

# ***The Mosaic Project: Held Together in Christ.*** Ephesians 4:15-16.

## **OUR NAME**

The name of our conference comes from the diversity of our members and from symbolism that all those pieces can become a work of beauty under the artful hands of God. The beauty of the mosaic is that it is broken pieces held together for a common purpose - to create something beautiful, an impossibility for the individual piece.

## **OUR PURPOSE**

NLOMA Mission: Advancing Lutheran Outdoors Ministry in service to Christ, the Church and our world. We do this by offering resources, support and growth opportunities to outdoors ministry professionals, emerging leaders and organizations.

We are held together by our common passion for Outdoors Ministry, but ever more importantly, we are held together in Christ! When assembled together, we are a picture of the future of outdoors ministry and of the Church. Everyone has a piece to contribute.

## **OUR PROGRAM**

Our times of intentional spiritual growth will be fostered in Bible study, evening devotions, and well-led, powerful and intentional worship. In preparation for these times, you are invited to make use of these devotions prepared by Rogin Dugall, our conference Bible Study and worship leader. If you are unable to attend the conference, we still invite you to work through these devotions for your own edification and to be in prayer for your outdoors ministry partners who will be in attendance. We look forward to meeting you in Portland in February!

## **Devotional #1 - The Dreams of God**

A deadening sound is occurring in the hearts and lives of people on a day-to-day basis. There isn't a camper or family or congregation that is within your realm of ministry and influence that doesn't experience the clash between two prominent "dreams":

- Dreams of culture (e.g. the American dream, cultural popularity, narcissism, Consumeristic Individualism, etc.)
- Dreams of the Kingdom of God (articulated by Jesus/Gospels)

Now, it is important to note - that our understanding of the Bible, "church", ministry, and living as a follower of Jesus is entwined and immersed in the images and values of the "dream" (the story or narrative or worldview) that dominates our lives. That's why it is important to ask yourself - "What is my prevailing dream? What is the story that shapes my life and my ministry passions and praxis?"

It shouldn't come as a surprise to you that God has an opinion of what story shapes your life. God has been busy since the beginning of time attempting to define human life and the human story as part of HIS story. In fact, through Jesus, God has revealed to us not just the blessings of grace, mercy and love that are poured out freely into our lives but also how God intends to get us "caught up" in His story. The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 1, *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (1:7-10)."*

God's desire (His will) is for us to join Him in His ultimate dream - for everyone to find unity with Him and with each other in His Body. Is there any greater dream? Why is it that so many exchange the dreams of God for lesser dreams?

## Devotional #2 - In our Backyard

Recently, my wife and I moved to the Seattle area. Though we miss our family, friends and the community that brought us a sense of love, purpose and meaning in life, God has opened the door to us experiencing His new life on the "ground" of our new context. When we recently met some neighbors in our new town in Washington, we realized how God opens opportunities for Kingdom influence in our backyard.

Consider this - it is extremely difficult to imagine any other "meaning" outside of our own experience and context. In other words, every one of us "contextualize" our walk with God, our ministry dreams and desires as well as our actions to bring the Kingdom of God to bear in the spheres of influence that God gives us.

This dynamic is what theologians and missiologists call, "Contextualization." Contextualization is the dynamic process of the Gospel interacting with a specific human situations. The Gospel, the good news of God through Jesus is that God has ALWAYS been in the contextualization business. That is what the incarnation was all about...that is what God did in Creation...that is what God continues to do through the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes, *"in him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13-14)."*

When you live as God calls you to live...when you minister to the kids and adults through outdoors ministry, are you "embodying" the good news of Jesus? Are you living the life of a follower of Jesus in your backyard? I met a man who was born as a Muslim in Egypt and is now a Christ-follower. He and I were talking by phone the other day when he said, "Robin, we need to know the language of the land not as an outsider who comes to judge or impose our system of beliefs upon people who we deem are inferior but as one who embodies the Gospel." God calls us to embed the very values and power of His Kingdom in our context. How is that occurring in and through you?

## Devotional #3 - Proclaim and Live

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him (Ephesians 1:3-4)."*

Here's something to consider - the Gospel is a message proclaimed and a lifestyle to be lived. It is not only understanding the truths of what God has revealed to us but it is participation in what God is doing...we not only understand the Gospel but we LIVE Gospel.

In my mind, the Kingdom of God and all the blessings of God that God so richly pours out upon our lives are either present to market to us an "Infomercial" or get us caught up in a "Revolution." Most people read Paul's comments in Ephesians and they think ONLY about themselves and how God has blessed them...that's true. God abundantly blesses and loves us...but He does so, "so that...". In other words, our life with and in Jesus are not purely about doctrines that come with believing God at the expense of what it means for us to live the actions that God plans once people answer the call and follow Him. Remember, we are blessed SO THAT we can live "holy and blameless lives" in the midst of the world.

Actually, the letter to the Ephesians epitomizes this truth: the first half of the letter (chapters 1 through 3) are mostly focused on proclamation...the second half primarily on lifestyle and action that is based upon a vital and living relationship with the living God. Is your life about you participating in the actions of God? Are you partnering with the Holy Spirit to incarnate in your spheres of influence and life the very character and nature of God? Yes, we'll never do it perfectly or adequately...but the only "God with skin on" in the midst of our culture these days are followers of Jesus who have the boldness and courage to live out what we proclaim.