



Common questions about proclaiming the gospel ...

1. Why proclaim the gospel in counseling?
2. What happens when the gospel is proclaimed?
3. How do I proclaim the gospel?
4. How do I envision the gospel in compelling ways?
5. How do I proclaim the gospel in personal and particular ways?
6. When can I start proclaiming the gospel into their particular situation?
7. How much should I share without going into teaching mode?
8. How can I bring everything back to the cross, back to the gospel?
9. How do I make the concepts concrete?
10. How can I share my own suffering (as a fellow sufferer)?

1. Why Proclaim the Gospel In Counseling?

What else do you have to offer? What else acknowledges God's sovereign authority and reveals his heart and mind? What else is not limited to time and space and endures forever? Who else brings order out of disorder? Who else created you and knew all the days of your life before you were even born? Who else knows your deepest struggles of life? Who else offers complete forgiveness and perfect love? Who else offers steadfast refuge and comfort? Who else is eternal joy and pleasure? Who else battles against the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places? Any questions?

2. What Happens When the Gospel Is Proclaimed?

Proclaiming the Gospel Grows Us Up in Love

¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph. 4:11-16)

2A. Failing to proclaim gospel truths in love keeps us immature

¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming

- We are childish and immature when we **speak with love but not truth ...**
 - We are like a ship without a rudder when we speak without the stability of truth.
 - We lean and depend on our own understanding and ways (cf. Prov. 3:5-6).
 - We are tossed back and forth by the ways of the world and the philosophy of humanity versus being anchored by gospel truths (cf. Col. 2:8).
 - We might fear what others think of us or we might fear hurting them. We can value our reputation or our friendship more than proclaiming the gospel in season and out of season (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-5).
 - We might think all a person needs is encouragement and empathetic love.
- We are childish and immature when we **speak truth without love ...**
 - We are deceived and tricked by our own self-righteousness and insensitivity. We think all we need to do is tell it like it is, to speak boldly and bluntly like a prophet.



- *And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* (1 Cor. 13:2)
- Bottom-line, when we fail to proclaim the truth in love, we battle unbelief:
 - **Love without truth**—We don't believe the gospel is sufficient ... that his word is living and active ... that Jesus is the way, the truth, and life (cf. Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 14:6).
 - **Truth without love**—We don't believe God's kindness, mercy, and love brings us to repentance ... we don't believe God and his Spirit does the work (cf. Rom. 2:4; Eph. 2:4; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:2)

2B. Proclaiming gospel truths in love grows us up in Christ

¹⁵*but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*

Believe it or not, God grows us up when we are able to speak his truths in love. How does God grow us when we live out the gospel and proclaim his truth in love?

- **We grow** in our intimate relationship with God, knowing him more and more as we know his word more and more.
- **We grow** in our identity in Christ, believing more and more that we are ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-20).
- **We grow** in being and living like, or imitating, Christ, reflecting him more and more through our lives as we grow in humility and submission.

2C. Proclaiming gospel truths in love grows up the body of Christ in love

¹⁶*from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

- **We grow** in our intimacy with one another as a church, caring for each other more and more as we engage and encourage one another in the gospel day in and day out.
- **We grow** in our identity in Christ as a church, seeing ourselves more and more as co-laborers in the gospel mission of redemption—building up the body in love and advancing the kingdom in the world.
- **We grow** in our imitating Christ as a church, following Christ as we grow in living out the gospel, increasing in love, humility, sacrifice, and service.

3. How Do I Proclaim The Gospel?

God uses his gospel **message** to accomplish his **mission** of redemption. If counseling is seen as a ministry of the Word, then counseling is one of God's **methods** to bring about redemption.

Gospel (Message) + Counsel (Method) → Redemption (Mission)

Gospel Counseling = Gospel Understanding + Gospel Proclaiming

Gospel Understanding = Listening to + Exploring the Heart

Gospel Proclaiming = Envisioning the Gospel + Sharing Gospel Truths

Proclaiming the gospel includes both envisioning the gospel and sharing gospel truths. We are called to proclaim the gospel (1) in compelling ways that help others see the beauty of the gospel and their need for a Savior and (2) in personal and particular ways that show how God and his gospel truths speaks directly to them and their situation. God is most beautiful, powerful, redemptive, and not confined to time or space; therefore, the way we proclaim his gospel should reflect all of his glory.



