

Made for More
Schooled
February 6, 2022

Good morning everyone!

Everywhere you turn these days, it seems there's bad news:

- Russia is preparing to invade Ukraine and we, as a nation, might get dragged into the middle of it.
- Interest rates are going up while the stock market is going down.
- The Chiefs lost last week and won't be going to the Super Bowl.

Everywhere you turn, it seems there's bad news:

But the good news is ... *Jesus can do for you what He has done for me.*

Let me say that again in case you missed it.

Jesus can do for you what He has done for me.

So let me tell you about my Jesus.

And let my Jesus change your life.ⁱ

If you were trying to sum up in just a few words what this church is all about – the very reason why we exist, those lyrics from the song we just sang would have to be near the top of the list.

As I said when we began this series three weeks ago, from the very beginning ...

- The purpose of North Heartland ...

- What we really, really want to see happen as a result of our collective efforts ...
- The ultimate win for us ...

... is to draw seekers into a *life-changing relationship* with Jesus and His Kingdom.

For every single person who walks through our doors – and especially those who are beginning to search for God (who we call “seekers”) ...

... we want to see their life *literally* change for the better ...

... because of their relationship with Jesus and their involvement with *the movement* of Jesus (otherwise known as the Kingdom of God).

We want to see Jesus do for others what He has done (and *is* doing and *will* do) for us.

Ultimate Purpose

But what exactly *does* Jesus do?

How does knowing Jesus, being connected to Jesus, following Jesus actually *change* a person's life?

Well, according to the song we just sang ...

- Jesus carries our burdens
- Jesus heals our shame
- Jesus makes a way where there ain't no way
- Jesus wipes away our tears
- Jesus works it all out for our good
- Jesus atones for the guilt of our sin

And I suppose that if the *song* went on longer, the *list* would be longer of all the ways that Jesus can change the life of anyone who comes to Him and believes in Him and follows Him.

And it's all true.

But as true and as wonderful and valuable as all of those "ways" are, I think it needs to be said that *none* of them *in and of themselves* are the ultimate goal and purpose He has in mind.

In other words ...

- There's a *reason* why Jesus wants to heal our shame – and it's not just so we'll feel better about ourselves.
- There's a *reason* why Jesus wipes away our tears (metaphorically speaking) – and it's not just so we'll feel better about whatever bad thing has happened.

- There's a *reason* Jesus makes a way where there isn't a way – and it's not just so life will be easier for us, or we can finally get whatever it is we want.
- There's a *reason* Jesus atones for every single sin past, present and future, known and unknown – and it's not just so we can go to Heaven when we die and come back with Him when He returns one day to this earth.

Ultimately, the *reason* Jesus does all of those things is ...

... so that we can become “more” of the more that we were made for.

Let me say that again.

The reason Jesus does all of those wonderful things in the lives of those who follow Him is so that that they – *we* – can become more of the

“more” we were made for.

Now, please don't hear what I'm not saying.

I'm not saying Jesus isn't really interested in being your healer, your comforter, your rescuer, your redeemer, and your forgiver. He is willing to be *all* of those things and more.

And if you *need* those things, by all means come to Him.

In fact, Jesus Himself said exactly that.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

If you need healing, comfort, rescue, redemption, forgiveness, freedom – it's there for you in Jesus. He says so.

But what's *also* “there” is something even

greater than any of those things by themselves.

Let me give you just one quick example of what I mean.

The Apostle Paul once wrote:

He comforts us in all our troubles

...

And isn't that so wonderful!

When we're down, dooby-do, down, down, Paul says, we can turn to God and find comfort.

But wait, there's more – as you can tell from the “...” on the screen. 😊

He comforts us in all our troubles, Paul writes ...

... so that ...

“Oh wait, Paul, you mean it's about *something*

beyond me being able to handle whatever I'm going through right now?"

"You mean it's about *something beyond* me feeling better and being able to move on?"

"That's right," Paul says.

He comforts us in all our troubles so that ...

... we can comfort others.

When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

2 Corinthians 1:4 (NLT)

Now, think about this.

- When you are in tears because of something bad that's happened ...
- When you're down or maybe even distraught over whatever it is ...

In that situation, in that moment, can you even *imagine* ever being able to comfort someone else in their troubles?

If you can, you're a better person than I am, because I can't.

When I'm down and distraught, all I can think about is *me* and what I'm suffering.

And what Paul is saying here is "That's OK, because God cares about that. God wants to comfort you in that, so turn to him. Cast all your cares on Him and He will care for you."

