

Our Mission and Core Values

Mars Hill Community Church exists to invest our lives in sharing Jesus Christ and growing His followers.

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Q: From these verses, what is the responsibility of the church?

“Few Christians seem to possess a ‘big picture’ of spirituality and even fewer believers (less than one out of five) describe spiritual success in terms broader than a single aspect of personal maturity. Most born-again adults have a very narrow view of what they are striving to become as Christians, what spiritual maturity might look like in their lives, and what it would take for them to maximize their potential as followers of Christ.”

— George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*

Q: When such a large majority of Christians lack a “big picture” of spirituality, what is the result in the church?

Q: How does the Barna quote relate to your own experience as a Christian?

Q: How would you define a spiritually mature Christian?

“Our research also points out that most born-again adults are limited in their ability to grow spiritually because they have failed to set any goals for their spiritual development, failed to develop standards against which to measure their growth, or failed to establish

procedures for being held accountable for their growth. Only four out of every ten church members responded that they had set personal spiritual growth goals for themselves.”

— George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*

Discipline is a key ingredient for any type of growth, especially spiritual growth. Discipline is difficult to cultivate and even harder to maintain. However, there is one thing that makes the act of becoming disciplined easier. We are disciplined about the things that we are passionate about! As Christians, we should be passionate about reaching our full potential in Christ.

Q: When would you say you have been the most disciplined in your life?

Q: What did that discipline accomplish in your life?

Q: How can we grow in discipline from a spiritual perspective?

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-8 and consider Paul's instructions to Timothy regarding effort and discipline in the Spiritual life.

7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

Q: What is Paul saying about discipline here?

Anything we do in our lives where we desire to grow, requires us to apply intentional effort. Growing as a musician, athlete or academic requires thoughtful discipline. How will we grow spiritually? Under the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we will need to apply diligence and effort. There are many areas of the Christian life that are keys to this pursuit of Christlike maturity. As a church, we have identified six areas that we believe are core to becoming more like Christ and living a healthy and balanced Christian life.

“Maturing disciples of Jesus will increasingly look like Jesus. We are given a completely new spiritual identity the moment we come to faith in Christ. And while this new identity is given at salvation, we are charged with partnering with Him as He works in us to transform us into Christ-likeness. As God matures us as disciples, we will increasingly

view our lives and the world around us through this new identity. There are six defining characteristics or core values in which our maturing identity in Christ will grow and be evidenced in our lives.”

-Kirk Pratt, Executive Pastor

We aspire to demonstrate commitment and growth in six key areas that we call our core values”



Biblically Centered: Seeking to be Defined and Directed by Scripture



Prayerfully Dependent: Cultivating a deepening relationship with God through regular prayer



Relationally Connected: Build authentic relationships marked by encouragement and accountability



Ministry Minded: Actively develop and deploy spiritual gifts to serve others



Missionally Engaged: Seeking opportunities to share the gospel locally and globally



Courageously Generous: Living as a steward over all the resources God has assigned to you

While we are far from perfect in expressing these values, we aspire to continually grow in them both individually and corporately. As a member of Mars Hill, we would ask that these core

values become your aspiration as well. It is our hope that everything we do here at Mars Hill Community Church will emanate from our commitment to living out our core values and serve the purpose of aligning us with the mission Jesus has given us, to make disciples who in turn go and make disciples.

As you watch the videos and work through this guide, it is our hope that you would honestly assess your spiritual health and passion in each of these areas and then set some goals as you seek to grow under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit.



Biblically Centered

Living a life defined and directed by Scripture

Each of us regards the Bible as God's written word. However, if we are honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that we don't know the Bible as well as we would like. Furthermore, we also have a difficult time applying the things that we do know from Scripture to our everyday life. The goal of this session is to examine the discrepancy that exists between what we believe about the Bible and what we practice, i.e. how we conform our lives to Biblical truth.

God has given each of us special revelation through His written Word, the Bible. The Bible is God's holy, inerrant word. God's word serves as the foundation of our life. It is essential to understanding God, mankind, history, and life in general. It is not merely a book of stories or of suggestions to regulate our behavior.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God^[a] may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Q: What are some observations you can make about these verses?

"Teaching" is the most general term and refers mainly to imparting doctrine. "Reproof" is used for the "conviction" of a sinner. "Correcting" literally means challenging behavior in hopes of "restoring to an upright position or a right state." This term would apply to believers. "Training in righteousness" refers to instruction given for the purpose of Godly Christian living, i.e. how we relate to God and to one another.

Q: How has the Bible done these things in your life?

The Bible is not an end in itself, however. Merely reading it or even memorizing it does not produce magical results in our lives. It serves as a means to a greater end: glorifying God in our thoughts, words, and actions. This can only be done through careful study and meditation on the scriptures. It is in the application of Scripture that we see the type

of life change that God's Word is designed to bring about. Through the application of Scripture, we set our lives apart from the world and become more like Christ.

