

PAR

TNER

SHIP

PARTNERSHIP

I am so glad that you are open to considering becoming a Partner at SunRidge! The PARTNERSHIP WORKBOOK will be our best way to explain to you why we exist as a church which is to: Lead People to Become Passionately Committed Followers of Jesus. To fulfill this we desire the GOSPEL to be everything to us, and for the GOSPEL to shape everything that we are about as a church.

We believe that the church is God's plan for spreading the GOSPEL. Jesus did not say that he would build a publishing company, a worship band or a denomination...He said he would build his church. (Matthew 16:18). Jesus is so closely identified with the church that he said Saul was persecuting Him when he was persecuting the church. If Jesus so closely identified with the church, then we should too.

The church is much more than a church service. The local church is a community of people following Jesus who GATHER regularly for preaching, worship, observing the sacraments of baptism and communion, and SCATTER to fulfill the great commission.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS AND VALUE OF PARTNERSHIP

1. The dominant metaphor for the church throughout the New Testament is a body. 1 Cor 12:12-19 paints this important picture of the church. With Jesus as the head, every Christian is a part of the body of Christ. Each part is important; each part has a function; this is why we believe in partnership.
2. 1 John 3:23, Romans 12:10 teach us that Christians are called to love each other. In fact, the Bible says that the world will know that we are Christians by the love that we have for each other.
3. Rom12:15, Eph4:2, Heb3:13, James5:16, 1Pet4:9-10 all describe the kind of relationships that Christians are to have with each other. While faith is personal, it was never meant to be private. Christians need community with other believers.
4. Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Thes 5:12-13 teach Christians are to obey and respect their pastors and spiritual leaders. It would not be practical to obey EVERY spiritual leader, however, the Bible is clear that we should obey and respect OUR spiritual leaders and pastors. This presupposes some sort of inclusion in a local church.
5. By partnering with a local church, we show that we want to join with them in Leading People to Become Passionately Committed Followers of Jesus. We show that we want to Love Jesus, Love People, and Live Mission. Partnership is a visible commitment.

PARTNERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

At the basic level, partnership is a commitment to a local church, and part of a much larger commitment to Jesus.

1. **There's a commitment to God.** You're affirming that you are indeed a Christian who desires to follow Jesus, and you've been baptized to publicly show your allegiance to Him.
2. **You're committed to the mission of SunRidge Church.** You know our mission statement and you are playing an active part in Leading People to Become Passionately Committed Followers of Jesus. This means you're serving somewhere and you're financially supporting the church.
3. **You are committed to growing in your faith.** No matter how long you've been a Christian, there are still steps you can take to become more like Christ. As a partner, you're acknowledging that you're taking an active role in the discipleship process – either through participation on a Serving Team, participation in a Small Group, and by personal, spiritual disciplines.

PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

1. ASK for a PARTNERSHIP WORKBOOK at Connect Centre.
2. BEGIN reading through PARTNERSHIP WORKBOOK. Classes will regularly be offered. CONTACT your Small Group leader or Serving Team leader for Partnership Interview.

PARTNERSHIP WORKBOOK

Session 1: The Gospel

Session 2: Love Jesus

Session 3: Love People

Session 4: Live Mission 30 Partnership Covenant

-PAR
TNER
SHIP

SESSION ONE
THE GOSPEL

SESSION ONE – THE GOSPEL

“Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.” – C.S. Lewis

The definition of the word gospel is “good news.” It is a simple word for something big. In fact, the Gospel that Jesus talked about was so big that he had to give people many, many different (and sometimes confusing) teachings and practical examples. His Gospel was about a new Kingdom that would change everything about a person, their community, and their world.

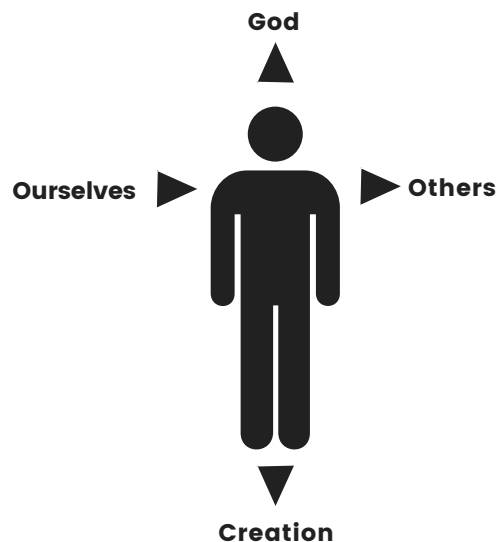
We’ve seen a recurring theme over and over again during the past few years. Even among Christians, our conversations range from politics to the economy, to parenting, to marriage and careers. Yet, one painful reality is usually clear: the Gospel has not touched down on planet Earth for many Christians. When and where the Gospel lost its place in the everyday life of believers is a mystery, but there is no doubt that it is not informing most of our basic life issues. We often end up shrinking the concept of the Gospel down to a set of beliefs or doctrines that have no seemingly practical effect on our daily lives. At the same time, we neglect to live out the greater story. Imagine what could change if the Good News of Jesus was allowed to shape and inform all the areas of our lives.

“WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?”

At its core the Gospel is a story. It’s the story of God’s continued faithfulness to His people despite their rebellion, and how He restores and redeems all things to the way they were designed to be. In essence the Gospel traces the theme of God’s grace throughout all of human history and shows us where our lives fit within that theme. The primary sections of this story are the following:

1. Creation

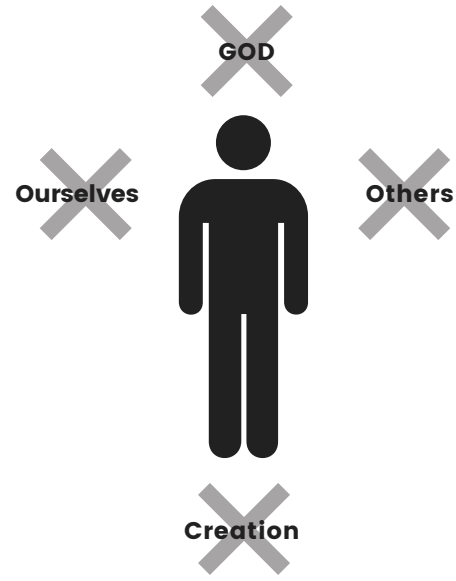
God decided in eternity past to begin creating the world with the intent to reveal His glory (Ps. 19:1). Every piece and part of creation was designed to unveil God’s fame. God then designed people to be His image bearers (Gen. 1:26-28), and gave them the special privilege of a relationship with Him that no other aspect of creation could have. Adam and Eve could know God intimately, perfectly, beautifully. Human beings have essentially FOUR planes of relationship. Four different expressions of relating (God, others, creation, ourselves.) At the time of creation, all of these relationships existed exactly the way they were supposed to. Adam and Eve had intimacy with God, they recognized their identity as His children, they had perfect relationships with each other, and were the stewards of Creation. This was exactly the way that God designed it to be.



