

### Is the Gospel Obsolete?

#### <u>Romans 10:15</u>: (NASB) How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!



We live in an age of tremendous knowledge, phenomenal technology and unprecedented freedom. On one hand, ours is an age where the individual reigns supreme. I can decide what is right and wrong for me, and I can also expect others to make allowances for my conclusions. On the other hand, the Gospel of Jesus Christ tells us right from wrong and moral from immoral. It defines our treatment of others, how to live and why we should live that way. The gospel is all about calling out a people for God's name through Jesus and proclaiming that God's kingdom is in fact coming! With the way this world operates, does this gospel

message and its way of life even matter? Are the personal freedoms of our present social order beyond the reach of the gospel?

**WHAT IS 1.** The first four books in the New Testament: **Matthew**, Mark, Luke and John. **2.** The good news for all as preached by Jesus.

WHAT IS OUR MISSION REGARDING the Gospel? We begin with some of Jesus' final words to his disciples: <u>Matthew 28:16-20</u>: (NASB) <sup>16</sup>But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some were doubtful. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples <3100> of all the nations <1484>, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the son

and the holy spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

**Disciples:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3100; *matheteuo*; to become a pupil; transitively, to disciple, i.e. enroll as scholar

Jesus is looking for thoroughly committed individuals for his cause. He is not looking for fans who cheer for him. The calling of individuals is much more than a "Jesus Fan Club." It is about enrolling as scholars, to learn how to follow in his path the best way we know how.

Nations: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1484; *ethnos*; a race (as of the same habit), i.e. a tribe; specially, a foreign (non-Jewish) one (usually by implication, pagan)

The King James Version translates this as Gentile, heathen, nation and people

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations - the idea is to make disciples (scholars, true followers) from all different nations. It does not matter where they come from, but they should all follow in the footsteps of Jesus.



#### Jesus spoke these words just before his ascension:

Luke 24:46-49: (NASB) <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be **proclaimed** <2784> in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>And behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

**Proclaimed:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2784 *kerusso*; of uncertain affinity; to herald (as a public crier), especially divine truth (the gospel)

It is not about <u>converting</u>; it is about <u>proclaiming</u> the good news. This is an important distinction. Jesus is saying proclaim, speak it out, give people hope, let them know this is about the kingdom, this is about my sacrifice - LET THEM KNOW! Everybody will not respond, but that is okay.

Jesus gave 5 instructions in the books of Matthew and Luke before he ascended:
Matthew and Luke before he ascended:

- 1. (Luke) Jesus would send God's spirit to guide the disciples in all they were being required to do.
- 2. (Luke) The disciples were to preach/proclaim repentance and the remission of sins everywhere they went, in all nations.
- 3. (Matthew) Make disciples out of all nations, but start at home in Jerusalem.
- 4. (Luke) Baptize in the name of the Father, son and holy spirit. Baptism symbolizes the disciple's source of life (the Father), the source of redemption (the son) and the source of their enlightenment (the holy spirit).
- 5. (Matthew) Teach the words and commands of Jesus to these new followers, exactly as the disciples themselves learned them.

#### The Apostle Paul reiterates this responsibility of the gospel message:

<u>Romans 10:14-15</u>: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup>How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things! (as quoted from <u>Isaiah 52:7</u>)

The gospel does not preach itself; it needs representation. It needs disciples preaching the message.

The obvious mission here is to preach the gospel to the world. The not-soobvious mission is that this preaching - while bringing disciples - will <u>not</u> <u>convert</u> the world.



In our day, we, as followers of Jesus, are bringing a message the world really does not like. Hence our question, *Is the gospel obsolete?* 

When we look around at what goes on in the world, what people are talking about and what attracts them, the gospel is rarely a part of it. We have to ask, what are we doing? It seems like preaching the gospel will fall continuously on deaf ears. Should we just accept that?

Let's pause on the mission of the gospel and review just a few of the many ways the gospel personally transforms us.



<u>John 13:14</u>: (NASB) If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

SERVE OTHERS This is a simple, straightforward lesson of serving one another. No matter how humble the service is, just do it! This is what Jesus did. Remember, being a

disciple is like being a scholar or student. We have to learn in a scholarly way how to wash one another's feet, how to have the attitude of love and servitude.

