

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

My Search for What Matters

By Pastor Brian De Jong

This month we are going to have a fascinating Worldview Movie Night featuring a film entitled “Sully.” Directed by Clint Eastwood and starring Tom Hanks, it is an engaging story about an amazing real-life event. It is a perfect film for thoughtful discussion, and should prove worthy of Christian analysis. [Don’t worry – no spoilers – join us on Friday, April 21st at 7:00pm]

Part of the attraction of this film is the subtitle of a book by Captain Chesley Sullenberger. Timed to the release of the film, this book became a best-seller on the New York Times list. What is the subtitle? “My Search for What Really Matters.”

I find this subtitle both curious and provocative – my search for what really matters. This is a timeless quest for meaning in life. Why are we here? What matters most, and what matters least?

Underlying that search are several presuppositions. First, it assumes that there are recognizable differences between one thing and another. Judgments of worth and value are possible, because something “really matters” and other things don’t.

I’m not just being cute or coy to say that if there are no differences of value or worth, then everything matters and nothing matters. Regardless of whether you’re an optimist or a pessimist, if the playing field is absolutely level, then it’s all the same regardless. You might even say that if there are no legitimate distinctions, then the words “really matters” are devoid of

any meaning or content whatsoever. Everything just is, and is all the same. Nothing can matter more or less than anything else, if all things are utterly equal.

Second, this subtitle assumes that there are things that **really** matter and other things that appear to matter, but are fakes, frauds and phonies. You might contrast those things that really matter with those things that pretend to matter, but are just fooling you.

A third assumption is that man should be searching for the true priorities of life. Industrious people are hunting for the truth about what “really matters.” Is it a fool’s errand to seek after what “really matters?” Obviously, Captain Sully didn’t think so (and neither do those millions of readers who bought the book).

A fourth presupposition might be inferred – and that is the possibility of discovering what you’re searching for. The Spanish Conquistador Ponce de Leon scoured Florida looking for the Fountain of Youth because he thought he could find it, and live forever. People rarely search for things they do not believe they can realistically find. Their search is animated by a belief that they can achieve their goal.

What adds to the curiosity of this book, the movie and the provocative subtitle is the fact that we live in a post-modern world that has been denying that anything matters. There is no over-



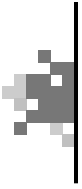
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3 Ways to Share the Gospel this Week

by Matt Smethurst

Preach the gospel at all times and, if necessary, use words.”

Scriptures and their saving power.

This classic quote, misattributed to Saint Francis of Assisi, is both clever and catchy. It just isn’t biblical.

Evangelism—communicating the good news of King Jesus—always requires words. Christians are called to adorn the gospel with actions (Titus 2:10), to be sure, but our actions are not the gospel. No amount of righteous living can replace the necessity of verbal-ly proclaiming God’s saving achievement in Christ.

But even though all evangelism involves sharing the same message, not all evangelism occurs in the same manner. Here are three kinds we see modeled in the New Testament.¹

1. Family Evangelism

God intends gospel proclamation to take place within Christian homes as parents raise their children “in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Children of believers, then, are specially set apart as front-row witnesses to and beneficiaries of gospel influence (1 Cor. 7:14).

The practice of family evangelism is seen in the life of Paul’s protégé Timothy. “I am reminded of your sincere faith,” the apostle writes, “which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy’s faith in Jesus first bloomed at home, thanks to the witness of his grandma and mom. (His dad, Luke tells us, wasn’t a believer.) Paul proceeds to exhort Timothy:

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. “(2 Tim. 3:14–15)

By God’s grace, Timothy could not remember a time in his life when he wasn’t acquainted with the

“Preach the gospel at all times and, if necessary, use words.”

2. Friendship Evangelism

Jesus was accused of many things; one was being a “friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Luke 7:34). Not a stranger, not a passerby, not an acquaintance—a *friend*. The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), and he did so in the context of authentic relationships. Paul, too, modeled such

“relational” or “friendship” evangelism:

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. (1 Thess. 2:7–8)

The apostle was emphatic that his team’s ministry in Thessalonica wasn’t some hit-and-run gospel invasion. They were happy to stay, to form friendships, to invest their lives.

Friendship evangelism can be a beautiful thing—so long as the friendship doesn’t crowd out the evangelism. It’s easy to build relationships with unbelievers in the name of gospel witness without ever getting around to gospel witness. Intentionality, then, is vital. As Matt Chandler has aptly quipped, “Relational evangelism? Go for it, as long as it turns into actual evangelism.”