James 1:21-25

21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Q: What is the difference between being a doer of the Word and a hearer of the Word?

Q: What is the benefit we receive when we become doers of the Word?

THREE BLESSINGS OF A BIBLICALLY ORIENTED LIFE

1. Change in Life Perspective

Romans 12:1-2

1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? 2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.*

Q: How does being Biblically Centered help us live as a holy sacrifice?

One of the results of the fall of the human race is that we were born into a selfish world with a self-centered nature. This condition can be seen in even the smallest members of the human race, children. Paul, writing to the church in Rome, reminds us that we need

to experience a transformation from a human centered approach to life to a God centered approach to life. Paul refers to this as a renewal of the mind or changing the way you think. One way that this renewal of our minds occurs is through the study and application of God's Word.

Q: What does this verse say about the benefits of a "renewed mind?"

"That's what holy Scripture is - not a calm, serene list of truths to be learned or commands to be obeyed, but a jagged book that forces you to grow up in your thinking as you grapple with it."

- N.T. Wright

2. Strengthened Character

Psalm 19:1

I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

The Scriptures tell us that what we hear in our words or see in our actions are an overflow of what exists in our hearts. A corrupted heart is capable of all sorts of evil thoughts and actions. Fortunately, God has given us a standard of moral excellence in His Word to constrain this type of behavior. As Christians, our character is strengthened and we become more like Christ as we follow His commandments for our lives.

Q: Can you think of an example when God's Word treasured in your heart kept you from disobeying Him?

Q: What are ways we can hide God's Word in our heart?

3. Gives us a foundation for our lives

Luke 6:47-49

47 Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when there was a flood, the river burst against that house and yet it could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who has

heard and has not acted accordingly is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation; and the river burst against it and it immediately collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Jesus tells us that we have two options when it comes to God’s Word in our lives. We can either apply it and use it for the foundation of our lives, or we can ignore it and allow our lives to be ruined by our own faulty foundations. The question for us then becomes, what are we building our lives on?

Q: What does it look like to make Scripture the foundation for your life?

Final Thoughts

- It is the vision of Mars Hill Community Church that the Scriptures would become your basis for all of your decisions. You can only grow in this area if you are willing to ask yourself some hard questions:
 1. Am I studying my Bible?
 2. What areas of my life do I need to apply this biblically centered thinking to?
 3. How can I start applying what I have learned in this study?
- You can build your life around your own beliefs and ignore God’s Word, but it will still be inspected according to His Word.

Personal Application: Are you Biblically Oriented?

1. If someone asked me to tell them what the Bible is about, would I be able to answer them? What would be my answer?

2. How often does the Bible factor into my decision-making process?

3. When I process through decisions, am I able to recall scriptures or easily find scriptures that guide me in that decision?

4. How often, aside from weekend worship services, do I open my Bible and spend time reading/studying it?

5. If the Bible is central to the Christian life, what keeps me from knowing the Bible as well as I would like?

Examples of personal goals to help you become Biblically Oriented:

1. Commit time every day to reading the Bible.
2. Keep a journal of what you read and write down questions, observations, etc.
3. Find a “biblical” mentor to help you work through your questions.
4. As you read and interpret the Word, think through measurable ways that you will apply what you’ve learned.
5. Attend the worship service regularly.
6. Take notes on the sermon, follow up on those notes during the week and come prepared for the following week.
7. Choose a system for memorizing scripture.
8. Listen to recordings of sermons (by whomever) in the car, while exercising, etc.
9. Read through and “master” a book of the Bible each month.
10. Purchase and read through a commentary as you study the Bible.
11. Join a Life Group where you and a couple of others keep one another accountable in your study of the scripture and share your personal insights.
12. Complete one “topical” study in the Bible a month to familiarize yourself with how the Bible addresses certain issues (i.e., marriage, parenting, prayer, etc.)

13. Set aside a time away from your desk, family, phone, TV, etc. and meditate on God's Word.

14. Study an Old Testament character (Moses, Ruth, David, etc.)

15. Choose a topic related to a current event once a month and study how the Bible addresses that issue.

16. Before making major decisions, get alone, fast, pray and study the Word to seek God.

17. Pick one verse a day to write on an index card, keep in your pocket or on your desk, and memorize and meditate on it each day.



Prayerfully Dependent

Cultivating an intimate and dependent relationship with God.

“Prayerlessness is arrogance”

Jared Wilson

Communication is important in any relationship. It is that much more important in our relationship with Christ. As a church, we have identified six areas that we believe are crucial to becoming more like Christ and thus living a healthy and balanced Christian life. However, all of our efforts are in vain if we are not prayerfully dependent. Prayer is the common thread that runs through all areas of our Christian walk. Through prayer we can pursue a relationship with God that is both intimate and dependent.

Q: What are the most common obstacles to anchoring your life in prayer?