"But *remember* that whenever He does that, *it's not just for you* and your own personal emotional stability."

"It's so that you can then turn around and do something" – and this is important so don't miss it – "something greater than *you ever imagined*

you could do" ...

... which, in this case, is to comfort someone else.

... and why Paul wrote elsewhere ...

*All glory to God, who is able,
through his mighty power at
work within us, to accomplish
infinitely more than we might
ask or think. Ephesians
3:20 (NLT)*

And that's the deal.

That's what you *really get* when you come to Jesus and believe in Jesus and follow Jesus: MORE.

More than you can ask or think or imagine ...

- Not just as it pertains to your circumstances.

- Not just as it pertains to your eternity

... but more than you can ask or think of imagine as it pertains to *yourself* ...

... because His mighty power is at work within you helping to produce that “more.”

And that is such good news because, as I said last week, far too many of us settle for far too little of who and what we’re intended to be.

And if you missed the first part of this series, “who and what we’re intended” to be is a person who fully and completely reflects the glory of God into this world ...

... which is what it means to be created in the image of God.

And because I went into great detail on that in the first message of this series, I’m not going to go back into it again today, other than to say that

...

- Every good and great quality you can think of ...
- Every good and great characteristic that reflects the goodness and greatness of God

...

That's what you were made for. *That's* the person you were meant to be.

And when God works in your life, when he makes a way or carries a burden or wipes a tear, that's His ultimate purpose: to move you in that direction.

And it's also our purpose as a church. That's why we exist. That's why we're here.

That's why our motto these days is "you were made for more. We can help."

And to do that – to help, we have strategized our ministry around four “transformational objectives” ...

... four activities and environments that we believe will help all of us become more of the more we were meant to be.

Two weeks ago, we talked about the first one, which is to ...

**1. Regularly, frequently and consistently
*connect with God.***

Jesus once said “I’m the vine. You’re the branches. Remain in me for apart from me you can do nothing.”

“Connecting with God” is the foundation of everything else.

So, we looked at what we do here at NHCC to

experience that together, collectively, in our services ... and, also, how we help people learn to connect with God on their own.

And then, last week, we talked about our second transformational objective, which is to ...

2. *Join a group.*

... which primarily means getting into a small group of 8 to 15 people who are also endeavoring to become more of the more they were made for.

And we talked about why that is so important and also why it's important join the collective group, *the church*, by becoming a formal member.

Of course, before you join this church (or any church), you need to know what it's all about, which is why, every month, we do a two-hour Orientation class.

And, lucky for you, that class is scheduled to happen today right after the 11:00 service. We provide free lunch and free childcare. And you're welcome to just show up and join us.

So, that's what we've talked about to this point in this series.

And if you missed any of those messages, I strongly encourage you to watch, listen to or even read the transcripts on our app and website (northheartland.org) ...

... especially if you want help in becoming more of the person you were meant to be and the person you want to be.

Bigger Than

Now, that's a very long introduction to what I want to talk about today, but I've spent so much time on it because I want it to be crystal clear in your mind.

I want it to be crystal clear that the reason God heals, comforts, rescues, redeems, forgives and so much more is, ultimately, so that you can become more of the "more" you were made for.

But here's something to think about.

- Why does God care about that?
- Why is it not enough for God that you are healed, comforted, rescued, redeemed, and forgiven?

And I should probably be clear that I'm speaking to Christians here. I'm speaking to people who believe that Jesus lived and died and rose again and have accepted Him as their savior and their

leader.

The reason why it's not enough for you – if you're a Christian, a believer in and follower of Jesus ...

The reason why it's not enough for you to be healed, comforted, rescued, redeemed, and forgiven is because ...

God wants to use you and your life to accomplish His work in this world.

We've talked about this at length last fall in a series called *Experiencing God*, how God is always at work around us and how God is always inviting us to join Him in that work ...

... meaning that God wants to use you and your life – your talents, your gifts, your personality, even your pain and suffering – in some way ...

- That benefits *others*

- That leads *them* to God
- And helps *them* to become more of the “more” they were made for.

That’s why ...

- It’s not enough for you just to be OK.
- It’s not enough for you just to feel better.

It’s not enough because God has a plan for you that’s bigger than you.

In fact, the “more” you were made for is far more than you ever *planned* for. <repeat>

You talk to any person who has followed Jesus for a long time and has learned to see their life as being used by God, as somehow contributing to what God is doing in this world ...

