

RESTORING SHALOM

Teaching Guide

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RESTORING SHALOM- A Framework for Urban Ministry

This Week's Reading Assignment

Many of the core concepts of the article, *Restoring Shalom - A Framework for Urban Ministry*, have been derived from the methods and mindset of the early Christian church. Early Christians were predominately civically involved, urban dwellers exhibiting many of the traits of influentials. It was through this life style that Jesus' doctrines of love and charity were able to touch and transform the Roman Empire.

Lesson Objectives

- 1) That the learner would begin to actively pursue civic involvement
- 2) That the learner would begin to exhibit the traits of an influential

A Note to Teachers

In this session you will cover three foundational principles: public faith, open networks and civic involvement. Understanding these concepts will help the learner launch and build a successful ministry that contribute to making Christ known in the city.

The church is the visible and tangible expression of the kingdom of God. As such it is essential that we as kingdom citizens live lives of public faith in the public square demonstrated by justice, mercy and generosity.

- Public and privatized faiths are not simply different expressions of the same faith but flow from radically different worldviews. In this session you will help the learner understand the differences. You may have notice the use of the word privatized rather than private. It's a good distinction. The teaching notes on the next page will help you explain the differences. The public/privatized exercise will help you assess how well your group understands the differences.

- Over-lapping social networks play an important part in ministry, as believers (and even non-believers) work together for the good of the city. You will help the learner understand the difference between "networking" and working to cause overlap and synergy among social networks for the good of the city.

- Finally you will touch on the importance of civic involvement. In this session you will help the learner see that civic activity is essential to public faith and for effective ministry.

Resources

- *The Rise of Christianity*, Rodney Stark (This book is strongly recommended for anyone leading this session)
- *The Call*, Os Guinness - chapter 19; *Locked Out and Staying There*
 - A discussion on the privatization of faith
- *Evangelism Plus*, John Stott
 - An Interview with Christianity Today

Class Structure

Please plan 2 ½ hours for this session.

30 minutes

Learning Activity: Public/Private Scenarios Debate & Discussion

15 minutes

Lecture: Public vs. Privatized Faith.

10 minutes

Debrief: Learning Activity in light of Lecture

40 minutes

Discussion: Social Networks and Civic Involvement and project discussion

30 minutes

Discussion: *Restoring Shalom, A Framework for Urban Ministry*

Learning Activity
Public Faith in the Public Square

Instructions: Divide your class in pairs or small groups. Assign two groups to each vignette; one group will try to prove that the individual in the scenario is demonstrating public faith while the other group will try to make a case for privatized faith. If you prefer discussion rather than debate assign one group to each vignette and have them state whether the statement represents a public or private faith, have them state each side of the argument.

Note: After this exercise there may be a sense that the issue is not resolved. This is good. Resist trying to resolve questions during the exercise. When each group has presented their thoughts move into your lecture. After the lecture re-visit the scenarios and see if the group can come to greater resolution.

Possible answers to this exercise are provided after the lecture notes.

Scenario #1: *Humphrey is an elder at his church, a Sunday school teacher and has taught Evangelism Explosion for seven years. He shares his faith regularly and often sees people come to faith. He is committed to using his spiritual gifts for the community of Christ of which he is a part. He also has been leading a marriage and parenting seminar after work for his co-workers.*

Scenario #2: *Eugenia has volunteered for World Wildlife Fund for several years. The disastrous treatment of endangered species in many parts of the world has led her to place her faith in Christ. She is currently involved in hosting a fundraiser for the imperial fresh water octopus that is slowly disappearing from the Great Lakes due to ocean bound shipping practices. She has enlisted many friends from church as well as her co-workers to help with the fundraiser. Eugenia explains that we all ought to be concerned for the world we live in, regardless of our faith orientation. Her commitment to the animal world is admirable and raises a lot of questions among both her Christian and her non-Christian friends. Eugenia is not yet able to articulate the tenets of her faith as well as we might hope, but she has a good sense of what her faith requires and she is willing to talk about it.*

Scenario #3: *Hubert is active in promoting literacy among the poor. He has been a Christian for many years and serves at church and in the community. He enjoys his volunteer work although he serves more from instinct than from thoughtfulness. Hubert does not like to share his faith but wants to be a good witness by example. He both hopes and fears the day someone will notice his service and ask him about it.*

Scenario #4: *This scenario is for a U.S Audience. Esmeralda is very active in her community. She is president of the local chapter of the Republican Party and works hard to make abortion and gay marriage illegal. She shares her faith and often invites friends and co-workers to church on Sunday. She is deeply grieved by the sins of her nation and the rejection of traditional family values.*

Lecture

Public vs. Privatized Faith

Public faith in the public square, demonstrated by justice, mercy and generosity

What is public faith and what is the significance of the public square?

