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DAY 1

ANSWER

We care because
God saved us
and gives us a
new identity

READ

2 Corinthians
5:17–20

SURPRISE! YOU'RE A MISSIONARY

LET'S PRETEND WE'VE NEVER HEARD OF JESUS.

As you pretend with us, here's a question: *What defines you?* Here's my answer even if I didn't know Jesus: I am husband to Jess, father to Charlotte, Maggie, and God willing, more kid-dos in the future. I'm son to Dennis and Becky, a brother, brother-in-law, and uncle. And even if I (Bob) didn't know Jesus, I am husband to Niki and father to Ben (not my coauthor; a different one who looks like me) and Jill. I'm son to Bob Sr. and Gaye. I'm a brother, uncle, father-in-law, and nephew. And as of October 2013, I'm a granddad! We're both Americans, and we're both Texans. Yeehaw.

While these are marks of our identities, we both also play unique roles. Various titles describe us: we're both writers and speakers. Bob's a diplomat and resident of Keller. I'm a professor and resident of Fort Worth. We're both pastors (that's weird since we're pretending we don't know Jesus, right?). But while these titles *describe* us, and help direct where our time goes, they're not our *identity*. They're *roles* we play. They're meaningful, and we both hope to continue playing our roles for as long as God allows. But roles change. Neither of us lives where we grew up; we

have both worked for multiple churches. So our residential and pastoral roles have changed.

Unlike roles, identities are permanent. Deeper than roles, our identity is who we are. There was a time when Bob and I were both single. There was a time when neither of us had children (those were the blessed days we could sleep past sunrise). But at specific moments, our identities objectively changed. We became husbands and dads, and now we live as married men with wives and children. These aren't hats we wear when we want and take off when we don't feel like living them out. They're more like tattoos that cannot be removed. Even if we could cover them up or they fade over time, once there, they're always there. If either of us is on a trip without our wives, neither gets to act as if we are single. Even as our kids grow and start families of their own, we're still parents. And when we're in Europe, we don't try to put on accents to fit in. We'd make fools of ourselves. I often tell my wife, Jess, that if I could change one thing about myself, I'd have a British accent—it just sounds so jolly cool. But because of who I am, I speak Texan, y'all.

What about you? If you didn't know Jesus, how would you define your identity? And what are some of the roles you play in your day-to-day life?

WHO WE ARE DEFINES WHAT WE DO

Okay, let's get back to loving Jesus. As we said, in nearly every one of Paul's New Testament letters, he explains "who you are" before he tells readers "what to do." He starts with our identity before he explains our roles and actions. "Christian" isn't just a role we play; it isn't just something we do. It's deeper than that. Our very *identity* is in Christ. Because of God's work in us, we are each sons and daughters of God. We are followers of Jesus. To take it a step further, that's a more important identity than "spouse," "parent," nationality or culture, or any way we define identity.

Before Jesus intervened in our lives, we were each, among other things, "a sinner . . . idolater . . . of our flesh . . . in darkness . . . slaves . . . children of wrath . . . [and] dead."² But in Christ, God has

given us a new identity. We've been "transformed by the renewing of your minds"; God has removed the heart of stone from our flesh; we're now "children of light, a new creation . . . alive in Him."³ Nearly every reference to salvation in the Bible speaks of a transfer of identities: we were *that*; by God's grace, we're now *this*.

That's the first reason we care about everyday mission. We have a new identity, and that new identity shapes our lives. God's gospel work doesn't stop at the moment of change. In fact, that new identity is just the beginning of God's work in and through us. Second Corinthians 5 explains our new identity, and reminds us that it's only through Jesus that this is possible. But Paul doesn't stop there. What else does God do? He "gave us the ministry of reconciliation." He entrusts us with his "message of reconciliation." He calls us His "ambassadors." Many Bible passages that speak of salvation echo the idea that our new identity calls us to demonstrate the gospel: in Romans, the gospel—"the power of God for salvation"—also enables us to live by faith; in Ephesians, the same God who saves us by grace, through faith also calls us "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."⁴ Throughout most of the Bible, we see that our decisions, actions, and even roles stem from that new identity.

