

Life on Mission

Matthew 28:18-20

John 1:40-42; Matthew 4:18-20; Luke 19:10

1. The Calling.

- *John 1:41-42*

- **First**
 - *John 1:41-42*

- **Find**
 - *Acts 4:12*

- **His Brother**

2. The Communication.

- *John 1:41-42*

- **Spoken**
 - *Luke 8:39*

- **Simple**
 - *Acts 8:4*

- **Sure**
 - *Psalms 107:2*

3. The Culmination.

- *1 John 1:41-42*



Life on Mission: The Ultimate Walk with Christ *Introduce People to Jesus*

If you joined us last week, you heard me say something at the close of the service. Do you remember when I asked you what the most significant symbol of Christ was? We might say it is the cross, but the cross is only wood. We might say it's the bread and wine of communion, but those are only elements. In fact, when God gave his people the Ten Commandments, the very first and second commandments are, "Don't worship anything other than God," and "Don't make an image of God to worship." That's Exodus 20:3-4. So it would make sense that we don't want to be tempted to worship a wooden cross or the bread and the wine, as if they were a representation of God.

When God commanded us not to make an image of God, of course it was because we can't reduce the Creator God down to any one thing in creation.¹ But there's another reason. People are not to make images of God because God has *already* made images of Himself. In Genesis 1 we read about God creating everything, and the pinnacle of God's creation is people, and in verses 26-30 we see that God made all people "in the image of God." So in other words, *people* are the only acceptable image of God – not our physical appearance, but in our character and nature; in the creative ways we participate with God and love others. Of course, we messed that up when we decided it wasn't enough to be in the image of God; instead we wanted to *be* God of our lives and world. That's called sin. And what is the center letter of sin? "I." The center of sin is "I" ... *I* want to be boss. I want to call the shots and be in charge. Sin is selfishness; it's all about me. I'm my own God. But God knows that we are only at our best when we are in a right relationship with him, living in his love, letting *him* be God and letting our lives reflect him. Unfortunately, the issue of sin must be dealt with, and death is the result of sin, so by sinning we've essentially cut off the possibility of our lives being in God's image because, well, we're dead. We're dead in our spirits, and we're experiencing pieces of death in our dysfunctional lives until we physically die. That death results in eternal separation from God and everything that is love. God could not bear the thought of that for you, so God did something amazing: he sent his Son to become one of us, to show us what an in-the-image-of-God-life looks like, and then he who had no sin died for those who deserved to die. By doing so, he broke the power of sin and death and literally rose from the dead to live forever. So now, when we accept his gift of new life, we are forgiven and made new. God the Holy Spirit is given to us to help us live out that new life with new attitudes and a new nature and a new character. We might physically look the same as we did before, but our personhood is now growing in the image of God. Then God's in-his-image people come together to become a new community of God's people called the Church. And the Bible calls the church the "body of Christ." The church does collectively what Jesus did; the church united functions in the nature and

¹ <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/image-of-god/>

character and image of Jesus. And *that* is why YOU, church, are God's image to West Valley. When any unchurched person comes into contact or friendship with you as an individual, and they see how you love others and hear the things you say, you want them to see what God looks like. When West Valley sees what our church does for our community, and when unchurched people are recipients of our ministry or join us in any of our gatherings – especially our worship, they see what God looks like. YOU, church, are the image of God. Not a cross, not bread and juice.

My friend, if you are here today and you are *not* in this saving, loving relationship with God, if you have not experienced God's new-creation-life in you, then watch us closely. We want to show you what God looks like. Our mission is to help others find out about this good news of God's love for them, and then to help each other grow in that love and live out that love. That is our mission. And we intend to be good at our mission. Every person who is a part of this great church has this mission too – in their own personal life, and we work together for it. That's because this isn't just an organizational purpose statement; it is what God has called us to in his Word.

This is so important that it's one of the last things that Jesus told his disciples, and therefore us, after he had risen from the dead and before he ascended into heaven. We find it in Matthew 28:18-20 –

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, nlt)

That is what is called the "Great Commission" – it's great because Jesus has commissioned us to carry it out, and it's great because it is the greatest thing we get to do on this planet. The only time you and I have to do this is while we are walking this earth. After that, it won't matter. So we'd better make it priority #1 in our lives because other people's eternities rely on us.

So from that Scripture passage, and another one that we will talk about later in this series, we get our church's mission statement:

- Introduce People to Jesus Christ,
- Equip People with a Faith that Works, and
- Live as People with Purpose.

That's our mission. Now to help you remember it more easily, we've put it more simply into three words: love, learn, and live.

