

One and the Same: Mission
This is hard.

For the past several weeks, I've been reading, thinking, examining, questioning, interviewing...gathering as much information as I can to try and figure out what I can possibly bring to the conversation about Mission. And, I'm at a loss. I don't really know how to bring us to a comfortable, easy-to-understand, wrapped-up-in-a-nice-25-minute-conclusion about what God's Mission for His people is.

One and the Same. To be honest, I don't like that phrase. I like differences. (Slide 1) I have an older brother, and I hated when people tried to compare us. I have a cousin who is almost exactly my same age. We have the same hair color, our mothers are sisters....but we are NOT one and the same. I assure you.

I love unique. I like individuality. I like discovering differences. In my former life as a teacher, I would try to discover each student's learning style. Now, in my work with leaders I focus a lot of my time and attention on reminding people that we are all different and that's ok. That they shouldn't expect each of their staff members to look and think and act just like they do.

One of my favorite things about Math, is that there is usually more than one way to solve a problem. I can get the same (right) answer and using a completely different approach. To me, that is beautiful...to others it is infuriating.

And so, I was asked to talk about One and the Same. What we have in common.

Luckily, I am blessed to be able to talk about Mission. (slide 2) Mission is air. Mission is soil. Mission is water. Mission is light. It's washing away all of our differences to see what we have in common. What we have at our core.

Mission is the answer to the question that we all ask—why?

At an organizational level I'm super energized by this question. I love working with teams/groups/companies to wrestle through the question of "Why do we exist?" I've read all the books, been to all the conferences, and facilitated my share of mission discovery exercises.

There's a famous quote that says, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." (slide 3) In other words, no matter how great the plans, the design, the construct, people's norms and behaviors will consume it unless you pay attention to it. If you are looking for real and radical transformation, mission needs to have a link to back a person. To their identity. You need to have people, one person at a time, fully bought into the core mission, clear about his or her role in that mission, and ready to do whatever it takes to see it through.

There must be a clear link between the universal mission and the individual application.

But when it comes to my personal mission, I can sometimes struggle. What is my answer? Why do I exist? What was I created to do? And beyond that, how does my identity impact my purpose? Is mission really a cookie-cutter-one-size-fits-all deal? Is there common ground, or is it all about being different?

What is the relationship between mission and identity? (slide 4) Are we first given a mission and then discover our identity? Or am I given an identity that shapes my mission? Which one is the constant? and which one is the variable?

Let's start with what some say is the definitive mission given to the Church by Jesus Himself.

The Great Commission. (slide 5) *Matt 28:18—I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. 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.*

What does Jesus say that our purpose is? Upon first reading I thought it boiled down to the "action" words of Go, Make, Baptize, and Teach. Luckily I'm married to a Biblical Language scholar and he was able to open my eyes to a few things. The heart of the passage is in the words "make disciples." In fact, it really should say, "as you go..." and "as you baptize..." and "as you teach..." MAKE DISCIPLES.

Really, Jesus was describing in one statement exactly what He had been a living example of during his ministry years. He went, he taught, he made disciples. He wanted them to emulate Him. He wanted them to reveal to the world what had been revealed to them. He wanted them to immerse the world in the truth about Him, His Father, and the Holy Spirit. That was their mission. And that is our mission today. He even combined it with strategy. Make disciples through going, baptizing, and teaching. Simple, yes?

It is our "one and the same mission." These are the instructions that he gave to everyone. Three of the gospels have this same story using slightly different language, and in Luke's version, there are women present. This was not a mission that the 11 were going to complete on their own. The idea was that as they made disciples, those disciples in turn would become disciple-makers themselves. It's the perfect strategy. This way the good news would travel exponentially.

It was the perfect plan. But how would it come to life? How would the disciples even begin (let alone accomplish) this global mission that they had been called to? We find the answer a few days later. Acts 1 tells us that a group of 120 people were gathered, including the 11 disciples "*along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus*"

Pentecost. (slide 6) *Acts 2:3-4—Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.*

This is the moment where strategy met individuality. Literally and figuratively. Each person present was anointed by a tongue of fire, each one began speaking in other languages, Jesus' mission for the church became a personal identity. They each knew their role and fulfilled their part of the mission. And by being a collective of fully engaged mission-fulfillers, they did far more than any one of them could do alone.

That's the power when identity and strategy go hand-in-hand. No one was saying, "That's someone else's job." Or "Whew, glad I'm off the hook." Or, "You're not allowed to participate." Everyone, including the women, received an individual fire-tongue and went out preaching in the language they were given. They were uniquely equipped to fulfill their unique role in the unified mission. Identity within mission. Individuality within unity.

The last few weeks, Andy has been exploring the four big things that are One and the Same across the gender divide (slide 7). He readily and repeatedly has acknowledged that the genders are very different, however in sin, in our need of a savior, and in our calling, we stand on common ground. Likewise, we have one mission: to make disciples.

