

EVERYBODY BELONGS

The CODE, Week Five

- JESUS FIRST
- MESSY MINISTRY
- PURPOSE DRIVEN
- AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

EVERYBODY BELONGS

We all bear God's image and the gospel is for everyone.

We welcome people of every ethnicity and every kind of story.

It was always God's intention to bring all people into a right relationship with himself.

Jesus gave the church a radical new priority to pursue...

Galatians 3:26-29 NIV

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

This does NOT mean that our gender or ethnicity doesn't matter (we reject the idea of colorblindness). This means that access to God is equal among all people.

True equality is not simply God's plan - it is a priority.

In Acts 2:5-21, the message is clear - this new thing called the church is going to be revolutionary. We're going to welcome ALL people, from every ethnicity and language group. The gospel, by its nature, creates equality.

In Acts 6:1-7, there is a systemic issue in which the Greek Jewish Christians were being treated differently than the Hebrew Jewish Christians, so a diverse panel of leaders were selected to fix the broken system, so a panel of seven men, all Hellenists, were selected to

tackle the problem. Again, the church is different. In culture, elites oppress and silence people, but the church amplifies the voices of the oppressed.

In Acts 8, persecution drives the church beyond its walls in Jerusalem and to the Samaritans and others, including a ranking Ethiopian official.

And the rest of the book of Acts is about getting the gospel to Rome, to the Gentiles, to every person of every nation and every language on earth.

And the Bible closes on this note...

Revelation 7:9-10 NIV

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

God is gathering a diverse forever family and he invites us into his vision for a better world for eternity.

HOW CAN WE JOIN GOD'S MISSION?

1. Challenge your own perceptions about others.

Do I have God's heart for people not like me? Do I see them the way God does? Can I see my own bias, which is the result of the fallenness of humanity? Am I open to examining myself and rooting out prejudice?

In other words, **stop being defensive** and make this a personal pursuit.

2. Listen to the stories and experiences of others.

You don't have to fix it all. You don't have to be a savior or have all the answers. In fact, one of the most valuable skills you can possess is that of listening.

3. Speak and work for true equity and equality.

Regardless of what many say, **we are NOT yet where we need to be** when it comes to real equality and equity.

We've been talking about social justice for nearly a decade at Grace Hills. It only recently became a hot button issue because of politicians and pundits and poor theology.

The church should be LEADING the conversation and the movement toward true equality, equity, and justice for all people.

4. Invite everyone into the family of God.

Everyone.

People from every socio-economic level.

People of every ethnicity and nationality.

People of every skin color.

People who struggle with every kind of sin and brokenness.

Everyone!

Romans 10:13 NIV

for, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.