Defining Our Terms: Public Faith, Public Square & Privatized Faith

- *Public Faith* has public consequence. It puts forth ideals that shape social structures and practices. It is not limited to personal consequences no matter how publicly those consequences are proclaimed.
- *Privatized Faith* is **limited** to private consequences such as the person or the family.

Note: *Privatized Faith* is not the same as *Personal Faith*. The Lord calls each us to a faith that is so deeply personal and transforming that we become transformative agents as we live out our faith. Our personal faith then has public consequences; it is *personal* but not *privatized*.

- *The Public Square* is the social domain in which ideas are posited, action is taken, decisions are made, social structures are shaped and social practices are determined.

Background

Our current understanding of faith has been shaped in part by 19th and 20th century movements that emphasized “personal piety” and “individual decisions” to trust Christ. At the same time these movements minimized the mandate for Christians to be involved in social structures and practices affecting the wider culture.

The resulting cleavage between the public and the private spheres of our life reinforce the idea that the private realm is the appropriate place for faith and conviction. *Privatized faith* is one that is content staying in the realm of personal piety. It works inwardly and solely with issues of personal salvation, morality, family, etc.

The Problems with Privatized Faith

- One problem with *privatized faith* is that our inner person can become disconnected from our outer actions; we become hypocrites.
- Another problem is that privatized faith becomes, “socially irrelevant, even if it is personally engaging,” as one social critic described the Christian faith.

Jesus’ Vision of Faith

Through Jesus’ life and teaching we can see that there was no division between what was public and what was personal. He healed the sick and fed the masses, he forgave sin and challenged the dominant religious thinkers of the day. He did what he did because he was who he was.

He calls his followers to both a deep personal faith and an engaging public faith. He offers abundant life but not for the sole purpose of self-fulfillment. He calls us to be *salt* and *light*.

John Stott, in an interview with Christianity today, explains Jesus' teaching in Mathew 5:

Regarding social transformation, I've reflected a great deal on the salt and light metaphors, the models that Jesus himself chose in Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount. "You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world." It seems to me that those models must be said to contain at least three things.

First, that Christians are radically different from non-Christians, or if they are not, they ought to be. Jesus sets over against each other two communities. On the one hand there is the world, and on the other hand there is you, who are the dark world's light. Jesus implied that we are as different as light from darkness and salt from decay.

Second, Christians must permeate non-Christian society. Salt does no good if it stays in the saltshaker. Light does no good if you hide it under a bed or bucket. It has to permeate the darkness. So both metaphors call us not just to be different, but to permeate society.

The third, the more controversial implication, is that the salt and light metaphors indicate that Christians can change non-Christian society. The models must mean that, because both salt and light are effective commodities. They change the environments in which they are placed. Salt hinders bacterial decay. Light dispels darkness. This is not to resurrect the social gospel. We cannot perfect society. But we can improve it.

A Proper Vision of Faith

- Through Jesus' life and teachings we can conclude that a proper vision of faith is not one that is only public or only personal, but he calls us to a faith that is deeply personal and one that leads us to public engagement. His lordship is for all of our lives and all of the world, both public and private.
- The question becomes not what we are to do but how do we live this out in a culturally appropriate way. How do we let our personal faith informed opinions and shape public life and institutions?

The Early Church

What stirs the imagination when considering the first Christians is that these believers had a compelling faith that addressed public issues. They were active in every part of society restoring *shalom* and providing gospel solutions for all sorts of personal, cultural and social ills.

Requirements for Public Faith

- Essential to public faith is a worldview that connects the gospel to everything in life. The gospel must have something to say beyond "sin management" and moral guidance. It must speak to how we build buildings and why we brush our teeth; nothing is exempt from its meaning and purpose. The Kingdom Story of *ought, is, can* and *will* help connect the gospel to all of life.
- Secondly if we want to live a public faith we must be able to articulate our convictions in a manner that makes sense to the wider public. Sin and salvation may not always be the best first conversation.

