

## **“HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD”**

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I remember scrolling through social media and I saw something posted by someone I know that I disagreed with to my core. As you might expect the post in question was regarding one of the many polarizing political issues of the day. As I stared at this post and I began to formulate a response to it. I started carefully building an argument in hopes of shifting this person’s opinion so that they would agree with me. Then something occurred to me. It occurred to me that my priorities were really, really messed up. I didn’t even know if the person I was about to engage was saved. Why on earth would I be quicker to try to change their mind about a political or moral issue than I was to share the good news about Jesus and how to go to Heaven? Did Jesus say to go into all the world and argue public policy and morality? If I recall correctly He spent an awful lot of time arguing with the most outwardly moral group of people of the time, the Pharisees, to try to get them to believe in Him.

I see this mistake being made almost everywhere I look. So many people want to have an impact. So many people want to help change the world for the better. And so many people are trying to do that through debating the day’s issues.

Why is this a silly approach?

1. Because convincing someone to change their morality doesn’t help them get to heaven
2. Because helping someone to live a more moral life doesn’t help get them to heaven (if that were the case then the Pharisees would have been good to go)
3. Because almost nobody budes on these issues!
4. Because it’s the same tactic the world uses. Why are we taking the world’s advice about how to change the world?

So many are like I was.... quick to carry an argument to someone they disagree with. However, as Christians we have something far better. We have a message that brings salvation if believed. We have the greatest message ever. Why are we settling to carry anything less?

I can tell you why I was, and maybe you’ll be able to relate...

1. I bought the lie the world was selling. I thought changing the world would come through convincing people to agree with me about the day’s issues. And 2<sup>nd</sup>....
2. I didn’t know how to lead someone to Jesus for salvation. And this is where I want to focus today’s message. Because I believe there is an epidemic of Christians being unable to, or not confident in, leading people to the Lord. So many either don’t know what to say or, sadly, are delivering the wrong message. My hope today is to give you clarity about the message you should be carrying, and the motivation to deliver it.

So why didn’t I know how to lead someone to salvation in Jesus? Why was I so confused? Because I saw so many conflicting messages about how to do that.

I’d see some teachers instruct lost people to turn from all of their sins and turn toward Jesus to be saved.(B)I’d see others tell people they must believe in Jesus and get water baptized to be saved.(C)Still others will tell people they must forsake all and commit their life to Jesus and follow Him faithfully to the end of their life to be saved.(D)Others provide a

prayer and tell people if they “Pray this prayer and really mean it” they’ll be saved.(E) Still others instruct people to simply believe in Jesus.

Now, please allow me to pose a few questions....First, how many ways are there to Heaven? Just ONE right?

Second question...are all of the ways I’ve presented here the same? No, they vary don’t they?

Last question...If there is only ONE way to Heaven, and if all of the ways presented here are different from one another, then can all of these be true at the same time? No! They can’t be.

I know what you’re thinking...“Well Josh you’re just being a little OCD about it.” Maybe I am, but you know what? If there was ever anything to be OCD about it’s this. You know why?...because, logically, these can’t all be true at the same time, and if my most important mission in life is to share a message then I want to be sure I’m sharing the TRUE message. And I’m passionate about this because for years of my life I wasted time because I was confused about how to lead someone to salvation in Jesus. Worse yet....sometimes I told people the wrong thing.

So let’s dive into this. How can we discern the truth from error? I think we can look at three verses that clear up all the confusion.

Romans 11:6 (NKJV) And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Romans 4:5 (NKJV) But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

These verses paint a very clear picture for us. We can see messages being broken into 2 categories. Grace or works. We can see that there is no mixing or merging of those paths. They must be one or the other. It’s either all Grace or its all works. We see works aren’t necessary for being made righteous. We know that we’re saved by Grace, and we know that Grace comes only through faith in Jesus. The moment you add an addition to faith in Jesus for salvation is the moment you’ve told someone the way to Heaven is by work instead of by Grace. Why? Because you can’t mix in works or it’s not Grace anymore, and if it’s not Grace anymore then it’s not the way to Heaven. I think you’ll see that narrows things down pretty quickly. Let’s look closer at the conflicting messages I’ve shown you today.

