

salt + light

LIVING MY KINGDOM CALLING

Experiencing & Extending The Kingdom
In The Places God Has Placed Me.



SALT & LIGHT

God is at work all around us and inviting us into the joy of joining Him in what He's doing - it's what we were created for! As the people of God we're invited to be both salt & light in a world that is in desperate need of the life of Jesus. The Church was never meant to be a social club or a religious group. It has always been the heart and design of God for the church to be the family of God representing who Jesus is to the world around us - it's who we are!

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FLAVORFUL & BRIGHT

Q. When have you felt most alive in who God created and called you to be?

THE BIG IDEA

Read Matthew 5:13-16, Ephesians 2:8-10 & Ephesians 4:1-16. You were created to be salt & light, and not in a generic, one-size-fits-all-way but in a way is unique to you. You created on purpose for purpose, and you have a calling from God and have been given custom-made grace to empower that calling. Your kingdom calling* is how you uniquely reflect Jesus to the world around you in ways that illuminate and add both flavor and life. It's not simply for "Churchianity", God's design is that your kingdom calling would impact every area of your life.

Who God created and called you to be, not only has a part to play in the mission of God, but it deeply impacts the role that you play in the family of God. Maturity in the family of God looks like humbly and intentionally playing your part well - we all need you!

Discussion

Q. What is your understanding of the meaning of "kingdom calling"?

Q. What does it mean to live a life worthy of the calling you have received?

Q. As you understand it today, what is your calling in life (it's specific & personal)?

Q. How do you live out your calling in this season of life?

Q. What would it look like for us to be a community that supports each other in our kingdom callings?

Group Activation

For larger groups, break into groups of 3 or 4. Take time to listen to God for each other and encourage each other in your calling. It could be something that the Spirit reveals or something that you have noticed through experience.

Individual Activation

For larger groups, break into groups of 3 or 4. Take time to listen to God for each other and encourage each other in your calling. It could be something that the Spirit reveals or something that you have noticed through experience.

**Kingdom Calling is a term we've coined to inform the ways we talk about our calling and purpose in life. We use the word "kingdom" in reference to calling because it gives us a vision of purpose beyond church. We are the church and we're called to be a kingdom people who see the ways and will of the King impact the world. If our calling was only to the church and spiritual maturity was primarily about church influence or position then we lose sight of all that God is doing in the world. Everyone is called to be part of the church, but most of the church will live out the majority of their calling outside of the church gathered.*



LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Q. How have you seen God at work around you recently?

THE BIG IDEA

Read Matthew 5:13-16, John 20:21, 2 Corinthians 5:20

From beginning to end the Bible is God's cry, "I want my kids back!" It's the heart of God that the world would know Him and the great joy of those who do to partner with God to pursue those who don't. One way to describe the mandate for the church, the family of God, is to know God and to make Him known.

This idea of being a salt & light, or living on mission, is where some of the church thrives and the rest of us shrink back. The issue here is often in our misunderstanding of "living on mission". Often a "missional life" feels like someone handing you Saul's ill-fitting armor when you're more wired like David to use a sling and some stones to slay Goliaths - it's a well intended prescription that doesn't seem to fit. You see, the mission of God flows through the ways He has uniquely designed you. It's not so much something you do, as it is you being fully you. You already reflect God, it's part of your redeemed nature and your calling. Discovering how to live on mission in the unique ways God has wired you and the unique places He has placed you is a significant part of spiritual maturity. The truth is that living on mission was always intended by God to be a joy we experience with God, more like going to work with Dad, than a chore we do for Him. Let Your Light Shine!

Discussion

Q. When have you felt most like yourself, most like the person God created you to be?

Q. Is the idea of living on mission inspiring or intimidating to you?

Q. How does the idea of "the mission of God flowing through the ways He has uniquely designed you" take the pressure off?

Q. In Matthew 5 Jesus talks about hiding your light under a bowl. What would be some things that cause you to shrink back or hide your light? What do you need to receive in order to take the bowl off?

