



PW 101

PART TWO: THE FOUR-FOLD PLAN

Loved by Jesus, Joining Him on His Mission

In **Matthew 28:18-20**, Jesus proclaimed His mission, which He assigned to us:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Jesus makes it clear. Wherever we go, whatever we do, be making disciples by baptizing and teaching. How are we doing that at Praise & Worship?

The Life Cycle of the Church

1. Jesus Defines Who You Are *because* of Who He Is
2. Your Story Is Part of His Story
3. He Demonstrates How to Love Your Neighbor
4. We Are His Body On Earth Right Now

Identity

Who are you? More importantly, on what basis do you answer that question? This is where Jesus starts, He starts with Baptism. Baptism is the event where our identity is firmly established. We are in Christ. Scripture makes this radical claim:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. — Romans 6:3-5

The reality of our Identity in Christ is not established by our doing. It's not something we do to ourselves, nor is it some kind of “promise” or “surrender” to God. Rather, **it is God's promise to us!**

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” — Acts 2:38-39



Often people think they have to “get right with God” before He will love them and take them in. On the contrary, it is He who makes you Right, and then you will know who you are.

Story

Jesus next says to teach. This is where we tell the story. His story. We explain the history, the context, the situations, the people who were involved and what was important to them. This is exactly what you do when you are telling your story. Others learn about you in the same way. In fact, we find it fascinating to discover your story, and to teach you how His story and your story intersect and what happens next!

So let’s share stories. Explain situations and circumstances and learn...together. Relationships will be built, new stories will be written and all along the way, we will celebrate the journey...together.

Experience

But do we learn everything through stories? Some of the most important things, yes. But not everything. Some things need to be experienced. God knows this more than us and has given us a tremendous gift which goes beyond our ability to understand: *The Lord’s Supper*.

A meal! A meal which carries the very body and blood of Jesus Himself! It is an utter mystery that we cannot possibly hope to explain or understand, but rather one that Jesus Himself promised to us!

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Jesus’ own words promise to us that these elements are indeed His presence, His gifts to us and deliver forgiveness. The early church used the Greek word *mysterion* to describe this, which later became the Latin word *sacramentum*, which found its way into English as *sacrament*. It is an everyday mystery. One that is *experienced!*

God’s grace that you can see and hear. Grace that you can smell. Grace that you can touch. Grace that you can taste. All of this coming down to us from Him, delivering His promises of forgiveness and renewal. By His very Word!

The mystery goes beyond what we eat and drink though! Consider these words from 1 Corinthians 10:16-17:

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

This forces us to ask the question: is Christ’s body the bread or the people? We love to shout: **YES!**

At the meal, as we “taste and see that the Lord is good,” we also get to *experience* unity. The idea that a group of people from different places and different times could come around a table and share this experience together of being the Body of Christ.

This is where Jesus's promise—that He is with us—is so important. He didn't just tell His disciples everything they needed to know, he is present with us now! And part of this power is not just in reading or talking, but in living it out. Try playing a sport after only *reading* about it. We need to be *shown* some things, we need to *experience* some things.

Indeed, Jesus had spent years *showing* his followers what to do. Demonstrating it to them. And then they did so to the new believers. And then they too passed it down, and on the pattern has gone even unto today. Nearly 2000 years of discipleship. New Christians receive His gifts, gain experience on how to love their neighbors by sharing the Meal and its powerful gifts, learning and showing how to pray to the Father, how to worship, how to teach and on and on it goes.

Community

None of these things happen when we are alone. From the very beginning, the Lord has worked through people. Together. God doesn't operate in some kind of cheesy ethereal realm we might see in a movie, He gets down in the mud. Adam, the first man, is from the Hebrew word for dirt or earth. The ultimate example of God getting physical is when God almighty, who created the universe, was born as a baby. His name is Jesus.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. — John 1:14

Scripture uses the word *ekklesia*, which made it into our language as “church”. But now many people think this simply means “building”. But church was never intended to refer to a building or an organization. It is God's People. Physical. Corporeal. The ones who offer a cup of cold water to a little one who is thirsty. Or those who visit in person when someone is sick. Or, merely a friend when you need one.

The reality of God is not limited to a warm feeling in our bosom. He became a baby, flesh and blood. He grew to a man, flesh and blood. He died, flesh...and blood. And it is His blood that saves us, not an ethereal reality. Not a feeling. Not a representation.

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This is a mystery, yes, but it is an *everyday* mystery. Which means God uses stuff to accomplish His mission. Which is to say He works through means, including bread and wine, including you and me. And He gives us what we need when we need it!

So our mission is not fulfilled when we elicit warm feelings in our people. Following Jesus is not a private matter. It happens in public, out in the bodily world. The mission is, in fact, the building up of a new people.