

Life Under Construction:
“Spiritually Engaged”
Part 6

Intro: We are designed not only for relational connections but for spiritual connection. The greatest influence on our entire planet is the spiritual beliefs of the billions of people who live on it. WHY? The need to connect spiritually is in our DNA. We are created with the ability and desire to connect with God.

- This is the entire story of Jesus coming to earth. It was all for connection.
- Just as with our horizontal relationships with each other; if we do not find healthy relational connections we find unhealthy substitutes, we do the same thing spiritually.
- Building our lives being spiritually engaged people with the God who created us is absolutely essential. Your DNA longs for this.
- Often, religion becomes the unhealthy substitute for real spiritual engagement. Religion is man’s attempt to fill that spiritual void. BUT, religion has no real power.
- What Jesus calls us to is something entirely different than religion. Real spiritual engagement has supernatural power.

Engage: *“to participate or become involved in.”* (Slide) Jesus calls us into a lifestyle of participation with Him. He calls us to partner with Him in this life.

I Cor. 1:9 “God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (NLT)

- What does it look like to spiritually participate with Jesus? To actually, partner with Him in this life? What would it look like to be spiritually involved in what Jesus came to do? How do I build my life with this?
- Let me give you 3 ways we become spiritually engaged people.

1. We follow rather than simply believe

- Jesus called us to participate with Him, He did not call us to simply believe in Him. This is the primary area of confusion with so many people today. They would consider themselves spiritually engaged because they have a belief in Jesus. Believing in Jesus is NOT the same as partnering with Jesus.
- **Illustrate:** Like the difference between watching NFL Football, believing in your team and playing with your team! One observes while the other participates.
- Let’s see how Jesus described engagement. Certainly it makes sense to allow Jesus to describe this not us. What did Jesus call His followers to?

Luke 9:23 “Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me.” (NLT)

- Even a casual reading of this makes it clear that Jesus calls us to more than merely a belief. Jesus called His followers in to a lifestyle not just a different belief system. Jesus calls us to participate. He calls us to partner with Him.
- What does following look like? 2 simple truths from Jesus
 - Following requires a leadership change
Simply believing in Jesus doesn't require us to change who is in charge of our lives. We are! BUT, if we decide to follow Jesus, we must have a radical change in leadership. Who leads my life changes from ME to Jesus. This is why Jesus said; "*you must give up your own way.*" Leadership change.

When we make the decision to give up our own way to follow Jesus, we are spiritually engaging with Jesus. We are participating with Him. Why do we have to give up our own way? Because you cannot follow 2 people at the same time.

Illustration: Years ago I made a foundational leadership change in my life. I had no intention of ever becoming a Pastor. Ever! Becoming a Pastor was certainly not my own way. (explain) BUT, I had to decide who I would let navigate my life...me or Jesus. This decision was life altering for me. It wasn't a decision to believe; it was a decision to follow. Big difference!

- Do you want to participate with Jesus? Do you want to experience Him in your everyday life? Then you have to make a leadership change. You have to give up your way for His way.

➤ Following requires a directional change

When Jesus said we "follow Me" don't miss the obvious implication. This means we don't follow ourselves anymore. This means our lives move in a different direction.

- Don't be surprised when Jesus begins to move you in different directions relationally / emotionally / mentally / behaviorally / vocationally / financially / ministry / influence / Following requires directional changes.
- Once I gave up the control, the direction of my life has never been the same. I take my directional cues from Jesus in every arena of my life. That is being spiritually engaged.

I realize that many of you are scared to death to give up control and follow someone else. I agree. It is a scary thing at first. But once you begin to experience being spiritually engaged, you will develop a confidence...an assurance in what Jesus is doing with your life.

- Many of you believe...BUT Jesus is calling us to follow. Will you?

2. We transform rather than tolerate

Not only did Jesus call us follow, He calls us to partner with Him bringing change to our world. Transformation is possible in our broken world because we are spiritually engaged with Jesus. We are participating with Him bringing change.

- If all we do is merely believe, this makes us into spectators in our world. We idly sit back and watch the brokenness and evil in our world while we do nothing about it.

Becoming a spiritually engaged person is not a spectator sport. We are not here to tolerate the brokenness in this world. Jesus asks us to be involved in the greatest undertaking the world has ever seen.

Matt. 28:18-19 “Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations...” (NLT) In other words, together we are going to transform our world!

The imagery Jesus uses calling us “salt and light” – explain – We are the answer to a lost and decaying world! We are not called to tolerate darkness and tolerate decay! We are here to transform it! This requires 2 very important steps.

➤ We allow Jesus to transform us

*Rom. 12:2 “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but **let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.**” (NLT)*

Transformation begins with us. It begins by allowing Jesus to make me into a new person. If we do not allow the power of God to change us how can we be a conduit of His power to our broken world? If His transformational power is not in me how can it be in our city?

