

THE GOSPEL IN STEP 6

Introduction

- **Transition from healing to growing.** We're half way through the twelve steps, but many of you may be new. Be encouraged that not all of recovery is like a trip to the emergency room. We talked in step 1 that Victory in Christ starts with Surrender to Christ. We have to lay down our arms; stop defying God, and surrender to him. But for many of us, we also have to surrender because we've been wounded – we're bleeding. We need triage, and we need it now – that's how recovery feels at the beginning. **(Slide 1)**

We help stop the bleeding, we care for your wounds, and you begin to see that healing from Christ starts with hope in Christ. **(Slide 2)** Christ is here, in this room, and his Spirit connects us. So we move from the emergency room to a hospital bed, but then the mean nurses (read: sponsors) start making us work. We encourage you to make a record of sin, and confess it. So, you start vomiting it up, but it's good, because it's been a poison that's infected you and kept you weak for a long time.

Now, in step six, the healing has been enough that you are released from the hospital, but now you have regular spiritual therapy sessions. **It is time to get stronger.** And how does that happen? By having God remove all of our character defects.

- **Step 6: We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.** The more character defects removed, the stronger we get.

- **Why does God want to remove these defects?** It is because his primary purpose for us is to grow in Christ-likeness. We were chosen in Christ before the creation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him (Eph 1:3). And yet we have this sin nature – character defects. So we are told to put off the old self, be made new, renewed in the spirit of our minds and to **put on** the new self, created after the likeness of God. God wants us to become who we were born to be – like Christ; no character defects
- **How does he remove these character defects?** He replaces them with Christ’s character. The gospel in step 6 is this: **Jesus gives us his character.**
- **Scripture: Phil 2:1-13.**

Verse 5: “Have this mind among you, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”

Verses 12-13: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

- **Jesus gives us his character because he gives us his mind.** The character and mind are inter-connected. You are what you think. “First thought, bad thought” is profound, because it is the thought that will lead to us **doing** something stupid, just as it is the thought that will lead. So understand tonight that when we talk about the mind of Christ, we are talking about is character too, which replaces our character with all its defects.
- We’re getting stronger; the spiritual therapy is working; and it is because the mind and character of Christ is replacing our character defects, as God wills and works in us for his good pleasure. We’re using the mind of Christ (not

“You have a brain, use it! (legalism) but “You have the mind of Christ, use it! (grace)).

- So what is the mind of Christ? There is no greater description than Phil 2”5-11. **(read it).**

Jesus Made Himself Nothing for You (slide 3)

- **Jesus is God** (the Form of God, in very nature God) – we only pretend.

³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

⁷ I will tell of the decree:

The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.

⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.

- The rod of iron is the scepter that signifies Jesus as King. He rules with it. All rulers of the world are subject to it. Jesus is Lord; and yet, Paul tells us, he did not consider equality with God “a thing to be grasped (v.5).” He let go of his scepter.

- **The Trinity conversation:** He said, “I will go.” They are sheep without a shepherd; I will lead them beside still waters. They are rebels, defying you, Father. I will free them to fight against the evil forces of this world. They are dead in their sins; I will save the dead men from their sins by dying for them.
- How did he do this? He emptied himself – he gave up being God. He took on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (the Creator of the universe, of every human being ever conceived, became a fertilized egg in a woman’s womb). And he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. **This is your God.**
- It’s like a man becoming an ant; not only an ant, but an ant serving a queen ant who holds a tiny, little scepter, thinking she is lord of all she sees. You care for these ants. Jesus cares for you more.

Jesus made himself nothing; he humbled himself; he became obedient to insignificant little rulers, to the point of death. **This is your God.** His love for you was greater than his need to retain his rule – to maintain his grip on his scepter.

He did this for you. He saw that you were helpless as a sheep, slaves to evil forces and dead in your sins. He thought to save you and then acted to save you. It is the mind of Christ and the character of Christ. And this mind is yours – so use it, Paul says. How? Four observations:

Let Go of Being God (The Biggest Character Defect)

- Jesus let go of his scepter. He did not consider equality with God a thing to grasp. In what area of your life do you need to let go of the scepter?

- A dysfunctional relationship? Who fixes these? By trying to hang on, to maintain some control, are you hindering God's redemptive plan for the relationship?
- A dream – career goal, financial status, professional recognition?
Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”
- A habit – still hanging onto it, even though it now rules you.
- A disappointment – people have let you down, and you hang onto that.
Back to the Trinity conversation – just how much have we disappointed God? How did Jesus respond? Have the mind of Christ – use it! Forgive!

Reach Out to Others (you can do this when you let go of the scepter)

- Become an ant; care for the ants. Phil 2:3-4: Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to your interests, but to the interests of others.”
- Serve: Volunteer on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The encouraging examples of caring for others in CR (court – Mike Cacini, Mark B., car trouble, crises, etc.).
- Serve the heart of the one you've been in conflict with: pray for them, care for them (T.J.: “I love my wife.” S.K. “My wife is powerless, too.”
- Mark 10:45: “For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The actions caused by your character

defects have been forgiven. Forgive the actions caused by the character defects of others – this is the mind of Christ in action. This is Christ giving you *his* character.

Hold on to Humility

- Humility is the key to Christ’s character on earth. It must be ours. Paul says, “**In humility** count others more significant than yourselves ... And being found in human form, (Jesus) **humbled** himself.”
- Humility: Not thinking less of yourself more often, but thinking less often of yourself. Jesus never thought less of himself, even as he humbled himself. He proclaimed, over and over again, that he was the Son of God; that he and the Father were one. He chose humility by choosing not to think of himself first, but to think of us more often. This is not easy for us (me) to do.
- Where do we find humility? We find it at the Cross. That is where the Son of God was not only humbled, but humiliated. He was not just a humble servant to insignificant ant-like rulers such as Herod and Pilate. He was humiliated on the cross – all dignity and respect washed away. He was humiliated – he allowed himself to be humiliated – for you. **This is your God.**
- Don’t hang onto the scepter of pride. Hang on to the cross of Christ. There can be no pride at the cross of Christ, only humility. And when we find humility at the cross of Christ, we find the mind of Christ at work in us.

Embrace Obedience

- **(Slide 4)** My experience in Jerusalem – the tomb is empty, people!
“Therefore (because of Christ’s obedience) God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name ...”
- Jesus obeyed – he did not just think about becoming one of us and dying for us, he was faithful to the task he was given.
- Embrace obedience – it’s how character defects fall away. Do the work God has given you to do (confession, repentance, forgiveness, amends and service – it’s a lifestyle!), in the context God has you (relationships and circumstances).
- This is what Paul means when he says in v. 12, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” – it is God working in you! It is the mind of Christ transforming your character! Fear and trembling because his mind is right alongside ours, and because, our God is invested in us! We fall on our knees in humble adoration when we soak this in.
- **(Slide 5) “Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you (James 4:10).”** He will *exalt YOU*.

God replaces our character defects with the mind and character of Christ. He’s even the one who has made you “ready” to have your character defects removed. Is that not good news? Is it not the gospel? Respond with fear and trembling, but respond with joy as well – aren’t you glad he’s still working in you?