

“Rooted” Series / 2: Serve / August 5, 2018

Chris “Tater” Taylor Interview: *(Watch & Listen to the video for the full interview)*

- About 6 or 7 years ago Mike Case (*former Connections Minister*) asked you to step way out of your comfort zone ...
 - You didn’t feel ready ...
- Some pretty amazing things happened out of that group ...
 - Deep and Wide, finding a way to serve a different generation ...
- Multiply, an amazing experiment ...
 - Nudged our church (not a transformation, but a nudge)
 - More than that ... long term transformation of several people ...
 - Long term impact on the Kingdom ...
- Todd (*Todd Layne: Discipleship Minister*) asked you to get out of your comfort zone again ...
 - Specifically with multi-generational couples ...
 - Has challenged you to dig into the Word differently ...
- Huge steps out of your comfort zone, not always fun; but regrets?
 - Have you sensed God working in you and through you?

Do you remember the first time you stepped out of your comfort zone and tried doing something for God?

- Maybe you volunteered to help with our Jesus Prom, or our Trunk or Treat, or something like that. You may have been a little nervous that first time.
- Or maybe you volunteered to work with one of our guest services teams, or even to help in our children’s ministry. And you felt kind of ... inadequate?
- Or maybe you got up the guts to talk to someone about Jesus, to share your faith, and maybe to pray with them. That can be terrifying!
- Or maybe you signed up for a mission trip. A little scary?
- Or maybe you got to baptize someone. And maybe you just felt unworthy. By the way, we all are.

That first time can be especially hard.

- I still remember the first time I preached. I was in Bible College, In Oregon, around 45 years ago. It was terrible.
- I remember the first wedding I ever performed ... for my sister ... it didn’t last.

- I remember my first “ministries.” I was responsible for Junior High kids at a church in Eugene, Oregon. That’s a scary thought, isn’t it? And then I was a Youth Minister in Scio, Oregon. Can you imagine me as a youth minister? Would you entrust your kids to someone who finds cartoons like this “funny.” (Caption: “As much as Pooh missed Piglet, he really did enjoy that bacon sandwich.”) By the way, Lisa Mattox sent this to me last week – and she is responsible for our elementary school kids downstairs.
- I remember my first “pastorate” – those poor people. And the first time I walked into a class as the “Professor,” and my first mission trip.

It’s scary ... and it’s good. You begin to understand that we’re all unworthy, inadequate ... and God still uses us ... go figure. And that is huge, because ... because God is going to nudge you; he’s going to nudge you to serve him somehow; he’s going to nudge you a lot. And you’re going to want to push back. Guys: Just do it! Because here’s the deal: we know we are unworthy, unprepared, inadequate ... just about every time. But we just do what we can do, and then we let God do what only he can do ... through us ... which is a lot ... and that is so cool!

Now, we are in week 2 of a series we’re calling “Rooted.” You see, this church exists, our mission from God is to bring people face to face with Jesus, and then grow them up into Christ-Driven 24-7 Jesus followers. And because it is our mission from God we try to do it as intentionally, and strategically, and as effectively as we can. And this “Rooted” series is about the second half of our mission – how we can grow strong, fully mature, God-loving, people-loving, life-loving Jesus followers. So we’re talking about some of the most important “growth catalysts.” These are the things we do as Jesus followers to grow strong, to drill our roots down deep, to be rooted, to toughen us up as Jesus followers. And today we are going to unpack the second of these growth catalysts – that’s what we are going to call them: growth catalysts, things that cause us to grow. This one is called, “Serve.” It’s on the wall in our Foyer: Worship, Connect, Grow, and SERVE. Last week we focused on “Connect,” this week it’s “Serve.” And this one may be the single most important, the single most powerful of all the growth catalysts.

Now, we’re going to tackle this “serve” growth catalyst by looking at a very familiar story from the life of Jesus, which maybe you have never connected to this idea of service (unless you’ve been here at Capital City for a while; because I’ve

connected them here before). So, if you have a Bible or a Bible app, find Matthew 14, and we're going to jump in at verse 13. I'm going to jump in while you're looking, and you can catch up. Matthew 14, verse 13: "As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left in a boat to a remote area to be alone." The news Jesus heard was that his cousin, a guy we call John the Baptist, was dead. You see, John had scolded the king for having an affair with his sister-in-law, then marrying her (by the way, she was also his niece). He was pretty twisted; and when John the Baptist called him on it, he had John beheaded. At least today when people get mad at a sermon they don't usually kill you, which is cool. Well, when Jesus heard about John's death, he went off to be by himself, I guess to mourn. "But," it says, "the crowds heard where he was headed and followed on foot from many towns." So Jesus takes off across the lake in a boat, and the people circle the lake on foot to find him when he lands.

