

Conversations that Matter

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[0 : 00] And there'll be a lot of things that might sound like a repeat, but, you know, it's incredibly important in the life of the church that we are doing the one another commands. And, Corey, that was even just a great introduction, thinking about exhorting one another, coming alongside each other.

One of the best ways that I've seen for us to be able to do that as believers in our culture is, and when I say our culture, I think there are a lot of cultures that this would apply to. But that's the idea of like a one-to-one or a one-to-two type of relationship or a type of connecting, a relational side-by-side, face-to-face kind of connection.

So that's what we're going to be talking about tonight. And even some conversations I've had here, there have been people, as we explain what we do with ministry and stuff, there are a lot of people that have said things like, you know, I hear a lot about the idea of having one-to-ones. I just don't know how to do that. How do you go about having a one-to-one? So that's what we're going to be talking about tonight. When you start talking about conversations that matter, I think one of the best verses is Proverbs 20, verse 5 there that I have on the handout.

[1 : 13] This is, The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out. One-to-one, one of the aims of that is to draw out the deep matters of the heart.

So we're trying to help each other walk in the fear of the Lord and determine, okay, what steps should I take? What should I do? And coming alongside and helping each other kind of think through that.

But then also just wanted to read the verse again that Corey read a couple of weeks ago from Ephesians chapter 4, verses 11 through 14, where it says, And so as a church, what we're called to do is, We're all called to do the work of ministry, and we're trying to help bring us to maturity. We're trying to build the church up and help people be mature in Christ. So when we talk about having conversations that matter, there are a couple of things I wanted to address. One of the things is another one of those phrases that Corey used a couple of weeks ago. And that is the idea that when we talk about biblical counseling, that is a form of discipleship. That we are helping each other grow in Christ's likeness.

[2 : 49] And so counseling, when you think about the word counseling, a lot of times it's a little bit more responsive. You come to a conversation, and you don't necessarily have an agenda, but you're being responsive in that, thinking, All right, how should we help each other right now in a more responsive way?

Whereas discipleship often has an agenda. I might sit down with someone, and I'm thinking, I want to help this person know how to study the Bible. And so we're going to talk about that as we sit across from each other in a one-to-one.

Tonight, I'm specifically addressing the first thing, and that is, What do you do when you're with someone, and there's not necessarily an agenda? We know we want to help each other mature in Christ, or I want to help this person, maybe it's in my city group, or a friend.

I want to make sure we're having conversations that matter, but we don't necessarily have an agenda. So how do I go about doing that? So that's what we're going to be talking about tonight. So the first thing that we need to consider is that biblical counseling is a form of discipleship.

But another thing I would say, and I don't think I have this on the notes, but we need to learn how to create an environment that is both safe and sharpening. Both safe and sharpening.

[4 : 03] What do I mean by that? Well, a safe environment is one that we have learned as we spend time together. We learn to trust one another, and I feel like this is a safe place for me to open up and really share what's going on.

It's a loving environment, one that is cultivated through time and through relationships. So I know I can trust you. I know that you are for me, and that I can share personal things with you. That's a safe environment. But we also need a sharpening environment. And that is one that's willing to get uncomfortable in order to share things that need to be said, maybe, or ask hard questions, share truths that might just make things a little bit uncomfortable. But it's that idea, as iron sharpens iron, like there's going to be some friction, but we've learned how to use the word like a scalpel instead of, you know, a dull blade or something, where this is really described well in the verse that we didn't read, Ephesians 4, verse 15, that says, Rather speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. It's speaking the truth, that's the sharpening, in love would be the safe environment. Does that make sense? So we really have to cultivate both of those things.

[5 : 21] A lot of times, you might be having a one-to-one or in a small group setting, and you feel like it's a safe place. Like, I can really share what's going on, what's on my heart.

No one's going to judge me. I don't have to worry that people are thinking I'm an idiot or anything like that. But people might not be willing to actually share the truth that needs to be shared, or ask that hard question.

Or, you know, say, hey, you've actually brought that up the last three times we've met, and I don't know that you're doing anything about that. Is there something that we could talk about now that could really help make sure that you're not still struggling with that sin three months from now? That's a hard thing to say to someone or a hard conversation to have, but willing to have a sharpening conversation like that. So we want to create an environment that is both safe and sharpening.

John chapter 1 says that Jesus was full of grace and truth. Grace would be the safe environment. Truth would be the sharpening environment. And it's not one or the other.

[6 : 24] It's both and. So creating an environment that is both safe and sharpening. So that's kind of just a couple of things that is a little bit of a background. We talk about having conversations that matter.