Q: What steps can you take to start removing these obstacles?

Even though we know that the Scriptures are full of admonitions to pursue a vibrant and consistent prayer life, it is still one of the most neglected spiritual disciplines. There are many things that make a consistent prayer life difficult. We can sometimes get so overwhelmed with these things that we avoid prayer all together. In order to improve in this area, we must first examine the way we think about prayer. For instance, prayer is less about an event or activity and more about a lifestyle. Paul tells the Thessalonian church to “pray without ceasing.” This doesn’t mean walking around with a bowed head and closed eyes all day...it means to have a continual attitude or lifestyle marked by prayer.

There are plenty of resources available that instruct us in how to pray. Unfortunately, though, pursuing an intimate and dependent relationship with God is less about method and more about a mindset. A life anchored in prayer must begin with the realization that we all struggle with self-sufficiency and independence. Self-sufficient people have no need for anything bigger than themselves, and thus, their prayer life is stifled!

One way to combat self-sufficiency is to deepen our knowledge of God. So much of our religious activity is anchored to the pursuit of our own happiness and fulfillment. God becomes the Great being who meets our needs and fulfills our aspirations. We do not pause to think about what He is like or what He expects in us. If we are not careful, we can “domesticate” God making Him serve us rather than us serving Him. If we lose sight of His holiness, sovereignty, goodness, and love, then we rely on our own abilities and we only turn to God when we have failed or disastrous circumstances strike.

In the biblical view of things, a deeper knowledge of God brings massive improvement in other core areas of Christian maturity: personal purity, integrity in relationships, better study of the Scriptures, a heart that desires to serve, better effectiveness at engaging the culture, and improved private and corporate worship. However, if we seek these things without passionately desiring a deeper knowledge of God, we are selfishly running after God’s blessing without running after Him. One of the most important foundational steps in knowing God better is prayer – spiritual, persistent, biblically minded prayer.

PRAYER PRINCIPLES

1. Seek the Will of God in Scripture

1 John 5:14-15

¹⁴ And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. ¹⁵ And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

Q: How do we know if what we are praying is according to the will of God? (See John 15:7)

Q: What is a good way to have Jesus’ Words remain in you?

2. Come to God with Pure Motives

James 4:2-3

² You want what you don’t have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous for what others have, and you can’t possess it, so you fight and quarrel to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don’t have what you want is that you don’t ask God for it. ³ And even when you do ask, you don’t get it because your whole motive is wrong –you want only what will give you pleasure.

Q: What type of motive for prayer is described here? What is the outcome?

Q: What should our motive be as we pray?

3. Seek Holiness Before the Lord

Psalm 66:18

¹⁸ If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened.

Q: What is the relationship between sin and our prayer life?

Q: What can we do if God reveals sin in our lives? (Remember 1 John 1:9)

4. Believe

James 1:5-8

⁵ If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking. ⁶ But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ They can't make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do.

Q: How should we approach God in prayer?

Q: Why is this mindset important?

THREE CATEGORIES OF PRAYER

1. Disciplined (Matthew 14:23, Luke 5:16, Luke 1:1-10, James 5:16)

Christ Himself makes prayer a priority in His life. Even though He is the Son of God, many times in Scripture we see Him escape by Himself to pray. Once we are in the habit of praying, scripture does give us some insight to shape our prayers.

Q: What are some principles these verses teach us about the discipline of prayer?

2. Spontaneous (Nehemiah 2:4,1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Our prayer life should not be confined to select times when we are able to get alone and connect with God. Our activities throughout the day should be filled with prayer. Stopping for a moment throughout the day to quietly acknowledge God's presence and His faithfulness is an important step in developing a life that is anchored in prayer.

Q: What types of events most often lead you to spontaneous prayer?

"Prayer is spilling your guts. It doesn't have to be pretty. It doesn't have to be tidy. It doesn't have to be eloquent."

- Jared Wilson

3. Corporate (Acts 12:5-16, James 5:14-15)

Corporate prayer is also to be a priority in our lives. When you read through the book of Acts, big things always happen whenever the Church gathers to pray. There is something special about the body of Christ meeting together and lifting up both corporate and individual needs. Galatians 6:2 tells us to bear one another's burdens. Also, think through the "Lord's Prayer." It only contains plural pronouns like "us and "our." Immediately after giving the disciples this prayer He stresses to them the importance of being in a right relationship with one another.

Q: What are some of the benefits/results that you have seen through corporate prayer?

Final Thoughts:

- God is much more concerned about our attitude towards prayer than the methods we use to communicate with Him.
- The transition from self-sufficiency to intimacy and dependence on Him often includes brokenness. God uses events, trials, and tests in our lives to draw us into a life that is more deeply anchored in prayer.

Personal Applications: Are you Prayerfully Dependent?

1. Do I pray every day?
2. Is there anyone in my life that I pray with?
3. When I make decisions, how often do I pray through them?
4. Do I pray with my spouse about decisions?
5. Do I pray consistently for the needs of others?

