

## Establishing a gospel culture in discipleship

### I. A foundation for gospel culture

#### A. How do we make disciples?

Making disciples is about helping each other be and live like Jesus. The key question is how? How do we help each other to grow? We all know that sin is what keeps us from being like Jesus. So helping each other with our sin is how we help each other grow. But it's easy to fall into several traps when dealing with sin. So it's easy to think pointing out sin, rebuking for sin, shaming for sin, etc. are good. And to some degree revealing sin is good, but it can easily miss *how* the gospel works in our hearts.

For the gospel to transform, we need its truth to sink in to people's hearts. How do we help each other be honest about our sin? We want to foster a safe gospel environment to open up, confess, and grow. That means a gospel environment of no condemnation. We don't want people to hide their sin, but to admit it and bring it to light where the forgiveness of the gospel is found.

#### B. What is a culture?

A culture is a shared set of beliefs, values, and practices that characterize a group. Cultures are intangible in a way; They can't merely be taught, or merely be caught. Rather, culture must be built up by intentionally teaching, modeling, and encouraging those values so that they are worked out and spread throughout a group.

#### C. What is a gospel culture?

A gospel culture is when the reality of the no condemnation good news of the gospel works its way into the welcoming, forgiving, gentle, and patient way that we deal with each other and our sin. It means doing whatever we can to help each other to repent of our sin and grow, making the environment safe to be transparent, and full of the gentleness, patience, and kindness of God in how we treat one another. It means removing shame, covering sin, helping people feel understood, and that their sin doesn't make them worse than you. A gospel culture uses the gospel to motivate change and growth, depending on the Spirit to transform, and so using His methods rather than human centered methods of change.

#### D. The kindness of God leads to repentance

*Romans 2:3-4*

*But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?*

Do you **think lightly** of the riches of God's kindness, tolerance, and patience?

Are you **ignorant** of how you yourself were led to repentance?

Have we **forgotten** how much we've been forgiven that we think judging others will help them?

#### E. The goal is always to help people **see** and grow in **faith** in God's goodness

The goal is love that comes from sincere faith.

*1 Timothy 1:4-5*

*...nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

F. The gospel transforms by the power of the Spirit

We have no power apart from Christ.

*John 15:5*

*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

The Holy Spirit needs to convict, that is not our job.

*John 16:8-11*

*And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.*

The gospel is what has the power of God.

*Romans 1:16*

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

*We will use human methods to try to force change when we think we have the power to change. It's easy to think that what people need is correction, that their sin is an information problem. We think if they just knew what was right, they would change, or if we just told them what was true, if we were just blunt with them, they would change. But often, the issue is in the heart, not just the head. Often the problem isn't that we don't know what should change, but we don't want to put in the effort to change. We need faith to change, not just information. We need to see that Jesus is better, we need encouragement for our faith to grow. And this is the work of the Spirit in the heart. Our job is to come alongside and **help** each other to grow.*

II. A gospel culture embodies the no condemnation in Christ

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

*Romans 8:1*

*Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

A. Those who understand mercy are merciful

Jesus Himself said, "Blessed are the merciful."

*Matthew 5:7*

*"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."*

We will be judged the way that we judge others! If we are harsh and trying to hold them to the letter of the law, that's how we will be judged. That shows a lack of understanding gospel grace!

*Matthew 7:1-5*

*“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”*

Judgment prevents merciful love. It’s easy to start thinking that people don’t deserve mercy, which is of course true, but misses the whole point!

*Luke 6:36-37*

*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.”*

Do not judge before the time, now is not the time to judge motives.

*1 Corinthians 4:3-6*

*But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God. Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.*

Do not speak down to a brother, that’s placing yourself in the place of God.

*James 4:10-12*

*Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?*

Do I see myself as a sinner in need of God’s grace? Then I will be quick to forgive and show mercy. I won’t judge motives, I won’t judge situations quickly. As a sinner desperate for grace, I will love showing grace. Before I judge, I will make sure I’m not judging in any of the ways God commands us not to. There is a kind of judgment that is fundamentally opposed to the gospel.

## B. We view others through the lens of the gospel

We need to view and recognize others through what Jesus has done and is doing in them.

*2 Corinthians 5:16*

*Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.*

Love hopes all things.

*1 Corinthians 13:5-7*

*...does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Because we are all so full of sin, it's easy to fall into a mindset of just being negative about everyone around us. We can be so focused on everyone's sin and think our mission is to change people in our flesh. But we forget that transformation is the Spirit's job, and we are called to be ambassadors of God's grace. The gospel allows us to view each other through the lens of forgiveness and overlook offenses and love people as they are. That doesn't mean never helping people to see their sin, but does so in God's timing and His way.

