

The Three C's -- The Great Commandment

**Read Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34,
Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18**

What is your overarching passion in missions? Is it to experience the sights, smells and sounds of a new culture, to get another stamp in the passport, or to interact with people of another world religion?

Very simply, as believers, our purpose in going across the street or across the globe is to love God and to love others, or to put it another way, to know God and to make Him known.

John Piper is noted as saying in his famous book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, that our fuel and passion for missions should be driven by God's fuel and passion for missions, which is His own glory. How then is it that we make His glory our primary focus? Jesus Himself says that we must first love God.

Love God

We love God by getting to know Him as supreme. Take time to study His attributes: creator (Genesis 1-2), covenant-keeping (Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22), deliverer (Exodus 14), holy (Revelation 4:8-11), omnipotent (Jeremiah 32:17, 18, 26, 27), love (1 John 4:7-10), sovereign (1 Chronicles 29:11-13), Father (Romans 8:15-17).

Revisit the Gospel in your life. Take time to recount how God has brought you from death to life, darkness to light, and enemies to sons. Write out your testimony using elements of the Gospel to share with others how God has brought you into His redemptive story.

Study His Word and pray. God has given us His Word in order that we might know Him, and He has given us access to Him through prayer. Spend time each day deepening that relationship with Him.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How infused is the Gospel in my life?
- Am I growing in my knowledge and love for God daily?
- What passions do I need to realign in order to make God first?

As we get to know and love God more intimately, we in turn see others differently and learn to love them with a love that comes from God alone.

Love Others

In each of the opening passages, there is a vertical component, but also a horizontal aspect. The Pharisees wanted to trip Jesus up to see how well He knew and fulfilled the law.

Jesus very simply responded that in order to keep the law perfectly, we must love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. We know that as sinners we fail at this daily, but as those who have been redeemed, God has loved us in order that we might love Him. By loving Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, we can love others.

1 John 3:16 says, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives from the brothers.” Because of the rich love that God has poured out on us as His children, we must exhibit this same sort of love in loving others.

Consider how you view people and relationships. Do you see the people around you at work, school or the coffee shop as people, or do you see them as those who have been created in the image of God? Do you take time to consider the lostness that is around you every day?

Allow the Gospel to transform the way that you tangibly love others. Don't see people and relationships as another thing to get done in the list of tasks throughout the day. Pray that as your love for God deepens, your love for others might be stretched to display, demonstrate and declare the Gospel.

The Three C's -- The Great Commission

Read Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16

How many missions emphasis weekends have you been to or missions-focused sermons have you listened to where Matthew 28:18-20 has been the focal passage? This is not a bad thing, but we must not limit the scope of how this passage is to be rightly applied.

The Great Commission is more than just reaching those with the Gospel who have yet to hear. It's also teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded. Sharing the Gospel and seeing people come to faith in Christ is only the beginning; we must then teach, train and equip them to live as disciples of Christ.

What is a disciple? A disciple is one who denies self, takes up His cross and follows after Christ. As we follow the Great Commandment in loving God more deeply, we will follow Him more passionately.

As believers in Christ, we should always have someone pouring into us and we should always be pouring into others. Look at how Jesus did it – He had the crowds who followed Him (Mark 8:2), He had the seventy (Luke 10:1), He had the twelve (Matthew 10:2), the three (Matthew 17:1-13) and He had the one (John 13:23).

We should in turn have those different spheres of influence and impact in our own lives. We will have our crowd (i.e., workplace, university campus) – those whom we know from a distance. The seventy are those whom we know somewhat closer (division within work, particular class), the twelve even closer (extended family, sorority sisters, fraternity brothers), the three still even closer (our family), and then the one closest person (wife, child, close friend).

Consider in this section: is Christ Lord of your life and are you following Him more closely every day? Are you investing in each of the levels of disciple making? Are you fulfilling the Great Commission – not just reaching, but teaching to observe?

The Three C's -- The Great Compassion

Read Luke 19:41-44, Matthew 9:35-37 and Luke 7:11-13

You would not think that such urban centers such as New York City with some 20-22 million people would have such an epidemic, but they do. Amidst all of the noise, busyness and fast-paced lifestyle, it's a problem. What is it? Loneliness.

It's the ebb and flow of life – get up, go to work, come home, go to bed, get up and do it all over again. Though this mantra of life happens amongst some of the most influential people on the planet, the businessman working on Wall Street or the nanny walking through the park faces loneliness.

So how does this have anything to do with what is termed The Great Compassion? It has everything to do with it, because it informs how we view people.

Jesus in these focal passages weeps over the city. Do we weep over the cities in which we live? Does our heart break for lost people? Going back to what we looked at in the Great Commandment, has our love for people been so revolutionized that we can no longer sit still? Do we see people as Jesus saw them, like sheep without a shepherd and lost in need of a Savior?

