

THE SALTSHAKER

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GRACE Training

By Rev. Sean McCann

A few weeks ago I announced from the pulpit that on Saturday, June 2, we will host a one-day training seminar put on by GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment). I want to use this article to explain a bit more how this seminar came about and what it will entail.

Last year we as a Session began to think and pray about how we could serve and lead our church in a time when experiences of sexual abuse seem to be on the rise. We are hearing more and more stories of abuse though the #MeToo movement (a social media movement begun in October 2017 with multiple sexual misconduct allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein), but none of this is new. A few years ago Jamie Dean wrote in WORLD Magazine: “Dealing with child sexual abuse isn’t a new challenge, but it’s a massive one: The U.S. Department of Justice estimates an average of one child molester per square mile in the United States. Statistics vary widely, but some estimates say as many as one out of four girls and one out of six boys endure sexual abuse by age 18. With 75 million children in the United States, that means nearly 15 million children could face sexual abuse in the next 18 years” (WORLD Issue: “Going it Alone,” Nov. 2, 2013).

For years we have been using a helpful church software screening program called *Protect My Ministry*, as well as hosting a few training sessions using *Darkness 2 Light* material, but we still felt like we could do more in the areas of prevention and counseling. This desire was in part a response to an action taken at the 42nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) in 2014. At that meeting our denomination passed an overture on Child Protection that included this resolution: “Be it further resolved that we urge all church leaders to use their influence for the protection of children, by any and all godly means, including preaching and teaching against the heinous sin of child sexual abuse, warning anyone with knowledge of these sins to “take

no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” (Ephesians 5:11), and by supporting victims who often suffer in silence and shame without the vocal and compassionate support of the church.”

As we began to search for resources to help us grow in this area, we were led time and time again to GRACE, which was founded in 2003 by Boz Tchividjian. According to the website, Tchividjian “is a former assistant state attorney, who served as chief prosecutor in the Sexual Crimes Division, where he gained experience in cases involving sexual abuse, and later served as the attorney for the Child Advocacy Center in Daytona Beach, Florida. Boz has also spoken extensively on the subject of child abuse at various events including the conferences sponsored by the American Association of Christian Counselors and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Boz currently serves as a law professor at Liberty University School of Law” (www.netgrace.org).

Since its founding, GRACE has grown to become a trusted resource for response assistance, consultations, and independent investigations of ministries in the wake of disclosures of abuse. Here is how they describe their ministry in their own words:

“As followers of Jesus Christ, the GRACE team seeks to be faithful and obedient to his teaching and the teachings of the whole of Scripture, which we believe put great value in the compassionate care and advocacy for children. He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me” (Mark 9:36-37). We believe that our care of children—our “welcoming” of them among us—is a direct reflection of our love for and obedience to God. Whatever we do for children, is done for him. We hope to equip others with a vision for authentic responsibility, accountabil-

Upcoming Events

| May and June | | Weekly Events | |
|--------------|----------|---------------------|---|
| May 6 | 11:00 am | The Lord’s Supper | Sunday: |
| May 6 | Noon | Elder Groups | Opening Exercises 9:30 am |
| May 13 | 6:00 pm | Evening Worship | Sunday School 9:45 am |
| May 20 | 11:00 am | The Lord’s Supper | Morning Worship 11:00 am |
| May 20 | 6:00 pm | Evening Worship | Evening Worship 6:00 pm |
| May 27 | 6:00 pm | Evening Worship | Wednesday Evenings: |
| June 2 | TBD | GRACE Training | Supper 6:00 pm |
| June 3 | 11:00 am | The Lord’s Supper | Bible Study/Prayer 6:45 pm |
| June 3 | Noon | Congregational Meal | Bible Study |
| June 10 | 6:00 pm | Evening Worship | For Men: |
| June 17 | 11:00 am | The Lord’s Supper | Men’s Prayer Breakfast 8:00 am |
| June 17 | 6:00 pm | Evening Worship | ROMEOS 8:00 am |
| June 25 | 6:00 pm | Evening Worship | (Retired Old Men Eating Out) at J&S Cafeteria, River Ridge |
| | | | Norm Bomer’s Home 7:00 pm |
| | | | For Women: |
| | | | Carol Belz’s Home 9:30 am |
| | | | Fellowship Hall 10:30 am |
| | | | Debbie Cate’s Home 7:00 pm |

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ity, and compassion in the care for children and adult survivors of abuse. Though the history of the Church can make this approach seem radical, we believe it is nothing more and nothing less than the fulfillment of Jesus’ teaching. We believe with proper education and training every church and ministry organization can navigate its responsibility to appropriately care for those who have been impacted by abuse” (from www.netgrace.org).

