




TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

“Talking Points, Walking Points” is a publication of 
the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Triangle Community Church aims to be a “transforming church”. We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent, action. I Timothy 4:7 instructs you to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Since “**Talking Points, Walking Points**” is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to “dive deep” too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled “**Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time**”, are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Pastor Doug noted that “God wants to disillusion us of our ability to manage life apart from Him.” Does that **sound** mean to you? Why or why not?
Tell us about a time when God disillusioned you of your ability to manage life on your own.
Did you recognize it as an act of God at the time? If so, did it **feel** mean to you? Explain.
- When people say or do a particularly rude thing, they often say, “*I don't know why I said/did that. That's not like me!*” **Why** do you think we say things like that?
Read Mark 7:20-23. Now what would you say about **where** that came from?
Imagine a travel mug full of...**something**. Under **most** circumstances, the lid keeps it all inside. But shake the cup and **you'll find out what's inside!** What in life typically “shakes your cup”?
What typically comes out when you're shaken—is it better described by Galatians 5:19-20 or by 5:22-23?
- In Matthew 5:23-24, who committed the sin—was it “you” or was it “your brother”?
Who is commanded to take the initiative to resolve it—is it “you” or is it “your brother”?
In Matthew 18:15, who committed the sin—was it “you” or was it “your brother”?
Who is commanded to take the initiative to resolve it—is it “you” or is it “your brother”?
What conclusion do you draw from this?

Application-Challenge

Is there any believer with whom you have difficulty?

- **God wants to cultivate within us a soft heart and a sensitive conscience.**
- **God often uses the difficult circumstances of life to unveil our true character.**
- **When God reveals an area of sin in your life, he wants you to own it and repent of it.**

Sermon Summary

Today we continue our series on the life of Joseph. A worldwide famine has struck and people are starving. The only place food can be found is in Egypt, because God had forewarned Joseph and so he had stored up for the lean years that he knew were coming. The drought and famine were having a devastating impact on Joseph's family back in Canaan (Genesis 42:1-2). So Jacob sent all his sons to Egypt, except for Benjamin, the youngest, the only remaining child of his beloved, long-deceased wife, Rachel (he had no idea that Joseph is still alive). Joseph's brothers had no idea what had become of him—in their wildest imagination they never would have guessed that now he is the prime minister of Egypt, and that they are about to meet him! And back in Egypt, Joseph has no idea what has become of his family. All of this sets the stage for what happens next... Genesis 42:5-7

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan, and Naphtali are clearly out of their element: a bunch of country boys in the presence of the Prime Minister. They had no idea that they were bowing before their long, lost brother. Once Joseph recognized them, he had to think fast (Genesis 42:8-15). This was not going at all like Joseph's brothers had expected; they must have been scared to death. Joseph learned that his father and younger brother are still alive, while everyone thinks he's dead and gone. Joseph capitalized on this information, but bitterness and revenge are not his motives (we know this from the names he gave his own sons; Genesis 41:51-52). His brothers insisted that they were honest men (42:11), and he gave them a chance to prove it. Years before, Joseph had been cast in the role of being a spy for his father (37:14), and now the tables were turned! He also decided to test their attitude towards God (42:18-20). Joseph's mention of God seemed to awaken their slumbering consciences. And a very interesting conversation ensued, which Joseph overheard (42:21-24; remember, they didn't know that Joseph understood Hebrew, since he had been communicating with them through a translator).

How does God soften a hard heart? How does He awaken a seared conscience? God often begins by disillusioning us of our ability to manage life on our own apart from him. He does that by turning up the heat in our lives, putting us in circumstances where we are in over our heads. First, the worldwide famine showed them that one's "daily bread" wasn't a given. Hunger drove them to Egypt—the illusion of being independent was now shattered. Then God convicted them of their sin so that they acknowledged their guilt (v. 21-22). A seared conscience is preserved through excuses, but as they sat in prison they laid aside all of their excuses. They didn't blame their evil actions on the fact that they had a passive father who played favorites with Joseph. They didn't blame Joseph for being their father's favorite. They took personal responsibility for what they had done. But something more happened: they acknowledged the pain their actions had brought to Joseph. Until we understand how our actions have impacted others, we won't repent at a deep level; we will give ourselves a pass. Now God has their attention.

1. God wants to cultivate within us a soft heart and a sensitive conscience.
2. God often uses the difficult circumstances of life to unveil our true character.
3. When God reveals an area of sin in your life, he wants you to own it and repent of it.

Notes

Talking To Others About This Week's Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asked you, "*What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?*", how would you summarize the most important elements of this week's sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

What is the “conscience”, what role does it play in the Christian life, and how should we relate to it? Let’s see!

