

BEAUTY IN BROKENNESS

From Rescue Academy: Session 1

We often feel great pressure to show only our strengths to those around us. We walk through our days slowly packaging up the brokenness and struggle we face so as to not seem weak and alone - and then we are surprised to find that we feel so alone, as if no one else understands the struggle that we are going through. Why is it, that as followers of Jesus we feel such burden to not appear weak? Do we truly believe that to show Jesus to the world, we have to appear fully functioning and impervious to struggle?

It seems as if we have come to believe that a life following Jesus is supposed to be without pain, struggle or difficulty - but why? If we are called to be witnesses to the power and love of Jesus, why would we strive to be without struggle? After all, struggle and brokenness is what displays the great power of God at work in the world. So let's boast about our brokenness so that those around will see the great love and hope found only in Jesus.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.

- 1. From the passage, what does Paul express is the purpose of his own affliction and comfort? (v.3-5)*
- 2. What was the purpose of the struggle Paul felt in Asia? (v.9)*
- 3. Remembering how God has rescued in the past changes our understanding of future struggle. What struggles and afflictions has God rescued you from in the past?*
- 4. How could you begin to use brokenness in your life to point others toward the hope of Christ?*

SHAME VS. GUILT

From Rescue Academy: Session 2

Have you ever considered the purposes of guilt and shame? I have always read those two words and seen the same - a response to doing something wrong that would cause a discomfort and disappointment in myself. As a result of acting against what is right, I would feel this state of sadness that left me empty. To me, shame and guilt were one in the same.

Biblically, however, those terms are very different in their definition and intended result. Guilt, according to scripture, is a God designed response that occurs when we act against His will and plan. It drives us to repentance and back to His presence. Shame however, is something that God despises. Shame is a state that the world around us says is the right response to our wrongdoing. It pushes us further from God and instills a belief that 'I am too far gone and incapable of what God wants for me.' Shame has never been used by our God to shape us to be more like Him - so why are we so often defined by its grip?

Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-12

- 1. Have you always seen Shame & Guilt as the same thing? How would you describe the terms?*
- 2. In this passage, Paul describes shame as "worldly grief" and guilt as "Godly grief". What does guilt (Godly grief) produce? What about shame (worldly grief)? (v. 9)*
- 3. Read 1 John 2:28. Are you living with confidence in Christ, or are you shrinking back in shame because of your past?*

BALANCING TRUTH & GRACE

From Rescue Academy Session 3

One of the most difficult parts of caring for others is trying to figure out how to deal with the seemingly counteractive presence of truth and grace in any situation. When loving someone with difficulty and pain, we often struggle to decide how much truth and how much grace is right for the person and his or her growth. Some of us tend to give endless grace which ends up looking a lot like we are enabling that person to keep on acting as they choose. Others opt for confronting the struggling individual with heaps of truth and ultimatums that don't seem very loving.

This struggle often leaves us wondering, "What is the proper balance of truth and grace?" We wonder how much love and grace we can show without enabling and how much truth we should tell without coming across as legalistic. If our goal is to become more like Jesus in how we love and treat others, then we have to stop trying to balance these two and instead embrace them both fully in our care and love for others.

Read John 1:14-17.

- 1. In Jesus (the Word) dwelling among us, what 2 things does the passage say He was filled with?*
- 2. How have you experienced the truth that comes from Jesus? How has He shown you grace in your life?*
- 3. Do you think it is possible to show 100% truth **AND** 100% grace to someone who is living in a way that is damaging?*
- 4. How can you begin to show truth and grace in your interactions with others?*

SACRIFICE: EARN BY DOING

From Rescue Academy Session 4

More often than not, we as humans are driven by our fears and insecurities. We put on masks and display certain aspects of ourselves in an attempt to increase our value in the eyes of others - but how does all of that effort and management really affect our value? Is it possible that many of the sacrificial and honorable things we do each day are merely attempts to cover for our insecurities - attempts to increase our value as humans to make up for our many shortcomings? In fact, everything about our culture says that we have to make up for our failures by creating more value for ourselves through what we do.