Q. Who are some people that you could be more yourself around and let your light shine? What do you imagine God doing with them?

Q. What are some ways you would like to grow and be equipped to let your light shine more brightly?

Group Activation

Take some time to listen to God together. Ask God, who do you say I am? Who have you called me to be? Share what you sensed* God saying to you.

For those who struggled sensing what God was saying, ask God to give others in the group words for them.

Individual Activation

Take some time to pray and journal about what causes you to hid your light. Ask God to impart healing, clarity and courage in those areas.



**We use the word "sensed" because God often speaks to our senses and imagination, not necessarily in ways that you audible hear.*

THE PRESSURE IS OFF!

Q. How have you seen God at work around you over the last week?

THE BIG IDEA

Read John 15:1-17. In the Old Covenant they rested from work, but in the New Covenant we work from rest. All that we're called to do is from a place of union and rest - it's in God's pleasure and from God's pleasure instead of an attempt to earn His pleasure. Hebrews 4:11 exhorts us to "strive to enter the rest of God" - that's really the only striving we're to do.

1 Corinthians 3:9 says that we are co-laborers with Christ. We're not working for Him, we're working with Him. Over and over again Jesus pointed to the reality of His partnership with Father-God. He said, "I do nothing unless I see the Father doing it" (John 5:19) and "I say nothing unless I hear the Father saying it" (John 12:49). In John 15:5 Jesus says, "apart from me you can do nothing." Meaning that if we're to do anything fruitful in our lives, it's to be done in partnership with God. That changes the guiding question for a believer from "What can I do for God?" to "What is God doing and how can I join Him?"

Discussion

Q. When was a memorable time that you were able to partner with God in making a difference in someone else's life?

Q. How does this idea of partnering with God challenge you? What pressure does it take off?

Q. What does it require from you to work with God?

Group Activation

Ask God what He is doing in the room right now and how you can partner with Him?

Ask God to give you a word of encouragement for someone in the room?

Individual Activation

Start each day this week by asking, "Holy Spirit, what are you up to today?" and "How can I join you?" You may even go through your expected schedule for the day, who you'll be with and where you'll be and ask Him to give you direction for the day. Hearing God and being Spirit-led doesn't always mean spontaneous - expect Him to show you what to expect. Journal what He shows you at the beginning of the day and what He shows you at the end of the day.



WHY CHURCH?

Q. When is one time that you saw the Church or spiritual community at her best?

THE BIG IDEA

The purpose of church can often get lost inside of our event centered, consumeristic approach to church in western culture. Church isn't simply something we go to or isn't another worldly organization, it's who we are as the people of God, it's the family we belong to, it's the mystical representation of the body of Christ on Earth. In this session we'll look at two words used for church and how they can help re-shape who we are called to be and how we engage with each other and the world.

Read Matthew 16:17-19 The word for church used here is "ecclesia" in Greek and it literally means "called out ones". There were many Hebrew religious words Jesus could have chosen, but instead He chose this word. In Greek culture, "ecclesia" was an assembly of the people convened at a public place of council for the purpose of deliberating on behalf of the city - it was a role of governmental authority. The idea behind this word is that the church, the called out ones, have the responsibility & authority of holding the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven and governing the spiritual realm on earth. It harkens back to Adam & Eve's original responsibility, to fill the earth and subdue it. When understanding this aspect of church, we see the church's role in shaping culture; however, as we seek to shape culture we cannot leave the Kingdom values of choice, love, mercy, justice and freedom behind.

Read Acts 2:42-47 The word describing church here is the Greek word "koinonia", which means fellowship, joint participation, communion. This idea of church highlights the familial & relational nature of the church. We're not simply the governing authority of the Kingdom on Earth, but also the spiritual Family of the Kingdom, looking after each other's needs and building each other up in love and faith. Our relationship with the church then changes from transaction or codependent to interdependent. I become less focused on "What can I get?" and more focused on "What can I bring?"

