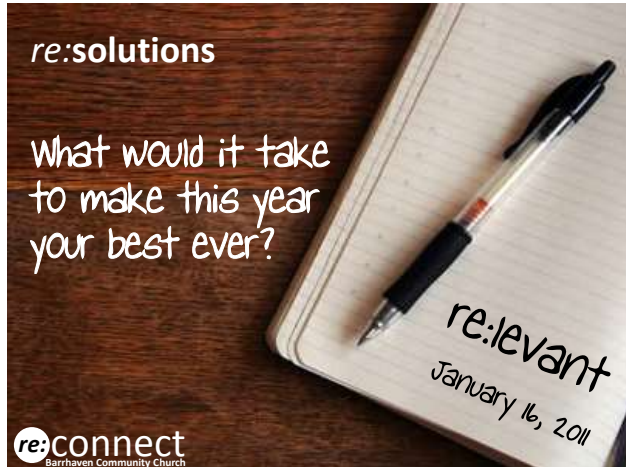


re:solutions – re:levant

Reconnect – January 16, 2011



Text: Proverbs 2:1-15; Matthew 16:24-27

Key Thought: A transformed life resolves to discover, display and distribute God’s wisdom to others.

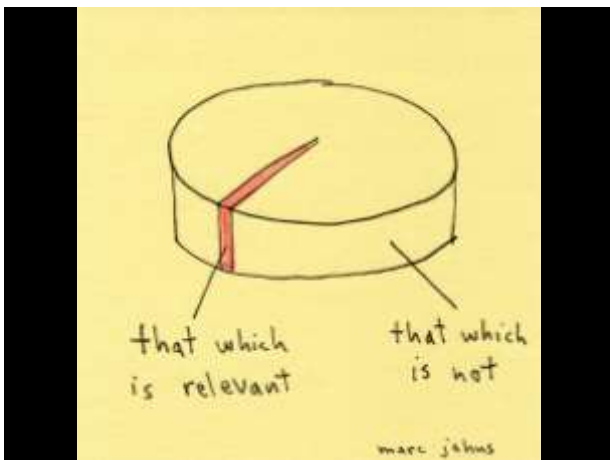
Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight and understanding. Search for them as you would for lost money or hidden treasure. Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He grants a treasure of good sense to the godly. He is their shield, protecting those who walk with integrity. He guards the paths of justice and protects those who are faithful to him. (Proverbs 2:2-8, NLT)

Pre-Intro: Golden Voice, Part Two (video)

Intro: from real to relevant

- The story continues from last week for “the man with the golden voice”
- As so often is the case, there will continue to be more to the story – the question is, will anyone else care, or should we care?
- As I watch this, I’m uncomfortable – I want this man to be helped, I want someone to help him, but I don’t want to hear about it anymore
- Because, while it’s extremely relevant for him, it’s not really relevant for me

Objection: relevance?



Q: Define “relevant” for me. What comes to mind when you hear that word?

- The dictionary.com definition for relevant is, “bearing upon or connected with the matter in hand; pertinent: a relevant remark”
- We make decisions about relevance every day, and those decisions go hand in hand with the way we prioritize: what do we need to know for our day? Will we take ten minutes to check our email, Facebook or the stock markets? How long do we spend talking with person A, or do we dodge them in favour of person B? What do I have to do today, and what do I need to look at in order to do it? What’s most important here? What matters?
- While those priorities might change over the course of the day, they only change when we receive new information – in other words, when something else pertinent, when something relevant comes our way and we realize that now we need to adjust and take on something else
- And what’s relevant for one person is sometimes different for another, because we have different needs and different things that are necessary and important for us
- But other things are relevant for everyone – because as people, we have certain common needs and desires and aspirations – and that’s the way that God made us

Relevant? (advice)



- Let’s talk advice:

Q: What is one bit of advice that someone has given you recently? What was it, and did you take it? Why or why not?

