

## Method of Disciple Making (Pt II) – Personification

### 1. INTRO

- The recent arrest and charging of Catholic Cardinal George Pell for child sex abuse ... reminds us that the lives Christians live matters
- Understandably, the communities trust of Catholic Church and its leaders has been seriously undermined
- However, it's not just the Catholic Church that tragic incidents like this affect
- It affects the way the community perceives and responds to all Christians and Christian churches
- And rightly so
  - When those who are leaders ... those who have significant power and influence are guilty of gross immorality and abuse of power, people are right to not to trust in them, what they say, or what they stand for
- Pell (and others) have not only not only committed a grave crime against vulnerable victims ... in doing so they have exposed themselves as great hypocrites
  - Every time they
    - preach the gospel
    - speak about God's love and our response to love others
    - call people to repentance
  - They are calling people to do the very thing they should done have and didn't do
- Likewise, the tragic massacre in Christchurch on Friday
  - While some will see this as terror attack based on fear and racism
  - Many will simply conclude that religion is to blame
  - They'll say religion is so polarising, that it leads to violence as people seek to promote or destroy that particular ideology ... whatever it is
- McCrindle Research on Australian views on religion and spirituality back this up
- When they asked the
  - 'behaviours are most likely to prevent 'Non-Christians' who are 'open to change' from exploring Christianity'
    - 57% - Child sex abuse
    - 47% - Hypocrisy
    - 45% - Religious wars
    - 43% - Judging others

- Clearly, the way Christians live in this world and in their communities' matter when it comes to living out the great commission and making disciples
- The cause of the gospel is done a great disservice ... when Christians fail to live lives that reflect the truths, they / or their faith proclaims
  
- This morning as we continue in our series on Discipleship, I want us to spend some more time thinking through the method of discipleship
- Two weeks ago, we looked at the Desire of Discipleship
  - That is ... **why** would I as a follower of Jesus want to actively engage in the mission of God and be a disciple making disciple?
    - Not only does Jesus command us
    - But the Bible also gives us a vision of what people are being saved from and to
    - From eternal darkness and death to eternal light and life
- Last week we started to consider the 'how' of disciple-making
  - People and Proclamation ... that is, God works through ordinary Christians sharing the gospel
- This week I want us to see that when it comes to the method of making disciples ... it's also about personification
  - That is, Christian's personifying Christ
  - When it comes to making disciples ... whether believers or unbelievers ... the way you live matters

## PRAY

### 2. GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION

- To help us with this this morning I want to look at Galatians 2
- But before we get to that, let me give you some background
- Acts 10-11 records for us a ground-breaking moment in the history of the church
- It was the moment that Peter and the rest of the disciples came to understand that God's plan to save people into eternal life included Gentiles ... non-Jews
- What happened was Peter had a vision of a large sheet being lowered from heaven with all types of food on it
  - God spoke to Peter and told him to get up and eat it
  - Peter initially refused because some of it was considered ritually unclean by Peter and the Jews

- But God spoke and said "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."<sup>1</sup>
- Immediately Peter was summoned to the house of a man named Cornelius ... a Roman Centurion ... and therefore a Gentile
  - God had been preparing his heart to hear and believe the good news about Jesus
- Now as a Jew, Peter had been raised to think of Gentiles as spiritually 'unclean' ... which meant he was not even to eat with them
  - But the vision with the food had taught Peter that he "should not call any man impure or unclean."<sup>2</sup>
  - In other words, ... he realised that Jesus alone makes us clean and acceptable and presentable to God
  - And so as a result, he enters into the house of Cornelius, shares the gospel with him and eats with him and his household
- A number of years after Peter had visited Cornelius and he'd realised that God has also called Gentiles into eternal life ... Peter ended up in the Antioch where Paul was teaching and preaching and helping Barnabas to run the church there
- Initially, the lesson Peter had learnt about the inclusion of the Gentiles in the KOG ... meant that Peter was willing to mingle and eat with Gentiles
- But when some Jewish Christian's arrived from Jerusalem ... Peter's behaviour changed
- Read with me Galatians 2:11ff
  - *<sup>11</sup> When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. <sup>12</sup> Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. <sup>13</sup> The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.*
- Paul describes these Jewish Christians as the circumcision group
  - We know **why** they were called this from Acts 15 ... where we read they were teaching that to be Christian you needed to continue to practice Jewish rituals and customs such as circumcision and refraining from certain foods

