

Colossians 2:6-7 | When Church and Campus Collide

Tyler Velin | November 17th, 2013

In the last 3 years we have gone through the gospel of John, the Psalms, we did the whole story of the Bible in 6 weeks, and just this last week we had Hugh Whelchel with us showing us the importance of investing in our city.

We are a church who sticks to expository preaching. That means we like to pick a book of the Bible and preach through it. So when we have gaps in our series at Sovereign Hope, like we do right now. We want to be intentional about what it is we are speaking about.

So we thought it best that today we give a little update as to where we are going as Sovereign Hope Church. Our mission is to engage the city and the nations with the treasure of Jesus, but to do that well takes faithfulness and direction, so let's **Pray**.

If you have been here for a while, hopefully you know our mission statement: to engage our city and the nation with the treasure of Jesus.

But have you ever really stopped to think about it? What does that mean? More importantly how does that get done? It's easy to have a mission statement, but to embody the mission statement is another thing. I think of professional athletes. Most athletes will say in an interview or article that they want to set an example for young people. Some of them do that well. Some of them do that not so well. When you get busted for shooting up a strip club with your posse, it doesn't matter what your PR team can spin, your life is not lined up with your mission.

So how do we as a church staff, and how do you as the church gathered here, and scattered later, embody this bold statement? Engage is a strong word. Missoula is an interesting culture, the nations are far away, and the gospel of Jesus Christ is an offensive message.

So this week I was wrestling with how I would communicate this, and where we would start to engage our city and the nations with the treasure of Jesus. And I kept going back to

Colossians 2:6-7.

This passage is rich with impact for mission and I love where it starts, because it is where we all need to start to do mission. Look back at **Col 2:6**.

Do you see what it says there? Paul is speaking to the church in Colossae and he is about to get real practical with them and he doesn't say, after you have studied the culture, he doesn't say after you have been trained in systematic theology, after you have become an employee at a church. He says as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

Mission starts with an understanding of what Christ has done for us. Our first point today is: **To Engage the City and the Nations with the Treasure of Jesus, You Must Be: Converted.**

This seems like a no-duh statement, but surprisingly it is often neglected. We want to skip to the doing, we want to skip to the part where we do things. Paul makes it clear that if you want to walk, if you want to be on mission, you must understand the work that Christ has done in you. You must see that you received Christ by grace, and by grace you have been saved.

I think that the church often struggles with mission because we try to do it apart from our conversion. We try to do it on our own power with our own might, and often within our own comfort. I would just argue that we have a bad view of conversion.

I had to get my tires aligned last week. They were wearing really bad, and my car wasn't handling very smoothly. So I went to the store, they took off my tires, and aligned my car, and

now my car drives straight. Often times this is how we view what Paul is talking about. How have we received Christ Jesus the Lord? He has smoothed out our life and pulled us in the right direction.

But that's not conversion. That's alteration. The word conversion means to be converted, that means that you are no longer what you once were. We all learn this in school. We have conversion tables where you start with one number, product or increment, and come out the other side with a completely different number, product or increment.

That is what it means to be converted. You did not go to Christ to have him align your heart. You received Christ and he made you an altogether new creation. Look at **2 Cor 5:17**. To understand conversion is to see that you were dead in sin, and to see that Christ made you alive through grace. Not according to your worth or weight, but according to the love of God manifesting itself through Jesus Christ. We received Christ Jesus in grace, and we walk as ambassadors of that grace.

Why does this matter, because converted people walk differently. Monkeys walk like monkeys, lions walk like lions, sinners walk like sinners, and a converted Christian walks like a converted Christian.

You will be frustrated with mission if you are not genuinely converted because your ability to walk is directly tied to your conversion. Converted people do mission because they have been made new for the specific purpose of mission. Christians are by nature missionaries, and our mission can easily be frustrated when seen apart from a clear view of grace.

As you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. We walk.

Walking is a term used throughout the New Testament as an example of how you live your life. Look at **Rom 6:4, Eph 2:10**.

What does it mean for us to walk? It means that we pursue Christ, and we promote Christ as the church. To be rooted and built up in Christ is to be a people genuinely converted and faithfully laboring for Christ.

There are some very broad ways in which we can do this. How can we walk in our mission? We can get involved in a community group and read the Bible with each other, be an active part of the church gathered and an active part of the church scattered, we can invite our co-workers over to dinner, we can read the Bible with a classmate, we can invite our cousin to church, we can teach our children scripture, we can serve through family promise, we can give to the church, we should share the gospel in season and out of season because our mission flows out of our conversion.

These are all broad things that all churches everywhere can participate in. But one thing I love about the Epistles, which are letters written to the churches in the New Testament, is that the writer always starts broad, but then always seems to contextualize certain aspects of the book to specific cities.

In Colossae Paul is telling the church to hold fast to Christ amidst a strong proto-Gnostic gospel. In Philippi, Paul is telling the church to endure and rejoice through the suffering that will come as a part of the gospel. In Corinthians Paul is telling the church to repent from all sorts of things. The point being that the overarching mission of God is that converted people walk forward in mission, but that mission looks different in different cultures.

That means to properly engage Missoula and the nations with the treasure of Jesus, **we must be Aware.**

I was talking to a buddy of mine who is on the football team at the university and he was telling me what all the pointing was about by the offensive linemen. He said that it's the centers job to identify the middle linebacker, and point to him. He does this because it communicates to the whole offensive line where he is attempting to go. His job is to get off of his first block and

move towards that middle linebacker, and the rest of the line works off of that.

Sovereign Hope: we are pointing to campus. To be aware of the culture in Missoula is to clearly see the role the University of Montana plays on Missoula.

