

In My Spheres of Influence (part 3)- Church

Joining God's Team – part 8

February 25, 2024

Life Vision Statement:

By God's grace, to step forward as God's man or woman,
in my spheres of influence, to serve His purposes, for His glory.

DAY 1: Saved individuals; from lost to saved

1. A church is in the “business” of helping lost people become devoted followers of Christ. Here are three metaphors of how the bible describes the beginning part: from lost to conversion to Jesus.

2. Church metaphor #1: we are His sheep, His flock

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood.

a. We become God's sheep.

b. What strikes you about this metaphor?

3. Church metaphor #2: God's people, God's family

Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household...

a. The New Testament calls us “the called-out ones.” (Ekklesia is the Greek word). God calls us out of the world and into His family.

b. What strikes you about this metaphor?

4. Church metaphor #3: bride of Christ

Isaiah 62:5 As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

a. Many Christians come to the reality of Christianity when they discover Christianity is not a “religion,” but a “relationship.”

b. How does this imagery of groom and bride strikes you as a metaphor for God and you?

c. What strikes you from today's writing?

DAY 2: Church: family: brothers, sisters, spiritual fathers, mothers

1. We are more than saved individuals. We are connected to other saved individuals!

2. Connection metaphor #1: Becoming part of God's family

John 1:12 But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave them the right to become children of God.

- a. This verse describes how we came into God's family.

- b. "The right" is the Greek word, "Exousia". It is usually translated authority or power. In this context, the term has both connotations.
 - We have been given the authority to be adopted into God's family.
 - We have also been given the power to become His child. We have been given God's power to thwart our sin nature which stubbornly resisted God's call to us.

- c. What strikes you about this metaphor?

3. Connection metaphor #2: God's family has spiritual parents and siblings.

Galatians 4:6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

- a. This verse is full of family metaphors! Jot down at least four "pictures" of family.

- b. What strikes you about being in God's *family*?

4. Connection metaphor #3: We belong to one another

Romans 12:5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

- a. All of God's children are called brothers and sisters, but this more than a theological truth. We "belong to one another."

- b. What strikes you about belonging?

5. What strikes you from today's writing?

DAY 3: The church is an organism

1. The church is like an organism. It is compared to a human body.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

a. Paul uses the metaphor to illustrate something of what a church is. It is a body. What strikes you about this metaphor?

b. We are, in another sense, the body of Christ! We are the hands of Jesus. We are the feet of Jesus. We are the eyes of Jesus. We are the smile of Jesus. We are the arms of Jesus.

c. "EACH ONE of you is a part..."

What strikes you about every one of God's people being part of His body, including you?!

2. The church is a relational organism.

Romans 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

a. A church is not like the movies where individuals go to see the movie and then leave without talking to anyone at the theatre.

b. What strikes you from these verses in Romans, written to that church?

c. There are about sixty "one another" commands in the bible. The different ways we are supposed to relate to one *put Jesus on display*, to folks inside and outside the church!

John 13:34 A new commandment I give you, Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

a. Loving people is the second greatest command. Here, Jesus says that when people see this kind of love between His people, people will notice. It is a powerful witness.

b. What strikes you about these verses in John?

3. What strikes you from today's writing?

DAY 4: The church is also an organization

1. The church is also an organization; the different “parts” depend on each other.

1 Corinthians 12:14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

- a. Think of all the different body parts that make up your body. Some of these you can see, and many of these you can't see.
- b. There is great variety in the church. You will see people of every age, many, many backgrounds—ethnic, racial, spiritual, family, and socio-economic.
- c. It is ASTOUNDING that people from such diverse backgrounds can not only work together, but love one another!

2. There are times when you may wonder if you really belong.

1 Corinthians 12:15 Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.

a. How does Paul answer the question when you wonder if YOU belong?

b. How would Paul's illustration help you “get back in the game” when you feel like you don't belong?

3. Sometimes, people feel like their contribution to church life is miniscule in comparison with others.

1 Corinthians 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

a. How does Paul answer the question of questioning your contribution?

b. How would Paul's perspective help you when you feel “small?”

4. Ultimately, the body is put together by God!

1 Corinthians 12:18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

It is expected that we will work together.

