

Series: GAMEPLAN

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Text: Luke 24

Title: Gospel, Relational, Disciple, Missional

Introduction

I absolutely love basketball, but I am not that great of a basketball player. Playing basketball all throughout elementary, middle school and high school, I had a passion to win every game. I wanted to demolish the other team. I wanted to humiliate the guy that guarded me, and I wanted to dominate the guy I defended. I quickly found out that I wasn't naturally talented to play the game. I didn't have what it took to be great. I didn't have the hops or the quickness to to dominate like I wanted. After playing for many years, I finally figured out my strategy to pull my weight and make sure my team won.

By the time I graduated high school, I had won two state championships. I was the second leading scorer on the team. I was second team all-state my senior year, and I lead in scoring my senior year state champion game with twenty six. All of those accomplishments because I had one strategy. It wasn't sharp-shooting threes, sick crossovers, or blazing fast breaks. My strategy was was the dirty work down in the post that often went unnoticed: REBOUNDING. I learned a solid box out made all the difference in the world. The better I boxed out my opponent, the more chance I had of rebounding the ball. The more chance I had of rebounding the ball, the less chance they had of scoring, and the more chance I had for a put back. Rebounding was my strategy to win every possession I could, every game we could, and ultimately the state championship with 26 points and 15 boards. (By the way, I'm not stupid enough to think I single handedly won the championship. My teammates were skilled and incredible players. I was just the "garbage man.")

Need

What have you developed your best strategy at? Some people have developed their own strategy to make good grades, to make tons of friends, to become the leader, to make money, to become a better artist, etc. God has created us as strategic people because God Himself has a strategy.

Before we talk about God's strategy, we first have to talk about God's goal. What is He aiming for, what's His win, what does God ultimately want? So many people answer this question with the popular statement "God's glory." What does God want? God wants His glory! While I absolutely believe His own glory is the best goal God could have, we must take this truth one step further by asking, "What is God's glory?" Dr. Russell More has taught me that God's glory is not a what but a Who.

9Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God is most glorified when knees bow and tongues confess to Jesus' Lordship! I remember watching the video of my senior year championship game. When the clock counted down to zero and the arena went wild, all I could hear were the excited screams of my own father because He was so happy for his own son. Because he was holding the video camera, his shouts outshouted all the other shouts in the stands. Do you want to know what fires God up the most? What does God get most excited about? What glorifies God the most? When humanity lives in such a way that we faithfully submit to (knees bowed) and confess Jesus' Lordship in every single moment in our life. That is God's overall goal for all of life and every life.

Here are the questions then we have got to ask. What is our strategy to accomplish God's goal in our lives? What is our strategy to accomplish God's goal in the lives of our students? What is our strategy to accomplish God's glory in Jesus Christ in our student ministries? If you can boil down your life, your marriage, your student ministry strategy to one single statement, what would it be? Write it down now.

The Apostle Paul's life and ministry strategy was, "*But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God*" (Acts 20:24).

My personal life strategy is to live in a Gospel-centered, relational way that makes disciples who are on mission with Jesus.

My marriage strategy is to love my wife in a Gospel-centered, relational way that deepens our personal discipleship as we are on mission with Jesus.

My ministry strategy is to raise up Gospel-centered, relational students that make disciples who are on mission with Jesus.

Bible

In Luke 24, God gives us a clear strategy for our life, marriage, and student ministry that will accomplish His glory which is Jesus' Lordship. God wants you to win. God desires your student ministry to dominate. God has given us the strategy for Jesus to get the glory and fame from our lives and ministries.

The 4 strategic words I see from Luke 24 are Gospel, Relational, Disciple, and Missional. In this chapter we will go take a macro-look at these four words in Luke 24, then in the chapters to come will dive deeper into these four words and their practical strategies for student ministries.

GOSPEL: Our Life Centered on Jesus.

In Luke 24, Jesus had just risen from the dead and those who were closest to Jesus were having a really hard time believing it was true. Even though Jesus told them numerous times while He was with them that He would rise, they still struggled with doubt, disbelief, misunderstanding. When two of the women who walked with Jesus the closest went to his tomb, they didn't find his body. They were confused. What could have possibly

happened? Where was Jesus' body? Who steals a dead guy? Two angels stepped onto the scene and said,

Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise. (Luke 24:6b-7)

I love that first word, and I believe it is critical for student ministries and student pastors today: REMEMBER. In student ministry we get so lost in all the details, events, bands, services, Sunday schools, small groups, mission trips, etc. If we're not careful, we'll start to do student ministry instead of living the Gospel. It is so easy to forget the Gospel in a pressurized student ministry world of parental complaints, comparison of numbers, and opportunity for popularity. In our case we don't have an angel coming to us, but God Himself through His Word saying "Remember!"