2. Fall

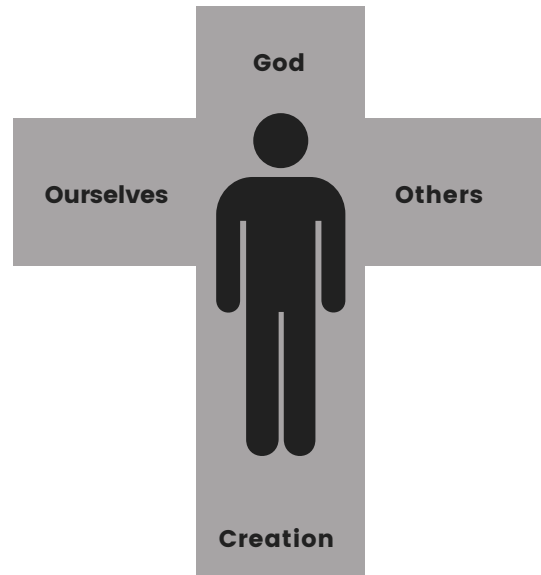
Beginning with Adam, mankind veered off of God's designed course (Gen. 3) and chose the path of rebellion, sin, and death. By attempting to place themselves in equal standing to God, Adam and Eve actually broke the perfect order that God created. The 4 planes of relationship were shattered. Our perfect love and surrender to God was replaced with a thirst for power and control. Our relationships with others have become plagued with deceit, selfishness, murder and manipulation. Our relationship with creation has seen the introduction of decay and disease, and our relationships with ourselves often come with damaged self esteem, anxiety, or even prideful arrogance.

EVERYTHING that is wrong with the world is wrong BECAUSE OF SIN...and therefore the only way to fix what is wrong...is to fix sin.



3. Redemption

Jesus, God in flesh, came to do what people are completely unable to do. Jesus was able to fix the problem of sin. Only through the death and resurrection of Jesus are the redemption of people and the restoration of creation made possible. Through the payment Jesus made for the sins of all the world, He actually RESTORED the broken relationships that had been destroyed since the fall. For the first time since the garden, it was actually possible for men and women to be restored to right relationship with God. Because of the Gospel, we are now actually able to once again live in harmony with other people, with ourselves and with creation. Because Jesus brings perfection back into the equation.



Eventually what we come to understand through the Gospel is that Jesus is the crux of human history. Everything before his time on earth was pointing towards him, and everything that has happened since his death has been looking back towards him. Partnership is about understanding the Gospel, allowing it to capture our hearts, and living out the implications of it in our lives. Everything SunRidge is about is rooted in the Gospel narrative, and our desire is to bring a Gospel intentionality to all of our relationships. The Bible teaches that Jesus himself is the fulfillment of all God's promises to His people. Read this story of Jesus quoting Isaiah 61 in a synagogue in Nazareth:

Luke 4:16-21 Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to

proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today the scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

In the words and actions of Jesus, we see him bringing fulfillment to God's promise of redemption and hope. Inasmuch as the Gospel is a story of God's redemptive work – the Gospel is actually also a PERSON – Jesus IS the Good News, He IS the Gospel.

- 1. How do you think the people in the synagogue responded to Jesus' words?**
- 2. What did the Good News mean to them?**
- 3. What does it mean for a modern reader?**
- 4. What aspects of the Gospel mean the most to you at this point?**

GOSPEL IMPLICATIONS

Just understanding the Gospel STORY is not enough, we must also understand how the Gospel PERSON totally changes the way we approach life. The reality is that if the Gospel is true then it is also RADICALLY life changing! So what are the implications of the Gospel for the Christ follower today?

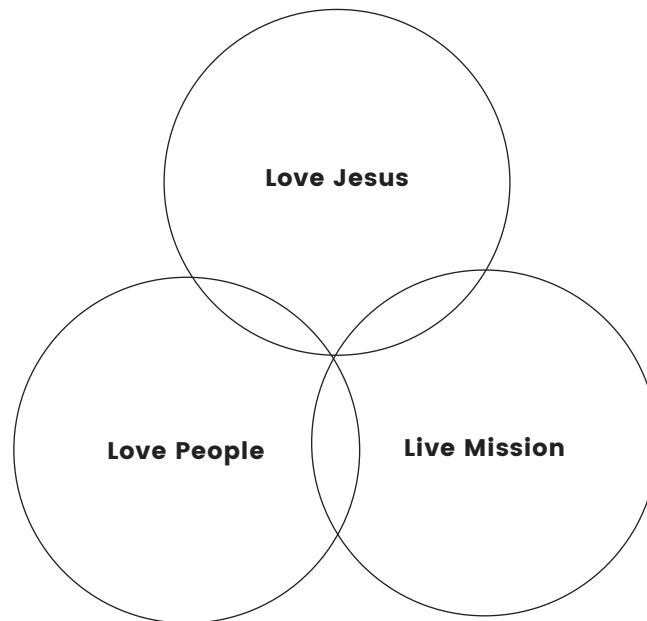
- 1. You and I are NOT the main Characters**—If the Gospel is a story, then it is a story about God! The truth is that the entire history of the world is a story about God himself, and while you and I play a role in that story, we do not play the MAIN role. This is important to understand because when we do, we begin to recognize that our lives are in fact, not about us. Our dreams, our goals, our plans are NOT the ultimate purpose and in fact our entire purpose on this earth is to live in such a way that we point to and Glorify the main character of the story – Jesus Christ.
- 2. We have nothing without Jesus** – Hopefully by this point you are recognizing the reality that one of the most substantial implications of the Gospel is that without Jesus we would have NOTHING. We would be trapped in a horrible cycle of sin and pain that would ultimately lead to our eternal spiritual death. We would have no ability to relate to God, we would be bound to try to adhere to a perfect law that we could never attain and we would live and die as sinful failures.
- 3. We have everything because of Jesus** – While we would have nothing without him, we must not forget that we have EVERYTHING because of him. Jesus gives us freedom and purpose and power and identity. Jesus restores us to the sonship and daughtership of God. Much like the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32) God sees us in our despair and brokenness, and runs to us with the life giving truth of grace. We were lost, but now we are found. We were dead (Eph. 2:5) and now we are alive! This truth should make us EXTREMELY THANKFUL, and it is from this place of thankfulness – driven by the realization of the Gospel – that we live lives of worship and service to Jesus.

GOSPEL CHURCH

Some of the last words that Jesus spoke to his disciples before ascending to heaven are recorded in Matt. 28:19-20: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

A Gospel Church takes these words of Jesus very seriously. Our purpose is to make disciples of all people. A disciple is someone who has had the Gospel revealed to them by God, and has decided to follow Jesus - allowing the Gospel to transform more and more of their hearts. As this happens, **there should be a tangible shift in the way that this person lives their life**, and as far as we can understand scripture - that shift should happen in three primary “Kingdom Circles”:

1. Their love for Jesus,
2. their love for people,
3. and a life lived on mission.



The **Love Jesus** circle represents those things (attitudes, beliefs and actions) that build our **relationship** with God. Pursuing a personal relationship with Jesus, as the gospel describes, is the true essence of our faith and essential in life transformation. Through a **devotional life**, we experience Him through our celebration, laughter, worship, joy and pain.

The **Love People** circle is about God’s redemptive work in **uniting** diverse people together in Christ. The call of community isn’t about finding people just like us, or excluding those who aren’t. It’s most definitely not just about Christians finding other Christian friends. Community, in the scriptural sense, is the result of people committing to love and serve each other and the world.

