

Living Out Your Purpose Part 4: Engaging

Notes

If we are going to live out our purpose of glorifying God, we will be a people who enthusiastically engage in ministry and missions

When I got my license, I had a 1972 Chevy Custom C10. It had a three speed on the steering column, but we put it in the floor. It worked great except occasionally when you shifted from 1st to 2nd the gears would stick and not engage. This happened once in the middle of an intersection on HWY 61. I went pulled off in 1st then attempted to shift to 2nd and nothing. No gear means no go. I was stuck in the middle of a multilane intersection on a major highway. I had to get out of the truck, get under the truck shimmy around the glass packs and unstick the gears, burning my forearm in the process.

You see, when the gear did not properly engage, the truck would not move. I could give it all the gas I wanted; I could press the clutch as hard as I could, but that truck would not go because the gear was not engaged.

Just like that truck, when the people of God, men, women, and children who have been redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus, when we fail to engage in the ministries and missions of the church, the church cannot go anywhere, cannot accomplish its mission, cannot build up the church or reach the lost.

You look at church after church that every week we have new ones closing their doors. Why do you think that has happened? Sure, there are several reasons, but one of the reasons is that somewhere along the way members in those churches decided to either stop ministering to the body or they stopped living on mission in the community.

Let me ask you this morning? Are you engaged in one of our ministry teams here at FBC De Soto? Are you engaged in our missions' efforts around the community and the globe?

Our personal, intentional engagement in the ministries and missions of the church are vital to us fulfilling our mission of making disciples to the glory of God.

WHAT IS BIBLICAL ENGAGEMENT?

Disciplemaking engagement takes place when believers in Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, through the ministries of the church, use their spiritual gifts to minister to one another and live on mission to the lost.

When we think of our Discipleship Pathway, Engage is the logical next step that flows.

Biblical engagement is simply following the Lord to do that which the Lord has given us to do.

Bro. Gene loves to say, "we are equipped to do what he has called us to do."

As Moses has passed away and the Lord is preparing his student, Joshua to take command of Israel and lead the people into the promised land, listen to what God tells him.

³ *Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. (Joshua 1:3)*

Notice what is taking place here. It is truly amazing. God is telling Joshua that he has already given them the land as their possession, they just have to go get it.

They simply need to acquire that which God has appointed to them.

God tells Joshua the land is already his to possess and look at Joshua's response in **1:10-11**.

¹⁰ *Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ¹¹ "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you, to possess it.'"*

Joshua said, "Hey! Get up! God said this is ours. Tells everyone to get ready, we're going to get what God has given us!"

Israel was to take possession of the Promised Land. The deed was already theirs; they just had to be obedient in going to get it. And once they did, they would live in the blessings of the Lord.

Now, let's shift our thinking to a New Testament perspective. As believers, we are already part of the kingdom of God (**Mt. 5:3**).

Jesus tells us in **Mt. 28:18-20** to go and expand the kingdom of God by engaging the world.

We learned last week the Great Commission says,

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

We learned last week that all believers are to:

Go and make disciples (share the gospel)

Baptize the new disciples (identify with his death/resurrection)

Train the new disciples in his commands (the whole counsel of God)

These commands, given to the church, the believers who make up the church, are our marching orders for God's Kingdom. This is how we are to expand the promised Kingdom of God.

God already has his kingdom out there and he desires to use the church, that is believers in Jesus, to go engage in ministry and missions and claim what God has already promised.

Jesus has promised to claim all those the Father will give to him (**John 6:37**), and he wants to use us to share with the lost, the gospel of their salvation.

We are called to walk in the promise of the Lord. God has already given us the Kingdom; we simply need to possess it.

But guess what? There is no Plan B. Biblical engagement means God's plan is to use God's people to expand God's kingdom.

We are called to walk in the promise of the Lord. God has already given us the Kingdom; we simply need to possess it.

How am I helping to expand the Kingdom of God in my life? In our church?

Too often, we forget that while God has given us the Kingdom, we are still required and privileged to go possess it.

Joshua is but one of many examples in the Bible of God desiring his people to engage the lost and expand the Kingdom.

HOW DID GOD'S PEOPLE ENGAGE IN THE BIBLE?

I want to look at two other examples in the Bible of how God used individuals to engage the lost and expand the Kingdom

Let's look at Abraham in Genesis 12:1-4.

*Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;
2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." 4 So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him.*

From this passage we see several important points.

It was God's choice to not only choose Abraham, but it was God's choice how his plan was to be executed.

We forget, we are on God's team, he is not on our team. He is the owner, the president, the general manager, and the coach. He sets the boundaries, and he gives our assignment.

God did not choose Abraham based on any earthly criteria. God did not choose Abraham based on his or the nation of Israel's future faithfulness.

God blessed Abraham so he and his people, the Israelites, would be a testimony to his grace and be a vessel for those blessings to all the families of the earth.

These blessings would happen as Israel lived and worshipped among pagan nations demonstrating love for and teaching about the one true God.

The blessings would ultimately be fulfilled in the person of Jesus. The whole earth would be and is blessed through the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You see, none of these blessings belonged exclusively to Israel, they were a gracious gift to be shared with others.

Abraham, as well as all those who are of the Lord, are called to steward the blessings and share them.

Notice what verse 4 says. What did Abraham do? He went forth as the Lord had spoken and he took someone with him.

If we will be honest for a moment here; our issue with engaging in ministry and missions is not one of a lack of instruction, motivation, equipping, or power. We fail to engage in ministry and missions because of a lack of love.

