

The Gospel and reaching out helping hand cannot be separated.

Mark Scholtz

Our country's problems are vast, and the issues run deep.

We should not try to oversimplify a complex situation.

Of course, the violence that erupted recently is not acceptable and the loss of life is tragic, but it has happened, and all we can do now is look at how we can tackle some of the underlying issues.

We can't change the past, but we can do something today that can help to make a difference for the future.

As the church we have a message that can change human hearts.

However, the people we deliver that message to have real challenges affecting their everyday lives, so it's important that we deliver it in the correct packaging.

There was a time when the church was only about preaching the Gospel, even if the listeners were starving.

That was clearly wrong. The church has also swung to the other extreme where people were being fed, but no one was sharing the Good News.

We have a mandate to share the Good News. The Gospel and meeting people's needs were never meant to be separate concepts. They belong together. That's where the power of Christianity truly lies.

Fruit is God's seed delivery mechanism. They distribute the seeds, which produce more fruit when they fall on fertile ground.

Our good fruit also causes the seed of the Word to spread and bring new life in the Kingdom of God.

The love we have for others is spiritual fruit. Ephesians 4:15 says that we are to be in the business of "speaking the truth in love".

The truth is the seed contained in God's Word.

The love is spiritual fruit, so "speaking the truth in love" means that the truth, the seed, needs to be delivered in the fruit of love.

Think of an apple. The seed is inside the sweet fruit. Some are swallowed, while the rest are distributed when the core is thrown on the ground.

The fruit gets the seed to its destination. We need to deliver the seed in the fruit of love.

Love is practical and it includes meeting people's immediate needs. In our nation there are many needs.

How do we do we love practically? What does it all look like in reality?

One of our partner ministries, Work-for-a-Living, makes unemployed people employable.

Unemployment is one of the biggest issues we face in this country. The courses are run out of centres that are linked to local churches.

The truth in the Bible is deeply integrated into the course content. The course literally changes the world view of the thousands of people who attend every year.

We are privileged to have two centres running – one out of a building in our Walmer Campus and another at our Kleinskool Campus.

What a joy it is for me to watch as the course facilitators walk many of the attendees across the campus to our Walmer auditorium to be baptized as they receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

At Kleinskool I had the opportunity to meet with the local ward office. We went to speak to them about our involvement in the community and our long-term upliftment plans.

One of their representatives told me: “Yes! I know about your church campus in our area, all the people who go there end up getting employed!” That was one of the most moving statements I’ve ever heard.

A church in the area is meeting the spiritual needs of the people by addressing the very real physical needs.

We are just a drop in the ocean and there are many other churches running centres like this around the country, but we are blessed to be able to play our small part.

What’s important to see is that Work-for-a-Living delivers the life changing seed of the Gospel wrapped in the fruit of love. The fruit of love is meeting the very real need for a stable job.

If the truth in God’s Word must get to people, then the fruit is important, because fruit is how we get the seed to people.

Fruit and seed always go together. It’s how God designed it in nature.

The fruit will bring people close to us. The fruit will draw people towards us and towards our churches.

The fruit of love will draw people in the community to us.

Another one of our partner ministries, Farming God’s Way, equips rural farmers with the skills they need to farm successfully – producing both physical and spiritual fruit.

The principles they learn increase their crop yield many times over. One such testimony is of a farmer who went from a yield of three bags of maize per year to 69 bags on the same piece of land! All he did was apply what he’d been taught.

The teaching material contains far more than just a good conservation farming technique. It shows the farmers how it all links back to the truth in the Bible.

This truth, the message of Jesus our Redeemer, the seed of the Gospel, is delivered in the fruit of love.

The farmers are shown love by being upskilled to better farming methods that change their financial futures and plant the seeds for the futures of their children.

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