

# The Discipleship Wheel Illustration

## Chapter Ten Not Ashamed of the Gospel—Part One

Last Revised: 2/10/2012

### Scripture Memory

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.*

### Review

- Draw The Wheel Illustration
- II Corinthians 5:17
- Galatians 2:20
- II Timothy 3:16
- Joshua 1:8
- The Word Hand
- Philippians 4:6-7
- John 15:7
- The Prayer Hand
- Philippians 2:1-2
- Hebrews 10:24-25
- The Fellowship Tree and The Scales of Community

## Not Ashamed of the Gospel

What are you ashamed of? Something in your past? A friend or family member? For some, it takes a little thought; for others, something immediately comes to mind; for almost all, there is something or someone that causes us embarrassment or shame in our lives.

If a young man asks a woman to marry him and then says, “But let’s not tell anyone,” you have to ask yourself, “What’s he ashamed of?” You would think he would be shouting it from the rooftops.

A common theme in literature and the arts is the scenario of the sophisticated child who is ashamed of his country bumpkin parents, relatives or roots. Society invariably judges this young man with a critical eye for this attitude, but it is a common enough theme to have repeatedly appeared in literature and the arts from Aesop’s Fables of the ancient Greeks to Shakespeare to modern sitcoms. It is an almost universally recognized experience in all cultures.

There are times when we are ashamed of the work we have done. Whether at work or a hobby, who of us has not been ashamed as we stepped back, looked at an accomplishment and then been a little bit ashamed that our name would be associated with it. As a minister I know from experience that if, at a social gathering of fellow ministers, the talk turns to sermons or messages done early in one’s career, many an embarrassing anecdote will be shared.

Other times we are embarrassed or ashamed for others’ rude behavior or ill-prepared public presentation or performance. Who has not squirmed silently in their seats at the actions of another? Whatever the circumstances, we find ourselves ashamed or embarrassed of and for the individual.

To be ashamed or embarrassed of ourselves, a product, our actions, or a friend or family member is something we can all relate to with ease. But what about being ashamed of the gospel, of the person of Jesus Christ, of the work of God? This is an entirely different proposition. It is one thing to be ashamed of your own shoddy workmanship, to be ashamed of the boorish behavior of another, to be ashamed of the poor skills or preparation of a performance or presentation, even of a country bumpkin relative (even though this reflects on our own pride and vanity), but to be ashamed of the gospel!! The ensuing study will address this issue as we seek to overcome one of the major obstacles to personal evangelism.

## I. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel...*

### **ASHAMED**

1870 *epaischunomai* (ep-ahee-skhoo'-nom-ahee); from 1909 and 153; to feel shame for something: KJV-- be ashamed. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.)

### **ASHAMED (TO BE), SHAME**

2. *epaischunomai* ^1870^, a strengthened form of No. 1 (epi, "upon," intensive), is used only in the sense (b) in the preceding paragraph. It is said of being "ashamed" of persons, <Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26>; the gospel, <Rom. 1:16>; former evil doing, <Rom. 6:21>; "the testimony of our Lord," <2 Tim. 1:8>; suffering for the gospel, <v. 12>; rendering assistance and comfort to one who is suffering for the gospel's sake, <v. 16>. It is used in Heb., of Christ in calling those who are sanctified His brethren, <2:11>, and of God in His not being "ashamed" to be called the God of believers, <11:16>.# In the Sept., in <Job 34:19; Ps. 119:6; Isa. 1:29>.#

(Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.)

### **A. Not Ashamed of the Gospel: Authority**

1. **Apart from Other Supposed Authorities** —“Not ashamed of the authority of the gospel” means that it is not an embarrassment to us that the gospel and gospel alone, in its simplest and unadulterated form, is sufficient for rebirth and, as such, exists apart from any other authority, be it scientific, cultural, political or religious.
  - a. In the project below read the verse and then reflect on its application to the reality that the authority of Christ and the gospel is continually challenged by the world.

Matthew 21:23: *And when He had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?”*

Luke 5:21-24

21 *And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”*

22 *But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts?*

23    "*Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?*

24    "*But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,*"—He said to the paralytic—*"I say to you, rise, and take up your stretcher and go home."*

#### John 19:10-11

10    *Pilate therefore said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"*

11    *Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin."*

- b. According to the following passage, what is our authority in witnessing, baptizing and discipling?

#### Matthew 28:18-20

18    *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

19    *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

20    *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

- c. Can you honestly say that you have confidence in the gospel and the Word of God?

- d. Do you find yourself, at times, a little ashamed at its simplicity and blandness? Does it appear almost naive to you to think that you could simply present the gospel through quoting key verses and someone's life be changed forever?
  
