

Goal: That the hearers would strive to be all things all people in their service.

You've heard it said, *"There's no I in team!"* It's true, whether you're talking about UH volleyball or NFL football. Sure, Tom Brady may be the one glamorized as the greatest quarterback of the New England Patriots, but without receivers and an offensive line, they would never have made it to the Super Bowl. *"There is no I in team."* Victor Cruz may be considered the best player on the Giants but he would be nowhere without the stellar defense of the New York Giants. As much as our world tries to emphasize individual ego and pride, *"There is no I in team."*

In the same way, *"there's no me in Christian."* Let me repeat that, *"There is no me in Christian!"* Too often I have heard people in the church say that things need to be my way or that the church is here to do what I want, but that's completely contrary to our calling as disciples of Christ. The Christian life is one focused on serving others. Listen how the Apostle Paul describes his life of discipleship to Jesus.

"For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings." (1 Cor 9:19-23)

For Paul, discipleship was not living for himself and his desires but serving others based upon what they needed him to be. This is Christ's ministry pure and simple. How do you share the Gospel of Jesus with Jews, you live within their community, understanding their traditions, and become one of them. How do you share the Gospel with those who are homeless? You go and visit them under the bridge on Kam highway or distribute food here on Saturday mornings and spend time getting to know them. The purpose of the church isn't to be a place where people are drawn, although that may happen, it's a place that sends us to reach others in the love of Christ and with the goal saving some.

That's what the missionary in Botswana and India and China does. They move to a foreign place, learn the language, the traditions, and the culture of that people. Over time they become part of the community and the community becomes part of them. It's then that they are able to share the Gospel of forgiveness and hope in Jesus, in the

language of the people and with the proper understanding of their culture. But it is not only missionaries in distant lands.

I grew up in northern California, in a suburb of San Francisco. I love California. It was my home. However, Rachel and I ended up to Missouri to study for the ministry at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis. Our plan was to return and serve somewhere back in the Bay Area. However, the Lord had other plans. He placed me at a church in McAllen, Texas, deep down south on the border of Mexico. I didn't speak Spanish nor did I have positive encounters with Texans, but I embraced the culture, even ended up rooting for both the Longhorns and the Aggies. I taught Vacation Bible School in Mexico and built a pool for an orphanage there. Surprisingly, I grew to love Texas. The culture became part of me and I of it, so much so that I didn't want to leave. But the Lord had other plans.

I figured if the Lord didn't have future plans for me in Texas, then I must be going back to the California coast. But again, God had other plans. He called me to serve a small rural, farming, and proud military community of Fallon, Nevada. I knew nothing about alfalfa and dairy farming, nor was I familiar with Naval procedures, but I embraced the culture of Fallon. I grew to love NASCAR, ride horses for cattle drives, volunteered as base chaplain, and appreciate big game hunting. Quite a stretch for a Marine Biologist from California. But that's what discipleship is all about, *"to be all things to all people in order to save some."* Then my call to Kaneohe, a contrast from Nevada, Texas, Missouri, and California, but through personal visits with our ohana I gained an appreciation for the unique beauties of Oahu and the Hawaiian culture. I learned and became part of our culture here so that I might be all things to you and share the Gospel of Jesus with you, our school families, and those in our community.

However, being all things to all people is not just the call of pastors. It's the call we each have as disciples of Jesus. It causes us to go to our school families and spend time with them, understanding their struggles, sharing their joys, celebrating their keiki's milestones. It's a call that points us out into our community to see those who are different than us and to ask, how can I meet them where they are? How can I convey to them the love of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's a call that encourages us to serve at our Food Bank or offer gifts to our neighbors giving our time in order to be part of theirs.

Sound difficult? Consider how God did exactly that for each of us, and in turn

encourages us to, ***“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2: 5 – 11)*** So what about you? How and where will you be a servant to others? How can you be all things to all people in order that you might save some? Or as a close friend quoted, *“Never judge a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins.”*

Some Christians think Christian discipleship is all about coming here to worship on Sunday mornings, as if this is the goal of our faith, our big Game Day. ***(“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9: 24 – 27)*** But they have it all wrong. This isn't the big game, this is our practice facility. It's here that we receive instruction and encouragement from our coach and Lord. This is where we learn the plays, where we get our uniform of forgiveness and love. This is where we are equipped with God's Word to take on whatever challenge we face. This is where we practice the drills of service, whether it's at the Food Bank or teaching Sunday School, as an usher or helping at Family Promise.

Then, once we've practiced here, over and over again, we go out and live what we've learned. Out there is the goal of our faith. Out there is our Super Bowl. Out there is where our spiritual athletic prowess is challenged. Because, out there we are missionaries for Christ by becoming all things to all people in order that we might save some. But unlike the Super Bowl and its commercials, Christianity isn't a spectator sport, and there is no I in team and there's no me in Christian. We live to serve, we live to love, we live to be all things to all people because that is who our Lord Jesus Christ was and is for us. Amen.