

Developing Students to Live the Mission

Identity Matters

Consider the Story...

Consider Adam and Eve...

- ❖ "God knows you will *BE* like him"
- ❖ The serpent went right to their identity
- ❖ Adam and Eve sought after an identity apart from God
- ❖ The results are still being felt today

Consider Israel...

- ❖ They were God's chosen people, His family
- ❖ He set them apart for His purposes to the world
- ❖ They sought to find their identity outside of God over and over again
- ❖ And they wandered aimlessly in ongoing restlessness

Consider Jesus...

- ❖ He came as Son - "*This is my beloved Son*"
- ❖ He was sent as a Missionary - "*As the Father sent me...*"
- ❖ When tempted to step outside of the Father's will to find significance, security or power he did not give in (like our first parents and everyone after that) but submitted to the Father
- ❖ He made it possible for each of us to be restored into right relationship and right identity once again - we do not need to do anything to become something

Consider the Church...

- ❖ Every time the Church got off course, the correctives were Remember: 1) Who God Is; 2) What He Has Done For Us in Christ Jesus; 3) Who We Are as a result; and THEN 4) What we are to Do
- ❖ This comes out of Gospel: We do because of what He has done and who he has made us to be NOT so that we can become something through our doing
- ❖ Our *being* precedes our *doing* and His *doing* precedes our *being*
- ❖ He is the author and finisher of our faith and it is He who is at work in us both to will and to do (Philippians 2:12-13)

Why does this matter?

Identity Chasing...

The students we are leading are chasing after an identity - they desperately want significance, security and belonging - and they are being offered 100 other stories on how they can get that other than the Gospel. And none of them work!

Solution Seeking...

Unfortunately, many of us fall into the trap of trying to find the next big idea, solution or passing fade that will meet that deep identity search they are on - and it "works"...temporarily

Program Building...

So, we plan programs and events for students to attend, thinking that there is some kind of efficacious nature in the pulling together of a new set of well packaged religious goods and services...but students just move on to the better product...and they still are left wanting

Cult of Personality...

Or, we make sure we find or try to be the most charismatic, attractive leaders we can, hoping that students will just keep gathering around us vicariously finding their identity through us

The Mass Exodus...

Then, they graduate and leave...some go off to college others into "Big Church", but in most cases they just leave the life of the Church altogether.

Why do so many leave?

- ❖ They're still chasing an identity because they still haven't found one that lasts through all of life and in every context
- ❖ They haven't really experienced a gospel transformation of their life – they don't see themselves as Children of God, Sent Ones from God, Servants to God and Ongoing Learners of the Rabbi
- ❖ They were only *ATTENDING* (doing) the Church or the Youth Ministry and they found their identity connected to the group they were attending instead of Who They Are in Christ Jesus
- ❖ They do not see themselves As the Church

If we are going to develop students to live the mission, we will have to lead them to what transcends every context, culture, situation and time AND will never change through all of their lives. This is what every good missionary has to come to – they believe their gospel identity in Christ Jesus and are committed to live it out no matter what the culture around them is like.

We must call students to the Gospel and their Gospel identity because the missional life that continues past high school cannot be something imposed on them from the outside through guilt, shame, human inspiration, seeking after acceptance etc...this will never last. It must come from a work of God within that works itself out into all of life.

GOSPEL IDENTITIES

FAMILY

WHO WE ARE: WE ARE SONS

In Christ Jesus we are not only children of God, but Sons of God
(John 1:12; Romans 8:16; Galatians 3:26; 1 John 3:1)

1. We receive all the rights of Sonship in Jesus Christ
2. We don't earn these, they are given because we are co-heirs
3. This means we have significance, security and access to everything we need (power, provision, spiritual direction and certainty of our complete restoration)
4. Every student we lead needs to know they are loved and accepted not for what they do, but because of what Jesus Christ has done.
5. Consider all that is true of us as Sons of God...

HOW WE LIVE: BEAR GOD'S IMAGE

We have been made Sons of God in order to display God to the World
(Genesis 1:27; Ephesians 5:1)

1. We should love each other as family and in doing so become the gospel hermeneutic Jesus said we were to become (John 13:34-35)
 - ❖ We need to teach what the family of God is like
 - ❖ We must equip students to live out the *one anothers...*
2. We are also to love those around us like family so that they might experience the love of the Father and come to believe the gospel
 - ❖ We must teach students to see everyone in their path of life like a brother or sister (or more appropriate to student culture – a friend)
 - ❖ We need to equip students how to love others like friends – *“Jesus was a “friend of sinners of which I am the greatest”*
3. We care for this world (creation) because it is the home our Father has given us to care for (Creation Mandate)
 - ❖ We should teach the Creational Mandate to our students
 - ❖ We must lead them to care for this world like it was their *home...*

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MISSIONARIES

WHO WE ARE: WE ARE SENT ONES

Just as the Father sent the Son, the Son has sent us to be his Witnesses – his Ambassadors
(John 20:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

1. Most students are trying to find a purpose in life to justify their existence.
2. In Christ Jesus we are justified and now sent for His purposes
3. Every Son of God is also Sent by God to declare and demonstrate the Gospel
4. Every student needs to know and believe that they have been sent by God to where they live, work and go to school
5. Consider how that would change a student's perception of their world...

