



Mission Serenity
Restoring Broken Lives

The Jesus Response

Mission Serenity has been involved in Life Recovery since our inception in 2007. Our mission statement says it all; Restoring Broken Lives. At the core of this work is the Twelve Step recovery movement based on the Beatitudes in Matthew in Chapter 5. There is no doubt for followers of Jesus, all the signs are pointing to Christ's soon return. World events and the prophecies of the book of Revelation have never been more in sync.

My work in the ministry has taken on a new urgency. I would normally craft my presentations and sermons through a gradual understanding of grace. Over the last thirty-five years, I have made a name for myself in the way I phrase my announcements to passengers as a Captain in an Australian Airline. I have taught communication skills to pilots. Where effective announcements to passengers was concerned, my mantra was always to tell the truth without gilding the lily, and pretend you are speaking to the little old lady sitting down the back who has never flown before. My approach to those who came to us broken in our ministry was the same, especially if they were new to faith or undecided. It always put everyone at ease and built trust with the softly-softly approach.

I now feel that we don't have the luxury of time and we need to cut straight to the chase. Probation could end at any time and salvation is at stake here. We must be blunt, and this applies to those who have been in the church all their lives, as much as it does newcomers to faith. I have worked with many life-long Seventh-Day Adventists who came to understand the faith through prophecy first. For many, being a church going member of the faith has given them an intimate working knowledge of prophecy, but has them largely paying only lip service to the topic of grace.

We have found that many in the church have spent a life time involved in works, prophecy, health, and revelation evangelism and they have largely done this all without an intimate working relationship with Jesus. Many admit to not having a testimony as their lives have run on the Adventist rails since birth. When I challenge these well meaning folk with the following statement, their chins hit the floor. "Perhaps you don't have a testimony because you don't have a relationship with Jesus!"

As someone who came to faith late in life and on the verge of committing suicide, it was God's amazing grace that got my attention and not prophecy. Just days before I was to end my shattered and sin filled life, Jesus entered my heart in such a profound and life

saving way that it took me into a new realm. 'Why would Jesus sacrifice His life on a cross for me, a washed out sex addict without honour?'

To answer that question, I threw myself into a study and understanding of grace and sanctification/justification. I mean, was I truly saved? How was I saved? I am so grateful to God for this entry into faith because I now see that He had me put the horse before the cart. I got to know Jesus and understand grace. Having seen the miracles of grace so illuminatingly demonstrated in my life every single day, my faith became stronger and my testimony now given to countless thousands has been a journey in a growing, strong and healing relationship with the Son of Man.

Now having shared the power of His grace in many seminars, sermons and counselling sessions, I feel spiritually ready to comprehend the truths my Father now wants unfolded before me. I have always said that we need to show newcomers the love of Jesus and build the relationship with Him before we can effectively share revelation with them. When we do it in reverse order we may well be creating a community of believers who have a thorough and extensive knowledge of Biblical prophecy and theology, but without a heart for Jesus. It may be more based on end time fear and conspiracy theories rather than an eternal relationship with He who saves.

I have met so many who can quote scripture from every version of the Bible. They have all the doctrine and fundamentals down pat, but they know not Christ. I have always thought the Bible should be eaten with the mind and digested in the heart. Sadly, too many seem to have indigestion and none of what they have studied has entered their soul through the organ of the soul—the heart. I fear for these folk. I often say in my sermons that there are too many Ians in church. Ians is the name I give a Christian who has no Christ in him. It's a play on words and I apologise to all the God fearing men named Ian out there reading this piece.

It's not for us to classify the people in our churches as saved or not saved. That's judgement and that is also God's job, not ours. We must be about God's work and not God's job. Having said that, I am also acutely aware from years in this coalface ministry, that there are far too many of us hiding sin when it needs to be cast out into the light. Sin thrives when people keep secrets. It is in the satan-filled darkness of our secret lives of sin that our eternal death awaits us.

Now we have discussed some basic fundamentals, we can get to the heart of the matter. Why do we have a secret world of sin when we have a professed love of Christ? He knows our hearts right? He knows our sins too, right? I cringe when I think that Jesus was sitting next to me every time I watched porn or entered a brothel. If as Christians we don't understand this then where have we been since entering church? So if Jesus knows, then why do we keep our sins in the dark where they can never heal? We are told that in order to heal a wound we must first open it up in the light and clean it out.

So the question remains. Why do we hide our sin when we know that our saviour has not only died that we may be forgiven, but has also clearly seen every sin we have ever committed?

He has seen them and yet forgets them the second we repent of them. You do get that right? So if we know what the response of Jesus is to our sins, then it can only be our perception of the standard human response that keeps it bulging under the living room carpet. Please allow me to illustrate. Lets say a man is burdened with the guilt of his porn addiction. He lives his life on the edge, living in fear that he will forget to erase the history on his computer and his secret life will be uncovered. He wants to come clean and get some effective help for his issue but he can't bring himself to tell his wife. Why can't he tell her.

