

MOSAIC: CONNECTING WITH GOD AND OTHERS
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Profoundly Sponge Bob Square Paints... In one episode Planktan, a rather small evil kind of guy, seems to have given up his life of inner ugliness and selfishness. And apparently one day, the corrupt, thief'n, Plankten makes a change in life. He turned good... The question is... is it real? Has he changed?

He says all the right things... *"Hi, Sponge Bob, it's a very nice day"*
 He acts right, *He isn't stealing crabby paddies*

Sponge Bob and Mr. Crabbs can't agree on whether the Plankten has actually undergone some sort of true life-change.

Q: It raises this question: What is true authentic life-Change?

- a) Is it merely saying the right things... affirming the right dogma & doctrine?
- b) Is it merely behaving correctly... avoid certain scandalous sins.

John 7:37-38

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Jesus describes a life of "streams of living water flowing from within.

Def: Reality Life Promised in Scripture

So... when we talk about closing the gap.... What does that mean?

What's going on inside of you and me... if the spiritual gap is closing?

- What's the real difference between authentic "gap closing" spiritual growth... and a religious life, or a religious version of plankten?

T>>
Zacchaeus

To get at this I want to talk about two people in scripture

Imagine you grew up in the suburbs of Jericho... Zac was a childhood friend. He was always so good at math. He helped you pass your algebra mid-term.

As he became a young man you watched his aspirations turn inward. You knew the real man. You remember when he started to slide toward selfishness,

- ✓ His lust for success and greed ... you saw your childhood friend...
- ✓ Defraud people in his own community.
- ✓ Foreclosure on Aunt Bee's house... The way he taxed people over, and over,
- ✓ The humiliation he caused to his mother and father.
- ✓ The self-indulgent parties he would throw for the rich and powerful.
- ✓ The way he would threaten the use of Roman solders

Knowing all that... imagine you are there the day Jesus walks into Jericho and you watch with amazement... this encounter Zac has with Jesus.

↳ Keep that in mind but think of another guy as well...

Rich Young Ruler We'll call him Richie...

Mark 10:17

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

↳ Look at this about this man's posture, his attitude...

Mark 10:19-20

... You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'¹⁴

Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

You'd hate to have this guy sitting next to you in class growing up... He was the good kid... Why can't you be more like Richie?

- ✓ Captain of football team,
- ✓ Student body president,
- ✓ Always eats his vegetables,
- ✓ Memorized the Torah first in his class, and...

- In high school he drives up in a brand new red convertible chariot...

Q: If we didn't know the response of Christ... and we knew each of these characters...

It's tempting think Richie is the spiritual one and Zac is just a spiritual loser...

Zac

...and yet because of a 10 min slice of time... we believe Zac is the one experiencing a gap closing kind of life...

Richie

And Richie... this guy has lived up to every behavior considered righteous... He's memorized vast amounts of scripture... He knows the core tenants of faith... He knows the right doctrine... His life is devoted to being good

The guy is on knees for goodness sake!!!

... and we're kicking him in the teeth... **because why...** "He's unwilling to give up everything he owns...?"

Q: Is that why we think he's not moving toward becoming a spiritual mother or father??? Wow... who among us would get in line for that challenge?

Did Zac give up everything he owned? No...

Q: What is the real difference between the Rich Young Ruler and Zac?

This is such a hard problem to get at... to define... because...

- We're trying to discern... The difference between authentic "gap closing" spiritual growth... and simply becoming more religious...

friends Here's my fear: I see too many churches that are turning out Richies and not Zac's

Michael Novak Author Michael Novak gets at some of this by describing different levels of convictions.

(1st) **Public beliefs:**

“Public Beliefs” are things I espouse publicly because I feel like I need to, or because it helps me in some way.

(ILL)

If Angie asks me: “Does this dress make me look fat...?” Yea... I know what I'm gonna say every time. Smart and wise husbands know the answer to this...

Public beliefs are things I affirm because it's the “right thing” to say or believe. **It's a spin job!** I say it because I think I need to in order to protect myself, or to get my way.

Biblical ie

King Herod. Remember what he said to the wise men?

Matt 2:8

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

Yea right...! He doesn't really believe that...? But he thinks he needs to say it.

Joke

You may find this hard to believe, but there was a time when politicians were actually capable of bending the truth...

(2nd) **Private beliefs:**

These are things that I sincerely desire to be true, or that I think I believe, but they are ultimately tied to other values or circumstances more than I realize.

(ILL)

Have you ever noticed how children will ask for something. They will say

“If you will just get me this I'll never ask for anything ever again!

Please... if you buy me the new “**Transformers Attack of the My Pretty Ponies**” video game... It's all I want... Just please get this for me and...

“... and I'll never ask you for another thing ever again!”

Q:

In that moment... Do they sincerely believe what they are saying...? Yes!

But a very strange thing happens, I'm sure this has never happened w/ any of your children... (you've heard about it from other parents) but sometimes the circumstances change... like they finally get the game, and what they once believed privately so strongly... starts to slip.

Another game comes out... “**The Transformers Strike Back**” one of the Pretty Ponies is frozen in carbonate... and

~ They come to believe they need to get another video game... they come to believe that there are other toys and things they desperately need to have.

Q: Anyone ever start a diet believing... I will follow this... I will make the right choice. "I'll not cheat on this one."