### the Gospel LOVE SELFLESSLY

John 15:12: (NASB) this is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

This love is *agape* in Greek, meaning the selfless, benevolent love we often talk about.

*This is my commandment* - Jesus is not just making a suggestion. We are to learn to love one another in a selfless way. What a responsibility!



Luke 9:23: (NASB) And he was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.

We first talked about what we are supposed to DO with the gospel. Now we see what we are

supposed to BE. The gospel transforms us so that we can bring this message of transformation to others.

In summary, the gospel contains the words, teachings and example of Jesus, as exemplified not only in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but also the rest of the New Testament.



The gospel message is GOOD NEWS of hope to all. While the general population is too preoccupied with their own issues to pay attention or even care, eternal hope and righteousness are ALWAYS relevant.

Eternal hope and eternal righteousness, no matter what the circumstance, has relevance. Eternal outcomes are much more powerful than that which is transitory. We have to see the gospel as relevant, even if it does not always seem to fit our needs. It has a distinct purpose.

The gospel is a BIG message about a BIG plan that will bring BIG changes. The beauty is, everyone will benefit.



#### So, the gospel message is relevant. What are some of the primary building blocks to make the gospel our own?

Having the gospel message preached to us and applying its value on a personal level are two very different things. We will begin to examine just three of the potentially life-changing **primary building blocks of the gospel**. We will find these building blocks are simple and sound life principles.



Our first primary building block of the gospel is **HUMILITY** - plain, simple, genuine humility. It is a simple concept but hard to manage. We constantly fail.

# Jesus is and always will be the primary example of what the gospel teaches us about humility:

<u>Philippians 2:6-9</u>: (NASB) <sup>6</sup>who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>For this reason also, God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.

God had Jesus with Him, as Jesus was the first and primary creation of God. Jesus emptied himself of that high and lofty spiritual position. He was willing to be completely emptied of it to become a human. After becoming a man, he emptied himself of his humanity by being willing to die for the purpose of doing God's just and righteous will. Jesus emptied himself twice! We are only expected to do it once. Jesus did it twice from a perspective we cannot even fathom. That is why for this reason also, God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name. It shows us the grandeur of what his humility produced.

Is this kind of humility common in our world or is it obsolete? This kind of humility is hard to find, but this is our example. It cannot be obsolete for us, because we are supposed to strive for it.

For us to aspire to the humility of Jesus, we need to be focused on others. Why?



#### Think of the actions of Jesus in light of this prophetic description of him:

<u>Isaiah 6:8-10</u>: (NIV) <sup>8</sup>Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I. Send me! <sup>9</sup>He (God) said, Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving. <sup>10</sup>Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

Jesus was sent to preach the good news which would only be received by those being specifically called by God. The followers of Jesus have the same mission, and the message most likely will not be received by very many. This is why Jesus quoted this prophecy from <u>Isaiah 6</u> when he preached the Parable of the Sower and the Seed in <u>Matthew 13:1-23</u>.

<u>Luke 8:10</u>: (NASB) And he said, To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.



God sent Jesus, knowing this would happen. Therefore, when we preach the gospel, we do not count "success" as how many people respond to the message. Instead, we are supposed to look at the proclamation, effort, humility and the giving of the good news. It is exactly that - good news - but it must be approached with genuine humility.



Check out our Co Kids videos: WHAT IS HUMILITY? christianquestions.com/youtube

#### We need to aspire to genuine humility:

<u>Galatians 6:1-2</u>: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

These are such beautiful texts showing us how to *fulfill the law of Christ*! The gospel requires humility from us. To wholeheartedly bear another's burdens requires selfless love as expressed through empathy.

Let's define empathy:

 $(\neg, \eta)$  The first of the two parts of empathy, *Narcissism*, *Dr. Ramani* 

• First of all, it's important to understand empathy has two pieces: It's the piece of attempting to understand, reflect and be present with the emotions or feelings of another person. Even if you're not experiencing them, and perhaps even if you don't necessarily agree with them, that you would understand that a person may be sad or angry or have some other emotional state.