Monday—Read Psalm 38 and consider the multiple and significant “price tags” of unresolved guilt:

- v. 2—internal pain and spiritual pressure
 - v. 3—physical illness
 - v. 4—heavy burdens
 - v. 5—worsening circumstances
 - v. 6—daily sadness
 - v. 7—weakness
 - v. 8—loss of caring and inward agitation
 - v. 10—heart palpitations and sad eyes
 - v. 11—aloneness/alienation
 - v. 12—threats
 - v. 17—sorrow
 - v. 18—anxiety
- If you shared these symptoms with your doctor, he likely would diagnose you with _____.
But in David’s case, these were symptoms of _____ (v. 3c) and _____ (v. 4a).
Circle the word “my” (7x in v. 1-5). Who was **responsible** for these symptoms?
Circle the word “your” (5x in v. 1-5). Who was **behind** these symptoms?
- Read Psalm 32. What was the **solution** to David’s problem?

Tuesday—The Conscience: What is it? How to get a “clear” conscience.

- Read Romans 2:14-15. In v. 14, mark the word “instinctively” (“by nature”, NIV). In v. 15, mark the words “hearts”, “conscience”, and “thoughts”. From these verses, try to write a definition of what the conscience is. Feel free to consult a dictionary.
- Read Hebrews 9:1-15. Mark the word “conscience” in v. 9 & 13. Then, with your Bible open...
What **could not** clear/cleanse/perfect one’s conscience?
What (Who) **clears** one’s conscience?
- Do you have a clear conscience? How do you know?

Wednesday—The Conscience: Is yours “clear”, “troubled”—or worse?! How to keep a clear conscience.

- Read 1 Samuel 24:5 and 1 Peter 2:19 (plus as much of their contexts as necessary). What produces a troubled conscience?
- From the following verses, how does one get and keep a “clear” conscience? Acts 23:1; 24:16; Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 4:12; 1 Timothy 1:5 & 19; 3:9; 2 Timothy 1:3; Hebrews 9:13; 10:22; 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16 & 21.
- From the following verses, what is at risk if we do not keep a clear conscience? 1 Timothy 4:2 and Titus 1:15
- Read 1 John 1:5—2:2. How can believers keep a clear conscience?
Is there anything you need to confess to God?

Thursday—**Some** believers have an **overly** sensitive conscience. Do you...

- ...ask forgiveness over and over for a sin you no longer commit?
...ruminate about past failures?
...seldom feel acceptable to, or accepted by, God?
...get down on yourself for small errors or normal human failures?
...have vague feelings of guilt—but you're not really sure why?
...struggle with unfounded feelings of inadequacy or incompetence?
...avoid making decisions that you imagine may hurt others, when there is no basis in fact that the decision is wrong or hurtful?
- If several of the above statements describe you, you may have an overly sensitive conscience. If so, read 1 John 3:19-24. In v. 21, John speaks of a Christian whose heart (conscience) **does not** condemn him. This person has "confidence". In v. 20 John speaks about a Christians whose heart (conscience) **does** condemn him—but according to v. 19, this Christian is instructed to "_____ his heart"! V. 20b says why we are to assure our hearts. Why is that?
- According to v. 23, Christ commands us to do two things. What are they?
Do you believe on Jesus Christ as your sin-bearer? Do you exhibit growing love toward other Christians?

Friday—Read Romans 8:26-39.

- How are Christians described in v. 26-27? Can you identify with that description?
- According to v. 30, **how many** believers "slip through the cracks"—predestined, but not called; called, but not justified; justified, but not glorified? In v. 30, circle the **six** occurrences of the word "he" and the **three** occurrences of the word "these/those".
Who makes sure that every Christian makes it home, safe and sound ("glorified")?
- Who can bring a charge against you (v. 33)?
Who can condemn you (v. 34; cf. Romans 8:1)?
Who can separate you from Christ's love (v. 35)?
- What does it mean if the things listed in v. 35-36 happen to you?

Saturday—Read Psalm 86 (after first reminding yourself of what Romans 8:35-39 says).

- How do you see the **troubles** described in Romans 8:35-39 in the psalmist's experience?
- How do you see the **confidence** described in Romans 8:35-39 in the psalmist's experience?
- What troubles are you currently experiencing?
Is your conscience clear—are any of your troubles of your own making?
Even if all your troubles are afflictions or attacks, have you "troubled your troubles" in any ways through ungodly responses?
If so, remember that "repentance is refreshing"! (Acts 3:19, 26; Psalm 32:1-5)
- How do we repent?
 1. Admit that you have sinned. (1 John 1:5-8)
 2. Confess your sin to God and seek forgiveness. (Proverbs 28:13b)
 3. Confess your sin to appropriate people. (Matthew 5:23-24)
 4. Make restitution. (Proverbs 6:30-31)
 5. Change and grow, in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Colossians 3)