

The diversity of believers

Diversity, equity, and inclusion should matter to us because they are the outworking of a critical truth embedded deeply within the Christian faith. The truth is that despite our differences, we were all made equally in God's image and ultimately belong to God and to each other. This is the "why" behind everything we do—the fuel that keeps our outreach ministries in motion. Arthur Satterwhite

Matthew 10:1-4

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

1) Called for a purpose

- God never calls us for the sake of calling us, or merely for our personal salvation.
 - He calls us and leaves us in this world to fulfil His purposes
- Jesus outlined His purposes when He read from the book of Isaiah
 - Luke 4:18-19 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
- In their time of training while He was with them, Jesus gave his disciples tasks to do in accordance with His purposes.
 - People are oppressed and need healing and wholeness
 - People are like sheep without a shepherd and need guidance
 - People are lost and need to be found
 - People are without God and hope in the world and need hope
- We aren't saved by works, but by grace, but we are saved to do good works
 - Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
- God expects us to serve His purposes in our generation because we can't do anything about previous generations that were before us, nor will we be able to do anything about generations that come after us, but we can and are responsible for our own generation.
 - Acts 13:36 For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers.
- One way that we can serve the next generation is to pass the baton of what we know onto them in discipleship as Jesus and as Paul did.
- The task that God has for us may seem daunting, but He empowers us and gives us the authority for all that He calls us to do

2) The diversity of believers within the purposes of God

- We live in a diverse world which has diverse needs.
 - Not any one person is able to meet those needs. God therefore calls believers in their diversity to fulfil His purposes amongst all peoples.
 - Different people identify with different people, not only ethnically or by gender, but also by life experience, personality and gifting.
 - This why every one of us, besides being personally important to God, is important to fulfilling His purposes in the world.

- Jesus chose a diverse group of followers to whom He would pass the baton to fulfil His purposes
 - Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen
 - Peter often spoke and did before he thought, which got him into trouble.
 - His worst blunder was to deny Jesus
 - However, he became a pillar of the church
 - Andrew was the first to call Jesus “Messiah” and led Peter to Jesus
 - James and his brother John were also fishermen
 - Jesus called them Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder, probably because they had a hot temper and wanted to retaliate when opposed
 - However, they also became pillars of the church along with Peter
 - John was called the disciple whom Jesus loved, and James was beheaded by Herod for his faith
 - Thomas seemed to have courage and faith when he stated that they should go die with Jesus when Jesus was going to return to Bethany when Lazarus had died.
 - However, after Jesus’ resurrection He appeared to His disciples when Thomas wasn’t there. Thomas wouldn’t believe it unless he saw the holes in Jesus’ hands and feet
 - Thomas planted the first churches in India and was martyred there
 - Matthew was a tax collector
 - Tax collectors worked for the Romans and were known to take more tax than expected, and pocket the balance.
 - They were despised by the people who saw them as traitors
 - Besides the work of the Gospel, Matthew recorded an account of the Gospel being a blessing to all of us today
 - Simon the Zealot
 - The Zealots were an aggressive political party whose concern for the national and religious life of the Jewish people led them to despise even Jews who sought peace and conciliation with the Roman authorities.
 - Church tradition puts Simon as a partner with Judas, the brother of Jesus, and that they preached the Gospel in Egypt
 - Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus
 - Matthew was explicit in his account that Judas betrayed Jesus
 - Not only did Judas betray Jesus, but he was a thief and stole from the common purse of the disciples.
 - However, none of this took Jesus by surprise. Jesus knew who Judas was when He called him
 - Judas, in his wickedness, fulfilled God’s purposes by Jesus being crucified for the sins of the world
- In the same way Jesus called and used His diverse disciples for His purposes, He wants to use each one of us
 - We all have something to give
 - You can connect with people of your own ethnicity better than others can
 - God has brought you out of your past religious background, a background of alcohol or drugs, gambling, anger, lying to make you something new to be a testimony to those around you
 - He’s gifted you in ways that He hasn’t gifted others to do what He wants you to do that others can’t do
- How are using what God has given you to fulfil His purposes for your life?

3) The ultimate diverse crowd

- There will come a time when we’ll be worshipping around the throne of God in all of our diversity
 - Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”
- What is your part in seeing this end being realised?