Everybody tracking with me okay? All right. Well, the next thing, when you talk about having conversations that matter, I want to stop right now and just kind of give a shout out.

But there was a professor at RTS Orlando that would come about every three years and do different staff trainings with us back in the U.S. with campus outreach.

And his name was Jim Cofield. And a lot of what I've learned about all of this stuff we're sharing tonight is from, you know, going back to 2010 and some of the staff trainings he had with us.

So I feel like I need to give him a shout out so it's not plagiarism or anything. No, but I really have just learned so much from that. And in case Dr. Cofield ever somehow stumbles on this, I want to give him the credit for a lot of what's being said.

[7 : 24] But the natural flow of conversation is one that moves from external things to internal things to eternal things.

Now, for any of the uni students in here that heard me share about evangelism at the CU, this is actually the same model that we use for evangelism, where we're thinking about how do we move conversations from external things to internal things to eternal things.

One of the differences is outside of the church and evangelism, that flow of conversation can take a really long time. It might take a while and lots of meeting up before we get to eternal things, depending on the situation.

Whereas in the church, hopefully, we're able to get to eternal things a lot quicker. But we're going to be talking about how that is a flow of conversation and some of the things that can happen if we don't necessarily do it as a flow.

That will make more sense in a minute, hopefully. But first is external things. These are just things that we just naturally talk about, things that are going on that are outside of us.

[8 : 33] What have we been doing? What's going on in the city? What's going on in the world? What's happening with Trump and Musk and Doge and all that stuff that people are talking about all the time right now? It's about work.

It's about family. It's about all those kind of things. One of the dangers is a lot of times we can have more serious conversations and they still stay in the external.

So, for instance, what I mean by that, we're talking about more serious things, but we're still just describing what's happened and never actually talking about how that affects us. Does that make sense? That's still an external conversation when it's just presented as facts or this person did this or this person did that, what's been done to me, just describing what happened. The circumstances that are outside of us, that's still an external conversation. Just because it's serious doesn't mean it actually got deep into the heart stuff. Does that make sense? So just kind of keep that in mind as well because we want to move conversations from external to internal. [9 : 38] Sometimes it is hard for people to open up, even about just external circumstances. Why? Maybe because of insecurities. Maybe because of fears.

They're unsure about, like, am I going to sound dumb if I say this? So even in the external, we still have to kind of mine those things out and ask questions.

So one of the things, this is not in your notes, but one of the best ways that you'll have conversations that matter is just learn to be a good question asker. We'll talk about being curious in a little bit, but asking a lot of questions because a lot of people, when they're insecure, fearful, those kind of things, they just won't risk being vulnerable, and that can be really tough.

That really halts conversations from getting into things that really matter. But real change doesn't necessarily happen in the external. We actually have to move to the internal, to the matters of the heart.

You can see behavioral change happen and it not be real change because we didn't get to the heart. We all know that. But we need to make sure we're moving those conversations from external to internal.

[10 : 51] And we could talk more about external things, but I think you kind of get that. Everybody, we do that naturally. It's a little bit easier to do that. So how do we move from the external things then to the internal things?

Well, the internal conversations are when you get a little bit more personal. You start getting to matters of the heart. You even start, I realize this is on shaky ground here in the UK, but you even start getting into your feelings and emotions, right?

I think it was Henry Cloud or Gary Chapman or somebody I first heard say, but Keller's the one that really helped me get this. But just the idea that your emotions are like dashboard lights in a vehicle. And often, like before I moved over here, I had the stereotypical big truck with a V8 engine, the terrible gas mileage. It was a 2006, terrible for the environment, right?

But it was loud and fast and strong and all those things. Oh, you know. But because it was a little older, I would have these lights that would just come on and you're just like, oh no.

[12 : 01] Maybe if I ignore this, they will go away, right? And then sometimes they do. Sometimes I crank it up and the lights didn't come on. It's like, see, there's nothing wrong with it.

It's fine. Everything is fine. And that's what we do with our emotions, right? Oftentimes we feel something like this anger or frustration or sadness and we're like, ah, everything's fine.

I can ignore that. They will go away. And then I'll wake up the next day and it's like, see, they're gone. I'm not sad anymore. And we can just kind of forget that it ever happened. And then they come back and it's like, maybe they'll go away again.

That's what we tend to do with our feelings and emotions a lot of times. And having conversations that matter, we just don't let that happen. We try to mine out the depth, the things that are in the heart.