Discussion

- Q. How have you seen the church operating as ecclesia & koinonia in your lifetime?*
- Q. What implications do these two ideas have for the role of the church in the life of the believer and for the role of the church in the world?*
- Q. Considering these two ideas, how is God inviting you to reimagine your mindset and relationship to the church?*
- Q. How might the ideas of "ecclesia" & "koinonia" reshape your participation and expectations as we gather?*
- Q. How might it fuel our times of prayer and your personal prayer life?*
- Q. What does it say about our daily life?*

Group Activation

Take time to pray for each other's needs.

Take time to pray for God to move in the places He's placed you and for the people He's placed you among.

Individual Activation

Take time to process your church history.

What are you grateful for?

What has been difficult or painful? Are there any negative experiences that might be keeping you from fully participating in what God has called you to and what He is doing in the Church today?

Where are you hopeful for the Church?



GATHERED & SCATTERED

Q. How have you seen God at work in your life over the last week?

THE BIG IDEA

Let's go back to the vision of the church in Acts 2:42-47. What were the active ingredients in the rhythms of their lives?

If you read on into chapter 3 about Peter and John and the healing of the lame man it seems clear that they were living as the church both gathered and scattered. God was moving in their midst as they gathered but also as they scattered into the regular rhythms of life. Their gathered times added fuel to their scattered times and their scattered times added meaning to their gathered times. When they were gathered you can imagine the times of care, prayer, equipping, impartation & testimony, and when they were scattered you can sense the purpose and expectation of God moving in them and through them. This seems to be something in the DNA of every believer that longs for this way of living. Sure, it can be intimidating, but it's the life of adventure, purpose and camaraderie we were all meant to live out.

Discussion

Read 1 Corinthians 12 from the paradigm of the church both gathered and the church scattered.

How might their coming together fuel their going out?

It's clear that Corinth was a less than mature and perfect church; they had some real struggles. At the same time there was real life happening in their midst. Can you imagine how God moving in their times together equipped them to be aware of Him in their times apart?

Q. Would you want to be a part of a group of believers living life in that way?

Q. What would it take to see God do that in our Community Group and regular life?

Q. Where might God be calling you to be expectant and intentional in the "scattered" part of your life?

Group Activation

Listen. What is God doing in the room now? How can you join Him?

Ask God who in the room needs a touch from Him now.

Individual Activation

Look at the places and people God has as part of your regular rhythms. Ask God what He is doing in those places and people. Journal what you hear.

Begin praying daily for the places God has placed you and for 2 to 3 people in those places.



ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Q. What have you seen God do over the last week?

THE BIG IDEA

Read Matthew 13:31-33.

In recent decades the church has been plagued with an idea of escapism, and it is having a significant impact on the role we play in the world. Many believers are more concerned with escaping earth and getting to heaven than they are about Jesus prayer, “Let your Kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). What you believe here has a consequential influence on how we live as salt & light. Starting with God’s instruction for Adam & Eve to “fill the earth & subdue it” (Gen 1:28), it’s always been the heart of God to see earth look like heaven and the kingdoms of this world be the Kingdom of our God and King (see Rev. 11:15). While we might not be able to fully wrap our minds around what it looks like, we can trust that God is still committed to seeing the experiential-knowledge of His glory cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

The role of the church isn’t only to get as many people from earth to heaven (evangelistic), thought that’s great! It’s also to transform the world to look like heaven (apostolic). If our focus is on leaving earth then we’ll fail to have an eternal impact here and now. However, when we begin to live in response to Jesus prayer in Matthew 6, then we will have a more significant impact on the world, not only preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom but embodying the message and infusing it into the systems of the world - like yeast in dough. When we take this approach, then every believer is not required to be a full-time evangelist, but instead we bring who God created and called them to be to everything they do. As we live life this way, our mission is about seeing the Kingdom advance and leaving a lasting legacy.