Empathy is a powerful word that we do not use enough. For me, it is three basic things: First, it is learning to be quiet enough to understand what somebody is telling us. We often think we understand and want to finish the sentence, but instead we need to be quiet enough to really hear what they are saying.

Second, be absolutely, sincerely interested in what they are saying. That means we've cut out all other distractions. We put down what we were doing, turning away from the things that are going to draw our attention, and focus in on that person.

Third, I have had the wonderful privilege of learning about things that have happened to people that have not happened to me. I can't sympathize with those things because I don't know what it feels like. But in empathy, I can walk by their side as they attempt to deal with it.

So, if we are quiet enough and sincerely interested, we can then walk with them. To me, that's what empathy is. It is transformative.

To be empathetic requires a humility to give space so that others can occupy our hearts.

Does our world value empathy? It depends. When tragedy strikes the way it has in our recent school shootings here in the United States, we would have to say, of course the world has empathy. But in the political climate, there is very little empathy for each other's viewpoint. Many just want to throw poisonous darts at the opposition. Since our society is so selfish in general, there is very little deep empathy. But there are many good people in this world.

The world can be empathetic, but it is focused during specific times and for specific reasons. It is true, we generally see great empathy during tragedy. While we are able to give people space in our hearts, we do not seem to be able to keep them there. This basic humility is scarcely taught in our world, but it does exist. We can see it during those tragic times when everybody just stops and feels. This is an important way to begin a healing process. But the value of empathy is deeper than an occasional happening.

#### Its value is powerfully described in the Bible:

James 4:5-8: (NASB) <sup>5</sup>Or do you think that the scripture speaks to no purpose (here he quotes the scripture): He jealously desires the spirit which He has made to dwell in us? <sup>6</sup>But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, God is opposed to the proud (conspicuous, haughty), but gives grace to the humble. <sup>7</sup>Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

For us to grab hold of empathy, we need to first be humble. Humility requires submission to righteous things and the resisting of evil. "NO! Evil will not live here!" Humility requires drawing near to the good that God has presented to us and cleansing ourselves.

Once we have put this process in order, we can then focus on the second part of empathy. Remember, the first part was being quiet, observing and entering into someone else's experiences. Let them affect us, accepting what the other person is feeling even if we do not feel the same.

The second part of empathy is what we do next, and here is where most of us drop the ball:

(1) The second of the two parts of empathy, *Narcissism*, *Dr. Ramani* 

• But part two of empathy is being able to self-reflect on your impact on other people. So, in the simplest example, empathy - the self-part of empathy, the self-reflective part of empathy - is taking a minute before you react to someone, to think about how your words and how your actions could affect somebody else.



Often we quietly listened and appreciated their feelings, but now we need to think about our reaction. We need to evaluate what our reaction will do for them or against them. Am I going to be helpful? I have been empathetic, but will my response relay something positive, or will it end up negative? This self-reflection requires internal thinking and observation. This is not easy or common. Narcissism, which seems to be a growing problem today, rebels against this self-reflection.

# CQRewind

(Source: https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/narcissism-symptoms-signs) Narcissism is extreme self-involvement to the degree that it makes a person ignore the needs of those around them. While everyone may show occasional narcissistic behavior, true narcissists frequently disregard others or their feelings. They also do not understand the effect that their behavior has on other people.

Signs of Narcissism: Sense of Entitlement, Manipulative Behavior, Need for Admiration, Arrogance, Lack of Empathy.

Lack of empathy is another sign of narcissism. This means that the narcissist is unwilling or unable to empathize with the needs, wants, or feelings of other people. This also makes it difficult for them to take responsibility for their own behavior.

If somebody is narcissistic, they are so absorbed with themselves that they have a hard time applying empathy in a positive way. This is not to say they cannot ever be empathetic. We will go into that later.

While we are not at all suggesting that everyone in the world is a diagnosable narcissist, we are suggesting that narcissistic tendencies are overwhelmingly prevalent in our social media society. Social media is about me presenting me to you. It is really all about ME. This narcissistic attitude and self-absorption overtakes us and skews our view of everything else.