3. Contact Evangelism

The final (and least popular) type of evangelism involves initiating gospel conversations with people you’ve never met. When I was in college, my campus ministry would often gear its outreaches around this approach—always a surefire way to get eye-rolls from the friendship-evangelism-only crowd. Contact evangelism, they insisted, is cold, impersonal, even deceptive.

Smethurst Continued..

Anything can be abused, of course, so contact evangelism can no doubt become unloving and unhelpful. But it doesn't have to be. In fact, this method is explicitly modeled in Scripture too.

In John 4 Jesus strikes up a conversation with a woman beside a well. Not only is she a complete stranger, she's someone Jesus "should" avoid since she's a woman and a Samaritan (double no-no). Nevertheless, he goes out of his way to meet her and turns their "natural" chat about water into a "spiritual" one about himself. He doesn't waste much time, either, moving from "Will you give me a drink?" (v. 7) to "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would've asked him and he would have given you living water" (v. 10) in the span of just three verses.

And Jesus's witnessing strategy here is not some New Testament anomaly. The earliest Christians also engaged in contact evangelism:

"Day after day, in the temple courts *and from house to house*, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. (Acts 5:42)"

"On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to *the women who had gathered there*. (Acts 16:13)"

"[Paul] reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with *those who happened to be there*. (Acts 17:17)"

The earliest Christians were apparently eager to initiate gospel conversations with "random" persons, with strangers—with whomever their sovereign Lord led them to encounter (Prov. 16:9; 20:24).

If the danger in friendship evangelism is never getting to the evangelism, the danger in contact

evangelism is not caring enough to remember the person's name. We aren't manipulators, and we don't work in sales (2 Cor. 2:17). God-honoring contact evangelism, then, requires healthy doses of social awareness, common courtesy, and authentic concern.

Deployed to Be Deliberate

People need to hear the good news about Jesus Christ, and there is no one-size-fits-all prescription for how that has to happen. It just has to happen.

Whether we're hoping to witness to a child, to a friend, or to a complete stranger, may the Holy Spirit grant us the courage to live lives of gospel intentionality this week—humbly and prayerfully seizing opportunities to brag about our great Savior.

The Gospel Coalition, Christian Living, Matt Smethurst, January 25, 2016



The Most Important Thing My Parents Did

By Tim Challies

I grew up in a church culture, a catechizing culture, and a family worship culture. Each of these was a tremendous, immeasurable blessing, I am sure. I am convinced that twice-each-Sunday services, and memorizing the catechisms, and worshipping as a family marked me deeply. I doubt I will ever forget that my only comfort in life and death is that I am not my own, but belong in body and soul, both in life and death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, or that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. I can still sing many of the psalms and hymns of my youth, and I have precious memories of my family bowing our heads around the kitchen table.

What was true of my family was true of many of my friends' families. They, too, grew up around churches and catechisms and rigid family devotions. In fact, in all the times I visited their homes, I don't think I ever witnessed a family skip over their devotions. It was the custom, it was the expectation, and it was good. Our church had near 100% attendance on Sunday morning and near 100% attendance on Sunday evening. It was just what we did.

But despite all of the advantages, many of the people I befriended as a child have since left the faith. Some have sprinted away, but many more have simply meandered away, so that an occasionally missed Sunday eventually became a missed month and a missed year. Not all of them, of course. Many are now fine believers, who are serving in their churches and even leading them. But a lot—too many—are gone.

Why? I ask the question from time-to-time. Why are all five of my parents' kids following the Lord, while so many of our friends and their families are not? Obviously I have no ability to peer into God's sovereignty and come to any firm conclusions. But as I think back, I can think of one great difference between my home and my friends' homes—at least the homes of my friends who have since walked away from the Lord and his church. Though it is not universally true, it is generally true. Here's the difference: I saw my parents living out their faith even when I wasn't supposed to be watching.

I had the rock-solid assurance that my parents believed and practiced what they preached.

When I tiptoed down the stairs in the morning, I would find my dad in the family room with his Bible open on his lap. Every time I picked up my mom's old *NIV Study Bible* it was a little more wrecked than the time before, I would find a little more ink on the pages, and a few more pieces of tape trying desperately to hold together the worn binding. When life was tough, I heard my parents reason from the Bible and I saw them pray together. They weren't doing these things for us. They weren't doing them to be seen. They were doing these things because they loved the Lord and loved to

Challies Continued...

