

Branches

Keep going! Keep growing!

Week 5 Notes

We've arrived at the end of Branches. A short 5 week class that serves as a launching point for individuals to begin to think and act outwardly as Jesus did. Over the course of your life if you remain in a church, you might learn different diagrams, or attractional strategies, but I hope that through this class you've gained an insight into the simplicity and yet powerful lifestyle and mission that Jesus lived and laid out for us to follow.

Jesus is the incarnation, and his very reason for being here is his mission. Jesus came, and lived among us so that we can be in relationship with him. He went to weddings, he drank and ate with people, and learned their cultural norms, and fallacies all so he could love them.

This is what Jesus is calling us to do. And I hope that the holy spirit has been stirring in your heart to begin thinking about what that means for your life.

The Daily Taks

So you can begin by asking, Holy Spirit, how can I think outward? How can I meet people where they are at, and love them on their own terms.

You can ask the Holy Spirit, daily, to lead your life, so that you can bring life to the people around you.

I would then develop a relationship with whomever the lord leads you to go after. If you're already friends with that person, then consider, "what might the lord be leading me to do next with them?" and pray, and seek.

A Story

As you become friends consider how you can enter into their life and bring church to them in a way that they can receive it. I want to share a powerful story about how I partnered with the Holy Spirit in an incarnational manner with my friend Pat.

The story starts with me working on people's fences in my neighborhood. It was mostly by accident. I didn't think, yes, fences are the best way to share the gospel! I mean the whole reason we moved into this poor, mostly black neighborhood was because we randomly found out about the house before it went on the market and it was the only thing we could afford. We bought the house but it was a mess, so I spent seven months remodeling it during the early covid shutdown. During those months people from the neighborhood saw me working day and night on it. And in that time I learned everything, from framing windows to tiling showers through watching so many hours of youtube tutorial videos. The first person to ask me if I'd do work for her was a lady down the street named Laquitta. She stopped by one day and asked if I'd build some shutters for her and I told Laquitta I'd gladly build anything for her as long as she let me do it for free. I just needed her to buy the supplies and I'd provide the labor. First I built those shutters, then I mounted her tv, and finally I fixed her fence. After that, while I was re-soding my year, a relative who lived a street over asked if I'd help her lay some grass and build a fence. So of course I said yes, with the qualification that she let me work for free. I wanted to communicate the love of Jesus to my neighbors and work freely to provide a greater quality of life for them. But even as I was doing this I was thinking, man, I need to get better at communicating my reason for helping my neighbors- I want to convey the blessings of Jesus to them. So one day, while I was working on Tam's fence, rhythmically drilling pickets away, I contemplated how to communicate that message of blessed and blessing. A couple of days earlier another neighbor further down Tam's street said they needed work done on their fence and asked if I'd come by. So here I am, finishing up Tam's fence, and I was getting ready to walk down and talk with them and offer them my services for free, I heard a lady sitting in a car parked in front of Tam's yard talking loudly. After a bit, it becomes apparent that she is wanting to talk to me. So I stop drilling and say, "Hi" and she says "D**n thats a nice mother f***ing fence!" So I did the only thing I could think of and laughed and said, "thanks!" We ended up talking for a long time, and the very thing I had been planning to tell those people I was planning on meeting in a few hours, I told her. I got to tell her about how Jesus had blessed me, and how I wanted to bless others because he had shown me such kindness, it only seemed right. As we kept talking I found out that her name was Pat, that she grew up in this neighborhood, and, as tears started forming in her eyes, that her mom recently passed away this last december. Pat was staying in her mom's house to take care of her things, but staying there was hard for her. Pat slept on the couch and experienced panic attacks because of the crushing sadness of losing her mom. She talked about how she was working through it with her pastor and that she needed to trust and believe. As I was listening, squatting on a sidewalk, talking through her car window to her, I did the only thing I knew how to do, I asked Pat if I could pray with her. I prayed that Jesus would be near and help her in her sadness. After I was done praying I saw fresh tears in her eyes, but mixed in with her sadness I saw gratitude that someone had extended a loving hand towards her.

One Last Encouragement

The picture I am trying to paint for you is a missional paradigm. I am trying to communicate that we are to live our lives, every day, being led by the Holy Spirit to engage people in the world and bring the gospel to them. This is what it means to be outward as Jesus is outward.

One last word to encourage you as you move forward on your journey to imitate the life and mission of Jesus is to tell your friends, your discipler, or anyone who will keep you accountable that you desire to live outwardly. Ask them to ask you if you are being outward focused and developing relationships with those around you to lead them towards Jesus.