- We get advice all the time – a good restaurant, a stock tip, a parenting tip, a good neighbourhood for house hunting, decorating advice – the list goes on and on
- Sometimes we get the advice from someone else because they think it is relevant to us – “I saw this and I thought of you”
- Other times we overhear something, or something winds up being especially relevant to us because of our specific situation, where for someone else, it wouldn’t be a big deal
- But if there was one thing that you could pass along to someone else, that you felt would be relevant for them, what would it be?
- That’s a big question, because we hope that all of the advice that we pass along to our kids (for example) will be heard and acted on – and much of it will be, one way or another, though we may never fully see or appreciate it

- But when we turn to Proverbs, there is consistently one piece of advice that is stressed again and again by Solomon and others – one piece of information that they feel is relevant – and it’s what was already read this morning:

Read/Explain Text: Proverbs

My child, listen to me and treasure my instructions. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight and understanding. Search for them as you would for lost money or hidden treasure. Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He grants a treasure of good sense to the godly. He is their shield, protecting those who walk with integrity. He guards the paths of justice and protects those who are faithful to him.

- this part is about changing your life
- First, the question of desire – the “want to”
- It’s tough, in a suburban lifestyle where often we’re only hungry for luxuries, or stuff we know we shouldn’t have, to understand hunger – the idea of wanting something basic to life and not having it, of not being able to go out and get it for yourself, of having to make do in the meantime
- But the person giving this advice is trying to tap into that kind of desire, that kind of passion
- “Search for them...” – like car keys, remote controls, the receipt to bring something expensive back to the store... be frantic, be desperate to have it
- Because, they say, then you will wind up connecting with God – because as Proverbs says over and over again, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”
- And the benefits of connecting with God – truly connecting with Him and desiring to follow Him – are immediate – your past is not immediately fixed, and your circumstances may not change much, but your future suddenly is diverted onto a better path – and eventually, the longer you walk on dry ground, the more your mud problem is going to disappear

Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will know how to find the right course of action every time. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy. Wise planning will watch over you. Understanding will keep you safe.

- this section is about how this relationship with God – this inflow of wisdom, relevant to your needs and circumstances, changes your choices
- Proverbs is about following certain principles that are generally true – so it doesn’t mean that nothing bad will ever happen – but what it does mean, is that a wealth of bad things that we get ourselves into won’t have the chance of happening
- Each day, we make choices – and if we REALLY wanted to, in a day we could throw away the life we have – God forbid! But it’s the good choices we make, the regular choices, the everyday smart ones, that keep our lives going

Wisdom will save you from evil people, from those whose speech is corrupt. These people turn from right ways to walk down dark and evil paths. They rejoice in doing wrong, and they enjoy evil as it turns things upside down. What they do is crooked, and their ways are wrong. Proverbs 2:1-15, NLT

- this section is about how this relationship with God – this relevant force at work in a life - changes your outcomes and saves you from a world of hurt

Relevant – not just for us...

