


Trusting the Author of Your Story A Testimony of God's Grace

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TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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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

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 and Discussion

- Rick's life divided naturally according to the three families in which God placed him.
What are the natural divisions of **your** life?
Which one(s) would you be happy to repeat? To which ones do you say, "*Never again!*"?
What do you think was the **key lesson** God taught you in each portion of your life?
Happy or hard, which **portion** of your life do you think was **most profitable**—and **why**?
- What **one experience** would you say has defined and shaped you the most?
How do you see God's mercy and grace in that experience?
How have you used those experiences to honor God and help others?
- What one thing do you think **you** could **do** to make the **next** portion of your life more profitable?
Are you ready to make that investment in your future? Why or why not?
How can **we** help you take that step?

Dissatisfied with the "script" of your life?

Write to:

BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

Application-Challenge

- **Sign up now** for the **PointMan Men's Retreat**, November 20-22.
 - Join a men's discussion group of Rick Thomas' book, **Change Me**.
- For either of these opportunities, visit: **tcc.org**, keyword: **PointMan**

Sermon Summary

My life story divides into three families, and I'd like to testify to God's grace in my life by telling you about my three families in sequential order. I'm sixty now, and those families divide my life into thirds.

[1] I was born into a dysfunctional family with an alcoholic father. My parents married when Mom was 15 and Dad was 18. By the time Mom was 22 they had five boys, of which I'm the fourth. A couple who didn't have a biblical template for marriage and family—all of a sudden had five boys to rear! Dad died when I was 19, and for two decades I lived in a traumatic, dysfunctional, dark, violent culture. Mom took us to church, but honestly, for my brothers and me it was just another avenue for acquiring marijuana. At age 15, I was arrested and spent five days in solitary confinement. It was a turning point, and one of the most merciful things that ever happened to me. My older brothers had modeled a path that led no where good: my oldest brother already was in prison and the second oldest soon joined him. Jail afforded me the opportunity not only to recognize the path my brothers were on, but also to realize that I was following them. Although I would not come to know God as Savior for another ten years, at that time I decided to clean up my life. My oldest two brothers later would be murdered. Their life choices, apparently innocuous at the time, led to these sad outcomes. (Brother number three joined the military at age 17, and thankfully that put him on a different path.)

[2] At age 19, I'd left home and gotten married—and my second family began. My wife and I were non-believers, yet somewhat moral. By age 25 we had a couple of children. I was working as a machinist at the time, and as I talked with my co-workers, I realized I was not a true Christian. This put me on a search for truth, and God in his mercy saved me and began putting me on a new path. I began reading the Bible, it made sense to me, and, like a mirror, it showed me myself. Soon we became involved in a little Baptist church in town. Within a year my wife and I moved to South Carolina so I could attend Bible College as preparation for going into ministry. Unfortunately, within a few years my wife divorced me for another man. As I sought answers for my situation, it became clear that they had no category for someone like me. (The dean of the college said, "If you'd broken your arm or something, we'd know what to do.") So I spent the next ten years of my life trying to figure out what was wrong with me and how to live in this new situation. This was a very dark and confusing time. I was angry because I thought that if I served God he would make my life smooth. But I learned the truth of Philippians 1:29, that "it has been granted to us not only to believe in Christ, but to suffer for his sake." Every Christian is given two gifts: salvation and suffering. But at the time I did not know that. God used my second family to help me develop a sound theology of suffering, of what it means to live in a fallen world. (My book, ***Suffering Well: How to Steward God's Most-Feared Blessing***, weaves together my story and Job's story, as it explores this gift of suffering.)

[3] At age 40 I began my third—and I hope final—stage of life. I married Lucia, and then God led me to earn a Masters in Biblical Counseling, into the pastorate, and now, since 2008, into this world-wide ministry that focuses on the dynamics of sanctification. I use the "gifts" of the dysfunctional family I was born into, and the confusion and pain of my second family, to help believers understand how God helps us grow and change. (My book, ***Change Me: The Ultimate Life-Change Handbook***, plus the thousands of free articles, podcasts and videos found at RickThomas.net, explain the process of change, from beginning to end.)

Throughout my life I've suffered both poorly and well, and I use the wisdom I've gained through my three families to equip others for growth and change, and to pursue God's path in this fallen world.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage.
We can use it to learn to trust God's sovereignty in our lives...

Monday—Study Exodus 3:7-11 & 4:10-12.

Tuesday—Study Acts 17:24-28.

Wednesday—Study Psalm 139:7-16.

Thursday—Study 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 & 4:5-10.

Friday—Study Genesis 37:13-14, 18-28 & 50:20.

Saturday—***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord with your church family,*** study **Genesis 2:16-17 & 3:1-9.**

Need blank copies for doing more "Five Question Bible Study"?
e-mail: Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]