

Story and Name, Glory and Shame
Speaking to Youth Concerns in a Re-Tribalizing Society

Introduction: Evangelizing Guilt-Free Children

Our evangelistic methods are optimized to deal with people who already feel guilty before God. Many of our children today simply don't experience that guilt in any practically accessible way. So what are we to do?

The Core of Human Need: The God-Shaped Vacuum

What we *actually* need is God Himself, and that never changes. The way people *interpret* and *experience* that need changes from culture to culture, from person to person.

Moral Man versus Tribal Man

Moral man lives in Christendom. He may not be a Christian, but he has a fundamentally Christian set of concerns: what is the right thing to do? How can I do it? How can I make reparations when I do the wrong thing? He wants to know that he is righteous, whether before God or before some supposedly secular standard of ethics.

Tribal man does not live in Christendom, and shares none of these concerns. Romans 1-2 still applies, but he processes it differently than moral man.

What Tribal Man Needs

1. Story

He has to know where he came from, where he is going.

2. Name

He has to know who he is, how he relates to his community.

3. Glory

He has to have weight in his community. He must know, and do, what will cause them to notice him and respect him.

4. Shame

He has to know what will reduce him in the eyes of his community, what will cause them to disregard him, and avoid it at all costs.

How the Gospel Meets Tribal Man's Needs

1. Story

The gospel embeds him in the true story of the world, beginning at creation and continuing through judgment day and beyond.

2. Name

The gospel draws him into fellowship with the Triune Godhead, which is his first community, and through that, into fellowship with the Trinity's visible expression on earth—the Church of Jesus Christ.

3. Glory

Walking with God causes him to show the image of God in the world, which brings him the reflected glory of the Trinity. To the extent that the Church also reflects the glory of the Trinity, the church will value that quality in him.

4. Shame

He has to know what will reduce him in the eyes of his community, what will cause them to disregard him, and avoid it at all costs.

Presenting the Gospel to Tribal Man

The Good News must be modeled as well as spoken, especially with Tribal Man.

1. Tell the Story.

The Story of the Bible is his story. Tell it in a way that takes him into it, and do it often and well.

2. Draw him into the community.

Human beings are wired to take significance from their relationships. Enter into meaningful relationship with him, and help others to do the same.

3. Give glory and celebrate successes.

Look for opportunities to give respect. Above all, celebration builds glory. When something good happens, however small, whether it's your success, or theirs, or just something good God has done, celebrate it.

4. Dispel shame.

Dealing with shame is painful, but if you handle it well, the pain is short-lived and the healing is lasting. For a model, look at what Jesus did with Peter in John 21. Key to the process is dealing with the issue squarely while giving hope and marching orders for the future.

5. When you talk...

When you talk about Jesus and about the gospel, certainly go ahead and mention heaven and hell, Jesus dying for our sins, all the traditional topics. But highlight that Jesus invites us into living relationship with the Father, speaks for us Himself in heaven, and sends us the Holy Spirit to live inside us so that we can be part of the Triune community.