This line of thinking often gets hijacked by people who want to jettison the ways of the Kingdom in order to advance the Kingdom, which is impossible! The Kingdom is often contrary to the world in that it isn’t advanced by control and domination but by Kingdom values like love, truth, humility, wisdom, faith and servant-leadership. When the values of the Kingdom are infused with who God has made you to be, the advancement of the Kingdom is inevitable.

Discussion

Q. How have you been influenced by the idea of escaping earth?

Q. How does the idea of the mustard seed & yeast inform the way we see and live out the mission of God?

Q. How have you seen the mustard seed and yeast principles of the kingdom at work?

Q. In what ways does the “on earth as it is in heaven” line of thinking add meaning to your daily life?

Q. What are some practical ways that you want to be a part of seeing the Kingdom advance?

Group Activation

Q. What are some issues of our day that are desperate need for the Kingdom to come?

Take some time to pray for those areas, for each other and the needs in the group. As you pray partner with Jesus’s example prayer and declare Heaven’s realities into earth’s issues.

Individual Activation

Your imagination is designed by God as a place that He speaks to and inspires you, where you envision what is not yet. Pick two or three places or spheres of life you are engaged in and ask God what it would look like for the Kingdom to come to those areas.



SHOW & TELL

Q. How have you seen God at work in your life?

THE BIG IDEA

Read Acts 3:1-8, John 4:1-42

The Gospel is a show & tell message. Our role in life is to be a living display of the Kingdom and to introduce people to Jesus. Often people are trained to share the Gospel by telling others about Jesus instead of introducing them to Jesus. What you'll find with both Jesus and the early church is that they were less interested in arguing philosophical truth and religious ideas and more interested in demonstrating the Kingdom.

When the lame man gets healed in Acts 3 and the woman at the well gets prophetic insight from Jesus in John 4 we find that those supernatural moments open up the door for the proclamation of the Gospel. Both encountered Jesus, the beggar through Peter & John, and those encounters changed everything. As your living as Salt & Light, expect Jesus to show up. Sometimes He shines through in things like kindness and being intentional, other times it's through a supernatural encounter. When we hear the phrase "supernatural encounter" many of us think God wouldn't do that through me. What will surprise you is that simply taking a moment to pray with someone, perhaps when they voice a need, opens up the door for Heaven to come rushing in.

Peter's simple response, we don't have silver or gold, but we'll give you what we do have is an inspiring example of living a show & tell Gospel. People aren't so interested in religion or our ideas, but when they encounter Jesus it changes everything. Perhaps it's time that we ditch our old ways of trying to convince people of Jesus and instead introduce them to Jesus.

Discussion

Q. Have you ever sensed the presence of God when someone prayed with you?

Q. Have you ever prayed for someone and seen them encounter God?

Q. What do you think about the idea of a "show & tell" gospel?

Q. Do you think it's easier to try to convince someone of Jesus or introduce them to Jesus?

Group Activation

Get into groups of 3 or 4 and take some time to pray for each other's needs. If someone hasn't had much experience praying for people invite them to give it a try. Model listening to God while you're praying.

Individual Activation

This week look for opportunities to pray with people. It's often easiest when they voice a need. Don't simply let them know that you will pray for them later, but pray for them in the moment.



A LOVE REVOLUTION

Q. When was one time that you felt deeply loved?

THE BIG IDEA

Read John 13:34 & 1 Corinthians 13. If you were to spend time with Jesus in His ministry on earth, you would have been moved by His teaching, awed by His miracles, but what you would have walked away with, what you would have been transformed by, is His love. Love was both His motivator and the end result of all He did. Every miracle He did, every message He preached and every interaction He had was rooted and saturated in love. Perhaps the most revolutionary thing we can ever do in the lives of others is be a conduit of God's love to them.

Paul, writing in the work of the Spirit in our lives in Galatians 5 says, "What counts is faith expressing itself through love." The expression of real faith always goes through love. As He writes in 1 Corinthians 13, it's not your spiritual gifts or acts of faith that matter, it's love. The gifts of God and the power of the Spirit were always meant to be expression of love. The world is starving for the love of God - it's what we were all made for. When love becomes the engine that powers our lives then people will inevitably encounter God.