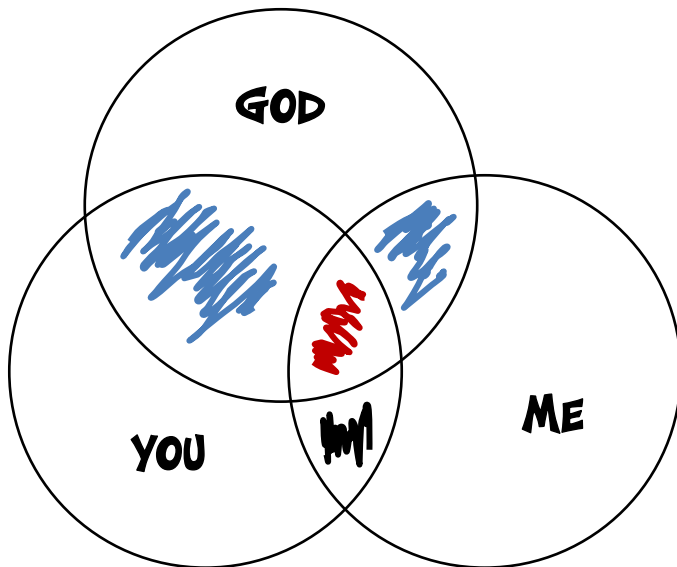
- So how do we get this across to others in our lives? and where are they at in terms of this process? Are they crying out? Are we? The level of hunger here is something not seen very often in our society – what are we ever really hungry for that is actually good? That isn't something that is going to drag us to the wrong path? Lust, greed, pride... what else are we hungry for? I mean, really hungry... our society dulls the senses and we're rarely physically hungry – and we're only desperate for anything much in a crisis, not in our everyday comfortable, suburban lives...
- How badly do we want to communicate this message? And how hungry are we to do it... it's been on my mind...
- Without a hunger in our own lives – without examination to see why that hunger has perhaps been dulled – what are we filling it with instead? – we can't very well extol the virtues of a hunger like that to others
- At the same time, wisdom is wisdom – and just because you get up with a headache doesn't mean it wasn't the right decision to sleep in a bed

A bridge:



- One of the things that is neat about how God has made humanity is that we have so much in common – common needs, desires, aspirations, as I've already mentioned
- Not only that, but we have common experiences, flaws, temptations, difficulties in our lives
- That means that our experiences and what has shaped us is like a bridge, especially for those who have found this connection with God and are experiencing his very relevant wisdom in their lives
- We have a connection with God – we also have the potential of a connection with others, and it's through that connection – based on past experience, or hurt, or mistakes, or positivity, or the mutual desire to help others, or for justice, or to show compassion, or through sports or the arts or a host of other things – it's through that connection that we can demonstrate and communicate this wisdom to them – but we have to choose to make use of that connection
- Sometimes we'd rather believe that there is no more bridge – that a certain part of our lives is over, that we no longer need that bridge, that the connection is no longer there
- I understand that feeling – but ultimately, as we gain strength, the desire to go back to help others should be evident
- The old saying, “there but for the grace of God go I” – being willing to go back onto the bridge we crossed over previously with a view to reaching out to the other side again...
- You can't always give the whole message, but you can give it in parts – and when you find a part, you run with it... you make the connection, because the world still hears the echo of God's voice when it comes to His truth and the compassion that we show to each other

- the **Conversations Peace Corps PSA video** – it’s like he’s speaking a different language – and we don’t think it’s relevant – but it’s MORE relevant than many things in life – and very relevant to that person and their personal growth



Relevant - value

- Here’s what our website has to say about this value of relevant – which by the way is one of our shared Reconnect values:



Relevant: "Finding and furthering connections between church, Christ and culture in our beautiful, screwed-up world"

Looks like: Accessibility

We want to share the message of God's love with clarity, creativity and courage, at every opportunity. In a world of conflicting messages that fight for our attention, we must find cultural points of contact to cut through the clutter. We will do this to ensure that the story we have to tell is both understood and recognized as personally important and necessary, with a choice to be made.

Looks like: Practicing justice and compassion

God has made us with a desire to help each other, as well as with a broad, generally shared understanding of right and wrong. We want to tap into these inborn shared characteristics to together work for justice and show compassion in our world, as we demonstrate the love and life of Christ.

- the Bible stubbornly maintains that having a relationship with God – a transforming, committed relationship that affects the rest of our lives – is the key to experiencing true success and joy in the rest of our lives – to “getting everything else right”
- Proverbs – 3x – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”
- No matter your degrees, or your IQ points, or your mad video game skillz, it comes down to having an ever-increasing space for God in your life – yikes!
- You can't really be relevant without God – sure, you can be honest and open about yourself – but what you show the rest of the world will be lacking, big time

What does relevant look like on a personal level?

