

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of **DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

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

Questions for Reflection

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Read Galatians 2:4-5. Paul is telling about a past event (which did not occur in Galatia; v. 4-5a), and then he says that he did not yield **to them** (there, back then) **so that the truth of the gospel would remain now, for the Galatians**. What happens if ever we yielded on the content of the gospel?
- Who has been influenced by the "health & wealth"/prosperity gospel? Tell us about your experience. How did you first encounter it? Did it attract you or repulse you—and why? Why did you leave it?

In what sense is the "health & wealth gospel" **cruel** toward those who suffer?

- How have you seen C.S. Lewis' observation to be true in your life: "*God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.*" ?

Tell us about an area of growth that you think you would not have experienced were it not for pain.

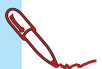
- In what contexts (home, work, neighborhood, etc.) do you most feel pressured to fudge on absolute truth?
- What steps can you take **individually** to resist these threats to your Christian faith?

Application-Challenge

What can we as a **church family** do to support you in that?

- Don't run away from painful experiences. Instead, hold on to God's promise that all things work for the good of those who love him. Let God use your suffering make you more like Christ.
- Explore your epistemology; how did you come to believe what you do? Do you determine truth, or does God? Examine your understanding of the gospel and make sure that it's the one found in Scripture.
- If you've not done so, place your trust in Christ as Savior today. If you check the box labeled "*Trusting Jesus as Savior*" on the CONNECT card, someone will follow up with you this week.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

It's a pleasure to get to join you again as we complete our series celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. I hope that rediscovering these central tenets of the Christian faith has been as meaningful for you as it has been for me. Today we are going to stop looking back at the history of the Reformation and begin looking forward, to its future. Anna and I recently took the plunge into home ownership. Submitting and re-submitting documents, it seemed like the process would never end. But two weeks ago we walked into our home for the first time... finally, we were done. For about five minutes. I won't bore you with details, but suffice it to say that since then we have built up some serious sweat equity. At one point I remember thinking, "Surely everything is finished." In the same way, the Protestant Church in the 21st century has come a long way. So much has been done. Surely the Reformation must be finished. Not so fast... Yes we have come a long way and I truly believe that the church more closely resembles God's design now more than it did 500 years ago, but we aren't done. I think when we evaluate the growth and change of the church, it's analogous to the growth and change we experience in our faith journeys. Ten years ago I was a lost college student, bound by many sins. Today, I'm a pastor—bound by fewer! By the grace of God I've come a long way—and praise the Lord that he's still changing me (Phil. 1:6; 1 John 3:1-3). None of us are finished in the process of becoming who God created us to be, and neither is the church. So where do we need to continue the reformation today?

[1] We must combat the rise of the "health and wealth," or "prosperity gospel". Without over-generalizing, those who teach this, pair your faith and obedience to material blessings from God. The message of the prosperity gospel is attractive; God wants me to have a comfortable, pleasurable life. Who wouldn't want that? Almost 2 out of 3 Christians believe that God's desire for them is to prosper and nearly 1 in 5 evangelical Christians openly identify with the health and wealth movement. But this teaching is in direct conflict with scripture (1 Tim. 6:6-10). Jesus was born poor, lived poor, and died poor. Jesus warned those who wish to follow Him that they are entering a life of poverty (Luke 9:23-25). Not only is it unbiblical, the prosperity gospel overlooks one of God's greatest instruments of change and growth in our lives: pain. C.S. Lewis put it well: *"Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."* Paul teaches this 2 Cor. 12:7-10). Or consider Job's painful journey; at the end of it all, he knew God more intimately than ever before. Physical, emotional, and spiritual pain are not speed bumps on the way to prosperity. They are meaningful moments that God uses to transform us. Finally, we need to stand against the prosperity gospel because it takes advantage of marginalized communities. When the church teaches people that God will only bless them if they give more money, we might as well be back in the 1500's selling indulgences.

[2] The other area of continuing reformation to highlight today is the study of knowledge (called "epistemology"). How do we determine what is true. The concept of truth is under attack. The prevailing concept that what's true for me isn't necessarily true for you. We have a difficult time discerning truth from opinion and feeling from fact. Conversations are dominated by, "I feel," instead of, "I think." But instead of asking how you determine what is true, the first step is to ask who determines what is true. God as "perfect in knowledge," (Job 37:16), and never lies (Titus 1:2). So who decides what is true, you or God? The answer to that question has huge implications on your life and society as a whole. The debates on gender, sexuality, abortion, etc. are questions of epistemology. But before we ever get to issues of gender, marriage, and sexuality, we have to settle the issue of the gospel itself. In John 14:6 Jesus—without any qualifiers—says that no one comes to God except through him. We have reached a point in our culture where this statement is widely considered intolerant, narrow minded, and disrespectful. But when we affirm this, we don't claim to be more enlightened or moral than anyone else, but only that God is our authority. We cannot soften it to "Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life for me." Actually it is the opposite of being narrow minded; no matter what you've done, you can have a relationship with God. All that it requires is coming to Jesus. When we change this statement to say that Jesus is the path to God for me, or Jesus is the way, the truth, and life for me. We aren't making His claim more attractive. We are weakening and undermining it. When we give in to the relativistic, pluralistic, and universalistic impulses of today's culture and allow the almighty God to become nothing more than one of several options on a menu, we are failing God, and we are failing our neighbors.

The 21st century church faces many challenges, but the prosperity gospel and the fight for objective truth are two of the most vital areas in which the church must return to biblical truth.

Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

If the reformation—the “reboot” of the church—is to continue, we have to know what the Bible (remember: “sola Scriptura”!) says the church is, and what it’s supposed to do. So, what IS the church? An institution? A club or voluntary association? It just might be more than most of us realize! In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul referred to the church as “the household of God”, “the assembly of the Living God”, and “the pillar and support of the truth”.

Monday—Key Truth: The true church is God’s redeemed people. It belongs to God.

- Read Matthew 16:18. **Whose** church is the church?
How do you typically feel about things that are yours? How do you think God feels about his church?
- Acts 20:28 says: “...God purchased the church with His own blood.”
How do you typically feel about things that cost you dearly? So, how do you think God feels about his church?
- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says: “**Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man corrupts the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.**”
English does not distinguish second-person **singular** from second-person **plural** (“you” vs. “you all”), but Greek does, so I’ve clarified them for you below. Let’s dig deeply into this rich passage.
⇒ “**Do you (plural) not know that you (plural) are a temple of God...**” What does Paul say that the church in Corinth is?
⇒ “...and that the Spirit of God dwells in **you (plural)**?” Believers are God’s temple. Who dwells in them?
⇒ “... **If any man (singular) corrupts the temple of God, God will destroy him (singular)**...” Who protects the church?
But what does it mean to “corrupt” the church (“the temple of God”)?! Read 1 Corinthians 1:11-13 & 3:3-7 to find out!

Tuesday—Key Truth: The church as we know it on Earth is a mixture of “wheat and weeds”—true believers and lost people.

- Read Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43. Complete the following chart:

The sower (v. 24, 37) is...
The field (v. 24, 38) is...
The good seed (v. 27, 38) are...
The bad seed (v. 25-27, 38) are...
The enemy who mixes unbelievers among believers (v. 25, 39) is...
When did the difference between the wheat and the weeds become evident (v. 26)?
When will the weeds be removed from the wheat (v. 28-30, 39)?
After the weeds have been removed, how will the church appear (v. 43)?
Do you know for certain that you’re “wheat”? How can you know?

Wednesday—Key Truth: The entire Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—are committed to the church.

- Read Ephesians 1:3-5. **When** did the Father choose us (v. 4)? What does v. 5 call this act of choosing?
- Read Ephesians 4:12 and 5:25. **Whose body** is the church? How did Christ make us his body?
- Read 1 Corinthians 12:13. **Who** places us into the body of Christ? What does John 3:6-8 call this act?
- Read 1 Peter 1:1-2. Show how each member of the Trinity is intimately involved in the origin and operation of the church.

Thursday—Key Truth: The church is the “pillar and support” of God’s truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

- Look up “pillar” in a standard English dictionary (such as dictionary.com). What is a pillar? What function does it accomplish? Look up “support” in the dictionary. What does a “support” do? What happens when something is unsupported?
- Wait! Isn’t God’s Word powerful (Hebrews 4:12)?! Does truth **really need** to be supported? (Before you answer, go to YouTube and watch: “Victoria Osteen: Worship for YOURSELF!”)
- What role should pastors play in “supporting the truth”? What role should church members play in supporting the truth?
- Skim Revelation 2-3 and place a “✓” next to the names of the churches which did a good job “supporting the truth” and a “✗” next to those which failed to support the truth: ☐ Ephesus (2:1-7), ☐ Smyrna (2:8-11), ☐ Pergamum (2:12-17), ☐ Thyatira (2:18-29), ☐ Sardis (3:1-6), ☐ Philadelphia (3:7-13), ☐ Laodicea (3:14-22).
- **How many** of the seven churches of Revelation still exist today? So, **how important is it** that the truth be supported?

Friday—Key Truth: The church “supports the truth” by **proclaiming** it and by **protecting** it.

- Read Acts 13:1-2. **Who** initiates the proclamation of the truth?
Read Ephesians 4:11-16. In v. 11, **who** proclaims the truth? In v. 15-16 **who** proclaims the truth?
- According to Titus 3:9-11, **who** protects the truth? (Hint: To whom was “Titus” written—to a pastor or to church members?)
According to Romans 16:17, **who** protects the truth? (Hint: To whom was Romans written—to a pastor or to church members?)
- According to 2 Timothy 2:15-26, **how** do we protect the truth?

Saturday—Key Truth: The purposes of the church are worship, evangelism, discipleship, and caring for one-another.

- Read John 4:23-24. What do you learn about worship?
Read Philippians 3:1-3. What do you learn about worship?
Compare Colossians 3:16-17 to Ephesians 5:18-21. What do you learn about worship?
- Read Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:18-20. Although these originally were spoken to the Apostles only, what hints do we see in them which prove that they are for all believers to obey?
- What is commanded in Romans 14:19? How do you think disciples are “built up”?
Read Acts 2:41-47. What were all the things listed here which built new believers up in their faith?
- Read Acts 4:32-35. How do we see believers caring for one another in this passage?
According to Romans 12:10, specifically what must you do to build up other believers?
According to Romans 14:19, specifically what must you do to build up other believers?
According to Romans 15:7, specifically what must you do to build up other believers?
According to Ephesians 4:2, specifically what must you do to build up other believers?
According to Ephesians 5:21, specifically what must you do to build up other believers?
According to Philippians 2:13, specifically what must you do to build up other believers?
According to Colossians 3:13, specifically what must you do to build up other believers?
According to 1 Thessalonians 5:13, specifically what must you do to build up other believers?