

True Community and Lasting Significance Philippians 1:3-8

All humans crave community and significance, and both can be found in joining God's mission of helping people find and follow Jesus.

Have you ever thought about why humans do what they do? What motivates us to say what we say and do what we do?

- Why do you college students spend 10's of thousands of dollars to sit in classrooms for hundreds of hours and read tens of thousands of pages of books – what's up with that?
- Why do people spend hundreds of dollars to stand in a big bowl with 100k other people on a hot summer evening? What's driving that behavior?

Why we do what we do has fascinated scholars for millennia

One of the most famous studies on the topic came from an American Psychologist named Abraham Maslow who suggested that all humans do what they do based on 5 levels of basic human needs

- Now I can't do full justice to Maslow's theory or to his critics – I'm not a scientist and this is not a Psychology class!
 - But the basics of what Maslow discovered really do line up well with what we see in our experiences and in the Bible
 - God really did design humans with a hierarchy of basic needs – and those needs drive us to do what we do
 - So let me walk you through these 5 levels of basic human needs:
1. **Survival** – most fundamental level of human need: food, water, air, clothing, shelter, and sleep – without these we will eventually die
 2. **Safety** – we need to feel safe and secure, free from violence and danger

What Maslow found: until you meet these most basic needs, it's very hard to move up to the next level of need. If you don't have #1 and #2 met, then you're not ready for the rest of this sermon! We need to get you some food or get you to a doctor or counselor or police officer ASAP! God designed survival and safety needs to trump every other need. Those must be met first.

So let me be clear: if your survival or safety are threatened, the church is here to help you! That is a core part of why we exist: to show the love of Christ to those who are struggling for survival and safety. We are also blessed to have doctors, nurses, counselors, police officers and fire fighters worshipping with us at Grace. They are committed to help you whenever your survival or safety are threatened. So please don't hesitate to ask us if you or someone you know has a survival or safety need! That comes first.

But let's assume that for most of us in this room, we already have these first 2 needs met. We are surviving and we are reasonably safe. In that case, Maslow found that our minds move up to the next levels of human needs.

3. **Society** – We need connection with others, a sense of belonging, a family – whether literal or metaphorical – where we feel loved and valued.
4. **Significance** – We need to know that our contributions are valued and meaningful. We want to make a difference in the world.

- 5. **Self-Actualization** – Odd phrase to describe our need to improve ourselves – we need to grow to become better versions of ourselves.

These top 3 needs are what Paul focuses on in this week's passage and next
In today's he'll focus on the first two needs; in next week's the last need

So, let's think for a moment about that 3rd and 4th need – society and significance

- I would argue that these are at the core of what most people in our town are looking for
- because most of us have been blessed to move beyond the first 2 needs – we're surviving & safe
- So the needs that drive us are:
 - o Society = Community – we need to know that people care about us
 - o Significance = we need to know that what we do matters
- So many people in our country do not have these needs met
 - o They feel like no one cares about them and nothing they do matters
- That's why so many turn to drugs, alcohol, and immorality to drown out the pain of loneliness and insignificance
- Humans MUST have community and significance to thrive

Fortunately, both can be found in the big idea we've been talking about for 3 weeks.

What is our mission on earth as a church and as individuals? **We help people find and follow Jesus!**

- That's why God still has us here on earth – to share the gospel – the good news about Jesus with people so that they would come to know and follow Him
- That's the task I've been calling you to the last 2 weeks

In this passage I want to show you how joining us in that task can satisfy those 2 great needs in every human heart – the need for community and the need for significance

Read 1:3-8

Big idea: Paul is VERY THANKFUL, isn't he?!

- Always giving thanks to God for the church in Philippi
- Greek here doesn't mean Paul is praying for them 24/7... means that whenever he does think of them, which is often, he feels thankful
- And for most of the passage he tells us why he is so thankful for them

And the key for us is that while telling us why he is thankful, he will show us how our deepest needs can be met by helping people find and follow Jesus

So let's unpack this:

Why should you dedicate your life to helping people find and follow Jesus?

1. Creates Genuine Community: creates friendship that last forever

- o Did you notice the strong emotional words in v7-8? **Read v7-8**
- o The Philippian church was not a job for Paul. These people were not congregants for Paul to minister to. They were not volunteers to manage.
- o They were friends he cared for; brothers and sisters he loved – they were family
- o **Why? read v5**
- o **the reason he feels such affection for them = their "participation in the gospel"**
 - or "partnership in the gospel" as it is in some translations
- o **"participation/partnership" = Gr: koinonia – usually translated "fellowship"**
 - "fellowship" sounds like what? potluck dinner, coffee social, just hanging out...
 - But in its biblical usage, koinonia means something much deeper

- At the end of the sermon, I'll tell you how.
- But before we get to the how, we have to look at that 2nd fundamental human need that can be satisfied by joining in Jesus' mission: the need for significance