HOW WE LIVE: ALWAYS ON MISSION

God is at work through Christ's Body, the Church (includes students), to fulfill His Great Commission

1. We should approach every situation as an opportunity to display and declare the gospel.
 - ❖ We should teach students that every moment is a gospel moment.
 - ❖ We should also equip students to be prepared to give an answer for the hope they have in Christ Jesus
2. We must be mindful of the competing stories to THE STORY and with wisdom and care address the idolatry of our culture with the gospel
 - ❖ We should teach students the Story of God and how to identify the idolatries in the competing stories
 - ❖ We must equip students to exegete the culture and bring the gospel to bear on the barriers and the open doors (Contextualization of the Gospel)
3. We need to create a sense of expectancy and freedom for the beginning of new missionary ventures within our ministries
 - ❖ We should create a culture where students know that it is expected that they are regularly thinking creatively about how to begin new works or join existing works with a missionary mindset
 - ❖ We need to train students to engage their imaginations and take gospel initiative in the world

SERVANTS

WHO WE ARE: WE ARE SERVANTS OF THE KING OF KINGS

Jesus came as a servant, laying down his life for us so that we, who as his slaves now belong to him, could lay down our lives for others.

(John 13:1-17; Philippians 2:5-11; Galatians 1:10; Ephesians 6:5-8; 1 Peter 2:12, 16)

1. Everyone is serving something or someone hoping it will give them significance, security or belonging
2. Unless we see ourselves as slaves to Jesus, we are serving a task master that will beat us down endlessly and never set us free
3. Jesus came to set us free and the only way we walk in freedom is by living out our identity as servants of Christ
4. When we live as servants of Jesus Christ, we no longer need to approval of men and we no longer get stuck in cycles of selfishness and self-protection
5. Imagine if every student you lead believed they were servants of Christ and that they no longer needed to live for anything or anyone else in order to gain what they need...

HOW WE LIVE: EMBODYING THE GOSPEL THROUGH GOOD WORKS

One of the ways Jesus displays the grace and truth of the gospel is through the good works of His people

1. We must learn to do good works with gospel motivation and for gospel demonstration
 - ❖ We should teach our students that we do good works BECAUSE we have been saved (redeemed, justified, adopted, etc...), not so that we might be – it comes out of our heart of gratitude and thanksgiving, not in order to earn anything

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- ❖ We must also train them how to do good works in such a way that the gospel is on display – this requires knowing the gospel well and contextualizing it in actions
- 2. We must begin to develop the eyes to see where gospel good needs to be done and be prepared to bear the burdens of brokenness
 - ❖ We should teach our students how to walk in prayer and ask God to open their eyes to the gospel needs around them
 - ❖ We will also need to help our students see that what they have been given (resources, talents, gifts, time, etc...) is for the sake of gospel demonstration – not for their own sakes
- 3. We need to do good works together
 - ❖ Students need to learn to serve together so that they can both be supported well and be a picture of the unity of the body (Consider Ephesians 4:11–16)
 - ❖ We will probably need to assist them through modeling, supporting and at times organizing

LEARNERS

WHO WE ARE: WE ARE DISCIPLES OF THE RABBI JESUS

Jesus came as one who learned and he called us to humbly learn from Him through His Word, His Spirit and His Body, the Church

(Luke 2:52; Matthew 28:18–20; Ephesians 4:11–13; 2 Timothy 2:2)

1. We are all learners who are being shaped by someone or something
2. As God's people, we now look to Jesus as the one who teaches us about God, ourselves, the world and our purpose
3. This means we don't just expect someone to teach us – instead we take responsibility to learn ourselves through the resources Jesus has given us
4. We also take responsibility to lead others in learning and being equipped for ministry
5. What would it look like if every believing student in your Church not only took their own growth seriously, but also believed God had equipped them to teach others as well?

HOW WE LIVE: BEING EQUIPPED AND EQUIPPING OTHERS

The Body of Christ is built up into maturity and therefore effectively displaying the Gospel only when each part is growing up, doing its part and equipping the others.

1. We must call students to belong to a learning community that they engage in for the purpose of being equipped and equipping others
 - ❖ We must continue to work out of our calling to equip for works of ministry and make sure that our teaching and training leads out into mission not toward greater dependency on us
 - ❖ We need to teach “Tri–perspectively” – God Message...God Motivation...Gospel Methods
2. The movement of development must be the gospel to their hearts, then flow from their hearts to the hearts of others
 - ❖ We must start with heart transformation leading to skill development with students
 - ❖ We also need to teach them how to go to the “heart of the matter” with their peers – this gets caught more than it gets taught
3. Remember, we are training them to leave our ministries and continue the work of the gospel elsewhere (another place, ministry, church, country, etc...) but no matter where they go, they ARE THE CHURCH
 - ❖ Instill in your students that they are called to a life–long commitment to gospel ministry wherever they go (school, future job, a new church) and treat them like they will be part of another ministry or even the core group of a church plant
 - ❖ Train students for ongoing multiplication in means that are transferable to any context (If you only equip them to serve in the programs you have, you will not have prepared them for life–long ministry)