

Tour 5 Themes

Tour 5 - The Vision - Engaging With Grace

Themes & Further Study

Introduction

With the close of Tour 4, we have finished laying the “theoretical” foundations for our task. We are now ready to embrace the challenge Jesus left us when He ascended to His Father: the challenge of engaging our neighbors with the love of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. The next three Tours (5, 6, and 7) are designed to focus on the *practical* aspects of this mission. With Dr. Tackett’s help, participants will zero in on the *one command* which, according to Scripture, sums up the entire Law: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Together we will explore its deeper implications. What does it *mean*? What does it *not* mean? *How* do we put it into practice? We will also attempt to articulate a Mission Statement, which we’ll call *The Royal Vision*. This statement will set forth in clear and concise terms a plain, workable description of the Royal Task in all its parts. It will serve us as a roadmap for the journey that lies ahead.

Themes

Once this *Royal Vision* has been articulated, we’ll be able to complete the diagram Dr. Tackett began in Tour 4. The Jewel of God’s *chesed/ agape* love can now be displayed in its proper setting – at the very apex of the Crown of the Divine Nature:

As we implement the Royal Vision, we will find ourselves becoming obedient to the Royal Law. For as we are to discover, these two trajectories – the Law and the Vision – converge at the point of the Crown Jewel itself. Moving down this pathway, we will learn what it really means to live out “*a steadfast, sacrificial zeal that seeks the true good (shalom) of the one who providentially lives nearby,*” thus drawing yet another step nearer to the goal of our quest.

The careful observer will notice that this Tour adds a new word to our definition of agape love: the word “*providentially*”. As Dr. Tackett, will explain, there’s nothing random or accidental about the placement of the people who live next door and across the street. They are our neighbors by *appointment* – not by chance. As Paul told the Athenians, God has “determined the appointed times” of *all people*, as well as “the boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26). That includes the folks in your neighborhood. They live there because God *put* them there. He put them there so that you might be a neighbor to them. He knows the name of your street, just as He knew the name of “the Street called Straight” (Acts 9:11). And just as He assigned Ananias the task of reaching out to a man who just “happened” to be lodging in that street – Saul of Tarsus – in the same way He calls you to make yourself available to those who just “happen” to live on your block. It’s something He wants you and your family to do together.

None of this is going to happen automatically, of course. It’s going to require *time, commitment and intentionality*. And beneath that layer of time, commitment, and intentionality we’re going to have to lay a rock-solid foundation of earnest prayer. In fact, if you’ve been wondering exactly how all

this is going to come about – how you’re going to establish deep, meaningful connections with strangers and families you still haven’t met – prayer is the ultimate answer. For as Dr. Tackett will tell us several times in upcoming episodes, “If you ask God for something He wants to do, *He’s going to do it!*”

Points to Watch For

The content of this Tour hangs together around a central core: Dr. Tackett’s articulation of The Royal Vision. In stating his understanding of this Vision he makes it clear that the wording is entirely his own. There’s nothing “divinely inspired” about it. In fact, he invites participants to compose their own personalized versions of this Vision. The main idea is to get our minds engaged with the mechanics of engagement and figure out how Christian families and singles can start living lives of zealous dedication to the shalom of their neighbors. Dr. Tackett sees it like this:

We will build real relationships with those providentially in our Jerusalem, through prayer and action, with grace and wisdom and truth, being attractively winsome, tearing down walls, building up trust, doing the work of the kingdom.

Having established the framework of the Vision in these terms, we will devote the remainder of the Tour to fleshing out its seven component parts: 1) *Building relationships*; 2) *With those providentially in our Jerusalem*; 3) *Through prayer and action*; 4) *With grace and wisdom and truth*; 5) *Being attractively winsome*; 6) *Tearing down walls and building up trust*; and 7) *Doing the work of the kingdom*.

Questions for further reflection

1. **Dr. Tackett says that you and I are fully qualified to put the Royal Vision into effect. We already have everything we need to accomplish the task – no further training is required. In fact, there’s an important sense in which Christians are uniquely equipped to touch the lives of the people around them with winsomeness and grace. Why is this the case?** (The Fruit of the Spirit [Galatians 5:22-23] is the key. Paul says that every Christian has the Spirit of Christ [Romans 8:9], that Christ lives in us [Galatians 2:20], and that the Fruit produced by the indwelling Spirit is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” This list of qualities offers us a perfect description of what Dr. Tackett calls “attractive winsomeness.” If this Fruit is truly manifest in your life, others will want to be around you. They’ll find peace, acceptance, and reassurance in your company. That’s the first step towards tearing down walls, building up trust, and establishing long-term relationships.)
2. **The apostle Peter writes, “always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence”** (1 Peter 3:15, NASB). Has anyone ever asked you to make such a defense? If so, how did you respond? If not, what changes do you think you might have to make in order to inspire that kind of curiosity in your friends and neighbors? (This is a question that has to be answered on an individual basis. Every participant will have a different response. Ideally, it should be discussed in tandem with Question #3. The underlying idea is that inward hope expresses itself in outward behavior. Where this outward evidence is present, it has the potential to stir up curiosity in the minds of those who have an opportunity to observe it.)
3. **Take a look at the following Scriptures: Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:5; Colossians 1:23 and 2:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Titus 3:7; and 1 Peter 1:3. What does it mean to be a “People of**

