Among the most important lessons you can learn as a Christian and therefore as a member of St. John MBC is this…**“It’s not about you.”** Let that sink in for a moment…Understanding that will guide you in every part of this orientation, every day of your journey with St. John and, most importantly, every moment of your relationship with Jesus.

 I know, it’s hard to absorb at first. That’s because society has been telling you for years that life is about YOU…about YOU achieving your dreams…about YOU looking out for number one. You’ve been told…“Be an individual”, “Break all the rules and decide for yourself what’s right”, “All that matters is that you get yours and do whatever YOU want to do.” So I get it…but think about what the world would look like if everyone took that advice. What if everyone were only concerned with themselves and saw others only as tools to be used for achieving individual happiness. In that world what happens when you need help and everyone else is only concerned with themselves? The reality is that no one is happy in that world.

 The Bible teaches us that **God designed** us to be together. It tells us that God created a world of shalom…that is, complete peace. **He designed** a world where everyone loves and cares for everyone else because of our immense love and appreciation for God and His creation. **His design** was that we would live in the world in loving families and supportive communities…the strong helping the weak…the fortunate helping the less fortunate…no enemies…no outcasts…just

God-driven-love.

 When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3) they corrupted our relationships with God, each other, and creation. This left all of mankind predisposed to continue that trend. In their story we see how we went from God being the center and motivation for all that we do, to only being concerned with our individual pleasure. But God is on a mission to fix what we’ve broken. While our sin has corrupted and divided His creation, His plan, according to Ephesians 1 has always been to “unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.” God is bringing the entire universe back in line with **His design…**and he’s starting with His church.

 The good news (the gospel) is that Jesus came to fix what mankind had broken. He gave His life so that we could live. God saved us by His grace through faith and now unites us as His representatives to show the world that the happiness that we all search for can only be found in a restored relationship with God. Now God guides us in living according to **His design.** Being a part of God’s plan is the most significant thing any of us can ever do, so to do our part we gladly “count others as more significant than [ourselves]” (Phil 2:3), seek peace with everyone and try to outdo one another in showing honor (Rom. 12:10-18), “Love [our] enemies and pray for those who persecute us.” We are more concerned with what God is doing than ourselves so we demonstrate his love for people no matter what it costs us (John 15:12-13).

 Jesus said it best when he said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). Did you catch that? Jesus said anyone who wants him must say no to his own wants and needs (deny himself) even to the point of death (take up his cross) and follow his lead (follow me)…this was just before he voluntarily died on the cross to bring his enemies into a restored relationship with God (Rom. 5:8-11).

God’s plan makes it clear that “It’s not about you.” It makes it even clearer that… “**It’s all about Him.”** This is good news for at least two reasons. First, there’s an amazing freedom in not being at the center of history and the universe. Any of us would collapse under that kind of pressure. Many celebrities have demonstrated this as they’ve become depressed, started using drugs, yearned for relief and even developing psychological disorders from being in the spotlight. God is the only one who can actually handle the immense weight of being the center of creation.

 Second, we all benefit from it being about Him. When we focus all that we do on loving God we soon come to see that the only way to please Him is to live in peace and love with each other. When Israel was trying to worship God without caring for each other God completely rejected their worship (Isaiah 1, Amos 5, Micah 6). Jesus said if you bring a gift to God and there remember that your brother has an issue with you, you are to hold off on giving him your gift to first go reconcile with your brother, and then come back to give your gift (Matt. 5:23-24). John said anyone who says they love God and hates his brother is a liar because whoever loves God will also love people (1 John 2:9-11, 4:7-8, 20-21). The two great commands that all of Scripture are based on are (1) love God with all of your heart, soul and mind and (2) to love your neighbor as you love yourself (Matt. 22:37-40). The reality is that loving people goes hand in hand with loving God. So when people live saying “It’s all about Him” then they also aim to love people. That’s the world in which we all want to live.

 The Bible shows us that everything God does is for his glory (Eph. 1). We’re called to love him by having that same focus. But it’s important that we understand that we glorify God by living according to **His design**. One way Christians have said it throughout history is that the chief goal and purpose of man is to “love God and enjoy him forever.” John Piper said “God is most glorified in us when we are most delighted in him.” Our goal is simply to please Him, realizing that we are most fulfilled when He is most glorified and He is most glorified when we are most fulfilled.

 At St. John we realize that we are God’s family and that we’ve been given the privilege of finding complete happiness living for His glory and enjoying Him forever. So we WORSHIP God with our entire lives, UNITE as His family, CONNECT with our neighbors thru love, and PROCLAIM the gospel of Jesus Christ all for the glory of God. Buckle in as we explore and celebrate being united in Christ by the gospel.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Corey Singleton

Senior Pastor

St. John MBC