Examples of personal goals to help you become Prayerfully Dependent

1. Set aside ten minutes each day to pray.
2. Pray through a Psalm each day.
3. Pray while you shower/get ready in the morning.
4. Pray while you exercise.
5. Instead of turning on the radio, pray during your drive to and from work.
6. Read a book on the subject of prayer (ex. A Call to Spiritual Reformation by D.A. Carson, Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference by Phillip Yancey, The Autobiography of George Mueller)

7. Do a word study in the Bible on prayer.
8. Ask someone to be your prayer partner.
9. Journal your prayers.
10. Create a list of people to pray for each day of the week.
11. Before you begin each week, write down the events of your week and pray about them.
12. Before every major event or decision that you make, pray for wisdom.
13. If you're married, set a regular time to pray with your spouse.
14. Pray for opportunities to become more relationally connected.
15. Pray through Scripture as you read it in an effort to become more biblically oriented.
16. Pray for opportunities to become more anchored in prayer.
17. Pray for opportunities to become more ministry focused.
18. Pray for opportunities to become more culturally engaged.
19. Pray for opportunities to become more courageously generous.
20. Attend weekly corporate prayer at Mars Hill Community Church.



Relationally Connected

Developing relationships of encouragement and accountability

“The gospel blows the doors of our tidy little hegemonic communes and creates a whole new community that never would have formed without it.”

- Matt Chandler

One of the things that people look for in a church is “good community.” All of us have a deep longing for community in our lives. Nobody likes to be alone, nor is anyone at their best when they are alone. Never in the Bible do we see an individual with a “lone ranger” mentality. Unfortunately, our American culture promotes this type of mentality and lifestyle. Not only does this limit our effectiveness for God, but it can also be fatal to our personal lives.

Q: When you think of the word “community,” what images come to mind?

Community is not a human invention. The Trinity exists in constant community with one another; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Genesis 1:26 God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” God created a Helper for Adam because He said it was “not good” for man to be alone.

Community is God’s dearest creation. It is only within community that there is the possibility of knowing and being known, loving and being loved, serving and being served, celebrating and being celebrated. It is in our relationships that we are able to demonstrate the love of Christ.

John 13:34-35

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 17:22-23

²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Q: How are our relationships with other believers expressive of the kind of relationship we have with God?

Q: How do love and unity work together?

Two essential elements of good relationships are encouragement and accountability. A beautiful picture of how this fleshes out in the church is painted for us in Acts 2:42: “All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.”

Here we see a group of believers in the early Church, bound together in Christ, choosing to study the Scriptures together, pray with one another, share resources, and spend time together to spur spiritual growth in one another.

Q: Do relationships in the church today typically look like Acts 2:42? What are some obstacles to being relationally connected that we face in our society?

The word encourage literally means “to give or speak courage.” Encouragement is the kind of expression that helps someone want to be a better Christian, even when life is rough. Not only is living life apart from encouraging relationships unbiblical, it’s also miserable.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Q: What are the benefits of community according to this passage?

Q: Even in the early church age, “gathering together” wasn’t a priority for some people. How have you seen a lack of community affect your own life?

It is essential that our relationships be grounded upon accountability. To be accountable to others means to be regularly answerable for the key areas of our lives to like-minded individuals. We need others around us to keep us from thinking too highly of ourselves and call us to act when we need to change. We need people to point out blind spots in our life that we may not see, so we can sharpen our character and not hurt or offend others. Few would disagree with our need for accountability.

However, many of us are surrounded by unhealthy relationships. In these relationships, we don't love people enough to tell them things that they may not like even though it will produce good results in their life. The irony in these relationships is not that we will hurt others, but we fear being rejected by that person.

Proverbs 27:6

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:17

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Final Thoughts:

- The hope of Mars Hill Community Church is to grow a body of believers that are interdependent and not independent.
- We need relationships that are marked both by encouragement AND accountability.
- Choosing to invest in relationships can be risky and painful. However, the sacrifice is worth the benefit – life change.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Are you Relationally Connected?

1. Who in my life do I trust enough to discuss problems with?

2. Aside from my family, do I have any authentic relationships?

3. Do I wait on others to initiate relationships, or do I seek people out in developing relationships?

4. If I am in a crisis, who are the people in my life that would rally around me and give me support, encouragement, etc.?

Examples of personal goals to help you become Relationally Connected

1. Rather than waiting for people to come to you, initiate conversation with a new person each Sunday.

2. Set up a monthly lunch with someone you would like to have a closer relationship with.

3. Practice listening and waiting for others to finish before offering an opinion.

4. Write encouraging notes to others.

5. If you don't have any close friends, begin to pray daily for God to bring you one or two.

6. If you are in an inauthentic or hollow relationship, confess your desire to see it taken to a "relationally connected" level.