We are going to spend the next four Sundays looking at each of those three components of our mission statement, reminding ourselves how important it is, and the vital ways we incorporate it into our lives and culture here at West Valley Church. We'll spend time in our small groups each week exploring these, as well. The fourth Sunday we will talk about our vision; in other words, what God has told us we will look like when we are accomplishing our mission.

Today, we are going to unpack that first of the three parts of our mission: ***introduce people to Jesus Christ***. These three are listed in order of their importance; while they are all of equal value, we carry them out in their order of priority.

We start with that first part because it's our highest priority – introduce people to Jesus Christ. Everything we do is done with *this* intent. *We* know God loves us, and *we* know God loves everyone. But there are people in West Valley who have no idea of that and how great it is, so we will love them enough to introduce them to Jesus. We either do it through our work as a church, in things like Upward Soccer and our school partnerships and our worship services, or it is done through each of our conversations that take place at events like Trunk or Treat and Breakfast with Santa, or as we each personally tell our friends or family or neighbors about Jesus and invite them to church with us.

The word “introduce” is really vital to our mission because it speaks volumes about our attitude and approach to *how* we share the Good News of God's love through Jesus. We don't preach at people, we don't debate with people, we don't thrust pamphlets into people's hands or faces, and we certainly don't argue, berate, or judge people. *We introduce* people to Jesus. We don't convict or convince people, and we certainly don't save people. God does all of that. We simply introduce them to him by the way we live and what we say.

We believe we have met the greatest person ever – the greatest God ever – and he is so great and so loving and so giving and so rescuing and so redeeming and so forgiving that we just absolutely *know* our unchurched friends and neighbors would love him too if they could meet him, so we can't wait to introduce them to him. We do that, in love, through our actions and our words.

Now, there are many excellent examples of this in the New Testament, but for today we are going to see this pattern through a guy named Andrew. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist's. John the Baptist introduced his disciples to Jesus, so Andrew began following Jesus. After Andrew met Jesus, he immediately realized that Jesus was the Christ, or the Messiah, or the Son of God, whom the Jewish prophets had promised centuries ago. We pick up the story from there:

“Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John (*the Baptist*) said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means ‘Christ’). Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, ‘Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas’ (which means ‘Peter’).” (John 1:40-42, nlt)

Andrew is mentioned only a few times in the New Testament, but *each* time we see him, *he is introducing people to Jesus*. First was the passage we just read, when Andrew introduced his brother Peter, to Jesus. Then, Andrew introduced the little boy with the five loaves and the two fish to Jesus (John 6:8-9), and Jesus used that little boy's lunch to perform an amazing miracle, feeding over 5000 people. Finally, Andrew and Phillip introduced a group of Greeks to Jesus (John 12:20-22). Andrew is a great example of someone who met Jesus and was so filled with Jesus' love that he couldn't wait for others to meet Jesus, too.

What we see Andrew doing is exactly what Jesus had told him to do:

“Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ he said, ‘and I’ll show you how to fish for people.’ Right away, they left their nets and followed him.” (Matt. 4:18-20, ceb)

Andrew took that call to heart, and we see him doing it throughout the New Testament. *Introducing people to Jesus is the primary task we have as Christians, and that’s why it is first in our tri-priority mission statement.* When we at West Valley Church do this, we are continuing the very reason Jesus said that *he* came to this earth:

“For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.” (Luke 19:10, nlt)

Andrew was just an ordinary person – like all of us – but like him, we can help others grow into a relationship with Jesus. Andrew didn’t rank up there with Peter or with Paul in the history books. We’re told he travelled throughout the Mediterranean introducing multitudes of people to Jesus, and like the other apostles, he was eventually martyred for his faith, however as far as I know, we don’t have any recorded sermon of Andrew’s. But - Andrew introduced Peter to Jesus, and Peter preached *a lot* of sermons, and Peter would not have preached at all if it weren’t for Andrew. Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost and the birth of the Church may not have happened had Andrew not introduced Peter to Jesus. Let’s learn from Andrew *so you and I can introduce people to Jesus, too.* That’s your primary purpose while you walk the earth, and it’s our priority purpose as a church. By the way, I hope you understand that, because sometimes, when we’ve been Christians for a while, we might begin to think that the primary purpose of the church is for *us*. So we expect the church to sing the songs we like, to do certain ministries for me or my family the way I want, to take certain political positions that I think they should...on and on. Some of those things maybe are important (not all of them!), and some of those things we’ll talk about in the remainder of our mission statement (not all of them). But there should be no question that *our primary purpose is to introduce people to Jesus.* I’m sure you understand that. You already know him. But there are *so many people who have not been introduced to him yet right here in West Valley!* So first, let’s see...

