



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. 1 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**?
- Now that we're coming to the end of Joseph's story, it's possible to see God's faithfulness in blessing (as he'd promised in 12:1-3). But God sure took a twisted, tortuous path to bring that blessing! How have you seen that same dynamic in your own life?

What lessons have you learned about God's ways?

What advice would you give to someone who's in the middle of “the hard, dark part” of the path?

- Read Genesis 45:4-5. Do the sentiments contained in the last line of v. 4 and in the first line of v. 5 appear unimaginable together? **How** can Joseph say “Don't be grieved or angry with yourselves even though you sold me into slavery”? **Why** would he even **care to** comfort his brothers?
- According to Genesis 45:7-8, who does Joseph view as the determinative actor in these events? Does this absolve his brother of all responsibility? Why or why not? Explain.

Who is/are the determinative actor(s) in these events described in Acts 4:27-28?

Does this absolve Herod, Pilate, Gentiles and Jews of all responsibility? Why or why not? Explain.

Think of an injustice done you. How would you apply these truths to your experience?

What would it look like for you to respond as Joseph did in Genesis 45:4-5? Could you do that?

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?

Sermon Summary

In Genesis 45:14–15 we have a beautiful picture of reconciliation—tearful apologies, expressions of deep repentance, and the assurance of God’s forgiveness. Soon, God’s blessing flowed (v. 16–20 cf. 12:1-2). And we live at a point in history where we are the beneficiaries of those blessings which flowed from the Jewish people (Galatians 3:8). Joseph’s father learns he still lives—and now is Prime Minister of Egypt (45:25–28).

God assured him of his provision and protection (46:1-4). God promised Jacob that (1) his family would become a great nation, (2) that God would be with Jacob and his family in Egypt and they need not fear, (3) that God would bring the nation of Israel back out of Egypt and into the Promised Land (it would happen 400 years later, under Moses’ leadership), and (4) that Jacob would die in Egypt, under the watchful care of his beloved son Joseph.

Have you ever felt like Jacob? You are facing big changes in life and are filled with uncertainty. When facing big decisions our first concern should be, “Do I see God in this? How does it impact what I know to be God’s will for my life?” I am going to be honest with you: I have no interest in pursuing things that God may not be in. So before you take on some new course of direction—do what Jacob did—go to God about it. Ask Him for wisdom, and He will give it.

Meanwhile Joseph waited. When he got news that his family was close, he wasted no time. “Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time” (v. 29). Jacob was a fulfilled man: “Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive” (v. 30). When his time came, he knew that he could die in peace. Jacob died at the ripe old age of 147. He enjoyed 17 more years with Joseph, which, by the way, equaled exactly the time he had spent with Joseph before his son was sold into slavery in Egypt.

Not long after Jacob’s burial, Joseph’s brother’s became fearful that Joseph may exact revenge (50:15–17). But Joseph carried no grudge (v. 19-21). What an incredible man Joseph was. Let me ask you a question. What kind of mark are you leaving? What kind of legacy will you leave behind when one day God calls you home?

Notes

Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

Joseph freely forgave his brothers for their betrayal of him and years of lies to their father. Yet their guilty conscience continued (Genesis 50:15-17). What is the solution—do they need to “learn to forgive themselves”?

Monday—If ever anyone needed to “forgive himself” it was Peter! He experienced perhaps one of the greatest spiritual failures recorded in Scripture (pride ▷ spiritual blindness ▷ betrayal). Let’s explore his experience and see what we can learn.

- Read Luke 22:24-30. This occurred just prior to the Last Supper. What were the disciples arguing about?
- Read John 13:33-38. What did Peter ask (v. 36)? What was Jesus’ reply (v. 36)?
What did Peter ask (v. 37)? What did Peter boast (v. 37)? What was Jesus’ reply (v. 38)?
Would Peter have been feeling and thinking after this interchange?
- Read Mark 14:26-31. To whom did Jesus make the prediction of v. 27? How many of the twelve refuted Jesus (v. 29)?
What did Peter boast (v. 29)? How strongly did Jesus word his reply (v. 30)? How strongly did Peter word his rebuttal (v. 31)?
- Read Matthew 26:69-75. Before whom did big, tough, Peter make his first denial (v. 69)? What was the content of his denial (v. 70)?
Before whom did big, tough, Peter make his second denial (v. 71)? How did Peter strengthen his denial this time (v. 72)?
How did Peter strengthen his denial the third time (v. 74)? What happened next (read Luke 22:61-62)? At that moment, how would Peter have envisioned his prospects for future ministry? Describe in concrete detail how he likely felt.
- As I said—**if ever** anyone needed to “forgive himself” it was Peter! **But that’s not at all what Jesus told him to do!** Read Luke 22:31-32. This is a detail recorded only by Luke. It occurred at the time of Peter’s boasting that he was ready to die for Jesus! In your Bible, **circle** “Simon, Simon” (v. 31) and “you/your” in v. 32. **Do not circle** “you” in v. 31—draw a **box** around it instead. Also draw a **box** around the word “brothers” at the end of v. 32. **Now for a wonderful insight!** The words you **circled** are all **singular**—they all refer to **Simon Peter alone**. The words you drew a **box** around are **plural**—they refer to **the rest of the disciples**. As Peter was **on the brink of his lowest spiritual point** (with the possible exception of Matthew 16:21-23!), what role did Jesus envision for him? How did Jesus’ vision of his future contrast to Peter’s own?
- Read John 21:15-17. What did it take for Peter to move out of the guilt and shame of denying Jesus? What did Jesus tell him to do? Was “forgiving himself” any part of it? (In fact, the idea of “forgiving oneself” **never** appears in the Bible.)

