Get Out of the Box! Part II: Come and See!

1. Review

2. Last week’s message on getting out of our box as a church and as individuals stirred my heart and left me thinking a lot about the many areas that we as followers of Jesus Christ must leave the boxes of our comfort and enter into the uncomfortable world of the Spirit.
   a. I am reading a book this week about disciple making and the author noted that Jesus had four distinct levels of disciple making for his followers. Each one of them required the follower to step out of a level of comfort, safety and self-dependence to step into and up to the next level of obedience.
      i. For example in John chapter 1 verses 35-39, we see how Jesus attracts people to Himself.
      ii. “The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him...” (John 1:35-39)
      iii. John the Baptist was heralding the coming Messiah. John the Baptist had his own followers. One day when John saw Jesus passing by, he identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God, and two of John’s followers hear him and begin to follow Jesus. They aren’t following him as disciples. They are following Him as seekers. They are curious as to who he is, and why John referred to him as he did. In a very real sense, John “recommended” Jesus to them.
      iv. When Jesus sees them, he asks them “what do you want” and they reply, “where are you staying?” Jesus gives them a very simple and low risk invitation, “Come and see.” So they spent the day with him, most likely asking him questions and getting to know him.
      v. We don’t know the content of their conversation, or what they did when they spent that day with him. The content isn’t important at this point. It is about the time spent together.
      vi. Jesus is saying, come and see for yourself, learn who I am by being with me.

This brings me to my first point:
   b. Every Christian makes disciples whether they realize it or not. People are drawn to Jesus in us, and they will spend time around us trying to discover whether or not we have something worth the investment of their life.
      i. We either offer people we encounter life or we take life from them. Some folks suck the life right out of others. Don’t be one of those people. Jesus has made you a life giver…give them the life God has given you…the hope, the love, the concern.
      ii. I can recall numerous people who were followers of Christ that I encountered before I actually gave my life to Jesus. They exuded life and attracted me to Jesus.
         1. My own Grandmother used to have me come over for cookies and tea with milk in it of course, to talk and listen to me. She enjoyed her grandchildren. But she would occasionally say something that would rock my boat. She would ask me, “Isn’t my Jesus wonderful?” I didn’t know how to respond, but it imprinted on my heart.
         2. I dated a young woman who was a Christian in college, (and I wasn’t one). Her moral purity and steadfast beliefs impacted me, even if I wasn’t ready to be a Christian. I thought I was rejecting her, but I was rejecting Jesus in her.
         3. I remember a guy in Military school who was a strong Christian. He was steadfast in his beliefs and yet kind to those who were the outcasts of the school social system. I can still see his face when I think of him.
4. I recall being witnessed to in college by a student with Campus Crusade for Christ. He tried to teach me the bible and spent a lot of time and effort trying to win my heart. I rejected his efforts but remember his kindness.

5. And then, after becoming a follower of Christ, I can name for you countless Christians who gave me their time, attention, affirmation, and who opened their homes and their hearts for me so that I could simply be “with them.”

iii. Each and every one of these people “discipled me.” How? They simply opened their lives to me and in so doing, said, “come and see Jesus.” They stepped out of their box of safety and selfishness and represented Jesus by giving me their time and attention.

3. Some call this level of disciple making “seeker making.” Very often the seeker doesn’t even really know they are seeking. They are attracted to people of God who have something that they wish they had.
   a. A seeker is someone who is seeking to discover who God is and how to connect to Him. Seekers take many forms – from the person who has absolutely no church or religious background to the faithful church goer who attends hoping that God will take note of their attempts to be good and do good.
      i. I was a seeker once…although raised in Roman Catholicism, all I really knew was religion. God was the big Genie in the sky who I could try to convince to meet a need if I had a really big one that I couldn’t do myself. I remember thinking I wasn’t a bad person, even though I made up my own rules about right and wrong. I felt I was better than most people because I believed God existed and I didn’t go out and commit criminal acts. But despite all of my efforts, I was spiritually dead. I wasn’t trusting Jesus to be my savior. Jesus was just a man who died a terribly tragic death. I didn’t know He died FOR ME. So I convinced myself I maybe needed a bit more church or some more good works or another Act of Contrition. Maybe if I turned over a new leaf.
      ii. But the truth was, I didn’t need to turn over a new leaf, I needed a new life. The Apostle Paul says, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.” (Ephesians 2:1) And then one day in May of 1980, encountered God’s love and surrendered. I stopped trying to be rehabilitated, and was resurrected.
         1. I had been in a spiritual coffin, and I was unable to come to life on my own. When I surrendered in faith to Jesus Christ, His life filled me and I became a brand new person.
   b. The seeker, while they may be a nice person, are still alienated from God because of sin. They are according to the bible, “deserving of wrath” and are “hostile to God.”
      i. The seeker needs to be introduced to Jesus Christ. To become a follower of Jesus Christ begins with an honest assessment of our life without Christ. We are lost, dead, alone, unable to save ourselves. We are dead in our sins. We are dead toward God. Our spirits are dead, lifeless, unable to bring themselves to life. (It is why a person is said to be “born again” when they truly encounter Jesus Christ. Their spirit comes to life!)
      ii. The good news is that Jesus Christ is our sin offering, and when we place our faith in Him, we experience a new birth, our spirit becomes alive and we are forgiven and free.
      iii. Understand please, that the gospel is not about trying to make bad people good, but bringing dead people to life.
         1. There are a lot of people far from God who aren’t bad or don’t see themselves as bad. But bad isn’t the problem. Dead is. Jesus said, “I am the way the truth and the life!” (John 14:6)
   iv. Perhaps you are a seeker. Wondering how you can follow Jesus. It all starts with a hunger in your heart and spending time around people who know Jesus.
      1. When I was in Houston, Texas, 2 other Christian brothers and I rented a house and hosted an evangelistic bible study for Single adult Catholics. Many of us
were a part of single adult groups in different parishes all over SW Houston, and made it a regular practice to invite people to our bible study. One particular evening as we got ready to pray at the conclusion of the study, a young man who was there for the first time said something that I have never forgotten: “I don’t know what it is that you all have, but I want it.” He prayed that evening to receive Christ as His savior.

