January 28 & 29

Create Margin for Discipleship Relationships

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Introduction

A tale is told of a man rescued after spending many years on a deserted island. Standing on the deck of the rescuing vessel, the captain says to him, "I thought you were stranded alone. Why do I see three huts on the island?" The castaway replies, "That one there is my house, and that one there is where I go to church." "And the third one?" asks the captain. "Oh," said the man, "that's the church I'll NEVER go to." Could it be the second church in this story illustrates what life is like for many people in our society? Bothered by negative perceptions of the church, based on real or imaginary events, many will never darken the doors of God's house. This weekend, we conclude our four-part *Declutter* series in which we learn about creating margin in our lives for discipleship relationships. Jesus lays out our mission through His life example, His teaching on the greatest commandment and His challenge for us in the Great Commission.

Discussion

Read Mark 1:35-39 and John 17:1-5.

1. In Mark 1:35, what rhythms does Jesus practice to clarify His mission for the day? What indication do we have that He spends considerable time in solitary prayer? As modern-day disciples, how do we establish this rhythm in our lives? Share with the group your rhythm for solitary prayer time. If you do not have a rhythm, what do you need to help place one in your daily life?

2. What do the disciples expect from Jesus in Mark 1:37? How does Jesus respond to them in verse 38? According to verse 39, how does Jesus minister to the "other towns" of Galilee? As a Bible-believing church eastern Iowa, how might Jesus' ministry methods apply to us today?

3. As Jesus recounts His earthly mission in John 17, what ultimate purpose does He cite in verse 1? In verses 2 and 3, what purpose does He give for His earthly coming? What does Jesus' statement in verse 4 say about His clarity and confidence about His mission? How can we reflect this mission in our lives? Discuss what "Jesus with skin on" means to you and how it affects your ministry to others in your community.

Think About It

Flight 401 was nearing its approach to Miami International on a cold December night in 1972. Captain Loft and three flight officers were attempting to determine if a bulb was bad that was supposed to illuminate when the wheels were down. Focusing on this burnt-out bulb, they failed to notice when one of them accidentally bumped the autopilot switch. Their plane gradually lost altitude in the pitch-black darkness and plunged into the Florida Everglades. This tragic flight is like a church that loses its focus on Christ. If we become preoccupied with appearances, ritual and good works, we'll fail to achieve our mission of making it hard to get to Hell from Iowa.

Do Something

1. Write your answers to the following questions on a piece of paper—Pray: In what ways can I pray for PLC?, Serve: Is there a new area where God is calling me to serve?, Gather: Have I committed to gathering with fellow believers in worship and group settings?, Give: How is God directing me to give of my resources to PLC?, Go: What opportunity is there for me to go beyond the walls of PLC to influence the world? Place paper where you'll see it every day this week.
2. Prayerfully consider and circle those areas where God is leading you to take action. Write down steps you will take to pursue these areas beginning this month. If a door closes for one step, re-evaluate and pursue the next step. Take inventory of your steps in one month.