  
  
  
  
  
- e. Like a child who brings his college friends to meet his simple, rustic parents, do you find the approach of evangelism using the authority and simplicity of the Bible a little embarrassing?
  
  
  
  
  
  
- f. Is the fact that it is in the Bible enough for you or do you need secondary authority for reassurance? Are you ashamed of aspects of the gospel which stand solely on the authority of the Word of God and are at odds with the authority structures of the world, be they intellectual, political, religious or cultural in nature?
  - (1) Is there a tendency for you to protect people from the embarrassing aspects of the Word of God which are in opposition to existing scientific or cultural authorities?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - (2) It is true the Word of God is not always applicable to a situation, but it is equally true that it is never harmful. If you are witnessing, it may not be applicable to read a two page list of genealogies from the book of Numbers; but it is never harmful to expose people to the Word of God. Do you have this conviction or are you ashamed of some aspects of the Word of God? Do you view passages which oppose authority structures as harmful and unproductive spiritually?

- g. Does your hesitancy to share Christ have to do in any way with your lack of confidence in its authority?
- (1) If I were to say, “I have irrefutable proof that Jesus Christ rose from the dead” and, based on this statement, you invited me to share this proof publicly with a student group or office group filled with skeptics and if my sole evidence was Luke 24:6-7 (*He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again*), would you be ashamed or embarrassed by my so-called irrefutable proof?
- (2) If I were to say, “I have irrefutable proof that Jesus Christ is the only way, that all other religions are wrong and that Christianity alone is right” and you invited me to share this proof publicly with a student group or office group filled with skeptics and devout practitioners of other religions and my sole proof was Acts 4:12 (“*And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved*”), would you be ashamed or embarrassed by my so-called irrefutable proof?

- (3) We may rightfully be hesitant to witness because it is painful or difficult. That is not a sin. It is, however, a sin to be ashamed of the gospel because it contradicts or flies in the face of other authorities. If you have a godly father who is a common laborer, who lives in a far off rural community, who cannot drive and who does not have the money for alternative transportation, it is not a sin to not look forward to the long and difficult drive to and from his home to make it possible for him to visit. It would, however, be a sin for you to be embarrassed of introducing your father to your more sophisticated friends once the difficult journey had been made. In the same way, it is not a sin to not look forward to a very difficult and arduous witnessing experience which you know God is calling you to accomplish. It is, however, a sin to be embarrassed of the gospel's sole reliance upon the authority of the inspired Word of God as its authority.
- (4) Can you honestly say that you are not ashamed of the gospel when it flies in the face of academic or cultural authorities?

2. **Apart from Works** means that the gospel of Jesus Christ is absolutely free and absolutely accomplished apart from any and all endeavors or accomplishments on our part. It means that at no time—before, after or during the salvation of man—do self-generated moral accomplishments or actions come into play as an agent of salvation, regeneration or security of the believer. We love God and serve Him, not because this will illicit any response towards us regarding His love for us and the resulting salvation of our souls which is given freely without reference to our behavior. Rather, all our actions are carried out as an expression of our love for God. It means that no matter what we do, God will not love us more; and no matter what we do, God will not love us less. The love of God and our resulting salvation is fixed not in the actions of man but rather in the nature and councils of God.
  - a. Do you find this a little embarrassing? A little cheap? Do you feel the need to upgrade the worth of the gospel?

- b. How do the following verses speak to the total independence of God's love for us from our own actions or performance?

Romans 5:6-8

- 6 *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*  
7 *For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.*  
8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Ephesians 2:4-5

- 4 *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*  
5 *even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)*

I John 4:18-19

- 18 *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.*  
19 *We love, because He first loved us.*

- c. How do the following verses speak to the total independence of salvation from any work of any kind on the part of the Christian?

Ephesians 2:8-9

- 8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*  
9 *not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*

- (1) What is one of the rationales given in verse nine for this system?

- (2) How does our pride factor in with being ashamed of the gospel as it pertains to works?
  
  
  
  
  
- (3) The sin of pride in a works-based salvation inevitably leads to the sin of embarrassment over the simple presentation of the gospel.

*Titus 3:5: He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.*

- d. In Ephesians 2:8 and 9 what important doctrine assures us that salvation is not by works?

For by \_\_\_\_\_ you have been saved

- e. In Titus 3:5 what important doctrine assures us that salvation is not by works?

... but according to His \_\_\_\_\_

- f. Grace and mercy, though similar, are uniquely different.

Grace – Receiving that which is not deserved  
Mercy – Not receiving what is deserved

- (1) What do we receive by grace?

(2) What do we not receive by mercy?

(3) What aspect of the definition of grace uniquely precludes salvation by works?