7. Join a community group at Mars Hill Community Church.

8. Don't be afraid to give a gentle rebuke when you see a friend in error.

9. Pray before you point out errors in friends' lives. Make sure you're doing it because God wants you to and not out of selfish motives.

10. Be open to the rebuke of others, without getting defensive or blowing up.

11. Seek the counsel of others before you make a big decision.

12. Tell others when you are hurting.

13. Find someone to mentor you and/or find someone for you to mentor.
14. Take a personality test in an effort to learn how you relate to others and how others may perceive you.
15. Read a book a year on relationships Ex: (Connecting by Larry Crabb, Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman, Dropping your Guard by Chuck Swindoll)
16. Constantly evaluate whether you are a “giver” or a “taker” in relationships.
17. Ask people three questions about themselves before you talk about yourself.
18. Invite a new friend or neighbor over for dinner once a month.

At Mars Hill Community Church, Life Groups are the primary means for developing Christ-centered relationships, accountability, and encouragement. Contact the church office if you are interested in joining a Life Group.



Ministry Minded

Discovering and employing my gifts to serve the body of Christ and the world

When most of us think of ministry, we think of the work done by pastors, missionaries, Christian conference speakers, or evangelists. Somehow in America we have the notion that the church is divided into two halves: those who “do” ministry (the pastors and staff) and those to whom the ministry is “done” (the members of the church). However, this limited idea of ministry is inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture. A proper understanding of ministry will help us find a greater fulfillment in life as we begin to see all that we do as opportunities to glorify God and serve others.

Q: What do you tend to think of when you hear the word “ministry?”

Q: What are ways to be a “minister” even though you are not employed by a church?

The Greek word in the New Testament that we most often translate as “ministry” carries the basic meaning of “service.” It can be used of tasks as basic as waiting tables (Acts 6:1), caring for the poor through monetary gifts (2 Corinthians 9:12), or proclaiming the gospel (Acts 20:24). The important thing to note about the use of the term is that the term is not limited to a select few individuals who hold a particular position within a church. All of God’s people are called to serve in a variety of ways. Ministry is what happens when God’s people utilize their gifts and abilities to serve others in ways that bring God glory, build up His church, and reach out to the world.

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Q: According the above, what are we saved “by?” And what are we saved “for?”

Notice how there is nothing that we can do on our own to earn God's grace, His unmerited favor or unconditional acceptance. However, there is an interesting comparison that is being made in these two verses. Verses 8-9 clearly state that we are not saved BY good works, however verse 10 states that we were saved FOR good works. The fact is that God has ordained "good things" (ministry) for life, and He has even gone before us and prepared the way for us to minister.

The ultimate example of being ministry minded is Jesus Christ himself. Jesus set aside the glory that was due Him and took the form of a bondservant. He was others-oriented. Jesus' entire existence on earth, including His work on the cross was a selfless act of obedience to the Father. In John 17:4 Jesus says, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." If you find it too difficult to relate to the ministry of Jesus, consider Timothy. In Philippians 2:19-21, Paul sends Timothy to the church at Philippi because he is a kindred spirit who will look after the church's needs rather than his own. Looking after the needs of others provided Timothy with plenty of opportunities for ministry.

"Faith without works is about as useless as a screen door on a submarine"

- Rich Mullins

STRIVING TOWARDS A MINISTRY FOCUSED LIFE

The core ingredient of a ministry focused life is spiritual gifts. Each member of the body of Christ has been given a spiritual gift. These gifts are given supernaturally by God and not through asking or wanting. Gifts are also not given to make individuals look good, even though the selfish nature of man often abuses them.

1 Peter 4:10-11

¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Q: According to these verses, what are some of the reasons why God gives spiritual gifts to believers?

Q: What do all of these gifts have in common?

According to Ephesians 4, God gave leaders to the church to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Therefore, some of the primary responsibilities of the leaders at Mars Hill are to help you identify your gifts, train you to serve, and make sure there are opportunities for you to serve both inside and outside the church body. Just as each individual has a distinct fingerprint, every believer also has a distinct ministry fingerprint. Beginning with spiritual gifts and supported by our interests (talents, skills, passions, personality, and experience), each believer has an endless number of ministry opportunities.

Final Thoughts

- At Mars Hill, we want all members to experience the power of God working through them as they use their gifts and abilities to serve others.
- In order to become ministry focused, we must choose the eternal over the temporal, realizing that God wants us to be a part of something bigger than ourselves.
- If you were only given one more year to live, what in your life would you change in order to be more ministry focused?

Personal Application: Are you Ministry Focused?

1. Do I view myself as a “minister of the Gospel?” Do I focus on ways that I can serve others, or do I expect the church to do this work?
2. If I were to leave Mars Hill one year from now, would my absence create a void in a particular ministry?
3. Do I know what my spiritual gifts are? If so, how am I using them?
4. What do I think about when I hear the term “good works?”