Our identity leads us to demonstrate the gospel. This isn't just true for the tiny percentage of Christians who actively choose to call themselves "missionaries," who get on a plane for the more traditional picture of "mission." It's true for everyone redeemed by God.

LIVING OUT OUR IDENTITY IN OUR ROLES

Gabe and Alison are actors in The City Church. They have helped me see the dangers of defining ourselves by the roles we play, instead of the identity we have. A professor once told Alison that any play worth watching is about an extraordinary day, be it triumph or tragedy. While that may be the formula for good entertainment, Alison explains the downside: "it fosters a false expectation of reality [for actors], leaving ordinary day to day seeming like no life at

all.”⁵ Christian actors must cling to something deeper, something more real, as they rest in Christ and demonstrate the gospel in the dark world of professional theater. They can’t be defined by critics’ reviews, audiences’ responses, or roles they play—because those change every few weeks. They live out their *identity* in Christ, in their roles as actors. This is true for every Christian, in every role we play. I’m paid to teach college freshmen about public speaking—or how to “talk good,” I often joke. But I cannot ignore the fact that I am first a Christian, and God’s missionary. I live out my identity *in* that specific role. I’m open about my faith from the first day of class. I get to know students. I try to model integrity, and to talk about Jesus when I can do so naturally. I seek to display grace and truth—which can be especially difficult when it comes to final exam grades!

Whatever we do in life, we are first and foremost disciples of God. We are members of His family. And we are missionaries to His world. It looks different depending on our place in life. But in whatever role we play—and even in lesser elements of our identity—we don’t get to disregard to our deepest identity. We do business differently. How we treat others changes. The way we respond to frustration is redeemed. Our roles are renewed: they’re each opportunities to live out our faith.

101 WAYS

TO DEMONSTRATE THE GOSPEL

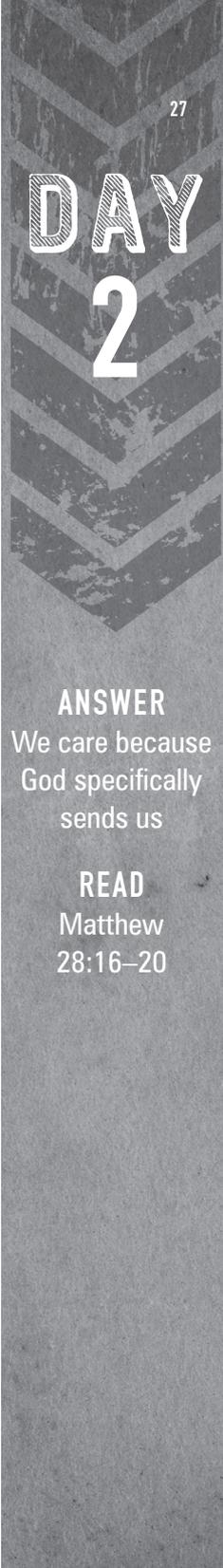
1 Fix broken things: Jesus saw blindness and other disabilities as symbolic of spiritual brokenness; we can too. Pick up trash, paint fences, help a neighbor with rehab, or clean a park.

2 Be generous: Sacrifice your time, money, and resources for the good of others. This echoes the generosity, sacrifice, grace, and initiation God first showed you.

3 Back up your ministry with your message: Be aware how the work of the gospel is echoed in your cleaning, fixing, renewing, and serving. Be willing to explain this when asked.

THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS IS BIGGER THAN YOU

If you were asked, “What is the gospel?” you’d probably speak of who God is, who He originally designed mankind to be, what sin did to distort our original purpose, and how Jesus is our only hope for eternity. And praise God—you’d be right! But the gospel doesn’t just call us to God, to spend the rest of our lives as we please. God doesn’t change our identity so that we can hide away from the world and wait for eternity. No! In our conversion, God changes our identity; our identity impacts our roles and changes our actions. The gospel is not *just* for the purpose of individual reconciliation; the gospel does not *just* call each of us out of our old identity. The gospel *also* calls us to participate in God’s reconciliation of all things. The gospel *also* calls us to live out our new identity, every day as His ambassador. Why do we care about everyday mission? Surprise: by the fact that you call yourself a Christian, God calls you a missionary.


 DAY
2

PAY IT FORWARD

WHAT HAPPENS IF ANIMALS STOP REPRODUCING?

If flowers stop producing pollen to spread? First endangerment, then if not reversed, extinction. I once met with an organization’s leaders, who became increasingly uncomfortable through our conversation, as I encouraged them to equip their members toward God’s mission. “It’s just that” one finally said and paused, “. . . we’re a more *inward-focused* organization.” It’s a popular label for Christian groups; it sounds good and holy. But Christianity is an outward-focused faith. From creation in Genesis, God designed every healthy, living organism to multiply: “plants . . . trees . . . winged birds . . . livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth . . . [and] man” all “bear fruit . . . according to its kind”⁶. Healthy trees make new trees. Healthy duck-billed platypuses make new platypuses. Healthy humans make new humans. So do healthy Christians make new Christians.

God’s Church is a living organism: multiplication and reproduction are not just physical, but spiritual. If we never multiply—if we never make disciples—we aren’t healthy Christians.

But aren’t community and discipleship good things? Yes. Growing together, carrying out the “one another” commands in Scripture, and

ANSWER

We care because
God specifically
sends us

READ

Matthew
28:16–20

building up the body are biblical concepts. Every plant and animal and human must mature—at least for a few days—before they multiply or reproduce. But *the gospel must spread*. We cannot live inward-focused lives if we claim to follow an outward-focused God.

**AN OUTWARD-FOCUSED GOD;
AN OUTWARD-FOCUSED COMMISSION**

Perhaps we don't live on mission because an "outward-focused God" is a new idea. Even if new to us, the concept is thousands of years old. Here are a few of Jesus' own words on the topic:⁷

- "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."
- "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."
- "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
- And even one of the most famous verses of the Bible: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

From God's promised Redeemer in Genesis to the culmination of that promise in Revelation, the Bible is a story of God's mission. And each of God's people between those points in history plays a vital role in that mission. Each of the four Gospels includes some form of Jesus' call to His followers, to make new disciples—most famously in Matthew 28. There has been a lot of debate over whether the Great Commission's "go" should be translated as a command ("go!") or participle ("as you go"). Honestly, God uses His people in both ways: some leave home on mission to a new place (like Abraham, Jim Elliot to South America, St. Patrick to Ireland, and the apostle Paul to, well, most of the Roman Empire). Others (like Israel's prophets, George Müller with British orphans, Jesus' brother James, and Jesus Himself) made disciples where they lived.

While the second view is the topic of this book, debating the nuanced Greek wording might miss the forest for the leaves on the trees. The kingdom of God might be better served if we just live out the explicit command in the verse: “make disciples of all nations.” Both our own and the other 195 across the globe,⁸ wherever God sends us. Bigger than the translating “go” is the question, *Are you making disciples?* Whoever you are; wherever you’re called, are you pursuing God’s mission?

Early in my (Bob’s) ministry, my primitive understanding actually got in the way of Jesus’ teaching in the Great Commission. I remember once giving a call in our worship gathering to anyone who felt called to be a missionary. But Jesus had already given the call to everyone. My job was not to issue the call but to show people their call and equip them fulfill it. For many, the call wasn’t about seminary, preaching, cross-cultural involvement, or religious work; it was about everyday discipleship in every way, engaging society by using what God had given, to bless others.

