

... From R.J.'s desk

As the culture of the church continues to change in our country, new terms are generated which are used to describe some of the changes being made and the challenges being confronted. Words like emergent, conversation, postmodernity, incarnational have all found their way into our dialog to describe some of these ongoing shifts in ideas. One of the most positive shifts is that of churches (youth groups) being challenged to become more "missional," in contrast with "doing a mission trip." Erwin McManus, founder of the Mosaic in southern California made this statement about missional living: "It is why the church exists. The key to the missional church is to love more profoundly and more deeply." Another author framed it this way: "in a missional church, the church IS mission rather than does mission as a program or activity of the larger life of the church. The church's nature is to show the world what it looks like when a community of people lives under the reign of God in every aspect of daily life."

"Living missionally" is rooted in many places biblically, but probably the most succinct is found in Jesus' challenge to the disciples in John 20:21: "As the Father has sent me, so I'm sending you." That simple commandment raises some significant questions:

- In what way was Christ sent by the Father that we are now to continue?
- Sent where?
- Sent to do what?
- This challenge was given to the disciples. Does it have any application to young people who are struggling with their own spiritual formation?

These are critical issues because they may not affect where we go but they certainly affect why we go. It really comes down to a very simple reason. Our "going" reflects the very nature of God. It's His nature to reach out, to restore, to redeem. His challenge for us is the same, to be like Him in reaching out, restoring and bringing the message of redemption. That ultimately is what gives God the glory, because in "living missionally" we are being like our heavenly Father.

One of the core beliefs that our culture has is: it's all about me. For those of us in ministry, we have to ask some tough questions: what do I need to do to move away from a self centered lifestyle to a God centered one? How can I best encourage those within my ministry to be more God centered and other focused?

Blessings in the journey,

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