Jesus throughout His ministry healed many that I would term 'the unseen.' They were not the prestigious, but merely the ordinary – a widow's son, a woman with an issue of bleeding, the blind beggar ... and the list goes on and on. Opportunities are all around us to put the Gospel on display if we would see them and act.

Missions is not just a way of doing, but more so a way of being. We must not merely see it as going on trips, but as actually living missionally. Look for ways to live out the Gospel intentionally with the goal of transforming lives through the power of the Gospel. If you aren't doing it now in your own city, you can't expect to live a missional lifestyle in a foreign context.

Gospel - Explained

- **The Gospel (Good News) Begins With God** - Before time and before anything was made, God existed. He has always been and always will be. He is also the beginning of all things. From the outer expanse of the universe to the smallest atomic particles, everything is the work of God alone. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of all things. He alone is worthy of the praise from all of creation. (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 19:1; Isaiah 40:28, 43:15; Revelation 4:11)
- **God is Perfect in Character and in All His Ways** - Every aspect of His character and actions are maximally perfect. His greatness, goodness, majesty, faithfulness, justice, love, might, grace, mercy, glory, etc. are pure and without any mixture of flaw. He is holy, which makes Him completely unique and separate from His creation. God never changes. He is the same today, yesterday and forever. (Psalm 48:1, 145:3; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 36:5, 86:15, 89:14, 145:9; Lamentations 3:22; Malachi 3:6; Revelation 4:8; 1 Timothy 6:15-16)
- **God Creates Man for Himself Out of Love** - God took great delight in creating man for Himself. Created in His own image, we were made to reflect His character and glory. We were made to worship Him forever and to find our fullest joy in knowing, loving and serving Him. (Psalm 8; Genesis 1:27; Matthew 4:10, 22:37-38; Colossians 1:16)
- **Man Rebels** - Soon after God created Adam and Eve (the first man and woman), they willfully chose to rebel against God. This rebellion is sin. Just as sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, this sin nature was transferred to every person thereafter. All of us have inherited this sin nature; we sin because we are sinners. We are sinners by nature and by choice. (Leviticus 19:2; Romans 1:19-32, 3:10-18, 3:23, 5:12)
- **Man is Separated and Condemned** - Because God is perfectly holy, He cannot tolerate the presence of our sin. Because we fall short of His perfect standard, we are forever separated from our Creator. Not only does our sin separate us from God, but it also carries grave consequences. The penalty of our sin is death. Because of our rebellion, we deserve the full weight of God's wrath and judgment. (Romans 6:23; 1 John 1:8; Isaiah 59:2; Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 25:31, 46)
- **God Provides a Way** - Man has no means of being restored to relationship with God without divine intervention. Still, the price of our sin has to be paid. God, then, because of His great love for us, sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to pay our sin's price. Jesus became a man, lived a sinless life and paid our debt through His substitutionary death on a cross. In our place, He took our condemnation and guilt and bore God's wrath and judgment. Through the cross, our sins are credited to Jesus and His righteousness (right standing with God) is credited to those who follow Him. (John 3:16; Romans 5:1, 8; John 1:14; Galatians 1:4; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 1:3, 3:18, 2:24; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- **Christ is Victorious** - Three days after His death, God victoriously raised Jesus from the grave. Spiritual death and sin are fully defeated. His resurrection is proof that God is satisfied with the atoning, reconciling sacrifice. Jesus alone is Savior and Lord! (Mark 16:6; Acts 17:31; Romans 1:4; Hebrews 7:23-28, 9:11-15)

- We Must Receive Him in Faith - To receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, we must trust in Him alone for salvation. We must turn from our sins in repentance and turn to Him in love and obedience. Salvation is paid by Jesus Christ and offered to us freely by grace. We cannot earn it. God's grace comes to us through simple faith in Jesus Christ. (John 14:6, 15; Acts 4:12, 17:30; Luke 13:3; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2)
- Faith in Christ Gives the Promise of Eternal Life - By His grace, we have been made new and have been brought into an abundant life for all eternity. This abundant life is not without trials and difficulties in this world. In fact, the followers of Jesus can expect to face tribulations. Yet, we have peace and hope for our greatest joy is knowing and loving Him. The gift of eternal life means that we not only take joy and delight in Him now, but also that we will be able to treasure His presence forever. Through Christ, those who believe are restored to their original created purpose - to worship Him forever and to find their fullest joy in knowing, loving and serving Him throughout eternity. (John 10:10, 16:33, 14:27; Romans 6:4, 9, 8:35, 8:37-38; Hebrews 9:14; Revelation 5:9, 4:9-11, 5:12-14)

Gospel - Applied

Death to Life, Darkness to Light, Slave to Sin, Slave to Christ ... these are all images and applications of where we once were before Christ and where we are now. God from eternity past until today is carrying out His plan of redemption. God's passion is bringing glory to Himself and He does this most clearly by redeeming sinners like you and me.

Whether you have been walking with Christ for 20 years or two years, the Gospel is what you have been called to and called for. We want the Gospel to be the foundation, the driving force and the motivation for why we live and move and have our being. The Gospel should be the propelling factor in us going on mission, whether it is across the street or across the globe.