PAY IT FORWARD

The 2000 film *Pay It Forward*⁹ re-popularized a concept first coined in 1919, of doing good deeds to others in response to first receiving a good deed. Haley Joel Osment’s eleven-year-old Trevor McKinley’s school project launches a citywide movement of do-goodery. Without asking his mom, he invites a homeless man to live with his family. Bad idea, Trevor. It turns out okay: the man “pays forward” the favor by doing chores around the house, and later stops someone else’s suicide attempt. Grateful for life, that person pays it forward again. And so forth. The past century has seen many versions of this concept. Attempts often lean toward moralistic, feel-good motives, temporary justice, and even overtones of karma. But it is a helpful picture of God’s mission: He sends us to make disciples, as He first sent someone to make a disciple of us, and someone else made a disciple of them, and so forth. With better records, each Christian on earth could trace our spiritual family to the eleven

apostles (or later, Paul) who heard Jesus' original commission, "Go make disciples."

Spoiler alert—if you don't want to ruin a decent movie, skip to the next paragraph. But there's a massive difference between *Pay It Forward* and the Great Commission. After seeing this movement spread through his city and beyond, Trevor dies—ironically while trying to do good. In a pseudo-Christlike ending, the hundreds impacted by the movement he started show up to a vigil, each committing to keep it alive. Less-Christlike, however, is that Trevor stays dead. So the continuation of his revolution relies completely on his followers. That's *not* how God works in His mission.

Remember what I told Jerry in the introduction? "My theology doesn't allow me to believe I can convert people." That's biblical honesty. I don't have the power, words, winsomeness, ability, or at times, even desire to make disciples. Even the most gifted evangelist cannot carry out the Great Commission by their own power. God alone convicts, changes hearts, leads to repentance, reveals idols, and draws people to Himself. This is why the end of verse 20, often less quoted than verse 19, is vital: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." We'll dive deeper into God's power

101 WAYS

TO DEMONSTRATE THE GOSPEL

4 Build relationships: Stories get deeper, trust is built, and needs are expressed, only as relationships get stronger. Make time, ask questions, and visit often. Share your story and remember as they share theirs.

5 Take—or teach—a class or lessons: do adult education, cooking, fitness, art, or whatever you're passionate about. If there's no class offered in an area of your skill or passion, start one.

6 Don't forgo Christian practices in not-yet-believers' presence: Speak truth. Encourage, exhort, or rebuke others in love, as you normally would. Pray. Take communion. Demonstrate the difference your faith makes.

in the coming weeks. For now, God both commands and causes His Commission.

Why care about everyday mission? Because the Bible is the story of a sending Father, who sent His Son to “seek and save the lost.”¹⁰ Because God sent someone to “seek and save” you, and you are now part of a sent people. Just as He commands and causes plants, animals, and humans to reproduce, He commands and causes disciples to be made in our lives. We are the vessels He chose to pay His mission forward. But we must embrace the commission God has put on every one of His people: when God asks “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” our understanding of a sending God and the Great Commission drives us to respond like Isaiah, “Here I am! Send me.”¹¹

DAY 3

ANSWER

We care because mission is an act of worship

READ

Romans
11:33–12:2

PITFALLS AND TRAPS

ANY GOOD FIELD GUIDE GUARDS YOU FROM DANGERS ON THE TRAIL.

Today, we play spiritual doctor and examine our hearts and heads, diagnosing pitfalls and traps in our minds, which can derail our everyday mission. Pitfalls are lies we believe, which *keep some of us* from making disciples. Traps, on the other hand, *drive some of us* to try to make disciples, but in unhealthy—even ungodly—ways. Once we discover these powerful dangers in our hearts, we can pinpoint the only treatment for both.

PITFALLS THAT KEEP OUR MOUTHS SHUT

When Jesus sent His first disciples into mission, “he said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.’”¹² The first Christian missionaries had no choice but to meet people wherever they went: if they didn’t, they’d have been hungry and homeless. Maybe we would meet people better if our lives—or at least a hot meal and good night sleep—depended on it. Today, politeness, introversion, and shyness are common reasons some Christians don’t pursue mission. Each often gets slammed as being bad or wrong, but while we guard you from the lie—“I can’t live on mission because of my personality”—we also want to

free you to live on mission in your unique gifting, instead of telling you to overcome or change it.