Let’s start with message (A). Here we see the added requirement to turn from all sin in addition to faith in Jesus. One argument I’ve heard defending the idea that people need to turn from sin to be saved is this....“well stopping sin isn’t doing something. It’s not doing something. Therefore it’s not a work.” That’s nonsense. In 1 John 3:4 we’re told that sin is transgression of the law. So when we tell someone they have to turn from all their sins in addition to believing in Jesus in order to be saved we’re telling them they must keep the law. Does salvation come through works of the law? Romans 3:20 tells us absolutely not. This message has added works, and that means this is teaching a works-based salvation.

Let’s move to message (B). Here we see a religious ritual added as a requirement to salvation. Some people include taking communion as well. Are we saved by rituals? No. The Bible states clearly, over and over again that we receive eternal life through faith. The Bible tells us clearly in Ephesians 1:13 that we’re put into the body of Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit the moment we BELIEVE. John 5:24 says we’re passed from death to life the moment we believe. In the Greek that’s written in what is known as the perfect tense, which means it’s an event that happens once and never needs to be completed again. Upon belief a person is given eternal life, which...according to the very name of the gift...cannot EVER be lost. A message adding baptism or religious rituals to salvation is teaching works, not grace.

On to message (C). Does salvation require commitment or is it a gift? Is it a reward for service or is it received freely? Let's see what scripture says. Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the GIFT of God is eternal life..." We see here that salvation is a gift. This point is emphasized again in Ephesians 2:8-9. Are gifts free? Do they cost anything? I shouldn't have to say this but, NO! They don't. The freeness of salvation is seen in Romans 3:24 "Being justified FREELY by his grace..." and then we see the freeness of salvation again emphasized in Rev22:17 "...And whosoever will, let him take the water of life FREELY." Let's revisit Romans 4:5 "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness," It couldn't be more clear. Salvation from Hell is free, received only by faith that is placed only in Jesus. It requires ZERO work on our part, and it's wrong to tell someone that it does!!! Please don't misunderstand me here...my hope and desire is that everyone who gets saved will go on to faithfully live for and serve Jesus for the rest of their life. I encourage the YG to live their lives for Jesus, but I won't lie to them and tell them it's a requirement. I don't want them to serve out of fear of Hell. I want them to serve out of love for Jesus. Ephesians 2:10 tells us we've been created in Christ Jesus for good works that we SHOULD walk in. It doesn't say we automatically will and it doesn't say we must. It says we SHOULD. So telling someone they must serve faithfully to gain entrance into Heaven is adding works to salvation.

And finally let's examine message (D). I won't pick on this one as much because I don't think there is anything wrong with a person saying a prayer to tell God that they are placing their faith in Jesus as savior. However, there is no magical prayer that saves. There are several examples of evangelism in scripture where nobody is instructed to pray. The "sinner's prayer" isn't found anywhere in the Bible. People are instructed to believe. The Book of John provides a purpose statement, or reason for why it was written. John 20:30-31 tells us these accounts were given so that "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." the book of John uses the word believe almost 100 times. Why instruct someone to do anything more? I personally don't feel comfortable instructing someone to "say this prayer" because I don't want someone to believe they are saved because they repeated some words. I want them to know they are saved because Jesus paid for their sins and rose again.

Note how close many of these messages are to the real thing. You know what else is really close to the real thing? Counterfeits. Why are the changes so subtle? Because they are meant to deceive. Who do we know that likes to deceive, has used subtleties to deceive in the past, and is known for being a master counterfeiter? If you said Satan then you guessed right. I don't know about you but I certainly don't want to carry a counterfeit message to a lost person. Hopefully you can now see what not to tell someone to do to be saved, but how can we learn to lead people to Jesus in a Biblical way? I think the best way is to look to the Bible! Please move with me to Acts 10:39-44. Here we see Peter lead his group of gentiles to salvation. What does he tell them? In v39 he tells them about the crucifixion. In v40 we see him tell them about the resurrection. In 43 he tells them what to do. And what happens right then and there? V44 the Holy Spirit fell on them that heard. He gave a clear, simple, and affective message and these people heard it and believed in Jesus, receiving the free gift of eternal life, before Peter even finished talking.

