



Episode 79: Recreation: The Gospel At Play - Part 2

Featuring: Mingo Palacios & Jay Johnson & John Tungar & Erick Thoennes

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Transcript:

Mingo Palacios: [00:05](#) Welcome to the Purpose Driven Church podcast where we sit down with leaders in and around the church to discuss current trends and challenges and how the five purposes of the local church matter today more than ever. Hey everybody, thanks for tuning in. This is a continuation from last week's episode. Hope you enjoy it. We'll talk to you soon.

Jay Johnson: [00:28](#) Well, that just leads to such great soul care, personal care and longevity I think. If we're talking about longevity in ministry and just taking care of ourselves, getting the old pumper going and laughing and

playing and doing all those things, I've only seen that lead to better longevity and building stronger team and allowing rest in your mind to be put to rest. That just continues to lead to that.

John Tungar: [01:05](#) And as I'm thinking, especially from what you're giving the age ranges, at least I'll speak for the 18 to 26 year olds.

Mingo Palacios: [01:15](#) Yeah, that's fair.

John Tungar: [01:15](#) There is so much more I think about play and recreation. I think even that definition is based around activities that are more just, "Hey, let's veg out or let's distract ourselves, let's-" and so the things that we're talking about when it's "Hey, play is getting out there and having fun, flicking the suds at someone else and community and you're hanging out with other people." I love, especially for our youth camps, when kids come up or even adults come up and they're like, "Oh, it's rocket science, right? I just go up to Hume and there's something about it." And really all it is, is we're pulling you out of your-

Mingo Palacios: [01:51](#) You're disconnected.

John Tungar: [01:51](#) Your distractions and you're actually sitting face to face with someone else and throwing a frisbee and laughing and joking and at the same time, yeah, you're in community with other Christians and you're hearing from the word. You're living as it should be.

Mingo Palacios: [02:05](#) Yeah that's good.

John Tungar: [02:05](#) So much I think we're just distracting ourselves and calling it play.

Mingo Palacios: [02:11](#) Yes.

Erik Thoennes: [02:11](#) I love that you just brought up play recreation at Hume because I've watched for years now, many years, how much work goes in to setting the stage for really fun, spontaneous play. I see staff out here setting up these games and strategizing and thinking about it.

Mingo Palacios: [02:31](#) Hours and hours, right? Yeah.

Erik Thoennes: [02:34](#) A lot of work goes into making that.

John Tungar: [02:39](#) It's a science.

New Speaker: [02:39](#) [crosstalk]

Jay Johnson: [02:39](#) A lot of thought, science, philosophy and it is not just physical work, it is mental. It is like the hardest job. This is going to sound crazy, but one of the hardest jobs is being the REC leader and moving that body of people to the gains. But just even preparing to get out there on the field takes so much out of you. Our REC leaders at the end of the week or just laying there exhausted and people think like, "Why is he/why is she so tired?" They're living the dream job. I want to do that." And I'm like, "You don't have the work ethic to do that."

Erik Thoennes: [03:18](#) What's fascinating about it, at least in junior high and high school, there's a competition element in it which

you think might kill play, but it actually increases the playfulness when it's done right. Because play can't exist if you don't care about what you're doing.

Mingo Palacios: [03:33](#)

Wow. Here we go.

Erik Thoennes: [03:35](#)

But if the competition becomes an end in itself, it kills play. If all it is is so called play and you don't really care well, what's fun about that? It's not playful. So, I love that there's this balance between a spontaneity, a sort of unpredictability to it all within the structure of the game where there's even points and things kids are working for. It's a fascinating balance that maintains. And even running the game requires some flexibility in what's happening; spontaneity, messiness to it within the structure you're committing to in this make believe world you've created play.

Mingo Palacios: [04:15](#)

There's two things that come to my mind just in this conversation. The first one is that book A Shepherds Look at Psalms 23, right? It's a pastor who in his youth was a shepherd and he talks about how great shepherds prepare pastures for their flock. So, first thing that came to my mind was if there are any youth workers that listened to our podcast who undervalue that which they do that even in the preparing of play, you are shepherding a generation; you're shepherding a group of kids. You're not just doing something that is a bumper to the real thing. It's all connected. It's all soul crafting in and of itself.

Jay Johnson: [05:04](#) It takes so much work to prepare for the game or the message and the weeks of reading the text over and over and over. Or just thinking through how the game and how you're going to move the people and what the goal is, it takes so much more work to prepare the pasture. I love what you said there, Mingo, than it does to actually play the game. That's just a moment. All of the work to get the sheep to that pasture that's green, that's ready for that sheep, is a lot of work.