Politeness

Politeness is good. The Bible celebrates those who consider others more highly than themselves.¹³ In fact, one reason many not-yet-believers dislike Christians is our *lack* of politeness. Politeness becomes a pitfall, though, when it slips into people-pleasing—the “fear of man.”¹⁴ When we make excuses against knocking on a neighbor’s door, convince ourselves of reasons not to talk to the new guy at work, and tell ourselves we’re a bother, politeness hinders us. Our mission meets the same demise as the teenage boy who never works up the nerve to ask out the pretty girl. But a healthy level of politeness in an everyday missionary is a blessing. As we’re honoring, respectful, and polite in our interactions, we build bridges instead of burn them. Politeness benefits mission.

Introversion

At least a third of the US population is introverted.¹⁵ So if mission can only take place with lots of people, by extroverts who love being around all those people, God’s mission is over 33 percent sunk! But introverts make great missionaries. You’re generally thoughtful, and while you may have fewer conversations than extroverts, those you do have are often deep. You likely listen well. This makes you a stellar missionary. An introverted friend is a wine expert. When he overcame the misplaced shame of not pursuing lots of relationships, he began inviting one person or couple at a time to join him and his wife for homemade dinners and wine tastings. Tastings last for hours and involve lots of talking. His hobby and personality make him an intentional listener, thoughtful speaker, and engaging friend. God has borne fruit through his efforts, one person at a time.

Shyness

Distinct from introversion, many people consider themselves shy. Striking up a conversation is simply something several of us aren't comfortable with. John Mark is in my City Group, and was once relieved to be on "dinner duty" the night a new couple walked in. He was able to stay in the kitchen instead of interacting immediately. John Mark can still live on mission; he just finds it helpful to discover a point of connection, like a common interest or shared acquaintance. Something to focus on—a TV or project—eases his pressure. And for many, mission in community (see Day 21) is essential: others have initial conversations, while you listen and grow in comfort and relationship to the point you can engage.

If you're introverted, shy, or both, be relieved: yes Christians are called to make disciples, but we are never given a quota or a step-by-step guide of how. Introverts, go make a disciple! One at a time if that's what it takes. Shy? Take your time, and give yourself grace. Polite? That's great news; just make sure you fear God more than man. And as you work through all three pitfalls, do two things: pray for ideas, boldness, and open doors—just like extroverts and less-shy missionaries must do. And praise God for the strength to obey Him in the way He's designed and gifted you.

TRAPS THAT SHOULD KEEP OUR MOUTHS SHUT

While pitfalls keep us from everyday mission, Bob and I have both stood by the door after missions conferences as attendees excitedly exit. Many are on fire for God's mission—but for all the wrong reasons. Here are five traps people easily fall into, as we wrongly pursue everyday mission:

Duty

Nearly every job requires tasks we don't like. We all attend events out of obligation. Everyone does things because

we have to. But we can't view mission through that lens. The prophet Jonah is often celebrated for finally going to Nineveh. But read the final two chapters of his story, and you'll find that he may not be as excited as many have come to think. Jonah goes only one-third of the way into the city to which he was sent; he pronounces judgment with no call to repent. And when God saves Nineveh anyway, Jonah sulks—*because* God saved them! Yes, Jonah went. But not happily, and he only did the bare minimum. The book ends as God rebukes Jonah's poor view of his mission.¹⁶ Mission can't be a "just enough" pursuit, an empty obligation. Do you live on mission only because you have to?

Earning

From televangelists to Islam to some Catholicism, many religious traditions are largely founded on earning or losing favor: "If I don't do this, God won't do that . . . If only I'd do this, I'll be blessed like that . . ." In this trap, mission becomes an attempt to earn something from God or prove something to Him. But mission is not atonement. No number of conversions makes up for whatever darkness drives us; only Jesus overcomes our past. Likewise, mission cannot be a way to please God or avoid some punishment; only Jesus takes God's anger. Do you pursue mission to prove or earn something, before God or man?