Examples of personal goals to help you become Ministry Focused

1. Take a spiritual gifts assessment. / Ask others what spiritual gifts they have observed in your life (see the following page for a list of common spiritual gifts).

*If you are interested, you can contact the church office for access to an online Spiritual Gifts test.

2. Serve in one of the essential ministries of the church (children’s ministry, student ministry, campus impact, etc.).
3. Complete a Bible study of Jesus’ life making careful note of how he was “ministry focused.”
4. Do a Bible study on the spiritual gifts.

5. Seek out a younger believer to disciple.
6. Take some time to spend alone with God. Pray for God to show you opportunities to use your gifts, both in the church and the community.
7. Look over your budget and gauge how much of your resources are going to support God's work. Align your budget in a way that you can make an impact in God's work with your finances.
8. Read three (3) biographies a year on Christians who made an impact for God in their life.
9. Pray that God would make you sensitive to the opportunities you have each day to minister to someone in the workplace.
10. Take a meal to someone who is hurting.
11. Invite a person from church, your neighborhood, or your work that is new to the area over to your house for a meal.
12. Aside from giving to the church and other ministries, set aside a "miscellaneous" fund each month that you can use for a need that someone suddenly has.
13. Take a week of vacation and use it to serve God somewhere.
14. Take responsibility to organize meals for someone who has a need (i.e. new baby, hospitalization, etc...)
15. Offer to baby-sit for a couple you know so they can take a date night.
16. Be willing to share your personal resources (car, truck, lake house, etc.) to help someone in need.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS LIST

Though this list is not exhaustive, the following are known spiritual gifts listed in scripture. Some of these may be natural abilities for you, but a spiritual gift is only present due to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life to carry out the purpose of God through you:

Administration: To plan, organize and execute procedures that accomplish the goals of the church

Creative Ability: To use creative abilities such as music, writing, drama, painting, etc. for the benefit of the church

Discernment: To distinguish between truth and error and to be able to discern the difference between good and evil spirits

Encouragement: To present God's truth to strengthen, comfort or urge to action those who are discouraged or wavering

Evangelism: To effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers so they respond in faith and move toward discipleship

Faith: To act on God's promises with confidence and unwavering belief in God's ability to fulfill his purposes

Giving: To contribute money and resources to the work of the Lord with a giving heart and positive attitude

Hospitality: To care for people by providing fellowship, food and shelter

Intercession: To recognize the prayer needs of others and consistently pray for them

Leadership: To motivate, lead, and direct people to accomplish the purposes of God

Mercy: To cheerfully, compassionately, and practically help those who are in need or are suffering

Prophecy: To reveal truth and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner for understanding, correction, repentance or edification

Service: To possess the grace to minister to the needs of the body, both spiritually and physical

Shepherding: To nurture, care for and guide people toward ongoing spiritual maturity

Teaching: To understand, clearly explain, instruct and apply the word of God



Missionally Engaged

Seeking opportunities to share the gospel in our community and around the world

“Just as Jesus was sent to do the Father’s will, so He sends His disciples into the world.”

- Dr. Carmen Imes

It is common for Christians to bemoan the state of affairs in our world. Society has and will continue to decline in moral standards...the Bible is clear on that. Too often we as Christians “hide” from the world and treat the church as a fortress. We can get the idea that the purpose of the church is to protect us from the culture. In his book *Lifestyle Evangelism*, author Joe Aldrich makes this observation as to why some Christians avoid engaging the culture:

Somehow in the church we’ve made it to where spirituality is defined by how much you can withdraw from culture. However, the true mark of spirituality is how much you can engage the culture and penetrate it for Jesus Christ.”

Q: Why do some people believe that it is spiritual to withdraw from the culture?

John 17:14-19

14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them away from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Q: How does Jesus say we can be in the world, yet set apart from it at the same time?

In order to understand what it means to be culturally engaged, we need to look no further than the ministry of Jesus himself. Jesus intentionally placed himself in the

vicinity of lostness. Notice this exchange between Jesus and the “religious” people of His day when they see him spending time with “sinners.”

Matthew 9:9-13

⁹As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. ¹¹But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?” ¹²When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” ¹³Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

Q: If you saw a member of the church hanging out with a group of “sinners,” what would you think?

Q: Have you ever avoided spending time with “sinners” because you did not want “religious” people to accuse you of being one?

Q: How does Jesus’ model challenge your thoughts on this?

We can see that Jesus wasn’t concerned about what the “religious” people would think of His spending time with sinners. He was committed to His mission. Luke 19:10 says that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Jesus’ goal was to reach sinners. He also instructed His disciples that they were to be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13-14). Salt is symbolic of the spiritual health essential to Christian virtue and counter to the corruption of the world. Light symbolizes the witness that we have for Christ in a world that is darkened by sin.