Enemies of Public Faith

- The notion that our faith should become the governing force over all of society takes faith out of the public square and puts into a political power struggle that eventually alienates many segments of society.
- The idea that the personal realm provides an adequate expression of the lordship of Christ and so faith becomes privatized.
- The tendency to build Christian ghettos (often due to an unwillingness for inter connectedness with the non-believing world) that meet all of our needs and provide all our means of expression.

Learning Activity- Continued *Public Faith in the Public Square*

Go back over the three or four scenarios about public and privatized faith. Is there anything that people would like to add, subtract or change about these stances? Do this as a group discussion not as a debate.

Scenario #1: Humphrey is an elder at his church, a Sunday school teacher and has taught Evangelism Explosion for seven years. He shares his faith regularly and often sees people come to faith. He is committed to using his spiritual gifts for the community of Christ of which he is a part. He also has been leading a marriage and parenting seminar after work for his co-workers.

Possible Answers: Humphrey has a very active faith however it is primarily related to his private life and the church community. He does venture into family issues with his colleagues. The family is in the private realm but it is encouraging to see him connecting the gospel to real issues. I would like to see Humphrey use his spiritual gifts on behalf of the wider community rather than limit their use to within the church.

Scenario #2: Eugenia has volunteered for World Wildlife Fund for several years. The disastrous treatment of endangered species in many parts of the world has led her to place her faith in Christ. She is currently involved in hosting a fundraiser for the imperial fresh water octopus that is slowly disappearing from the Great Lakes due to ocean bound shipping practices. She has enlisted many friends from church as well as her co-workers to help with the fundraiser. Eugenia explains that we all ought to be concerned for the world we live in, regardless of our faith orientation. Her commitment to the animal world is admirable and raises a lot of questions among both her Christian and her non-Christian friends. Eugenia is not yet able to articulate the tenets of her faith as well as we might hope, but she has a good sense of what her faith requires and she is willing to talk about it.

Possible Answers: I like how Eugenia connects her faith to the care of creation. Endangered species are definitely in the public realm. I wish she could articulate her convictions in light of the Kingdom Story.

Scenario #3: Hubert is active in promoting literacy among the poor. He has been a Christian for many years and serves at church and in the community. He enjoys his volunteer work although he serves more from instinct than from thoughtfulness. Hubert does not like to share his faith but wants to be a good witness by example. He both hopes and fears the day someone will notice his service and ask him about it.

Possible Answers: Hubert, I like your service but if you can't connect what you do with a verbal expression of the redeeming work of Christ you are hiding your faith.

Scenario #4: This scenario is for a U.S Audience. *Esmeralda is very active in her community. She is president of the local chapter of the Republican Party and works hard to make abortion and gay marriage illegal. She shares her faith and often invites friends and co-workers to church on Sunday. She is deeply grieved by the sins of her nation and the rejection of traditional family values.*

Possible Answers: It is hard to say whether Esmeralda has a public faith or a politicized faith.

Discussion

Social Networks and Civic Involvement

Overlapping Social Networks-

Discuss the following points in light of the project *Insert Thyself (Networks)*. Then have each person share his or her thoughts on the project itself.

- Over-lapping social networks play an important part in ministry, as believers work together for the good of the city. Take time to discuss the difference between "networking" and working to cause overlap and synergy among social networks for the good of the city.
- Discuss the idea of networks as presented in *Restoring Shalom*. What relevance does this have for work and ministry in our cities?
- In *The Rise of Christianity*, Rodney Stark says, "Most new religious movements fail because they quickly become closed, or semi-closed networks. That is they fail to keep forming and sustaining attachments to outsiders and thereby lose the capacity to grow. Successful movements discover techniques for remaining open networks, able to reach out and into new adjacent social networks. And herein lies the capacity of movements to sustain exponential rates of growth over long periods of time."¹

Civic Involvement-

Discuss the following points in light of the project *Insert Thyself (Civic Involvement)*. Then have each person share his or her thoughts on the project itself.

Which networks are most active in doing good on behalf of the city?

Which networks are the most influential, regarding "doing good?"

Discussion:

Restoring Shalom - A Framework for Urban Ministry

The purpose of this discussion is two fold. First you want to give time for individuals to share their thoughts and to ask any questions they may have. Secondly you want to begin to discuss your city in light of the framework given in the article; you want to answer the question, how might we shape our approach to our city in light of this article. The framework includes the following:

Who – *Influentials*; **How** – *Civic Involvement and Open Networks*; **Why** – *Restoring the Shalom of Jesus*

¹ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, HarperSanFrancisco, San Francisco, CA, page 20