If the Gospel then is the foundation of our very lives and it is the Good News, how can we apply this Gospel in the context that we live in today, and how can we apply the Gospel in a missional context?

I would first encourage you to preach the Gospel to yourself daily. You can do this through different means:

- Focus on different aspects of salvation. Pick passages that focus on justification, adoption, sanctification, redemption, atonement, etc. Read a particular text and write out what that text means to you and to your salvation.
- Use a simple Gospel outline of 'God, Man, Christ, Response' to structure your time in the Word:
 - God** – How does this text speak of God's character/nature and work?
 - Man** – What does this text say about man's dependence upon God?
 - Christ** – How does this text point to Christ (Prophet, Priest, King)?
 - Response** – What is this text calling me to put into practice?

Grace - Explained

Grace – often heard as God’s riches at Christ’s expense or the unmerited favor displayed to us by a merciful God. What, though, is the reason for this grace? Why would Christ expend His very life on our behalf and God pour out His riches on us? To grasp this grace that has saved us, we must first understand where we have been saved from and then see what it is we are saved for.

Paul begins this chapter by saying, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” The “you” refers to the second person of Ephesians 1:13, 15-18, referencing the Gentiles. Verse three, though, explains that both Jews and Gentiles are dead in their trespasses and sins. The word translated as dead occurs 129 times in the New Testament, both as an adjective and noun. Paul isn’t speaking of physical death or about the sinner’s ultimate fate in the second death. The most vital part of man’s personality, the spirit, is dead to the most important factor to life – God. This is a reminder of where we were before we came to know Christ in a saving way. Being “dead in trespasses and sins” means that for the unregenerate sinner, he is a sinner not only by choice, but also by nature.

In verse two, Paul says that these believers once walked about according to the “course” of “this world.” These two words (course and world) most likely refer to time and space. Not only did they “walk according to the course of this world,” but also “according to the prince of the power of the air.” John McArthur’s take on the phrase “course of this world” is that it “refers to the world order, or humanity’s values and standards apart from Christ.” The work of the prince of the power of the air is at work in the “sons of disobedience.” This can be seen in contrast to the work of the Holy Spirit at work in the believers, referenced in Ephesians 1:19-20.

Verse three says, “Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of the flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” “Among them” refers to the sons of the disobedience (Ephesians 2:2). Paul, by saying we “all” formerly lived in the lusts of the flesh, notes that the former state, of not only the Gentiles, but also the Jews (including himself), consisted of following the desires of the flesh.

To contrast the way that we once were, Paul writes “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.” We see that God is not hostile towards us as His creation. Had He decided to condemn each of us and judge us as we are in our sin, He would have been completely just in doing so. His love, though, caused Him to be merciful and to do otherwise. Agape, the word for love, is used in nearly every case in the New Testament to speak of God’s relationship with us. We must remember that God’s salvation is ultimately for His glory. As sinners who were once enemies of God, we have been saved by His mercy.

We do not see the main verb of this passage until we get to verse five, which reads “even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” Paul’s main point in this passage is to show that believers, once sinners who were dead, have been “made alive (cf. Colossians 2:15) together with Christ.” The regeneration of the believer is by an act of God’s grace. This idea is restated in verse eight.

Not only have we been made alive together with Christ, but also as verse six says, “and (God) raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” These are two more verbs with the prefix ‘syn’. He has “raised us up with Him” (cf. Colossians 2:12) and “seated us with Him.” These ideas are reiterated in Colossians 3:1-4. McArthur says “The tense of raised and made indicates that these are immediate and direct results of salvation. Not only is the believer dead to sin and alive to righteousness through Christ’s Resurrection, but also he also enjoys his Lord’s exaltation.” He continues by noting that the phrase “heavenly places” refers to the place where God reigns, but is also where believers’ blessings are (Ephesians 1:3), where their inheritance is (1 Peter 1:4), and where their affections should be (Colossians 1:3).

God does all of this “so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7). It was God’s plan to continue to show His unmerited favor for all generations. John Newton reflected on this grace as He penned “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.” We are saved for the purpose of glorifying God for His amazing grace (Revelation 7:10-12).

Paul wants to remind us in verse eight how it is that we are saved – by grace. “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” As mentioned above in verse five, our salvation is totally based upon the grace of God. Grace is the sole cause of our salvation. It is unmerited favor that must be accepted as a gift from God. All of salvation, including the gifts of grace and faith, are gifts from God (cf. Romans 10:17). The believer’s response is a facet of salvation, but that faith is also a gift granted to us by God, which cannot be exercised by man’s own working.

Paul makes sure in verse nine to stress even further that our salvation is “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” All of this culminates in verse ten with expressing the purpose for which we are saved. It reads “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” We are God’s “workmanship,” or “product.” Just as we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), so are the works or fruit for which we were created to bear prepared before the foundation of the world. Paul contrasts this idea of walking in the ways of this world (Ephesians 2:2-3) as sinners who are under the control of Satan, versus as new believers in Christ walking in the good works, after having been “made alive together with Christ.”

