



James 1:22-27 Unleashing the Family: Two Paths, One Purpose
October, 27, 2013

A few weeks ago, our Bishop refreshed the vision of CRCC. Reviewing the vision of our church is beneficial because it clarifies what God wants to do through us.

- Our vision is about **discipleship**. This has to be restated over and over again due to the difficulty of the task.
- We believe God is showing us “old” methods (which should always have been current) to do his work.
- If we keep Christ as our head, His word as our commands, and His Spirit as our helper, many people will be touched with the Gospel.

Our vision scriptures:

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."(Mat 9:35-38 ESV)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."(Mat 28:18-20 ESV)

In these passages we see Christ, proclaiming the Gospel (reaching), teaching the things of God (teaching) and healing the sick and setting them free from bondage (releasing). In summary, this is the discipleship process. Therefore, we ask all covenant members to:

- Worship as a family and invite others (reaching)
- Be active in care group (teaching)
- Serve the church, the community and the world (releasing)

Friends, our focus today is on the **releasing** part of the triangle. It is here that we find ourselves modeling Christ by serving others and proclaiming the Gospel. CRCC is a church that believes that discipleship is incomplete without serving others and proclaiming the Gospel. These two “paths” of good work (serving others and proclaiming the Gospel) are Kingdom oriented and fruits of the disciple.

It is important for us to remember, though, that both paths are important and required. As a strong, Bible believing, sola scriptura, Jesus is enough church, there is no need to mention this! We can see it in Scripture, hear it from Bishop and see it on our triangle. However, these two elements are so close to the heart of God that it cannot be overstated. It is very easy for the American Church to spend more time on one path than the other. (Guess which one? LOL!)

James 1:22 -27, ESV

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

Saints, my goal today is simple: to discuss why both paths (serving others AND proclaiming the Gospel) are essential and to encourage you to take your families and **GO!**

The Path of Serving Others

In context, our passage today is the third topic of which James writes. James is advising his readers that knowledge is useless without application. It is obedience to scripture that makes one godly.

- “I can tell you are a Christian; not because of what you tell me but because of what you do. . . “
- “You love God with all your heart and soul because I can ‘see’ it in your living.”

It is here that James gives us the first of two actions of a disciple of Christ: *“Visit orphans and widows in their affliction . . . “*

- The concern for widows and orphans was the current need of this particular church. However, James is describing the **“heart”** of a Christian. This “heart” extends to ALL who are in need.
- The desire to serve others comes from God’s heart and is found in his precepts and patterns throughout scripture.

“learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.” (Isaiah 1:17, ESV)

““When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:9–10, ESV)

- The desire to serve others comes from a place of **compassion** in our Lord. So much so that he equated their treatment with his own:

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe

you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" (Matthew 25:35–40, ESV)

- The path of serving others should be **purposeful** and intentional vs. rushed and haphazard.
- **However** . . . if a Christian ONLY walks this path negative results will follow:
 - This Christian ends up looking like the **world**. An unsaved person's good work is temporary. The motive is a love for humanity and the glory goes to the giver. However, a redeemed person's work is eternal and points others to a love of Christ! What a difference a motive makes!!
 - This Christian could unintentionally affirm sin!
 - This Christian violates the Great Commission – go make disciples, baptize, teach them . . .
 - This Christian violates the Great Commandment. People will die in their sins if they do not hear the Gospel. If we love the Lord our God, we will care for his people. If we love our neighbor like we love ourselves, we will do all we can to share a life giving message.

The Path of Proclaiming the Gospel

James provides the second action of a disciple of Christ: “. . . *to keep oneself unstained from the world.*”

- This call to be “unstained” is a calling for Christ's disciples to be different.
- This desire for us to be different, again, comes from a place of compassion by our Lord. His desire to save us from his wrath prompted him to send his Son who calls us to share this news.
- We are not to be **infected** by the world; rather we should be influencing the world.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”
(Matthew 5:14–16, ESV)

- We are different in how we walk, act, vote, educate, use our money, drive our cars, take care of our bodies, view authority figures, regard our employers, handle family drama, conduct our marriages and “yes,” **preach the Gospel!!!**
- Just like the other path, proclaiming the Gospel is purposeful and intentional.
- **However** . . . if a Christian ONLY walks this path negative results will follow:
 - This Christian will not reflect the life of Christ and his works.
 - This Christian will violate the Great Commandment. Not serving God's people is not loving God and not loving your neighbor as yourself.
 - This Christian has a faith that is **useless**. James explains this in chapter two of his letter:

“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (James 2:15–17, ESV)

To be clear . . . preaching the Gospel is the high call of every Christian. I cannot over emphasize how important this is. People will die without food but later die again without Christ. If placed on a scale the Gospel outweighs serving and charity by light years!! However, we are still called to do both.

Family, let's consider these paths and actually turn outward and DO THEM!

Both of these paths must be walked out. *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves,"* says James.

- This work is NOT to remain within the **church** walls. Serving others and teaching the Gospel within the church is a blessing and is needed. However, this work was never meant to stay within the church.
- This work is NOT to stay within the four walls of your **home**. Training and teaching at home is great. But without leaving your home reaching out will never take place.
- Many of you have already experienced the glory of serving and proclaiming the Gospel that was a result of family discipleship. A natural desire to serve others comes from consistent worship and study.

Turning **outward** and doing the hard work of serving and proclaiming the Gospel will help us grow as disciples. There are many ways but here are just a few:

Turning outward directly **teaches** your family

- YOUR disciples see you in action - *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master."* (Matthew 10:24, ESV)
- Someone once said, *"A student learns what his teacher knows, but a disciple becomes what his master is."* Oh, how true this is!
- Your family (especially children) will see the tangible results of community work and evangelism.

Turning outward shows your family the **eternal** value of our task.

- The very desire we have to serve others and proclaim the Gospel was given to us by Christ! What an honor to be used in this way.
- God has chosen us to express the value He places in mankind. What an honor to bring such a great message of peace!

Turning outward teaches your family **selflessness**

- The work we do is for God's glory alone.
- What better impression on our children than to see parents demonstrating selflessness.

Turning outward teaches your family the principle of **submission**

- Fathers, your family is submitted to your vision and leadership.
- Fathers, YOU are submitted to God by keeping his commands
- Our submission to the Lord by serving and proclaiming the Gospel stems from our confession of faith in Christ Jesus.
- We submit in the area of giving because all that we have is granted by the Lord! He tells us what to do with HIS resources! We are merely stewards!

Turning outward gives God a reason to **empower** your family

- What need do we have for "the anointing" of Acts chapter 1, if we aren't willing to serve?
- Ultimately, serving others is serving God!

In closing, I'd like to give you three Biblical examples of these paths being walked out from the home! No question, this is hard work. But by God's grace, we can do it!

Proclaiming the Gospel

"And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:29–31, ESV)

Serving Others

"Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them." (Acts 9:36–39, ESV)

Both—Proclaiming the Gospel & Serving Others

"At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God." (Acts 10:1–2, ESV)

Amen!