The problem that many of us face is that we attempt to love people with our own love. It's impossible to give away what you haven't received. The key that changes everything in the New Covenant is that we aren't living for the love of God but from the love of God. "Love others as I have loved you." It's not our own love, it's the love of God through us that shines bright and points people to Jesus. Perhaps the love of God through the people of God is the best apologetic (argument for the existence of God) of our day. When love becomes our ultimate motive then it negates any ulterior motives.

Discussion

Q. What does it mean to love other's the way Jesus loves us? Have you ever experienced that?

Q. What does it look like to love somebody that isn't easy to love or perhaps antagonistic to the things of God?

Q. Have you seen love soften people's hearts and make them receptive to God?

Q. What might it look like for the gifts of the Spirit to flow through love?

Group Activation

Q. Have you ever received the unconditional love of God? If so, how did that impact your life? If not can we pray that you would?

Individual Activation

Q. Ask God for His heart for 2 or 3 people in your life? Let His love be the fuel that makes your light shine brightly.



PASS IT ON

Q. How did you come to know Jesus? Who has been influential in your spiritual growth?

THE BIG IDEA

Read Matthew 28:18-20, John 14:12, 2 Timothy 2:2.

Jesus wasn't looking for converts or to create a large following of adherents to His new religious system. He wasn't interested in fans or groupies. Jesus was focused on making disciples, and He would prefer a few deeply devoted disciples over multitudes of shallow converts. He was after a few disciples who would be deeply transformed and multiple by replicating His life into others. His mandate to spread the message of the Kingdom was directly tied to making disciples who would look and live like Him, who would do what He was doing. Jesus' method was to go slow in order to go fast and within a few years it would be said of this band of ragtag disciples that they were turning the world upside down.

There has been some confusion and even abuse around the idea of discipleship. Some have used it to attract disciples to themselves instead of Jesus, gain control in people's lives or create a system of people subservient to them. Those ideas have nothing to do with Jesus. The goal of making disciples is to impart the life of Jesus into the lives of others so they can emanate the life of Jesus in the way God has uniquely designed them.

Discipleship is about empowerment not control.

A disciple is an apprentice. More than a student who is learning head knowledge, being a disciple is about becoming like the Master. Making disciples then is not only about overtly spiritual things, but all of life, therefore it must be both intentionally taught and relationally caught.

We're saved because we believe in Jesus, but we're mature when we believe like Jesus. In John 14:12, Jesus clarifies that a disciple does what He does and more, and they do it not because they intellectually know but because they believe. Making disciples is not about behavior management but about cultivating and imparting the faith-life of Jesus into the lives of others.

When were Jesus' disciples saved? The answer isn't clear, but it was sometime in the journey. We often think discipleship starts at salvation, but perhaps a better way to see it is that discipleship starts at hello.

Discussion

Q. How effective do you think the western church is at making disciples, why or why not?

Q. What has been your experience with the idea of discipleship?

Q. What do you think about the idea disciple-making being taught & caught?

Q. What do you think it looks like to effectively make disciples today?

Q. Do you feel qualified to make disciples of Jesus?

Q. How does your kingdom calling play into the ways you make disciples?



Group Activation

Read Luke 6:12-13. What role does prayer play in making and empowering disciples? Take some time to pray for the people in your life and ask God who you should invest in? Take time as a group to pray for those people by first name.

Individual Activation

Discipleship is a vital component of your spiritual journey. Consider who you might invite to invest your life and who God would have you invest in. Sometimes this is overt and intentional other times it's simply relational.



WHO & WHERE?

