

existence in eternity past to the very present and on into the eternal future.

In order to expand this disposition outward even further, God created image bearers of Himself that they might experience His love and learn to love outwardly like Him as free-willed beings. His design was that humanity would grow in their dependence upon Him and choose, out of their trust of Him, to self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. The command to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the whole earth was part of God's plan to expand His love outward to all people everywhere and for them to rely on Him to put His love on display in their relationships with Him and with others.

This is still God's design and desire. When Paul writes that God desires all people to be saved, they are being saved unto something: in their growing relationship with Him, they would learn to trust Him, depend on Him, and love others in ways that they would experience something of Him. And if God desires all people to be saved, then ***God's whole economy is centered on this mission.***

From the moment humanity chose independence from God, He has been working to restore them back into dependence on Him. From pursuing Adam and Eve right after they rebelled, to giving opportunity to those alive in Noah's day to repent, to establishing the nation of Israel to represent Him to the world, to the sending of His own Son to pay the penalty of sin, to sending out the Church to the ends of the world to reveal the gospel, to bringing about the judgments in Revelation to quicken the hearts of the unbelievers at that time, and to the return of Jesus to establish His Kingdom on earth, they all point to God's larger story mission to bring about relational restoration between individual people and God. Everything that God has been doing, is doing, and will do is centered on this mission. We believe this is so much the case that the Bible can, and, we would say, "must," be interpreted through

this missional lens (the case is more explicitly made for this in the course MET 201).

This “search and rescue” mission, at this point in human history, is everything that God is about, and He has designed it such that those who are already His children would choose, by faith, to partner with Him in this mission. For believers, getting cleaned up morally is not the goal, but a means towards which we can better pursue the goal of making disciples. Dealing less with besetting sin allows us to have more physical, spiritual and emotional resources to direct towards others to love them well. Dealing less with trying to pull personal value from others allows me to engage with them at deeper levels of love. Having a better marriage is not the goal, but a means by which we can learn the benefits of sacrifice for the good of another.

KEEPING THE MISSION IN SIGHT

Genesis 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Peter 5:8

If everything that God is about centers on His search and rescue mission of lost image bearers, then it makes sense that His nemesis, Satan, would be about blocking this mission from going forward in any ways that he can. There are multiple fronts that Satan assaults to restrict the movement of this mission. We can categorically divide them into two groups: Satan’s work with unbelievers and Satan’s work against believers.

SATAN’S WORK WITH UNBELIEVERS

2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us that Satan “has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” Through building a cultural system of beliefs based on his cunning deceptions, Satan is able to convince unbelievers that the best life they could possibly

live now must be one separated from this “overbearing, unloving, not-much-fun, antiquated, paternal” God.

Satan preys on the fallen flesh of unawares people who are operating from the extreme, one-sided, self-first posture. His comprehensive world system is designed to reinforce this posture in every area of life (marriage, family, friends, job, possessions, experiences). He leaves no area of life untainted by His touch.

Without the work of the Holy Spirit, it’s impossible to penetrate Satan’s web of deception in a person’s thinking and believing. Only God could do this as we partner with Him in His mission work.

SATAN’S WORK AGAINST BELIEVERS

1 Peter 5:8 tells us that Satan prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Since Satan already has the allegiance of unbelievers, and because Peter is writing *to* believers, this warning is given *to* believers. It is believers that Satan wants to devour.

So, how does Satan devour? Obviously, there are overt ways that his happens. But, there are also some subtle ways this occurs. At the moment an unbeliever accepts the gospel of Jesus Christ, much happens on a spiritual level to remove that person from Satan’s family and to now place them into God’s family as His adopted child. Yet, very little happens in the fundamental belief system of that person in terms of what life is about and how to make it work. These deep beliefs are still very self-centered and largely below the surface of their thinking. So, these beliefs need to be exposed and challenged, and new believers need encouraged to give up these beliefs in place of a growing dependence on God and His goodness.

Overt Ways

When a genuine believer goes off the deep end and runs head-long into the world system, it is because the fundamental beliefs

about what life is and how to make it work never changed. They could very well have placed a saving faith in Jesus Christ at the time of hearing his gospel proclaimed (thus, being a true child of God), but then, in the ensuing months and years afterwards, never gave up their functional beliefs about life and their strategies to make life work. To them, God was just another means by which to make life work out in their favor. And when life didn't work out in their favor, as they defined it, they casted off Christianity and moved onto something else that might be able to help make life work.