1. The **calling** to introduce.

Every disciple of Jesus – every Christian – has this calling to introduce people to Jesus. Look again at verses 40-42:

“Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. *The first thing Andrew did* was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.” (John 1:41-42, niv)

Do you see that part that I’ve italicized: “The *first* thing Andrew did.” Notice the word...

first.

When Andrew met Jesus and realized who he was, he started introducing a lot of other people to Jesus. As soon as he realized who Jesus was, he wanted to introduce Jesus to the

other people he knew and loved. How could he *not* want them to know the greatest person he'd ever met? Most of us who love Jesus can't help but have this compulsion to introduce him to others. Unfortunately, over time we can lose this priority. Maybe we begin to believe the lies of the enemy and our culture that say we shouldn't talk about Jesus because no one wants "religion shoved down their throat." So we suppress this God given call. While it's true – no one wants religion shoved down their throat – *everyone* wants to meet Someone as loving, accepting, forgiving, and transforming as Jesus is. *It's all about a loving relationship with a real Person, not a set of rules enforced through a religious persuasion.* If you want to keep alive your loving desire to introduce people to Jesus, or to rekindle that desire, *do it – keep* introducing people to Jesus. Usually we lose interest in it because we've stopped doing it.

Let's reread those two verses again:

"Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus." (John 1:41-42, niv)

Do you see that part: the first thing Andrew did was *to find* his brother Simon..." Notice the word...

find.

We don't really know how far Andrew had to go to find Peter, but Andrew *found* him, which implies Peter was "missing" somehow, right? Peter was missing out on Jesus, he wasn't with Jesus, and he was missing out on the greatness of being a citizen of the Kingdom of God. Peter was *missing* from God's love and God's kingdom, so Andrew went to find him.

It's our calling to "find" those who are missing out on the love of God in Jesus and introduce them to Him. *Everywhere* in the New Testament, it is *individuals* who make the introductions. Introductions are always personal.

Do we realize that all of the people around us who don't know Jesus are missing out on God's Kingdom? Do we realize that every person like that is a child of God who is lost?

Look around you. Most of the people around you are "found." There are exponentially more outside this room that *are not*. They don't know how much God loves them. How dare we be content with ourselves, with this group of people in this room, when God still has missing children that he loves very much?! He's provided the Way for them: his One and Only Son.

"Salvation can be found in no one else. Throughout the whole world, no other name has been given among humans through which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12, ceb)

The name of the person we introduce to people is Jesus. The first thing we need to do is love people enough to find them and introduce to Jesus.

And who was it that Andrew found?

his brother.

Andrew started with his own family. Do you have people in your own immediate family or group of friends who haven't met Jesus? Start praying for them and start looking for Spirit-led opportunities to make the introductions. You don't have to have all the right answers. You don't need to be ready to debate. You simply need to introduce them to Jesus, the one you've met.

The first thing we want to do is find those who haven't met Jesus – especially those closest to us – those we love the most – and make the introductions.

This, by the way, is why we are intentional about making sure every unchurched person feels welcome and can understand what is going on here, so we have worship in English and Spanish and we translate the sermons into Spanish. Half of our population in West Valley is at least bilingual in Spanish and English, and many of them are more proficient in Spanish. If we are going to introduce people to Jesus, and then disciple people in Jesus, how can we do that if they struggle to understand us?

Someone asked me why we “accommodate those people” instead of “making them speak English.” I'll tell you why: for the same reason that Jesus didn't stay in heaven, but instead became one of us. Do you think that in Heaven Jesus spoke English? Do you think the Holy Spirit only speaks English? Jesus became us to reach us. Our job is to introduce our community to Jesus. If we are successful at that, we will start looking and sounding like the people in our community. To do that, we've got to make it as easy as possible for them.

Occasionally, people will write complaints on the prayer cards, typically without putting their names on them. One time someone said, “Why are we doing things in Spanish if (most) of our church is not?” That statement was basically saying, “I want you to make sure the church stays like me.” When actually, that statement should give us an even greater burden to introduce people to Jesus. If half of our community is Hispanic, and most of our church is not, THAT should break our hearts because it means we are not effectively introducing our community to Jesus.

On the fourth Sunday of this series I'll talk more about this when we discuss our vision, so if you have questions about what we do, hopefully that will answer them for you. And if you have a question, let us know who you are so we can talk about it. But this language issue is important – see...

2. The communication to introduce.

What did Andrew say to Peter when he found him? He said:

“‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.”
(John 1:41-42, niv)

All Andrew did, like we just said, was to tell Peter what he knew about Jesus: “We've found God's Son! I want you to meet him!” Let's say you want to introduce me to a good friend of yours. So I ask you to tell me about your friend; what would you do? Well first you'd say it in way that I can understand – whether it's with my language or at least in way I'd understand it. Would you force me to learn your language first? I highly doubt you'd do

those things. If you did, I might still want to meet your friend, but I wouldn't be very excited about knowing *you*.