We are pointing to campus because when we engage campus we engage the city and the nations. Last week in your community groups you discussed what it is like living in Missoula, and this is a town which is controlled by that campus at the mouth of the Hellgate Canyon. There are over 15,000 students on the campus of the University of Montana, hundreds of faculty, and even more support staff, janitors, landscapers, adjunct faculty, campus police members and medical professionals. All of which end up making up over a quarter of the population of Missoula.

Over the course of six home football games this year, over 160,000 people will walk into Washington Grizzly Stadium, that's over a tenth of our whole state.

When we speak of campus, we are not just speaking of students. We are speaking of the influence campus has as a whole, as a culture creator, as Missoula's largest employer, as melting pot of people, places and ideas. To be aware of our distinct mission in Missoula is to be overwhelmingly aware that the greatest entry point to our culture, and the greatest influencer in our area is the University of Montana.

That is why you have heard so much of Grizzly Christian fellowship this year. Because as a church we want to reach campus. That is where we are walking Missoula.

For non-students involved at UM, we want our community groups and members to be mindful of them. You live next to professors, you work with fans of Grizzly athletics, you might even be an employee of UM, and we want you to labor in those circles with the gospel.

Grizzly Christian Fellowship is our way of influencing the university as a whole, but primarily it is our ministry to college aged students and people in Missoula. In the last three years GCF has grown from a group of about 20, to a group this year averaging between 40-50. But the biggest growth isn't numbers, it's mission. This summer we took on 14 interns and trained them on discipleship and evangelism. We see that the greatest way we will influence campus is not through our large group meetings on Thursday nights, but with students reading the Bible and sharing the gospel with other students. Most of those 14 interns are involved in a community group throughout the week, but they are also leading individual Bible studies throughout the week.

We firmly believe that to reach Missoula, Sovereign Hope will need to hold game day tickets in one hand, and the Bible in the other. When Paul went to Rome, he climbed the Areopagus, to the place of philosophers and decision makers, he engaged them with their own culture, and then he won them with the gospel. When we reach campus we reach Missoula.

But the beautiful thing about his is that when we reach campus we also reach the nations. The University of Montana has exchange students representing over 60 foreign nations. And the state of Montana sends over 650 American students abroad every year.

When we reach campus, we reach professors who are presenting papers across the world. We reach students who will be lawyers in L.A. and doctors in Eastern Europe. We reach foreign exchange students bringing the Bible back to their culture to be communicated to their culture. Ever since 1886, starting with a revival in Northfield, MA, college students have been the driving force for global missions.

I firmly believe that the nations part of our mission statement will begin to be fulfilled through our college ministry. Matthew 28 tells us that our mission is to go forth out of Christ's authority and make disciples of all nations, in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. By engaging the University of Montana we most easily impact Missoula here, and the Nations there.

Two quick things in closing that we must do to reach Missoula and the Nations with the

treasure of Jesus: **Be Willing**

We need people who are willing to support our efforts on campus. That means people who are willing to give their time and often their comfort to evangelize and serve our community. We need people willing to selflessly serve this community because the gospel is for you, but the gospel is not about you. Before you receive Christ, you are the mission. After you receive Christ you become empowered for the mission.

College students. I want you to be ready to go, but willing to stay. I want you to think big about your future. I want you to labor well while you are here, to preach the Bible and read scripture with your peers, but I want you to be willing to go with that gospel when you are done.

High Schoolers. I want you to think strategically about your life. Your dreams for education are not separate from God's mission. View college as a mission field, not simply a place of education. I want to invite you to join us at GCF in this mission.

Parents, grandparents, employees of Missoula, residents of Missoula. I want you to be willing to serve GCF with three things.

1.) Giving. It takes money to reach college students because college students have no money. From meals to offsetting retreat costs, we want to bless them, train them, equip them and send them, and all of that takes financial resources.

We have retreats coming up for both guys and girls this spring, and your support helps us buy resources and training materials for those individuals. You help us make missionaries by contributing money for hotdogs, and money for study Bibles.

Be willing to employ students and rent to students.

2.) Be Open. We don't yet know the best ways we need your help, but we want to be able to come to you when we know we need it. We try to think long term about this stuff, but often times we know our needs as they happen and we want you to bear with us as these things pop up spur of the moment.

3.) Be Prayerful. Above all else be prayerful. Be exceedingly prayerful. Because we need it. The ground is hard, the workers are few, but the grace of Christ is exceeding. Pray for our student leaders, pray for faculty members, pray for employees and students alike. Pray for revival in our city.

Lastly: To engage our city and the nations with the treasure of Jesus, we must be **steadfast**. Look back at **Col 2:6-7**.

See before Paul got to Colossae, someone had already taught them. We want to be a legacy church. We want to die in such a way where we can be forgotten but our gospel cannot.

Whether you are 18 or 80 you may never live long enough to see what God wants to do in Missoula, but we want to labor well with faithfulness and steadfastness.

There is no insignificant gospel work. The gospel only accomplishes that which it set out to do. Do that work. Walk in that manner. Think bigger than your life. Think about your legacy as a high school senior, a college junior, a stay at home mom, or an insurance salesman. We want to till soil behind us, so that others can say. Walk just as you were taught.

Look at **Ps 102:18**

Sovereign Hope, you are not rouge crusaders for Christ. We are faithful laborers working together for God's goal, and Christ's glory. Will you be converted with us? Will you be aware of our culture and passionate with the gospel? Will you be willing to go, to give and to serve the lost? And will you be steadfast and confident that God accomplishes his work in his timing? Because when we get those things, darkness trembles. The church is built, Christ is glorified, and worship will ring through this town with the sweetest of songs. Let's pray.