Subtle Ways

In contrast to these overt ways, Satan also works in subtle ways to slowly, but surely, divert believers from God's main mission. Through his world system, Satan has elevated certain personal values in the western culture that he uses to woo believers from fully engaging in the mission of God. A couple of the highest values are comfort and pleasure with an intense disdain for suffering of any kind. Many resources are used to experience comfort and pleasure and to avoid suffering. Satan tempts with a little comfort here and a little pleasure there in very small bite-sized amounts that are easily justifiable, but nonetheless whet the appetite with desire for more. Bing-watching TV series, spending long hours on social media, using a majority of free time to pursue a hobby, and being a sports fanatic are just a few.

Consumerism (the pursuit of more and more possessions for the purpose of providing a distraction or escape from reality, a feeling of importance, or a sense of security) is another high value in the culture. Because of a deep belief that having more is better, westerners spend a good bit of time working to obtain. "Obviously, we must buy things," so the argument goes. And that is true. The line is crossed when we buy more than we need with the belief that the more we have, the more we are. And so, as believers, we tend to align with our unChristian counterparts where our time is mostly consumed with working, spending, and enjoying the things we buy with little time left for other things.

Another area in which believers are often misled is the way that we engage with God and live life for Him. Many well-intended churches who had great beginnings, over the years, lost their zeal and aliveness and settled into adopting and depending on certain forms as their means by which they teach their members to relate to God, often called formalism. With believing that I can only relate to God when I “go to church,” then the only time I can deeply connect with Him is when I am at church participating in certain forms during the “worship service.” This may happen once or twice a week, leaving the rest of the week up to me to live my life the way I see fit. “I’ll do my God stuff once or twice a week. That must be his mission for me. But, since I can’t participate in the forms that connect me with God outside of being at Church, I have to depend on me to figure out what to do with my life the rest of the time throughout the week.”

One last area to mention is spiritualism. This is an over-emphasis within Christian circles on feeling a sense of the Holy Spirit during worship times. This is so elevated that people understand their spiritual mission in life to be pursuing a feeling of God’s Spirit. Boiled down, it’s really a pursuit of pleasure through formalism. Through participating in certain forms that can only happen during the “worship service,” I can manifest a pleasurable, exciting feeling that I attribute to the Holy Spirit. And since this can only be achieved on a certain day, in a certain way, and I believe that this is God’s best for me, I’m left to myself for the remainder of the week to figure out how to live my life until the next time I can get a “shot” of the Holy Spirit.

There are a multitude of ways Satan works within believers and their churches to draw them away from the actual mission of God. A Biblical example of Satan working his schemes to divert away from God’s mission is with Adam and Eve. To them, God gave the mission to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with His relational glory as people operated with a dependence on Him to love Him and others well.

When Satan tempted Eve, he worked to divert her attention away from God and his mission and onto herself and *her* smaller mission. God's mission was to be fruitful and multiply. Through considering Satan's argument, Eve redefined her mission in terms of *pleasure* (beautiful to the eyes), *fulfillment* (good for food), and *importance* (make on wise).

THE CALL TO SACRIFICE

Mark 10:42-45; Luke 9:58; Mark 8:34; Luke 14:25-33; John 10:10; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Matthew 6:20

The actual mission of God (to reach lost people with the gospel and disciple them into maturity through a relational process that involves dependence on the Holy Spirit as modeled by Jesus) requires much sacrifice. If God's fundamental nature is sacrifice through giving up of oneself for the benefit of others, then it makes sense that His mission will require that same type of sacrifice from those who choose to follow Jesus into His mission. Jesus modeled this clearly in his statement to his disciples, "I did not come to be served, but to serve and give my life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45). In this statement, he was teaching them the kind of posture that is required to follow Him into His mission.

Jesus continued to teach and model this life of sacrifice. In response to someone's comment about following Him, Jesus made this statement in Luke 9:58, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." And again in Mark 8:34, Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The cross here is THE picture of sacrifice.

