

IDENTITY: WE ARE LEARNERS

family . missionaries . servants . learners

Questions for Personal Study

Read Matthew 28.18-20. What is Jesus commissioning them to do?
Is that commissioning still hold true for disciples today?
If so, what do you need in order to be equipped as a disciple-maker?
How are you taking responsibility for your own development?
What do you have - gifts, resources, experiences, etc. - as a disciple?
How are you taking responsibility to develop others - in and out of church?

Questions for Study in Community

Read Eph. 4.1-16. Why does Jesus give gifts to the church body?
Read Eph 2.10. What are the works Paul is talking about?
What does our Missional Community need to learn & be equipped in?
How might we get the equipping we need?

Questions for Staying on Mission

As a Missional Community, where are we called to make disciples together?
What part of that are each of you good at? Where are you weak?

On Gospel Motivations

No matter what you are doing or how you are doing it, you are teaching others how to be a disciple of Jesus. Because it is your Identity and not simply an activity, all that you do teaches about Jesus and life in Him.

Therefore, we first need to repent of the ways in which we've not believed this reality and not lived out of this Identity. When you don't think that your contribution to the body is important or needed, you are failing to believe the truth about who you are. The joy of knowing that you are gifted and needed in this disciple-making adventure ought to lead to a deep desire to be developed and equipped as a disciple so that you can become a better disciple maker!

The modern idea of being a "church attender" is totally foreign to the New Testament. We are the church, so we can't "attend" ourselves! The church is the body of Christ living as His people and carrying out his mission, each of us equipped and equipping others, so that the body keeps on growing.

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Who Are You?

Tonight we're continuing our series exploring what it means to be a person formed by the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Above all, the goal is to remember who we are as a people originally created in God's image and now - in Jesus - created anew and restored to relationship with God: "For you are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph 2.10). **We need to remember the Story of God and what He has done in history for us, come to a firm conviction about who we are because of what He has done, and then dialogue about how we should live in light of what He has done.**

Over the last 3 weeks we've talked about our Identities of Family, Missionaries, and Servants. God has always desired a people - a human family - who would live together in such a way that the world would know what He was like. In Jesus, God has adopted us as his children and created this Family! At the same time, this Family has a purpose - or mission - in the world. In Jesus God is restoring all things to himself, remaking the world the way he intended it from the beginning. Therefore, as his Family we are sent into this world to join with him in restoration and redemption. We are Missionaries, sent into our culture to demonstrate the redemption that God is bringing through Jesus. Jesus came to heal the world by absorbing the pain and rebellion in our world. As we go into our culture as Missionaries, we want to go just like Jesus, as Servants. He came to give up his life for us, as our ransom, and so we are his possession and sent into his world as his Servants. We actively choose to be lowest, least, and last, that others might come to know God.

Our final Gospel Identity is Learners: *we are disciples of Jesus who together are responsible for the maturity and mission of the church.* Jesus called 12 men to be his disciples, learning from him how to live the life he created them to live. After his death and resurrection, Jesus instructed these disciples to go into the world and multiply themselves, making disciples in every nation, teaching them to obey everything that Jesus commanded. Each of us has been called to be a

disciple or student of Jesus, and each of us is called to help others become disciples of Jesus. We take responsibility to grow and develop as disciples ourselves, even as we do the same in the church and in the world. We are disciples who make disciples.

To Image God

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were called to God as a Family and sent by God as Missionaries. Though Adam and Eve were made in God's Image, they did not yet know everything, did not completely understand how to Image God in everything, and needed to be intimately connected to God in order to grow and mature in their calling. Though they were without sin, they weren't without room for maturing.

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people were called to be a Learning Community. God gave them his Law and told them to teach each other, remind each other, and encourage each other in faithful obedience. They needed one another as they walked out their Identity as God's people.

Suffering Servant

Jesus came as both fully human and fully God, and Luke reports that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and favor with men and God (Luke 2.52). Though he was fully God, he learned as he grew and came to understand his call as he walked in obedience to his Father. Though he was perfectly without sin, he was also fully human and his wisdom and understanding grew as he matured.

As Jesus lived out his mission on earth, he called people to himself so that he could teach, train, and equip them to replicate his ministry after his death and resurrection. Throughout the gospels we see Jesus doing ministry - preaching, teaching, and demonstrating the good news - and taking his disciples with him. They watched him, asked questions of him, and eventually did ministry alongside him. Jesus told them, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6.40). Jesus invited his disciples into a process of learning how to live in his ways and to do his works.

At the end of his time on earth, Jesus gathered his disciples together one final time and commissioned them to continue this disciple-making process: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded

you. And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28.18-20). A few days later, as the disciples were praying together in Jerusalem, Jesus sent them the Holy Spirit to empower and embolden them to go out and fulfill this disciple-making commission.

The Church Matured

In Ephesians 4, Paul gives a picture of a fully functioning church. Jesus is the head of the church, the senior pastor, the one who is responsible for the growth and maturity of his body. In order for the church to reach full maturity, each part had to be working to its fullest extent. Each part needed to be developed. So while we recognize that we have been called to make disciples, we must also first recognize our need to be formed into disciples ourselves! We have much to learn about how to live as a Family, how to be on Jesus' Mission, and how to embrace our Identity as Servants. As we step into these Identities, our need for learning and equipping goes way up! We don't know what we are doing! So we need to take responsibility to get the teaching, training, and equipping that we need - from Jesus, gifted leaders, and the gifts of the body.

At the same time, Jesus gives gifts to his church - to people like you and I - in order that his church would continue to mature in likeness to him and fulfill his call on us to make disciples of all people. As a part of Jesus' body, we are each given gifts, abilities, and experiences that we must use to equip the rest of the body so that we all mature together. As you are learning and being equipped by these gifted people, you must remember that the purpose of such equipping is so that you can turn and do the "work of ministry;" that is, so that you can be a disciple-maker.

We Are Learners

To say that we are Learners is to acknowledge that "grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph 4.7). Each one of us has received from Jesus grace in the form of gifts, abilities, resources, and experiences. As we are called into his Family and sent as his Missionaries, each one of us is in need of being developed as a disciple and at the same time needed as a developer of disciples.

The body of Christ is being built up in love, both in maturity in Christ and in the mission of Christ to make disciples. In order for this to happen, each part of the body - you and I and all of us - must be "working properly." As we mature and develop ourselves, we take responsibility to mature and develop others.