Verse 14: "Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and (instead of getting ticked) he had compassion on them and healed their sick." His patience was stunning. Verse 15: "That evening the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.'" It's been an amazing day! Wouldn't it blow your mind to spend a day listening to Jesus teach and see him actually heal people? That would be worth a road trip. But it's been a long day, and the people are tired, and hungry; and I suspect the disciples are tired and hungry. "Jesus, these people need food! We all do!"

And here's where Matthew starts reeling us in. Jesus says, verse 16: "That isn't necessary (you don't need to send them away)—you feed them." Now remember, they are out in the middle of nowhere (there's no Kroger, Walmart, Sams nearby; no McDonalds, Taco Bell, BW3). And Jesus says, "I know it's been a long day, and I know they're hungry, and I know there's no place to buy food around here, so you feed them." "You see a problem, you handle it."

Now the disciples have just entered a place where you have been, many times I bet. You look around, and you see a problem, something needs to be done. You look around and you see some needs that need to be met, and your heart starts beating harder -- you want something done about it. And sometimes when you become aware that something needs to be done, you'll get this little conviction, you'll get this little nudge, you'll hear this little whisper, from God, maybe – "You do

it, you get it done, you meet that need.” And your reaction is like, “No! You see, God, I don’t meet those needs, I pray for the people who you send to meet those needs. I’ll do my part by praying that you send somebody ... God.” “God, please send someone to provide food for that family. Send someone to the hospital to sit with her. Send someone to work with those preschool kids. Send someone to teach those middle school boys. Send someone to be there for that guy whose life is falling apart, for that single mom who is just out of gas.” “God, I heard them talking about these needs; God I know they need help; God I am praying that you send just the right person ... that you break someone else’s heart.”

And sometimes it seems like God just keeps nudging – “I want you to do it.” And we push back! “Uh uh, God, I’m just a prayer warrior. I’m not the right man for this job. I didn’t train for it. I don’t have any experience doing it. I don’t have the time, I don’t have the resources. They might ask questions I can’t answer, and I might embarrass us both, God.” But there are times when God just doesn’t seem to let go. It’s not a voice, really; it’s just a nudge that keeps nudging, a conviction that won’t go away ... easily. It just seems like God keeps saying, “I want you; I want you to do it; I want you to meet that need.”

So the disciples start doing what we do sometimes, when we feel God’s nudge. They started making their excuses – and they are really good excuses. I’d accept them! Verse 17: “But (Jesus) we have only five loaves of bread and two fish!” and there are like ... Seriously Jesus?! There are thousands of hungry people here.” “We can’t do it, Jesus! We’re not prepared, we’re not equipped, we’re not the right guys for this job, Jesus.” Do you think that maybe they rolled their eyes at Jesus a bit? What did he mean, “You do it!” How?!

And Jesus says, verse 18: Well, “Bring them here.” “Bring me the bread and the fish.” “Just bring me what you’ve got.” Listen guys, don’t miss this, this is huge. Jesus says, “Just bring me what you have.”

- “But God, I didn’t even finish college, I just did two years.” “Well, just bring me those two years.
- “But God, I don’t know much about the Bible.” “Well, just bring me what you know.”
- “But God, I don’t have much time, I don’t have much money.” “Well, just bring me what you have.”

- “But God, what if they ask questions I can’t answer?” “Well, just bring me the answers you’ve got.”

So they do. The disciples bring Jesus five small loaves of bread and two small fish. And Jesus breaks them up and gives about half a loaf of bread and two or three fish sticks to each of the twelve disciples. And sitting behind these guys is this crowd, about 5000 men, not even counting women and children. I mean, all Jesus had done so far was to give back to the disciples what they had given to him, and they are standing there with enough food for a snack, for me. And Jesus says, “You feed them.”

Now listen, this is big: Jesus didn’t need their help. Jesus was God; and God is really good at miracles. Jesus could have fed them himself. A little manna, maybe. Or a truckload of BLT’s – kind of child’s play for ... God. But Jesus says, “You feed them,” when they simply don’t have the resources to get it done, right?