But circumstance change... you see the "Death By Chocolate" Brownie desert on the menu.

- That's the nature of "private beliefs" They seem to be real at the time, but they are tied to circumstances and other values more than we like to admit.

Biblical ie

At the last supper Jesus told Peter he would deny him three times.

Q: How did Peter respond?

Mark 14:29, 31

Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

:31 But **Peter insisted emphatically**, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."

Q: Did Peter really believe this? Was he sincere? *Yes...*
But when circumstances changed... His belief wasn't as solid as he thought.

It turns out that many of our beliefs are more fickle than we realize.

(3rd) **Core Scripts:**

These are beliefs scripted deep... deep into our mind and emotions. Some psychologist would call these "mental maps" but that has come to mean a lot of other things.

Core Scripts: These are beliefs we have that are so deep they are always in play. They influence our daily living... our decisions, and our relationships. **It's like a script we follow whether we're aware of it or not.**

~ It's my beliefs about the way things really are.

~ They are mostly revealed by my actions... what I actually do.

Gravity

I believe in gravity, it's a part of my "core script".

✓ So... I don't have to think about it...

✓ I don't fight against a constant stream of desires to defy... I don't try to float from one roof top to the next.

✓ Gravity is part of my "core script", therefore my behavior is always congruent with my belief in gravity.

Biblical ie

When Peter denied Christ in front of this little servant girl... **What's going on?**

He knew his actions were hurtful to Christ. He knew it wasn't moral or honorable... He didn't like what he did... but...

Deep down... way down deep... he believed he needed to protect himself and that denying Christ was really the most sensible thing to do.

I have 3 types of beliefs.

1. What I **say** I believe
2. What I **think** I believe...
3. What I **reveal** I believe... based on my actions My "core scripts"

Depravity

In a strange way it turns out that we're not always the best judge of knowing what we believe most.

Worse: My core scripts are all messed up

Biblical writers have a word for this. In our day the essence of this word gets lost, even among churches and Christians...

The word is **depravity**. I'm depraved... you are depraved. My deepest beliefs, purposes, and convictions are messed up.

Paul gets at this in Romans 1.

Rom 1:28

... since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved... WHAT?... mind...

My soul has a problem it's damaged... depraved... to trust in my own soul will lead me in a bad direction. Selfish, prideful, and self-destructive ways.

Q: What is Jesus wanting to change? Public beliefs, Private beliefs, or "Core Scripts"?

Zac & Richie

John 7:38

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Friends

These are absolutely gorgeous words... this is good news... It's the best news ever.

Zac

Zac saw the opportunity of a life-time! To be transformed God... To have God in his life... Could care less about his religious reputation... he was falling in love w/ God.

Richie

on the other hand... could only see things in terms of:

- a) Correct dogma & doctrine... and
- b) How good his behavior was.

Our Foundation

Q: Is solid doctrine important? Absolutely. Does behavior matter? Absolutely...
 But they are not the foundation.
 Our Foundation is a person... it is the person of Jesus Christ...

Worship
 Friends...

When we worship: we do not worship doctrine, We do not worship good behavior... we do not worship our religious reputations...

We worship our God... we worship Jesus!

We give Him our hearts... we give him our mind and body... He is the one who has the power & desire to change me... right down to my core scripts.

↳ And we love Him

There r churches:

There are churches that build themselves upon a religious system or reputation.... Just as Richie was trying to do...

In the end... it just **behavioral modification and image management.**

And... We're not going to do that... it's well intentioned... but it turns people into Richie's, not Zac's – They become legalist, or labors... there focus is on a moral reputation.... They're good, but they are not salt & light.

(Story)

A year & half ago a young man approached me after a service...

I'm going to call him Charlie, and I'm going to change the facts of this story because he lives out of state and I didn't have the opportunity to ask if I could share the story.

"He said you've talked a lot about following God, and prayer, and what a good week would be like.

And he said something that broke my heart... He said let me tell you what a good week is form me. A good week for me is just not waking up in the ER strung out on crack w/ my blood count in a total danger zone. It's just not being paralyzed by a life of being abused by more people than I could count before I was 10.

Then he said... so when you talk about feeling God's love, praying from the heart every day... living with a sense of God's love and presence... That is a week I can't even imagine...

Is there a place for a guy like me in a church like this?... is that even possible?

This place became a shimmer of light in his life... and when I get to see Charlie... I continue to encourage him.

He's not a church kind of guy... but you all as a church have been a very bright light for a guy who's see a lot of darkness.

~ Here's what we believe... That when Jesus stood up and said all who are thirsty... come to me... that offer was for you... and me... and Charlie.

We will not be the church that says to the Charlies of the world... You don't measure up, you don't belong... Rather, we want him feel God's love that constantly calls him to put his hope, trust, and very life into Jesus Christ...

As you think about message this morning... as you think about your relationship w/ God... I want you to respond to God through this song:

Song

Hear the holy roar of God resound
Watch the waters part before us now
Come and see what He has done for us
Tell the world of His great love

Our God is a God who saves
Our God is a God who saves

Let God arise
Let God arise
Our God reigns now and forever
He reigns now and forever

His enemies will run for sure
The church will stand, she will endure
He holds the keys of life, our Lord
Death has no sting, no final word