... and they will tell you: “never in a million years did I think I would be doing X.”

- “I never thought I would work on a church staff.”
- “I never thought I would plant a church or be a pastor.”
- “I never thought I would be teaching kids about Jesus in Adventureland.”
- “I never thought I could pray for people.”
- “I never thought I could influence the culture of my workplace in a positive way.”
- “I never thought I could invite people to my church so they could hear about Jesus.”
- “I never thought I would give away so much of my wealth to help the people and causes God loves.”

- “I never thought I could be a foster parent.”
- “I never thought I could adopt a child.”
- “I never thought I could use my ability to fix things or cook things or plan things or write things or say things or program things as way of helping someone else experience God’s grace or God’s love.”
- “I never thought I would be able to comfort someone with the comfort God gave to me through that terrible time in my life.”

Every one of those statements, someone has said to me over the years.

They “never thought,” but God’s power at work within them accomplished infinitely more than they could have or would have asked or imagined.

So ... if you're a Christian, the "more" you were made for is far more than you ever planned for.

But you don't get there overnight, and you don't get there automatically. Instead, it takes *time* and *training*.

It takes time and training for you to reach your full potential as a follower of Jesus.

Now, as far as time is concerned, there's nothing you can do about it. Time is time.

And sometimes – a lot of times – time goes really slow.

- And you think, as a Christian, you're never going to get there.
- You think you're never going to become the person you're meant to be and want to be.

So, time is time. And time is hard.

And there's nothing you can do about it but take your time.

But, as far as *training* is concerned, you *can* do something about that.

In fact, *we can help you* with that. After all, you were made for more and we can help!

About Training

And I'll say more about *how* we can help in just a bit but, first, I want to talk about the idea of training because, in my experience, a lot of Christians don't understand that this is part of the deal.

A lot of Christians think that growth and development (as a Christian) just "sort of happens" by spiritual osmosis.

- Just connect with God – go to church and engage in a great worship experience.
- And maybe join a group of other Christians who challenge and encourage you to not give up when things get hard.

And obviously, those are good and helpful things to do ... which is why we invest a lot of time and energy trying to help people do them!

But to truly grow and develop to your full potential as a Christian requires a level of knowledge and coaching that you don't get in those two environments.

It requires, for lack of a better term, that you get "schooled."

And that's not my idea. That's actually Jesus' idea.

And this is amazing. Check this out.

Right after Jesus says ...

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Right after Jesus says, in essence ...

- Let me help you with your burdens
- Let me heal your shame
- Let me make a way where there isn't a way
- Let me comfort you

Right after He says that ...

Jesus says ...

*“Take my yoke upon you and
learn from me ...”
Matthew 7:29 (NIV)*

What Jesus has in mind for us goes far beyond just helping us solve our immediate problem.

Jesus wants to teach us and train us.

Jesus wants us to be his *disciples*.

Now, that’s not a word we use very much these days which is kind of sad because it really does communicate very well what Jesus wants for us.

So, let’s talk about *discipleship* (which is the process of becoming a disciple).

And let’s dig a little deeper into the wording Jesus used here to describe it: “take my yoke upon you.”

That language sounds strange to us but, in Jesus’

day “the yoke” was a way of describing a particular rabbi’s unique interpretation and application of Torah (the Hebrew Scriptures which we call The Old Testament).

And what they would do – the rabbis – is to travel from town to town explaining their “yoke” in hopes of attracting new disciples.

- People willing to study under them and learn their way of doing things.
- People who were willing to be schooled by them

In fact, in Jesus’ day, there was actually a little bit of *competition* among the top rabbis.

Often, a rabbi would send one of his best students to test the yoke of another rabbi. The student would show up and ask a question like, “Suppose a woman marries seven successive

brothers and they all die; whose wife will she be in heaven?”

... which you may recognize as a question Jesus was once asked.ⁱⁱ

Anyway ... what we really need to understand about this is that for a person to *follow* a rabbi and *take* his yoke meant for them to get in lockstep with him in the same way that two oxen are in step when they are yoked together.

It meant ...

- To think like he thought.
- To live like he lived.
- And, therefore, to impact the world like he was impacting the world.

In essence, the invitation to “take the yoke” was

an invitation to be trained by the rabbi with the goal of becoming *less like themselves and more like the rabbi*.

And not only that, according to one biblical scholarⁱⁱⁱ the invitation to “take the yoke” meant that the rabbi *believed* the potential student had the ability and commitment to *actually do it* – to become like him.