4. How Do I Envision the Gospel In A Compelling Way?

4A. What is meant by “envisioning the gospel”?

To envision is to imagine and visualize a desired or actual reality. God gave us the ability to imagine. Why? So that we can imagine Him! How else can we love Him even though we can't see Him? How else can we be overwhelmed by His grace? How else can we experience inexpressible joy in the midst of suffering?

4B. Envisioning a beautiful gospel

Before we can proclaim the gospel in a compelling way, we must first be overwhelmed and captivated by the reality of God's glorious redemption.

¹⁴For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

¹⁵And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

Our whole heart must pulsate with the life of Christ (cf. Gal. 2:20)—**our thoughts** must be convinced of Christ's sacrificial death and supernatural resurrection; **our affections** must be compelled by Christ's love; and **our will** must choose to live for Christ and to no longer live for ourselves.

Listen to Peter as he describes the glorious gospel. How does he help you to envision the beautiful gospel of Jesus Christ? Share how these magnificent truths stir your imagination:

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Pet. 1:3-9)

God calls us first to see, taste, feel and experience the beauty and power of the gospel through Jesus Christ then to share these truths in personal and particular ways to offer faith, hope, and love to a weary soul.

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken. "With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak (2 Cor. 4:13).

5. How Do I Share Gospel Truths In Personal and Particular Ways?

5A. Sharing With Your Words and Life

Throughout the NT, the apostles not only preached the gospel but also shared the gospel with their whole lives. **First**, if we share gospel **truths without personal affections**, we come across as talking heads. We have to share the gospel as if we believe it ourselves, as if we personally experienced the grace of God so we can offer a full and vibrant picture of the gospel in action. **Second**, if we share gospel truths with **words without personal actions**, we come across as hypocrites, merely hearers of the word, not doers of the word (cf. Jas. 1:22). We have to share the gospel through living it out with those we minister, since such



sacrificial, pursuing, and faithful love and forgiveness is the tough work that brings about gospel change in everyone's lives.

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,* ⁴ *who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* ⁵ *For as we **share** abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we **share** abundantly in comfort too.* ⁶ *If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.* ⁷ *Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you **share in our sufferings**, you will also **share in our comfort**.* (2 Cor. 3-7)

²⁸ *Him we **proclaim**, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.* ²⁹ ***For this I toil**, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.* (Col. 1:28-29)

⁷ *But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.* ⁸ *So, being affectionately desirous of you, **we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves**, because you had become very dear to us.* ⁹ *For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we **proclaimed to you the gospel of God**.* (1 Thess. 2:7-9)

⁴ *I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers,* ⁵ *because I hear of your **love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints**,* ⁶ *and I pray that **the sharing of your faith** may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.* ⁷ *For I have **derived much joy and comfort from your love**, my brother, because **the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you**.* (Philemon 1:4-7)

5B. Sharing with Grace and Gentleness

Because of our self-righteousness and self-centeredness, we are tempted to respond to those struggling with sin and suffering harshly and with impatience—"just stop it," "just get over it," "just grow up." Moreover, we can struggle with apathy, which leads to inaction, unintentional efforts, or impersonal encounters.

¹ *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should **restore him gently**. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.* ² *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* ³ *If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* ⁴ *Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,* ⁵ *for each one should carry his own load.* (Gal. 6:1-5)

²⁴ *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be **kind** to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.* ²⁵ *Those who oppose him he must **gently instruct**, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,* ²⁶ *and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.* (2 Tim. 2:24-26)

²⁹ *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, **so that it will give grace to those who hear**.* (Eph. 4:29)

Remember, you should share in ways that reflects the gospel in the following ways:

- **Pattern**—in your tone, in your attitude, in your expressions, in your content, in your emphasis, etc.
- **Pace**—in measured amounts based on the need of the moment, with patience knowing God doesn't reveal every sin to us at once and doesn't change us overnight but over a lifetime.