As student pastors, we must remember that absolutely everything we teach, every way we lead, every event we do, etc is ultimately about raising up Gospel-centered students who live their lives with, like, and for Jesus. That right there is exactly how God is glorified most in our student ministries.

How do we do this? Since Gospel is the first word for our student ministry strategy, we ourselves must first be living the Gospel. Those who are believing the Gospel will be living the Gospel. Every single day, we must read God's Word in a Gospel-centered way. Gospel-centered devotions are both a necessity and a non-negotiable for every single student pastor. While I'm assuming that every student pastor is a legit Christian (I know that is not always the case), I'm stressing that every student pastor must be in God's Word in order to live out the Gospel in their lives. This is how we defeat forgetfulness and accomplish the remembering.

I firmly believe when we read Scripture in a Gospel-centered way, God will speak to us and His Spirit will empower us to live Gospel-centered lives as we follow Jesus. Only a fresh, Gospel-centered, daily time in God's Word can ensure a Gospel-centered life, marriage, and leadership in ministry. Absolutely everything in Scripture comes back to and is centered around Jesus being crucified and rising from the dead. His death and resurrection

are the center of the Gospel that we must remember in order to live in a Gospel-centered way. Personally Gospel-centered student pastors will lead Gospel-centered ministries. Live Gospel-centered to lead Gospel-centered. The Gospel is our life centered on Jesus.

Relational: Our love is centered on others.

Fast-forwarding in Luke 24: Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples couldn't believe it, nor could they find His body. On the same day Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared on a seven mile walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus to a couple of His disciples. One was named Cleopas. If you think that name was bad, you should have heard the other's name. Needless to say, he remained nameless. Then this happened.

15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

The ultimate reason these two disciples were walking and talking is because they couldn't help it. God made them this way. God has designed all of humanity this way. When God created humanity in His image, we inherently became relational creatures because our Triune Creator God is a relationship. God has eternally existed in a perfectly, loving relationship within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God did not create humanity because He was lonely, rather God created humanity because He wanted us to be a love-gift to His Son. We were created ultimately in the image of Jesus since it was God's plan for Him to be the eternal King as the God-man. We aren't just created for relationship, we're also created as relational beings.

The two disciples also couldn't help but walk and talk because the resurrection had just taken place. When a dead human being resurrects 3 days later, it's all over the news, all over social media, and all in conversations. What else was there to talk about back then? Nothing could possibly compare to that miracle that happened in their time. At the same time, what could possibly trump the resurrection in our daily conversations? The resurrection is just as true today as it was 2,000+ years ago!

Also notice how Jesus stepped into their relational conversation. They didn't invite Jesus in. Reading further, they didn't even recognize Jesus. Jesus inserted Himself out of His love and plan for their conversation, future, and life. Jesus is relentlessly relational because He is God.

Student ministry must be relational. If we want our student ministries to reflect God and grow in Christlikeness, then we must lead in such a way to grow our students in relationships with Jesus, each other, and the world around them. Student ministries must not be first and foremost systematic theological, unnamed faces in a crowd, or a sit down and listen to me teach type of environment. If our student ministries will be Gospel-centered, then they must be designed to help grow our students in relationships with Christ, Christians, and not-yet Christians. That starts with student pastors taking the time to foster relationships with both leaders and students so that both leaders and students will follow and pursue relationships with each other.

Disciple: Our growth is centered on The Word.

Later in Luke 24 after some awesome appearances and disappearances, Jesus went deep with them. If there was any conversation throughout human history I wish I could ease drop and overhear, it would be these conversations out of Luke 24. Twice, earlier and here, Jesus takes His disciples through the whole Old Testament to show them how He is the central figure and interpretation. After going through this entire Old Testament Bible study, Jesus then took His disciples deep.

When it comes to discipleship, everyone seems to have a different definition of deep. Some think diving deep spiritually means systematic theology, others think original languages, others think ancient cultural customs and sayings, while others think deep means understanding the setting and surroundings. Jesus defines depth in discipleship for us. Read Luke 24:33-46.

44Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45Then he opened

their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,

In case you missed it, Jesus went deep with them by opening their minds to understand the Scriptures. Christians aren't called to be open-minded, instead we should pray that our minds be opened! Jesus deepened their discipleship by showing them how the Scriptures are Gospel-centered. Do you see it? He took them through all the Scriptures, opened their minds, and then helped them understand how the whole Old Testament was about Him suffering and rising. Discipleship depth is not complicated. Instead, discipleship depth is centering your life's perspective on the Gospel.

By discipleship, I do not mean a deeper study, a fill-in-the-blank workbook, or an extra hour on Sunday nights for elective classes. Discipleship in Scripture is a relationship between a few people with the purpose of living with Jesus, like Jesus, and for Jesus. Do our student ministries point our students to these types of relationships? Intentional discipleship relationships are what Sunday school, small groups, and Bible studies can't do. Those open type groups are not conducive to students being personal about their lives.

Our student ministries need to help students form discipleship groups of 3 to 5 students (with or without an adult leader) who get together on a regular basis to read Scripture, talk about the Gospel, and get personal about their lives. Too often students dodge the tough questions with “its personal.” Its time to get personal about our lives with others so that we can experience more wins for God's glory!

Missional: Our service is centered on the world.

The fourth word for our student ministry strategy is missional. Following Luke 24:44-46 about a Gospel-centered understanding throughout all Scripture, Jesus then said

47and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48You are witnesses of

these things. 49And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Where there are Gospel-centered, relational students making disciples, there will be students on mission. In fact, that is the mission! The mission is to follow Jesus through the Gospel, to be relational with Him and others, and to make disciples who do the same. Gospel-centered, relational discipleship will always result in living missionally to reach the world.

There are far too many student ministries who are trying to reach their world in their own way. While I don't think there's anything wrong with attractional, event-driven ministry, I do believe that attractional, event-driven only is wrong. Student ministry should not be evangelism only, it should be evangelism always. It should not be Gospel only, but Gospel always. It should not be about salvation only, but always about salvation.

A student ministry that is missionally minded understands that they have a student pastor and many student ministers. The student pastor pastors, the students themselves minister to their friends, neighborhoods, communities, and campuses. If a student ministry lacks students who are on mission, then that student ministry needs to simply return to square one, start with the gospel, become relational, and grow as disciples. It will become missional! A student ministry that is not missional does not ultimately understand or live the Gospel.

Story: A strategy that is sure to lose.

I remember as a college student, I had a friend who was a chess champion in his country of Sri Lanka. I have no idea if he was the chess champion of his middle school, but he claimed to be a chess champion non-the-less. What I do know is, he beat everyone at our college that I watched him play. I love chess, but I am worse at chess than I am at basketball. He challenged me to quick watching and play him one time since I would love to talk trash during his games just to get in his head. It was time for me to face the music and finally play him.

I sat down across the chess board from him and made my first move. I noticed him “hmmmm” under his breath. After his move, I moved again

which seemed to confuse him. After lasting several minutes longer than any of his competition, he stopped the game and asked, “Where did you learn to play this style of chess?” I guess I was doing pretty good, so I talked more trash, called time-in, and we continued. After about a grueling hour of back and forth calculate moves, I lost. He begged me to tell him who taught me the game. I finally told him. No one! I was making it up as I went along. My chess strategy was so unconventional, he couldn’t figure out where my next move was going. That’s because I didn’t know either!

Some student pastors have no overall strategy. They don’t know what their next move in ministry really is. Can I ask a really difficult question? If the goal is for students to be Gospel-centered, relational disciples who make more disciples that live on mission with Jesus, is your student ministry winning? Could you be a student pastor who makes unconventional moves and looks like you know what you’re doing, but you know down deep you don’t have a strategy. Might your student ministry lose in the long run?

PWR Gospel

God’s goal has always been that His Son become the Savior, Lord, and King of the world through His life, death, and resurrection. That is the Gospel and is the way that God is winning the world from sin to Himself. Is your student ministry reputation that you are relentlessly about Jesus, radically preaching the gospel, and miraculously watching disciples go on mission? If not, I want to encourage you to read on so we can dive deeper into Gospel, Relational, Disciple, and Missional from Luke 24.

Life/Lead

Let’s live the Gospel and lead our students to do the same.

Let’s love relationally and lead our students to do the same.

Let’s disciple deeply and lead our students to do the same.

Let’s go missionally and lead our students to do the same.