c. We can’t always define what it is we have that they want…it may be our joy, our peace, our faith, our love for each other, our confidence…but in truth, what we have is Jesus Christ. And He invites people to “come and see.”

4. Because we all disciple others, we need to notice when God puts someone in our path. It can be a non-Christian, it can be an unchurched Christian, it can even be a mature Christian. It is in these moments that we get to choose whether we are going to stay in our box of comfort and isolation or step out of our box into the realm of relationship. It may mean we ask someone to go have breakfast with us, or go for a walk, or do a project together. The key here is “together.”
   a. Discipling someone, or seeker making doesn’t require a bunch of training, learning, or memorization of a bunch of scripture. It requires an act of caring. It requires giving an invitation to someone. It will cost you some time and some caring. But the impact is be measurable by its impact in eternity!
      i. Only two things on this earth last forever…the word of God and the souls of men. Are you willing to get out of your box to give life to someone?

5. Jesus asked these two men, these two seekers: “What are you looking for? What do you really want?”
   a. This is the question Jesus asks everyone. What is it that you are searching for? What is the hunger of your heart? Most people can’t put their finger on it. They don’t really know.
      i. A young man from a pastor’s congregation was working in a men’s clothing store. While ringing up an order, he said to the customer, "Where do you live?" "Oak Park," replied the customer "We live in Oak Park too," said the clerk, "How do you like it?" "Well, to be honest about it, it's a great community, but we're having trouble meeting people. We don't feel connected." "You know," said the clerk, "we've made most of our friends through our church. You might want to give it a try some Sunday." Several weeks later he and his family did give the church a try; some time later they became members; and they're still involved to this day. And it all started with a simple invitation. "We've made most of our friends through the church. You might want to give it a try." All he really said was "Come and see," and the customer and his family did just that.
      ii. This customer was seeking authentic community and friends. And He ultimately found it in Christ. It takes an invitation. It requires stepping out of our box.
   b. To say nothing is to stay safe, it is to stay inside our box. It is to refuse to take a risk, to open up our hearts. The box will smother you. The very thing that makes you feel safe is also the thing that endangers you the most.
      i. When I was a child, my friends and I would occasionally catch field mice when my dad would plow the field in our nursery. We would put them in shoeboxes. But what we didn’t understand was that there wasn’t a lot of air in those boxes, especially when we taped them shut. Our mice would inevitably die. They were trapped in the box. Don’t get trapped in yours!

6. In a moment we will have a ministry time. It is a time you can respond by stepping out of your box, out of your safe place and come for prayer or to make a decision to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. You too can come to life. Jesus offers it to you. Free to you…it cost Him plenty. It is a gift of a new life. Don’t you want it? You are here not by accident. God wanted you to hear his invitation today. Step out and take it! Let’s pray.
8. To change our world, we must be better disciples. Growing as disciples. Making disciples.
   a. What are you willing to lay down, what obstacles are you willing to let go of to be a better disciple, to be a growing disciple?
   b. We can have all the great ideas of reaching people, but unless we are better disciples, we won’t be making very good ones, nor will be attractive for people who are seeking to see what God is like.
   c. Whether we want to believe it or not, each of us reproduces what is inside of us. Biologically it is our dna…whatever is in us is what we pass on to others. Biblically speaking, God created everything to reproduce after its own kind.
      i. What is inside of You? How hungry for God are you? How responsive are you to His love? Have you received His love? Are you willing to fully embrace His love and plan for your life?
   d. You and I aren’t here by accident. God called us together because He has a plan for us together.
      God has called us together to belong to each other in Christ.
      i. Romans 12:5 says, “in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”
      ii. This belonging to one another is part of how God designed the church. It is to be a relationship of individuals, connected to one another in community. Another way to put it is that we are to be “family” to one another.
      iii. It is my hope and prayer that you feel and experience that at Here’s Hope. But to maintain that experience, we also must intentionally connect ourselves to one another in small groups, fellowships, bible studies and service.
         1. These connections are places where we learn that we are loved just as we are. They are places where we actually experience love and grace.
         2. I read this week that the three most important words we long to hear are “I love you.” And the four most important words are similar, “I believe in you.”
            a. These words communicate that we don’t have to do life alone.
            b. They remind us that we have others who are there for us, there with us, who are willing to walk with us through the dark times of life.
         3. In our small group, we laugh together, eat together, pray together, and share life experiences. I have been surprised by what I have learned from the difficult life experiences people have shared with us in our small group. I have a deeper understanding and affection for each of these folks in our group as a result of our sharing and caring.
      iv. Attending on Sunday morning is the just first step to becoming a part of our family. Joining us in fellowship meals, small groups and serving together is how we grow deeper in that family experience. It is my prayer that each of us will embrace the joy that comes from being connected with one another, and then find ways to express that outside of these walls.