1John McArthur, *McArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 1686.

2McArthur, 1686.

Grace – Applied

So how do we apply this grace? Well, we must first receive it. For us to live out our salvation as something that we have earned, much less deserve, is sinful. As we just looked at in Ephesians 2, we could not save ourselves – we were dead! We had to be made alive through the resurrecting power of God. Realizing from where we have been saved is the first step in applying this grace, because then we understand more fully that we do not deserve Christ.

So, if we understand that we have received the riches of God in Christ by grace through faith, this ought to shape the way that we live now. Paul addresses this in 2 Corinthians 4. As Paul says in chapter 4, verse 5, “what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake.” Or again in verse 7: “but we have this treasure (this Gospel of grace) in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” So having been made alive, we now can only proclaim Christ and Christ alone.

Grace then affects the way that we view the course of life. Come what may, whether persecution, affliction or perplexing circumstances, Paul says that because of God’s power working in and through us, we will not be crushed, driven to despair, forsaken or even destroyed. You are living under the grace of God. Grace that has saved you is grace that will carry you through the trials of life.

Grace applied does not just affect the way that we face trials, but also the way that our lives express this gospel of grace. In chapter 5, verses 14-17, Paul says, “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.”

We are controlled by Christ’s love, seeking to love and live not for us, but for Christ. We also do not view people just as people, but rather we want to extend and express this grace to them. As those who were once in darkness, we see others in darkness and our hearts break. Therefore, we cannot help but speak of this grace that has saved us. Paul goes on and says that because we have been reconciled to God through Christ (5:18-19), we are now ambassadors for Christ.

So live under grace, knowing that you have been saved by God’s unmerited favor poured out on you, and extend this offering as you speak on behalf of Christ. May you be a minister of reconciliation and an agent of grace to the world.

Christ's Humility/Servanthood - Explained

Read Philippians 2:1-11

When we think about the way that we are to conduct ourselves in the Christian life, and even as that translates to serving on the mission field, there is no better place to turn than to Paul's exhortation in Philippians 2.

As disciples of Christ, we are to follow not only in teaching to observe all that Christ has commanded us, but also in observing the very nature and demeanor of Christ and modeling such in our attitudes. This includes exemplifying unity and humility as the Bride of Christ.

Paul begins by outlining how we are to be united in our humility (v.1). Because we are Christ's, we now receive great encouragement, comfort, fellowship, affection, and mercy or sympathy through the bond that we share with one another. We all are united in Christ and can exemplify this unity through the way that we allow the Gospel to shape our lives and the way that we live in community.

Having these things then, Paul says that his joy is complete in the unity of the church (v. 2) as they are of one mind (having one unified thought), loving without partiality, and living in full accord or spirit in our direction. If these things are the inward way, both in heart and mind of how we are to be unified, Paul then outlines the way that this should be expressed outwardly (vv.3-4).

We are not to minister to one another or the world out of strife or desire for personal glory. Rather, we are to think of others' needs before our own. We need to practice the 'one anothers' that Scripture outlines (love one another, exhort one another, pray for one another, admonish one another, etc.). We need to live on mission every day, seeking ways to BE the church, and display, demonstrate and declare the Gospel in very real and tangible ways.

Paul then points to Christ's example, which is the ultimate picture of humility (vv.5-11). Jesus being fully God from eternity past to eternity future (see John 1:1, Colossians 2:15-18, Hebrews 1:3), laid aside His position at the right hand of the Father. He emptied Himself (v.7), or better translated, had a self-renunciation (vv.5-6). He never ceased to be God, even while here on this earth, but rather laid aside His heavenly glory, His independent authority (submitting to the will of the Father), His willing display of divinity (allowing the Spirit to lead), eternal riches and a favorable relationship with God, most notably seen on the cross.

Laying aside all these things, He took on the likeness of men (v.7). This was not just God in human flesh, but He was taking on the essential attributes of humanity. He became the

God-Man, 100 percent God and 100 percent man. He was not only in the likeness of man, but also in the appearance of man (v.8). The difference here is that though outwardly he looked like any other human being, He was much more because He still was God.

The humility that He exemplified was one that did not demand royalty. Rather, Jesus came into this world in this way: a lowly peasant girl, a lowly stable, a lowly entrance into the world; eating with, walking among, healing, teaching to and performing miracles among the lowliest, and ultimately dying a lowly and brutal death and being buried in a borrowed tomb. This was God's plan in order that God's glory might be most fully put on display through Christ's incarnation, death, burial and resurrection.

Moving onto verse nine, we see that the humbling example of Christ and the exaltation of Christ by the Father are inseparable. John McArthur points out that this exaltation is four-fold, speaking to His resurrection, His position (at the right hand of God), His intercession for believers and His ascension. Because of Christ's incarnation, He was now able to receive privileges as High Priest, Substitution and Risen Lord.

