

Following Jesus Means Growing as a Leader

5/28/17

Matthew 4:19

We all have our own stories of how and why we showed up at Foothills. Even if this is your first Sunday you have a story of how you got here this morning. And your presence in this church is not an accident. You may think it is, but it is not.

My journey with Foothills began 6 years ago. I was working in another church where I had been for 14 years, and Jesus clearly called my wife and I to move out to Molalla and become part of the kingdom work here.

For us, the decision was 100% about following Jesus. As a couple we have never had a stronger call on our lives, where we knew Jesus wanted us to do this together than we had at that moment. So we packed up our lives and moved out here.

What happened next was a huge shock to us. Our lives started to unravel. The transition out here was incredibly difficult for us. Very close family members began dying, we lost many of our friends, and it was taking a long time to make new ones. Things were hard.

I remember saying, and thinking this statement often . . . maybe you have found yourself asking the same thing.

“Why is following Jesus so hard?!”

There is this perception out there that when you choose to follow Jesus, your life starts coming together. You are going to live a happier easier life. Doesn't that sound great?

My reality has been the bigger decisions I make to follow Jesus sometimes the harder life seemed to get. I am not saying it hasn't been full and fulfilling, but it has been hard.

So I found myself asking “Why is following Jesus so hard?!”

Am I the only one, or have any of you asked that question before?

This morning I have an answer from the Bible to that question. And it has to do with one powerful word . . . purpose.

We were created for purpose, and Jesus has a purpose for our life! And sometimes the things that I think I want for my life are not the same as what Jesus wants for my life.

- **Jesus purpose for me is not to make my life easier.**

I wish it was. Having an easy life sounds nice.

- **Jesus purpose for me is not to make my life more comfortable.**

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- **Jesus purpose for me does not revolve around financial security.**

And this is the rub at a foundational level, the things I think I want for myself, are not always the best thing for me. The things I think I want don't lead to the most fulfilling life. And it is not that Jesus doesn't love us, he does, *but he has much more important things for our lives that what can be produced from easy comfortable lives.*

Inspiring lives are not forged in the fires of ease and comfort.

Inspiring lives are forged in the fires of living faithfully through the worst that life has to throw at you.

Transition

Jesus was clear about what his purpose is! So what is it? God's goal for all of us is to grow us into leaders in the kingdom of God.

1. God's goal is to grow you into a leader in the kingdom of God.

Matthew 4:19

¹⁹ Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!"

When Jesus called his disciples he was very clear about his purpose.

He didn't say follow me, and I will make your life easy.

Or follow me, and I will make your life comfortable.

Or follow me, I have some killer teaching you are going to want to incorporate into your life!!!

No . . . Follow me and I am going to show you how to fish for people.

I know that the term leader might scare some of us, or that we may not think of ourselves or our personality as a leader, but John Maxwell is one of the leading people in the world to teach on leadership and he says this about leadership.

"Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another."

– **John C. Maxwell**

This is the heart and soul of what leadership is. Not titles, not position. It is influencing others. My life influencing other lives.

Now Jesus uses fishing for people to talk to a bunch of fisherman. But let me translate . . . Jesus call was,

"follow me, and I am going to use you to transform not only a generation, but the world."

When Jesus called his disciples his primary call was to a life of leadership.

We don't only see this when he calls his disciples, but also at the end of his ministry when he leaves them.

Matthew 28:19-20

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"¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations,¹⁹ baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ 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."

This verse is what has rooted the church and Jesus followers in it's mission for 2000 years.

Doesn't that sound like leadership?

Why is following Jesus so hard?

Because everything that Jesus is doing in your life has purpose behind it. And the purpose is to transform you into a powerful influencer in the kingdom of God.

Everything that Jesus is doing in your life has purpose behind it. And Jesus' purpose is to transform you into a powerful influencer in the kingdom of God.

And the way we become powerful leaders in the kingdom of God is not by living an easy comfortable life. Living an easy comfortable life does not turn you into a powerful leader in the kingdom of God. I wish it did, but it doesn't.

So here we go: If you want an easy comfortable life. You probably better think twice about following Jesus, and you might want to avoid Foothills all together. This place has a habit of ruining comfortable easy lives, because Jesus calls us into something far better: A life of transformation.

How did Jesus teach his disciples how to grow as a leader in the kingdom of God?

2) Jesus taught values based leadership.

Throughout Jesus time on earth, He was teaching his disciples values. And those values became the foundation by which his disciples led.

The values of the kingdom of God are the things that create the culture of the kingdom of God.

Last week during announcements Brian mentioned the Global Leadership summit that our church is hosting in August.

If you haven't signed up for it yet, I would encourage you to do that.

At the conference there was a speaker Patrick Lencioni (Len-cho-ni), who wrote a book called the Ideal Team Player. I don't normally borrow so much of a sermon from other people's works. But this book has been so influential in my development of a leader, and in the development of our culture here at Foothills, that I am going to borrow these 3 words from him. But the difference is we are going to talk about these

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three words through the perspective of Jesus' teaching and training his disciples to become leaders in the kingdom.

Before I give you the 3 values I want to say a couple things about them.