Self-glory

Competition can be healthy—even fun. But sadly, we know people whose ministries, and even self-worth, are built on "how many people I've saved" compared to how many "you have." The obvious issue in this view is that souls are worth far more than notches on a belt! Deeper though, this puts ourselves in the place of God. Yes, He gifts some as evangelists—praise Him for it. But as He reminds Jonah, and echoes throughout the Bible, "Salvation belongs

to the Lord.”¹⁷ We aren’t responsible for the success of His mission, so we can’t use His mission to build ourselves up. Do you do God’s mission to promote yourself?

Doing “Good” Things

Mission is not truly mission if it doesn’t involve Jesus. “Empty moralism” is doing nice things for people. It makes us feel good, and even benefits them for a time. But moralism alone stops short of mission: it doesn’t require or point to Jesus, it lacks eternal impact, and it often stems from poor motives. Jesus celebrates the feeding and clothing of people in need. But people who don’t know Jesus do that too. The final question of this book—“HOW do I share the gospel . . .?”—helps us ensure movement from moralism to mission. We must *both* display the gospel by our actions *and* declare it by our words. Does your “mission” point people to Jesus, or just do nice things for others to feel good about yourself?

Trendiness

As we’ve said, “missional” is a sexy word right now. Some call it a trend. But as AOL Instant Messenger and the clothes in your parents’ wedding photo prove, trends die off: As a word, “missional” may be a trend, but everyday mission is not. God’s mission is as old as history, as broad as every inch of land on which a follower of Jesus stands, and as necessary to life in Christ as discipleship or community. We’ll see practical ways to live on mission in the coming weeks, but we’ll first show the gospel motive that undergirds everything we write. Do you pursue mission just because you think it’s cool right now?

Why is each of these a trap? It’s a question of motives. Are we focused on God or on us? Sneakily, the outward expression often looks the same, regardless of what drives us. And we all know the deceit of

our hearts. We must be careful with motivation: mission must find its root in God and His gospel work in us, for the sake of His gospel work in our everyday mission fields.

THE BETTER PATH IN A YELLOW WOOD

If our pursuit of everyday mission has gone off the beaten path into pitfalls or traps, we may need to pray for boldness, or to repent of selfish motives. Like everything under the sun, God can redeem our fears, excuses, and poor motives. But today's point isn't to leave us hopeless about our souls. Instead, these pitfalls and traps show our need to find the right path. So we end today asking, "What is a *right* motive for everyday mission?" There is only one: mission is an act of worship.

Worship goes beyond songs and sermons. It involves pursuing obedience to God's commands. Even the hard ones. In today's reading, Paul reminds us that "all things"—including God's work in our own lives, the mission on which He sent us, and the gifting He's given each of us—are *from* God, provided *through* God. "All things" are also *to* God, for His glory. God is the beginning and end of His

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TO DEMONSTRATE THE GOSPEL

7 Foster or adopt a child: Reflect God's adoption of you by bringing someone out of a poor situation and into your family. Or financially, emotionally, and practically help a friend as they do the same.

8 Support international orphan prevention: Organizations are now working to keep children in their homes and cultures, and help them from becoming orphans by reconciling brokenness in families that would eventually put them on the streets.

9 Consider your week: How much are you alone? With other Christians? With not-yet-believers? If the last group gets the least time, leave your home, be outside more, invite them in . . . how can you look outward?

mission. God's work is both our motivator and goal. God's glory is the sole reason we obey God. What does obedience look like? Paul tells us in the very next verse: sacrifice. Sacrificial lives move past pitfalls and break out of traps, as God corrects our motivation. Sacrificial lives are lives of worship. God has uniquely prepared you for your place in it, has given you the only pure motive, and has shown you the only right goal. "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."¹⁸