5. What strikes you from today's writing?

DAY 5: Engage: from customer to consumer to co-laborer to commando

*Phil. 2:25ff. But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my **brother, co-worker** and **fellow soldier**, who is also **your messenger, whom you sent** to take care of my needs.*

*Philemon 1:1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and **fellow-worker**.*

Philemon 1:2 ...to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home...

1. Our growth in Christian maturity is not just individual growth. In fact, focusing your growth on you, individually, is the slow boat to maturity.
2. Christian maturity involves BOTH internal change and external change. Christian maturity is both “getting” and “giving” to God and others.
3. When most people first come to any church they come as **consumers**. When they leave they ask themselves, “What did I get out of that? The message? The music? The people? We are like consumers going out to eat at a restaurant. It is all about what we get—the wait time, the food, the service, the ambience, and the price. No one goes to a restaurant looking to give something—to anyone.
4. If we return to a particular church, perhaps the church passed the “blind date test.” “I guess I’ll ask her out again.” If a church attender who started out as a customer continues to attend, they will slowly become a consumer. Consumers are known by “getting what I want.” There are different kinds of church consumers:
Disconnected consumers. They may like the message, music, or kids’ programs, but they are not interested in getting to know anybody, or especially, to risk being known.
Connected consumers. At some point trust is built toward that particular church. They become willing to relationally connect with church members.
Contributing consumers. They become a little more connected, and want to begin to serve, to help, to “pull the wagon” with church members.
5. Christian maturity comes to a halt when self is the primary motivation of growth. The next stage of Christian growth is to become a **co—laborer**.
6. Co-laborers develop a team heart. They look for ways to serve, and are out for the best of that church. They begin to see themselves as advancing God’s kingdom through their work and service in the church. They learn to freely give, freely, serve, and freely follow leadership.
7. The next stage in Christian maturity is to become what Paul called, “a fellow soldier.” We will call them **commandos**. Commandos are “all in.” They want their life to count for more than trinkets and treasure. They want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. They put all their resources and family at the Lord’s disposal. These people want to be trained to be spiritual warriors and perhaps future leaders in the church.
8. What strikes you from today’s writing?

MAJOR IDEAS:

Spheres – where I intersect with people. Generally, you will have more influence with people with whom you have repeated contact. MFC3O—marriage, family, church, community (neighbors, community organizations & groups), career; out (restaurants, stores, bank, etc.)

Influence – not a matter of a position of leadership!

Similar message for several weeks:

- “Pregnant with purpose”
- Spheres—MFC3
- Stewardship
- Influence

Last two weeks:

- Career – work; work ethic; work attitudes;
- Community – coaching LL baseball; coaching girls’ soccer; Mindy neighbors; SG: swim at association pool; Jacuzzi;

Today: Church, marriage, family

Church – not like going to the movies; What am I going to get out of this?

Family – brothers, sisters, spiritual fathers and mothers,

Relationally: Will someone talk to me? Does anyone care? Why didn’t someone call me? VS: How can I be a blessing to someone today?

Love one another, encourage one another, exhort one another,

Body—both a collection of individuals AND an organization.

Organizationally: What’s the least I can do? What’s the easiest thing to do? VS: What are the greatest needs? Where does my church need the most help?

Serve one another

Serving one time; serving monthly, pulling the wagon, financially, especially if time strapped,

When the metric of church life is what’s in it for me, don’t be surprised when you feel lonely, empty, critical, etc.

SPHERES OF LIFE

- MFC3
- Own your sphere of influence—**STEWARDSHIP**—get a firm grasp
- Easy to focus on ONE sphere (**My dad’s generation**—one source of income; long hours; mother kept the family together. NOW, two sources of income—changes how I approached marriage, parenting, and home responsibilities.

INFLUENCE;

Luke 2:46-47

Paul's story with people.