Finally, the **Live Mission** circle is God’s invitation to every Christ follower to **participate in his redemptive work in all aspects of life**. James calls this “pure religion” in the sense that mission reflects God’s simple call to make the world, and people’s lives, better. Living on mission helps us to realize that it’s not all about us.

“Whenever a group of people work together to create a rhythm or balance among Loving Jesus, Loving People, and Living Mission, you will always find the Kingdom.” – Hugh Halter. To be honest, most of us look at the three circles of Kingdom life without much argument. But integrating them

into our lives is so much easier said than done and is often not seen in the lives of those who claim to follow Jesus. The reason for this is that there are real barriers to connecting these three circles within our own lives. As Galatians 5:17 illustrates for us

“The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

So if you really want to know why people just go to church without Loving Jesus, Loving People, or Living Mission, you don't need to look far. It's not that the pace of the world is too fast or the forces of darkness are too great. It's that we're fighting against the sin that has gripped us since the fall. This is yet another reason why we are so dependent on the Gospel to become real to us. The greater degree to which we understand and believe the Gospel, the more consistent we will become at Loving Jesus, Loving People and Living Mission. As the Gospel becomes more real to us...we become disciples.

→ **Considering the 3 circles, place an X on the line where you see yourself in each area.**

NOTE: This is not about passing or failing, but honestly recognizing where our sin has affected our pursuit of Christ and His plans.

LOVE JESUS

NOT SO GOOD

PRETTY GOOD

The call to Love Jesus is: Pursuing a **personal relationship with Jesus** through a **devotional life**, which is the true essence of our faith and essential in life transformation.

This will include intentional, personal time in scripture, openness to God, silence and attentive prayer, worship, and willingness to be changed. This is an area of learning, listening and letting go.

LOVE PEOPLE

NOT SO GOOD

PRETTY GOOD

The call to Love People is: To know and to be known, to need and to be needed, recognizing that God has designed us to live in a **deep relationship** with others.

This is far more than just going to church on Sunday. A commitment to community might change the way you think about your Christian friends. Instead of working to impress them with your spirituality, you might find yourself entrusting them with your struggles. Vulnerability with your own story and not judging others' stories are a hallmark of loving people AND letting people love you. Which might lead to better relationships. Which might lead to you going on mission together. Which is the whole point.

LIVE MISSION

NOT SO GOOD

PRETTY GOOD

The call to Live Mission is: To reach out to people living out and lifting up the Gospel, by using our **time, treasure and talents** even when inconvenient.

We are challenged by Jesus as he describes his own mission in very practical, concrete terms as he called people to repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15), which was made possible only through his death and resurrection. Jesus seems to be also interested in helping others with what concerns them now. His list of priorities seems surprisingly devoid of lofty spiritual concepts. Rather, by announcing himself as the fulfillment of all the promises of Isaiah 61, **He steps directly into the “real world” of pain, disappointment, and brokenness.** Jesus declares I AM THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING THAT IS WRONG IN THIS WORLD...and you and I are called to do the same. Disciples of Jesus step into the “real world” of the people around us – and through our actions and our love demonstrate...that Jesus is the answer to everything that is wrong.

This will mean big changes. It will change how we relate to the ‘seeker’ ‘starter’ or ‘returner’ in our own lives. It will change how we think about our neighbourhoods and cities. It will change our own hearts. When we begin to understand the Gospel that Jesus was talking about we start seeing it all around us. It shows up in unexpected places, acted out by unexpected people. Here’s a thought for you; the mission of Jesus was to bring the Good News for the here and now, not just for the eternal future.

Consider the relationships you have today - Co-workers, family, friends, really anyone that you have a relationship with. Now with these people in mind ask yourself this critical question – As the GOOD NEWS of Jesus has changed your life then HOW are we to reflect this GOOD NEWS to those around us? “What does GOOD NEWS look like for him/her?” What does the Gospel of love and grace and compassion look like for a co-worker going through a divorce? Or a friend who declared bankruptcy? Or a neighbour who doesn’t go to Church because of some extreme judgment she received in her childhood? This is the question Jesus asked and answered as he conducted his life and ministry.

For the woman at the well (Jn. 4) GOOD NEWS was knowing that she didn’t have to find her ultimate meaning and value in men anymore. Ultimate meaning could only be found in Jesus. For the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8) GOOD NEWS was knowing that even before Jesus, she was not condemned but forgiven, and she could live a life free from sin! For Zacchaeus (Lk. 19) GOOD NEWS was having a friend to eat at his house, which provoked such a response, that Jesus said ‘Salvation has just happened in this house’. The stories go on and on but the consistent factor in each story is that **Jesus brought GOOD NEWS into their world, instead of focusing on some sort of conversion or moral reform.**

So at SunRidge our goal is really to see people become disciples of Jesus Christ, and we really believe that this process starts and stops with the Gospel. As someone comes to understand the Good News and what it means in their life, they will begin to respond to Jesus in a way that sees their love for him, their love for other people, and their life of mission increase...and as they do this...they will understand the Gospel more. It’s a beautiful circle in which God gets all of the glory, and people come to see the reality of Jesus at work in their worlds.

In our next three sessions we are going to unpack those three “kingdom circles” of discipleship – and try to understand the barriers that keep us from living each one more tangibly.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. Take some time and reflect on the section REDEMPTION (page 6), considering the lengths that Jesus went to restore all that has been broken in us. Has there been a time in your life where you have invited Jesus into your life to do this? How did this happen for you?

2. The three implications of the Gospel that we highlighted in this session were 1) You are not the main character, 2) You have nothing without Jesus, and 3) You have everything because of Jesus. How would the way you live your life change if you really believed these three things were true?

3. Have you been baptized as a follower of Jesus? If yes, where and when did that happen?

4. It has been said that the greatest fear of every human being on the planet is that we cannot be both FULLY KNOWN and FULLY LOVED at the same time. The Gospel flies in the face of this truth by demonstrating that even while knowing everything horrible about us God pursues us with ferocious love. This is very Good News. Take some time to write a prayer to God specifically thanking Him for the ways that His ferocious love has brought healing to your heart.

-PAR
TNER
SHIP

SESSION TWO

LOVE JESUS:
THE ART OF
APPRENTICESHIP

SESSION TWO – LOVE JESUS: THE ART OF APPRENTICESHIP

“Nothing is more important for mature Christian discipleship than a fresh, clear, true vision of the authentic Jesus.” – John Stott

If you’ve been around SunRidge for even a short amount of time there is a good chance that you’ve heard the catch-phrase “Love Jesus, Love People, Live Mission” more than one time. The truth is – we love those statements because they accurately and simply depict the type of lifestyle that a disciple of Jesus will demonstrate as they mature and grow spiritually. However, there is a critical truth that must always be remembered as we try to live these statements out in our lives:

EVERYTHING WE DO STARTS AND STOPS WITH THE GOSPEL.

The reality is that it is possible to live in such a way that there is no authentic submission to Jesus – and yet from the outside looking in people around us might say that we Love Jesus, Love People, and Live Mission. It is possible to fake our way through all the actions, without a heart captured by the grace and truth of the Gospel. So as we consider how it is that we can live out these three statements – it must first be remembered that the Gospel is the foundation for everything.

What this means is that as the Gospel increases our understanding of our need for the grace and saving love of Jesus – we will respond with increased love and thankfulness for him.

As we increase in our love for Jesus and our desire to return glory to Him – our love for people will increase.

