

Announcements

1. Distance Learning—Prayer
2. Paint job—trim and touch ups left
3. AWANA's starts this Thursday
4. Lunch
5. Introduce Evan

Mission Minded: Reach

1 Corinthians 9:22-23

We are starting a three week series that I have titled "Mission Minded". I firmly believe that we are to be mission minded in our approach to our personal faith, mission minded in regards to the growth of other people's faith that are in the church, and mission minded in reaching people that do not believe that Jesus is the only way for salvation.

Being 'mission minded' as followers of Christ is to be intentional in our lives to represent Christ. It's meant to permeate our whole life, because His message is for our whole life and changes our whole life. It isn't compartmentalized to Sundays or our Christian ministry or Christian friends. Paul, in 2 Corinthians connects this to the term ambassadors. We are ambassadors of Christ; representatives of our heavenly King pointing people to and promoting the things of the Almighty King Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 says, "And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

Catch that, we have a task of reconciling people to God. He gave us the wonderful message of reconciliation not for us to keep to ourselves, but to share with the those around us. We are His ambassadors, His representation, His spokesman. Out of God's great love He brings us into His ministry as partners in His marvelously wonderful and fulfilling work.

God is making His appeal *through us*. We have a mission. And when someone carries out a mission, they are a missionary.

This isn't to take away from those called to the role of a missionary that goes to a foreign land. But, I do think we have segregated out in our minds, maybe unconsciously, that sharing the gospel is the work of a missionary, maybe a pastor, or someone who is an evangelist. We fall prey to thinking that it isn't our ability and gift, when in reality every believer is called to evangelize. Every believer is to use their circumstances, gifts and abilities, hobbies, unique personality, and experiences to evangelize.

The second aspect of being 'mission minded' as followers of Christ is the aspect of maturing in the Lord. It's a personal mission, but it is also a community mission for the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:12-13 says, "Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ."

Hear these phrases:

"build up the church"

"This will continue until": it takes time, it's a process

"until we all"

"...we will be mature in the Lord". That is the goal of the mission, maturity *in* the Lord.

What does maturity look like? verses 14-16 gives us understanding, "Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."

Paul tells the Philippians in chapter 3 it's a process and calling. In verses 12-14 he said, "I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing:

Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.”

That is being mission minded. The mission is to ‘press on’ to the end, to maturity. That is the call as individuals in Christ and it manifests itself in and through the collective body of individuals in Christ. And, it is the burden of the believer for the non-believer: to see them move to maturity in Christ as well. The natural overflow of Christian maturity is to want for others to know and experience God.

The picture that God gave me a few years ago that helps me to wrap my head around this in the form of steps or movement. It’s a picture of a funnel. And, this funnel is my thought process of how and what we do as a church body.

At the top is the widest part. It is those that don’t know Christ, those outside of the church. The narrowest part at the bottom is those that have a mature relationship with Christ and multiplying themselves; there are less people that fit into this category. The whole thing is the process of evangelism and discipleship.

The top is REACH, next is CONNECT, then EQUIP, and finally, GO. [By the way, this may look familiar. It’s on the inside of your bulletin. Also, I mentioned this a few weeks ago when we went through our series, “7 Weeks to a Better Body.”]

The goal, or mission if you will, is to provide a way and help people move from wherever they are in the funnel towards maturity. It’s to help people move from a humanistic worldview towards a biblical worldview, to help people move from a ‘what is God going to do for me’ mentality to an attitude of servanthood, the idea of being a bond-slave.

Our modern day idea of slavery is very westernized. Its degrading, full of inequality and hardship. But, that’s not the case in God’s kingdom. To be a slave to God brings freedom and worth...which sounds contradictory. But, scripture tells us we are either slaves to this world or slaves of God. We are either slaves to sin or slaves to freedom that only God can bring. Slaves of Christ experience love, peace, joy, and hope because of their freedom from the power of sin irregardless of what their surroundings bring.

However, the saddest thing is a Christian that has freedom from sin, but goes back to their sin. They will be conflicted, struggling, confused, and often the things of God will feel distant and sometimes like a bitter pill. That is why scripture tells us to 'put off' our old self with its deceit and corruption, and instead 'put on' the new self. Romans 6:4 says, "We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Ephesians 4:22-24 says it this way, "throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy."

This funnel is the process of maturity in Christ. It's the process of walking in the freedom Christ wants you to experience. It's the movement from enemy to friend of God. It's the growth process of our relationship with God.

The funnel also helps to make intentional how we interact and what our expectations can be. I cannot expect someone who doesn't know Christ to understand the value of financially giving to a missionary overseas, to giving their time to AWANA's every week, go to a Bible study, or spend lots of time in prayer. I have to intentionally deal with someone who doesn't have a relationship with Christ differently, having a different expectation of how they are going to act and react than a person who has grown up in the church and surrendered their life to the will of God. And likewise, I have to interact with and expect someone who is a baby Christian to act, interact, and react as someone who is just learning to walk in the Lord would act. [By the way, just because someone has grown up in the church does not make them mature in their faith.]