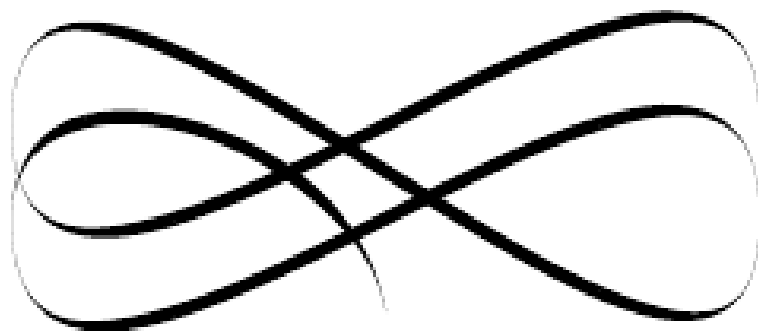
spend time with him, and that spoke volumes to me. I had the rock-solid assurance that my parents believed and practiced what they preached. I knew they actually considered God's Word trustworthy, because they began every day with it. I knew that they believed God was really there and really listening, because they got alone with him each morning to pray for themselves and for their kids. I saw that their faith was not only formal and public, but also intimate and private.

Here is one thing I learned from my parents: Nothing can take the place of simply living as a Christian in view of my

children. No amount of formal theological training, church attendance, or family devotions will make up for a general apathy about the things of the Lord. I can catechize my children all day and every day, but if I have no joy and no delight in the Lord, and if I am not living out my faith, my children will see it and know it.

For all the good things my parents did for me, I believe that the most important was simply living as Christians before me. I don't think anything shaped or challenged me more than that.

Www. Challies.com, Tim Challies, April 9th, 2015



April Birthdays

Jay Buyze	1st		Sara TenPas	21st
Nick Froh	3rd		Toni Barthels	22nd
Brian De Jong	5th		DeLou De Jong	22nd
Nancy Hamelink	7th		Jeff Froh	22nd
Trent Adam	8th		Emile Doro	24th
Randy Jensema	10th		Chris Kaeiser	24th
Audrey Voskuil	17th		Christian De Jong	28th
Gail Moody	18th		Rodney Nyhof	28th
Sue Gross	20th			

Wedding Anniversaries

Josh & Stephanie Arndt

April 13th ~ 4 years



Excited for Spring?

We have plenty of garden space available on our church property for anyone interested in gardening. Our soil is good and we have easy access to water. Don't have tools? No problem! The master gardener, Harlan Harmelink, will help you. The ground will be plowed and ready sometime in May. Questions? Ask Harlan Harmelink, Sara TenPas, or Gail Moody.



SPRING MOVIE NIGHT

Our Spring Worldview Movie Night will take place on Friday, April 21st, at 7:00pm. We will be watching and discussing the movie "Sully" starring Tom Hanks. Popcorn and drinks are provided, other snacks are welcome! Invite a friend for this night of fellowship!



Grace OPC

April 2017

Showing forth the excellencies of



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 Meadowview Manor 3:00 p.M.	3	4	5	6	7 Milwaukee Admirals Hockey Game	8 Men's Leadership Breakfast 7:00 am
9	10	11 Session Meeting 6:30	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21 Worldview Movie Night 7:00 pm	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30S Spring Hospitality Sunday Lord's Supper						

FEARNOT

*Finding God's Comfort for my
fearful soul*

New Hope Church

2017 Women's Conference

By Carla DeMaster



What do you fear most? The women were asked to write down their fears and worries on a card, anonymously, and pass them to the speaker at the end of the first night. She went through them and piled them according to topic. The biggest pile dealt with the fear of rejection, of what people think. Is that your fear?

Fourteen women from Grace Church were at the Women's Retreat on March 24-25 to hear Tara Barthel speak on finding true comfort in the midst of our worries. Topics she covered were: Why we Need More Fear, Not Less; This Relationship Stresses Me Out; God Will Make You Strong and Steadfast.

Tara Barthel, a former director at Peacemaker Ministries and a recovering Lawyer, cares for her husband and two daughters, while regularly mediating and speaking at conferences and retreats. Her books were available for sale: Peacemaking Women-Biblical Hope for Resolving Conflict and Redeeming Church Conflicts.

The sessions are helpfully outlined in the retreat bulletin. These are useful for future use, as well as a flyer on peacemaking, Peacemaking Principles. The 4 G's of Peacemaking, for example, are Glorify God; Get the Log out of Your Eye; Gently Restore; and Go and Be Reconciled. Other lists include: the 7 A's of Confession; the 4 Promises of Forgiveness; The PAUSE Principle of Negotiating and Building a Culture of Peace in Your Church.

Additional blessings for the ladies were: seeing those we met at retreats and elsewhere in the past, talking over the delicious lunch about needs and goals, meeting new people for future connections.

Spring Workday



Mark your calendars for our annual spring workday that will be held on Saturday, May 13th, at 8am. Weather date will be the following Saturday, May 20th.

