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UpReach — InReach — OutReach

Individually, each of these describes a critical element of faith. Together, they have been the guide for many, providing the basic goals for a church, the plan for a family or the foundation for an individual Christian life. And they spring directly from the theological ground floor laid down by Jesus himself — love God, love your neighbor — passion for God, compassion for people.

There are so many ways to describe UpReach, InReach and OutReach. All three are worthy of serious reflection and practice. And much has been written about each dimension of faith. But we make a serious mistake if we see them as separate concepts. They are made for each other. They work best together. And their deepest meanings are distorted, shallow or missing altogether when we isolate them from each other.

Together, they form a picture of balance. One is the fuel. The other two are the faith engines it powers, moving through our world, changing lives and making a difference.

UpReach Describes Our Relationship With God

He is our Creator, our Father, our Origin, our Motivation and our Energy. He is the Beginning of life and the very reason that we live. Life cannot proceed without UpReach. But life must proceed with UpReach providing the fuel. It must express itself in the next two relationships, or it is not real.

InReach Describes Our Relationship With Other Believers

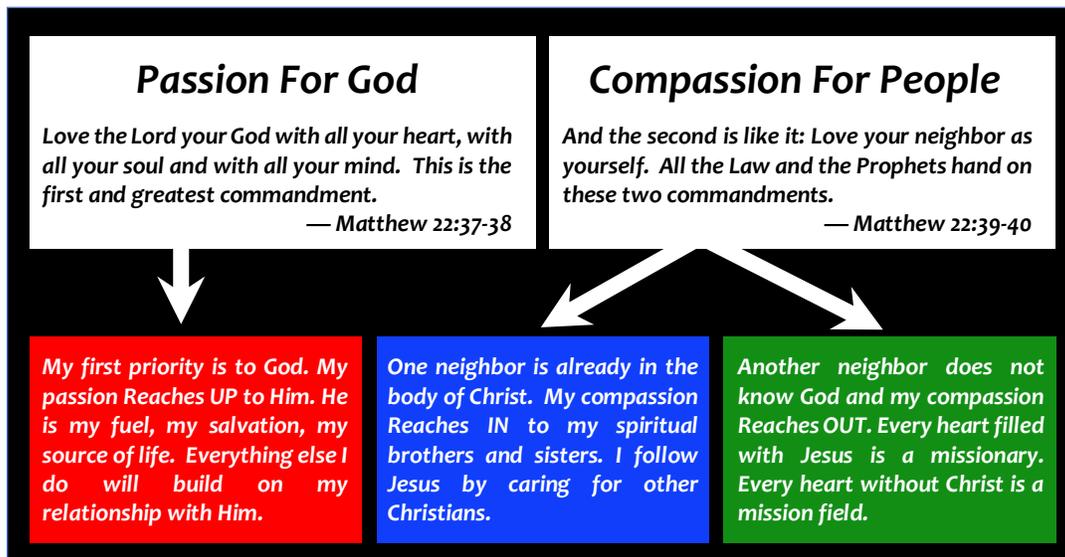
All of us are moving across the landscape of this world. Sometimes we define InReach with words like “fellowship” or “church” or “body life.” It is the brotherhood of the Christian community, reaching into each other’s lives to share the heart of our Father. Why? Because no single human life is able to understand and communicate all that UpReach offers. We are not designed to be alone in our faith. This is why InReach provides an essential place for nurturing, sharing and teaching, as God utilizes a wide variety of lives — women and men, old and young, single and married. One Christian will see what another Christian has overlooked.

One will clarify what another has misunderstood. And together our faith which began in UpReach, will deepen and mature through the “one-another-ness” of InReach, as God prepares us for OutReach.

OutReach Describes Our Relationship With Non-believers

This is where we all began — outside. God found us there and brought us inside the door of faith. But now that we are inside, now that the atmosphere of fellowship has been nurturing our faith, we are ready to return to the outside. OutReach describes the mission we share with the Father. He reaches out, through us, to rescue others who are outside of faith.

UpReach — InReach — OutReach: Together they are “The Shape of Faith.”



