

READ

Exodus 20:4-6
1 John 2:28-3:3

CONSIDER

When I turned twenty, I was asked by the camp I had worked at for a number of years to consider being the male staff director for the following summer. It was a high honour to be asked and to oversee the operations and spiritual health of the team. My task was to prepare the devotions, care for each member, and keep everything running smoothly. The only way I knew how to fulfill those expectations at that point in my leadership was to be a disciplinarian and have consequences for when the staff stepped out of line. It made me into an authoritarian and legalistic leader, giving little room for grace or understanding. When I gave any leeway, I expected to be shown gratitude and respect. This led to most of the staff disconnecting with me at best, resenting me at worse. As a gag gift, they even fashioned a make-shift prop, which they labelled as 'Nip's Whip'. Staff members told me that I had taken the life and joy out of knowing Christ and serving Him. Though the camp director praised me for running a tight ship, I felt that I had failed in my role.

Reflecting on my experiences has given me much to ponder and learn from. I was challenged to consider how I was formed as a leader and disciple maker and realized that it had much to do with how I was raised and the environment of my upbringing. The perspectives, practices, and patterns we internalize from our family of origin have a particular way of both developing and distorting us. We are simultaneously formed and malformed in our identity and purposes, despite best intentions and efforts. These impacts and effects are brought into the light as we continue to discover and mature as children of God. When who we are in Christ becomes more primary and central, there is a reckoning and redemptive move as the Spirit breaks the cycles of brokenness which work against our discipleship and ushers us into a new way of life, defined by our ongoing journey to know and become more like Jesus and our practice of righteousness.

Looking forward to our time in God's Word together,

Pastor Jon Nip

PRAY

Gracious Father, you have made a way in Jesus to be your children. We are eternally grateful and desire to know how that identity, purpose, and relationship with you is worked out in all of our lives. We ask that you give us wisdom, insight, and courage to reflect on the perspectives and patterns in which we have been malformed by our families of origin and histories. Lord, we turn them over to you, asking you to reverse their effects, break cycles, and lead us into all righteousness. Would who we are in you be the primary and ultimate definer of every part of our lives, communities, and church. We ask that our witness of our redemption and belonging to you would bring you glory and point back to your salvation. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

DIVING DEEPER

What parts of our lives are we tempted to idolize? What has informed our tendency to worship and pursue those things?

What positive and negative perspectives, patterns, and practices were passed to you from your family of origin? In what ways have they influenced who you are today?

The signpost of a Christian is to practice righteousness. How does that compare and contrast with the priorities of your family of origin?

If the Christian life is a continual journey of the Spirit unforming us from our sinfulness and reforming to be more like Christ, how do you participate in that work? How does community play an integral role in that process?