Hope?” Would you describe yourself as a hopeful person? How do you think “the hope that is in you” makes itself known to others? (In these passages a single thought is repeated over and over again: Christians are people whose lives are characterized by hope. This is significant; for, as we have seen in previous Tours, hope is a commodity in especially short supply today. Living our lives as “people of hope” is one of the most strategic things we can do in the culture of “the Land of Nought.” According to the writer of Hebrews, this hope is founded upon “two unchangeable things:” God’s promise of blessing and the unshakeable goodness and reliability of His character. If we can lay hold of this hope – this “sure and steadfast anchor for the soul” [Hebrews 6:19] – modern people will be drawn to us as moths are attracted to a flame.)

4. **What does it take to build deep, meaningful relationships with other people? What are some practical things you can do right now, today, to start moving in that direction?** (Most of us are capable of forming real relationships with only a limited number of “significant others.” If we want to go deep, we have to be careful not to spread ourselves too thin. Jesus concentrated on a small group of twelve disciples. Within that group He gave special attention to three: Peter, James, and John. Meaningful relationships are an investment that cannot be taken lightly. Relationships ask a great deal of us: time, energy, trust, authenticity, vulnerability, generosity, sacrifice, communication, and patience. They are fostered in a context of selfless hospitality, shared meals, shared projects, and a genuine willingness to enter into the details of other people’s lives.)
5. **Joy tells us that she and a few Christian friends prayer-walked the streets of Logan Park in Sacramento, California for an entire year before seeing signs of the Spirit’s movement in the lives of their neighbors. Why is prayer such an essential ingredient of the Royal Vision? How do prayer and action work together?** (Prayer is probably the most important aspect of the task God has set before us. It’s here that the element of human initiative and creativity enters the picture. Prayer is our opportunity to assume the role of the “lead horse.” It’s one of the ways in which the commandment to “be fruitful and multiply” is brought to bear upon the Royal Vision. In Tour 1 we said that God could have sustained Creation by constantly renewing His original creative act. Instead, He chose to grant His creatures a role in the process. The same principle applies here. Jesus could draw all men unto Himself by His own power and of His own accord, but He chooses to involve us. He wants us to ask Him to do it. He will make it happen when we want it badly enough to get down on our knees and beg Him for it. He also wants us to become active participants in the unfolding of the plan. And it all begins with prayer. As Dr. Tackett says, if we ask God for something He wants to do, He’s going to do it! That’s what Joy and her friends discovered after fifty-two weeks of calling down God’s mercy on the residents of Logan Park.)
6. **We’ve already discovered** (in working out our definition of chesed and agape) that love is much more than a feeling. Love, as we know, is a steadfast, sacrificial zeal that prompts us to act for the good of our neighbor. Unfortunately, that doesn’t change the fact that feelings can be very real, and negative feelings can become serious obstacles to positive action. What should you do if feelings of dislike or aversion are blocking you from reaching out to your neighbor? (It’s precisely at this point that we need to remember and apply the principle that love – agape – is not primarily an emotion but an act of the will. C. S. Lewis (quoted by Dr. Tackett during the course of this Tour) put it this way: “Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find

yourself disliking him less” (Mere Christianity, Book III, “Christian Behavior,” Chapter 9, “Charity”).

7. **What does it mean to “do the work of the kingdom?”** (Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). This statement deserves to be carefully pondered. The kingdom that Christ announced when He came preaching the Good News by the shores of Lake Galilee is not a matter of human plans, programs, or stratagems, however righteous and holy. It’s a supernatural “happening.” The kingdom is the sovereign, active, dynamic presence of God making itself known and felt in the lives of ordinary people. Kingdom work, then, is not necessarily the same thing as church work. Nor is it particularly concerned with well-intentioned efforts to inject biblical principles into the fabric of government or public policy. Most importantly, kingdom work is not about my agenda or your agenda or anybody else’s agenda. It’s about God – God Himself, working through His people by means of the Royal Law, to turn the world upside down one neighbor at a time.)
8. What is God showing you specifically through this tour?