It's this title of Lord that was given to Jesus (v.10), the name that is above all other names. It is this Jesus who is Lord to which every knee will bow and every tongue confess Him as such. This includes all people from every tribe, tongue and nation – both those who are His own and those who do not receive Him as Lord.

Christ's Humility/Servanthood – Applied

Now understanding Christ's humility in becoming the God-Man, how do we exemplify such Christ-likeness in the way that we serve, particularly on foreign soil? Oftentimes it has been said that short-term mission trips can hurt the long-term work more than it does help it. This does not have to be the case. If we appropriate Christ-like humility to the way that we enter into a new culture, we will see greater fruit born out of our service to God and to others.

Duane Elmers has written a great book called Cross-Culture Servanthood that outlines three ways to learn as we enter into a new culture: learn about, learn from and learn with. By posturing ourselves as humble learners and servants, we will not only be a blessing to others, but also receive a huge blessing in being able to see things from a new perspective.

Elmers outlines the three ways to learn:

- Learning about others yields facts that help us adjust our expectations and generate fruitful avenues for deeper learning after entering the culture. The danger is that we may stop learning and think that now we know everything necessary for ministry. It also tends to create "we/they" categories.
- Learning from others yields understanding that moves us into strong, enduring and trusting relationships resistant to colonialistic attitudes and dependency. The danger is that we may tire of learning from and move into the telling mode where we think we have all the answers.
- Learning with others yields authentic partnerships where each probes deeply the mind and heart of the other, bringing interdependent growth and culturally sensitive ministry. "We/They" categories are replaced with "us" categories

Never stop being a learner. Never stop serving. We are called simply to come alongside of others and image Christ to them. As Jesus said, “for whoever is least among you all is the one who is great.” Live as Christ lived, not doing things to bring attention to yourself, but rather magnifying Christ who is all-satisfying.

Look to Appendix 2 to understand better your role in a new culture using the acronym SLOB. We are called to be **servants** in meeting others’ needs before our own; **learners**

¹ *Cross Cultural Servanthood*, Duane Elmers. 2006 – Intervarsity Press.

– learning about, from and with the culture we are in; **offerings** – pouring ourselves out as a drink offering (2 Timothy 4:6), expending ourselves for the Kingdom; and a **blessing** – as Abraham’s descendents we are called to be a blessing to the nations. Be a SLOB as you serve the world.

Sin - Explained

Read Isaiah 6, Romans 3

Dead. Darkness. Enemies. Separated. These are all words that the Bible uses to define our state of being in sin before being saved from the power of sin. The Bible says that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” but I would contend that I think many fall short as well of understanding the weight and nature of our sin.

Before we came to Christ, we were not on neutral spiritual ground, but rather we were dead. Paul writes in Ephesians that we were dead in our trespasses and sin, following the lordship of Satan. It is not as if all of a sudden one day we decided to wake up from our sinful slumber. No, something or rather Someone had to awaken our cold dead hearts.

The darkness from which we have come is not just a state of being that we moved out of like moving from one zip code to another. We were darkness – our very identity was dark and void of light. God, when He awakened us, caused us to be light (2 Peter 2:9). We were enemies of God, separated by our sin.

Isaiah understands something of this in chapter 6 when he sees a vision of God high and exalted. He sees the worthiness of God, as the angels are crying out to God – ‘holy, holy, holy.’ It is in light of Isaiah’s vision of Who God is that he fully realizes his state among God Almighty. In light of his sin, Isaiah does not even feel worthy enough to receive such a vision, much less the call that he was about to answer.

Take a moment to reflect on these two texts listed above. Ask yourself if you first and foremost see God rightly for who He is. Then, examine in light of who God is your own sin and sin nature in the right perspective. None of us is righteous, as Paul indicates to the church in Rome. On our own, we do not seek after God; we have turned aside each to our own way.

As enemies of God and slaves to sin, we cannot look to please God in any way. As we mentioned before, we were dead in sin (Ephesians 2) and cannot comprehend any spiritual truth apart from the work of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 4:1-6). What's worse is that not only can we not save ourselves from our corruption, but also we are unwilling to do so. Before Christ, we loved our sin.

I know this paints a very bleak picture, but I would argue that until we grasp our sin for what it truly is (disobedience, treason, and falling short before a Holy God), we can never fully rejoice in what we have been saved from. We must see God for who He is, and then see ourselves as sinners who have been made alive, in order to then answer such a call as Isaiah did. This is how sin is to be applied.

Sin – Applied

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 5:11-21

Sin applied responds to God. Isaiah humbling himself before His Creator, and depending upon Him alone for salvation, has his sins removed and atoned for. After calling Isaiah to Himself, God then calls Isaiah to a mission. Isaiah does not reluctantly answer this call, but rather willingly lays his life on the line, signs the blank check and says 'wherever God, I will go.'