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 10:15

<sup>2</sup> Acts 10:28

- And when they arrived ... Peter withdrew from eating with the Gentile Christians to sit with his Jewish buddies
  - He was being a hypocrite ... and that's what Paul accuses him of in v13
  - Previously, he'd been happy to eat with Gentiles because he knew the 'Gentiles had been made clean by faith' and that no-one was 'unclean' in Christ
  - But when the Jewish Christians turn up ... he distances himself from the Gentiles
- And his hypocrisy is infectious ... because it causes others to follow suit, including Barnabas
  
- Why? What caused his hypocrisy?
- It's not because he changed his convictions
  - He knew the food laws were only Jewish customs
  - It wasn't because he did a back flip on his beliefs
- We see in v12 ... it was because he was **afraid** of the circumcision group
  - He was worried about what they would think
  - He still believed the gospel ... but he was failing to practice it ... he was failing to live it out
  
- The consequences of Peter's actions were huge
- Firstly, it implicitly said to both Jewish and Gentile Christians ... that ritual, custom and good works do matter when it comes to salvation
  - By choosing to eat with the circumcision group ... Peter was implicitly saying ... "these guys are right"
  - Theologically, that was huge!
  - And it resulted in Paul going to Jerusalem to have it out with the church leaders there to clarify the issue
  
- Secondly, it completely undermined the unity in Christ the believers should have had
  - Instead Peter's actions created two camps ... an us and a them
  - Gentile believers on one side ... Jewish believers on the other side
  - He caused a racial divide
- Peter was allowing cultural differences to become more important than gospel unity
  
- Now Paul quite rightly confronts Peter over this in v14-16
- And when he does, he doesn't simply say
  - "Peter, disunity is wrong"

- "Peter, racism is against God's will."
- Those things are true, of course
- But instead Paul says in v14
  - "Peter ... you're not acting in line with the truth of the gospel"
- When we're talking about the gospel ... we're talking about the good news of Jesus ...
- The phrase 'acting in line' in the original language means 'to walk in a straight line'
- Literally, he is saying that Peter and his companions are not walking straight 'in line' with the truth of the gospel
- For Paul ... the truth of the gospel is not just a set of doctrines by which you 'are saved' ... but something that guides the way Christians live and act in every area of life
- As Paul says in Phil 1:27
  - *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*
- In other words, the gospel ought to shape every aspect of your life
- And so rather than just command Peter to change his behaviour ... he applies the gospel to Peter's behaviour
- He shows that his actions are in effect
  - a failure to believe the gospel deep down
  - a failure to live out the implications of the gospel in his life
- And so, Paul doesn't state simply
  - "Stop causing division amongst your brothers"
  - "Stop being a racist"
- He confronts Peter's practice of exclusivity by reminding him of the gospel
- And so he says in v15-16
  - *We know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*
- In other words, ...
  - "Peter ... God didn't have fellowship with you based on your religious practices, culture or race"
  - "You know all those things had nothing to do with it"

- "So, don't be a hypocrite and live in way that's not in line with what you believe and know to be true"
- Peter, of course, knew the gospel ... but he wasn't walking "in line" with the gospel
- His actions weren't consistent with the gospel he knew and believed
- Rather than just focus on Peter's behaviour ... Paul instead focused on Peter's heart