I used to say that our failure to engage in ministry and missions was due to a lack of obedience, but the more I have studied the Bible the more I've come to understand Jesus' words in **John 14:15**,

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

Our lack of engagement is a lack of a love of God and a lack of love for the things of God.

Jesus pulls no punches here. I know in our culture and society we don't like absolutes or conditional statements, but Jesus makes both here.

Jesus says, "If." This is a conditional word which will be followed by the conditional statement. If we have a love for Jesus, we will be a people who obey his word.

And this is what we do to make ourselves feel better about disobeying his word. We tell ourselves, silently and at a whisper level, because we would never say it out loud, but this is what happens in our hearts and minds.

We tell ourselves, "I am pretty honest. I am fair with my money. I give to the Lord. I don't cheat on my spouse. I am not greedy." "So, I don't really need to be engaged in the work of the Lord. I don't really need to be engaged in sharing the gospel." "I mean, I know I probably should, but it's not that big of a deal if I'm not because I am pretty good in so many other areas of my life."

Sound familiar?

We avoid engaging the ministries and mission of the church because we tell ourselves we are pretty good elsewhere.

If we don't tell ourselves that lie, we believe another lie. We will tell ourselves, "I don't have anything to offer. I am not that talented. I am too young. I am too old. I am too busy."

These lies are just as detrimental to our engaging as the others. The Devil wants nothing more than for you to think you have nothing to offer in service to the Lord.

But here is where you need to stop believing the lies. If God has called you to engage, he has fully equipped you to engage!

In a few weeks we are launching our new Next Steps Classes, one for each the steps on our Discipleship Pathway.

In the Engage class you can find out where you are gifted and where those gifts can best fit into one of the areas of engagement here at FBCD.

God did not just provide us with an example in Abraham. Let's flip over to the New Testament to **Mt. 3:1-3**.

Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³ For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!'"

In our Old Testament passage, we see Abraham setting out to fulfill the beginning of the command to engage.

Here in Matthew, we see the herald of Jesus, John the Baptist preparing the way for Christ.

Notice how simple John's words and actions are. John is low maintenance in his approach to ministry.

He comes and tells them what to do and why they need to do it.

The what is "repent" and the why is "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

John provides us with a model for ministry. The simpler we think of ministry and missions the more readily we can see ourselves engaging in them.

We often overcomplicate ministry and missions.

Ministry is in-reach to the church, the body of Christ. Ministry is using your God-given gifts to serve others in the church.

Missions is outreach to the lost world. We use our gifts and talents to share the gospel of Christ with the lost in our community and across the world.

We can use multiple means to reach whether it is healthcare, clothing, food, education, meeting a need, or entertainment. But we use those methods as a means to an end-the sharing of the gospel.

Have you overcomplicated ministry and missions in your mind? What is keeping you from helping us engage one another and the world?

We love God by serving him. We love people by serving those in the church and by sharing the gospel with those outside the church.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ENGAGING?

When we talk about engaging in ministry and mission, it is not simply for the benefit of others. We remember, we are who we are because of the grace of God. We exalt, are equipped, and engage all because we know and have encountered the holiness of God.

We learned last week that we are equipped so that we may be strengthened in the Lord, so that our lives look more like Jesus.

When we engage in ministry and missions, we:

Mature in Christ- You grow spiritually deeper and grow in your giftedness

Learn Humility- As you make yourself a servant you learn the humility of Jesus

Learn Flexibility- You learn the world does not work on your clock and your plan

Grow in Gospel-Centered Relationships- You develop a special bond with those who you serve alongside

Practice the Great Commission- You live out, very tangibly the commands of the Great Commission and you gain confidence in practicing the Great Commission.

Dr. John Geddie was a Scots-Canadian missionary who was known as "the father of Presbyterian missions in the South Seas." In 1848 he pioneered missionary work in the New Hebrides islands, Aneityum (Anatom) and worked there for God for 24 years. On the tablet erected to his memory these words are inscribed: "When he landed, in 1848, there were no Christians. When he left, in 1872, there were no heathen."

Are you experiencing the blessings and benefits of engaging ministry and missions?

When we faithfully and regularly engage in ministry and missions we place ourselves in a position to experience the many blessings of God.

In 1629, when the favorite wife of Indian ruler Shah Jahan died, he ordered that a magnificent tomb be built as a memorial to her. The shah placed his wife's casket in the middle of a parcel of land, and construction of the temple literally began around it. But several years into the venture, the Shah's grief for his wife gave way to a passion for the project.

One day while he was surveying the sight, he reportedly stumbled over a wooden box, and he had some workers throw it out. It was months before he realized that his wife's casket had been destroyed. The original purpose for the memorial became lost in the details of construction. They built the Taj Mahal, but they forgot the reason for the building. They forgot what their mission truly was! (Dr. James Dobson, Coming Home, Timeless Wisdom for Families, (Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton; 1998), p. 122)

We must live, making sure the treasure is always in view. If we fail to keep the treasure of the gospel in view in our own lives, two things happen:

We don't glorify God in our lives through exaltation and being equipped

We don't glorify God in our lives through engaging in ministry and missions.

What about you? Are you glorifying God by engaging in ministry and missions? Are you serving on a ministry team or in one of outreach missions?

Would you help us make an impact and expand the Kingdom of God?

We can build the house of our lives in many different ways, but we must always keep the glorious treasure of the gospel as its foundation.

Will you help us make a gospel impact by taking the Next Step to Engage?