

Tour 6 Themes

Tour 6 - The Vision - Engaging With Wisdom

Themes & Further Study

Our journey through the Epoch in which we are currently living and operating – the Epoch of Engagement – continues in Episode 6. The ongoing purpose of this excursion is to explore what it really means to live by the Royal Law: the Law of Neighbor-Love. We intend to do this by implementing the Royal Vision, which was delineated in Tour 6 as follows:

1) We will build real 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, 7) doing the work of the kingdom.

The content of Tours 5, 6, and 7 is organized around a detailed exposition of the fourth component of this brief manifesto: the adverbial clause *“with grace and wisdom and truth.”* Adverbs modify verbs. They tell us *how* an action is carried out. In Tour 6, we attempted to answer the overarching question *“How do we build real relationships ...?”* by unpacking the phrase *“with grace.”* In this Tour we’ll take a closer look at the second member of this adverbial trinity: *“with wisdom.”* We’ll ask ourselves *what wisdom is, how we get it, and how it is best applied* to the task of *“steadfastly seeking the true good (shalom) of the one who providentially lives nearby.”*

Themes

The message of this Tour can be summed up in a single sentence: relational wisdom consists in knowing how to engage with individuals. To be more precise: it’s a question of learning to engage uniquely with unique individuals. Every person is different. Every person needs a different touch, a different response. Our goal as Christ’s ambassadors is to communicate His love to each one in the manner best suited to his or her needs.

To say it another way: Tour 6 is designed to bring us to the place where our intellectual understanding of God’s Royal Law is transformed into a practical, whole-souled commitment of the heart – a commitment that drives and determines the way we interact with the people around us. Wisdom is the indispensable key. It’s the ingredient that enables us to customize our words, actions, and responses to fit the requirements of each new situation.

Points to Watch For

In this episode, we’ll be taking our cues from several key biblical passages, the most important being Colossians 4:5, 6: *“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person”* (NASB; see also Ephesians 5:15-17).

Elsewhere in Scripture we’ll examine the story of King Solomon (2 Chronicles 1:1-13), which will show us how wisdom is obtained and how it’s supposed to work. We’ll learn that the secret of true wisdom is a sincere desire to use it on behalf of others. We’ll also revisit our old friend, the Hebrew word *binah*, defined in this context as deep discernment, profound understanding, a willingness to

listen, and a capacity to see individuals as God sees them (2 Corinthians 5:16). From the book of James we'll derive the valuable insight that "godly wisdom" is inextricably linked with "good conduct," and that it is "pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits" (James 3:13-17) – in other words, that it is practically synonymous with "The Fruit of the Spirit" as described in Galatians 5:22, 23.

In the course of this discussion, Dr. Tackett will lead participants into an in-depth examination of the words mind and heart as used by the biblical writers. We will discover that some commonly held notions – for instance, the idea that the mind constitutes the "thinking" part of the human psyche while the heart is the seat of the "feelings" – don't really match up with scriptural teaching. In actuality, the two are best represented as the "outer" (mind) and "inner" (heart) aspects of a single faculty. With the mind, we perceive, take in, and assess the validity of various "truth claims." Those that pass the test of reality – those with which we connect through personal experience – are admitted to the inner sanctum of the self, which the Bible calls the heart. Here they become matters of genuine belief and assume the power to mold our feelings, actions, and further thoughts. An undivided heart (Psalm 86:11) – a heart like the heart of a child – is a heart in which knowledge and committed belief are one.

Here's the point. As long as our connection with the Royal Task, the Royal Law, and the Royal Vision remains solely a matter of the mind – a question of mere intellectual assent – it isn't going to make much difference to us or anybody else. If we're going to turn the world upside down for Jesus, we're going to have to engage with our neighbors at the level of the heart. This is what Dr. Tackett has in mind when he talks about building relationships with wisdom.

This concept will be fleshed out for us in a series of videos highlighting the experiences of several down-to-earth, flesh-and-blood, rank-and-file "ambassadors for Christ." Special attention will be given to the testimony of Kent and Rosaria Butterfield, whose up-close and wonderfully gritty personal interactions with a neighbor named Hank demonstrate exactly what can happen when Christians open their hearts and homes to the guy from across the street.