As we increase our love for people – we will feel an urgency to be a people involved in the lives of those far from God – because we know they need the same saving work that our hearts do.

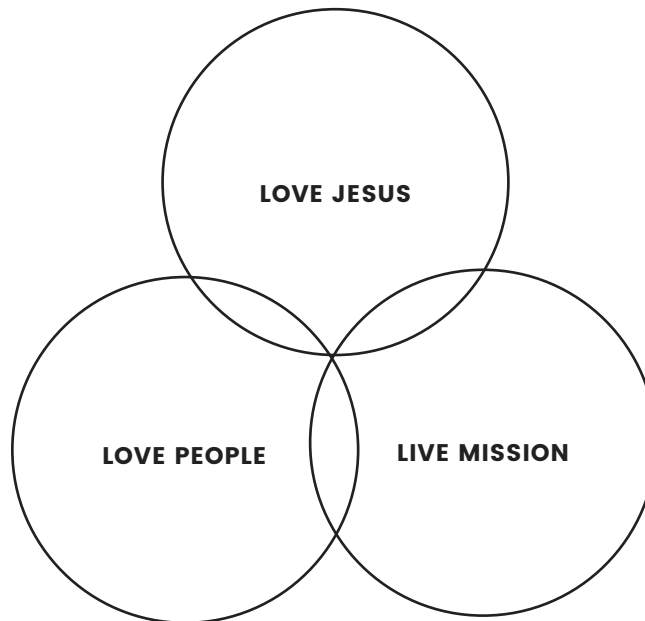
So this week as we unpack the first of those three statements – “Love Jesus” keep in mind – we love Jesus because he first loved us, when we were totally depraved and dead in our sin...he loved us...he gave us life...he saved us.

Eph. 2:1-10 “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- -by grace you have been saved-- and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. What stands out to you from this passage?

2. What ONE truth from this passage can you apply to your life in a specific way today?



At SunRidge when we talk about “Love Jesus” we’re talking about the **attitudes, beliefs, and actions** that build our relationship with God. We believe that building this relationship is so important because Jesus is EVERYTHING to us. He is the fulfillment of the Gospel, the saviour of our hearts and the answer to everything that is wrong in the world. If we really believe this, and we really believe that THIS GOD wants to have a relationship with us and allow us to know all the freedom and life He gives, then why wouldn’t we want to build that relationship?

The call to Love Jesus is: Pursuing a personal relationship with Jesus through a devotional life, which is the true essence of our faith and essential in life transformation.

Now for many people the question really is “How?” How do we build this relationship? **How do we increase in our love for Jesus?** Sometimes actions can lead the heart – pray, read your Bible, journal, sing and listen to worship songs, even when you don’t *feel* like it. Now the thing is that all of these actions, or “spiritual disciplines” are good, important things that followers of Jesus DO need to implement into their lives in order to build their relationship with him.

However - the truth is that these actions can become dry, even meaningless. We can reach the point where we do devotions mindlessly, even heartlessly. We can sing songs we've always sang simply because the words are on the screen - but even as we sing the words with our mouths... our heads and hearts can be somewhere else. So how do we maintain a meaningful and vibrant relationship with Jesus? How do these disciplines stay fresh? In a word: Apprenticeship.

APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeship is about our heart posture towards Jesus. The goal of the apprentice is to posture themselves in submission to a teacher so that they can learn from them, and ultimately live like they do. This story from scripture does a fantastic job of opening the door on this conversation:

Luke 10:38-42 Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

What this passage shows is Jesus and his disciples being shown hospitality by two unmarried women - Mary and Martha. As the story unfolds we see Martha doing all the work of hospitality, and Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. What is often over-looked is the significance of that phrase "sitting at the feet" of Jesus. This phrase is not merely a description of Mary's physical position in the room - **it is also a description of the posture of her heart.** This phrase was a cultural term used to describe someone who had assumed a posture of submission and apprenticeship to someone else. Look at this passage from Acts where Paul refers to his own apprenticeship: *"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day."* - Acts 22:3

So the truth is that Mary is not merely slacking off on her dinner duties - but she is doing exactly what she had signed on to do when she became a disciple of Jesus - she was sitting at his feet. Posturing herself in such a way that she was looking to her relationship with Jesus as the source of her purpose, meaning and life direction. In fact at the conclusion of this interaction Jesus says to Martha "Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." Jesus says that the great thing about what Mary has signed on for is that a vibrant relationship with Jesus can satisfy everything Mary will ever need - and the beauty of the Gospel is that he can do that for you and I as well.

Don't Just Do Something - SIT THERE!!

It's really important for us to recognize the tendencies that all of us have within us to posture ourselves just like Martha did. Often times our lives become so filled with activities, distractions, meetings, work, and even serving in various ministries that we start becoming like Martha who "was distracted with much serving" (10:40).

You see the truth is that Martha wasn't technically doing anything WRONG - she wasn't sinning, she wasn't breaking the Ten Commandments, she wasn't doing bad things...she was doing GOOD things. **So many good things that she forgot to recognize that the best thing...**the source of all goodness and life - was right in front of her.

Tim Keller wisely writes that one of the most deceptive ways we can sin is by allowing "good" things to become "ultimate" things. When we attribute too much value to good things and allow them to take so much weight in our lives that we begin to derive our identity and value from them.

The truth is that this can even happen to some of the things we do to build our relationship with Jesus. **Going to church, reading our Bible, praying and singing become more about getting them done then about actually meeting with Jesus.**

It is important that we ask ourselves – is our heart postured in such a way that we are sitting at the feet of Jesus...not just distracted by doing things? Is Jesus our teacher and our leader?

Mary had it right – there was a lot to do. There STILL is a lot to do...but there is nothing more important for followers of Christ than to posture ourselves at the feet of Jesus in recognition of the fact that everything we do is worthless without Him and His power at work within us.

So what does this look like? How do we bring a practical routine of sitting at the feet of Jesus into our lives? At SunRidge we believe one of the most common ways God speaks to us is through The Bible – **Scripture is our starting point for hearing from Jesus every day.** The word of God is living and active (Heb. 4:12) and inspired by God (2Tim. 3:16). It is through spending time with our Bibles, God’s Word, that we get to see stories of God’s faithfulness in the lives of people who have gone before us, and the Spirit of God can speak to our hearts, through the life and ministry of Jesus.

Now if you feel like you don’t know where to start with reading the Bible in a devotional way these 3 words will be key for you successfully developing this area of your life. The 3 words are: TIME – PLACE – PLAN

Time: The things that are important to you are things that you schedule. I think that the morning is the best time but whatever it is for you then decide and do it then. Even if you are not a morning person this would be one of those things to strongly consider making a priority because it sets your day in order. It’s more about a decision then anything so I would schedule your Devotions right into your day.

Place: People that are really diligent at this spiritual discipline will describe to you that they have a place that is their spot where they meet at the feet of Jesus. For me there is a chair in our home that I most often do my devotions. For some it maybe a spare room or the car or a stairwell or at a coffee shop! Try implementing this routine and you will find that it really helps you.