God sent and Isaiah went to a people who would hear, but never understand; they would see, but not perceive; they received, but never believed. You see, sin rightly applied causes you to go to even the hardest places and to the hardest, stiff-necked people. God wanted these people to get to the point where they came to the end of themselves and the only place they could turn to was Him. We know from this passage, too, that God would bring a remnant out of these people, one through whom the Savior would come (Isaiah 6:13).

Sin applied also humbles us because it reveals to us from where we once were, to whom we are called and what we are to proclaim. Because the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ has shone in our hearts, giving us knowledge of Christ and faith in Him, we proclaim Christ and Christ alone.

As Paul goes on to say in 2 Corinthians 4:7, "we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." We have nothing to boast in or proclaim about except what Christ has done in redeeming us. The "love of Christ controls us" now so we should "regard no one according to the flesh," but should be serving faithfully as ambassadors of Christ who have been reconciled. We are then to call others to repent and be reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

If anyone knew first-hand what slavery, bondage and darkness looked like, it was John Newton. He is most notably known as the famous slave trader who penned the hymn 'Amazing Grace.' What many do not know, though, is that he was a slave as well. It is through this very deep and dark season that he came to the understanding of Christ as his Savior. He eventually would be an instrument used of God to bring the injustice of slavery to an end. He would later pen several hymns and poems that reflected his own experience, and what I am sure is the experience of each of us who have been set free from sin to serve our Savior. A hymn titled, We Were Pharaoh's Bondmen:

*Beneath the tyrant Satan's yoke
Our souls were long oppressed;
'Till grace our galling fetters broke,
And gave the weary rest.*

*Jesus, in that important hour,
His mighty arm made known;
He ransomed us by price and power,
And claimed us for His own.
Now, freed from bondage, sin, and death,
We walk in wisdom's ways;
And wish to spend our every breath
In wonder, love, and praise.
Ere long, we hope with Him to dwell
In yonder world above;
And now we only live to tell
The riches of His love*

Amazing grace has saved you who once were lost so that now you are found; once blind, but now you see. Having been set free from being a slave to sin, you are now a slave to Christ. Go and tell of this love.

Spiritual Warfare – Explained

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

Spiritual Warfare is a topic that is often taboo among Christian circles today. Warfare is nothing new to us, as we see it with the conflict around the world, but to think of a war going on in the spiritual realm is a somewhat strange and difficult concept to grasp. We must, though, see spiritual warfare as an essential aspect of the Christian life, because we deal with it everyday, whether we realize it or not. Avoiding a proper understanding of spiritual warfare leaves us susceptible to the attacks that Satan will throw at us. These temptations will most likely cause us to feel defeated in our Christian walk.

So what is spiritual warfare? We know that God is sovereign over the universe and has control of all things, but we also understand, from Scripture, that God has permitted Satan to have influence over the earth. Satan's reign has a territorial aspect in that he reigns over the earth, but his reign is also temporal. Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 4:4 of Satan being "the god of this age." Though Satan has rule, God ultimately reigns sovereignly. There is a war going on nonetheless.

Therefore, if spiritual warfare is an all-encompassing aspect of our Christian life, who or what are our enemies? I would suggest that there are three enemies: the flesh (inner battle we wage within ourselves), the world (context/environment we live in), and the devil (orchestrating our downfall from the supernatural realm). Knowing our enemies is just the first step to engaging in spiritual warfare. We must next understand how we wage war against these enemies. This is not a time to sit back as redeemed Christians and think that the war is over. Yes, the ultimate victory is ours through the blood of Jesus Christ, but we must continue to fight until He returns.

Paul, in Ephesians 6:10-20, lays forth how we can wage war against the devil by girding ourselves in the armor of God. Even before we put on the armor of God, we know that the victory is already ours through Christ because of His death, burial and resurrection (cf. Genesis 3:15, 1 Corinthians 15). Paul says in verse 10 that it's by the Lord's power and strength that we can stand firm against Satan's attacks.

This armor is to be the permanent attire of the Christian. We should make it a point of application and practice to pray on this armor daily. We are soldiers of Christ, and we must be armed and ready to battle. That's what Paul is getting at in verse 11, when he instructs us to put on the whole armor of God.

Verse 12 points to whom it is that we are battling against. It is not man fighting against man; rather, it is a battle in the spiritual realm. Therefore, because this battle deals with those fighting in the heavenly places, we must take up the armor (v. 13), again a charge to put it on in order to withstand the attacks.

Whether Satan tries to attack us doctrinally through our distrust of God, forsaking our obedience, or living hypocritically, the actual armor is our defense and offense against the devil.