### C. Gospel culture of covering sin

Love covers a multitude of sins.

*1 Peter 4:8*

*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*

Love covers, not spreads sin.

*Proverbs 10:12; 11:13; 17:9*

*Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions.*

*He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.*

*He who conceals a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.*

Paul's heart was to not overwhelm with excessive sorrow.

*2 Corinthians 2:6-7*

*Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.*

Great is my confidence in you! He wrote this to the Corinthians!

*2 Corinthians 7:4, 16*

*Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.*

*I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.*

The way that Paul handled the Corinthians' sin is so convicting because of how patient he was! He was after their hearts and gently encouraged them, while still dealing with their sin. His stance, attitude, and posture towards them was so kind and gentle, he wanted to do absolutely everything he could to help them see that he was **for them**, even when dealing with their sin.

### D. Table Discussion: What are areas you fall into having a judgmental attitude towards others? (Hint: when we are impatient and not gentle with peoples' sin, this is revealing our heart attitude towards them.)

III. Gentleness and selfless love win people to truth

A. Gentleness is Christlike

Jesus is gentle and lowly in heart.

*Matthew 11:29*

*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

I urge you with the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

*2 Corinthians 10:1*

*Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ— I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!*

B. Genuine care is fundamental to the gospel

We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

*1 John 3:16, 18*

*We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

*Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

You are in our hearts to live together and to die together.

*2 Corinthians 7:3*

*I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.*

C. Our goal is to do whatever we can to win people

Giving no offense for anything so that the ministry will not be discredited.

*2 Corinthians 6:3*

*...giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited...*

Paul does everything so that he might win some.

*1 Corinthians 9:19-24*

*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.*

We persuade people, we beg people.

*2 Corinthians 5:11, 20*

*Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.*

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

Show your brother sins in private to win them.

*Matthew 18:15*

*“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”*

D. Even correction is to be done gently

We restore in a spirit of gentleness.

*Galatians 6:1*

*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*

Even false teachers should be corrected gently, that’s how we help people repent, which is always our hope.

*2 Timothy 2:24-26*

*The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

E. But different people require different approaches

Admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all.

*1 Thessalonians 5:14*

*We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

F. Table Discussion: How have you experienced someone’s Christlike gentle care in discipleship that encouraged your faith and even made you want to open up about your sin? Or how has someone’s harsh judgment of you made you want to hide your sin?

#### IV. Transparency, confession, and repentance are how we grow

The purpose of all this no condemnation, gentle, patient, sin-covering, merciful, love-lensed, no judgment care is to provide an environment where people see and embrace the goodness of confessing and repenting of sin for themselves. The goal isn't just accepting each other's sin. The goal is to embrace growing in our faith. We want to provide such a clearly loving, welcoming, and not condemning environment that we make it a blessing to open up about our sin. We want people to be confident that if they open up, they will be met with encouragement and help. We want people to know that confessing is a balm to our souls. And we want this culture to so pervade the church that it's actually normalized to talk about our sin and struggles and to be met with compassionate biblical care. We want to be able to talk about our heart idols without feeling like people look at us weird. We never want to be surprised at other people's sin because we know how deep our sin is.

Confess your sins to one another.

*James 5:16*

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

Bringing sin to the light is where forgiveness and healing are found.

*1 John 1:9*

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Confession is where mercy is found.

*Proverbs 28:13*

*He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.*

- A. Table Discussion: How has opening up about your sin in a discipleship relationship helped you grow?
- B. Speak the truth in love to one another

*Ephesians 4:15, 25*

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

*Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*

#### V. Small Group Discussion Questions

- What sins or types of people am I tempted to judge harshly? How does the gospel compel us to view other sinners compassionately and not feel superior to them?
- What kind of cultures can thrive in churches that are opposed to the gospel that we take pride in?
- How do we help foster a gospel culture? Discuss practical ways we can help this gospel culture grow at RBC.

## VI. Homework

Carve out time this week to have at least a 30 minute conversation (preferably with someone from class), and discuss how to apply Rom. 2:3-4:

- Read Rom. 2:3-4 together and discuss how it informs how we encourage each other to repent?
- What are areas I personally struggle to deal kindly, patiently, and suffer long with others (like God does) in their sin?
- How can dealing kindly, patiently, and suffering long with others (like God does), foster godly confession toward one another?
- Write up a short summary of your conversation and what you learned.