Erik Thoennes: [05:38](#) I wonder how many young people grow up in a great youth group where there's a playfulness in the midst of a seriousness in all they see is that final product. They go into youth ministry and they're bitterly disappointed.

Mingo Palacios: [05:53](#) Because they have to work.

Erik Thoennes: [05:54](#) Because they have to show up four hours early and do all the work.

New Speaker: [05:58](#) [laughing]

Erik Thoennes: [05:58](#) Fill out all the paperwork to make sure it's legal, meet with a kid after the game who lost his temper and it's not just the upfront, "I'm the cool guy" it's a whole lot of work.

New Speaker: [06:11](#) [crosstalk] [laughing]

Mingo Palacios: [06:14](#) Jay's eyeballing me from across the table right now because there is a misconception that if you've got an extroverted personality that you can put a microphone

in my hand, I can say a few things to get a crowd going and you have no idea the pre investment and the post investment when all the kids are done screaming your name, you've got a lot of work to do to prep for the next day or the next round. So-

Jay Johnson: [06:40](#)

Mingo, I've seen you tired and exhausted.

New Speaker: [06:43](#)

[laughing] [crosstalk]

Jay Johnson: [06:43](#)

And you look at me and go, "Do I still have to go out there and do that?" And I go, "Yep, go on out there."

Mingo Palacios: [06:48](#)

It's a part of the gig. It's a part of the gig. That's probably to our fault as leaders that we don't bring people along enough to show them the full scope of what it is. I love getting a few up and coming personalities, young kids, young leaders and just giving them the full survey of a day in the life. They look at a podcast, they look at like what we get to do and they go like, "Man, I would just love if I could just do your job for a week, man. It'd be amazing!" Then you get them for a day and you're like, "Hey, so call time is actually six in the morning. Right? Because that's when we cleaned the air stream. That's what we get everything tethered. We got to be at that event by 10. That means you got to be there two hours to set everything up." And I've had enough not second timers because they think everything is caught in the moment that shows up on instagram.

Erik Thoennes: [07:42](#)

I think so much of our idea of ministry is driven by narcissistic conceptions and self absorbed ideas of

what I'm going to do, I'm going to be this significant person.

Mingo Palacios: [07:55](#)

[laughing] Erik, shepherd me right now!

New Speaker: [08:00](#)

[laughing] [crosstalk]

Erik Thoennes: [08:02](#)

It's great we're here at Hume. We're sitting here at Hume. One of my absolute most influential stories of my life I've ever heard is how this camp got started by a guy named Walter Warkentin and Francis, his wife, because he was a farmer and he and a bunch of other guys got together praying for revival in the central valley and they said, "You know, there are a few things we should pray for that God will use like a radio station and a Christian Bookstore and a Christian publishing company." And one of those things they came up with was a Christian camp and they said, "Well, how are we going to do this?" And they wrote them down where each of these ministries down, put them in a Bible and then picked one out and took responsibility for it. And Walter Warkentin, picked out Christian camp. Didn't know anything about it. It wasn't his passion, it wasn't what he had envisioned himself doing. It wasn't driven by Walt working teens, personal mission statement. It was something they thought God would really use to bring your revival. Somebody needed to do it. So this farmer did it because that's what they thought would advance the kingdom. It was not this narcissistic 'me and my ministry' stuff.

Mingo Palacios: [09:18](#) So good.

Erik Thoennes: [09:18](#) It was wanting to see God work and willing to invest in whatever they thought would help bring that about it. It wasn't, "Oh, this is my gifts assessment survey results or my personality inventory," or-

Mingo Palacios: [09:30](#) Murder! You're murdering it right now!

New Speaker: [09:30](#) [laughing]

Erik Thoennes: [09:35](#) This is, "We think God will use this. So who's going to do it?" The farmer does it because he picked it out of the bible. I love it's so different than we tend to think. That's why I love guys like Mike Rowe who talk about the dumbest advice he ever heard was "follow your passions" because-

Mingo Palacios: [09:51](#) Yes. I love that segment.

Erik Thoennes: [09:52](#) Yes, you've got to follow the needs you see and sometimes that can become a passion, but it's not the thing that's your passion, it's being helpful, it's being useful, it's meeting needs for the glory of God and it can become a passion because you see the importance of it.

Jay Johnson: [10:10](#) Yes and you fall in love with it.

New Speaker: [10:11](#) [crosstalk]

Jay Johnson: [10:15](#) Passion isn't a prerequisite or isn't in a job description. Show me the job description that has passion written on it.

New Speaker: [10:25](#) [laughing]

Jay Johnson: [10:25](#) Now we all love that and we all want that, but that is such like this, for lack of better word, a lie.

