

How Does the Gospel Shape Us?

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Our behavior is directly connected to our belief in the Gospel and in our New Gospel Identity in Christ

Every time Paul addressed a people that we're getting off track he began by reminding them WHAT GOD HAD DONE (The Gospel) and WHO THEY WERE BECAUSE OF GOD'S WORK (Their Gospel Identity). Then, he went on to call them to different behavior. He knew that it is God's work that both precedes and produces our ability to do good works. And it is only because of what God has done and who we are in Christ Jesus that God is also going to do work through us that resembles Him.

Paul knew that our Gospel Living comes out of our Gospel Identity and our Gospel Identity comes out of God's Gospel Work

Our motivation is not based upon trying to accomplish something (performance), become something (significance), obtain something (security) or cover up something (create a false impression). Our motivation is based upon what God has accomplished for us in Jesus Christ (our justification); who He has made us to be and is making us to be (a new creation – new identity); and what He is doing in us and through us by the power of His Spirit (Sanctification and Restoration).

Our New Gospel Identity

Consider Paul's words to the Corinthian Church in 2 Corinthians 5:16-18

We have a new identity because of what He has accomplished and it is in light of what He has done for us and who we are in Christ that we do anything rightly. Our Sanctification comes out of our Justification. We live differently because of what he has done and who we are in Christ. Our doing comes out of our being.

As Soma Communities we have decided to describe our new Gospel Identity in four different ways:

FAMILY...MISSIONARIES...SERVANTS...LEARNERS

We are a family on mission sent by God to serve our world and continually learn how to walk in his ways.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9

THE CHURCH IS A CHOSEN RACE – the called-out ones (FAMILY)

Soma's Family Identity Statement:

Family – *We are all children of God who care for each other as a family.*

God has always desired a people—an earthly family—who would live in such a way that the world would know what he is like. Jesus said that those who live in his ways and obey his Father are truly his family. Through Jesus we believe we are Children of God and brothers and sisters with each other. As family we see it as our obligation to personally care for the needs of one another – both physically and spiritually. We disciple, nurture and hold each other accountable to this Covenant life together. We do this through regular celebration gatherings and consistent involvement in a DNA group. (John 1:12; Romans 8:16; Galatians 3:26; 1 John 3:1)

WHO WE ARE: WE ARE SONS

In Christ Jesus we are all sons of God (Galatians 3:26-29). In Christ, we all, male and female, are heirs to the promises – we all have the rights of Sons...

- » In that culture, the firstborn male received the inheritance
- » Also, the Jews were given the promises from God

- » Now, Paul is trying to help us understand that Jesus is the firstborn male (firstborn among many brothers) and he is the rightful heir to the promises and the inheritance
- » And, whoever is united in Christ, is treated like the firstborn son – regardless of your race, your gender or you standing in society
- » All that is Christ Jesus' is ours – It is rightfully his and he gives it to us based upon his merit not our own

HOW WE LIVE: BEAR GOD'S IMAGE

We have been made Sons of God in order to display God to the World (Ephesians 5:1-2)

The Visible Family: We should love each other as family and in doing so become the gospel hermeneutic Jesus said we were to become (John 13:34-35)

The Not-Yet Visible Family: We are also to love those around us like family so that they might experience the love of the Father and come to believe the gospel

THE CHURCH IS A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD – the sent ones (MISSIONARIES)

We are a royal priesthood that extends the message of reconciliation to the world. We are ministers of reconciliation with the message of reconciliation (John 20:21; 2 Cor. 5:17-20)

Soma's Missionary Identity Statement:

Missionaries – *We are sent by God to restore all things to Him through Jesus Christ.*

God sent his son, Jesus, to Earth to take on human form and live within the culture. He worked, ate and interacted among the people; living in such a way that those around him could see and experience what God was truly like. Jesus came so that all people, places and things could be restored to a right relationship with God. In the same way, we believe we are missionaries sent into our culture to restore all things to God through Jesus. We live this out through involvement in a missional community. (John 1:14; 20:21; Colossians 1:19; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21)

WHO WE ARE: WE ARE SENT ONES

Just as the Father sent the Son, the Son has sent us to be his Witnesses – his Ambassadors

- » Every Son of God is also Sent by God to declare and demonstrate the Gospel
- » Every one of us needs to know and believe that we have been sent by God to where they live, work and go to school

