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**Theology and Practice – Book Assignment**

*Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hand*, Paul Tripp

1. **Write out five things you learned from the book that were most helpful to you. Write two or three sentences to unpack each point.**
   1. ***Instruments***: Rather than acting “immediately”, God seems to like using things he has created as mediums of his grace. Not unlike the physical elements of the sacraments, God uses his own people as instruments and vehicles of his grace in the lives of other believers and unbelievers. When we work in, say, the garden with our own tools, it isn’t the tool that works the change, it is us. Likewise, when God uses us as instruments of grace to others it is He who does the work and accomplishes the change, not us. Furthermore, this concept provides a powerful complement to the traditional and central pastoral “ministry of the pulpit” by providing an ongoing and distributed ministry of the Word, as individuals are used by God to “counsel the word” with others.
   2. ***“God’s Story”, not an encyclopedia***: Rather than use scripture as a collection of principles to be applied topically, we should be communicating the full breadth and depth of God’s story of creation, the fall (including our own sin), redemption, and consummation; God’s sovereignty, grace, and glory. This will allow us to more fully understand and convey to those we are counseling or discipling our identity in Christ, our position before God, and what he intends as our purpose.
   3. **Everybody ministers and everybody needs ministry**. Heb. 3: 12-13. Personal ministry, one unto another, should be a central part of the daily culture within the church. We are all still sinful and still blind, particularly to our own sin. Within the context of real community acting with honesty and humility on both sides of the relationship, we can help each other to see truth more clearly. (N.B. This concept, I think, is true and currently lacking in the church, but it rests on a knife-edge: a glorious community of believers on the one side and a collection of busybodies on the other.)
   4. **The Heart**: Unique to Biblical counseling, as compared with secular psychology or so-called Christian counseling is the understanding that the heart – the inner man – is where problems, pain, sin, and dysfunction have their root. Real change and healing must therefore also be heart-change. This change can only be accomplished by the Spirit, but he uses other believers as his instruments.
   5. **We are ambassadors**: Perhaps the brightest light bulb to go on as a result of reading this book is the idea of being an ambassador for Christ. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, I am representing Christ to the world and to other specific people, believers and unbelievers. This role of ambassador is not a *special* vocation for only some believers, it’s a general call. II Corinthians 5: 18-20. More about this below.
   6. **Speaking Truth in Love**: Part of the Love-Know-Speak-Do model of Biblical counseling is speaking the truth *in love*. Lev. 19:15-18 indicates that speaking the truth is often not something that is optional – we may have an obligation to do it in order not to share in the guilt of the other. Our silence can give tacit approval and affirmation. However, the truth does not have to be, and shouldn’t be brutal or harsh, but shared in a loving way that has the heart of the other as the goal. More about this below, as well.
2. **Now, personalize this even more. Write a paragraph explaining how this book has changed your perspective on God, Scripture, the power of the gospel, and your life.**

“*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us.*” II Corinthians 5:20

“…*that they may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me*.” John 17: 21

These passages, and the author’s take on them, have made a significant impact on my understanding and perspective. When I was redeemed by Christ and regenerated by the power of the Spirit, I was claimed by God as his, to be transformed in every corner of my being, and to live *in the light of* his glory and *for* his glory. I was also made part of a corporate mission (“agenda”, in the author’s words) to incarnate Christ to the world, and to be and instrument in his work of reconciliation. The idea of being an ambassador, and really thinking through the implications of that, has been very eye-opening. It adds a distinctly personal dimension to the great commission, without diminishing its corporate nature. It also gets at the full-time nature of our relationship to the world. Every personal relationship, every casual encounter and interaction with the world, or even with brothers and sisters in Christ, is an action done as an ambassador of Christ. I am never “off-duty.” A whole host of other passages take on a more weighty aspect in light of this. (For example, to pick one that I read this morning, Ephesians 5:3-4.) As an ambassador, I am always incarnating the King. My life will reflect upon him. His agenda is my agenda. My own agenda and will are only significant or legitimate insofar as they are in harmony with his. This is causing me to reexamine my relationships, be they casual or close.

1. **What are the counseling implications of this book for you? How will you think differently about ministry? What are some specific things you want to do to counsel or disciple more effectively?**

I don’t have any current formal *counseling* relationships. But, with respect to my friendships and more organic discipling relationships, the book has created a much greater awareness of the need to be more thoughtful and intentional. I am thinking and working through the implications of being an ambassador and an instrument of change in others’ lives.