5C. Sharing According to the Need of the Moment

And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. (1 Thess. 5:14-15)

- **Warn those who are idle**—God calls us to rebuke and admonish the idle (military term for one who doesn't keep rank); those who are lazy and loaf (2 Thess. 3:6-15).
- **Encourage the timid**—God calls us to encourage those who are anxious and worry, who lack courage, who are discouraged and become despondent.
- **Help the weak**—God calls us to “hold onto, cling to, put your arms around” those struggling with self-control, those who are weak spiritually (cf. Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8).
- **Be patient with everyone**—we are called to be patient (long-suffering) with them all, since God is infinitely patient with us. By God's grace, patience is a fruit of His Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23).
- **[Nobody] pays back wrong for wrong**—God calls us not to take personal revenge and retaliation.
- **But always try to be kind to each other**—God calls us to seek to do good to one another.

6. When Can I Start Proclaiming The Gospel Into Their Particular Situation?

7. How Much Should I Share Without Going Into Teaching Mode?

8. How Can I Bring Everything Back To The Cross, Back To The Gospel?

Always strive to make a direct connection with Christ and his sacrificial and humble life, death, and resurrection. Here are some simple questions that will get you back to the gospel:

1. Where are there evidences of unbelief and the believing of lies?
2. Where are there evidences of God's grace—presence, provision, promises, etc.
3. What does faith look like in this situation? Remind them that God supplies faith.
4. What does repentance look like in this situation? Remind them that God enables repentance.
5. How would God have you confess your (sins)? Remember that sin is always against God.
6. Why did your (sins) require Jesus to be nailed to the cross?
7. What does obedience look like as they live by faith and repentance?
8. How is God growing you through this situation?

9. How do I make the concepts concrete?

- Use the phrases and words you heard and explored. Use illustrations based on their life details.

10. How Can I Share My Own Suffering (Fellow-Sufferer)

- Tell your story in a way that breaks down the misconception that you are essentially different from the person you are helping.
- As you tell your story, be honest in describing your struggles and failures.
- Be discerning and purposeful as you tell your story. Limit the amount of 'gory' detail.
- Always tell your story in a way that makes God the key actor in the drama.
- Tell your story with humility, admitting your continued need for grace.
- Always make it clear that you are not what this person needs—God is.
- The goal of your story should always be worship. All true hope and comfort are rooted in thankfulness for God, his character, and his help.

¹ Paul Trip, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* (P&R 2000), pp. 153-157



Example of sharing the beauty and hope of the gospel in a compelling way

Scenario—You have listened to and explored the heart of a person struggling in the midst of deep, painful suffering. How do you proclaim the gospel in a way that doesn't come across cheesy or like a Sunday School answer? You can have them read the following passages and ask them to stop whenever a truth or a phrase grabs their attention or resonates with their soul ...

¹Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart... ⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you... ¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. . (2 Cor. 4:1, 7-12, 16-18; 12:5-10)

⁷To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

After the person works through the passage, ask if you can minister the gospel to him/her by reading the passages in a personal way. As you get up on the edge of your seat, while looking at the person in the eyes with confidence and compassion, proclaim the gospel, helping him/her to envision the beauty and the grace of the gospel while sharing gospel truths to encourage his/her weary souls ...

“Allow me to share what your Savior is saying to you ... do not lose heart. You may be broken but my all-surpassing power will shine greatly through you. You may be hard pressed on every side, but I will not allow you to be crushed; you may be perplexed, but I will not allow you to die in despair; you may be persecuted, but I will not abandon you—there is nothing that can separate you from My love; you may be struck down, but I will keep you from being destroyed.”

“I will work My mighty power in you so that the glory of My Son Jesus will be revealed through you ...therefore do not lose heart. Though outwardly you are wasting away, yet inwardly I am renewing you day by day. Your light and momentary troubles are achieving for you an eternal glory that far outweighs all of your suffering. So keep your eyes on Me as your God. For what is seen is temporary, but I am eternal.”

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in your weakness. I want you to boast all the more about your weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on you. That is why, for Christ's sake, you will be able to delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when you are weak, then I am strong. I am with you and I am your God.”

As another illustration, you can envision and proclaim the gospel to yourself as you sing, “May Your Power Rest on Me.” Inspired by “Hymn 15” by Isaac Watts, Written by Joel Gerdis and Neil Robins, Sojourn Music