2. Creates Lasting Significance: it will make a difference that lasts forever

- **Read v6**
- Quite a debate over this verse – What is the “good work”? 2 possible answers
- Could be God's good work IN us = our sanctification
 - = God transforming us to make us more and more like Jesus
 - God will indeed continue to do that work in us throughout this life
 - That's a point Paul make clear later in chapter 2
 - It's what Paul will pray for in the passage we'll study next week when he addresses that fifth and final human need
 - So it's definitely a true point – no doubt that God will continue to work IN us
- But I think it's more likely that v6 refers to God's good work THROUGH us = advancing the gospel throughout the world
 - That's the good work God is doing in the world through the church → He is spreading the gospel through us as we help people find and follow Jesus
 - That option fits the context much better in this passage
 - Paul just gave thanks for their participation in his ministry of spreading the gospel – it makes sense that he'd still be talking about that partnership
- **And so the point in v6: God promises that our work helping people find & follow Jesus will bear fruit... it will be effective... it will make an eternal difference**
 - God promises to work eternal good from our efforts, as faltering as they may be
- **That's really encouraging!**
 - The time, money, and sweat we expend sharing Jesus' love with people in words and deeds... it will not be in vain. It will have an eternal impact for good – God promises us that.
 - Read 1 Cor 15:58 (ESV)
 - Dedicate yourself to the Lord's work of helping people find and follow Jesus because He's promised – your work for Him will not be in vain
- **That's encouraging because there's a lot we do in this life that does turn out to be in vain!**
 - When I was an engineer – spent a year working on a bus...
 - Big project – take a bus like one of the Aggie buses and convert it into a hybrid electric vehicle. Lots of engineering, fabrication, testing
 - We all worked, not just our regular hours, but a lot of unpaid overtime to get it done.
 - So we were very pleased when it was finished and we shipped it to the customer. There was just one problem...
 - The customer was the country of Egypt in partnership with our United States Department of Energy. And while that bus was on a slow ship to Egypt – the political relationship between our nations deteriorated and the partnership was scrapped. So the bus arrived in Egypt and they stuck it in a customs warehouse where, as far as I know, it never moved! It was never used. It rusted away. A year of my life completely wasted!
 - That was depressing... and it left me asking the question: Does my work matter? What difference am I making with all my effort?
- Here's the answer: the lasting difference I made at my engineering job during that year... I was a light for Jesus to my fellow engineers as we worked on that project together
 - My work ethic showed them that Christians work hard at their jobs – they don't slack off or take advantage of their coworkers
 - My patience demonstrated Jesus' character at work in me
 - My witness for Jesus over lunch conversations or coffee breaks shared with them the hope and peace I have because I believe in Him

- God sanctified my work at that company and used it to make a lasting impact on my coworkers because my primary goal throughout that year was to help them find and follow Jesus
- That same philosophy guides me now – as many of you know, Julie and I started a charity that gives away cars to people in need
 - Sounds like a great thing, but I have to make sure I keep first things first
 - First thing can't be the cars – our work can't be all about the cars because guess what, cars don't last! At the very best, our clients might get 10 yrs from the cars we give them. But then the cars will wear out and be scrapped and they'll have to get another car somewhere.
 - So if the cars won't last, then why do we do what we do: because it gives us a chance to show people the love of Jesus... and that lasts forever.
 - You give someone a car, you get to show them in a tangible and powerful way that *they matter*
 - You get to love them like God loves them in grace, with no strings attached
- That's the part that will last forever, and we believe God can use that gift of love and grace to transform people and families in ways a car never could
- If you want to know that your life is making a difference, that it's truly significant – then join Grace Bible Church in helping people find and follow Jesus
 - When you share His love in words and in deeds... it makes a difference that lasts forever
 - God has promised, nothing we do for this mission of helping people find and follow Jesus will be in vain – it will all count in some way – even if we don't see the effect in this life – He will use it in a good and eternally significant way

So, if you are like every other human being on earth, you want community and you want significance. And you get both by joining us in this one great mission of helping people find and follow Jesus.

So, HOW can you join us in this work of sharing Jesus' love with others?

- There's as many answers to that as there are people in this room!
- God loves variety – so He's laid out a unique path of good deeds for each of us
- But I can give you a few ideas of how some people join in this work of helping people find and follow Jesus
- **For some people, it begins by supporting a missionary who's taking the gospel to people who don't yet know Jesus.**
 - That's exactly how the Philippians partnered with Paul – they prayed and financially supported his missionary work.
 - If you already know of a missionary on the field – support them
 - If not, email us at globaloutreach@grace-bible.org and we can connect you with missionaries who will soon be going out from here to take the gospel to the nations, and who could use your prayer and support. Feel free to tell us in the email if there's a particular people group or demographic you have a heart for.
- **Invite an Int'l student to a meal**
 - Taped cards to the "Love the Nations" wall in the foyer that were filled out by Int'l students at the Big Give last week who would like to have a meal with an American
 - Take one and invite that student to breakfast, lunch, or dinner within the next 2 weeks
 - Share the love of Jesus with them in a tangible way
- **Go on a missions trip with us this spring or summer**
 - We'll be sending many trips to places including South Asia and Honduras to name just a couple
 - Much more info coming soon
- You could do what I did when I was an engineer in DC looking for community and significance: **join a small group Bible study that will encourage you and help you be a light for Jesus at work, home, and school**
 - Sunday morning groups, coed home groups, men's groups, women's groups – tons of options outlined on our website under the "Connect" tab
- **For a lot of people – joining the mission of the church means joining the church as members**
 - Come to our next Membership class later this month