Plan: There are many reading plans that will be necessary to develop the practice of regularly doing your devotions. As a church we put out a monthly reading guide with daily readings to try to help give a little bit of structure to our times with Jesus. But make no mistake about it that if you are going to get serious about this you will need a plan to read the bible regularly.
→ Check out www.sunridge.org/bible for resources

To be able to read the Bible in a way that removes distractions and becomes far more personal I highly recommend the practice of journaling your devotions. A pen in our hand will move much slower than our thoughts – and so journaling causes us to really slow down and allow the words of scripture to speak to our heart while we reflect on what we are reading means in our life.

Do not be intimidated or put off by the practice of journaling – God has used this very simple, intentional practice very powerfully in the lives of many regular people just like you and me. Try using this simple plan in your journaling based on the acronym S.O.A.P. (Scripture – Observation – Application – Prayer).

1. You start at the top of a brand new page and you write down the SCRIPTURE that stands out to you.
2. Next is OBSERVATION where you will write briefly what is going on in this verse. This is where you ask: What, Who, Where, Why, in order to understand the context of the verse. A great way to start writing this section is, “This verse is saying...”
3. APPLICATION follows next with you asking how you can actually put what the verse is saying into action. This is where the Spirit of Jesus has so much opportunity to speak very personally to you. **It is here that many truths about what God wants to teach you can come to the surface.** In this section ask yourself “what does God want me to DO about what this verse is saying?”

4. Once you have opened your heart for God to speak to you it is very natural to move to PRAYER as you talk to God writing out the intention of your heart. Here you can write a prayer asking God to help you do what you wrote about in your application section.

I encourage you to begin this spiritual practice of devotions and watch what takes place in your heart and your walk with God as you do. If you would like a journal to help you in your posture of apprenticeship – there are some available at the Church office.

→ Check out www.sunridge.org/bible for journaling resources

Don't Just Sit There – DO SOMETHING!!

Apprentices of Jesus allow their hearts to be broken by the things that gripped Jesus and were huge parts of His ministry. Apprentices of Jesus will find themselves moving in love towards authentic relationship with people and towards those who are in desperate need to hear words of life and encouragement. This is how the LOVE JESUS circle drives and influences the LOVE PEOPLE and LIVE MISSION circle. Our apprenticeship of Jesus drives is into the hearts and lives of the people around us – just as Jesus did.

SITTING AND DOING: THE BLENDED LIFE OF THE APPRENTICE

So in the last two paragraphs we have told you that you should be both sitting still at Jesus' feet, and also moving around in service. So which one is the right answer? Simply put....both. The true apprentice (or disciple) of Jesus is primarily concerned with being in an intimate relationship with Jesus – with sitting at His feet and **allowing their relationship with Him to be the driving force that motivates everything else that they do**. This being said – one of the primary markers of a person who is truly an apprentice of Jesus is a grace-driven and love-filled movement towards others. Our love for Jesus propels us into the service of others because the whole point of apprenticeship is to learn from our teacher – so that we can do what He did.

So the apprentice of Jesus lives in the tension between “sitting” and “doing” – in “sitting” we find our motivation and our strength – in “doing” we find our calling and our fulfillment. In the life of the apprentice – we allow our love for Jesus to form our heart and our actions – and we become more like him.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. Generally speaking – some of us have tendencies that are more like Martha - and others of are more like Mary. Which of these characters is a more accurate reflection of you? Why is this?

2. Listening to God through reading the bible devotionally and Talking to God through prayer are **vital** elements in deepening one's walk with Jesus. Describe how you are presently nurturing your spiritual growth through those spiritual disciplines on your own.

Note: In asking you to describe your spiritual habits, we want to be careful to avoid the mistaken notion that legalistic formulas and rigid rules guarantee a healthy devotional life. It is more important that your walk with Jesus simply be characterized by regular and meaningful input. What matters is that you're becoming more like Him, and that you're taking it upon yourself to improve your relationship with Him privately, and not solely be dependent on what public meetings provide.

3. Apprenticeship is not just passively sitting – it's an active balance of learning and expressing. The apprentice of Jesus is called to both sit at His feet AND follow him into the lives and hearts of the hurting and the broken. What would need to change about your current daily routine to make this possible? What would it look like?

4. Read the following quote, take some time to reflect on it and then write a prayer to God expressing your thoughts and feelings.

"Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one's heart, its pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may sober them; tell Him your longings, that He may purify them; tell Him your dislikes, that He may help you conquer them; talk to Him of your temptations, that He may shield you from them: show Him the wounds of your heart, that He may heal them; lay bare your indifference to good, your depraved tastes for evil, your instability. Tell Him how self-love makes you unjust to others, how vanity tempts you to be insincere, how pride disguises you to yourself and others. If you thus pour out all your weaknesses, needs, troubles, there will be no lack of what to say. You will never exhaust the subject. It is continually being renewed. People who have no secrets from each other never want for subject of conversation. They do not weigh their words, for there is nothing to be held back; neither do they seek for something to say. They talk out of the abundance of their heart, without consideration they say just what they think. Blessed are they who attain to such familiar, unreserved intercourse with God." – Francois Fenelon

-PARTNER
SHIP

SESSION THREE

LOVE PEOPLE

SESSION THREE – LOVE PEOPLE

“I am not myself, by myself” – Eugene Peterson

As a church one of our basic assumptions is that people have been designed to be a part of a community. As we discussed in our first session on the Gospel – part of the Image of God inside us is an innate need to be in deep, meaningful relationships and the Church is to be a place where those kinds of relationships can exist. At SunRidge we would go so far as to say that we cannot actually function the way the God designed us to without meaningful relationships around us. We cannot properly love Jesus, without also loving people (Matthew 22:34-40). Here is a beautiful picture of community from Acts 2.

“42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

According to Webster, community can be defined as a unified body of individuals, a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society. When we think of community, a number of words come to mind: unified, joint, participate, love, common, cooperate, connect, sharing... “Community” is a word with many meanings and contexts. It’s an ideal, a hope, and a need. It’s the foundation of any group or church and requires people to interact, share, and participate in a common effort. It’s similar to a team sport that requires individuals to prioritize the involvement of others in order to succeed. Community cannot be created in isolation, nor does it happen without action. It requires people to navigate the tensions of interpersonal relationships. Creating community doesn’t come easily, but when it happens, the rewards are worth the effort.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. Have you ever enjoyed a significant community experience? Describe it and what made it meaningful for you.

2. What are some positive and negative examples of community that you’ve experienced?

3. What are your biggest hopes, fears as you think about being involved in community?

The call to Love People is: To know and to be known, to need and to be needed, recognizing that God has designed us to live in a **deep relationship** with others.

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

Community is an interesting thing to try to explain because at its core it really is nothing more than an ideal. A love for Biblical Community is a philosophy of living that drives us to allow our lives to be vulnerable and open with others. Community is a way of life more than it is a “thing” and yet – when enough people come together believing the same philosophy, the resulting phenomena is one of the most powerful forces on earth. People feel loved. They feel encouraged and cared for. They feel challenged and like they matter. People feel like they belong.

Community can change 20 individuals into one cohesive unit. Community can make a stranger feel like a friend. Community can turn a crowd into a family with a purpose. When people of various backgrounds unite around a common goal and desire – they cease to become a whole bunch of different people, and they become one group of people. Here are just some examples of community:

1. The same group of Seniors who gather together every afternoon to talk and stay active together.
2. A group of friends who have no formal group name, but hang out together regularly, but have an intentionality to their relationship that allows them to challenge and encourage one another.
3. A small group who pools their money together to help someone make rent.
4. Someone opening their home to a person who needs a place to stay.