So they just did what they knew how to do, because that’s all they could do. They had no clue how to feed thousands of people with a 12 McDonald’s Happy Meals, but they could turn around and start serving the food they had. They just did what they knew how to do. Verse 19: “The disciples distributed the bread and fish to the people,” ... trusting Jesus to do what only he could do. They did what they could do, and they trusted God to do what only he can do.

Now ... you are going to feel a nudge, a nudge to do something, a nudge to serve somewhere. It won’t be just a whim, it’s going to be rather persistent. “I want you to sign up, I want you to help out, I want you to go on that trip, I want you to talk to that person, I want you to be the one who gives.” And it is going to be way out of your comfort zone. And you are going to feel inadequate. And you are going to be able to find great excuses why you are not the one. And God will whisper, “You simply do what you know how to do, and I’ll do what only I can do. Just ... trust me.” You see, God isn’t just loving on someone through you, he’s stretching you. He’s building something in you, something really grand. And as your trust in him grows, your life with God will begin to come alive.

Let’s keep going, verse 20 (-21): “They all ate as much as they wanted (unbelievable!), and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers (in other words, they got their Happy Meals back!). About 5,000 men were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children!” And do you know what the

disciples didn't do, next. They didn't go around saying, "We're pretty amazing!" And they didn't start thinking, "We ought to go into business, all we need is a couple loaves of bread and a few fish, and we'll sell meals all month!" They took no credit; and they presumed nothing. (Repeat) Because they knew, "We didn't do that! I was just there, I just did what I could. All I did was do what I knew how to do. But I'm telling you, God showed up and he did what only he can do."

You see, listen: Jesus didn't "perform" this miracle simply to feed a crowd. He was trying to build something in these disciples. He was trying to plant something in us. "You do it." You see, he's going to entrust these disciples with a whole lot of responsibility in a couple years, and they had some growing to do. So a big piece of what Jesus is doing is teaching Jesus followers to trust him. He's trying to stretch us; to make us bigger.

Listen, I want to show you two more verses that are just flat-out powerful. The first is from a letter the apostle Paul wrote to some Jesus followers in a town called Ephesus (in what is now Turkey). He says, "We are God's handiwork (we were made by God, and we were), created in Christ Jesus to do good works (to serve), which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2.10) You were made by God to make a difference somehow, somewhere! Here it is in the Good News Bible: "God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds (we were made for a life of service), which he has already prepared for us to do." You were made by God to make a difference somehow, somewhere! You were made by God to serve someone other than yourself, to live for something bigger than yourself.

Here's the other verse. It was written by the apostle Peter, kind of the big dog of the early church. He says, "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another." (1Peter 4.10) Every one of us, every one of you, has been gifted by God, not just to serve you, but to serve someone other than you, to live for something bigger than yourself. All of us are gifted somehow, some of you are incredibly gifted. God didn't give you all those gifts just to showcase you. He's trying to grow you up; he's trying to make your life mean something; he's trying to partner with you, to work through you. Do you have any idea how honored you should feel?!

So, here's what's going to happen. If you try to do life with God, for God, God's way, he's going to start nudging on you to do something, maybe way out of your comfort zone. Maybe you'll hear someone talk about a need, and you just won't be able to get it out of your mind. Or you'll feel this nudge to serve, maybe in some ministry at church, or some service opportunity in town, or just a person or a family you feel nudged to help. And you'll probably be thinking, "I don't feel adequate to help, I'm not prepared, I'm not smart enough, good enough, resourced enough. If I go there and do that I'll probably fail and maybe make a complete fool of myself. In fact, maybe it's not a nudge from God's at all; maybe it's just my overactive conscience, or maybe something I ate." But you'll discover the nudge just won't go away.

In fact, some of you guys may be wrestling with what may be a nudge from God right now. It's possible that you're in kind of a tug-of-war with God right now. You may feel like you need to plug in somewhere here at church. Or you may feel like God is nudging you to serve some group or some person outside these walls. And you are not sure you want to, in fact you are really hoping it's not God's nudge at all...

Listen, you need to understand something ... this is big. This tension you feel is not just about someone needing your help; it may be just as much about God wanting to stretch you, to grow you, to build your trust in him. This isn't just about helping people, this is about God taking us out of our comfort zone, and taking us to the next level, growing us.