- Your influence as a person is going to be connected to these three values. The more you live these things out, the more influence you will have in all aspects of your life.
- Just about every problem I have encountered in working with other people, can be traced back to a deficiency in one of these 3 areas either in myself or another person.
- We are meant to always be growing in these values. They are not a checklist of you have them or don't have them.
- Humble

Humility was a big theme throughout Jesus teaching. but I want to illustrate this with the passage the night before Jesus died on the cross.

They were gathering for a meal, and Jesus took the role of a servant. In that culture people walked on dusty roads everywhere in sandals and when you came into a house a servant would wash people's feet. Jesus humbled himself, not only by coming to earth, but he did things like this all the time. He took the role of a servant and washed his disciples feet.

Of course peter protested (I can relate to Peter, as he was prone to pride, and kind of intense):

John 13:8; 12-15

⁸ "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

¹² After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³ You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."

Jesus was teaching humility and what it is like to serve others. Some of the strongest language in the bible is against pride.

Humility is a very attractive quality, but it is not celebrated in our culture. But to grow as a leader in the kingdom of God part of Jesus purpose for your life is to help you grow in humility. And as one who has had to grow in that it can be a painful journey.

The easiest violation of humility to spot is arrogance but true humility is not just a lack of arrogance. But on the flip side, our insecurities can also be a violation of humility.

C.S. Lewis said, "Humility isn't thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less."

Part of the problem with insecurities is that with insecurities we are still very self-focus.

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Your ability to serve on a team, your ability to lead and influence others will skyrocket as you start focusing on the people you are serving rather than yourself. (testimony of growing as a worship leader and speaker?)

- Hungry

The second value is Hungry. The value of hunger has to do with how much internal drive a person has for what they are pursuing.

It can be applied to anything. How much hunger you have for your work, family, etc.

But in this case we are going to apply it to following Jesus and the kingdom of God.

Matthew 16:24-26

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. 25 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 26 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?"

I know some of you might be thinking, OK, that sounds very intense, but what does that mean for me. How do I grow in hunger for following Jesus?

Growing in hunger is connected to passion. Let's face it, not all of us are passionate about the same things.

When one person starts talking numbers they light up . . . and other people would rather have a root canal. When other people talk about running they light up, and other people want to go take a nap.

God has created us all different. You have been uniquely created to become a passionate leader in the kingdom of God who can change the world. That is in you. God put that there.

But if you don't discover your passion, the way God created you, you are never going to find the internal hunger to become the leader in the kingdom that Jesus is trying to form you into.

This is actually the reason I chose to preach on this today. I don't get that many weeks to preach a year, so I was asking myself, what am I most passionate about right now. Because I want to preach to my passion: And the answer is this. I am passionate about growing as a leader, and about how these concepts have dramatically shaped my leadership.

One of the ways to find your passion is what is currently breaking your heart in the world? What things are not the way they should be? We can pray the prayer that God would break your heart with the things that breaks his heart.

One of the stories from the resource center, there was a gal who was receiving food, and she was nervous about actually eating the food, because she doesn't eat every day, so she won't run out of food. And we assured her we were not going anywhere. Is hungry people, hungry kids, in our community something that

creates a passion in you that this is not OK. Then do something the resource center needs your help. Sign up to help them.

This world is going to start changing when we cultivate this hunger in ourselves to follow Jesus no matter what. To let our hearts be broken, to experience pain, and to let that fuel the fires of transformation in our souls to change this world.

You want to influence other people? Become a hungry person. Hungry people do not have to be told what to do, they don't have to be told to grow, or learn, they have this internal motivation to throw themselves into whatever they are doing with their whole self.

Hunger is attractive. You can see why people would follow hungry people. Easy, comfortable, lazy, lives do not inspire or influence anyone.

- People Smart

The term people smart does not refer to how smart people are. But rather people with high people smarts will know how a group of people, or a person will respond to something that is said or something that is done.

Some people don't have an awareness of how they are coming across to others. And some people have a high degree of understanding. People with high degrees of understanding have high people smarts.

Now why does this matter with what Jesus taught?

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?"

³⁷ Jesus replied, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind."³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself."⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Everything comes back to the way we love God and the way we love each other.

The higher awareness you have about how a person receives love, or what you might say could come across as unloving, the higher you have the ability to love the person.

Ultimately loving God and loving people is what it is all about. So we all want to gain an awareness of how to do this better.

This world will be transformed with love. If you want to follow Jesus, you want to be a person who can influence others. The more extravagantly you love people, the more influence you will have with people.

Humble, Hungry, People Smart

Conclusion

I could say so much more. But let me end with this thought.

Jesus created you to have a destiny in the Kingdom of God. It is not an accident that you are in this time, in this place, in this church. You are here because Jesus appointed you to be here, and there is a calling on your life.

Following Jesus means embracing that calling, and following Jesus will mean that he wants to grow you as a key influencer/leader in the kingdom of God.

But in order to influence people we all must grow in the kingdom values that Jesus taught. We must possess these values to an inspiring level that people want to follow us. Or, you must be very authentic in your growth of these things . . . “I am not where I want to be, but I am chasing it.”

Prayer

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