TO KNOW AND BE KNOWN

At the end of our session on the Gospel there was a question that highlighted the statement “the greatest fear of every person on the planet is that they cannot be both fully known, and fully loved.” One of the basic beliefs of every person is that there is a certain standard to which we must attain if we hope to be loved, even accepted at all. We can trace this fear all the way back to the fall in Genesis 3:9-12:

“But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

One of the very first markers of the introduction of sin into our world was shame – and a desire to hide as a result of it. We all have a fear that if people were to find out everything about us – every dirty secret we have – that they would find us unlovable and totally reject us. This fear, and the degree to which it has permeated our society, has created a culture of individualism that is rampant in North America. Independence, privacy, and appearing as well put together and successful as possible are the false markers of success in our very broken world.

Now obviously there is certain degree of unhealthiness in the idea that we should just open ourselves up to everyone and tell all of the worst stories of our lives – but what we do need to keep in mind is that our tendency is to hide...and hiding will always eventually result in isolation, which will eventually kill community.

At SunRidge we try to lift a value of “knowing and being known” - we want our community to be a place where we are intentional about both discovering other people’s stories, and being open and vulnerable with our own. This isn’t always comfortable...in fact often times it’s not – but the truth is that as much as the fear of rejection drives our desire to hide, there is nothing quite like being in relationship with someone who knows your flaws and loves you regardless. We believe in this so much, that we are willing to risk the discomfort in pursuit of this ideal.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. Describe how the original disciples might have explained their community – both with each other, and with Jesus.

2. What thoughts come to mind about how you view your own community?

3. What would need to change for more community to take place in your life?

MAKING IT PRACTICAL: LIVING TO B.L.E.S.S.

So how do we develop this ideal in how we live our lives? It's one thing to say we really believe in community, and an entirely different thing to make actual, tangible steps to pursue "know and be known" types of relationships. At SunRidge we believe Christians are to live our life in such a way as to BLESS those around us. Here are the practices that will help you in 'Living to BLESS'.

The B.L.E.S.S. Practices

"B" Begin with Prayer

The "B" is for Begin with Prayer. We believe that prayer is how you discover your mission as well as how you accomplish it. If you're not sure who the people are God is calling you to bless or where the place is God is calling you to go, you can begin with prayer. And if you know people or the place you want to impact, begin praying for those people and that place.

"L" Listen

The "L" in BLESS is for Listen. Sadly, most Christians are known for talking more than listening. If we sincerely hope to impact the lives of people around us, then we must first get to know them. Any relationship starts with listening. We need to listen to their hopes, their dreams, and their challenges. Truly listening may be the kindest and most loving gift you can give someone.

“E” Eat

The “E” in BLESS is “Eat.” This third practice is our personal favorite, and it’s something in which many of us are experts—eating! There is something about sharing a meal that moves any relationship past acquaintance toward friendship—faster than just about anything else we can do. And there are few ways we can better bless the people around us than by sharing a meal.

“S” Serve

The first “S” in BLESS is for “Serve.” We are convinced that if you will begin with prayer, listen, and eat; there is a good chance that by then you will have discovered how you can best serve the person or place to which God has called you. They’ll likely tell you how you can best serve them.

“S” Story

The second “S” in BLESS is “Story.” Our experience is that if you do the other BLESS practices – Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, and Serve; then there is a good chance you will have the opportunity to share your story. Someone may ask you to explain what makes you different. It is then that you can tell them your story of how Jesus changed your life.

Living to BLESS practices are intended to form a set of values in us that motivate us to move towards people to develop healthy relationships. Part of having healthy relationships is knowing how to initiate depth and movement, and how and when to establish boundaries to provide the healthiest context you can. Our heart is always to do the best job we can loving others as we love ourselves.

INDIVIDUALISM – THE COMMUNITY KILLER

If there is a primary barrier that prevents us from moving into community – it is individualism. Our culture glorifies the pioneer, the lone hero, and the over achiever, however the reality is that an individualistic mind set will work against, and even kill community by prioritizing things done in isolation over things done with others. Some of us live in places where it’s common to drive an hour each way to work, where the brick walls and long driveways keep neighbours at a distance, and where spare time is commonly viewed a rare commodity. While we’d love to let everyone off the hook right here and say that the challenges of modern living can justify our individualism, in the grand scheme of things, it’s just not the case! Our individualism is destroying the powerful, counter-cultural witness of the Church. It’s limiting our capacity to experience God and it’s only going to get worse unless we make some significant adjustments!

As Christ followers, we need to be the kind of people that recognize the danger in an individualistic mind set, and allow the walls that can naturally begin to surround our lives to come down. We need to live lives of invitation – where people around us are invited into our worlds and we move towards theirs. This is how Christ lived, and his followers we are to live the same way. We Love Jesus, and we Love People.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. List adjectives you would use to describe the feelings and actions associated with your ideal community experience.

2. Are you connected to a Small Group at SunRidge for the purpose of Accountability, Belonging, and Care? If yes, how is it impacting your spiritual growth? If no, please explain why.

3. Do you have any relationships that would be dishonouring to God (ei broken or impure)? If so please explain the problem.

4. As far as it is up to you, are you committed to pursuing the biblical pattern of conflict resolution to rectify those or any future relational conflicts?

Note: Relational breakdowns are usually complex matters. We recognize and respect that. At the same time, members should be willing to engage in the strenuous process of conflict resolution. They should display approachable hearts, a willingness to examine and address personal issues that may have contributed to the conflict, and an openness to receiving counsel where appropriate.

-PARTNERSHIP
SHIP

SESSION FOUR
LIVE MISSION

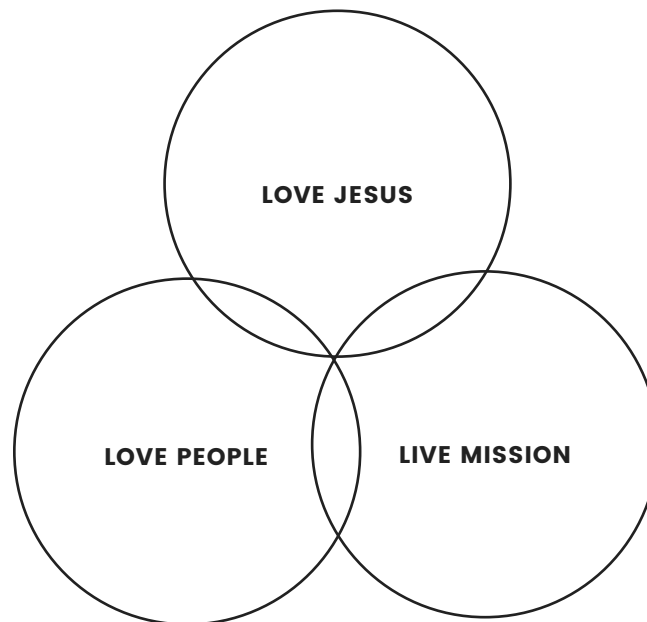
SESSION FOUR – LIVE MISSION

“The command to love our neighbour lies at the core of God’s plan for our lives, and when we follow this mandate, it changes everything.” – Jay Pathak

In this final section of PARTNERSHIP, we want to explore how it is that the Gospel motivates us to Live Mission. Living Mission is about allowing our relationship with Jesus and our love for people to catapult us into a lifestyle that moves us towards the people in our worlds who are far from God. Living Mission is about recognizing Jesus was very specific about his desire for his followers in Matthew 28:

“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” – Matthew 28:18-20

There is an inherent “sent-ness” that all followers of Jesus carry with them. We have been sent into the world – actually commanded to “go,” and as we go we are to make disciples – essentially to come and follow Jesus with us. The more we recognize the urgency that surrounds this “sent-ness,” the more we come to understand how critical it is that our discipleship results in an outworking of Living Mission. In the final analysis we must remember – ALL Christ followers have been sent by God into their real-time contexts to make disciples. Living Mission is about making that purpose the driving motivation of our lives.



