

“Making Friends, Maturing Believers & Multiplying Disciples”

Text: 1 Peter 1:13-23, 2:4-5, 2:9-10

Sunday, February 8, 2015

1 Peter 1:13-23

13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God

1 Peter 2:4-5

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9-10

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

I. Today and Next Week

- A. Today: The perfect day to learn who we are, what we're all about
- B. Next week: "The Perfect Marriage" [Logo slide]

II. The Value of Change **QUICKLY**

- A. First, if we allow ourselves to fall in love with the **status quo**, we are allowing the seeds of resistance to be planted in our hearts that will bloom tomorrow. To *love* the status quo today is to walk in rebellion tomorrow.
- B. On the other hand, to be in love with change could reveal that we are undisciplined, that we **give up too easily on a vision** - because a vision requires tons of work since visionary efforts often require the breaking of new, stubborn ground.
- C. A love of change can also betray our **lack of relational discipline** - the kind of discipline required to build strong, enduring families of friends. The discipline that embraces the messiness, the heartbreak, and the predictable, the mundane, the slow - all elements that are essential to puncture the stubborn ground of superficial, "surfacy" relationships that are so common in the church and in our society.
- D. So we are not in love with change **for the sake of change**; because it's fun, new, or exciting. But we don't view change as a threat or our adversary either. The Scriptures are chock full of stories about God's unpredictable, unexpected, random movements in history and, more specifically, in the lives of his servants. The story in scripture that we most often see is God leading his people down a head-scratching path that is counter-intuitive and requires that his servants trust him with every step.
- E. Why? Because **God is perfect** and we are not. This means that we are the ones who face a lifetime of change and adjustments if we are to remain obedient to him. So if and when we arrive at a system or program or way of doing things that seems to bear the most fruit, we must hold lightly to that thing, lest it mutate from a gift of God to an idol that is opposed to God.
- F. As leaders, we **constantly evaluate** what we are and what we are doing, knowing that it is only God who gives life. And sometimes even our best ideas need to change because they can become clumsy and get in God's way. So when we

perceive even the slightest resistance to God, we leaders (often with the help of many of you) are forced begin a regimen of prayer, conversation with godly people, and a lot of reflection on our experiences to try and discern if God is gently nudging us to change...to adjust, to let go, to move on, or to overhaul.

- G. The kind of change we are going to be talking about today is **not dramatic**, nor is it a 180° change of direction. Simply said, we feel God is showing us that there may be a better way to shepherd our people and to train our people to be light and salt in the darkness of our increasingly secular, hedonistic, and anti-Christian world.

III. Text - Gospel, Community & Mission (3 pivots, 3 areas in which we're changing...)

A. Community - 1 Peter 1:22-23

"22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God..."

1. What is maturity? LOVE!
2. It is impossible to practice the faith alone.
3. We are bound to create environments in which people can practice and grow in abounding, enduring love for one another in the body of Christ.
4. From Missional Communities back to Small Groups:
 - a) We need safe access points;
 - b) Our current process doesn't respect the time it takes for some believers to emerge as disciple-makers (my 15-yr journey);
 - c) The term "Missional Communities" alienates more people than it attracts (already hard enough to sit in the living room of a stranger) - so the entry level is too high;
 - d) Some of our Small Group Facilitators are beginning to feel wearied by the expectation of cultivating environments that shepherd people and reach out to lost people (we must protect our leaders from burn-out);

- e) Our current process may be sending a legalistic message that MCs are the "only way" to evangelize and make disciples;
 - f) Missional Communities are not resonating with most of our members - the result is that shepherding has decayed and mission has not advanced;
5. Going back to Small Groups - but not chips & dip...
 6. Small Groups: A place where people can connect, be loved, learn to love, and simply enjoy one another...and have lots of parties.
 7. NOT unspiritual - have dinner together and enjoy one another -- to learn each other so we can love each other
 8. High invitation, low challenge

B. Gospel (Discipleship) - 1 Peter 2:4-5

"4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

1. High invitation, high challenge
2. Structure that:
 - a) Trains people to become self-feeders, breaking an unhealthy dependency on professional clergy and Christian media/resources;
 - b) Trains people to learn how to commune with God;
 - c) Trains people to discern and use their spiritual gifts;
 - d) Trains people to walk together on the path of godliness, learning to talk and confess with their hearts rather than their heads.
3. Holy Priesthood: We all learn to make spiritual offerings to God
4. We all learn to become fluent in the means of grace: Scriptures, prayer, the Lord's Supper, worship and singing, community.
5. DNA: Discipleship, Nurture, Action (not something that happens to you)
6. DNA Liturgy:
 - a) Very reproducible

- b) Can be facilitated by anyone
 - c) Form allows for the Spirit to fellowship and for the disciple to grow
7. Every member of a small group is invited to participate, but no one will be pressured. When you're ready...

C. Mission - 1 Peter 2:9-10

"9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

1. NT believers, made up of all races, come together in Christ to proclaim the excellencies of God with the goal of non-believing people repenting and joining them in God's mercy.
 2. We belong to God, so God gets to tell us what to do
 3. "What justifies our existence as a church?"
 4. Are we going to be a church that fights with so many other churches over one piece of the pie or are we going to be faithful to our core identity, which is God's chosen race that proclaims him to the world?
 5. What is our strategy to train our members to live this identity?
 6. "Think like Abraham."
 - a) Genesis 15
 - b) Instead of trying to change our church all at once, why not take a 5-10 year approach in which we gradually plant and nurture a missional DNA in our church - that will yield tremendous fruit over time?
7. Ron's Multiplying Communities
 - a) Low invitation, high challenge
 - b) 6-mo semesters in which only 2 teams of 10 will be accepted at a time
 - c) June 21st kick-off:
 - d) Will learn several competencies under the direct supervision of Ron S:

- (1) Learn an entry strategy to reach a community, your sphere of influence, or network of people.
- (2) Learn a gospel plan to engage those far from God in a non-confrontational manner.
- (3) Learn a discipleship plan to equip new believers, mobilize pre-existing believers, facilitate a gathering and multiply.
- (4) Learn how to nurture *healthy* multiplying communities.
- (5) Learn how to build and multiply leaders.
- e) We will instill Confidence, Competence and Conviction.
- f) No pressure whatsoever...when you're ready if you desire to do this.
- g) Ultimate Goal:
 - (1) "Think Like Abraham"
 - (2) Create a germ in our church's culture that, over a 5-10-year period, will become a permanent part of our church's DNA
 - (3) Graduates will be sent back into existing Small Groups or they will be able to start new Multiplying Communities and ultimately train other members to start Multiplying Communities themselves.

IV. Challenge

- A. Join a Small Group (bulletin insert): Reach out to that group facilitator today.
- B. Pray about participating in a DNA Group
- C. Pray about signing up for our first semester of Multiplying Communities
- D. Ask yourself: "If I belong to God as "his own possession," should I not seek to sincerely grow in gospel, community, and mission?"