After much conversation with the Rev. Mike Sloan, he designed a one-day seminar for our congregation, scheduled for Saturday, June 2. Rev. Sloan is ordained in the PCA and is the Director of GRACE Child Safeguarding Certification and Seminary Course. The training will be divided into two parts: two sessions for church leaders, followed by a church-wide session. I would encourage every one of you to attend the entire training, whether you are a leader or not, but if you can only come to one make sure it is the final session. The sessions will cover these topics:

Biblical Leaders Make the Difference (We will learn more about the deep biblical teaching related to abuse and protect-

ing the vulnerable, as well as how to speak up in an informed and compassionate way in order to empower all adults in the church to play their role well.)

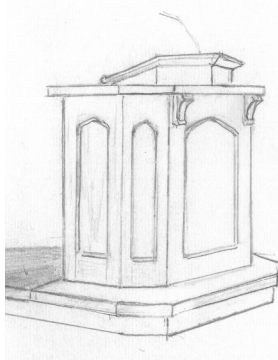
Prevention and Response: Best Leadership Practices (The sessions will equip leaders to understand and embrace best practices in child protection with a focus on caring for survivors of abuse.)

Protecting God’s Lambs: Everyone has a Role (This session will equip the congregation with an overview of the major dynamics of abuse and how abusers operate in the church and in Christian homes. Parents who are educated will be able to contribute to a safe church and equip their own kids to understand abuse so they are empowered to speak up.)

As many of us are painfully aware, CRPC has not been immune to these realities. Though these topics are not easy to discuss and may bring up painful memories, we are convinced that we are facing nothing less than the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. I hope all of you can make time to attend these sessions as we grow to stand together as individuals and as a church.

The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Sean McCann



After starting off the year with three shorter sermon series (Titus, Haggai, and *What’s Next?*), I am eager to turn our attention to a lengthy series through The Acts of the Apostles. The most famous verse in the book may be Acts 1:8 “and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This verse not only communicates the plan of God for his disciples, it also lays out the pattern for the rest of the narrative. Acts traces the establishment and growth of the early church from a small group of disciples huddled together in an upper room in Jerusalem, all the way to Rome (which in many ways was the end of the known earth from the perspective of Jerusalem).

As we see the early church grow throughout Acts, a few patterns emerge that help us understand how God plants, establishes, and renews his church. For two years I have attempted to emphasize – through my preaching and broader ministry – the necessity of the Holy Spirit and the word of God in the life and ministry of the church. These two themes – God’s Spirit and Word – appear time and

time again throughout Acts as the sources of power made available to the church.

We see the ministry of the Holy Spirit on display most powerfully in the Pentecost account when he is poured out on the disciples and they “began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). This Spirit-empowered witness marks the boldness of Peter and John in Jerusalem (4:8), spreads into Samaria (8:17), and eventually falls on the Gentiles as well (10:43). So while the narrative of Acts traces the ministry of the disciples and the missionary journeys of Paul, all along the way it reminds us that none of this was possible without the ongoing work of the Spirit.

This Spirit works in a number of ways in Acts, but primarily through the proclamation of the word. Acts has 19 major speeches, many of them evangelistic sermons delivered by Peter and Paul. These speeches represent the public witness of the church as she obeys the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. While Acts includes accounts of healings and miracles, these works are done to confirm the proclaimed word and never to supplant it.

You often hear people say “we need to be like the church in Acts!” What they usually mean by this is rediscovering the formula that will lead to rapid, numerical growth (hopefully without the constant persecution and imprisonment!) In this series I hope we will learn from Acts not how to be successful, but how to be faithful, and to trust in the Lord to bring about his good purposes, through the power of his Word and Spirit.

Preaching Schedule

| Date | Morning | Evening |
|---------|--------------|------------------|
| May 6 | Acts 1:1-5 | |
| May 13 | Acts 1:6-11 | John 19:16-42 |
| May 20 | Acts 1:12-26 | John 20:1-10 |
| May 27 | Acts 2:1-13 | John 20:11-29 |
| June 3 | Acts 2:14-41 | |
| June 10 | Acts 2:42-47 | John 20:30-21:14 |
| June 17 | Acts 3:1-10 | John 21:15-19 |
| June 24 | Acts 3:11-26 | John 21:20-25 |

The Gospel of Hope in Counseling

By Dan Lemley, Ruling Elder

Like a constant drumbeat during our Biblical Counseling course, I have repeatedly asserted, perhaps even persuaded you, about Biblical counseling being antithetical to humanistic counseling. By now you should be aware that humanistic counseling is not only deceitful, but is unhelpful with all its labels and incurable mental disorders. Therefore, in order for the counselee to change by the power of the Holy Spirit, either through evangelistic outreach as well as through progressive sanctification, it is necessary for the counselor to be a person of Biblical hope in order to convey the same to the counselee in need of this hope.