... which is so encouraging because when Jesus – the perfect Son of God who lived a perfect life ...

... when Jesus says to you and me “take my yoke upon you and learn from me,” He *really believes* that it’s possible for us to become like Him.

He really believes that it’s possible (as the Apostle Paul would later put it) for you and me to ...

... become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness

of Christ.

Ephesians 4:13b (NIV)

He really believes that it's possible for us to learn to think like He thought, to live like He lived, and to impact the world around us like He did.

But that doesn't happen overnight, nor does it happen automatically ...

κ ... which is why we have to ...

*Grow in the grace and
knowledge of our Lord and
Savior Jesus Christ.*

2 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

It's why we have to be disciplined. It's why we have to be schooled. It's why we have to be trained.

Now, just to be completely honest about this, for most of us (including myself) being disciplined,

being schooled, being trained does not sound all that exciting. It doesn't sound all that motivating.

Some of you know that Jetta and I are in the process of buying a new home which is still under construction.

The other day, we got an email telling us that a week before move-in, the builder's rep would meet with us for two hours to train us in all the features of our new home.

And my first thought was, "really? What are we? Stupid? Do we really need that much time?"

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm *real excited* about our new house. We've been waiting for months, and it's almost finished. That's exciting!

But two hours of training? Not so much. It seems unnecessary. It seems superfluous.

Now, I'm sure I'm wrong about that ... but I tell you this little story because that's how a lot of Christians feel about the idea of being disciplined or schooled or trained in the way of Jesus.

It seems unnecessary. It seems superfluous. What are we? Stupid? Do we really need that?

So let me see if I can give you a different perspective on it – again, assuming you're a Christian.

Let me see if I can help you understand why we might need to be trained/discipled/schooled *continually*, all throughout our lives.

I'm talking about people who just two weeks ago prayed to receive Jesus as their savior as well as people like me, who've been Christians for going on 50 years.

Here's why we need to be trained and trained again as followers of Jesus.

We've already *been* trained (and are constantly *being* trained) by the world to do life without God.

Let me say that again.

The reason we need to be trained and trained again as followers of Jesus is because we've already *been* trained (and are constantly *being* trained) by the world to do life without God.

And that's what's normal to us. That's what's natural to us, which means the deck is stacked against us.

And by that I don't mean that the world is anti-God (at least, for the most part).

What I mean is that the world basically ignores God.

What the world tells us is that we really don't need God, unless of course, you need Someone

to make a way when there ain't no way.

Think about it.

- From the TV shows and movies we watch
- To the music we listen to
- To the cultural icons who shape opinion about what's good and right and normal
- To the corporations who sell us on their products
- To the politicians who claim to have "the answer" if we'd only vote for them and their agenda

99.995% of all of that simply ignores God; tells us that God is not necessary.

Point is ... you have been and are currently and constantly being trained/schooled/disciplined by

the world around you ...

... which might even include your family, your friends, the company you work for, the school you go to ...

You are being trained/schooled/disciplined to live a life without God.

And furthermore, until someone points it out to you like I am right now, you don't even realize it's happening. You never think about it.

It's just normal to you. It's simply "how life is to be lived in the modern world."

And furthermore, you (and I) simply go along with it ...

... rarely, if ever, stopping to ask: is this way of living truly helping me to be the person I want to be? The person I was meant to be?

Have you ever thought about this?

And again, to be clear: I'm not saying we're being persecuted as Christians in this culture. We're not.

If you want to see what persecution of Christians looks like, go to Afghanistan or North Korea.

What I *am* saying is that, if you're a Christian, you have to be *continually* trained/discipled/schooled in the way of Jesus, all throughout your life if you're going to follow Him and experience the "more" you were made for.

This is why Paul once wrote:

*Do not conform to the pattern of
this world ...*

... which is what we naturally do; we conform to

everything and everyone around us without ever thinking about it.

Instead of doing *that*, Paul says, if you're a Christian ...

... be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

... which is just another way of saying what Jesus himself said:

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me ..."

Matthew 7:29 (NIV)

- Learn to think like I think.
- Learn to live like I live.
- And, therefore, impact the world like I have impacted the world.

We Can Help

So, how do we do that?

How do we learn to think like Jesus thought and live like Jesus lived?

One way is to find a mentor, someone who is further down the road than you and ask them to disciple you.

And we have men and women in this church who do kind of thing as their own personal ministry. It's what God has called and equipped them to do.