And asking, learning even to ask ourselves a question, why does that always make me angry? Why am I so frustrated when this happens? Those emotions are triggering.

[13 : 02] Something's going on in my heart. That's not new. I've heard that several times since I've been here at St. C's. We get that. But learning how to pay attention to those things and even helping others to get there and go there in their own lives.

And so we need to actually, hear me out, initiate getting into conversations that deal with feelings and emotions, okay?

Those are God-given. And again, they're pointing to something else that's going on. So we need to learn how to even set the pace for this, create an environment where I'm willing to open up and share how I feel about this.

I know my generation growing up, even talking about the things of the Bible, it was not, what's God teaching you and how's that impacting you, that kind of thing.

It was more of like, what did you learn today? And it was all about head knowledge and those kind of things. We would even keep spiritual conversations in the external instead of getting into the matters of the heart, saying, you know, when that happens, what's happening inside of you? [14:14] What are you feeling when that person does this? I know you said you felt like you should have responded like this. Why do you think you keep feeling that? You know, asking questions like that.

Proverbs 4.23 says to keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flow the springs of life. God does great work down in the depths of our souls, down in that inner being, in the internal parts. And we need to try to get there in our conversations. So we're trying to get to matters of the heart. Now, one of my big fears is that people can be so guarded with their emotions and guarded against being vulnerable, that that self-protection is keeping them from knowing Jesus more. Because Jesus meets us in the suffering and in the hardship. And one of the things that might be happening is the suffering in our life, we know that it's always meant to lead us to Jesus. And when we try to protect ourselves from the hard things in the heart, we might be protecting ourselves from experiencing Jesus. Because He wants to meet us there. Does that make sense? [15:27] And so we need to be ready and willing to go into the matters of the heart. Even talking about things that affect us deeply. Because Jesus meets us there.

To take things from external to internal, one of the things that we say is you have to learn to be curious. What was that experience like for you?

That simple question. I heard someone was sharing this on a podcast I was listening to. He was talking about, he was having a conversation with someone and they mentioned, it's like, okay, what did you do this weekend?

Good external conversation. He said, oh, well, actually my son had a graduation. And so we all did the family thing and went to the graduation. He said, I could have said something like, oh, that sounds great.

I hope that was, you had a good time with that. But instead, what the guy asked was, what did it feel like for you watching your kid walk across the stage? And it's like, all of a sudden, that got down to a little bit of a, they start having a heart-to-heart conversation because the guy was like, for me, I've got a kid that's coming up, three years they'll be graduating.

[16:41] And I've often thought about what that's going to be like when they're getting ready to leave the house. And it makes me kind of emotional. And so they're having like an internal conversation getting to the matters of the heart.

And I think that's just a great illustration of taking something from external to internal. It could be little phrases like, hey, tell me more about that. Or it seems like you've got a great story to tell in that.

How has that impacted your life? And I remember Dr. Cofield said, there's kind of a trick of the trade if you're a counselor, is you ask a question like that, and then you take a sip of your coffee or your water and you just sit there.

Because that's the universal sign that I'm not going to say anything, it's your turn to talk, right? So take a sip. How's that impacted you? And you're giving the signal, hey, this is your turn to talk. How has that shaped your life? How do you feel like you've been shaped by those things? How has that belief really changed the way you make decisions? Like not just talking about, oh, that's really cool that you believe that or think that.

[17:50] How is that impacting your life? Just even that, you start going a little bit deeper and deeper into the internal things, and that's what you want. It could be something like you're having an external conversation, and you say something like, what's the best part about living in your neighborhood?

What do you like most about working at this place? How do you see yourself fitting into that work environment five years from now? That seems like an external conversation, but you're actually just taking step by step by step into deeper things.

And then ultimately, we do want to get to the eternal conversations. And one of the things that you want to understand, you don't want to just stay in the feelings and emotions.

Like there are some people that just because you had a deeper conversation into the heart, you feel like progress has been made. Oh, that was a good conversation. But really, change may not have happened.

It's just like a little unusual sometimes to go deep with someone like that. I remember there was a campus outreach staff that I had known as a student.

[19 : 01] He'd kind of come up through our campus, and I'd known as a student. And then his new director was a buddy of mine, and the three of us were together. The guy that was my former student walked in, and within like two minutes, we were like into deep heart stuff, because they'd had a baby that had had some medical problems.

We'd kind of shared some things. We got in like really quickly, and the other guy was like, that happened really fast. That's what time does.

When you have a relationship with someone, when there's trust that has been built, that wasn't the first conversation Josh and I had had. That was like years of conversations, right?