The Armor (v. 13-17)

- **The Belt of Truth:** The belt in a soldier's attire helped cinch up the loose-fitting clothing. Therefore, the truth of God's Word gives us a guide and helps us hone in on what is true and right, keeping us fixed on God's Word amidst other pervasive worldviews.
- **Breastplate of Righteousness:** This was the vital piece to the armor, as it protected the vital organs. We are covered in the righteousness of Christ and because of that cannot be snatched up ultimately by Satan.
- **Boots of the Gospel:** The boots helped with firm footing on the battleground. Because of the assurance that we have in the Gospel, we are able to cling to the peace we have through the cross and resurrection.
- **Shield of Faith:** This shield was large enough to protect the entire Body of the soldier. Our continual trust and faith placed in Christ alone keeps us firmly rooted in the One who holds victory over sin and death.
- **Helmet of Salvation:** This helmet protected the head, which was a continual target in battle. Satan will always be trying to plant discouragement and doubt in our minds about our salvation. Thus, we must continually let our thoughts and mind's attention run back to the Gospel as doubt seeps in.
- **Sword of the Spirit:** The only offensive piece of armor. God's Word is the only piece of weaponry that

Verses 18-20 then tie this entire passage together, showing how prayer is directly linked to spiritual warfare. We must pray with great variety – adoration, confession, thanksgiving and adoration. Our prayer must be focused and done with frequency – continually being in a spirit of prayer. Praying in the Spirit then shows us our humble submission and dependence on Christ. Prayer keeps us watchful against the attacks, but looking forward to Christ's return. Finally, our prayer must be persistent, again linking us back to the idea that Satan is always looking to devour us. So, we must be on our knees asking for God to help us battle through His power and the protection of His armor.

Spiritual Warfare – Applied

Spiritual Warfare is a part of sanctification. This is definitely a process for which we can see the results more clearly when we are not in the midst of spiritual warfare. How much, though, do we think about the fact that we are being sanctified when we are in the battle?

Oftentimes, it is not just the big scary events that the Lord uses to shape and mold us, but also it is the small circumstances of life that seem to rattle us, and through which God sifts us. The question has been raised several times over the course of the trip, and particularly during the debriefing sessions, is the real warfare occurring in the midst of the battle (i.e., life circumstances), or is the warfare in how we respond to the circumstances? I believe that it is the latter. God is truly working in and through us so that we can respond in confidence and resist with courage, standing firm in who God is and in His process of conforming us to be more like Him.

How can spiritual warfare be rightly understood and applied in the context of mission? A 'first thing first' is to know that warfare will hit us and hit us hard. As we mentioned above, it certainly does come in the everyday ebb and flow of life, but Satan sure does like to attack when we are boldly declaring and displaying the Gospel on foreign soil.

As you prepare to go, be read and prayed up. Commit to bringing others alongside you to hold you accountable to be in the Word and prayer consistently as you prepare to go. Cling to Christ constantly before going, while you are on the field and once you return.

One very real way that spiritual warfare rears its ugly head is through culture shock. I encourage you to read through the appendices on culture shock – what is and how to manage it. Very simply, culture shock occurs when entering into a new culture. You experience in a very dense period of time new sights, sounds, smells and feelings. How you deal with culture shock will determine how effective you are going to be on the field. You can either avert it by completely rejecting the new culture, assimilate to it by trying to go completely native, or you can adapt to it, looking for the silver lining. Learning from, with and about the new culture is key in handling spiritual warfare as it is applied in the realm of entering into a new culture.

Know ultimately that the God who has called you to this task is the same God who will be with you in the midst of the battle. He has not left us alone, but has already won the war for us and equipped us with the proper armor to withstand Satan's attacks.

Go into the battle and onto the field with confidence, but go armed. The war has been won, though the battle rages on. Victory is ours. Be faithful to till, sow and water, allowing God to bring the harvest.

Prayer – Explained & Applied

Read Matthew 6:9-13

The Lord's Prayer can really be defined as the model prayer. John 17 could more aptly be termed the Lord's Prayer. Jesus' teaching on prayer here in Matthew 6 gives us a straightforward outline for how we can deepen the roots of our prayer life.

In the context of going on the mission field, Piper says, "Prayer is a wartime walkie-talkie. God designed it and gave it to us for use on a mission. You can say the mission is to 'bear fruit,' or you can say the mission is to 'set the captives free.' The point stays the same: Prayer is designed to extend the kingdom into fruitless enemy territory."

If we aren't on our knees first, we cannot expect that we will go in the power of the Holy Spirit. We will only attempt and fail, because we attempt in our own strength. Let's look at how Jesus models prayer for us and strive to position ourselves accordingly.

◇ Our Father – v. 9a

Here we are addressing God as Father. Paul, in Galatians 4, shows us that our redemption brought us into sonship with the Father. "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God (v. 4-7)."

Because of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, we who are believers in Christ have been brought into that sonship as well. So, our posture in prayer is one of intimacy with the Father.

◇ In Heaven – v. 9b

God is not only intimate, but He is also transcendent. He is near, yet separate from us. He is sovereign over all things, reigning and ruling from His throne in heaven (cf. Isaiah 55:8).

While we can approach God as Father, we also must remember that this relationship is one of awe and reverence, and not a buddy-buddy connection.

