

Missional Enviroments

Missional Discipleship: We are transformed when we give ourselves away for the sake of others. (Colossians 3:17; Eph. 4:11-16)

For all of our discipleship in Christ...experiencing him in moments that mark us;



encountering him in the community doing life with others; being transformed through the living Word and intentional personal disciplines....if it is not lived out...expressed in love, compassion and mercy to others...the poor, the marginalized...our hearts have not been formed as we think we have.

Mission is for the good of the world, but also works for the good of God's people. It is central how God forms and shapes us as disciples of Jesus. Tim Morey writes, "As we reach out to

others in need, we find that our compassion expands, and consequently so does our capacity to receive and give away God's grace." (*Embodying Our Faith*, p.175)

Paul writing to Philemon: "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ." (Phil. 6)

The fuller life in Christ comes not only as we give attention to our own growth but largely as we give ourselves away. Paul reminds the church in Ephesus that growth in faith, knowledge, maturity and unity will come as God's people are equipped to serve (Eph. 4:11-16)

We encounter God's heart most deeply as his love sends us out into the world; for God is a missionary God and we are a sent people.

When our vision of being disciples of Jesus involves living as kingdom people, we find ourselves thrust into both the inward and outward dimensions of spiritual formation. Our inner life-thoughts, attitudes, desires, reactions-become more and more like those of Jesus and we live in a way that demonstrates the kingdom and invites others to receive the friendship and mercy of God.

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It is not so much the case that God has a mission for this church in the world...but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God's mission. (Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God*)

We are formed by Christ to live missionally which means it's not so much participating in something as it is *a way of living*.

In his book, *Embodying Our Faith*, pastor and author Tim Morey writes, “Church people think about how to get people into the church; missional people think about how the church into the world.

Church people worry that the world might change the church; missional people work to see the church change the world.

Church people think the church exists to serve me (and if they don’t fulfill all my consumer wants, I’ll go somewhere that will); missional people want to serve a lost and dying world.



Our God gives himself away, and those who follow are shaped into his image will becomes givers as well. Among other things, to be shaped into the image of Christ means we become increasingly other-centered.

Church people help serve in a soup kitchen one day year and pat themselves on the back for their service; missional people follow Jesus into the lives of men and women who are waiting for soup.

Church people proclaim “a faith” from a religious formula or package and turn non-Christians into “projects” to be won; missional people embody their faith and love people simply because Jesus loves them.

Church people ask, “I wonder what kind of mission God has for me. Missional people ask, “What kind of ME does God want for HIS mission.””

If our witness is to be plausible in this world, our faith must be lived out in ways that show God’s compassionate heart. It is not enough to tell people God loves them...WE have to love them.



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God cares deeply about injustice, the poor, the broken-hearted. He actively works to bring restoration, healing and justice...and much of how he chooses to do this is through his people.

Some of the harshest critiques that the Old Testament prophets uttered were aimed at those who claim to worship God but neglect the and those suffering injustice.

“I am sick of your sacrifices!” God cries through Isaiah. “I cannot stand the sight” of your worship, and will no longer listen to the prayers of those with blood on their hands.

It is as if God is saying, “How can you claim to love me, when you don’t love those I love?”

Isa. 1:17 (NLT) “Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.”

Jesus seizes on this language when he rebukes the Pharisees for being so meticulous in giving their tithe, yet they neglected “the more important matters of the law-justice, mercy and faithfulness” (Matt. 23:23).

However, our compassion ministries must not have a hidden agenda. While our earnest hope is always that those we serve might come to know Jesus, we have to make sure our efforts aren’t just another kind of switch-and-bait ploy.

Compassion service is worthy in and of itself as part of God’s kingdom mission, and does not need the presence of an evangelistic message to validate it.

Compassion acts come out of hearts of compassion. Acts of compassion cannot just be programs that come and go...they must be part of the fabric of our church...and the stuff of our everyday lives as God’s people.

We are not elected for privilege but for service; to live not as exclusive beneficiaries of God’s saving work, but as bearers of this grace to the rest of the world.



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We are called to live like people on mission. We serve a higher purpose than our own. The mission of God is the establishment of the kingdom in the hearts of people...in other words...making disciples.

It was not the establishment of an army or a religion. It was the rule of love in the hearts of people.

How will this kingdom come about? Over and over throughout the gospels we read Jesus saying:...”The Kingdom of God is like...” It had to do with how we live now!

Jesus was describing to us how we live in this kingdom. He was actually inviting us to participate with him in bringing it about.



Once you understand this....the New Testament makes more sense. For example when Jesus, at the discourse during the Last Supper said:...”A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”...Jesus places this new commandment as only second in Loving God with all your heart. This would be the distinguishing mark of those citizens in the Kingdom.

During that same discussion is when Jesus said...I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends...." (John 15:15)

I now call you friends...living in the kingdom encompasses holding a deeply help friendship with Jesus....Jesus didn't leave us with a list of do and don'ts.....he called us into relationship with him in this new kingdom whereby we would make other disciples of this kingdom.

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And maybe the kingdom looks like us living as representatives of that loving God - loving others as God loved us - sharing meals and other resources, calming fears, dispelling doubts and participating with God in bringing about his kingdom characterized by love.

Our discipleship HAS to make a difference in the way we live. Our faith must become an embodied faith, where our witness to the world is based more on the weight of our actions than the strength of our arguments.

People in our world today need to know that our faith demonstrates its ability to make a difference in the world...for it to be considered at all. They also long to give their lives to a purpose greater than themselves.

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What Thomas said of Christ, the world is saying about the church..."Unless I see you hands and the print or the nails, I will not believe." (John Stott, The Cross of Christ)

On the other hand, we also find that as we reach out to others in need, we find that our compassion expands, and consequently so does our capacity to receive and give away God's grace. As we bring together these two aspects of receiving and giving grace, God shapes us in a proper perspective of ourselves as servants. We are not rescuers of the needy but recipients of God's grace, co-opted as fellow workers to bring that grace to others.

We can only find it by listening to the voice of our loving God and responding through our actions to what the love of God asks of us.

We believe that when we pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," a responsibility falls on us to do our part to make this prayer a reality. As we align ourselves with the person and work of Christ...in becoming his disciples...our actions naturally flow out of heart like his in demonstration of the love that has shaped us.