## The symptoms of this narcissistic approach are not new, and they are not unique to the present:

<u>Romans 1:21-25</u>: (NASB) <sup>21</sup>For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup>Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. <sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. <sup>25</sup>For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

This is pure and simple idolatry, putting the created before the Creator and saying, *I'm the most important thing!* 

This takes us away from empathy.

This is why the gospel does not fit in this world. *But, is it obsolete?* No! We need to be able to rise above what is all around us.





Leadership tends to invite personal pride to well up and distort that which is sacred to become that which is arrogant.

Without true humility, whatever empathy we have is going to go awry: <u>1 Peter 5:1-3</u>: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder...

Peter could have said: I'm the one who brought the gospel to you, or, I'm the one who gave that great sermon at Pentecost. But no; he is simply saying: I am a fellow elder. This is humility!

...and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup>shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup>nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Peter was saying to eagerly give of ourselves (*shepherd the flock*) because we want to, with no thought of getting anything in return. This is what good leadership should look like. Empathy is easier with this kind of an attitude.

Peter, of all men, was well-qualified to teach the early church leaders humility, as he had to learn it himself.

#### For leadership to be effective and transformative, the leader must have their fingers upon their OWN pulse with just as much intensity as they have them on the pulse of those they lead:

<u>1 Peter 5:4-7</u>: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. <sup>5</sup>You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud (haughty), But gives grace to the humble. <sup>6</sup>Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

We cannot say to God, "I did a good deed today! Did You see that? I need to be recognized!"

Humble Christians rely on God to lift them up in an appropriate and Godhonoring way. If it is not an appropriate



comes WHEN, WHERE and IF the Father deems it necessary

time, then we still rejoice that we were able to serve humbly and without fanfare.



The gospel requires humility in those who will follow its message. More often than not, our world encourages a brash and arrogant attitude in those who will follow its causes. As our social discourse becomes ever more toxic, we can see that empathy - true humility-driven empathy - is blatantly absent. The humility of the gospel IS relevant!



The gospel is not obsolete, but it IS uncomfortable to the world.

If we injure our knee and have to wear a brace, it often hurts. But it is supporting the knee so that it can heal. Even though it chafes and hurts, that brace is necessary. The relevance of the gospel is that in order to heal, the world needs this example set, this chiding reminder, even though the world does not want or like the example.

Humility-driven empathy seems so simple and yet is hard to apply because it requires ME to let go of ME!



# What effect does a lack of humility and empathy have on our ability to adhere to any kind of moral code?

Defining morality is a massive part of our social media culture. When we look at the relevance of the gospel in our world today, perhaps the most obvious area of divergence is in regard to moral codes. This world is a free-for-all morally, while the gospel comes complete with an intact and detailed moral code.

Round peg/square hole, right? It is not going to fit! But that does not mean we stop working with it.





**MORALITY** is having a clear-cut code that defines right and wrong.

# As messengers of the gospel, Christians are overwhelmingly instructed to follow righteousness as defined by God:

<u>2 Timothy 2:3-5</u>: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. <sup>5</sup>Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.





Such simple, clear statements! We are not supposed to win by cheating. We have to have the same high level of morality the Apostle Paul taught his spiritual son, Timothy. Christians should aim to have Paul's type of morality and an all-out dedication and belief in Jesus as a model for our daily lives.

...unless he competes according to the rules - the rules of the gospel. Not the rules of the gospel as written by us, but as written by Jesus Christ according to the Bible.



As messengers of this gospel, we find empathy to be a key to understanding those around us so as to be able to potentially show them a higher morality and a higher way. If we can

apply the two parts of empathy we discussed, we can lift people out of a lower level of morality into the Christian standards of morality.

(1) The positive power of empathy, *Narcissism*, *Dr. Ramani* 

• Empathy, when used correctly, gives us a lot of information about the other person. It teaches us the sorts of triggers for sadness, the kinds of things that anger them or agitate them, the things that they feel anxious about, and any number of other situations or triggers that bring out strong emotions in a person.

