

THE BIG IDEA: The Gospel enables different people to be in the same place because of God's grace.

The Take-Off

2 weeks ago, we started a series called "Into the Water" that is going to kind of serve as our follow up series to the month of Focus that we experienced in July.

Basically, if July was a month about the ONE THING we're supposed to be doing - making disciples who make disciples who make disciples (or disciplers, as we call them), then August is the month when we talk about HOW we do it. In other words, it's one thing to talk about it, and another to do it.

Just like a child who is standing on the side of the pool trying to work up the nerve to jump, this series admits that while it might be safer on the shore, none of us were made for that. We were made to jump into the water.

[PIC OF MAN JUMPING]

2 weeks ago we looked at Ezekiel 47 and saw that Ezekiel had a vision of being led into a river that got deeper.

We also saw that he didn't stay in it, but was led back to the shore to do some fishing.

In other words, it's good to go deep, but it's not good to stay there and forget that God takes us deep so that we can go wide.

The river - another term for God's presence - is great, but it brings us work to do. Specifically, souls who need the ONE THING we're supposed to do: help them become disciplers!

And so, if God is going to bring us fish - souls - to journey to Jesus with us, then we've got to be prepared for all kinds of fish, don't we?

[FISH PICS] Stonefish, Red Lion fish, Frog fish, Blobfish, Boxfish, the Smoking Turkey Fish

There are tons of fish - all different kinds - and this morning I need to get a concept across to you that is critical

Sometimes we take passages and look at Greek words, and really pick that passage apart to apply it

This morning may be a little different. I want to read a portion of Romans 14 to you and then give you a metaphor that will hopefully help you to really grab the concept.

So, let me read it, and then I'll give you the Big Idea and then we'll talk about the perfect illustration of what Paul's trying to get across in the passage.

Romans 14:1-12

Here's our Big Idea: **The Gospel enables different people to be in the same place because of God's grace.**

I can't think of a better metaphor - a better picture - of Romans 14 than a crowded swimming pool.

[PIC OF POOL]

Here are just a few observations about pools that I gained after years of lifeguarding:

1. Pools attract all types of swimmers

- a. We've already talked about the different types of fish, but think about how many types of people are co-existing in the pool
- b. Wall clingers, bubble blowers, splash and dashers, cannon ballers, lap swimmers
- c. I mentioned the word "co-exist" and for some of us that brings to mind a bumper sticker about all different kinds of religions and belief systems getting along
- d. Let me say clearly that Paul isn't talking about that in Romans 14
- e. In fact, 9 times in the first 12 verses he uses the term "Lord"
- f. There are all types of swimmers in the pool, but if you're in the pool, you're a follower of Jesus only
- g. That's important to remember, isn't it? The only way to be in this pool is by resolving the issue of who is Lord of your life.

2. There are different depths in a pool

- a. Think about it: the kiddie pool, the shallow end, the rope, the deep end by the ladder, the diving board
- b. When I was a lifeguard, the pool could often look like controlled chaos because there was so much activity in so many different places
- c. Most people tended to hang out in the places that they felt comfortable
- d. What Paul is saying in verse 2 is basically, "some love the deep end and some love the shallow end"
- e. Paul is saying that's ok because all of us have a swimming instructor - and Jesus will help us swim (v. 4)
- f. So maybe you're a deep end kind of a guy or a shallow end kind of guy - don't miss the beauty of a pool full of different activities because not everyone has the same preferences you do.
- g. Too often, we just go find a pool that is full of people who swim the way we like to swim and eventually that pool is a private pool with a fence built around it in order to keep out all the "wrong" swimmers.

3. There are messes in a pool

- a. Of all the pool rules I've ever seen, this is my second favorite...
- b. [PIC OF NO P IN IT SIGN]
- c. My favorite pool rule was on a sign at a hotel pool and it simply said, don't drown. Simple and effective!
- d. With this many people in a pool, there will be messes.
- e. Some kid is going to pee in the pool, someone's going to get sick.
- f. Food will get into the water. I remember diving down in the deep end to retrieve a Snickers bar. Or was it?
- g. The question is, what do we do when there are messes? Keep swimming and hope they go away?
- h. Absolutely not! We clean them up.
- i. It's easy to read Romans 14 and think we can't judge anyone about anything, but we know from other passages in the Bible - Matthew 18 and Galatians 6 - that we are to help clean up messes.
- j. Sometimes we have to confront each other, but always with the grace that we've been given in Christ.

4. You can be around the pool and not be in it

- a. I love it when people go to a pool and complain about getting wet.
- b. You're in a pool!! Full of water!!
- c. If you're around a pool - maybe you're laying out in the sun, maybe you're dangling your feet in the water - you're going to get wet
- d. Some kid is going to cannonball right in front of you, or some dad is going to splash his family and get your book wet
- e. Can you be in the church and not love Jesus, not have Jesus be your Lord?
- f. Absolutely, but at some point you will be affected by him, and we hope you'll be like the sunbather who gets so hot, you want to dip in the pool to be refreshed.
- g. Which brings me to my final observation about pools and the gospel: what are we called to do with all these different types of people?

5. Make room and make swimmers

- a. We're called to do 2 things: make room and make swimmers
 - i. Make room
 - a) I love what Colossians 3:13 says - make allowance for one another
 - b) Lap swimmer, make room for floatie swimmer
 - c) Cannonballer, don't jump on the wall clinger
 - ii. Make swimmers
 - a) When it's all said and done, we can't force people into the deep end or off the diving board
 - b) But we can do our best to make sure everyone can swim
 - c) 2 Peter 1:15 - Peter made sure they had a greater lifeguard than himself
 - d) Romans 14:4 - that lifeguard is Jesus, and he is able to make us stand (or swim)
- b. I don't know where you are in the pool, but no matter where you are - if you're the scuba diver in the deep end or the nose-holder in the shallow end, I challenge you with this as we close: are you making room for others and are you making sure everyone can swim?

The Landing

That last question reveals a critical truth about what God is showing us about making disciplers.

It isn't just the preacher's job to make sure people can swim.

One of the most chilling stats about children who drown is that almost half of them do so within 25 yards of a parent of an adult

One of the best tips for us is this: when kids play in a pool, they make noise. When they get quiet, you need to check on them.

Who has gotten quiet? Who does need to call this week and check on? This is what it means to go into the water - we are a church - a pool - full of different types of swimmers at different depths and places, and we will make room for more and will make swimmers of all.

Let's pray.