However, we cannot be salt and light to sinners if we are not engaged with them. If you notice Jesus’ life, He simply reaches out to the people around Him. He never organizes a rally or an event so that people can hear the Gospel. The question, then, becomes where are we engaging the world? Christ’s example is clear, and so are His words. He says in **Matthew 28:19-20**

¹⁹“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

This verse is not meant only for pastors and missionaries. It is directed to all believers as we realize that we all have our own personal mission field. The first step in becoming culturally engaged is to ask the following questions.

Q: What are the opportunities that I already have to relate with non-Christians?

Q: Where can I actively and strategically place myself to develop relationships with non-Christians?

FOUR ARENAS FOR CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

Finally, it is helpful to think through the following four arenas of your life as opportunities for you to engage the culture.

1. Conduct (Being) –

1 Peter 3:15-16

¹⁵“Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. ¹⁶But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ”

As a Christian, our lives should be representative of the righteousness of Christ. As we are being conformed to His likeness, we are being called to a lifestyle, or a standard of conduct, that is different from that of the world. Our conduct and behavior gives testimony to the holy work of Christ in our life.

2. Works (Doing) –

Matthew 5:16

¹⁶“In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

In each new situation we should ask, “What can we do in this situation that draws attention to God so that He can be honored?” We can authenticate the reality of the

truth of Scripture by caring for the needs of individuals. When the truth of the gospel is combined with the proof of love for God and for man, then the message of salvation becomes more than something religious; it becomes extremely relevant.

3. Money (Giving) –

Luke 16:9

⁹“Here’s the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your earthly possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.”

You can use your money (wealth of unrighteousness) to strategically help change lives and reach other parts of the world for Christ. Money is only temporal, but a wise investment can produce eternal results as individuals come to trust Christ and later will welcome you into heaven.

4. Words (Sharing) –

Acts 1:8

⁸“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Each individual has the responsibility of sharing their faith in the context of relationships with non-Christians. The church is not the best answer for a non-Christian friend, because of the credibility issue we addressed earlier. You have credibility with your friends because you have the testimony of a changed life.

Q: Which of these four arenas do you feel like you are actively engaging the culture? Which arena needs the most work?

Final Thoughts

- We need to take a fresh look at our leader, Jesus Christ, and the efforts He made to spend time with non-believers.
- We need to re-embrace Jesus’ original vision for the church as salt and light and measure our progress as a church against that vision.
- We need to seek significant non-Christian relationships, serve these individuals in practical ways, and then share our story with them.

Personal Application: Are you Missionally Engaged?

1. When was the last time you shared your faith with someone? Have you ever?
2. What areas of your life are you consistently around non-Christians? Do you have any significant relationships with non-Christians?
3. What non-Christians are you currently praying for and pursuing?
4. Do you retreat from the culture or do you seek to engage and penetrate it? How?

Examples of personal goals to help you become Missionally Engaged

1. Pray every day that God would make you sensitive to the daily opportunities you have to connect with non-Christians.
2. Make a list of non-Christians that you will commit to get to know and pray for their salvation.
3. Think through how you came to know Christ and the individuals that God used to draw yourself to Him.
4. Memorize a few key verses of Scripture so you can share the Gospel when you have an opportunity.
5. Introduce yourself to your neighbors.
6. Pray for your neighbors as you drive or walk around the neighborhood.
7. Invite a non-Christian neighbor or co-worker over to dinner once a month.
8. Initiate a social activity (go to dinner, a ballgame, movie, etc.) with a non-Christian friend.

9. Stay up on current events so you can engage non-Christians in meaningful conversations.
10. Educate yourself on something that interests a non-Christian friend in order to stimulate conversation (i.e., a certain sports team, a particular hobby, books they like to read, etc.).
11. Pick one activity (a club, team, project, etc.) to participate in each year specifically for the purpose of meeting non-Christians.
12. When people voice concerns in their life, ask them if you can pray for them, making sure to follow up on their concerns.
13. Summarize your testimony to one or two minutes so you can share it in casual conversations.
14. Read magazines that give insight into our culture.



Courageously Generous

Living as a steward of all of God's resources

(Note: The following study has been adapted from a book called "The Treasure Principle," by Randy Alcorn.)

Few people, even Bible-believing Christians, grasp the incredible joy available through God's grace. We squander vast resources in our quest for joy, trying to buy happiness. But it never works. According to Jesus, we gain joy in ways that are paradoxical and counterintuitive. We gain what will last only by giving up what won't.

THE TREASURE PRINCIPLE:

"You can't take it with you, but you can send it on."

Treasure Principle Key #1: "God owns everything. I'm His money manager."

At the root of our thinking about material wealth should be one truth that is easy to understand yet difficult for many of us to accept: God owns everything. His name, and His alone, is on the title deed to the universe.

Picture your wealth – money, home, clothes, equipment, entertainment system - everything. Make sure you don't leave anything out, especially items you tend to take for granted.