In Jesus' discourse about following Him in Luke 14:25-33, Jesus ends with these words of sacrifice, "So therefore, any one of you

who does not *renounce all that he has* cannot be my disciple." This is a very encompassing statement about the extent to which Jesus is calling his followers to sacrifice. He isn't saying here that his followers can not own things or have relationships with family members, but what He is saying is that our posture towards all of these things must be one of a willingness to give up for His sake.

As you consider being an MC leader, it is necessary for you to wrestle with this call to sacrifice. MC leadership is not a position to gain recognition by others nor to advance your personal agenda nor to view as a great way to hang out with your friends. It is a position of sacrifice for the benefit of other fellow MC leaders, MC members, and the unbelievers that your MC family is trying to reach. In many ways and at various times you will be asked by those you serve to give up your time, your comfort, your money, your possessions, and other dearly held values in order to love them well for their benefit.

There is a joy in this sacrifice. It drives us to a greater dependence on the Holy Spirit to work on our behalf toward those we serve. We get the opportunity to partner with the God of the universe in His search and rescue mission, experience Him at work in the deepest levels of someone's life, and be changed ourselves more and more into the life of Christ. This is the abundant life that Jesus promised in John 10:10. Yet, this does not happen on its own. It requires continual choices to sacrifice.

THE PROMISE OF REWARD

1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Matthew 16:18; Matthew 28:18-20;

Are you ready to step into this life of sacrifice in the here and now in order to receive a reward in the life to come? Jesus asks you to count the costs and to not make this decision lightly. For those who are faithful to build on the foundation of Jesus with gold,

silver, and precious stones (a life of pursuing Him and His mission at great personal cost) will gain a reward.

The abundant life is not just a promise for this lifetime, but a promise consisting of reward in the life to come. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "...I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." Through sacrifice, Paul stayed focused on the mission of God in order to qualify for the prize: treasures stored in heaven waiting for Paul where neither moth nor rust can destroy (Matthew 6:20).

The promise of reward for those who are faithful is contained throughout the New Testament (Matthew 6:20, Matthew 25:14-30, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Timothy 2:1-7, 2 Timothy 4:8, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:4, Revelation chapters 2-3 to name a few). These promises still hold true today for you as you choose to sacrifice in order to step into Jesus' mission of building His Church through making disciples by going to the lost, immersing them in something of the nature and character of God, and teaching those who believe how to grow in their dependence on God more and more in very practical ways as they deepen their relationship with Him and desire to also step into His mission.

CONCLUSION

In the introductory course (INT 200), we *defined* the Mission of God, and we made the connection between the fundamental nature of God and His Mission. We also saw how the choice of people to rebel against God changed the *work* of the mission. Although the *work* of the mission changed, the *goal* remained the same.

In the second MC Leadership course on Methods (MET 201), we looked at how God worked in different ways throughout human history toward the goal of his mission. He always employed human agency (he chose people through whom to work) to accomplish his missional efforts.

In the third MC Leadership course on Relevance (REL 202), we looked at the various ways Jesus was and is involved in God's mission in and through the Church. He did this by being an example of each of the disciple-making components. We saw him leaving heaven and coming to the earth. We saw him immersing people in the nature and character and will of God as He sacrificed to love them well and provide for their needs. We saw Him teaching both large crowds and in more intimate settings with His apostles. Then, we saw Him giving the mission of making disciples to the Church and a promise to be with them as they stepped out in faith so Jesus could build His Church through them.

In this MC Leadership course on Motivation (0.MOT 203), we took a look at the comprehensive scope of God's mission, the challenges involved in keeping our eyes on His mission as Satan works to woo us away, the cost of engaging in God's mission, and the reward that He offers to those who faithfully choose to sacrifice for His mission. These are all things you must think and pray through in giving your life over to Jesus for the mission of God as you consider becoming an MC leader.

This is the last course in the MC Leadership preparation track. It is an important consideration as you make the decision to step into this sacrificial, serving lifestyle of working with messy image bearers for the purpose of seeing them grow into spiritual maturity with the hope of seeing them too want to give their lives to this mission.

We hope and pray that you choose this lifestyle moving forward. We fully believe, when all is said and done, in choosing this lifestyle, you will have no regrets when looking back over the breadth of your life.

If you have any questions, hesitations, or comments, please feel free to share these with the person who sacrificed their time to walk through these courses with you.