

You Were MADE for a MISSION

“In your own hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,” 1 Peter 3: 15

Each community we have lived in has its own uniquenesses. In Nebraska corn fields stretched out endlessly with barely a tree in sight. They also ate corn in every imaginable way – even Jello salad w/ corn in it.

When living in Minnesota, we discovered “hot dish” and “bars.” Does anyone know what “hot dish” is? It is bringing a casserole to a church potluck dinner in a hot dish. And bars are not places that serve alcohol, but cookies – bar cookies.

The community where we last lived had a unique thing a lot of people did. Every Saturday night there were parties of neighbors, in driveways, around a fire pit. Up and down residential streets, neighbors would gather, drink a beer, chat with one another. Sometimes they would celebrate a birthday or graduation.

When we first moved to that town, I found the driveway an odd place to gather. But it makes sense. Its an easy place to meet neighbors.

Kids would shoot hoops or ride bikes together. Dads would talk while clusters of Moms tried to find some adult conversation with each other, and regain their sanity. You’d find a couple of old guys getting all wound up over a story from years back, or talking about how everything has changed.

The driveway firepit is more than a place to sit in a chair to rest, or enjoy a beverage. More than a place to eat an evening snack. Instead, it’s one of those places in life where **connect with other people. It’s a place to live life.**

Maybe you’re not a firepit kind of person. Maybe you find the evenings too chilly, or you don’t like it when the wind shifts and the smoke blows your way. I’ve noticed in my current neighborhood, people walk a lot, and as they pass by on the sidewalk, often

conversations are struck up with other neighbors. It's the sidewalk that's more the place for connecting with neighbors.

I believe that almost everybody has a driveway firepit in their life of some sort. Almost everybody has one of those places and one of those times in their week when they gather and talk about life with other people; where they shoot the breeze or share their struggles with family and friends. Almost everybody has a firepit.

Even though the pandemic has made it much more difficult to have close, relaxed conversations right now, I hope you are still finding some way to connect with others. Your fire pit now might be a zoom call to catch up with family members you can't see in person. Your fire pit might be standing in your driveway, shouting through the mask over your face, lamenting with a neighbor how hard this year has been on us all. Soon, God willing, this pandemic will end, and we pray we can resume being close to others once again.

Where is your driveway firepit? It might be the bus stop, in that 10 minutes after the kids have been shipped off to school and you stand around talking with the other parents.

Your firepit might be the break table at work. Your firepit might be the gym, where you talk with the people who routinely work out the same time you do. Your firepit might be on your buddies' boat every Saturday in the summer, or the garage at your dad's every Sunday afternoon.

Where are the places where you talk about life? You talk about kids and work, and stuff like that? Where? Everybody has, or should have, a place in their life like this. Where's yours?

The reason I ask, is this week, we're talking about **You Were made for a Mission, the 5TH purpose for your life.** This week we're going to look at how we can 'cook God' into the conversations we have around that firepit kind of place in your life. Your 5th purpose in your life is that the people who sit around your fire, might, through you, get to know God and love God and follow God, just a little bit more.

I will kick things off by just being honest and saying that in the past, I have found it awkward to talk to people about God.

I first learned to share Jesus with people when I was a teenager. I had to go door-to-door, trying to share Jesus with a complete stranger. It felt like I was selling magazine subscriptions or vacuum cleaners. Sharing God that way just felt wrong. It felt wrong because that was trying to share something very personal, very intimate, with someone who was a complete stranger. There was no relationship of trust with the other person.

Somewhere along the way, I think we got the wrong idea. Somehow, many of us, came to believe that talking about Jesus with another person involved arguing or convincing another person to come over to your “side.” It was like an arm wrestling match where finally the other person would surrender, and you would “win.”

Somewhere along the way, we got the wrong idea that sharing Jesus with others was like performing an infomercial in front of your friends, to get them to buy into the “God product.” And we are surprised when no body wants to do it!

One of the most freeing ideas that I’ve found comes straight from the pages of the Bible. And it’s the idea that the goal, the job of the person who believes in and loves Jesus, is that around that firepit (where ever it might be), their goal is NOT to get their friends to sign their life away to Jesus. That is NOT the goal. Instead, **the goal of a Christ-follower around the fire pit is to introduce their friends to Jesus through their life** – to introduce their friends to Jesus through MY life. And there is a difference.