◇ Hallowed Be Your Name (v. 9c)

Because God is God, He demands and delights in the worship of His people. This is the third commandment reversed – we worship God and Him alone (Exodus 20:5).

Our worship and hallowing of God should be both individual and corporate. Worship at the root means ‘worth – ship.’ We are ascribing to God the worth that He deserves.

Not only should we be satisfied in Him, but we should be dissatisfied in those places in our own lives, and in the world around us, where God is not seen as worthy, namely among the 2.5 billion people who have no access to the Gospel. This should propel us to declare His worth, to make known His name among the nations (Ps. 96).

◇ **Your Kingdom Come (v. 10a)**

This is the outworking of hallowing God’s name. Our position before God propels us into the world to extend and advance God’s Kingdom. This is not just a Western thing or a United States thing; this is a global effort by Christians all over the world.

Christianity is growing the fastest in non-Western parts of the world. China is coming to Christ in droves at a rate of 75 million. South Korea is the largest missionary sending country, sending out 21,500 missionaries to 175 different nations. It’s His Kingdom from everywhere to everywhere.

◇ **Your Will Be Done (v. 10b)**

This draws us back to the Great Commandment. We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. God’s people are called to obey God’s will.

So we see from the first half of Jesus’ teaching on prayer that God is pre-eminent. We are to honor Him as Father, hallow Him in our worship, and live our lives for the advancement of His Kingdom and His will.

As we realize who He is, we understand that this global mission to which we are commissioned calls for us to depend on Him. That is why the second half of the teaching focuses on our petition to Him.

◇ **Give us this day our daily bread (v. 11)**

We are not after luxury, but sustenance. It’s only through God’s sustaining power and grace that we live, move and even have our being (Acts 17:28).

We need to relinquish this idea that it is all about me. It doesn’t take but five minutes in a third-world country to see just how rich we are. We must live lives holding very loosely to the things of this world and laying up for ourselves treasures in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

◇ **Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgive our debtors (v. 12)**

We need to be reminded of our sin. We have been forgiven much and are therefore called to forgive much. As the Puritans remind us through their writings, preach the Gospel to yourself daily. Live the Gospel out by receiving and extending grace.

◇ **Lead us not into temptation (v. 1)**

Looking at areas where we tend to fall prey to sin is key in our preparation. How many times do we envy and crave after self-gratification? We need to cease our cravings and cling to Christ. We have nothing to envy except that we have Christ. Because of where we have come from – death, darkness, enemies of the cross, a desire to preach Christ and Him crucified should naturally spill out of us. We have nothing apart from Him and in Him we have everything we need.

We must repent – not taking sin lightly, pray that God’s grace would be evidenced in our lives, and live out our lives as a living sacrifice before Him.

Prayer – it’s a difficult discipline to practice and one that many of us need to work on. This model gives us a great starting point for learning how to position ourselves before God and how to petition our requests before Him.

Gospel Applied:

- 1.) Practice sharing your testimony this week with a friend or family member. Be sure to share it within a 3 min. span, as well as even 30 seconds!
- 2.) Share the Gospel with someone this week that doesn’t know the salvation found in Christ alone. Write down your reflections.
- 3.) How has the Gospel changed the way you live for the glory of God? What are some examples of how you have lived with Gospel fluency this week?

Grace Applied:

- 1.) Are there ways that you have cheapened grace this week? Confess those to God and seek to receive His grace and forgiveness anew.
- 2.) What is an example of how you have exemplified grace to another believer or non-believer this week?
- 3.) How have you seen God’s grace evidenced in your life this week?

Christ's Humility/Servanthood Applied:

- 1.) What are some practical ways you anticipate and have expectations for learning about, learning from and learning with those you encounter in Ethiopia?
- 2.) Take the opportunity this week to practice one of these three aspects of learning in another culture/context with a friend, child, co-worker, etc. Write down your reflections.
- 3.) Look for a way to stretch yourself this week and engage with someone you wouldn't normally extend service towards.

Sin Applied:

- 1.) What besetting sins do you need to seek forgiveness for, in preparation for this trip?
- 2.) What are some helpful ways you have found to put sin to death and flee temptation?
- 3.) How are you allowing the Gospel to impact the way you view sin? Is another believer holding you accountable, by helping you to not only sin less, but also treasure Christ more? Write down your thoughts.

Spiritual Warfare Applied:

- 1.) What are some ways that you could anticipate being attacked by Satan throughout this trip? Pray that God would empower you to battle in those areas.
- 2.) Pray on the armor of God daily. Reflect this week on how this has equipped you for battle in the day to day.
- 3.) What area of the armor are you weakest in and need help to stand firm?

Prayer Applied:

- 1.) What are some ways we, as a team, can pray for you this week?
- 2.) Ask another team member to be your prayer partner throughout this trip. Hold one another accountable to praying for one another.
- 3.) Take one of the elements of Jesus' model prayer and focus on praying that component this week. Write down how your prayer life has been shaped in light of that.

¹ Piper, John - *Let The Nations be Glad*, pg. 49.