The call to Live Mission is: To reach out to people living out and lifting up the Gospel, by using our **time, treasure and talents** even when inconvenient.

TIME

Perhaps the most commonly asked question surrounding Living Mission has to do with “how?” How do we make the changes necessary to make mission a part of our life? How do we change our routine so that we can be more intentional with our neighbours? How do we use our relationships to actually lead a person into a relationship with Jesus? These are all important questions, and ones that we will deal with in this section, however, we first must recognize this foundational truth: Living Mission is *NOT* about living a good life, doing good things, or being a nice person. **Living Mission is about using our lives as signposts that point others towards Jesus.** The foundation of a missional life is the decision to offer to God our plans in exchange for his plans. It requires that we are willing to leave our world so he can send us to extend his Kingdom. Living Mission is about allowing God – and all of His plans – to be the centre of how we live.

INCARNATIONAL LIVING

If Living Mission is about recognizing the “sent” nature of following Jesus, then living “incarnationally” is about HOW we do that. It may surprise us a little, because it’s likely a lot simpler than we expect. Living incarnationally means living as representations of Jesus, or much more simply – living like Jesus did. Incarnational living is about how we go about our lives, and what people see as we do so. It’s about our motives and our heart. It brings the heart of the Gospel to the daily life of the Christ follower. The Apostle Paul viewed his ministry as one where he simply allowed his life and work to be done in relationship with others, and pointing towards Jesus:

“So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. For you remember, brothers, our labour and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.” – 1 Thess. 2:8-9

The beautiful thing about living incarnationally is that at its core it isn’t about changing anything about our schedules or our routines or our plans. The incarnational life simply desires to bring the heart of Jesus into the actions of our day. We already have jobs – how can we do our work with the heart and grace of Jesus? We have routines – how can we go about them displaying love and compassion? Incarnational living brings the heart of Jesus to life in our worlds, and allows people to see His love and truth and grace in our actions. It’s about seeing people as Jesus saw them, and loving them as Jesus loved them.

Here is a Challenge for You

Spend some time this week in a shopping mall, a downtown café or a coffee shop that overlooks a road or crosswalk and look at the faces that go past you. Imagine some of the things that might make up their life stories: sadness, abuse, abandonment, broken relationships, sexual mistakes, unemployment fears, lack of purpose, broken marriages, deep debt, bankruptcy, loneliness, despair, pressure to measure up, desire for community, searching for God, parents who haven’t understood or cared for their children well.

All of this brokenness and all of these stories can be repaired and restored through a relationship with Jesus – the call to His followers is to live in a way that people will see him through us, as we live incarnationally.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. How does the idea of being “sent” into the world you live in change the way you view the different areas of your life? Consider: home, work, friendships.

2. How willing are you to have God disrupt your plans in order to give you an opportunity to fulfill His plans? What is it that would stop you from allowing a “divine disruption” to take place?

3. In your own words and using specific examples, what would “incarnational living” look like in your world? How can you bring the heart of Jesus into all the activities that fill your day?

THE ART OF NEIGHBOURING

It is important to try to bring some practical context to this conversation, so lets review what we know so far:

1. All Christ-followers have been sent by God to make disciples.
2. Sent people should be living “incarnational” - that is - allowing the heart and motivations of Jesus to govern HOW we go about our “sent-ness.” It is important to also bring a sense of practicality to this conversation - where do we go to make these disciples? What is the best way to make disciples? Where does the rubber meet the road in the “Live Mission” conversation? To answer this, lets do a neighbourhood map. (Next Page: adapted from book by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon.) Here’s how the neighbourhood map works - the centre block that says “you are here” represents your house. The eight blocks around it represent your eight geographically closest neighbours. In each box, write down the following:
 - Write the names of the people who live in the house represented by that box. If you can give first and last names, that’s great. If only first names - that’s fine too.
 - Write down some relevant information about each person, some data or facts about them that you couldn’t see just by standing in your driveway.
 - Write down some in-depth information you would know after connecting with people. This may include career plans or dreams of starting a family or anything to do with the purpose of their lives. Really anything meaningful. Many people will have a hard time filling out this chart in its entirety - some of us will have a hard time even just writing down the names. It is sobering to take a step back and realize that when we compare the intentionality we have put into the relationships with our neighbours against the following quote from Jesus, we often fall short: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”* - Matthew 22:37-40

The Art of Neighboring



Who is my Neighbor?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. How would you say you did on your neighbourhood map? What steps can you take to increase your intentionality in these relationships?

2. What are the major barriers blocking you from pursuing intentional relationship with your neighbours?

FRIENDSHIP IS NOT ENOUGH

One of the dangers in this conversation surrounding Living Mission is that we would come to believe that as long as we are being good neighbours, have good friendships with the people around us and are intentional about meeting and inviting new people into our worlds - we are Living Mission. The reality is that all of this talk about incarnational living and neighbouring are really only means to an end. The end is that we would, in all aspects of our lives, glorify and follow Jesus in such a way that people around us are called to do the same.

The “sent” follower of Jesus lives in the tension of realizing that while people are not our projects - we do have a mission and a mandate. We are called to make disciples. To call people to follow Jesus...and sometimes - that call has to happen with words.

Often it is this area of conversation that can make people nervous. The idea of sharing our faith with others - or “evangelizing” creates a lot of anxiety in believers today - and while this is understandable - **our love for people must drive us to overcome it**. If we really believe the Gospel is true, then what we know is that these people that are our friends, will live cheap imitations of real life and die to an eternity completely separate from God without an intervention by Jesus Christ. The people who we love and care for and have at our parties - they have to know Jesus in order to experience freedom and salvation, and no matter how uncomfortable we are with talking with them on this level, if we love them - we will do it anyways.

There must a come a time in our relationships with people far from God - when they know we love them and care for them, and our friendship has been established and we have opened our hearts to them and they have invited us into theirs - that we would give them an opportunity to follow Jesus. Now this can look all sorts of different ways, and will vary based on personality - but it is important to ask yourself this question - “Am I comfortable with speaking directly to someone about their need to follow Jesus?”

In his book “Speaking of Jesus: The Art of Non-Evangelism,” Carl Medearis highlights the difference between speaking “about” Jesus, and speaking “of” Jesus. He says that we speak “about” things that we know information or facts about. We can speak about politics or finance or the Vancouver Canucks. However we only speak “of” those we know. We speak of our family, our friends, ourselves - and our saviour.