My goal is to live in such a way through what I say and do, that the people chatting with me casually in my driveway or around my kitchen table, when they reflect on my life, they know that Jesus is the Savior of my life, that He’s doing stuff in my life, and that the Jesus I know would probably be willing to do the same for them. THAT is the goal of the Christ-follower. THAT is the essence of sharing your faith in a realistic and relational way. THAT is what it means to be living your life on God’s Mission, every day, in every place, with every person.

So, to help us, there are 2 key questions that everyone needs to ask of themselves, and of everyone around that relational meeting place in their life. And the first question, is simply this: “Who has your faith?” **Who has your faith?** Or to put it another way, Who is your god?

Who are you, and most importantly, who are the people in those firepit kinds of places in your life, putting their faith in? Because believe it or not, every single person around you – even if it is the break table, the bus stop, or your buddie’s boat, EVERY SINGLE person you know IS very religious, even if they’ve never set foot in a church.

One thing you’ve got to come to terms with is that every single person around your neighborhood driveway firepit, whether they know it or not, has a god. Every single person in your life is putting their ultimate trust and hope in some thing or some one. And the question is simply: what is it? Who is it? Who has your faith?

All of us were created to give away our hearts. We were all created by God for faith. The question is: Who or what do you give your heart to?

Humans give their hearts to a lot of different things. We’ll put our faith in the belief that if we just climb higher up the ladder at work we’ll be happier. Or we’ll put our faith in the aspiration that if I raise the world’s happiest and healthiest kids, I will feel completely whole on the inside. Or that my soul will, somehow, be at peace and at rest, if I just collect as much stuff as possible. Everybody around your firepit, or around your kitchen table, -- is bowed before something, or some one.

God’s desire (<) is that we’d use that God-given gift for faith to put it in something that would last forever. Something that will never fail us. **God’s desire for you and all of us, is to put our faith and ultimate worship and devotion in HIM.**

In fact, God says that if you put your faith in anything other than Him, you are just cruisin’ for hurt. You will be let down.

Just think about it: if you worship your work, life is good as long as the overtime or the promotions keep coming. But if you get

laid off, you have not only lost your income, you have lost your security. Your world has fallen down around you.

If you treasure the most in your life your children, then when they love you, God loves you. When you and they get along at home, your god himself is smiling upon you. But if your kids grow to become teenagers who argue and disagree with you – then god himself has turned against you. And you are lost.

The goal of the Christian around the firepit is not to preach, not to point, not to put on an info-mercial that says “I know what you should do.” The goal of the Christian is first to LISTEN. Sit back and **listen to the people around you, so that you might hear clearly from them the answer to that question -- who has their faith.** Who has their hope.

Listen to the stories that are told. Listen to the choices that are made. Listen with an open mind and an open, non-judgmental heart, to the priorities that are put on display. To the values that are revealed.

Listen, not so that you can sit back and judge; not so that you can put people in a box. Listen, because you honestly care! Listen because you honestly care about what’s going on inside of someone’s heart.

Listen because you believe that who you put your faith in matters! Listen because you know that people can put their faith in a whole lot of stuff, but unless that faith is ultimately put in the Creator of the Universe, that faith will disappoint.

Around the firepit in your life you listen, so that you might point those people who have placed their faith in something that will fail them, to have faith in someONE who will never let them down – and that someONE is Jesus Christ.

- And you point them to Jesus, not just because He’s the world’s greatest teacher and He can show them how to live life like God designed – which He can.
- You point the friends you have listened to, to Jesus, not just because He’s shown that He LOVES THEM MORE THAN

ANYONE else on the planet by being nailed to a cross and dying in their place – which He did.

- You point those people to Jesus, not just because He rose from the dead and proved that He is more powerful and more trustworthy than anyone else that you could bow your knee to – which He is.
- You point the people you know and care about to Jesus, because you know that if they put their faith and hope in Jesus, they will receive something from Him that no other person and no other thing could *EVER* give to them – namely, an eternal life in heaven. And at the end of the day, when everything else in this life, everything in this world fails, and falls short, and lets you down – that is the only thing that matters. That's it.

And this is where the questions come from you, to the others as you sit there and chat with them. You see, everyone can sit there and do the listening part. Everyone can say, “Yes, Yes, I see ... your career ... uhahh.” This is where the pointing to Jesus part comes in.

It's simpler than you think, the pointing part. After you listen and you've gained the trust and confidence of your neighbor, or your coworker and friend, just, simply, tell them what you've found in Jesus. Tell them, in an honest, humble, non-judgmental way, **what Jesus has done for you, and what He means to you.**

You point people to Jesus, in the midst of your conversation, sharing with them, the real deep and meaningful stuff of your life. You share with them who, ultimately, are you trusting in. And you -- again humbly -- share what your faith means practically, in your daily life.