There are so many ways to describe these three dimensions of faith. To name just a few, we could say there are:

- **3 Faces of Faith** — UpReach, InReach, OutReach.
- **3 Focal Points for Life** — worship, fellowship, ministry.
- **3 Extensive Relationships** — with God, with Christians, with non-Christians.
- **3 Forms of Identity** — children of God, family of God, neighbors for God.
- **3 Areas of Work** — establish faith, develop faith, extend faith.
- **3 Spiritual Goals** — experience God, discover gifts, serve with those gifts.
- **3 Essential Experiences** — live with God, grow in the church, hurt with the world.
- **3 Educational Objectives** — taught by God, nurtured in his family, sent into the world.
- **3 New Norms** — surrender control, invite evaluation, offer God’s love.
- **3 Sacred Values** — find spiritual depth, build spiritual relationships, share spiritual life.

Of course, these are not really ten different faith statements, but ten ways to describe one faith statement. And the three faces of faith contained in each statement can be found together several times throughout scripture. For example, during the Last Supper, when Jesus gave his final teaching, all three dimensions are clearly on his heart.

UpReach — In **John 15:1-11** Jesus repeats one phrase over and over, highlighting for the Twelve the most important relationship. It is so foundational that they must protect it:

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **Remain in me**, and I will **Remain in you**. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must **Remain in the vine**. Neither can you bear fruit unless you **Remain in me**. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man **Remains in me** and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not **Remain in me**, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you **Remain in me** and my words **Remain in you**, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now **Remain in my love**. If you obey my commands, you will **Remain in my love**, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and **Remain in his love**. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

InReach — In **verses 12-17** he shifts his focus to the relationship his followers have with each other, particularly their love for each other:

*My command is this: **Love Each Other** as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his **Friends**. You are my **Friends** if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you **Friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: **Love Each Other**.*

OutReach — Finally, in **verses 18-21**, Jesus takes his stream of thought to the outsider by giving a name to the mission and describing some of its difficulties:

*If the **World** hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the **World**, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the **World**, but I have chosen you out of the **World**. That is why the **World** hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If **They** persecuted me, **They** will persecute you also. If **They** obeyed my teaching, **They** will obey yours also. **They** will treat you this way because of my name, for **They** do not know the One who sent me.*

The gospel of John is not only known for the detail it brings to the Last Supper story, but also for giving us a glimpse into the heart and mind of Jesus as he prepares for the end of his life through extensive prayer. In **John 17**, in his well-known prayer for his disciples, Jesus again highlights the Three Faces of Faith.

UpReach — In **verses 1-5** Jesus prays focusing on his relationship with God. Notice the repeated pronouns:

*After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “**Father**, the hour has come. Glorify **your** Son, that **your** Son may glorify **you**. For **you** granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those **you** have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know **you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom **you** have sent. I have brought **you** glory on earth by finishing the work **you** gave me to do. And now, **Father**, glorify me in **your** presence with the glory I had with **you** before the world began.”*

InReach — In **verses 6-19** Jesus shifts his prayer to the relationships his followers have with each other. Again, notice the repeated pronouns make it absolutely clear who is on his mind:

*I have revealed you to **those** whom you gave me out of the world. **They** were yours; you gave **them** to me and **they** have obeyed your word. Now **they** know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave **them** the words you gave me and **they** accepted them. **They** knew with certainty that I came from you, and **they** believed that you sent me. I pray for **them**. I am not praying for the world, but for **those** you have given me, for **they** are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through **them**. I will remain in the world no longer, but **they** are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect **them** by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that **they** may be one as we are one. While I was with **them**, I protected **them** and kept **them** safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that **they** may have the full measure of my joy within **them**. I have given **them** your word and the world has hated **them**, for **they** are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take **them** out of the world but that you protect **them** from the evil one. **They** are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify **them** by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent **them** into the world. For **them** I sanctify myself, that **they** too may be truly sanctified.*

OutReach — Finally, in **verses 20-26**, Jesus shifts to the relationships his followers will have with those on the outside. Notice the repeated theme:

*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for **those who will believe** in me through their message, that **all of them** may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May **they** also be in us so that **the world** may believe that you have sent me. I have given **them** the glory that you gave me, that **they** may be one*

as we are one — I in **them** and you in me — so that **they** may be brought to complete unity. Then **the world** will know that you sent me and have loved **them** even as you have loved me. Father, I want **those** you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of **the world**. Righteous Father, though **the world** does not know you, I know you, and **they** know that you have sent me. I have made you known to **them** and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in **them** and that I myself may be in **them**.