Spring Hospitality Sunday

On Sunday, April 30th, we will have Hospitality Sunday. If you've never participated before, now is the time to sign up! Everyone marks down on the sign up sheet their name, how many are coming and whether they would like to host, be hosted or both. The week before, everyone is contacted with whether or not they will be hosting (if they volunteered) or where they will be going so the individuals, couples & families can co-ordinate what everyone is going to bring in their group for the luncheon on Sunday.



Roasted Turkey and Basil Cream Cheese Pinwheel Sandwiches

- * 4 ounces whipped cream cheese
- * 1 large head romaine lettuce
- * 1 cup baby spinach leaves, loosely packed
- * 8 large fresh basil leaves
- * Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- * Four 10-inch flour tortillas
- * 8 slices oven-roasted deli turkey (about 8 ounces)
- * 1 whole roasted pepper from a jar, sliced into 1/4-inch strips
- * 1 cup shredded carrots
- * *Directions:*

Pull the largest four romaine leaves from the outside of the bunch and wash and dry carefully, trying not to tear the leaves. Cut the leaves at the base where they were connected to the root; the pieces should be about 9-inches long. Using a vegetable peeler, shave the center rib so the leaves roll up more easily. Set aside. Combine the cream cheese, spinach and basil in a food processor and puree until smooth. Season with 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt and a few grinds of pepper.

Lay one of the tortillas on a clean work surface and add one of the romaine leaves to fit neatly on top. Place 2 slices of turkey next to each other, covering the lettuce. Spread 2 tablespoons of the cream cheese mixture over the surface of the turkey and line up a quarter of the roasted pepper strips along one edge. Line up 1/4 cup of the shredded carrot just above the peppers. Roll up the wrap tightly starting from the edge with the peppers and carrots, so the wrap holds together with the peppers and carrots in the middle. Place the wrap seam-side down. Repeat with the remaining tortillas, vegetables, turkey and cream cheese spread. Cut the wraps into 1-inch pieces, then pierce each segment with a toothpick or skewer from the outside of the tortilla through the seam on the bottom.



“The eyes
of all look
to You,
And You give
them their food
in due time.
You open
Your hand
And satisfy
the desire of
every living
thing.”



Showing forth the
excellencies of Jesus
Christ

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Spurgeon

Corner

*“Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”
Ezekiel 15:2“*

These words are for the humbling of God’s people; they are called God’s vine, but what are they by nature more than others? They, by God’s goodness, have become fruitful, having been planted in a good soil; the Lord hath trained them upon the walls of the sanctuary, and they bring forth fruit to his glory; but what are they without their God? What are they without the continual influence of the Spirit, begetting fruitfulness in them? O believer, learn to reject pride, seeing that thou hast no ground for it. Whatever thou art, thou hast nothing to make thee proud. The more thou art in debt to God; and thou shouldst not be proud of that which renders thee a debtor. Consider thine origin; look back to what thou wast. Consider what thou wouldst have been but for divine grace. Look upon thyself as thou art now. Doth not thy conscience reproach thee? Do not thy thousand wanderings stand before thee, and tell thee that thou art unworthy to be called his son? And if he hath made thee anything, art thou not taught thereby that it is grace which hath made thee to differ? Great believer, thou wouldst have been a great sinner if God had not made thee to differ. O thou who art valiant for truth, thou wouldst have been as valiant for error if grace had not laid hold upon thee. Therefore, be not proud, though thou hast a large estate—a wide domain of grace, thou hadst not once a single thing to call thine own except thy sin and misery. Oh! strange infatuation, that thou, who hast borrowed everything, shouldst think of exalting thyself; a poor dependent pensioner upon the bounty of thy Saviour, one who hath a life which dies without fresh streams of life from Jesus, and yet proud! Fie on thee, O silly heart!

Morning January, 22nd C.H. Spurgeon

Front Page Concluded

arching meaning to life, according to modern thought. The growing secularism and the creeping materialism works together to deny distinctions and differences. As the steam roller moves forward, it flattens everything in its path. So modern philosophy is in the business of destroying all distinctions. “Nothing matters” is the cry of the hour.

So why does a book claiming a search for what REALLY MATTERS do so well? Because most people instinctively know that some things do really matter more than other things. The success of medical treatment for a critically ill patient matters far more than whether I can get a latte with skim milk at my local Starbucks. Who really cares if the short-stop of the Milwaukee Brewers has a .250 batting

average this season? What does that matter? But if a loved one dies outside of Christ and goes to hell – that matters far more.

So everyone knows, and everyone is engaged in the same search that motivated Captain Sullenberger. What matters most? Let me find it, and let me have it!