- relevant (selfish, irrelevant) – being willing to live in this way, in God's wisdom, and looking for ways to pass that along



the power of referral – the value of a referral, in all sorts of areas of life and business – someone saw something good enough that they mentioned it to someone else – people go with referrals from people that they trust – they will check it out first for themselves, but if it's something that they need, they will give it a look – or even if they don't think they need it, they will listen, take it in and file it away...

- The opposite of relevant is SELFISHNESS – toward others, the unwillingness, for whatever reason, to pass along “where to find bread”
- But the other opposite, and one that the church has often been accused of – rightly – is IRRELEVANCE - No one wants to be put aside, forgotten, set aside and without value – but our spiritual lives are too often put there – how badly do we want to live this life, or how important do we think it really all is, either for ourselves or others
- It takes **resolve** to be relevant before God – the sticky part of the word “resolution” – or re:resolution, as we’ve been saying... it takes being “resolute”

Key Thought:

TAKE IT HOME:

A transformed life resolves to discover, display and distribute God’s wisdom to others.

Then Jesus said to the disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life. And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul? For I, the Son of Man, will come in the glory of my Father with his angels and will judge all people according to their deeds.” – **JESUS** in Matthew 16:24-27, NLT



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Conclusion: short-sighted? (J.C. Ryle)

- What can I do to help you serve God? Not just like the idea of Him... not just be open to Him... but to get you to give Him your all? To put your life in His hands?
- Intro: J.C. Ryle – bishop of Liverpool, England back roughly 150 years ago – passionate about true faith that made a difference in people’s lives, especially those who weren’t “churchy people” for church

Ryle's questions: (from 100 years ago) (chapter 1 of Practical Holiness) – from 1878! (133 years ago)

- 1) Do we ever think about our souls at all?**
- 2) Do we ever do anything about our souls?**
- 3) Are we trying to satisfy our consciences with a mere formal religion?**
- 4) Have we received the forgiveness of our sins?**

5) Do we know anything by experience of conversion to God?

“Without conversion there is no salvation... We are all by nature so weak, so worldly, so earthly-minded, so inclined to sin, that without a thorough change we cannot serve God in life, and could not enjoy Him after death.

Sense of sin and deep hatred to it, faith in Christ and love to Him, delight in holiness and longing after more of it, love to God's people and distaste for the things of the world, - these, these are the signs and evidences which always accompany conversion. Myriads around us, it may be feared, know nothing about it. They are, in Scripture language, dead, and asleep, and blind, and unfit for the kingdom of God... Hypocrites and sham Christians are indirect evidence that there is such a thing as real grace among men. Let us search our own hearts then, and see how it is with ourselves.” (J.C. Ryle, Practical Religion, 7-8)

6) Do we know anything of practical Christian holiness?

Holiness is not absolute perfection and freedom from all faults. Nothing of the kind!... Absolute perfection is for heaven, and not for earth, where we have a weak body, a wicked world, and a busy devil continually near our souls. Nor is real Christian holiness ever attained, or maintained, without a constant fight and struggle.

Yet, weak and imperfect as the holiness of the best saints may be, it is a real true thing, and has a character about it as unmistakable as light and salt. It is not a thing which begins and ends with noisy profession: it will be *seen* much more than *heard*... It will make a man humble, kind, gentle, unselfish, good-tempered, considerate for others, loving, meek, and forgiving. It will not constrain him to go out of the world, and shut himself up in a cave, like a hermit. But it will make him do his duty in that state to which God has called him, on Christian principles, and after the pattern of Christ.” (J.C. Ryle, Practical Religion, 8-9)

- How are we communicating that truth to others and encouraging others when we find it?
- It's a message that needs to be communicated, that needs to be lived out first, to our community – it's about more than just us, more than just a small, neighbourhood church that we all enjoy – there is a world out there that is in need of the wisdom, the knowledge, the connection to God that we have

Response: prayer

Or discussion – “For you, what's an attractive part of following Jesus?”