

Summer 2007 - King's Centre Church, Sheffield

Engaging with our World : Godly Foundations

6 May 2007 Nick Allan

Intro

We are in middle of our 'engage' or OUT teaching series. I'm glad that the People of Peace sermon has been useful to you and opening a helpful perspective on sharing our faith. I am keen to be practical & specific in this series on engaging with our world. I'm passionate to see a reformed society, not just a full church on a Sunday. I read the HTB newspaper recently, and was struck by their vision to transform society. Our vision – call a city back to God – is much more than just evangelism, it might look different in Sheffield, but God has a powerful plan and desire for our city.

I felt today to remind us of the foundations for engaging with our world in a godly way. **The foundation of course – is God. Father, Son, Holy Spirit.** First allowing God to love us.... Out of which will come an overflow of love, compassion, interest, engagement with the world and people around us.

It starts with me

I hope you agree that we want to see our society transformed by the power of the gospel? Transformation starts in my heart. You and I need to be transformed (reminds me of a Matt Redman worship song.. "send revival, start with me").

'And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit' (2 Corinthians 3v18)

Its not really about me – it "comes from the Lord, who is the spirit"

The vision is Jesus. The answer is the ministry of the Holy Spirit

Our first call from our mentor Jesus is to let God love us. He said 'Love God with everything'. But how can we do that, if we don't also receive all the love God has for us?

I'm in a relationship with Marjorie – its 2-way. There is no way I could go through life loving her with everything I've got available in me, if she didn't also reciprocate it! That would dry me up very quickly. Carol Arnott made an interesting comment last week at a conference I attended : felt God say once "Carol, I've got a lot of servants, but I haven't got many lovers'

Service is what we are called to, but it must come as a response to letting God love us. Letting go, taking down the defences, making space to build relationship with our daddy, our friend, our counsellor – all the things the Trinity is.

The answer is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And we must have it again, and again, and again. Are you making the space and time, in a way that suits your personality, to meet and get to know our living God – through his spirit which is freely available?

EXAMPLE - Alpha Holy Spirit weekend - you see transformation in people's lives, each time. There was an Alpha day in a prison recently, when a HTB staff member reported a conversation with a big tough criminal. He wasn't a Christian but watched the Alpha HS day and said "can't buy it, can't steal it, can't hustle it, can't inject it, but I really want it!"

You and I can access this same spirit every day! So first, let God love you. Let God teach you how HE sees you, not how you/the world says you are like. Let your heavenly dad install his approval in you. Let God's love show you that you are indeed inheriting the things of his kingdom, like Jesus promised.

What we are is much more important than what we do. And out of that place of love.....will overflow a desire and a passion to engage in our world around us.

Not just love, but power

More than just knowing & operating out of the love of God, the more time we spend intimately with our Father, the more of his POWER he will also impart to us.

Jesus is the best example. He knew the love of his father on earth, He operated in the power of his father's spirit too. That's how it was that *he didn't just have compassion on the blind men – HE HEALED THEM!* (Matt 20:29-34)

We are called into the same ministry as Jesus. So we need to hunger for and expect the same love and power from God. Out of the overflow of our hearts comes **transformation – us and our communities**

What does a transformed community look like? – A picture in Rom 12

Rom 12:1-21

First word is important “Therefore”

- In light of the previous 11 chapters – understanding of significance of:
 - Sin – we are sinful people
 - Forgiveness available for us, and freedom from previous sins/patterns/past that hold us
 - = salvation, being saved from our own seemingly hopeless, helpless destiny – is freely available to all who choose to believe in Jesus, God's son
 - Covenant – how God cares for his people and calls them into protective relationship

Therefore, **in the light of the way God has reached out to us** in costly, extravagant love ‘...***be transformed...***’ (Romans 12v2)

Allow yourself to be transformed by God's spirit, by offering up yourselves wholeheartedly to him. And he will transform our hearts and minds so that...(v2) we “will be able to test and approve what God's will is” **So that we can work out just how to engage in this world.**

You won't be surprised to hear that there are 3 dimensions in this passage:

Love for God (UP)

‘Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.’ (Romans 12v1)

We start with us again. ‘Lord you can have everything.. Thanks for loving me. I love you..’

Love for one another (IN)

‘Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.’ (Romans 12v9-10)

What we really want is to build an alternative society. A Godly society. A Godly Nether Edge, a godly Sharrow and Woodseats. There is such a difference from Xian community and what goes on in other circles, there is something so different, and so vital, so attractive about Christian community. Because its based on love. EastEnders / Coronation Street – that is one depiction of

community, but it sure doesn't operate on love, forgiveness, grace does it? Albert Square is not like that!

Love for others (OUT) Especially our enemies!

'Bless those who persecute you... "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink.' (Romans 12v14-21)

This kind of teaching is fairly unique to Jesus – nobody ever tells you to love your enemies. It goes against all human instinct. (but of course, its what God did for you and me – we were considered his enemies at one stage too). And its huge challenge! I used to cycle from Walkley to town for work – a good way to learn to love your enemies!

"Do not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21)

The way to win the world is not through objecting to everything they do. Its through showing, in action and words, the same love for the world, for individuals, as God has also lavished on us. The power of Good to redeem, to overcome, evil

We have to believe that lives can be transformed – even where on the face of it, the odds don't look good.

We have the **promise, love and power** of God in our lives, overflowing into the world

- When you walk into a hospital ward... a person's odds of recovery suddenly improve!
 - Have you ever thought about it like that?
- When you walk into a conflict (on your street, in work)... the odds of peace being the outcome improve when you are around.
- When you meet someone with hearing trouble, or broken bones, or a headache... that person's odds of recovery suddenly improve!
 - BECAUSE THAT IS GOD'S NATURE and we carry it with us – HIS SPIRIT

There is an eschatological understanding of what the earth will be like when the kingdom of God finally comes in fullness. One day it will be restored and made new (Is 65:17). But we believe that **we can be part NOW** in bringing in God's kingdom onto earth – that's why we pray for healing and transformation in other ways. That's what I've just seen myself – 225 healings in a week!

The kingdom breaking in looks really wide ranging, and always good

- Hope where there is no hope
- Healing where there is sickness
- Purpose in the workplace
- Harmony with the environment
- Eradication of poverty
- Respect & aid for the vulnerable
- Saving and turning around, where it looked like life was heading for hell more than heaven

But that is a big ask. And its impossible without God's spirit – and enough of it to overflow past our needs, our horizons, into service to others. **So that's why we need to first come back to God's love again & again**

Conclusion

Those of us who know Jesus will want to pass Him on to others. Its natural to pass on a good thing!
The simple message of today is – remember the Lifeshapes Triangle!

- UP - First let God love you, and love him back
- IN - Find and relish our Christian community
- OUT - Out of that foundation will come the passion, the compassion, the overflow of God's spirit in us – to engage and transform the world around us

Let me encourage you to end: Rom 15:13 – *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