So the communication to introduce is important.

And when it comes to introducing Jesus to your family and friends, don't over-think it! You know Jesus, your friend does not. So tell them about him. Notice a few things about Andrew's introduction: first, it was...

spoken.

Sometimes people will say "I let my actions do the talking." Well, having Christ-like actions *is* very, very important. It's our actions that validate our words. That's why we need to love and serve our neighbors. That's why West Valley Church is so involved in serving our community through our school partnerships, Homework Club, Trunk or Treat and Breakfast with Santa and Upward Soccer. *But – actions without words are empty*, the same as words without action are just hot air. If you are going to introduce me to a friend, but you don't *speak* to me, how am I supposed to figure it out? Don't just show me; *tell* me!

Jesus healed a man and then told him:

"Return home and tell the story of what God has done for you." (Luke 8:39, ceb)
(see also Mark 5:19!)

Just tell the story. Most of us are ready to talk about anything when we are asked our opinion. Why not be willing to introduce people to Jesus – just telling them what you know about him?

It's not complicated; just keep it...

simple.

Even a child could've understood what Andrew told Peter. We aren't making a theological, philosophical thesis here; introducing people to Jesus is as simple as introducing one friend to another. In Acts 8:4 we are told that it was simply a natural part of the believers' lives to tell people about Jesus wherever they went:

"Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went." (Acts 8:4, niv)

Have *you* met Jesus? Do *you* know some things to be true about him? Has he answered *your* prayers? Has he given *you* a new life? If so, why not simply tell people *that*?

And then also see that Andrew's communication when he introduced Peter to Jesus was...

sure.

Andrew was absolutely certain of his message, and that's what people want to hear today. They don't want to hear theories or arguments; they want to know if *you* believe it – are

you sure of *your* truth? Introducing people to Jesus is telling *your* story. No one can deny your truth because it's yours. Then this truth can become theirs, too.

Speak what you know, keep it simple, and share what you are sure of. We aren't making a sales pitch, and we aren't trying to close a deal. We are simply making introductions. We are simply making friends and introducing people to Jesus.

The Bible says:

“Has the Lord redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has saved you...”
(Psalm 107:2)

So we have a *call* to introduce people to Jesus; that should be the first thing we think about doing, finding those who are missing (especially those closest to us), and we can *communicate* the message by speaking simply about what we are sure of.

Finally, in Andrew's example see...

3. The *culmination* of introduction.

The point of introductions is not to “win someone over,” it's not to make someone a “convert,” it's not to evangelize or proselytize or sermonize or homolyze or anesthetize or accessorize or caramelize anyone! We just want people to know Jesus and how great he is – which is what we know about him. So we introduce them to him. We see the point of it all in Andrew's story of introducing his brother Simon (Peter) to Jesus.

“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.”
(John 1:41-42, niv)

He brought him to Jesus. That's the hope, that's the goal, that's the point of making an introduction, isn't it? If I have a great friend, and I think you'd like to meet him or her, I'd introduce you to each other, and I'm hoping that you two will become friends too.

It's important to see that Andrew *brought* Peter to Jesus; he didn't tell Peter to go find Jesus. Andrew led Peter to Jesus and made the introduction. You can do that simply by bringing folks to church with you!

Let me ask you this: if you are a Christian, how many of you had someone introduce you to Jesus – whether it was a parent or grandparent or friend or stranger, a pastor or a teacher – you learned about Jesus because someone or several people along the way told you about him? Raise your hand if at least one person introduced you to Jesus in some way. See?

It is a fact that the majority of people who are Christians today were brought to Jesus by someone else. That's what happened each time in the Bible, too.

It's up to us to make the best introduction we could ever make to the people we know and love. They are missing out on knowing Jesus, on all the great things that come with being a part of God's kingdom. You can introduce them. And for sure, we are working together as a church to do that. If nothing else, you can invite them to church with you.

We happen to believe that attending worship is a great way to meet Jesus. As a church, we do the things we do in order to build loving relationships with people in our neighborhood, so that when YOU invite them, they will come. It won't happen if YOU don't make the introductions. And remember: you are not alone. God the Holy Spirit will guide you and strengthen you and help you every step of the way in your introductions, and we are in this with you too. But it can't be done without you. It won't be done without you. Don't let others miss out on meeting Jesus.

Prayer

Benediction (Pastor Roger)

From Romans 10:13-15 (tlb) –

Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But how shall they ask him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them unless someone sends him? That is what the Scriptures are talking about when they say, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace with God and bring glad tidings of good things." In other words, how welcome are those who come preaching God's Good News!