HOW WE LIVE: ALWAYS ON MISSION

God is at work through Christ's Body, the Church, to bring about restoration

- » We should approach every situation as an opportunity to display and declare the gospel.
- » We must be equipped to exegete the culture and bring the gospel to bear on the barriers and the open doors (Contextualization of the Gospel)
- » We need to create a sense of expectancy and freedom for the beginning of new missionary ventures within our community

THE CHURCH IS A HOLY NATION – A Kingdom of Servants (SERVANTS)

A holy nation that is an alternative city within a city to give a foretaste of what the eternal city will be like under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ. We belong to God and exist to bring Him glory. The currency in this Kingdom is Love. Love expressed in Servanthood and Sacrifice.

Soma's Servant Identity Statement:

Servants – *We are servants who serve Him as we serve others around us.*

Fully God–fully human, Jesus took on the posture of a servant. He gave his life, even unto death, so that others could experience salvation, peace and restoration. Jesus said, *"I am among you as one who serves..."* All those who follow Jesus are called to serve in the same humility. For us this means joyful submitting to God, leadership and to each other, as we serve whoever God brings into our lives. We do *Whatever* He leads us to do, *Whenever* He tells us and *Wherever* He wants us to do it. (Matthew 20:25-28; 25:31-46; John 13:1-17; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:16)

WHO WE ARE: WE ARE SERVANTS OF THE KING OF KINGS

Jesus came as a servant, laying down his life for us so that we, who as his slaves now belong to him, could lay down our lives for others.

- » Jesus came to set us free and the only way we walk in freedom is by living out our identity as servants of Christ
- » When we live as servants of Jesus Christ, we no longer need to approval of men and we no longer get stuck in cycles of selfishness and self-protection

HOW WE LIVE: EMBODYING THE GOSPEL THROUGH GOOD WORKS

One of the ways Jesus displays the grace and truth of the gospel is through the good works of His people

- » We must learn to do good works with gospel motivation and for gospel demonstration
- » We do goods works **BECAUSE** we have been saved (redeemed, justified, adopted, etc...), not so that we might be – it comes out of our heart of gratitude and thanksgiving, not in order to earn anything
- » We must learn to do good works in such a way that the gospel is on display – this requires knowing the gospel well and contextualizing it in actions

THE CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY OF *LEARNERS* – called to equip and be equipped

(Ephesians 4:11-16)

God has called and gifted people in the church to not only use their gifts for works of service and ministry, but to equip others for works of service. The Body of Christ (SOMA) will be built up as each person serves and equips others to serve.

The Church doesn't need more programs to do the work that people are called to do – the Church needs people to be faithful to their calling to develop and equip others. This responsibility needs to be placed back into the hands of the people who **ARE** the Church. ***We don't go to Church. We are the Church***

We are the Church

Soma's Learner Identity Statement:

Learners – We are Students of Jesus who take responsibility for our own development and the development of others.

As a young man Jesus grew in both height and wisdom. He learned from local religious teachers, by living in community, and through regular times of listening to God. Jesus called others to follow his ways, to be his disciples and live in obedience to all that God commands. He then sent these followers out to make new disciples. We believe we are also called to be followers of Jesus who take responsibility for our own development and the development of others. This includes both our personal time with God as well as involvement together in training provided by spiritual leadership. (Luke 2:52; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Timothy 2:2)

WHO WE ARE: WE ARE DISCIPLES OF THE RABBI JESUS

Jesus came as one who learned and he called us to humbly learn from Him through His Word, His Spirit and His Body, the Church

- » As God's people, we look to Jesus as the one who teaches us about God, ourselves, the world and our purpose
- » We now take responsibility to be equipped through the resources Jesus has given us
- » We also take responsibility to lead others in learning and being equipped for ministry

HOW WE LIVE: BEING EQUIPPED AND EQUIPPING OTHERS

The Body of Christ is built up into maturity and therefore effectively displaying the Gospel only when each part is growing up, doing its part and equipping others.

- » We belong to a learning community that we engage in for the purpose of being equipped and equipping others
- » We must continue to work out of our calling to equip for works of ministry and make sure that our teaching and training leads out into mission not toward greater dependency on us
- » We are all being trained to be sent to be a display and declaration of the gospel