Mingo Palacios: [10:34](#) It's cotton candy.

Jay Johnson: [10:35](#) It's cotton candy, but like to get down to work to see the fruit of the labor-

Mingo Palacios: [10:42](#) That's good.

Jay Johnson: [10:42](#) And to see at the end of the day something that you've poured your heart and your soul and your blood, your sweat and tears into, you can just go, "Man, what a blessing to see the fruit of that."

Mingo Palacios: [10:56](#) That's good.

Jay Johnson: [10:58](#) That's what causes that love and that passion for it. It's beautiful. It's like the most beautiful story ever in my mind.

Erik Thoennes: [11:05](#) And that's another thing I love about Hume because I think this place does a great job of helping that guy who cleans bathrooms or that woman who makes beds or makes 2000 pancakes in the morning, catch a vision for this. Who says my passion is to clean toilets? But if you can connect that to enabling this whole thing to happen where the kingdom is advancing because of it, now cleaning a toilet can become a passion.

Jay Johnson: [11:33](#) Chuck is a great example of that. He's not with us right now, but he would literally, I would watch him walk from bathroom to bathroom in Meadow Ranch with his bucket and his cleaner and his gloves and all that stuff. He's-

Mingo Palacios: [11:45](#) The super purple? The super purple, whatever that cleanser is?

Jay Johnson: [11:45](#) He's done, ministry, he's done all that stuff, he comes up to Hume and you look at as ministry now and the fact that he's helping program a pastors retreat and he's been a speaker here and he's got multiple expressions at his church-

Mingo Palacios: [12:03](#) [laughing]

Jay Johnson: [12:03](#) And all these different things like that. The perfect example.

Erik Thoennes: [12:09](#) And then you compare that to how the mentality can become where you get invited to speak at a conference and you realize one of the speakers has a nicer hotel room and it ticks you off. What in the world?

Mingo Palacios: [12:20](#) I love it. This is such as like soul chip like this. You have to pay attention to all the things that are being said here.

Jay Johnson: [12:27](#) I read a great book on this whole thing and it was amazing. It talked about all these different concepts and so it's crazy that we're on that.

Mingo Palacios: [12:33](#) Was it the Bible?

New Speaker: [12:37](#) [laughing]

Jay Johnson: [12:39](#) No, unfortunately, it wasn't.

Erik Thoennes: [12:41](#) Well, it was. You read that too.

Jay Johnson: [12:43](#) Well, I read that too. Absolutely, I did.

Mingo Palacios: [12:45](#) Just for the record, my first job at Hume was a floater cleaning bathrooms.

Erik Thoennes: [12:49](#) There you go. Boom.

Mingo Palacios: [12:51](#) And it was a total paradigm shift because it got you off your high horse. It got you to stop thinking about yourself and what you can uniquely add to the tribe in order for the tribe to look better and you went, "Well, if that's the need." I was a little bitter at the age of 18, but man, looking down the line, it was that shallow versus long perspective. You went like, "This is actually, somebody is going to accept Jesus tonight and I'm a part of that picture."

Erik Thoennes: [13:19](#) Yeah. I love the people in our church who work in the nursery because they have a vision for clearing the plate of these parents who are at the end of their ropes and they need to sit and worship. And They don't just say, "I'm loving this baby right now" and they'll pray for that baby. Somebody in our nursery will pray for a baby she holds and then she attaches a note telling them mom and dad what she prayed for during that service. Sometimes it's this little girl's

husband somewhere. So to catch a vision for these big things that can be happened, changing diapers. I love my students and they have big lofty goals which I love, but they want to change the world. I heard a preacher say one time, "You want to change the world. You've never even changed a diaper. Why don't you start there?"

- Mingo Palacios: [14:06](#) [laughing]
- Erik Thoennes: [14:06](#) And I think we need to encourage people in that way. "I want to go rescue kids from sex trafficking." Well, go work in your nursery and change diapers. Step one and that won't look as good on instagram but God's pleased with it and it really ministers to people right where you are now for two weeks of your summer.
- Mingo Palacios: [14:21](#) So good.
- Jay Johnson: [14:23](#) It's really taking that first step, the first step and the name of the book was So Good, They Can't Ignore You.
- Mingo Palacios: [14:30](#) Oh, is that the name of the book?
- Jay Johnson: [14:31](#) Yeah, that's the name.
- Mingo Palacios: [14:31](#) That's so good, They Can't Ignore You.
- Jay Johnson: [14:33](#) And it's a Steve Martin concept that he had developed and this author, I forget his name.
- Erik Thoennes: [14:39](#) Not the comedian?