Tuesday—The person who says “I just can’t forgive myself” may be expressing an inability or unwillingness to grasp and receive God’s forgiveness. This is probably the most common explanation behind “self-forgiveness” talk. We say that we can’t forgive ourselves because we really doubt that God has forgiven us. Or we don’t see our need for forgiveness from God, so we take over the job ourselves. Unsure of a solution to our real or perceived failure, we posit a need for self-forgiveness to satisfy our lingering guilt or to supplement God’s insufficient forgiveness. Why might a believer fail to properly receive God’s forgiveness?

- Read Psalm 51:3-4 and Genesis 39:9. Against whom is our sin a direct offense? How serious is our sin?
- Read Isaiah 6:5. Describe God’s holiness. Describe his wrath against sin.
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Philippians 3:13-14; and 1 Timothy 1:15-16. Describe the scope and depth of God’s forgiveness.
- Read Mark 1:15 and Acts 20:21. Have you certainly entered into God’s forgiveness through saving repentance and faith?
- Read Zechariah 3:1 and Revelation 12:10. Are you responding properly to the obstacles which hinder assurance?
- What have you learned today about God’s true nature, your nature, and the extent of salvation?

Wednesday— The person who says, “I just can’t forgive myself,” may not see or be willing to acknowledge the depth of his depravity. The expression “I can’t forgive myself” often means “I still can’t believe I did that!” Interestingly, contrary to conventional wisdom, such thinking is not an evidence of “low self-esteem.” It’s actually high self-esteem, a form of pride in which we think that we’re incapable of such evil deeds. Inability to forgive oneself often expresses an underlying problem of self-righteousness and a lack of realistic self-knowledge.

- How does Jeremiah 17:9 describe the depth and extent of your depravity?
- How does Romans 3:9-18 describe the depth and extent of your depravity?
- How does 1 Corinthians 10:6-12 describe the depth and extent of your depravity?

Thursday—The person who says, “I just can’t forgive myself,” may be venting his regrets for failing to achieve a certain cherished desire. In essence he says: “I squandered the opportunity to get something I craved; I threw it all away!

- Read 1 John 2:15-16. What are we not to “crave”?
- Read 2 Corinthians 5:9,15. What are we supposed to “crave”?
- What do you crave?

Friday—The person who says, “I just can’t forgive myself,” may be trying to establish his own standards of righteousness. In this case the expression “I can’t forgive myself” is equivalent to saying, “I haven’t lived up to my own or others’ standards.” Such a person has proudly erected his own law, but the Bible tells us that God is the only one we must please; that His law must be our sole standard of self-measurement.

- Read Philippians 3:1-11. List all of the ways those who are of the “true circumcision” (v. 3) are contrasted with “dogs, evil workers, false circumcision” (v. 2, 4).
In v. 5-6 Paul catalogued the things which he formerly viewed as “gain” (v. 7), fleshly things he “put confidence in” (v. 3). What were they? What sorts of things might be on a list of religious accomplishments contemporary Americans trust in?
- What does it mean that Paul “counted them as loss **for the sake of** Christ”?
What does it mean that Paul “counted them as rubbish **so that I may gain** Christ”?
- According to v. 9, one may have **either** “a righteousness of one’s own, derived from the Law” **or** “_____”. Only the latter “gains Christ” (v. 8). The former “puts confidence in the _____” (v. 3).
- Whose forgiveness do we need?

Saturday—We need **God’s** forgiveness—not our own (we’ve sinned against him, not against ourselves)! Thankfully, we can have God’s complete and final forgiveness. How do the following verses describe the forgiveness God offers us?

- Psalm 103:12
- Isaiah 1:18
- Isaiah 38:17
- Isaiah 43:25
- Micah 7:19

Is “self-forgiveness” merely an imprecise, harmless, neutral notion? No! Any thinking which clouds God’s forgiveness is never harmless. May God enable us to correct such error and lovingly and faithfully minister the rich grace of God to those who are guilty and struggling!

† Adapted from Robert Jones’ minibook, *Forgiveness: “I Just Can’t Forgive Myself!”*