Regarding speaking the truth in love, Leviticus 19:16 has changed my thinking. Previously, when I was in situations where I observe sin or false belief or teaching, I would have seen my options as being to either remain silent or wade into it without too much regard for the feelings of the other person. So, in most cases, especially if family or close friends are involved, I would remain mostly silent, in order to preserve the relationship. But, this passage effectively removes the silent option from the table when real sin or falsehood is at stake. The author’s teaching about speaking the truth in love reveals a third option, the right option, and is something that I will need to read repeatedly and carefully, and pray about, in order to transform my ability to confront others more appropriately.

This is the first book like this that I have read, and the class is the first training I have received about counseling others in a Biblical way. As I move into some formal discipling in the near future, the Love-Know-Speak-Do model will be setting the foundation for how I develop these new relationships.

1. **What questions do you have as a result of reading this book? What further areas of study would you like to pursue?**

The book is very generic regarding people. By that I mean that he makes few distinctions among men and women, husbands and wives, cultures, ethnicities, and between personality types. Many of these categories reflect genetic wiring, meaning that they are God’s designed-in characteristics of individuals, sexes, and peoples. Some reflect distinct roles that God has defined.

While there is common application of everything in this book across all of these categories, there are also very specific admonitions in scripture that have a profound impact on the individual.

I’m interested in how Love-Know-Speak-Do is carried out in a way that specifically addresses men and husbands in our western, post-Christian, feminized, culture, which is increasingly influenced by secular progressive thinking. How can men be discipled in a Biblical way that results in a church that is apart from the world and that is corporately incarnating Christ and modeling his kingdom?

1. **Think of one person you know who is struggling. What is one truth from this book they need to understand? How could you wisely communicate it to them?**

My nephew, Alec, is struggling with depression, self-image, sin, and purpose. He would be described by many as “having” ADHD and being on “the spectrum.” There is a chance that he will be coming to live with our family for a while. I think Alec needs to have foundations in his life reestablished, starting with “God’s Story” (p36). He really needs to “rest in his sovereignty…rely on his grace…and submit to his glory.”

I am hoping that he does come to stay with us soon. Communicating this to him will be a challenge, but I think it will be much more natural and effective if he can break out of his current habits and relationships, many of which are counter-productive or destructive, and it happens in the context of living with our family and participating in our daily lives, worship, conversations and such.

1. **Write a paragraph book review commending this book to others.**

*Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, by Paul David Tripp, is a remarkably and refreshingly biblical approach to achieving change in people’s lives. It is a book that addresses the deep needs of those who are acutely suffering, but also every one of us as it teaches us to minister in a biblical way one unto another.

Trip lays a good foundation by explaining who we are in God’s creation, what the effects of sin are on every one of us, and why we need Jesus. The book gets its title as he explains how we are each used as an instrument of Christ to work his redemption in the lives of others. In turn, others are used as instruments of change in our lives. He powerfully ties this into our role as God’s ambassadors who are incarnating Christ at every moment.

Another of the radical differences between this book and other approaches to life-change is the focus on the significance of the heart as the source of our sin and broken lives. The heart becomes the target for change as it is compared with scripture and God’s will for us to glorify him and enjoy him.

After preparing the foundation, Tripp spends the majority of the book describing a model for building relationships and actually *being* the instrument for change, called “Love, Know, Speak, Do.” *Love* is the over-arching and motivating part of the equation. It encompasses God’s love for us as well as our love for one another. *Know* is the process of developing deep and caring relationships, through which change and mutual admonition can happen. *Speak* deals with truth and the need for godly and loving confrontation, not just in the big things, but as a natural and organic part of our corporate lives. Finally, *Do* is concerned with action, responsibility, and accountability for the long haul.

His instruction is thorough, comprehensive, and detailed. It is also very practical, with specific examples and suggestions about how to implement each of the four aspects of the model. Without reservation, I recommend this book to anyone who is in formal counseling or discipling relationships, but also to anyone who wants greater insight into his own heart and who wants to more fully reflect Christ to others.

1. **Write a prayer thanking God for what you learned and asking him for specific graces for you and someone you minister to.**

Heavenly Father, thank you for this book and for the insights within it that have exposed your will for me more fully. Please continue to impress them upon my mind and heart and change me to be more loving of others, more interested in their lives, and more committed to their hearts. Please, also, impress upon Alec’s heart your love for him and the reality of your grace and forgiveness. Please put people in his life that will be your faithful and effective instruments. Amen.