### 3. GOSPEL MATURITY

- Now what's this got to do with discipleship ... and in particular, the '**how**' of discipling?
- Lots!
- Firstly, if you're not a Christian here this morning ... what it shows is that
  - Christianity it not all about rules and regulations
  - Christians don't strive to live in a particular way in order to be right with God ... they strive to live a certain way because of what God has done for them in the gospel ... in Jesus and his death and resurrection
- However, if you're here this morning and you're a Christian ... probably the key thing it teaches is how you apply the word of God to one another as you get on with the business of making disciples
- Because if we're saying that the way Christians live matters ... then the implication is those who are following Jesus ought to be maturing in their faith and growing to be more and more like Jesus
- And so as each body of believers seeks to honour God, honour Jesus, honour the gospel ... this will inevitably involve discipling others to grow and mature as disciples of Christ
- However, when you and I seek to do that ... it can be very tempting ... to resort to bringing about that transformation in others by
  - Command
  - Fear
  - Guilt
- **Command**
- What do I mean by command?
- This is the Nike approach where we say Just Do It

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- We do it with our kids ... when we say ... "Just do it – Why? - Because I said so"
  - We can do this with the Bible too
    - It's not as crass as 'Just do it' ... but the sentiment is the same
    - "The Bible says XX ... so that's what you need to do"
    - This not to say we ignore the Bible's commands ... we don't!
    - But to merely quote a command and call for obedience ... fails to address the person's heart
  - **Fear**
  - We do the same when we try and drive transformation by fear
    - When I was at school you behaved in a certain way out of fear of getting the cane
    - We sometimes get kids to behave in certain ways by fear
      - Send them to the naughty corner
      - Remove privileges
    - And we drive transformation out of fear of the consequences
  - Again ... it's right to fear the eternal consequences of rejecting God
    - But when it comes to helping another Christian grow as a disciple ... fear of consequences fails to address the persons heart
  - **Guilt**
  - The other way we can try, and drive behaviour change is through guilt
  - We do this with kids too ...
    - "If you really love mummy ... then you'll do it"
    - "I work so hard for you ... the least you could do is give me some respect"
  - We can do the same when we're discipling others
    - "If you're fair dinkum about following Jesus, then you'll do this"
    - "It really disappoints me when you keep sinning like that"
  - Discipling others to grow in Christ-like-ness and godliness by command, fear or guilt is not helpful ...
    - because those things will only manipulate the emotions and bend the will
    - but they're unlikely to have lasting change because they don't change the heart
  - However, a better way to disciple others ...
    - Whether your own children, kids in youth group or kids' church,
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- Whether your discipling someone 1:1, or encouraging fellow members or your GG
  - Is to help them ...
    - Move the right
    - Grow in Christlikeness
    - Mature as a Christian
      - In response to the gospel
      - Because the gospel that will change their heart and mind and will
      - And that's the thing that will bring lasting change and transformation
  - So for example...
  - **Love one another**
  - The most basic tenet of the Christian faith ... is to love one another
    - Jesus says in the gospels ... love your neighbour
    - He not only calls on his followers to love each other ... but to love your enemies and pray for them!
  - Virtually every command, exhortation, plea and warning in the Bible that doesn't relate to God ... is an expression of how we are to love one another
    - Kindness, goodness, self-control, patience and gentleness
    - Bearing with one another, submitting to one another, providing hospitality, caring for the poor, outcast and widow, honouring your parents ... are all expressions of how we love others
  - However, all of that is grounded in the gospel
    - For as Jesus says in John 13:34 – *Love one another. As I have loved you*
    - The love we show others flows out of the ultimate love Jesus showed us at cross
  - So, when we fail to show kindness or patience or respect for parents
  - When we are harsh in our words, lash out in anger, put down others ... we're not acting in line with the gospel as Paul would say
  - We're not allowing the gospel to impact our hearts to the point where it drives us to love others
  - **Pornography**
  - What about pornography?
  - Those of you struggling with pornography ... you know it's wrong, you know you need to stop it
    - Your spouse, or parent or friend could just say "just stop doing it, it's a sin"
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- They could cite Jesus words "Gouge out your eye and throw it away, better to enter eternity with one eye, than two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell"
  - That's okay and true and better than nothing
  - But a better way is to show how it's not living in line with the gospel
    - To show that consuming porn is often an attempt to feel loved, or feel satisfied or good about yourself
    - But the reality is porn is enslaving ...
      - it's a false love that never delivers or satisfies ...
      - and only makes you feel awful about yourself afterwards
  - But in God,
    - Christians experience true love because it was demonstrated through Christ giving up his life for us
    - Christians experience full satisfaction because everything we ever need is found in knowing God through Christ
    - Christians know that in Christ they've been set free from the power and slavery of sin
  - **Forgiveness**
  - What about strained relationships
    - Someone has said something or done something or mis-interpreted something ... it causes tension and places strain on a relationship
      - Parents – Children
      - Spouse
      - People at church or work
  - What do we tend to say to ppl in those situations?
    - "You need to say sorry"
    - "You need to forgive them"
    - "You need let it go"
  - Better to urge them to live in line with the gospel
    - To remind them of how much God has forgiven us
    - To rejoice in the reconciliation God initiated to restore relationship with us
  - In other words, help them to see the depth of the gospel so their hearts are transformed ... which leads to transformed living
  