They talk about struggles. You listen, and then you share your struggles. But you also share who it is who you hand your struggles over to – Jesus.

They talk about success, and you share your success, and who you credit with success, and what *really* is lasting success – lasting success is love and faith, that are worked in the heart as gifts from God Himself.

Someone shares their past, the mistakes they've made, or the guilt they carry – you talk about your past too, and the mistakes you've made. But you also share the wonderful truth that Jesus' death and resurrection has paid – completely paid – for all the mistakes and sins of your past, so they don't condemn you any longer. And you talk about how Jesus has done the same for them, and how He offers that forgiveness to them on the basis of a free gift, -- not on the basis of how good they are, or what they've done or haven't done. You talk about how **THEY TOO**, can be set free from all the remorse and regret of their past, by what Jesus has done for them.

They are talking about their plans for the weekend, you talk about the weekend as well. But you also share what you do on Sunday mornings, and **WHY** you do that. And, "If you're ever interest, I'm always going."

Friends, living on the Mission God made you for is not rocket science. It's just sharing your faith in a real and relational way. All that takes is just honesty. You don't have to have memorized Bible passages, or a well-oiled presentation. It just takes being humble and honest about your life.

Living your mission boils down to just 2 things: The first is listening so you can discover who or what is their god, and then showing your cards, so you can say, "Hey, I live a life of faith as well. It just happens to be faith in Jesus."

I want to warn you: when you do that in that very simple way, the people with you around your driveway firepit will take notice. They will. And **the people around you will always respond**. They will always respond.

- If you share that your faith is in Jesus, do not be surprised if someone you're chatting with says, "Hey, you believe in prayer – right? Could you pray for me? Because I'm struggling with something."
- Do not be surprised if others peg you as a spiritual guy or gal, and they come to you with a spiritual question, one that you feel

unqualified to answer – still do not be surprised if you're called on for an answer.

- Don't be surprised if someone asks a question that tries to dig deeper into your life to find out more about the hope that is displayed in your life. When you show your cards to people whom you've proven you care about, they will always, always respond.

Peter, a close friend and follower of Jesus, later in his life wrote this: *"I your own hearts, set apart Christ as Lord."* That means, start by you answering the question, "who has your faith?" Peter goes on: *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,"*

1 Peter 3: 15

When you show your cards to people you share life with, an opportunity will always present itself.

I would like to promise you that every person around your neighborhood firepit – everyone with whom you share your faith in Jesus, will respond eagerly. But I can't. Not every conversation will end in a way that you see of someone moving closer to God.

The important thing to remember, is that all you are called to do is to share Jesus. You can't make someone believe. **You can't close the deal and make another person come to faith. Ultimately only God alone can do that.** You are called to love people, and listen, and share what Christ has done and means to you in the real stuff of your life. That's all you can do. And you can PRAY – pray for God to act. Pray for God to work in your friend's heart and mind.

Now, please understand, God wants everybody – *everybody* – to be saved and to put their faith and trust in all that Jesus has done for them – His death, and His resurrection. God's desire is that everybody would be with Him in heaven. That's His true and honest heart, and that's our heart as well. But whether or not a person does believe in Jesus, is not up to me. And one of the biggest rules around the firepit is, you have to be OK with that. Because we share our faith, not to count conversions, like carving notches on our

Bible cover. “I got that one!” The reason God has put you where you are in your neighborhood, is so that you might love people. No matter who they are, no matter what their faith is in, no matter how receptive they are to Jesus, isn't really the issue. God has put you where you are so that you can listen to their hearts, and share your own. God can work through you, and the rest is ultimately between them and God. Listen in love, and through casual, caring conversations, point them to Jesus.

In the rack in front of you are some small cards. Please, everyone, take one. Will you commit today to invest relationally with 3 people in your life. Build a relationship with them.

Will you commit to pray for those 3 people? Will you pray for God to give you opportunities to share with them who has your faith? Pray for God to open your ears and eyes to see those opportunities that He brings to answer your prayers?

And in time, invite them. Put the card somewhere you'll see it each day – by your Bible, on the bathroom mirror, car dashboard, on the edge of your computer screen. Place it somewhere to remind you to pray each day.

You are not here by accident. You are MADE for a MISSION.