When we put empathy to work, it will teach us about the person we are reaching out to if we pay attention to what they are saying. This is the positive power of empathy. By doing this, we can help them see a higher way, a higher level, a higher morality.

But we then need to look at our world. The other side of the "moral coin" is deciding to make morality fit our own agenda. This is when it is all about ME and what I think is right. Do not judge me.

While we lament at how shockingly far this has gone, it is important to remember that this kind of thinking is not new. It has been repeated throughout history.

#### We go deeper into darkness every time we repeat history:

<u>Isaiah 5:18-19</u>: (NASB) <sup>18</sup>Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood, and sin as if with cart ropes (this is a picture of dragging sin along behind you with ropes: Come along, sin!); <sup>19</sup>Who say, Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come to pass, that we may know it!



It sounds like they are saying, "Let God show us plainly, and only then we will follow." This arrogance reminds us of the Pharisees at the cross, mocking Jesus in <u>Matthew 27:41-42</u>: ...let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

What audacity they had to say that after all the miracles he had showed them. No matter what evil was thrown at him, Jesus stood his ground. And not only did he stand his ground against evil, while he was hanging there on the cross in such pain, he witnessed to the two thieves on either side of him. While he was dying, he made sure John would take care of his mother. All the while, they were throwing insults at him.

That was his empathy, his high moral code. We can imagine he looked at them and thought: *I am dying for you, just like I am dying for those who love me*. He understood the power of his sacrifice. We want this same thought process.

#### Isaiah continues, and it gets worse:

<u>Isaiah 5:20-23</u>: (NASB) <sup>20</sup>Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! <u>Isaiah 5:21-23</u>: (NASB) <sup>21</sup>Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight! <sup>22</sup>Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink, <sup>23</sup>Who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!

We see evil all around us today. How much worse can it get? Is the gospel obsolete? No, but it is certainly out of place being so different from the current worldview. However, we should not ignore it just because it is different. We cannot back away from that which is righteous.



For those who twist and subvert, there is a negative power of empathy as well.

# SHOW NOTES

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#### $\mathbf{<}$ **C** $\mathbf{Q}$ Rewind $\mathbf{<}$ )) The negative power of empathy, *Narcissism Dr. Ramani*

If you study that carefully enough, you better believe that you can then use that knowledge to manipulate that person. If you know what gets a rise out of that person, creates emotions out of them, if you're the narcissist and you're aware - which is empathy - of the other person's emotional state, when you need it you can turn around and use that as a weapon, as a tool, as a way of manipulating them, as a way of getting a rise out of them. And then turning around and gaslighting them and saying, "You're being too sensitive."

This is awful but so easy to do. We can listen and learn enough to turn it against someone. We can use their vulnerability to crush them. This is not how we are supposed to be - our morality should be so much higher than this. Our standard is higher than that of the world around us. Every person is not evil and dark like this - most of us try to be better. But we must be wary and careful against such things.

#### We know this because Christians have these same challenges:

James 1:14-17: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. <sup>15</sup>Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. <sup>16</sup>Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.



American Standard Bible: the sin, when it is full-grown

Amplified Bible: when sin has run its course

<sup>17</sup>Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

James is writing this to Christians saying: We are tempted when we are enticed by our own desire. Doesn't this sound like those narcissistic tendencies we are talking about? James says to strive to that higher level of morality. Do not be stuck in the way the world deals with things. Stand up for something higher, bigger, stronger, better, wiser, clearer and more compassionate. This is why we need to cling to the gospel in every aspect of our lives.



Eventually sin brings death.

#### God knows the difference between right and wrong, is far above us and has clear objectives in His actions:

Isaiah 55:8-11: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup>For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your

thoughts. <sup>10</sup>For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; <sup>11</sup>So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

#### God is a God of compassion.

My word...goes forth from My mouth...accomplishing what I desire - we need to believe this and hold onto it - even when we are uncomfortable in this world that does not like what we stand for. It does not mean the gospel is obsolete; it is simply a round peg in a square hole. We are being tested on our example of higher morality and the application of humility and empathy.

God allows man's immorality for the purpose of teaching us that our own made-up ways are futile.