(4) What aspect of the definition of mercy uniquely precludes salvation by works?

Many will grant heaven by grace as from God and not by works and then turn around and grant hell by works. In other words, a person is saved by grace and on his way to heaven; but then because of his works, he is sent to hell. How does Titus 3:5 and its reference to mercy exclude not only the doctrine that works do not get us to heaven, but that equally true is the phrase that for those called of God, works do not send us to hell?

How do the following verses address this issue?

Galatians 3:1-3

- 1 *You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?*
- 2 *This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?*
- 3 *Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*

- g. One aspect of being ashamed of the gospel has to do with fairness. It just does not seem fair that some go to heaven and some go to hell on the basis of grace and mercy rather than on the basis of works.

Is it fair that Jesus, living a sinless life, should die for you who lived a sinful life?

If God were to be fair, once Jesus had lived a sinless life, He would have gone to heaven. Then all those who did not live a sinless life would have gone to hell. Do you want God to be fair?

If God were fair, where would you go when you die?

- h. Does the gospel seem just too good to be true?
- i. Does it seem naive to you to tell people, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.” Are you just a little bit ashamed of the gospel?

3. **Apart from Institutions** means that the proof, work and efficiency of the gospel relies solely upon the will of God as expressed by the revealed and sovereignly protected Word of God. It means that no institution confirms or rejects the gospel of Jesus Christ. It needs no confirmation, no proof, no support of any kind for its efficiency but rests solely upon God.
  - a. Some people are ashamed of the simplicity of the gospel in terms of its presentation. They want something with more institutional support, something a little more showy. It seems to them naive to believe that the simple, straightforward manner of the gospel presentation would bring about an eternal change in a man's life. Something that big must be packaged big. Surely there must be an institutional setting to bring about such dramatic changes. If dramatic testimonies are more powerful than mundane ones, then conversion must rely on the dramatic. It is from this mindset that the term "Powerful Testimony" enters our vernacular. A powerful testimony is one given by someone who, steeped in sin and degradation, comes to Christ. A weak testimony is given by some poor sap who was raised by Christian parents, who from birth dedicated him to Christ, prayed over him and raised him in the faith, creating a Christian environment in the home and in his life experience whereby he was protected from degradation and from an early point in life was nurtured in the faith. This poor fellow, cheated by his parents from having a "Powerful Testimony," must, by default, have a weak one. How far from the truth can this be? Yet a view that the dramatic, that drama, that institutional productions enhance the gospel leads to this very mindset. How does Paul deal with this mindset in the following verses?

1 Corinthians 2:4-5

*4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,  
5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.*

2 Corinthians 4:2: *but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

Think for a moment about this concept of “adulterating” the Word of God. The first response of most Christians is, “I would never do that!” Yet, do you ever find yourself feeling the need to “fix” the gospel?

## 2 Corinthians 2:17-3:3

*17 For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.*

*3:1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?*

*2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;*

*3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.*

- b. If we are honest, this feeling that without an institutional setting, a validation of an institution proving a program, a “hook,” a series of events, something both lending authority while at the same time able to captivate and entertain reveals our embarrassment that the gospel itself is just too simplistic and dated to be relevant and attractive. Do you ever find yourself thinking that if only you had something “big,” you could impact your community for Christ, and that what you do have—the message of Christ—is just too humble to take to the world? Is this really the problem? Are you, in fact, ashamed of the gospel, unwilling to take it out into an arena where it will, no doubt, be an embarrassment both to you and to God?
  
4. **Apart from Sociology, Psychology or Anthropology** means that the depravity of man has left him helpless. He is so blinded to the gospel and Satan has so enslaved him, that sin has slain him. That man, being lost, blind, enslaved and dead is beyond any remedy or any aid except that of the gospel of Christ. It means that the disciplines of human science are of no consequence given man’s spiritual state. Rather, the call of God, the work of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Word of God reign su-

preme in the work of salvation in unregenerate man. No social, psychological or spiritual barrier comes close to the impediment of the depravity of man; and the work of God in the remedy of said depravity not only exceeds the scope of these sciences but, in fact, works in spite of them not because of or in concert with them.

- a. Just how bad off is man without Christ? If his problem is simply that of a lack of knowledge, then our burden is great indeed. If, on the other hand, his problem is of such a nature that only the intervention of God will save him, then we become messengers and not saviors. Freed from being saviors, we are freed from fixing the gospel for those who hear. How does Ephesians 2:1-3 speak of man's state without Christ? Is this problem simply one of knowledge?