We see this in how Paul treated the Corinthian church. In 1 Corinthians 3:2-3 he said, "I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?"

I hope that gives you some understanding and some foundation to what we are going to talk about the next three weeks. This week we are going to look at the widest part of the funnel, REACH.

I hope to answer three questions:

Why do we REACH?

Who do we REACH?

How do we REACH?

...but let me first define this part of the funnel.

This group doesn't know Jesus. They do not have a relationship with Him. They may not even know who Jesus is, and at best has a distorted idea of Jesus and the church. They won't understand what we do as a church and they won't understand why we do what we do as a church.

I would like to mention also, that we must remember that we live in a post-Christian culture. We have to get it out of our heads that people today, especially the younger the person, has any understanding. More people today than ever in the history of the United States are claiming to have no religious affiliation. They have been labeled the "Nones". And, because of living and growing up in a post-Christian culture Biblical principles are not taught, the Bible stories that were once common are at best fables, and most likely if they know anything of the stories, it's a small, non-factual or twisted aspect of the story. So, in order to reach many of the people today we have to move expecting people of our culture to be at step 8 understanding who Jesus is and going all the way back to step 1. We pretty much are going to have to think as a missionary that goes to some forsaken tribe that has no connection to the outside world and has only heard their made up stories of creation and mankind.

In Glide, I am not sure it's quite that extreme, but I am not convinced that I am that far off. That is not a putdown to our area, it's just simply the world we live in today. And, we can try and cast blame, but it will just hinder us, build up anger, and get us off topic. Besides, we must remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means."

We have two options here: 1) retreat and stay in our safe Christian bubble or 2) we lay ourselves out as a 'living sacrifice on the altar' and with the response of Isaiah saying, "Here I am, send me." One option will feel safe, but miss the power of God and the blessings of God and the other will experience the presence of God and see the hand of God at work.

Why REACH out?

1. God wants everyone to repent. 2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."
2. We are all need salvation
 1. Because *all* have fallen short, Romans 3:23
 2. Because *all* are born dead to Christ and alive to sin, Ephesians 2:4-5, "But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)"
 3. There is no where to hide. Because there will be "judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power." according to 2 Thessalonians 1:9.
 4. 2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must *all* stand before Christ to be judged."
3. We are commanded to reach out: Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Who do we REACH out to?

1. All would be ideal, but the reality is those that God has put in your life.
2. Those without faith. Hebrews 11:6 "And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him."
3. In our proximity. Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

4. As you go. Matthew 28:19 “As you go, make disciples”. The people around you. Those that you have a relationship with.

How do we REACH out?

1. By believing what we believe in
 1. First, you must understand that the things you believe in as a Christian are facts.
 2. Second, these facts are not yours in the sense that they uniquely pertain to you or your perspective or experience, or in the sense that you made them up on your own.
 3. Finally, in Biblical evangelism we are not imposing anything.
 1. For some, we think we are imposing our beliefs on another. That is an underlying lie that has permeated our culture. What's right for me may not be right for you. I don't want to push my beliefs upon you because you may have other beliefs. What!?! How does that work? It can only work if Christianity is *not* the only way to God. Because, if it is, it is abuse, hatred, and absolute unlovingly to think sharing our beliefs is an imposition.
2. Realize there is urgency in the message.
 1. It's appointed once for a man to die, then judgment. We don't know what that day is.
 2. There is urgency in our message. I think we forget that sometimes. It isn't our responsibility to save the individual, that is God's responsibility. Our responsibility is simply to be faithful in our calling, to share God's love and hope found in the Truth.
3. By our lifestyle:
 1. Matthew 5:14-16, “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”
 2. How we love matters. John 13:34, ““A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”
 3. The way we live matters. It can prompt people to pay attention, to ask questions.
 4. Our lifestyle, collectively

1. Quote by Mark Dever, “Live a life of committed love to the other members of you local church, as a fundamental part of your own sanctification and of your evangelistic ministry. Our individual lives alone are not a sufficient witness. Our lives together as church communities are the confirming echo of our witness.”
The spirit will lead you.
4. Through our words
 1. Acts 20:21 “I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus.”
 2. Revelation 12:11 “And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony.”
5. Through God’s Word
 1. 1 Peter 1:23 “For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.”
 2. Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.”
 3. Romans road
6. Share the gospel. Ask.
 1. Romans 10:14 “ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?”

God has brought you in to the impossible. You are partakers in the work of God. You have been called into a task that you cannot do on your own, but God promises to be with you, to work through you. He has called you to do the impossible. But, remember, God is a God who can do the impossible. Matthew 19:26 says, “Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”