Questions for Reflection

- 1. Many of us today have serious misgivings about "bothering other people." In one of the featured videos, Jay says that this a huge obstacle to engaging with neighbors. Jesus' "Golden Rule" exhorts us to "treat others as we'd want to be treated." So what do we do about the neighbor who has no desire to engage? Is it best to leave him alone? How would you go about extending yourself to someone who seems determined to remain aloof? (Jay suggests making yourself available to "hang out" with neighbors at their convenience. Don't be pushy, but don't isolate yourself either. Stay visible and involved in the life of the neighborhood. Remember, too, that what your neighbor says or thinks he wants is not necessarily what he really needs. To a certain extent, the Golden Rule asks us to cultivate honesty and see beneath the surface. That's an important part of wisdom. In the final analysis, nobody wants to be alone. Sometimes people just need to be convinced that they need others. This requires a soft, slow, gentle, and patient approach on the part of Christ's ambassadors. Building trust between neighbors takes time!)**
- 2. Hospitality is an important part of reaching out to neighbors. But hospitality can take many different forms, some not as beneficial as others. In fact, certain widely held assumptions about the best way to "entertain guests" may not be particularly conducive to**

our fulfillment of the Royal Task. According to Rosaria Butterfield, what's the best way to get past this difficulty? (The key, says Rosaria, is to extend open and informal invitations. Banking off the Butterfields' personal experience with Hank, she reminds us that people who are suffering in some way or dealing with personal problems such as addictions or abuse rarely feel comfortable accepting a formal invitation to dinner. They have no way of knowing what shape they'll be in when the appointed hour arrives. With folks like this, it's better to say something like, "Feel free to drop by any time. I'll be here if you need me.")

3. **What do you think it means to "redeem the time" or "make the most of the opportunity?" Have you ever had a chance to seize a "kairos" moment in your interactions with folks in your neighborhood? If so, what did that look like? Did you learn anything from the experience?** (This is another one of those questions that have to be answered on an individual basis. The key to seizing kairos moments is keeping your eyes open and staying sensitive. Things have a way of "coming up" when people live in close proximity – as, for example, the incident with the Butterfields' lost dog and the chance it gave them to get acquainted with Hank. Dr. Tackett had a similar experience when the neighborhood hogs rooted up his wife's flowerbed! It's all a matter of being alert and seeing things from God's point of view.)
4. **The longer we live, the more our hearts shrink. At least that's the way it happens with many of us. Negative interactions with others convince us that "everybody's a salesman." As a result, we adopt a self-protective attitude. Faith and trust retreat ever deeper into the core of our psyche. How do we deal with this? What does it take to "tear down walls and build up trust" with wisdom?** (There's just one way to answer this question: deep relationships are the key. If you've taken the time, done the hard work, and made the sacrifices necessary to establish a real life-connection with the people who live around you, they will know, from personal experience, that you're not just "a salesman." What's more, you'll gain similar insight into their character. Gradually you'll get a sense of where you stand and what the relationship can bear. Only then can the walls come down. Only then can a sense of genuine trust begin to grow in your heart and in the hearts of your friends and neighbors.)
5. **When it comes to fulfilling the Royal Law by implementing the Royal Vision, how do we move from the level of mere head knowledge to that of committed heart-belief? How do we connect the mandate of this spiritual truth with the reality of our everyday lives?** (It all begins with a willingness to accept an element of risk. If you don't take the initiative – like Jay and Tanya and the Butterfields – it's probable that nothing will ever happen. In that case, neighbor-love will be nothing to you but a theory. It will remain a mere concept, an idea, a "truth claim" resident in the outer court of your mind, never penetrating into the inner sanctum of your heart. Chochmah, the Hebrew word for wisdom, does not refer primarily to head knowledge. It means "skill" or "practical know-how." It's the "expertise" of the craftsman or artist. You can't learn a trade without putting your hand to the wheel and giving it a try – again and again and again. Reaching out to neighbors may seem scary, but Dr. Tackett says that [fear] will melt away if you just step out and try it. It's at that point that a connection will be cemented between the biblical injunction and practical everyday experience.)
6. What is God showing you specifically through this tour?