

Gospel Theology - Mini Course

Gospel is a Third Way Examples

Now that we know the Gospel is a Third Way, how do we apply this to really challenging topics?

1. Discouragement.

When a person is discouraged, the moralist, religious person says, “You are breaking the rules—repent.” On the other hand, the irreligious person says, “You just need to love and accept yourself.” Without the gospel, the response is superficial. You don’t address the heart. The moralist will work on behavior and the relativist will work on the emotions. But the gospel leads us to examine ourselves and say, “Something in my life has become more important to me than God, a false-savior, a form of works righteousness.” The gospel leads us to genuine repentance.

2. Love and relationships.

Moralism often makes relationships into a “blame game.” Why? Because this person is traumatized when criticized. So in order to maintain a self-image of being a good person, they are quick to blame others. On the other hand, moralistic people can use love as a way to feel worthy and valuable. It’s a way for them to “earn their salvation.”

Irreligious people reduces love to a transaction. You relate to a person as long as it’s not costing you anything. This creates selfishly using other people or let yourself be used by others.

The gospel leads us to something different altogether. In love and relationships, because of the gospel, we sacrifice, we commit ourselves wholeheartedly, not to convince ourselves or other that we are worthy and accepted. We can confront people we love when we need to and we can stay in relationship with that person even if it doesn’t benefit us.

3. Suffering.

If you're a religious person how do you approach suffering? You'll probably think you don't deserve this. "I did everything right. I've been good. What did I do to deserve this God?" You become distant, angry with God. Why? Because you believe God owes you, the he's in your debt.

On the other hand, you may think "I did everything to deserve this!" I haven't been performing well. I'm a horrible person. You live under this shame and guilt for not living up to a set of standards and you begin to be angry at yourself.

The relativist, the irreligious person feels justified in avoiding suffering at all costs—lying, cheating, and broken promises, those are all okay to the irreligious persons. But when suffering does come, the irreligious person says, "God it's your fault." To the relativist, God is either unjust or powerless.

The cross shows us, however, that God redeemed us through suffering. God suffered not that we wouldn't suffer but that in our suffering we could become like him. Since both the religious person and the irreligious person ignore the cross, they will both be confused and devastated by suffering.

All problems in life, personal, social, at work, come from a failure to get "in-line" with the truth of the gospel, to apply the gospel in a radical way.

The gospel is such a beautiful reality of God's amazing grace that brings transforming joy and power in all areas of our lives.

Take time and reflect on other challenging topics and issues in your own life and context. How does the Gospel change the way you approach those issues?