

# Family TableTalk

Conversation 85

## Planted With Purpose

read

*Isaiah 61:1-4*

think

A few weeks ago I looked through a box of old pictures and found a number of group shots from old mission trips. I reminisced about how passionate we were as teens and college students back then, and wondered where all that passion and energy went. I felt defeated, like I was a failure for not being able to continue to care for the world like I did as a high-schooler. But this actually betrays a wrong understanding of how God wants his people to be on mission in the world.

schooler. But this the world.

Isaiah 61 is a great place to see how Jesus saves us and prepares us for the kind of mission he actually wants us to be on. God's mission involves redeeming both physical/social and spiritual places of brokenness: Verses 1-3 show how Jesus gathers his people together and cares for both their physical needs ("beauty instead of ashes", "praise instead of despair") and reconciles their relationship with God ("oaks of righteousness"). But he doesn't stop there! These trees get planted. Things that are planted are nurtured, and they grow. Verse 4 describes God's people rebuilding, restoring, and renewing things that have been broken for generations. Complex issues like this aren't fixed with a band-aid, but by the slow, intentional faithfulness of God's people incarnating themselves in broken places over a long time.

Sometimes it can feel overwhelming to believe God wants us to have an impact in his world, pushing back against the brokenness of the fall. We either can throw ourselves into the task, often burning ourselves out in the process (because we aren't Jesus!), or we can despair because the darkness seems too great for us to make a difference at all. But God saves us to be trees, planted in specific places, slowly growing and having an impact in the lives and systems that he intertwines us with, what Eugene Peterson once called "a long obedience in the same direction." We can trust that God is using us now, and will continue to use us, to accomplish all of his purposes for the world, in His time.

apply

- Are you more tempted to overwork yourself trying to fight sin and evil, or become depressed that it's too much for you to make a difference?
- Fredrick Buechner once said "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." What kinds of things are you doing/ learning/experiencing now that, if God used them later for His glory, excite you?
- When you see things happening around the world and in the lives of your friends, what aspects of brokenness in the world break your heart?

pray

Father, thank you for healing our wounds, caring for our broken hearts, and entering into a relationship with us because of Jesus. Jesus, encourage us that you are planting and empowering us to serve in this world alongside you. You are the king, and already victorious over sin and death, so we can serve without fear of failure or expectation to be a hero. Holy Spirit, give us hearts for the places even now you will plant us, passions for the rebuilding work to do, and patience that it will come in your timing.

### by Stephen Yates

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