

Small Group Discussion Guide

Harvest Mission Measures & Strategy November 6-7, 2010

Opening Discussion: Vern began the message this last weekend asking the question: “What does the finish line look like for your Church?” Ask the group how long they have attended Church of any kind? Could you define the growth steps that any of those Churches had defined for your growth? Where these growth steps more than attendance expectations?

It is someone who is living more & more of their life as though Christ were living through you. The finish line for the Church is more than just raw data (attendance, giving, programs). These are quantitative measures, but for individuals success is more qualitative (Christ following). These are harder to measure, but there are ways.

There are three measures of Spiritual Maturity as defined in the Bible:

1) Love God –

Ask your group: “How do you know if someone loves God?”

READ | John 5:2-3

Ask the question again: How do you know if someone loves God? *Loving God means that we obey God's commands.*

Can you describe someone who keeps God’s commands in a way that seems to be a burden?

The difference between legalism and obedience is a relationship with God and refusing to judge another person’s obedience. Ultimately I cannot judge another’s love for God, except by their trust in God’s word that is demonstrated in obedience to it.

READ: John 14:21 Why is loving God so closely connected with obedience to His word? *If I love someone I must trust them. Trusting God includes trusting His design for life and my life specifically.* How, then could you measure **your** love of God?

2) Love Others –

READ: Matthew 22:37-40

Based on these verses, can a person truly love God and *not* love another like God loves them? Why or why not?

What is the measure of loving another? *As you love yourself.*

What can we learn about loving others from the way that we love ourselves?

What does this command imply about your ability to love others if you do not love yourself?

READ: 1 John 4:11-12

How does this verse tell us about how we learn to love God? *We learn what God's love for us looks like as we love others. We can't really learn to love God without the messy process of loving others. That's how God loves me.*

What does love look like? 1st John gives us two basic characteristics of love:

READ 1 John 4:10 What is the first characteristic of love – “not that we loved God, but that he loved us.”

LOVE INITIATES - Love doesn't wait for a person to become worthy of love, or to respond to love, it initiates love before the person deserved it or wanted it!

READ 1 John 3:16-17

LOVE SACRIFICIALLY GIVES – While this is tied to the first, this is HOW love initiates, by sacrificially giving to help the other person.

Think of a close relationship and how could you employ these two characteristics of love this week?

Love of others is measured in actions toward others ("one anothers" of the Bible)

3) Love Life — A Christ follower is not only given life after death, but life that begins right now.

READ: 1 John 5:11-12

Discuss: “What is the difference between the quantity and quality of life?” *Quantity is the length of a life, and Quality is the kind of life that we live. Which of these is Jesus referring to here? The answer is BOTH.*

READ: John 10:10 in the New Living Translation

“The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.”

That is why we say that discipleship is holistic, or it impacts every area of your life. What is attractive about the life of a Christ follower who all they gain in a relationship with Christ is a longer list of rules and meetings to attend? That isn't what Christ meant by obeying His word, rather He calls us to love Him and love others, and follow His plan for a full and fun life and life with Him in eternity.

Vern listed areas where God's plan for life transforms in your daily zeal for life:

- Creation – God is creative so we reflect that now in more creativity and care for the areas God entrusts to us.
- Friends – Now our relationships become transforming rather than dragging others down.
- Risk – Faith in God involves taking risks in life because we have the promise of God's word behind us.
- Generosity – I move from hoarding resources to investing resources in areas that make a larger impact.
- Contentment – Finding joy and satisfaction wherever I am
- Joy – I find fun in life because I am connected to life's purpose, plan and the Creator