Has that always been our mission?

Creation. *Gen. 1:26—Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea; the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals. So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.*

Even before the sin problem entered the world, humans were created to be in relation with God and each other and to showcase the character of God to the world and beyond. That is true identity. How we express that character is distinctly male and female

So, why was I created? To reflect the image of God. Not just as a person, but as female. God decided not to just pile all of his likeness into one person or one gender, because that would not be a true representation of our Relational God. He is one-in-three, so he made us and divided his traits across two distinctly different persons: man and woman.

What does that mean for us? That the things that make me uniquely female were intentionally given to me by my Creator. It's not a mistake. It's not a flaw. It's who I am because I'm a reflection of who He is.

To me, it's always been easy to see the correlation between the masculine heart and the heart of God. (slide 8) They are both brave, fearless, strong, and loyal. Warriors ready to defend what is theirs. And I never thought much of it. I have really amazing men in my life who have shown me this side of God and I am so grateful for that.

But what about the rest of God's image? The feminine side? What does that look like? And what does it mean for me in my search for identity and purpose? God wanted to reveal something about Himself, so he gave us Eve.

Genesis 2:18—And the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him." (Slide 9)

That word "help" (or as some translations say "helper") is not quite powerful enough for the original meaning. In fact, the original word, Ezer, is used 21 times in the Bible and whenever it is not talking about Eve, it is referring to God.

Deut. 33:26—There is no one like the God of Israel. He rides across the heavens to help you

Ps. 20:1-2—In times of trouble, may the Lord answer your cry... May he send you help

Ps. 121:1-2—I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!

Ps. 115:9--O Israel, trust the Lord! He is your helper and your shield.

In most of the cases when this word is used, God is the lifesaver. He's essential. That's how He sees Eve. As essential. Women, and the role that we play is essential. We help to complete the picture of God. Without us, the image is unfinished.

In the Great Commission we are called to make disciples, to reveal the truth about God to a broken and needy world. How can we reveal God's heart? We must know Him...

God wants to be chosen. "Come to me and you will find rest" "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with ALL YOUR HEART," His desire is that we will chose Him, and not be weary, chose Him and rest. He refuses to force us to be with Him, instead he waits in great anticipation of the choice that we will make. That same desire is planted firmly in my heart as a women. This desire starts long before I was interested in marriage or guys. When I was a little girl, I had a friend named Anthony that was adopted. I was fascinated with the idea that someone picked him. Someone could have chosen any little boy or girl, but they picked HIM! It's easy to want to deny or hide this part of my heart, but when I realize that it was placed there to show the world a more complete picture of God, I embrace the vulnerability.

God longs for connection. "When you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you and pray to your Father secretly." Matt. 6:6 Jesus instructed us to interact with Him, not boastfully, but quietly, intimately. "I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you and I will care for you. I will carry you along and care for you." Isa 46:4. I love talking to people. Hearing stories, asking questions, really connecting. There is nothing more affirming than Greg telling me about his day, asking about mine, and listening to how I'm feeling. Recently I've been able to string together elementary conversations with Gideon and my heart takes flight every time. One-on-one we long to connect with those we love.

God wants to fill the world with beauty. Creation. A lily. A sunset. All of nature. Women. God has filled our life with beauty. Some argue that nature's beauty has no purpose. But anyone who has sat on a beach, or on a mountain side, or in a forest knows that beauty invites, informs, comforts and nourishes the soul. Women, too, want to bring beauty to the world. "A woman's touch." Whether it is picking out the artwork and décor for a home, a new dress for the special occasion, fixing her hair just right, or delivering flowers to a loved friend. Women desperately want to fill the world with beauty.

I could preach a whole sermon on how Satan has used these and other God-given desires to hurt, cripple, confuse and distort, but for now we are going to focus on how they can, when founded upon an identity in Christ, help fulfill our mission given by Jesus.

Imagine what our families, church, community, and world could be like if we all chose to live life wholeheartedly and unashamed. (slide 10) Not hiding from who God made when he created us. Not worried about how we might fall short or how we might be stepped on. But instead united in our mission and unique in our expression.

TAKE *away* →

5.23.15

1. What do you think the mission of the Christian Church is or should be?
2. How would you describe the relationship between the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18 and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:3-4?
3. How well have you translated that mission into your everyday life?
4. What does it mean to be made in the image of God? For men? For women?
5. What can people learn about God by how you live? By what you say?

Service archives are available at www.hospitalchurch.org

Follow us on Twitter



@FloridaHC

TAKE *away* →

5.23.15

1. What do you think the mission of the Christian Church is or should be?
2. How would you describe the relationship between the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18 and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:3-4?
3. How well have you translated that mission into your everyday life?
4. What does it mean to be made in the image of God? For men? For women?
5. What can people learn about God by how you live? By what you say?

Service archives are available at www.hospitalchurch.org

Follow us on Twitter



@FloridaHC