  - If you and I are going to disciple one another ...
  - If our goal is to see people become mature in Christ ... that requires a lifetime of transformation
  - The only way we can help one another with that
    - Is not by command or guilt or fear
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- But helping them to see the richness and depth of the gospel ... so they might live in line with it

#### 4. GOSPEL WITNESS

- Now not only is living in line with the gospel crucial to making disciples of those are already believers ... but also for those who are not yet followers of Jesus
- Jesus commanded his followers to go and make disciples
- Christians are to do that by proclaiming the good news of Jesus
- However, that goods news message is dishonoured, rejected, and ignored by people because of the immorality, hypocrisy, self-righteousness and judgmentalism of those who proclaim it
- **Illustration - '100 most influential people in the world'**
- Michael Hart wrote a book called '100 most influential people in the world'
- In his opinion, the most influential person was
  - #1 Mohammad
  - #2 Isaac Newton (British mathematician and scientist)
  - #3 Jesus
  - "if Jesus followers actually did what Jesus taught them ... then he would have been #1" <sup>3</sup>
- Jesus said Matthew 5:16
  - *"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven"*
- Without a doubt, the witness of Christians / the way Christians live their lives in the community shapes and influence the way the gospel is received or rejected
- Authentic Christian living ... doesn't make people into believers ... but it does give credibility to the gospel
- Again, McCrindle research backs this up
- The top attractors to religion and spirituality
  - 16% seeing people live out a genuine faith
  - 12% stories or testimonies from people who have changed due to faith
- You see friends ... how you live matters

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<sup>3</sup> Quote unconfirmed

- When it comes to making disciples ... living in line with the gospel matters
  
- This is true for those who are Christian and non-Christian
  - Children are just as turned off by hypocritical parents as non-believing workers by their hypocritical colleague
- Or to frame it more positively
  - The life and witness of a believer has just as much influence on the young Christian they are discipling as it does on the non-Christian neighbour they are witnessing by the front fence
  
- If you and I are going to be effective disciple making disciples ... we need to allow the gospel to shape our life so that we might personify Christ
- The Christian life is not just one of proclaiming the gospel ... it's also living in line with the gospel
- As you do that ... you will model Christlike faith to others
  - So that unbelievers will
    - see your good deeds
    - appreciate the authenticity of your faith
      - and that gives credibility to the message you proclaim
- But as model Christlike faith to those you are discipling ...
  - They will see what it means to live in line with the gospel
  - And so not only will you have taught them how ... you will have shown them also

## **PRAY**