As we share our faith and journey with our friends and neighbours – it is important that we speak of our relationship with Jesus. We can speak of how He has changed our lives, we can speak of how He is our hope and our joy. We can speak of how He gives us peace in all circumstances and of how he gave us life amidst our sin and death. We can speak of our stories of Jesus, and we can invite our friends and neighbours to do the same. This is Living Mission.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. Are you comfortable speaking of Jesus to one of your friends or neighbours and inviting them into a relationship with Jesus? Why or why not?

2. If someone asked you to share your “stories of Jesus” – what stories would you tell? Write down just one of them below.

The call to Live Mission is: To reach out to people living out and lifting up the Gospel, by using our **time, treasure and talents** even when inconvenient. We have been looking at how to reach out to people with our time, but let’s look at what this looks like when it comes to our treasure, in other words giving our money.

TREASURE

One of the things that Scripture is clear about when it comes to the subject of giving is God does not want you to give out of guilt or compulsion. Paul says, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Cor 9:7. A cheerful giver does not sound like a person that is giving out of guilt or obligation. Approaching life as a steward means there is no hint of pressure. This is because God is the owner of everything and does not need your money to advance the Kingdom of God.

In the same breath, we cannot let fear and emotions keep us from giving either. Sometimes our emotions like fear can dictate how we steward the resources God has entrusted to us. Just as you would most likely not advise someone to buy a stock based on emotions, you should not base how you give on emotions either. On top of that, Paul makes it clear that there is a “reaping and sowing” principle in play when it comes to giving. He says, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” 2 Cor 9:6. That means there is a correlation between how much our wallet reaps and how much we sow out of our relationship with God.

In order to sow what we desire, we have to put a plan in place that helps us conquer our fears in giving. If we allow emotions to get the best of us, we will end up reaping and sowing very little because our emotions and fears will get the best of us. There are a number of questions that come into play when we begin to steward God's resources and live generous lives towards others. Questions like "How much should I give?" and "Who should I give it to?" and "How often should I give it?" are all legitimate questions. In *Fields of Gold*, Andy Stanley puts together some Biblical principles that help us minimize fear in giving and help us grow in our stewardship of the resources God has entrusted to us. This plan revolves around three "P's" of giving: Prioritize, Percentage and Progressive.

"Prioritize" means you give off the top before you pay the mortgage or buy groceries. You place a priority to give on the ministries you feel like God is leading you to "invest" in. Giving off the top can help minimize fear because you don't have to worry about things at the end of the month when you have already given priority to ministries that help advance the Kingdom of God.

"Percentage" means set a certain percentage of your income to give away on a consistent basis. This gives you something objective to shoot for and helps to remove emotions from the equation. A percentage of what you bring in is fairly "black and white" and easy to measure whether or not you are hitting the mark. Even if you can only give 1% commit to a percentage and stick to it.

"Progressive" means you remain open to God growing and stretching you in the area of giving. Once you have crossed the "threshold" of giving, it becomes less and less a test of our faith because you are more comfortable with how much you are giving away. God will, at times, lead us to give more and cross the "threshold" of giving yet again. This is important because it consistently challenges us to grow in our faith towards God in the area of finances and resources. It also consistently challenges us towards living lives that are generous towards God and others.

As followers of Jesus we realize that we have been bought with the price of Christ's blood, and that everything we have belongs to Him. In light of this, we desire to be responsible caretakers of the Treasures that God has entrusted to us.

Matt 6:19-21 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Regarding our Treasures or material resources we recognize the tithe (10% of one's earnings) as the historic standard of giving in Scripture. But moreover, in response to Christ's abundant giving, we increasingly submit our resources to His Lordship and display a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness in supporting the work of SunRidge church.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. Do you believe the way you use your material wealth is God-honoring? If no, in what areas? What action are you taking to make changes?

2. In light of the tithe as a biblical precedent for giving, do you regularly support this body using 10% as a goal to reach (or surpass) as God prospers? If not, describe your current practice and ways you're moving toward this goal.

Finally, the call to Live Mission is: To reach out to people living out and lifting up the Gospel, by using our time, treasure and talents even when inconvenient. Let's look at what this looks like when it comes to our talents.

TALENTS

God has blessed you with a variety of talents, gifts and abilities. Those talents become more strategic and influential—for your benefit and assistance to others—when you invest in developing and sharpening them. Various passages of the Bible discuss the fact that God gives spiritual gifts to those whom He calls to His service. Because the ways we can serve the Lord are so diverse—from being a loving husband and parent, to helping kids learn while teaching in a public school, to praying for discouraged friends, to donating money to the less fortunate, to more formal types of ministry in a church setting—each of us receives a different mix of gifts. But they are all provided to us for the same purpose. To bless others for the glory of God.

If you love Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you have gifts from the Holy Spirit at your disposal. You might think of those gifts as supercharged abilities. But just as a baseball player has an unusual talent for hitting or pitching the ball, that talent has to be developed. Spiritual gifts are the same. You must cultivate spiritual gifts through study, practice, and application.

What happens when you commit yourself to maturing your gifts? You become capable of accomplishing superior outcomes. The Bible tells us about all kinds of individuals—who were no different from you or me, who took their gifts seriously and worked at refining them until they were unusually capable.

- Samuel became a great prophet by working with Eli to understand and expand his gift.
- As a shepherd David perfected the use of a slingshot, which came in handy in his battle against Goliath.
- Apollos was a gifted speaker with a good heart, but it took mentoring from Aquila and Priscilla to enhance his abilities as an evangelist and apologist.

- Peter was given a master’s course in leadership, which helped convert him from an impetuous bungler into a reasoned and seasoned elder.
- Even Paul transitioned from being an angry scholar to a loving teacher beyond compare.

God has similar plans to use the gifts He’s placed in you and me. As followers of Jesus we realize that we have been bought with the price of Christ’s blood, and that everything we have belongs to Him. In light of this, we desire to be responsible caretakers of the Talents that God has entrusted to us. Regarding our Talents we recognize that the church is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and furthering the ministry of the church. We therefore seek to discover, develop, and deploy those God-given gifts and to seek a place of service both inside and outside the church, with the support and affirmation of the body.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

There are so many ways to use your gifts. At SunRidge, we offer opportunities through serving teams, and small groups. For more info go to www.sunridge.org/serve

1. Read through 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11-13; Romans 12:4-8. Which gifts do you think you have?

2. How can you use them to serve?

3. After thinking about your gifts and how you can use them, how do you think you could serve at SunRidge?

We encourage you to explore how God wants to uniquely use you to serve His people. Talk to one of our Pastors to connect with a Serving Team!

CONCLUSION

We hope this PARTNERSHIP WORKBOOK study has been rich and affirming. Remember, we are not looking for “perfect Christians” who live struggle-free lives. We are looking for those who are committed to loving Jesus, loving people, and living Mission – and as we unite around these practices a kingdom revolution can take place.

MISSION

Leading people to become passionately committed followers of Jesus

VALUES

Love Jesus: Pursuing a personal relationship with Jesus through a devotional life is the true essence of our faith and essential in life transformation.

Love People: To know and to be known, to need and to be needed, recognizing that God has designed us to live in a deep relationship with others.

Live Mission: To reach out to people living out and lifting up the Gospel, by using our time, treasure and talents even when inconvenient.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Link available at www.sunridge.org/about

PARTNERSHIP COVENANT

I make a covenant to agree with and support the Mission, Values, and Confession of Faith of SunRidge Community Church.

Printed Name

Signature

Date