

Session 1: A focus on the heart

'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.' (Matthew 23:25-26)

'When we do not think about characteristic motivations, the counselee's 'relationship with God' tends to be approached chiefly through outward disciplines: devotional life, church attendance, and the like. When we do address the motivational issues biblically, the counselee's relationship with God becomes a counselling issue we can get our hands on.' (David Powlison, *The Biblical Counselling Movement: History and Context*)

What's happening in our churches?

A man in trouble...

- **Discuss: How true to life do you think this response to Dave might be?**
If you were the pastor, what would you say? Is there any scripture you might use?

The Gospel Gap

'Often there is a vast gap in our grasp of the gospel. It subverts our identity as Christians and our understanding of the present work of God.'

(from Lane and Tripp, How People Change)

A man in more trouble...

Where the gospel gap takes us...

Emphasis on behavioural change..

... external righteousness

... but unchanged hearts

Creating

...a culture of performance

...taking us away from gospel and toward religion

The Sanctification Gap

'There seemed to be a sanctification gap among Evangelicals, a peculiar conspiracy somehow to mislay the Protestant tradition of spiritual growth and to concentrate instead on frantic witnessing activity, sermons on John 3.16 and theological arguments over eschatological subtleties.'

(Lovelace's description of 1950's evangelicalism in Dynamics of Spiritual Life)

Filling the Gap.....

- *Legalism*
- *Formalism*
- *Mysticism*
- *Activism*
- *Biblicism*

The Missing Link: Sanctification and the present grace of Christ

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3.18)

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (Romans 8.28-29)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1.2-4)

The work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness (Shorter Westminster Catechism)

Further Reading

- *On the gospel gap: chapter 1 of How People Change by Tim Lane and Paul Tripp (New Growth Press, 2008)*
- *On the sanctification gap: chapter 7 of Dynamics of Spiritual Life by Richard Lovelace (IVP, 1979)*

Some quotations

The Puritans were masters at understanding the nature of human beings and applying Scripture in practical ways to help people with their struggles and problems. In the truest sense of the word they were psychologists, students of the inner person, before there ever was a field of secular psychology.

Mark Deckard, *Helpful Truth in Past Places: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Counseling*

For Gregory [the Great], the pastor is a physician of souls and is called by God to bring people to a godly healing of their sin and to a life of righteousness and virtue, to the end that they – pastor and people together – may say, "Glory, in Christ Jesus our Lord"

Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*