Our world constantly reinforces the idea that you are what you do - you get what you earn. How different that is from the Gospel of Jesus that says we are loved, redeemed and saved because of the work of Jesus alone - no earning, working or achieving required. There is no need for creating more value for ourselves when we have already been given the highest value possible - belonging with Christ.

Read Luke 10:38-42

- 1. In this passage, why do you think Martha was working so hard to serve Jesus?*
- 2. Do you tend to work harder when you are feeling more insecure in your value?*
- 3. If you truly believed that you are loved by Jesus, how would it change how you work and serve Him and others?*
- 4. How can you help others stuck in **creating-value-through-doing** recognize that they are loved by Jesus?*

IDENTITY: HOW GOD SEES YOU

From Rescue Academy All Sessions

I remember the first time that I met someone who was color blind. We were talking about the plants around us and my friend spoke up and said "That is definitely not green to me." One of our mutual friends asked him, "Well if you can't see green, then how do you see that plant at all?" - as if a lack of color meant you saw right through the whole bush. He quickly returned the question by pretending that he could see right through anything green. As funny as that interaction was, it got me thinking about our own perspectives.

You may not be colorblind, but you see the world and everything in it from your own experiences. So how do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as a failure or screwup? Maybe you see yourself as better than everyone else? Perhaps you see your life as a series of mistakes? Regardless of your exact perspective, I can guarantee that God sees you differently than you see yourself. In you, God sees His own image - marred as it may be - destined for love and grace.

Read Genesis 1:26-31; Psalm 139: 1-18

1. What do you think it means to be "made in God's image"?
2. In this passage in Genesis, How does the creation of man in God's own image show the love of God?
3. In Psalm 139, to what degree does the passage express God's knowledge of humankind?
4. How might you live differently, if you saw yourself in the same way that God sees you?

THE GOSPEL: GOOD NEWS FOR ALL

From Rescue Academy All Sessions

In the culture that we live in today, the ability to receive and tell news has been all but lost. In such a globally-connected world where you can access any and all information at the click of a button, we're left overstimulated and often unable to process everything we are receiving. We read words and hear people talk and often immediately shut out all the noise - there is simply too much noise. As a result of this constant news, it is no surprise to me, that the good news of the Gospel is often shut out in the lives of those around us.

For you and I, the Gospel is the best news that anyone can hear. This news of Jesus and His love, grace, forgiveness, hope and plan for us is something that must be shared! What happens, however, when people don't care to listen at all as a result of all the noise? If our heart's desire is to share this Gospel news with others in our lives, we must first re-learn what it means to hear this Good News and then seek to live out the Gospel through loving, authentic friendship.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

1. When you read this passage and hear what Jesus has done for you, what are your immediate thoughts?
2. From verse 7 of this passage, why did God "make us alive" and "raise us up to sit with Jesus"?
3. What do you think are the "good works" that vs.10 says we were rescued and created in Christ Jesus for?
4. Verses 4-7 are an incredibly clear picture of the Gospel. How would you share that with a friend who hasn't heard?

OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER

From Rescue Academy All Sessions

Have you ever stopped to think about how unique and amazing the Church really is? We're not only talking about CrossPoint, but the entirety of those that follow Jesus. So what makes us different than the rest of the world? We can be sure that it is not our ability to reason with our minds, or how skilled we are at our crafts - those things are not unique to only the Church. Even looking at something like care for the poor should bend toward the Church, but there are many incredibly compassionate and caring people who are not following Jesus. So what is it that should mark and define the Church as a unique and compelling community?

The single most compelling and unique characteristic of the Church is the love shared between brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and friends. There is no group on earth with such a vast, unique and deep love within its family. While we may not always live up to this incredibly high calling individually, this incredible love is the visible sign of God in this world.

Read John 13:1-20; 34-35

- 1. In verses 1-20, Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. Why is this such a shocking act of service?*
- 2. In verses 2-5, we see Jesus lovingly serving all His disciples, even Judas who would betray him. How have you treated people that have betrayed you? Do you continue to love and serve them in the midst of all the pain?*
- 3. How can you take part in loving and serving others like Jesus did when he washed His disciples' feet?*