

...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembly together...but encouraging one another.  
 Heb 10:24-25

Share the teaching  
 Guard the sharing

# Male Call

## March 14, 2008—Atonement—What's The Big Deal?

6:00 – 6:05	Coffee & Donuts Opening Prayer
6:05 – 7:00	<p>1) Introduction</p> <p>a) We looked at the Prodigal Son and discovered in it the challenge to be a Father to others. Today we begin looking at how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to be transformed into a Father.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In the Christian faith the key to the puzzle is the work of Jesus Christ. Once we have a solid grasp of the meaning of his work, the rest of the faith falls together around it. When I discovered the universal and cosmic nature of Christ, I was given the key to a Christian way of viewing the whole world, a key that unlocked the door to a rich storehouse of spiritual treasures.        --Robert Webber<sup>1</sup></p> <p>2) Atonement Defined and Described</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p><u>Atonement:</u> At One. To atone is to become reconciled, to be in harmony, to be at one.</p> </div> <p>a) God's atoning work in history</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">i) Genesis 3—Revelation 20?</p> <p>b) Center point of atonement is the work of Jesus</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">i) Philippians 2:5-11</p> <p>3) Our current state:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The fundamental negative reality among Christian believers now is their failure to be constantly learning how to live their lives in The Kingdom Among Us. And it is an <i>accepted</i> reality. The division of professing Christians into those for whom it is a matter of whole-life devotion to God and those who maintain a consumer, or client, relationship with the church has now been an accepted reality for over fifteen hundred years.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">And at present—in the distant outworkings of the Protestant Reformation, with its truly great and good message of salvation by faith alone—that long-accepted division has worked its way into the very heart of the gospel</p>

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient-Future Faith*, Baker Books, 1999, 39-40. Quoted in *A Community Called Atonement*, 1.

	<p>message. It is now understood to be a part of the “good news” that one does not have to be a life student of Jesus in order to be a Christian and receive forgiveness of sins.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">--Dallas Willard<sup>2</sup></p> <p>The bad news, the anti-gospel as it were, is that the claim Christians make for the atonement is not making enough difference in the real lives of enough Christians to show up in statistics as compelling proof of what the apostle Paul called the “truth of the gospel.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Scot McKnight<sup>3</sup></p> <p>a) Do you agree with their assessment?</p> <p>4) Table discussion</p> <p>a) What is your view of the atoning work of God?</p> <p>b) Is your view of atonement really transformative for you?</p> <p>c) Does the atoning work of Christ and the Spirit to forgive sins and empower Christians make us forgiving people or morally empowered people?</p> <p>d) Does the claim of the gospel extend to what can be observed in the concrete realities of us who claim to be its beneficiaries?<sup>4</sup></p> <p>5) Group discussion of table-generated thoughts</p> <p>6) A story of atonement<sup>5</sup></p> <p>a) Where do you see atonement in this story?</p>
7:00	Closing Prayer

Further reading:

- *The Bible*
- McKnight, Scot. *A Community Called Atonement*. Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Plantinga, Cornelius. *Not The Way It's Supposed To Be: A Breviary of Sin*. Eerdmans, 1995.
- Volf, Miroslav. *Free of Charge: Giving and Receiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*. Zondervan, 2005.
- Willard, Dallas. *Divine Conspiracy*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.
- Wright, N.T. *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship*. Eerdmans, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> *Divine Conspiracy*, 301. Emphasis in original.

<sup>3</sup> *A Community Called Atonement*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Questions c & d from *ibid*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Dawn's Story from *A Community Called Atonement*, 3-4.