What did He tell them? Did he instruct them to stop their sinning? Did he tell them to commit to a life of service? Did he ask them to forsake all? Did he instruct them to pray? No. He told them to believe. Just believe in Jesus.

What did the Apostle John want people to do to be saved? John 20:31 - Believe

Who did John the Baptist say was saved? John 3:36 – He who believes

What did Paul instruct? Acts 16:31- Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved

What did Jesus say? John 3:16 – Believe in me

A few weeks ago Pastor Mike talked about how simple salvation is. Leave it to men to mess it up and complicate it. The Bible is so clear. When I finally understood how simple and beautiful the message of salvation was; when the confusion

was cleared away and I realized the power of what I believed and that I was capable of leading someone to eternal salvation; something inside of me changed. It was like I knew something that was too good and too exciting to keep inside.

I think somewhere along the line a lot of us have gotten the cart before the horse. We try to get people to look and act like children of God before we tell them how they can be born again. Rather than telling someone how to be saved we invite them to church and hope they come and get saved while in attendance. Wouldn't it make more sense to tell them how to be saved and then to invite them to church to worship the God who saved them? Wouldn't it make more sense to deliver good news to people rather than engaging in endless debates about which side of the political spectrum is ruining the country? You don't need to be an expert in anything to preach the gospel. You don't need to be pastor to lead someone to Jesus. You don't need a degree or to be a gifted speaker. The Apostle Paul said he used plain speech. Why? So people would understand. It's a simple message. So simple that even a child can deliver it, and I'll tell you right now....we've got teens in this church who are doing just that. Think of the impact we could have if we all got our priorities right and started telling people how they can have eternal life.

What do we tell them? Tell them who Jesus is (the Son of God who became flesh). Tell them what Jesus did (He died for their sins, was buried and rose again). Explain to them that He's the only way to Heaven. Why? Because forgiveness cannot be obtained by good works or religious rituals since those things don't pay for sin, and eternal life cannot be earned since we don't deserve it and can't pay for it. Then be crystal clear about one thing... if they will simply place their faith in Jesus as their savior then God will forgive them of ALL their sins based upon the finished work Jesus did for them, and Jesus will give them eternal life as a free gift.

If you're visiting today or if today is the first time you've heard or understood this good news. Maybe it's your first time in a church, or maybe you were trusting in something else you were doing rather than placing your faith solely in Jesus. If that's the case then I'd encourage you to simply believe in Jesus as your savior and receive the free gift of eternal life right here and now. It's that simple. If you do that or if you've done that before then I urge you to start trying to make sharing the good news of this amazing gift, that's available to ALL, a priority in your life.

Before I wrap this up I want to be clear on a few things...

1. I'm not telling you to stop standing up for the truth or to stop fighting for what is right.
2. I'm not telling you to stop voting or to stop endorsing political candidates who best align with Godly principles.
3. I'm urging you to use your energy to persuade someone to place their faith in Jesus BEFORE you argue with them about something else.
4. I'm urging you to care more about where people will spend eternity than about where they will place their next vote.

I heard one man say it like this, and I couldn't think of anything better so I figured I'd steal this quote from him...."If you want to save America then get people saved."

The original disciples changed the world, and they didn't have cell phones or social media. They didn't change the world by trying to change public policy or by endorsing leaders. They changed it with a simple message. They changed it by telling people good news. Continue to be salt and light, continue to stand against evil and to stand for the truth, but remember....the way to make the greatest impact is through faithfully delivering the best news ever, and now you know how to do so.