

Spiritual Missional Community

Isolation—part 4

May 15, 2022

DAY 1: We are called to a missional lifestyle

1. A childhood friend took issue with me regarding one's purpose in life. I had written a poem talking about finding our greatest purpose in God. He didn't think God was necessary. "You have to create your own purpose."

My simple reply was, "Good luck with that."

2. What's wrong with creating your own purpose? Plenty!

- a. You cannot create a purpose big enough for your soul. Your soul is designed for a God-sized purpose.
- b. You were created for a purpose that will outlast you for generations.
- c. You were created for a purpose that will make a difference in the lives of people, that God can use in ways you may never fathom.
- d. If you create your own purpose, then
 - (1) You inevitably will seek to fulfill that purpose primarily to validate you.
 - (2) You are now under pressure to perform.
 - (3) You have just set yourself up for anxiety and worry when it seems you may not make your purpose.
 - (4) You set yourself up for extra discouragement when you don't measure up to achieving your purpose.
 - (5) You set yourself up for shame when you fail along the way in your purpose.
 - (6) You set yourself up for depression, despair or suicidal thoughts when it appears to you that you'll never fulfill your purpose.

3. What strikes you about finding a God-sized purpose?

4. Your family is not a big enough purpose. You will find a restlessness in your soul, looking, searching for something bigger. Your career is not a big enough purpose.

Matthew 9:9 As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

Matthew 4:18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

5. When Jesus calls us to be His disciples, it is a call to following Him and being engaged in His mission.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: The bigger issue: people's spiritual need

1. The kind of community I need is not ingrown on itself. It is ultimately not self-serving. This kind of community impacts the members of the community but ultimately it is people outside the community to which our eyes must yearn for.

2. There has been a move toward “social justice,” which has a number of different definitions to it. The gospel is bigger than social justice.

3. What is “social justice?” It depends on who you ask.

a. To some, social justice means “equality of opportunity”

b. To others, social justice means “equality of outcome. Everyone should have the same amount.” Though well-intentioned, this is a thoroughly unbiblical notion.

4. Within a short time of Jesus' arrest, He was at a home for dinner. Mary stood behind Him while He reclined at the table. She poured out expensive perfume on His feet. Judas and the others grumbled because that money could have been used in a social justice cause to help the poor.

Mark 14:4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? ⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

⁶ “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

5. What reasons does Jesus give for not using this money to feed the poor as was suggested?

6. People sometimes ask, “why did Jesus feed the 5,000?” Isn't that what we should be doing?

Matt. 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Mark 6:34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

7. In these instances what needs did Jesus see in people?

8. In each instance what did Jesus do?

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Letting your light shine

1. What differentiates a church's mission to serve versus any secular group that serves?

2. There are three great differences that the Christian brings to the table that no secular person can replicate.

a. The first we covered yesterday. The greatest needs people have are spiritual needs. Whatever we do has to keep in mind the real problems people face, which is inside them. And the ultimate solution is greater than a meal, or hand-out.

b. The second is *why* we do acts of service. Without Christ motivating someone there is always self-interest and a certain amount of self-glory in our service. There is a personal payoff. This is also true for the Christian with one great exception—at least we can recognize our self-interest and say “no” to our self-interest.

c. The third difference between what any secular person can do and what we can do is that we bring Jesus along with us. He is what people need more than any service we can do.

John 8:12 (Jesus) I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life.

3. He then tells us that we reflect His light to the world around us.

Matthew 5:14 You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

4. What does Jesus hope will be the outcome of our service to others?

5. How could you let your light shine this week? (At work? In your home? With friends?)

6. When a secular person serves, no matter how great the act of service, if there is no Jesus also communicated, the act of service remains only that—an act of service. There is nothing that penetrates the crusty heart, that shines the light of Jesus Christ and what He can do in our lives.

2 Cor. 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.

7. Paul “sees” (smells) the amazing effect of Christ—a sweet aroma.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: The surprising metric: the “small” turns out to be the “big”

1. Many, many times we miss opportunities to serve because they seem so small and insignificant. We are more likely to be drawn to big projects where we can be a part of something big. The allure of a self-centered payoff for serving is tempting.
2. William Wilberforce spent his entire adult life battling the slave trade in the British Empire.
3. We are all not going to be a William Wilberforce, neither will we be called upon to help overcome racism by giving a speech on the national mall next weekend.
4. But just because I can't do big things doesn't mean I can't do small things. And just because it *seems* to me I'm not doing big things doesn't mean that small things are virtually irrelevant!

Matt. 13:31 He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

5. This parable contains one of the laws of His kingdom. It is a paradox. That which seems super-small has the potential to one day be very great!
6. Imagine holding a tiny mustard seed in your hand. Now, imagine what Jesus says in v. 32. What strikes you about this contrast?

7. That which was and seemed so small and insignificant turned out to be very significant!

Matthew 10:42 “And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

8. The tiniest act of love, in God's hands, is a big act of love. Why is that?
9. The act itself may be quite small, but it is (1) why we act and (2) the nature of what people sense from us that is the real gift.
10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Serving as a way of life

1. Secular people can serve humanity. More often than not, people who serve do so in a “drive-by” manner. Lots of people show up on Thanksgiving morning at a homeless Thanksgiving dinner. Fine. Is that all there is? Maybe there is a once/year Habitat for Humanity weekend. Find.

2. The bible envisions God’s people serving as a way of life, not in “drive-by” acts of service.

*Titus 3:8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be **careful to devote** themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.*

*Titus 3:14 Our people must **learn to devote** themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for **urgent needs** and **not live unproductive lives**.*

3. In the space below, jot down what strikes you about Paul’s teaching on doing good deeds?

a. How do we become *devoted* to doing good deeds?

b. What are the benefits *to us* of doing good deeds as a way of life?

c. If we slough off doing good deeds, what are we in danger of doing? (Titus 3:14)

*Galatians 6:9 Let us **not become weary** in doing good, for at the proper time **we will reap a harvest if we do not give up**.¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

4. You can expect serving like this to be wearying. Sometimes, serving is not convenient, and sometimes it’s costly in time, effort, emotion, or financially.

5. But the delectable promise is the assurance of fruit. There will be a day when we clearly see that what we did was worth it.

2 Corinthians 4:5 For what we proclaim is Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Christ’s sake.

6. I want to be a part of a missional community where we are relating to people and meeting whatever needs we are able, as a way of life, not just on Thanksgiving morning or the occasional beach clean-up. I am not poo-pooing either of those events. I am saying that a church community is in “the people business,” and more specifically, attempting to bring Jesus to people in the way we relate and how we serve. Jesus has the power to change a person’s life, their identity, their value, their sense of importance, and their character.

I want to be part of a missional community that talks about God’s larger story, His redemptive story seeking to infect everyone He can with the wondrous love of Jesus Christ. I yearn to be a part in His larger story, even though in my everyday life my little story sometimes seems quite minute, and the efforts I make to be missional with people seems so small.

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?