Jesus lived with this sense of balance in his life. It was a part of his vision, his strategy, and his daily routine. It was the Shape of His Faith. And so here, at the end of his life, at the Last Supper and again during his last lengthy prayer with the Twelve, he wanted them to hear his balance once again.

The Shape of Faith is an enduring vision that Jesus wants us to understand as well. And setting our sights on the balance of his vision will help us to discover why we are here and how we should live our lives.

With **UpReach** as my foundation I now know where to begin:

- (1) **I Want To Express My Love To God.**
“I love you, Lord. You are my strength.”
Psalm 18:1(CEV)
- (2) **I Want To Celebrate God’s Presence.**
“O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together.”
Psalm 34:3 (NIV)
- (3) **I Want To Praise God’s Name.**
“I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you.”
Psalm 7:17 (NIV)

And as my growing relationship with God overflows into my spiritual family, the nurturing atmosphere of **InReach** goes to work as I share my life with my brothers and sisters.

- (4) **I Want To Be Engaged In This Community Of Believers.**
“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”
1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV)
- (5) **I Want To Strengthen God’s Family.**
“You are a member of God’s very own family
and you belong in God’s household with every other Christian.”
Ephesians 2:19 (LB)
- (6) **I Want To Build Up God’s People.**
“Building up the church, the body of Christ to a position of strength.”
Ephesians 4:12 (LB)

Empowered by UpReach and nourished by InReach I can live a life of **OutReach** sharing my faith with my family, friends and neighbors.

(7) **I Want To Live Up To The Trust God Has Given Me.**

“We speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.”
1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NIV)

(8) **I Want To Spread God’s Word.**

“The most important thing is that I complete my mission.”
Acts 20:24 (NCV)

(9) **I Want To Prepare God’s People For Ministry.**

“To prepare God’s people for the work of ministry.”
Ephesians 4:12 (LB)

Notice how the flow of thinking and activity in these nine items all begin with UpReach. God is the initiator. He supplies the fuel. And any attempt to personally bridge the gap or create our own power will leave us either broken in our own failure, or blind and arrogant in our false sense of success.

C. S. Lewis once wrote about this kind of false success,

*We regard God as an airman regards his parachute;
it's there for emergencies but he hopes he'll never have to use it.¹*

Lewis reminds me of the popular phrase you may have heard, “Do your best and God will do the rest.” It may be popular and at first it might sound reasonable but take a minute to think it through. When the life I am living is divided into “**my best**” and “**God’s rest**” at what point will I finally go to God? According to this popular phrase, I will go whenever I think I really need him. Do you see a problem with this kind of thinking? Do you see how it turns God into a last resort? I go to God only when all of my own resources are depleted. This is not discipleship. Discipleship does not mean I go to God when I can no longer function on my own. On the contrary, it means that from the beginning I admit to myself and I confess to God that I have nothing at all until I receive it from God. Paul did not write to the Philippians “I can do **most** things **myself**.” Instead he wrote, “I can do **all** things through **Him** who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

This is why I have a little message hanging on my office wall. I first saw it, years ago, hanging above the workstation of a man I dearly loved who mentored me in ministry for many years. He has gone on to be with the Lord and now the same framed message hangs just across from my desk so that I can see it every day. Here is how it appears:

*Good morning. This is God.
Today I will be handling all of your problems.
I won’t be needing your help.
Have a nice day!*

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 85.

What is the message here? Absolutely everything depends upon God. We may think we operate on our own strength, but we do not. Our resources come from God. Our abilities come from God. Our opportunities are given by God. Even the time to use our resources and abilities to take advantage of these opportunities is a gift from God. Yes, it all depends upon God. UpReach is the beginning of everything else. It is the fuel and inexhaustible power for the rest of our Christian lives. All of it.