Q. How have you seen God at work around you lately?

THE BIG IDEA

Read Galatians 2:8, Romans 11:29. Your Kingdom Calling works anywhere on anyone, but it works best somewhere on someone. Just as God sent Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles, God has a people and a place for you to live out your calling. Sometimes it is a temporary assignment and other times is a life-long calling. It's necessary that we're sensitive to God's leading and moving, but it's also easy to overcomplicate. Stay open to where God might be leading you in the future, but assume that He has intentionally placed you in the places you're currently in on purpose. If that's true, and it's likely that it is, then there is an invitation from God to be intentional in the places He's placed you.

Peter and Paul are great examples of willingly embracing God's positioning, albeit with a bumpy start for both. Jonah is a great example of a reluctant apostle or missionary. God called him to Nineveh and Jonah's judgment of the Ninevites made his pathway to purpose a bit more miserable than necessary. Though he probably smelled like fish, in the end God still fulfilled His purpose through Jonah, but Jonah's attitude kept him from enjoying the journey and the fruit. Often our perspective on where God is calling us can keep us from really enjoying what and who He has called us to.

Discussion

*Q. Where are the two or three places God has intentionally placed you to be salt & light in this season?
Do you see the purpose?*

Q. Do you feel more like Jonah (reluctant) or Peter & Paul (willing)?

Q. How can you find joy in the places God has placed you?

Q. Going beyond where, who has God called you to in those places?

Group Activation

What does it look like to take ownership and be intentional in the places God has placed you? Take time to pray for the places God has placed each of you. Consider laying hands on each other and commissioning each other to be salt & light in those places.

Individual Activation

Take some time to write out the places God has placed you and the names of people He has called you to. Make it a practice to pray daily for those places and to regularly listen for God's heart and instruction for you when you're there.



OUT OF CONTROL!

Q. Have you ever seen God draw an entire group of people to Himself?

THE BIG IDEA

Read Luke 8:4-15, Luke 10:1-12, Galatians 6:9. Living out your Kingdom Calling and living life on mission requires both patience and intentionality. When we look at the Parable of the Sower we learn that not everyone who hears the message will receive it and bear fruit, but we should sow liberally. When we read about Jesus sending out the 72 we discover that we have received authority to bring the kingdom, and yet not everyone will be open. And as we read Galatians 6:9 we discover the need to wait faithfully on the harvest for the proper time if we don't give up. There is a healthy tension in being both intentionally bold and patiently waiting for the proper time. Perhaps the key is staying postured to work for God and let Him produce the fruit.

As people are ready and receptive, it's valuable that we discern from God how to invite them to move forward with Him. Perhaps it's an invite to your group or church or maybe it's that you do what the disciples did in Luke 10, stay in their house and teach them. Often we'll find that one person is connected to an entire group of people, an oikos (household). When we "stay with them" we find that God isn't simply plucking one person out but drawing a whole group of people to Himself. This is how the early church planted churches. They found people who were hungry and invested in them and their oikos. Often this started a chain reaction that turned cities upside down. We call these initial people "people of peace" and the group of people connected to them a "house of peace". What we find is that people of peace, lead to houses of peace, and houses of peace begin to transform cities.

When we adopt this kingdom mindset about relationally reaching people and making disciples, things can quickly go viral and get out of control. We may start investing in a person of peace and before long we start seeing groups spontaneously starting in neighborhoods, schools, restaurants and workplaces. This is what happens when the yeast starts to work in the dough and the mustard seed starts to grow. For this to work, it's essential that we have an equip, send and support ideal of the church instead of a control and contain mindset.

Discussion

Q. Have you ever seen a Kingdom work get out of control (in a good way)?

Q. How does this paradigm excite or challenge you?

Q. Are you more comfortable inviting people to things or staying with them and investing in them?

Q. If we as a group adopted the idea of looking for people of peace and investing in them, how would it change the dynamics of this group? What would we need to change?

Group Activation

We all have a role to play, some of us are called to the front lines and others are called to send, support and encourage. What roles do you feel most called to? How can you play your role well in this season?

Individual Activation

We all have a role to play, some of us are called to the front lines and others are called to send, support and encourage. What roles do you feel most called to? How can you play your role well in this season?

