

Just Stop It: Transformation from the Inside Out

Faithwalkers 2016 Seminar: Message Notes

(1) My name is Dave Bovenmyer and I'm a pastor at *Stonebrook Community Church* in Ames Iowa.

I work with our church's care ministries, teach about once a month on Sunday, oversee some administrative areas, and help with our leadership training classes

My wife, Dawn, is here with me. We've been married for 40 years.

(2) We have seven children (Explain their situation)

As you can probably tell, we've had some disappointments accompanying raising our family story:

We had high hopes and great faith that our children would all love and serve the Lord

We diligently trained our children, using the rod, as Proverbs instructs. We home schooled, had regular family devotions, memorized verses together, had our kids involved in serving in the church and tried to help them reach out to others.

Yet two of our sons have left the faith and one seems to be barely holding on.

The rest are doing great, but something within us keeps wondering, "when will the next bombshell fall."

(3) My ministry has suffered similar disappointments

When in Maryland, I was the Executive Director of Great Commission Ministries and had a dream of leading that organization into a great, great work for the kingdom

Yet GCM quickly outgrew my ability to manage and I returned to pastoring in Ames as others more qualified took over

And, while serving as lead pastor in Ames, my fellow leaders were discontent with my leadership and we decided that it was best for the church for one of the other pastors, who had stronger leadership gifts and more inspiring teaching gifts to be the lead pastor and do the majority of the teaching

I was encouraged to concentrate on counseling and theological training, two areas I was gifted in, but, at that time especially, not areas that were highly honored in our churches.

In many ways, my life has seemed like I have gone through a series of demotions.

Thinking about this this week, I realized that Jesus also went through a series of demotions didn't He.

He humbled himself and became a man, humbled himself in obedience even to death on a cross.

Often God's way for us is down before we go up.

Through all this, we believe that God has taught us many things that can be a blessing and help to others.

And He has particularly taught us through being essentially forced into concentrating on the area that seemed so much less profitable—the area of counseling and care giving.

Today I would like to share with you one major lesson we have learned and are learning through our involvement in care ministry over the last 15 years.

At the end — Questions and Answers

(4) Who are we as human beings?

Body, Soul, Spirit — Our area of care ministry has focused on the soul. Other care ministries focus on physical needs.

We focus on hurts, habits, and hang-ups:

(5) Hurts — an emotional response to a disturbing situation such as rejection, aloneness, abuse, abandonment, divorce, tragedy, betrayal, etc.

A hurt can be something that was done to us or something that we did to ourselves or others.

Habit — An addiction to someone or something. Examples include alcohol, drugs, food, gambling, sex, shopping, smoking, pornography, work, entertainment, sleeping, cutting, binging & purging, etc.

(6) Hang-ups — sinful reactions that we use to cope with people or adversity, such as, anger, anxiety, overly controlling behavior, withdrawal and avoidance, criticizing others, self-loathing, etc.

We've worked with some men and women whose lives were deeply damaged by trauma, such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, physical or emotional neglect, divorce of parents, their own divorce, their own sexual sin, having an abortion, experiencing terrifying demonic manifestations, witnessing a murder, etc.

And we've also worked with many, many people who were damaged by their responses to more typical events that to them were traumatic, such as rejection by peers, rejection by someone they were romantically interested in, by failures in life and the dashing of their dreams, by the death of a family member that had never been grieved, etc.

To be honest, it has been an amazing journey, helping people so deeply and intimately.

Often I consider it a tremendous honor for someone to trust me like they do, to open up the very depths of their soul and their deepest secrets and fears and embarrassments.

It often seems like walking into the holy of holy place in their hearts and helping them

Principles that have helped us:

(7) Stop It! Video.

Why can't people just "Stop It?" The Water Line —

(8) The visible part above the waterline represent the things we do, the thoughts we consciously think, and the feelings we sense within us.

The great mass beneath the waterline represent the part of us that cannot be clearly seen: the motives and attitudes of you hearts, those strange impulses that sometime overwhelm our determination to resist them, the painful memories and intense emotions we are hidden beneath the surface of our lives."

Matthew 15:17-19 — It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the heart.

(9) For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone. (Matthew 15:19–20, ESV)

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for not cleaning up their hearts

(10) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. (Matthew 23:25–26, ESV)

Jesus extended the ten commandments into the heart

(11) But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:28, ESV)

Why do people have trouble, "Just stopping it?"

(12) We need repentance at a deeper level.

There is some area of deception or pride or stubbornness or fear or shame or loneliness or insecurity or anger or hatred or doubt that hasn't surfaced and been repented of and replaced with faith.