#### For those of us who want God's morality in our lives, we need to see it as the overriding influence in all of our decisions:

<u>Proverbs 16:2</u>: (NASB) All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the LORD weighs the motives.



#### This reminds us of:

James 4:3: (NASB) You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.



#### What are our deep motivations?

<u>Proverbs 16:3-6</u>: <sup>3</sup>Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established. <sup>4</sup>The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. <sup>5</sup>Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; assuredly, he will not be unpunished.

#### Immorality will have consequences!

<sup>6</sup>By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.

Lovingkindness and truth are who Jesus was, is and will be. We need to adhere to that morality. We do not fit in this world, but it does not matter. It is not that we are obsolete. It is that we are living up to something higher to be an example.



The gospel and its morality are far above that of any morality of human design. Because the vast majority of the world categorically denies God's morality, it serves as a point of comparison for our broken and selfish ways. This comparison will be used in the future reconciliation of humanity. The morality we learn from the gospel IS relevant!

The gospel is not obsolete - it is just not comfortable.

Even though morality related to the gospel is presently held in disdain, it is comforting to know its future importance in the work of reconciliation of the world to God.

THE GOSPEL IS RELEVANT! THE GOSPEL IS RELEVANT! THE GOSPEL IS RELEVANT!



#### How does discipleship, our third gospel building block, work together with humility and morality?

We preach the gospel, the good news of the kingdom. In preaching this message, we need to be its humble representatives who live as an example of a higher morality than that with



which the world is comfortable. All these are a function of being an actual footstep follower of Jesus, not just a "fan" of him.

The sole purpose of a Christian disciple is to learn how to be the best and most complete reflection of Jesus in your life.



# Jesus chose to abandon his own will as a man whenever the will of God stood above it:

<u>Psalms 40:7-8</u>: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>Then I said, Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. <sup>8</sup>I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.

This sounds wonderful, and we are excited to do this...until we have to apply it!

Then we look at Jesus' life and the night of his deepest trial and see how he had to apply it:

<u>Matthew 26:39</u>: (NASB) And he went a little beyond them, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as You will.

That is our selfless example. If we are disciples, this is what we want to learn and reflect in our daily lives. It is not easy.



#### The rich young ruler was enthusiastically faithful to the Law. Jesus saw this and knew his heart was good, but his earthly attachments were just far too significant:

<u>Mark 10:21-23</u>: (NASB) <sup>21</sup>Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the

poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. <sup>22</sup>But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. <sup>23</sup>And Jesus, looking around, said to his disciples, How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!



His attachment to earthly things was too great. Round peg/square hole. The rich young ruler was close but was just not able to let go. This is what discipleship is, and why the gospel feels like it is obsolete. However, it is simply different. This lesson for the Christian is not complicated - it is a simple right-and-wrong scenario: Am I going to live higher or not? Am I going to say, "By God's grace I get to be the round peg that does not fit in the square hole!" We hope so because we do not want to fit into this world!

Notice Jesus did not say it is <u>impossible</u> for a rich man to enter the kingdom; he said it is <u>difficult</u>. Our hearts must be willing to let go of earthly possessions. If our heart is so positioned, God often will give us stewardship of those possessions to use in His service.

We are not our own. Our things are not ours. We are dedicated to a higher purpose. It is important that as a disciple we realize we are not about an obsolete teaching. We are about a different and higher teaching that does not fit into the context of the environment, but is here for the good of those around us.

On the negative side, this kind of selfless and sacrificial discipleship is completely frowned upon today. Think about how Christianity has been so misrepresented. Think about the unholy leadership that continues to feed such misrepresentation. The narcissistic type of approach from leadership has a direct influence on the followers.

(リ)) A narcissist's use of empathy, Narcissism, Dr. Ramani

• Because narcissists often just say and do what they want without thinking that absence of empathy - the problem is that they hurt a lot of people. Because it's not that they have no empathy, they've got some, they know they've done something wrong, and two hours later, six hours later, 24 hours later, five weeks later, may come back to you to say, "Yeah, I can see how that made you upset," or "I guess I'm sorry I said that." The apologies are kind of hollow, but they are apologies because they get that they did something wrong. But in the moment their selfish, impulsive need means that they're willing to throw all that empathy stuff out of the window to do what feels right and necessary to them at that moment.