And we were able in two minutes to get to real deep heart stuff. How are you and Sarah Jane doing? You know, that kind of thing, like really deep stuff. And it takes time.

So you've got to keep that in mind, and you don't just stay in the internal, because we long to see lasting change happen, which happens when we're taking the truth of God's Word and applying them to our hearts, right?

[20 : 06] If you jump to eternal too quickly, though, there can often be a disconnect, because you don't know specifically how that could apply to that person's life.

In other words, a lot of times what happens, as good Christians, as followers of Christ, it's like we want to give Bible to each other, because that's how lasting change is going to happen.

And we may not have done the work of figuring out what's really going on in that person's life, and I might be speaking a truth that is just not ringing, like really connecting today, because of what's really going on in that person's life, and I didn't take the time to figure that out.

Does that make sense? So don't jump to eternal too quickly, okay? We want to get to eternal.

That's what we're trying to get to Scripture. But don't do it so quickly that you miss where the person really is.

And often we can feel like we're being faithful just because we talked about Scripture when it really might not have even been what the Lord was wanting to do in that person's life, and we just didn't take the time to go there.

[21 : 14] Does that make sense? So going through that flow of external to internal, but then getting to eternal. To take it to eternal, we need to be intentionally thinking, what is God wanting to do here?

What is He trying to do in my friend's life? And ultimately, God is not trying to fix all of our problems. God is giving us His presence. Does that make sense to you? Like the goal is not for everyone's problems to be fixed. The goal is to know God.

There are often times that people will go through things, and it seems like the Lord is never fixing it. But God has been near, and His nearness is our good.

His presence is what we're longing for. So it's not just like, okay, what's the verse that's going to fix this situation? It's how can I help this person connect with God right now?

[22 : 18] Okay? You're with me? Is this boring? Are we okay? Do I need to move on? Because I've got a lot of stuff I can just jump to. It's like, okay. Okay. All right. External, internal to eternal.

Often I see people just trying to give Bible verses with encouragement. You just need to believe this. But what happens when you're in a situation where the person's like, I'm just trying to get out of bed right now.

Sometimes they don't need us to just give them the verse. Maybe that's the next conversation. And what they need right now is just our presence. And how can we be the hands and feet of Jesus to this person right now with our presence?

And so a lot of times people will even hear the verses that we're trying to share to try to help them out. And it just feels like guilt and condemnation to them because they can't even, like I don't feel like I can even open my Bible right now.

And when I do finally get out of bed and I can open my Bible, the things that are going on in my life are so pressing on my mind and my heart, I can't focus. And now I just feel guilty about that.

[23 : 30] And so learning how to speak truth even to that, that's like, hey, God just wants to be with you right now. And He is with us. He knows, and we've heard some great theology about God's presence with us.

He knows what we're going through. He gave up His only Son. He knows what it's like to lose that. He knows what it's like to have broken relationship. All those kind of things and we can remind people that God is with us.

He hears and He knows. Okay? So we're trying to help them get to that eternal perspective. Now, they talk about, there are some kind of rules that people break often in this flow of external to internal to eternal.

If you're always talking about external things, you're fun to be around, but there's no real depth to those conversations. And so in some ways, that's kind of breaking a rule.

Like, we should be connecting on a much deeper level than that. You will often be surprised by how quickly or readily someone might be to go to internal and eternal things if we're willing to go there with them.

[24 : 45] So, you know, one person said, just take a couple of shots across a bow and see what lands, you know? Just try some things. Ask some questions. Some people are just dying to share and to go there.

And we never know that unless we're willing to go there with them. Some people try to go to internal too quickly. And that breaks a rule too. So the question is, like, okay, how do I know if I'm moving too fast?

Well, I mentioned this a little bit in my talk in evangelism to the CU, that it's, some of it's honestly just having a little bit of social awareness that when I'm asking a question, you can kind of tell when someone puts up the wall and says, okay, that's far enough.

You know what I'm talking about? When it's like, yeah, they're not willing to go there. So instead of, like, continuing to move forward, it's kind of like, okay, we'll stay right here. And we might keep it a little bit and then try again to go a little bit deeper.

And just through time, trust, you say, okay, they are willing to go there now. Good. Could we go a little deeper? Let's ask another question. And it's kind of like this, just being aware of what's going on and being present, you can kind of tell when people are putting up the, giving you the stiff arm, you know, the metaphorical stiff arm.

[26 : 04] So just kind of be aware of that and not trying to go places too quickly before you've listened, before you're really trying to sense what the Lord is trying to do there.

