

The Offence of the Gospel.

There is a very popular ministry mindset that has established itself in much of the American church. The mindset introduces itself in the term “seeker-sensitive”.

The goal of the “seeker-sensitive” approach to ministry is to love and woo someone into making a decision for Jesus Christ without making them feel uncomfortable or offended by implying that they are sinners and thus cause them to turn away from the church altogether.

The problem is that this mindset operates on the assumption that people can be coaxed into the Kingdom of God. The truth is that a person only comes into the Kingdom as the Holy Spirit convicts him of sin and brings him to repentance. A person that has been coaxed into the Kingdom can be coaxed out.

QUOTE: *In his book I Surrender, Patrick Morley writes that the church's integrity problem is in the misconception "that we can add Christ to our lives, but not subtract sin. It is a change in belief without a change in behavior." He goes on to say, "It is revival without reformation, without repentance."*

The fact is that Salvation is not brought about by a “decision” for Christ but by repentance from sin that leads to faith in Christ.

Foundational Truth #1: I have offended God. **(Conviction)**

There can be no sugar-coating of this truth. The fact is man’s condition is contrary to what God desires.

To deny this truth is to eliminate the work of grace in our life.

It is normal to not want to see our loved ones hurt or depressed. But to attempt to make them feel better by assuring them that they are right with God when in reality they are not, is to enable them feel at ease in their sin and reinforces the lies that keep them from receiving the truth of God’s grace.

Foundational Truth #2: I must acknowledge my offense and my offensive lifestyle. (Confession)

It is not just my acts of sin that is offensive to God, it is my sinful condition that daily offends Him.

My trying to be moral only offends God more.

Why? The problem is not simply with what I have done or repeatedly do; it is with who I am – a sinner who’s attempts to be a good person only testify to my guilt of not acknowledging my sinful condition.

ILLUSTRATION: "The Romans sometimes compelled a captive to be joined face-to-face with a dead body, and to bear it about until the horrible effluvia destroyed the life of the living victim.

Virgil describes this cruel punishment: "The living and the dead at his command/Were coupled face to face, and hand to hand;/ Till choked with stench, in loathed embraces tied,/The lingering wretches pined away and died." Without Christ, we are shackled to a dead corpse -- our sinfulness. Only repentance frees us from certain death, for life and death cannot coexist indefinitely.

Foundational Truth #3: I must repent of my offense and my offensive lifestyle.

(Repentance)

Repentance is more than simply feeling sorry for one's sin's.

2 Corinthians 7:8-10 HCSB (8) For although I grieved you with my letter, I do not regret it-- even though I did regret it since I saw that the letter grieved you, though only for a little while. (9) Now I am rejoicing, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance. For you were grieved as God willed, so that you didn't experience any loss from us. (10) For godly grief produces a repentance not to be regretted and leading to salvation, but worldly grief produces death.

Sorrow and grief cannot save, they merely bind and condemn.

ILLUSTRATION: Ripley's in Gatlinburg used to have a wax figure of a man wearing chains. He lived in India and carried 200 pounds of chains around his neck for 15 years, hoping that somehow he could atone for his sins.

Repentance is a gift given by God to prepare us for the gift of Faith that allows us to receive the gift of Salvation.

Foundational Truth #4: I must surrender myself to the mercy of God.

(Surrender)

I cannot bargain or give conditions to God about my surrender.

We come to God on His terms, not ours.

I give up all rights to myself and place myself in the hands of God.

"God is attracted to weakness. He can't resist those who humbly and honestly admit how desperately they need him. Our weakness, in fact, makes room for his power." – Jim Cymbala

Foundational Truth #5: I must believe that the offense has been paid for by Jesus' death on the cross and that sacrifice was made applicable to me by His resurrection from the dead.

(Believe)

The same God that gives the gift of repentance also gives the faith to believe in forgiveness.

Foundational Truth #6: I must receive the forgiveness God offers through grace and not self merit.

(Receive)

QUOTE: Oswald Chambers – *“It is not repentance that saves me; repentance is the sign that I realize what God has done in Christ Jesus. The danger is to put the emphasis on the effect instead of on the cause. Is it my obedience that puts me right with God? Never! I am put right with God because prior to all else, Christ died. When I turn to God and by belief accept what God reveals, instantly the stupendous atonement of Jesus Christ rushes me into a right relationship with God. By the miracle of God's grace I stand justified, not because of anything I have done, but because of what Jesus has done. The salvation of God does not stand on human logic; it stands on the sacrificial death of Jesus. Sinful men and women can be changed into new creatures by the marvelous work of God in Christ Jesus, which is prior to all experience.”*

ILLUSTRATION: Back in 1830 George Wilson was convicted of robbing the U.S. Mail and was sentenced to be hanged.

- President Andrew Jackson issued a pardon for Wilson, but he refused to accept it.
- The matter went to Chief Justice Marshall, who concluded that Wilson would have to be executed.
- "A pardon is a slip of paper," wrote Marshall, "the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged."
- "For some, the pardon comes too late. For others, the pardon is not accepted."