A dear friend of ours and sister in Christ, Micki, who passed away several years ago, is a sad example of this. She had been going to a specific church. That church was all about tithing. She was disabled and on a pathetically low fixed income. She gave and she gave, and the blessings they promised never happened. She would ask why these promised blessings did not happen, and the church leadership would say she had to give more. She gave to the point of not having food, finally leaving the church when she realized this was not the way of the gospel. She could not even feed herself, but the preacher wore \$400 shoes. He understood her sincerity in trying to please God and played on it for monetary gain. That is the dark side of all of this. This is why we have to stand for the gospel that is most certainly not obsolete.

<u>2 Peter 2:1-3</u>: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. <sup>2</sup>Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; <sup>3</sup>and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

The Apostle Peter is specific here about what happened in his day, and it is scary. *False prophets...arose among the people* - that is how it was in Israel with a warning applicable to our day within the Christian community.

These false teachers lead the people in sensual (immoral) doings - luring some to "follow me." This is NOT what the gospel is. This is a corrupted form of the gospel being taught today.

The real gospel is different, higher and selfless. Discipleship has a high moral standard that represents teachings of Jesus accurately, not for personal gain and power. Although darkness and evil surrounds us, it is not an excuse to let up. We have to stand for something higher.

## Contrary to the way this Christian-in-name-only approach teaches, we are given clear and concise direction:

<u>Romans 12:1-2</u>: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.



That which is good and acceptable and perfect - walking in the footsteps of Jesus, doing what he did and treating others the way he did. Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century does not change God's applicable high standard.

We are to have the same humility, the same selflessness, the same true empathy on both sides of the issue, so we can actually stand for the people and not make it all about ME.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind...

## This spiritual transformation is for the purpose of living your discipleship in an unfriendly world - that is what we are facing:

<u>1 Peter 1:13-16</u>: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, <sup>15</sup>but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; <sup>16</sup>because it is written, You shall be holy, for I am holy.

#### Peter understood how difficult it is to stand out in a crowd for a holy purpose.

Do not be conformed to the former lusts...be holy for I am holy - this does not mean we will not make mistakes and revert back to old habits. It is how quickly we recover and realize our mistakes and move forward in our discipleship. This is not saying we have to be perfect. We just need to have the right heart intent and desire to be the disciple God wants us to be. It is a struggle and not always easy. Remember the importance of humility. Keep getting up and fix what needs to be fixed. Do not allow the gospel to become obsolete.

Discipleship and its necessary suffering are an important process.

### It makes us worthy through Christ to be trusted with a glory beyond human comprehension:

<u>Romans 8:14-18</u>: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>For all who are being led by the spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father! <sup>16</sup>The spirit himself (itself) testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.

Let's really think about this gift. We are adopted into God's spiritual family - this is incredible! We call him *Abba*, which means Daddy. It is such a privilege to have an intimate relationship with God.

<sup>17</sup>and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. <sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Jesus suffered all that he did and then was given incredible glory. Discipleship says: Follow in the sufferings and let God bless you in His time and His way. We are called to be children of God, *fellow heirs with Christ*, by way of suffering for a short time, because we are His disciples in a world that does not like it. It does not matter what they like; what matters is what we are called to do.

Be a follower, not the centerpiece. We must eliminate that narcissistic approach inside of all of us. We have to continually tell ourselves to do what Jesus did the best we can.



The gospel and its call to discipleship is all about putting the highest things first and yourself last. Our social media society is all about putting

yourself first and then joining in with whatever causes fit into your life. This comparison shows just how lost our world is. True discipleship is a relevant ray of light and hope in a world gone mad.

Our world has gone mad - in fact, it is off the rails! Do we stand for something? What if that "something" does not seem to fit with those around me? So what? If we are following the gospel in a righteous way, as it is written, then it is good it does not fit! It means we are following something higher and better. We do not look down on those around us but need to encourage them to come up higher. Look at the hope in Christ and see the way that can embody a higher standard.