Because he believes that her response will be marriage ending. He believes that it will spell the end of the unearned trust she has in him and she will be hurt and let down. He expects her to say, 'How could you do this to me, to our marriage, to our family, to our children? Every time you look at this garbage you are comparing me to those women. You are having an affair and it's killing me.' It is the fear of this reaction that will have him keep the sin in hiding and not seek the healing he so desperately needs. The real truth is that, in most situations like this, it's not about his wife. It's got little to do with her. He is struggling with an addiction he has had since puberty when he first discovered, or was inadvertently introduced to it by his peers or older misguided men in his life. Perhaps he had no foundation as a man in solid fathering and mentoring. Perhaps this is a curse that he alone has been powerless to overcome for all his adolescent and adult life. He is starting to realise that he can't fix this in his own power but how can he tap into the greatest power in the universe if he remains fearful of others finding out and persecuting him?

James 5:16 tells us to, confess our sins freely to God, ourselves and to someone we trust so that all may be healed. He remains trapped not by what Jesus will think of him for his transgressions but what his fellow Christians will think of him. The bible states that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Some feel that a shoplifter who repents of his or her sin is more likely to make it to heaven than a murderer or pedophile. However, we also know that God loves the sinner but hates the sin. In the eyes of God, sin is sin and the saving grace is applied only through a sincere repentance of that sin and an acceptance of the Lamb of God.

If we truly understand grace, then we know that it is not only a joy to receive, but also meant to be given freely. God gives us nothing that He does not expect us to pass on and share with others. How can we expect God to forgive us our sins when we cannot forgive those whose sins hurt us? So ponder this one if you have the courage.

Your reactions to everyday events in your relationships, your standard responses to crisis in your relationships and your over inflated expectations of those you are in relationship with, may be condemning those whom you have chosen to love, to eternal death. Here is another imponderable side effect of this situation. You may also be condemning yourself in the process. Is this what you want?

As a child, how many times did you keep secrets from your parents, who may have been able to help you, because you were scared of their reactions or punishment? I thank God that I work for an airline that has a non-punitive safety culture. What does this mean? Well, if as an operating captain of a flight, I make an error that may have involved an incident or worse—an infringement of the operating rules—and I report myself to my manager, I am praised for my courage and my dedication. I will not be punished and my experiences will be shared with others so the same thing is less likely to happen to someone else. New procedures are developed and lives are saved.

Jesus Christ invented the non-punitive safety culture when He died on the cross. He told us all that we will not only be forgiven if we self report and repent, but that through the power of His testimony in our lives, others will be saved because of our experiences and that we will be rewarded with eternal life.

My wife Michelle and I have agreed in our marriage and friendship with each other, to watch each other's back. We both want to spend eternity with Jesus together. If either one of us is there and the other isn't, it would be a tragedy we would not want to comprehend. The scripture tells us that the way of the world is easy to travel and the gate is wide, but the pathway to Heaven is narrow and so is the gate (Matt. 7:13). Michelle has made it her responsibility to keep me on that narrow path and I do the same for her. Our friends can do this for us as well if we choose to have authentic relationships in our lives. I do not want friends who lack the courage to tell me when I am falling to sin; to call me on my stuff. They do this because they expect the same from me also. This is called accountability.

Everyday our prayers include a request for God to shed light on our character defects. It would be glorious if God appeared to us whenever we needed Him to tell us something the way He did to Moses. But we know this is generally unlikely. So how will He shed light on our defects? Clearly, it will be through the people that we are in relationship with. This is why we need authentic and accountable relationships. It is recommended that your accountability partner in the 12 Steps should be someone that you are not related to. This is to protect against the human response. But imagine how easy it would be if we were assured that our spouse or friends would always give the Jesus response. We could openly share with our wives and husbands and our children, and them with us. Imagine the healing power of the Spirit that might be unleashed if we all adopted the Jesus response as a matter of course. Imagine if your family ran on a non-punitive safety culture.

This does not mean that all things would go unpunished. Sin has eternal as well as daily consequences. But freedom in Christ would prevail and the day of His soon return may be even sooner. So allow me to give you a life example of a Jesus response. In April 2013, I had a momentary lapse back into pornography. It was a dark day for me and it haunted my life after that. I love my wife more than anyone else but Jesus. My relationship with her is precious to me. For six weeks I struggled with my fall and even though I shared it with my accountability partners, I kept it from Michelle. Yet my ministry revolves on my honest testimony, and how could I give an honest testimony if I could not include my falls from grace?

Michelle is always present when I give my testimony, so I knew she had to be told. I feared the pain it would cause her. The day I shared it with her, the response was astounding and nothing like I had geared myself up for. Her first response was, “You poor thing, are you okay?”

Then she asked if there was any way she might have caused it.

Her final question was, “What can I do to help you?”

After I had answered all these questions, she hugged me and told me that I was more her hero now than I was before I confessed. We set in place a strategy for any events that may be likely to occur in the future. It was in our daily debrief after this event that we called this, the Jesus Response.

After this incidence, during some overnight trips I was on, when the quiet urge to watch porn started churning in the pit of my stomach, I would call her and we would pray together; rebuking Satan in the name of Jesus with His authority and the urge went away. I now feel closer to conquering the dragon within me than ever in my fifty plus year addiction. I am stronger than ever before and I owe that to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that keeps my friends and loved ones and my beautiful wife Michelle locked into the Jesus response; a response that will not only transform your marriage and your family, but also your church community. I urge all churches to promote this kind of response amongst all its congregations and that we may truly live as a community that not only knows and loves grace, but a community of believers who are happy to extend grace through the Jesus Response.

We don't have time to do this any other way.

Graham Hood.