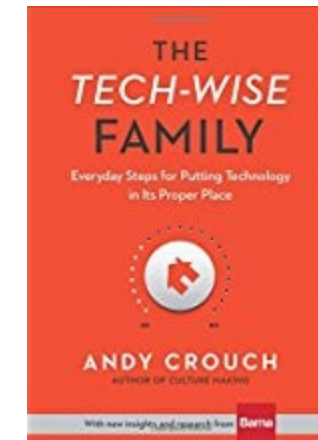
Writing to the Roman Christians, Paul asserted, “For whatever was written in the former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). In 1 Thessalonians 1:3-10, the greatest need for the Thessalonian church under trial was for hope, as endurance is realized from hope. Accordingly, genuine hope comes only from God, who does not lie, and whose Word becomes an anchor to the soul (Heb. 6:13-20). For counselees to both start and continue along the path of change, they must have this hope through faith. Dr. Jay Adams in his book entitled, *The Christian’s Counselor Manual – The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, points out how hope does not carry the “connotation of uncertainty” that our English word does (“I hope so”), but conveys certainty. Consequently, as Dr. Adams contends, the counselor must be a man or woman of hope; otherwise, doubt will be communicated to the counselee. In other words, the person counseling “must be fully persuaded of the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises,” and express it with “enthusiasm, conviction, and assurance.” Dr. Adams insightfully remarks that enthusiasm is “contagious,” whereby only biblical encouragement can help sinful men change.

Experientially, we all know that sin, as Dr. Adams asserts, has its “defeating and disheartening effects.” After the fall and in the midst of punishment God spoke words of hope to Adam and Eve with the protoevangelium (first Gospel proclamation – Gen 3:15). Therefore, as Dr. Adams insightfully deduces, the Gospel is actually one of “double hope;” to wit: 1) The future hope in eschatology, viz., “Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the body, the erasure of sin, pain, and tears,” and of course, the “presence of Christ;” and 2) The current hope of the “abundant life now,” after being set free from the dominion of misery and sin.

For this reason, the Biblical counselor must understand the importance of conveying this hope, indeed, double hope, to the counselee. In Jesus’ walking ministry as recorded throughout the Gospels, He continually provided this hope, through the gift of faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to all people who were without hope. Apart from God’s Word and apart from the Holy Spirit, there is no genuine hope and those who need hope must be either convinced or reminded of God’s promises.

The Tech-Wise Family

by Rev. Sean McCann



A recent study revealed that 78% of parents believe raising kids today is more complicated than it was when they were kids, and the top reason they think parenting is more difficult is because of technology and social media. As a parent who agrees with this majority, I was glad to have recommended to me *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* by Andy Crouch, the executive director of Christianity Today.

Though aimed at parents, this little book offers help to all of us trying to navigate the 21st century: “It’s about building character, wisdom, and courage rather than accepting technology’s promise of ease and instant gratification. It’s about developing our heart, mind, soul, and strength when we’re tempted to settle for entertainment and consumer satisfaction. And it’s definitely not just about the kids.”

I was expecting a book with some tips about how to stop looking at my phone so frequently and how to set up a secure home network to make it hard for children to access pornography, but instead I discovered a book that challenged many of my priorities and pushed me to be a better father. Instead of framing his book in a negative light (i.e. filling it with a list of things not to do), Crouch positively lays out ten “Tech-Wise Commitments.” These commitments flow out of three fundamental choices: to *choose character* (“to make the mission of our family...the cultivation of wisdom and courage”); to *shape space* (“to make choices about the place where we live that put the development of character and creativity at the heart of our home”); and to *structure time* (“to build rhythms into our lives...that make it possible for us to get to know one another, God, and our world in deeper and deeper ways”).

One of my favorite chapters was one in which he examined how technology impacts the weekly rhythms of work and rest. He argues that while work used to be at the shop or in the office, today bosses and clients can (and do) reach us whenever they want through our devices, even on our divinely instituted day of rest, the Sabbath. And even when we do manage to avoid work on the Lord’s Day, our rest can all too easily turn into leisure: “Netflix is always waiting to stream more entertainment into our home. Facebook keeps serving up more morsels of news, animated GIFs, and cute cat videos from our friends. It’s easy to let Sunday become one more day of toil and leisure.” Crouch recommends we choose to turn off our devices one day every week to better focus on rest and worship.

Whether you feel like you are “addicted” to your phone, or just want to cultivate better habits and priorities, I recommend this book as a great help to living out the Christian life in our technology age.