The gospel is not obsolete in this world. It is an important example to follow. But that example will not be there unless each of us decides to make it so by the way we live.

Live the gospel, live as a disciple of Jesus and make a difference!

#### So, is the gospel obsolete? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions... Think about it...!

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.





#### **Bonus Material and Study Questions**

### Excerpts from: https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/narcissism-symptoms-signs

Narcissism is extreme self-involvement to the degree that it makes a person ignore the needs of those around them. While everyone may show occasional narcissistic behavior, true narcissists frequently disregard others or their feelings. They also do not understand the effect that their behavior has on other people....

People who show signs of narcissism can often be very charming and charismatic. They often don't show negative behavior right away, especially in relationships. People who show narcissism often like to surround themselves with people who feed into their ego. They build relationships to reinforce their ideas about themselves, even if these relationships are superficial...

#### Signs of Narcissism

#### Sense of Entitlement

A common sign of people with narcissism is the belief that they are superior to others and deserve special treatment. They believe that others should be obedient to their wishes and that the rules don't apply to them.

#### Manipulative Behavior

Another common trait of narcissism is manipulative or controlling behavior. A narcissist will at first try to please you and impress you, but eventually, their own needs will always come first.

When relating to other people, narcissists will try to keep people at a certain distance in order to maintain control. They may even exploit others to gain something for themselves.



#### Need for Admiration

One of the most common signs of a narcissist is a constant need for praise or admiration. People with this behavior need to feel validation from others and often brag or exaggerate their accomplishments for recognition. They also like to feel appreciated to boost their ego.

#### Lack of Empathy

Lack of empathy is another sign of narcissism. This means that the narcissist is unwilling or unable to empathize with the needs, wants, or feelings of other people. This also makes it difficult for them to take responsibility for their own behavior.

#### Arrogance

People with narcissistic behavior already see themselves as superior to others, so they may become rude or abusive when they don't receive the treatment they think they deserve. While they hold themselves superior, they may speak or act rudely toward those that they deem are inferior.



# Study QUESTIONS

### Ep.1232: Is the Gospel Obsolete?

https://christianguestions.com/doctrine/1232-gospel-obsolete/

- 1. What is the gospel? What is our mission with regards to it what action(s) should we take with our knowledge of the gospel? How should we expect the world to react to this action? List Jesus' five instructions to his disciples. (See Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 2:46-49, Romans 10:14-15)
- 2. In what three ways should the gospel transform us? How is the gospel relevant throughout the ages? What is its purpose? (See John 13:14, 15:12, Luke 9:23)
- 3. How did Jesus exemplify humility? How was he worthy of the exalted position God gave him after his resurrection and ascension back into heaven? Why is this kind of humility not obsolete - especially for the followers of Jesus? (See Philippians 2:6-9)
- 4. Did Jesus' preaching and his miracles sway many people into becoming Christians permanently? Why? How should we view success in our own proclaiming of the gospel? (See Isaiah 6:8-9, Matthew 13:1-23, Luke 8:10)
- 5. If we aspire to the humility of Jesus, on what do we need to focus? What defines genuine humility? (See Galatians 6:1-2, James 4:5-8)
- 6. Define empathy. Define narcissism. How does narcissism affect our empathy? (See Romans 1:21-25)
- 7. Where is the danger in a leadership role? How can we combat that danger? (See 1 Peter 5:1-7)
- 8. How does empathy help in showing others how to live higher, more morally? What is the negative, dark effect of using empathy to understand the motivations of others? (See 2 Timothy 2:3-5, Isaiah 5:18-23)
- 9. How did Jesus react to the terrible hatred that surrounded him and put him on the cross? How should we use his example to hold fast to our righteousness? (See Matthew 27:41-42, James 1:14-17)
- 10. What is necessary for us to be successful footstep followers of Jesus? (See Psalms 40:7-8, Matthew 26:39, Mark 10:21-23, 2 Peter 2:1-3, Romans 8:14-18,12:1-2, 1 Peter 1:13-16)
- 11. How can you make the gospel more vibrant and impactful in your life? How does the gospel shape your life differently from the world's ideas of morality?