1 Chronicles 29:11-14

¹Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. ¹²Wealth and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength. ¹³O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name! ¹⁴But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us!

Q. This is a prayer of humility. What does this speaker teach us about God in these verses?

Q. Whenever we begin to think like “owners” of the things that God has blessed us with, a red flag should appear. If God is the owner, the what is our role?

“A steward manages assets for the owner’s benefit. The steward carries no sense of entitlement to the assets he manages. It’s his job to find out what the owner wants done with his assets, then carry out his will.”

-Randy Alcorn

Treasure Principle Key #2: “My heart always goes where I put God’s money.”

“He who lays up treasures on earth spends his life backing away from his treasures. To him, death is loss. He who lays up treasures in heaven looks forward to eternity; he’s moving daily toward his treasures. To him, death is gain. He who spends his life moving away from his treasures has reason to despair. He who spends his life moving toward his treasures has reason to rejoice.”

*-Randy
Alcorn*

Q. How closely does the preceding quote represent your own views? How does giving make us more joyful people?

Q. What do your checkbook, your credit card statements, your receipts, and your appointment book say about the placement of your treasure....and your heart?

Treasure Principle Key #3: “Heaven, not earth, is my home”

There is a constant struggle that the believer must face as we are tempted to focus too much on the here-and-now rather than on the destination that awaits us all.

“There are many roadblocks to giving: unbelief, insecurity, pride, idolatry, desire for power and control. The raging current of our culture – and often our churches – makes it hard to swim upstream. It’s considered “normal” to

keep far more than we give. But I'm convinced that the greatest deterrent to giving is this: the illusion that earth is our home."

-Randy
Alcorn

Q. How do we practice having an eternal mindset?

Q: Why are the tangible things right in front of us so tempting?

Treasure Principle Key #4: "I should live not for the dot, but for the line" Consider the following diagram:



"The person who lives for the dot lives for treasures on earth that end up in junkyards. The person who lives for the line lives for treasures in heaven that will never end. Giving is living for the line." — Randy Alcorn

Q. What aspects of this world are most effective at luring your affections away from heaven? What methods have you used to combat this competition for your heart?

Treasure Principle Key #5: "Giving is the only antidote to materialism."

"The act of giving is a vivid reminder that it's all about God, not about us. It's saying I am not the point. He is the point. He does not exist for me. I exist for Him. When I give something away... the magic spell is broken. My mind clears, and I recognize God as owner, myself as servant, and other people as intended beneficiaries of what God has entrusted to me...Only

giving breaks me free from the gravitational hold of money and possessions. Giving shifts me to a new center of gravity – heaven.”

— Randy Alcorn

1 Timothy 6:17-19

¹⁷Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. ¹⁸Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. ¹⁹By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.

Q. What are some examples of fruit that comes from our giving?

Q: Can you think of a time where your generosity impacted your own life?

Treasure Principle Key #6: “God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving.”

2 Corinthians 9:10-11

¹⁰For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. ¹¹Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

Q. Based on this passage, why does God provide us more than we need?

Q: How can I live this specific principle out?

Final Thoughts

- You may already be changing your thinking and habits about money and giving. As you consider your next step of giving maturity, remember that no efforts will succeed without Christ's involvement in the planning and in the implementation.
- Consider the following questions that are intended to help you clarify your plans toward giving:

How am I doing at my basic giving commitment to God, beginning with my church (1 Corinthians 9:9-12; Galatians 6:6)?

Am I giving where I am being spiritually fed?

How much is God leading me to give in freewill offerings?

Where should I give them (James 1:5)?

How strategic or worthy are the organizations or individuals I'm supporting or considering supporting?

To whom might I pass along what I've learned about the Treasure Principle?

What are some creative ways that I can accomplish this?

Personal Application: Are you Courageously Generous?

1. What does it mean for me to be a good steward?
2. What resources (money, possessions, etc.) do I tend to hold on tightly?
3. What drives me to keep or hold on to resources?
4. When have I given out of excess? When have I given out of sacrifice? What's the difference?
5. What blessings have I seen as a result of giving?

Examples of Personal Goals to help you become Courageously Generous

1. I will affirm God's full ownership of me (I Corinthians 6:19-20) and everything entrusted to me (Psalm 24:1).

2. I will set aside the first-fruits of all I receive, treating it as holy and belonging exclusively to the Lord (Malachi 3:8-10).

3. Out of the remaining treasures God entrusts to me, I will seek to make generous freewill gifts (2 Corinthians 9:1).

4. I will ask God to teach me to give sacrificially to His purpose, including helping the poor and reaching the lost (2 Corinthians 8:3).

5. Recognizing that I cannot take earthly treasures from this world, I will determine to lay them up as heavenly treasures – for Christ's glory and the eternal good of others and myself (Matthew 6:19-21).

6. I will ask God to show me how to lead others to the present joy and future reward of the treasure principle (Hebrews 10:24).