Repentance and change take exposure. You aren't going to change in something that you won't even acknowledge is a problem.

Secondly, we have trouble changing because we don't understand and believe the gospel as deeply as we should.

There are inner doubts and objections. There are parts of our hearts that don't trust God, are angry at Him, are afraid of Him, etc.

If I've learned anything from care ministry it is this. It is almost constantly the case with my own self and with any others who have really and thoroughly looked within.

The gospel hasn't been accepted in the deeper parts of the heart.

(13) to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Shalom Lost (Gary Sweeten hearts)

(14) Here is a simple diagram from Gary Sweeten's "Listening for Heaven's Sake" seminar that illustrates some of how God intended things to be.

God created man in His own **image**,

with deep desires to love and be loved.

Able to think, to have emotions, and choose.

And as the pinnacle of all creation, man was precious to Him and loved by Him.

And man and woman were designed to love God in return and to love each other.

There was intimacy between God and man and woman

What is intimacy? It is a deep mutual knowing for the purpose of caring involvement.

(15) Adam and Eve rebelled and the image of God within them was marred. It was not completely eradicated, but shattered.

All of us are now fallen

Our hearts were turned upside down

(16) Hidden parts of the heart

So, the first lesson we've learned is that deep, wholehearted change often requires that some work be done below the water line in the typically hidden portions of the heart.

The second lesson we've learned is that emotion can help uncover what's going on within our hearts

(17) Fact, faith, feeling train

1) If we change what we believe, we will change our emotions

2) If we pay attention to our emotion, we can uncover what we truly believe.

Example of losing your job — Fear, shows that we are struggling to believe that God will provide

This second principle is a very powerful principle that undergirds the core process that Dawn and I use in helping people—TPM

(18) Emotion is the window to the heart—particularly to hurting memories

Following emotion is like following a smoke trail to its source, to the fire that is still burning and needs to be put out.

Rick Beemer, my friend and fellow pastor in Michigan, who introduced us to TPM, introduced us to the power of emotion to uncover deeper areas of the heart that need healing and faith

Rick is a professional counselor and for ten years he used a form of cognitive therapy that many people found helpful to some degree

But he said that before he discovered TPM, it was like snorkeling. You could kind of see what was going on down under there, maybe a reef here or a school of fish there

But he said with TPM that it was like putting on the tanks and going deep. You got right up close and right in the face of the problem.

Emotion is like the tank that gets you there.

Rick said that after the first three months of TPM he had gone through more Kleenex than the previous ten years combined.

(19) What is TPM?

TPM is a disciplined way of exploring our hearts with the aid of the Holy Spirit, that follows our emotions to experiences and then to beliefs with the goal of re-interpreting those experiences and changing those beliefs in the light of the truth of God.

We've found this to be a powerful tool in uncovering false beliefs and inner pride and unbelief that needs exposure and repentance.

The third thing we have learned is that we all are effected by what we call “triggers.”

(20) A trigger is when an event automatically produces emotion based on past experience.

This is based on the principle of association

God has created our minds to associate present experiences with past experiences

Dawn — Fear of appearing stupid & her dad.

MAN

I think of a man I talked to who had had ten affairs over the course of his marriage.

None of them started as a purely sexual thing.

He came to understand and realize that every one started with a deep-seated, desperate need for female attention

And as his marriage was about to end, this Christian man turned to his local church, which had just begun a certain type of care ministry.

And through that ministry he recalled an unspeakably painful and life shaping moment in his life when his mother took the seat in the courtroom with him present and stated under oath that she no longer wanted him as her son and she gave him up for adoption.

And as he faced this horribly painful moment, he was able to release his rage toward his mom and forgive her and see that moment from the perspective of God's grace and mercy and love for Him.

And since that day, his incessant craving for female attention simply vanished

His marriage has been restored and he has grown to become a faithful husband and father.

WOMAN

I think of a woman who came to me having suffered from deep depression for over a year.

She had many problems in life, but the biggest problem seemed to be the depression itself,

It seemed to have her by the throat

It seemed to keep her from taking the steps she knew she should take to overcome her other problems.

I used some tools I had learned to try to help her uncover the sadness and anger and fear that was beneath her depression.

While in the process of doing this, she stopped short

She took in a deep breath and just sat there, seemingly stunned.

With all the courage she could muster, she reported that she remembered something she had tried to push out of her mind a thousand times—the memory of her abortion.