So having those conversations, moving towards people and seeing what's receptive and what's not. All right. Yeah, real quickly, just as a side note, this is a little bit, when people are hurting, this is something I heard one time that was really, really helpful.

When people are hurting, sometimes they say things that are just flat out wrong and maybe even offensive towards God.

And it was, I think it was John Piper that gave a sermon on Job and the phrase he used was, and I forget what version of the Bible it talks about this, but it's, the phrase was, there are words in the wind.

And essentially, when people are hurting, they're just going to say all kinds of things and we don't have to freak out if they say something that's like biblically incorrect and feel like we've got to correct them. Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a second.

[27 : 17] Like, you need to remember that what you're saying is not true. It's like, just sometimes just let it, let it go and let those be as words in the wind. Let them go away.

We'll address those later if they're still there, but just be present with people and be there for them and not feel like you have to correct all the wrong theology. When people are hurting, that's what happens.

Does that make sense? Okay, that's a little side note there. Okay. A couple minutes. So the three types of conversation, what I'll say right there, just be aware that the three types of conversation, there's competitive, informational, and connecting.

A lot of times we're having these kind of conversations without realizing it, like competitive conversation. That's when it's like, you can't wait for them to shut up because you've got something to say, right?

And it's kind of like you're trying to win the conversation by having the right thing to say or whatever. A good motivation behind that might be you're trying to identify with them when you're like, oh yeah, well I had, you know, this happened or whatever, but it can come across, and this is a bad motivation, it comes across as like you're trying to one up the other person.

[28 : 34] So just be careful about a competitive conversation. Man, I could say a lot more about that, but just to move on. An informational conversation, this is what a lot of us have where it's like, oh, I've got a truth they need to hear, and we kind of give a little sermonette because it's like, oh, I've got a verse that would really speak to this, and we can't wait to just give them that information because we want to be helpful, right?

But what it does, it often causes us to not be listening to what's really being said, and a lot of times it could be information that they could get off chat GBT, right Christian?

Yeah. Sorry. But these connecting conversations, that's the goal. We want to have conversations that we really are connecting with people, and that is when you're communicating through words and body language that I'm present, I'm interested, I'm curious, I'm with you.

People will open up and tell you about their lives. And so when you are able to have conversations that really, if all we did was connect, and that's what was needed, that's good.

Because sometimes it is just that connecting presence, that relationship, that does the healing. Just people knowing that they're not alone, sorry, that they're not alone, facing this alone.

[30 : 03] They're not isolated, that I'm connecting with someone else. And when we're connecting with people in these conversations, that's when they feel like it's safe, that environment that's safe and sharpening, it allows that to happen.

Well, I put on the back there as we kind of close and run out of time, I just gave like an example conversation of what, you know, might be cheesy, but just like, here's an example of what I'm talking about.

You know, you're sitting down with someone and you want it to be a good, meaningful conversation with that person. And so you're trying to think, all right, how can I move this, maybe somebody from your city group, but how can I move this from external to internal to internal?

And, you know, you're going through the normal, you're asking questions, you're talking about external things, and it's, you know, you might say something like, it sounds like you've got a lot going on. What do you think God is teaching you through all that?

And I've got, in parentheses, they're like, that's actually an external question, but it's kind of one of those safe ones that you can ask, it's kind of easy to answer. What is he teaching you?

[31 : 13] That could be the, in the head, not necessarily in the heart, but then one, an answer you hear all the time, like when you have conversations like that, he's teaching me patience, right?

And then, you know, you know that, you know, when we feel like God's teaching us patience, that usually means that we're having to wait to see prayers answered, we're struggling with wanting to control the situation, we're in the middle of suffering, or we're having to trust God's timing on things. Do you feel like you're in a season like that? And then they might say, you know, yeah, actually, and it gets them to talking, yeah, I feel like God's not hearing me when I pray, or I really am trying to control these situations, and I just feel like I'm losing that control, and so you might be able to say, you know, what are promises of God that you're clinging to right now?

And that's when you are really shifting it to the eternal, and then, you know, you might even say, would you like to hear a truth that I had to cling to when I was going through something like that?

Again, that might be a little bit cheesy, but it demonstrates how do you move from external to internal to eternal, and then I just had a few sample questions as well that's like, just some things to open up discussion, and that's one of the things that I would say work on that, like, what are things, we all know don't ask yes or no questions, but ask open-ended questions, like, what are some questions that I could have in my, you know, in my back pocket that I could ask someone that would help move things forward, and so I have some sample questions there.

That's all we have time for right now.