#### Ephesians 2:1-3

- 1 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,*
- 2 *in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*
- 3 *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

- b. In our earnestness to witness as Christians we sometimes forget the non-Christian's lack of ability to understand spiritual issues. The longer we are saved, the dimmer is the memory of how utterly confounding and foolish the gospel and the Word of God was to us before God saved us from our depraved state. As a result, there is a tendency to forget that there is no understanding of the gospel apart from the divine illumination of God. Read and reflect on 2 Corinthians 4:4-6 as it pertains to this reality.

#### 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

- 4 *in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*
- 5 *For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.*
- 6 *For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

- (1) According to this passage, what is man's problem as it pertains to understanding the gospel of Christ? (verse 4)

(2) What is the solution for this problem? (verse 6)

(3) What does that free us to do and be? (verse 5)

(4) How does this free us from the responsibilities of mastering the difficult fields of sociology, psychology or anthropology in the presentation of the gospel?

- c. Do you really feel the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all peoples, to all cultures, to all men? Do you believe that if the message can be transmitted in an intelligible language, that the gospel will do the rest?
- d. Many experience a loss of confidence in the gospel's ability to penetrate and convict the thoughts and desires of men's hearts, especially as it pertains to a culture that is foreign to their own. They have decided that not only must the gospel be presented but that it must be presented in a sociologically sophisticated manner, something that the common man, equipped with the Word of God, simply cannot accomplish. Sure there are men who in their naivety and simplicity there think that God

can use anyone, that by clearly presenting the Word of God, God will do the rest. But you are not among those amateurs.

- e. Instead, we are ashamed; and we begin thinking in sociological terms to reach men for Christ rather than in biblical terms. The approach of simply presenting the Word of God to people and leaving the results to the power of the gospel, the work of the Holy Spirit, the effectual call of God, the work of Christ on their heart seems both antiquated and simplistic to us. We are ashamed and embarrassed by those who rely simply upon this rather than those who study and apply the deeper understanding of man through psychology, sociology and anthropology.
  - f. Picture for a moment the culture of the time period of Christ—the language, the lifestyles, the technologies. Now consider your own language, lifestyle, culture, technology. Could any two cultures be further apart? Yet, you came to Christ as a result of the simplicity of the gospel. If it can bridge this gap, it can bridge any gap. Why do we tend to not believe this? Why do we tend to be ashamed of the gospel as it pertains to all the people of the world?
5. **Apart from Intellectual or Emotional Preparation** means that the impediment of depravity so renders one both intellectually and emotionally dead to Christ and that, as such, he is beyond the powers of man to revive him, resting wholly upon the mercy and grace of God. It means that having received the mercy and grace of God, all else becomes inconsequential. It means that the call of God, the work of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Word of God are of such a nature that they stand independent of any other contrivance of man and stand solely upon God's sole authority, power and will.
- a. Do you really feel that the gospel is the power of God for salvation, that the intellectual and emotional preparation for man is inconsequential as compared to the Word of God? How can something so important be communicated in such a simplistic way? This borders not on the naïve but on the foolish. Is it embarrassing to you to hear of people who go right to the gospel without first laying the intellectual and emotional groundwork?

- b. To be quite frank, many have come to believe that the Bible is dull and the gospel just does not captivate. We are ashamed of a tool and vehicle that has been handed down to us by the Apostles through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is so bland and lacks the sophistication and extreme emotional impact provided by modern technology and entertainment.
- c. If the gospel cannot be accompanied by spectacular miracles to get its point across, then at least accompany it with something spectacular, anything spectacular. Failing to have access to the spectacular then at least gives us ironclad wisdom, logic and sophistication of thought and presentation.
- d. We begin to take pride in our own understanding of the gospel, and with this pride comes an embarrassment towards those who present the gospel with a few sets of memory verses and an earnest appeal. We are ashamed for them and their naivety. Don't they understand that it just will not work that way any longer? Man must be prepared over a long period of time by our convincing arguments and by our sophisticated approach to the Christian life.
- e. Do you find yourself ashamed of a simple message, a simple plan and, yes, the simple people who often share the gospel?
  
- f. Early in my discipleship training with the Navigators, a wise and older staff man used to continually repeat this principle to me as it pertained to evangelism – **KISS** (**K**eep **I**t **S**imply **S**imple). He was always reminding me it must be simple and direct enough to quickly pass on to another if the world was to be reached for Christ. How do the above convictions free us to apply this principle?

**Quiet Times Alone With God—Jeremiah 15:16—Chapter 10 Theme: Not Ashamed of the Gospel  
Part One**

**Passage for Meditation: Matthew 28:18-19**

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

**Passage for Meditation: 2 Corinthians 2:4-5**

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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**Passage for Meditation: 2 Corinthians 4:2**

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**Passage for Meditation: Matthew 21:23; Luke 5:21-24**

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