And over the next hour, I sat in amazement as I watched her and helped her bring this event before God,

She found forgiveness in a deeper way,

In deep agony, she mourned the loss of her child,

She released rage toward herself

Rage toward those who pressured her to abort,

And rage toward God,

And she found deep, indescribable comfort from the Lord.

You know what?

Her depression significantly lessened that day.

The Spirit's work in healing the heart

(21) Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139:23–24, ESV)

Sometimes achieving comfort requires more than words.

(22) Story of a mom comforting her child

When a child is hurt, a mother instinctively knows that the child needs reassurance and comfort. She may say words such as, “It’s not really bad, you are going to be OK,” yet a good mom will do much more than that. She will take the child on her lap, fuss a little over the wound, look at it closely, give the child a hug and a kiss, express sorrow and maybe take some time with the child to tell a story about hurts she received in the past. Her tone of voice and body language and the quickness that she responds to the child’s cries for help will communicate her love, care, and desire to protect. All these things communicate to the child and create more than just “head knowledge” but an “experience.” The totality of the experience of mom’s comfort actually do comfort the child as he believes that the hurt isn’t really severe, and that Mom loves him and is watching over him. Words are part of this, but only a part. Often, words themselves would not be sufficient, especially if the other elements of the experience are absent or contradict the words. The words “you’ll be OK,” if accompanied by apathy (continuing to go about life without paying much real attention to the child), or contempt (the insinuation that you shouldn’t be wining about such a small thing) would not comfort the child all that much and may confuse him or wrongfully shame him. I can see that painful experiences from our past, especially traumatic ones, have communicated something to us very powerfully through all our senses, with powerful force, and in multifaceted ways. Such deeply ingrained conviction born from overwhelming experience, may be difficult, if not impossible to dislodge with words alone. An experience of God’s love or comfort that is in addition to words may be necessary to counteract the painful experience.

Dawn — We don’t show affection in our family.

Is it worth it?

(23) Thorn in sock in Kentucky

(24) Wound with more and more bandages to cover it.

Sewer Backup

Suppose that one day you come home and smell an awful smell in the house.

So you go down into the basement and see that there's **sewer water** all over the basement floor. (25)

Well, it smells so bad and the thought of it is so overwhelming that you freak out, run up the stairs, slam the door and say, "Boy does that stink. **I'm not going down there again.**" (26)

Well, the next day, the house smells even worse. But when you open the basement door, the putrid smell is so horrible that you immediately slam the door and say, "**I'm never opening that door again.**"

And so there you sit, every day living in a stinky house because you can't bear to go down into the basement and deal with the slimy, vile mess in the basement.

That's what it's like with many of us. Looking below the water line seems **too ugly, to frightening and too humiliating** to pursue.

Some of us have **locked** the door and put bars and chains on it and even pile up boulders and dirt in front of the door, trying to keep out the stench.

Even the task of opening the door would take **so much effort** that we wonder if it is really worth it.

And, let me warn you, many people go to their **graves** never having the courage to clean out the basement of their hearts, believing it's better just to live with the stench.

But, here's the problem. (27) The **washing machine** is in the basement and the pool table is in the basement and the entertainment center is down there as well.

When you decide to seal up the basement, you not only end up with a stinky house, but your clothes don't get washed and you can't enjoy the fun aspects of the basement.

You see, when we lock up our hearts to protect ourselves against the pain and shame and ugliness that's inside, we **lock up much of the passion and love and joy** that are down there as well.

And so, many of us live a shallow, plastic, **passionless** life— seemingly **safe**, but **hollow** and **dead**.

I believe that this would, in many ways describe what I've come to discover was true of me for many, many years. **My heart** had been, in many ways, **shut off and sealed up.** (29)

Since I've been unwilling and unable to connect with my own heart, I've had a limited ability to **connect with the hearts of others either**, including my own family and children.

First of all, I thought that such a journey was **unnecessary**, and secondly that probably **wouldn't do any good** anyway,

and thirdly, it might be **too shameful** and humiliating and scary to think about pursuing.

For sure it's **scary**

I've **not met anyone** yet who hasn't had real and powerful **trepidation** at the prospect of really looking below the water line.

But I'd like to encourage you to **think and pray** about it, not only for yourself, but as an example for those you lead.

For those who pursue it, I believe it will be a journey that's fully **worth it in the end**.

The fallen tree: (29)

Reminded me of a couple fallen leaders in our movement.

Before it fell, it looked no different from any of the other trees

It was rotten and decaying on the inside

Could there be a way to probe the trees, to take a boring, maybe you could save some

We need to find ways to help one another look below the water line to probe the hidden things of the heart so that where there is rottenness, it can be healed.