PURPOSE vs work,

- Not just “spheres of responsibilities”
- We are not just passing through...
- Passive living vs. you are called...
- Leadership, not positional.
- God wants to use our lives in others, redemptively—get a firm grasp, a conviction,
- Influence often done through “little things” (Luke 16:10-13). Easy to underestimate our influence on others. Little things matter.
- **Thermostat vs thermometer**

COMMUNITY:

- Hamburger place near us: Mother's Day; Valentine's Day – flower arrangement
- Thanksgiving: Mindy takes potted plants to our neighbors.
- Calling people by their name (restaurants, store checkers, store clerks) asking about their day, what are you doing for Super Bowl Sunday?
- Coaching boys' baseball – 10 years
- Coaching girls' soccer – 16 years
- Patriotic program
- HB: serving at seminary

MARRIAGE

- HB: never heard you say anything negative about Deb, even in jest
- HB: invite for dinner; ham, carrots, green beans
- Deb: we buy the better ice cream for guests

SIMPLE FOOD:

- SG: brownies for John Strap

TAKE AN INTEREST

- SG: took an interest in Ralph N. Had no idea he came to the seminary pretty banged up. He came from a very strong Christian family, his father was a very well-known pastor in Houston, with a ministry that was cutting edge at the time in its ability to get people into simple ministries. How do you have a QT? Do you memorize scripture? How's your prayer life? Servant?
- Same with Phil H.
- Hearing people's life stories. CURIOUS & OPEN-ENDED Q'S: “What were your growing up years like? What was family life like? What was school like for you?” Opening doors to share heartache, disappointment, emptiness, broken home, abuse,

Responsibilities AND Influence (OPPORTUNITIES) **THIS IS A MESSAGE**

Work – Col. 3:23, etc.

Servant –

Be a blessing -

Team player vs bag on the boss; compete with others, who's idea, who gets credit, seeking to make your boss successful, JOSEPH in prison; WORKERS who did not need accounting!

Humility – not making a splash; open heart, willing to listen to feedback.

Show up, as you: being a blessing, a servant, an encourager, supporter, motivator to help people move forward

Challenge:

Step in with commitment to honor God and honor and encourage people in those spheres.

FOCUS: specific places, specific people,

STEWARDSHIP VV.

- **Matt. 25 parable of the talents!**
- Matt. 25 – did it to the least of these

In My Spheres of Influence

John Hawkins - 25 minutes

By God's grace, to step forward as God's man or woman, in my spheres of influence, to serve His purposes, for His glory.

"...in my spheres of influence..."

Leadership component:

- Sphere—places, people,
- Influence—leadership. (Not positional leadership).

→Marriage, family, career, church, community—Where God has put us. MFC3

We are not just "passing through". God wants to use our lives in the lives of people with whom we are around.

→**What does it mean to OWN your sphere influence?**

= What God has given *me*. Stewardship. Getting a firm grasp on God's intention to use me where I am.

We tend to look at some spheres of influence as "means to an end." NO!!! Luke 16:10-13 little things matter.

Not just looking at the "big" stuff in the future...

Humble influence:

Grandy – John's maternal grandma. Amazing. Simple. HS grad, taught school. She sincerely and simply loved people—encouraging, taking an interest, cooking pound cakes to friends/shut-ins. Everything in creation disappeared except you. Meaningful love. She was from the south. Big thing to have flowers on the graves of her deceased relatives. She had a stash in the trunk of her car!!!

Owning your sphere of influence is not complicated. You just need to show up as you are, with the hope of being a blessing, a servant, an encourager, supporter, motivator to help people move forward. John learned a lot about life and influence from Grandy. GOD-HONORING INFLUENCE.

Trickle down influence. Grandy—John—Laura—her kids.

Priorities and responsibilities

Communicate with others and let them talk with you. Feedback. Need an open heart and mind to listen.

Spheres of INFLUENCE, not just spheres of responsibilities.

Our tendency is to zero in on ourselves.

It is not enough to check my boxes of responsibilities. Get them done in such a way that the people around me are influenced.

Ii Woman, from line employee to manager. Crummy attitude toward those she was supposed to manage because “they kept her from her work.” One day she realized, they were her work!!! The people were not “interruptions.”

Responsibility in the light of the relationships, the people around me.

It's easy to just focus on one sphere of influence.

Ie Work. And passive re marriage, family, community, church, hobbies.

God is big enough to empower me in all spheres of influence!!

A balanced life is aware of all these spheres of influence. All have demands and opportunities.

Honoring God in how you live and relate in your marriage, with your kids, in your church, career, and community.

Final thoughts:

Places God has placed us; MFC3.

Responsibilities AND people to be influenced.

Step in with commitment to honor God and honor and encourage people in those spheres.

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