Here's another huge piece. Think about it: God doesn't need our help. He's God. He's the God who spoke the universe into existence. He's the God who can snap his fingers and the mountains will dance. He can make anything so just by saying it's so. He doesn't need our worship, he doesn't need our prayers, he doesn't need our love, he doesn't need our praise, he doesn't need our help. He's God. But we need to worship him, and we need to pray to him, and we need to love him, and we need to praise him, and we need to serve him, because it enriches us, it grows us, it fills us ... because that's what we were made for. And God delights in doing life with us, and we find purpose and fullness when we do life with him, his way.

It's how we were made. There are guys out there who study the power of serving, the positive benefits of serving someone other than yourself. They'll tell you that

serving reduces stress, and depression, and anxiety; it reduces anger and enhances happiness; it makes us healthier physically, it actually measurably increases our lifespan; it raises our self-esteem (isn't that weird!); it reduces loneliness as we connect with those serving with us and those being served; it breaks the pettiness of self-absorption ... and it's fun.

And all that stuff is ... little. There is a deep, and immense satisfaction we experienced when we are actually used by God. As unworthy as we are, as inadequate as we are, as ill-equipped as we feel ... to be used by God – the Creator himself! That is incredible! You see, we were made to live for something bigger than ourselves. We will only be grow into what God meant us to be when we live for something bigger than ourselves. You see ... when God nudges you to serve, he's offering you one of his greatest gifts.

And here's what we have discovered. Serving is probably the most powerful of the growth catalysts. If you want to be rooted, if you want to be strong, if you want to experience the kind of life God made you for, you've got to go when God nudges you. We used to think that growing a person up in Christ was all about knowledge. Get them into the Word, teach them more stuff about God, give them answers to their questions ... But here's the deal, learning more about God without serving him when he nudges is kind of like eating, and eating, and eating without exercising. You just get fat and self-absorbed. God does want us to get into the Word and learn more about him; but he also wants us to serve.

Now I want to start winding this down with a warning, and a promise. Here's the warning: Too often we tell God we're willing to serve as long as we don't have to step too far out of our comfort zone. We are kind of wusses, sometimes. We're willing to serve if it doesn't cost too much time, too much money, too much discomfort. Listen guys, we are Jesus followers. Here's the heart of it: wherever, whatever, whenever, however ... because he's our King. I'll go where I am needed most; not where it's easiest for me. When he nudges: just do what you can do, and watch him do what only he can do ... through you.

And here's the promise. This is from the book of Hebrews. The Bible says, "God will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do." (Hebrews 6.10) God sees,

and God won't forget. Listen guys: Someday you are going to look back ... and you will not regret those times you said "Yes" when God nudged. You will regret those times you pushed back. Let him use you. Let him grow you up. Let him lead you into the life he made you for.

Now Jon is our Executive Pastor, and he kind of oversees the "Serve" part of our strategy here at Capital City. And he's going to talk about serving, both inside these walls, and out there. Our strategy is a little different than a lot of churches. It used to be we'd tap on the same people all the time – that old 80/20 principle: 20% of the people do 80% of the chores. And we'd keep going back to the same 20%. Same people serving, all the time. Not anymore. We won't wait until we know you; we won't wait until you have somehow proved yourself. Our strategy at Capital City now is this: as many as possible, as young as possible, as soon as possible. We want you to serve: Because it is the most powerful catalyst for growth we've got!

We won't wait until we think you're ready; we won't wait until you think you're ready. It's been part of our strategy for our kids for some time. If your Junior or Senior Higher is here at church on a Sunday morning, there will not be a Sunday School class for them. If they are here one hour, we want them in this room, with us, in intergenerational worship. If they are here for two hours, we want them to serve somewhere. Because serving grows them up, and serving makes this place home.

It's the same for our adults. It's even the same for those of you who are not Jesus followers yet. We want you to jump in and serve. We won't ask you to preach or teach ... yet, but we'd love to have you on one of our guest services teams, or tech teams, or even on a worship team, or some other team. And we'd love to have you participate in one of our All On Deck events like our Jesus Prom, or join one of our mission teams, or jump in on one of our Serve Days, like today. You see, we'd love for you to get a taste of what it's like to be used by God, and to work alongside others who want to live for something way bigger than themselves.