- Are you asking Him to transform you daily? (Refer to last week on Relationships)
- Are you making excuses for your bad behavior / attitudes / motives / values? “This is just the way I am.”
- Are you allowing Him to change your thinking or are you unteachable? Do you refuse to consider there just may be a different perspective besides yours? Without a change in our thinking transformation doesn’t happen.

Illustration: One of the best decisions I have ever made was years ago deciding to be a learner for the rest of my life. I love learning. I learn from others / reading / learn from failure / I watch leadership videos on YouTube / I learn from travel / PLEASE, don’t be afraid of learning. Don’t be afraid of being wrong in your thinking or limited in your thinking. Allowing Jesus to transform us is being committed to being a learner. Are you a learner?

➤ We allow Jesus to bring transformation through us

Eph. 3:20 “Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.” (NLT)

Phil. 2:13 “For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” (NLT) Notice the partnership? Notice the cooperation? Notice how we are participating together? This is being spiritually engaged! Partnering with Jesus allowing Him to use us to be an extension of His power bringing transformation in our world is spiritual engagement!

We are a church passionate about transformation. We believe that as we learn to follow Jesus fully, He will use us to bring transformation to our city. We actively look for ways to be an extension of Jesus and His blessing to our town. Let me show you what I mean.

- I do not share any of this to elevate us over any other church or ministry. BUT if you say you believe in transformation you should be able to prove you are involved in it. Therefore, let me share with you what God is doing through His people!

- Resource Center data
- Backpack buddy data
- Molalla Adult Community Center data
- Guatemala data
- FSM data
- CR data
- We need to discover new ways to bless our community. Just be willing to invite people to come to Foothills with you is participating.

Prov. 11:11 "By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down." (NASB)

Anyone can tear down and destroy a city. We are called by Jesus to bless and exalt and build and be extensions of His heart and His power. That is what being spiritually engaged looks like!

Are you allowing Jesus to transform you and bring transformation through you? Be part of the spiritual narrative here at Foothills.

3. We serve others rather than serve ourselves

Being spiritually engaged is simply acting like Jesus.

Phil. 2:3-5 "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. ⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had." (NLT) (Explain the following verses)

- Being spiritually engaged and serving others go together. Notice how Phil 2 calls followers of Jesus to participate in the attitude and lifestyle of Jesus. "Have the same attitude..." Since Jesus served others how can we not serve others? How can we say we are spiritually engaged with Jesus if we are serving ourselves and living a self-absorbed, self-centered existence? In order to serve like Jesus, we need 2 things.
- We are spiritually engaged when we...
 - Humble ourselves like Jesus
If you want to know one of the main keys to experiencing Jesus and His power in this life you must understand and embrace humility. In God's Kingdom humility = power. (say together) Pride and selfishness = weakness. Humility allows our lives to be unrestricted conduits of His power. Pride plugs up the conduit. Pride and selfishness ground out His power.

How did Jesus demonstrate humility?

- Jesus gave up His rights and didn't demand His rights
- Jesus gave up His freedom for the sake of others
- Jesus was inconvenienced for the sake of others

- Jesus didn't retaliate when wronged
- Jesus did what was best for others and not Himself
- Jesus submitted to His Father's will
- Jesus forgave even those who abused Him

This is what humility that results in power looks like. When we grow in this type of humility we are becoming spiritually engaged with Jesus. We are truly participating with Him.

- I'm sure we all need to grow in this type of humility. Myself included! How can we all demonstrate a growing humility this week? How can we do this today?

➤ Selflessly serve others like Jesus

When we embrace humility, now we can selflessly serve people like Jesus. Now service makes sense. It's not out of obligation or with selfish motives but out of our participation with Jesus. Serving is part of becoming spiritually engaged. It is our humble service that enables us to be the hands, heart and feet of Jesus in this hurting world.

Some of you might be thinking; "Are you telling me that I'm not a spiritually engaged person if I'm not serving others somewhere?" Let me ask you a question. Can you honestly say that you are following Jesus fully if you're not serving others? Can you honestly tell yourself that you are spiritually engaged with Jesus in this world while you live entirely for yourself? How is this participating with Jesus?

- Serving others can take place here at Foothills in a variety of existing ministries. Visit our web site. Go observe a ministry or program. Contact a ministry leader.
- Serving others also takes place in the haphazard moments of life (at home / at work with co-workers / at the grocery store - helping with groceries / a kind word / when we see needs and stop to make a difference. Opportunity to be salt and light are all around us if we're looking.

When we grow in serving others rather than ourselves, we become spiritually engaged people experiencing the power of God moving through us into the lives of others.

Today I am not asking you if you're building your life believing in Jesus. I am asking you if you are building your life partnering with Jesus? If not, what specific things need to begin to change?