Another way is to do it on your own: study and learn and train yourself which is a lot easier these days because there are so many great training materials – videos, podcasts, books – that you can watch, listen to or read.

We actually have this training resource here at North Heartland called *Right Now Media* which you can get access to simply by going to the media section of our website and app and signing up. It's free.

In fact, speaking of the media section of our website and our app ...

There are years and years worth of messages available. And I promise I'm not trying to promote myself and I don't make any money off of this ...

But if you would listen to a whole series back-to-back like you would a podcast from somebody "famous" I think you'd be shocked at how much you would learn by taking it in all at once.

I do that from time to time. I go back and read an entire series of messages and I'm shocked at what I learn. And I'm the one who wrote them!

So, that's an option.

But part of our goal here at North Heartland is to help you learn in a systematic way about the Way of Jesus.

That's why our third “transformational objective” is to help you develop your potential.

So, it's ...

- Connect with God
- Join a group
- Invest time and energy in developing your potential by getting trained, getting schooled, getting disciplined.

Now, one of the most amazing things that has happened here – and this is all been going on

behind the scenes with very little fanfare ...

One of the most amazing things to happen here in the 27 years we've been in existence ...

And I'm so excited about this because we've talked about it for years and years ...

One of the most amazing things happening right now is that we are developing a discipleship/schooling/training/whatever-you-want-to-call-it process.

And you're going to be hearing a lot more about this in the very near future.

In fact, if you go to the Orientation, we're already teaching this.

We have developed a "Made for More" growth track ...

... six foundational spiritual growth classes

which include ...

CONNECT 101: Develop Intimacy with God
(TODAY)

JOIN 101: Experience Belonging with
Others

DEVELOP 101: Realize Your Potential

GENEROSITY 101: Live as a Financial
Steward (TODAY)

VOLUNTEERISM 101: Find Your Place of
Service (TODAY)

UNITY 101: Maintain Interpersonal
Harmony (required before membership)

And all of these classes are going to run every
other month or every third month.

So, at least four times a year, you can go learn
the basics of following Jesus from someone who

is actually doing it and can teach you.

In addition, if you become a formal member of the church, we have trained coaches who will help you create an Individual Development Plan.

I'm telling you ... this is incredible.

They will sit down with you (if you're a member and you want this) ...

They will sit down with you and help you determine the areas of life in which you need to learn from Jesus so you can be more like Jesus.

And then they will point you in the direction of specific training materials and classes that will help you in those areas ...

... which we call core competencies – things that Christians, over time and with training and the power of God working in us ... ought to become

better at.

For example, a mature Christian ought to be increasingly ...

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY: I deal with past and pain for the benefit of present and future.

RELATIONALLY INTELLIGENT: I understand others and I am able to manage conflict.

SPIRITUALLY ROOTED: I am active and growing in connection/friendship/relationship with God.

THEOLOGICALLY INFORMED: I understand the major gospel/Kingdom concepts.

STRATEGICALLY SERVING: I know my gifts and talents and I'm using them to serve the church and God's Kingdom.

A mature Christian ought to be more and more ...

CULTURALLY IMPACTFUL: I am a “light” for Jesus at work and in the community.

FINANCIALLY FREE: I am generous because I manage money according to the give/save/live paradigm.

MISSIONALLY FOCUSED: I point others to Jesus.

FAITHFULLY ENDURING: I turn to God (instead of away from God) in trials and tribulations.

BIBLICALLY LITERATE: I know how to find Scriptural truth on my own.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying.

I'm not saying that Christians are going to be perfect in all of these areas and that taking a class and getting a coach is going to make it happen overnight.

And I'm not saying this is some kind of measuring stick to beat people over the head with.

Instead, I *am* saying that those are the ways of Jesus.

I am saying that those are the fruits of a life lived *with* God instead of *without* God.

And I *am* saying you were made for those ways, and you were made to bear that kind of fruit.

Conclusion

You were made for more. And we can help.

And not just for *your* benefit but for the benefit of others because, remember ...

- If you're a Christian, God has a plan for you that's bigger than you.

- If you're a Christian, the "more" you were made for is far more than you ever *planned* for.

God wants to use you in some way in what He is doing in this world.

The question is ... will you make room for that in your life?

Will you take the yoke of Jesus up yourself and learn from Him?

Let's pray.

Endnotes

ⁱ I'm quoting the song that the band did just before this message, My Jesus.

ⁱⁱ <http://acts242study.com/jesus-a-jewish-rabbi-part-4/>

ⁱⁱⁱ See Vanderlaan