- Jay Johnson: [14:39](#) Yeah, the comedian. He was going to become so good. When he was becoming a comedian, he would work at it and it took so much work to become the best comedian that he could possibly be and nobody sees that. They just see him-
- Mingo Palacios: [14:57](#) Right, in the funny.
- Jay Johnson: [14:57](#) That's the funny guy and as a success. But that was what he had to learn and the author used that as the title. And he went through a bunch of different concepts what it takes to get there, but I read the book and I'm like, "Yeah, that's what it took to get me to where I am now" and in all these things that have these students that look at us and go, "Man, I want to be you" or, "I want to be that when I grow up" but you have to take the first step and you have to build that career capital and be so good at something that people go, "Man, I've got to have him on my team. I've got to do that."
- Erik Thoennes: [15:29](#) And you know, Mingo, you're part of this high profile ministry now doing stuff that everybody would say is important and influential, but if any one of us ever gets to the point where we feel above cleaning that toilet, if that's what needs to be done, we really need to check our hearts.
- Mingo Palacios: [15:45](#) That's good.
- Erik Thoennes: [15:45](#) Because Jesus had nothing in appearance or to attract us to him. He wasn't voted most likely to succeed at Nazareth High.

Mingo Palacios: [15:53](#) Yes!

Erik Thoennes: [15:56](#) His hometown folks were offended at his messiahship because he was so normal.

Mingo Palacios: [16:02](#) I receive that. As we wrap up two thoughts, maybe three thoughts for the listener that vacant takeaway and go, "You know what? I'm owning this. I'm going to believe this. I'm going to live this." What would it be?

Jay Johnson: [16:19](#) You just got to go play, you've got to stop or, if you're a team leader, make them laugh, you know? And sometimes like for me, I'm not a very big guy, so you know, we had these huge 6'3", 6'4" guys that I'm sitting around at a table with and just to go jump on them, made them laugh, made me laugh.

Mingo Palacios: [16:40](#) You became a backpack is what you did.

New Speaker: [16:43](#) [laughing]

Jay Johnson: [16:43](#) I was a ragdoll is what I was in the hands of these guys but it made them laugh and it broke the tension. They would literally say, "Something changed in Jay. When Jay changed" and they would refer back to it and they talked about it and I kind of heard about it. "What are you guys talking about?" But that affected everything that affected my personal life. That affected my profession and my career. Even at Hume Lake, there's so many times when as a task oriented person and I get so focused on what I'm doing that I forget to laugh and play. And the camp is fun. Good

camp is fun. We have to remind ourselves that even here at Hume Lake, the camp is fun.

Mingo Palacios: [17:33](#)

Ministry is fun.

Jay Johnson: [17:33](#)

Ministry is fun. It's for the kids, if you're in youth ministry or whatever it is.

Mingo Palacios: [17:38](#)

Yeah, that's good. Erik?

Erik Thoennes: [17:41](#)

Whatever your hand finds to do, do with all your might for the glory of God. Whatever your hand finds to do. Objectively, the worst job in the world can be a great job if you go at it with a joyful desire to glorify God and bless people in the context of it. And circumstantially, the best job in the world can be a nightmare if it's an idol. So, when our motives are God glorifying, when we're spirit enabled, when we seek to be a blessing to those we're working alongside, anything can be a joy.

Mingo Palacios: [18:14](#)

Guys, I love the word rhythm was true even in this episode because we started to talk about recreation and we got to work and then we talked about recreation and rest and we talked about seeing it and valuing it and then toiling with it and putting your arms into the work you know that the Lord puts in front of you is certainly unbeknownst to us, I think, with our eyes on Jesus, with the right people around you, balance can be found. I think that would be fair to say. It can be found. He, it's not going to come automatically. I think that was the question or the statement earlier that you've got to be able to intend to live a life that God calls us to, which includes rest,

which includes Sabbath, which includes shooting a little bit of soapy water at your kids and your wife when it's time to do dishes. So I appreciate that perspective.

- Jay Johnson: [19:05](#) Or a lot.
- New Speaker: [19:05](#) [crosstalk] [laughing]
- Mingo Palacios: [19:09](#) Depends on how good the faucet is. Help me because my mind is like running blank, but in psalms when he asked, "Lord, calm, give me rest. Give me a calmness of heart." It's written in the middle of chaos. Do you know what psalm I'm talking about?
- Erik Thoennes: [19:32](#) Be still and know I am God. That one?
- Mingo Palacios: [19:32](#) Yes! Thank you. The most on every women's retreat plaque given out. "Be still and know that I am God."
- Erik Thoennes: [19:42](#) It's not only chaos, it's world war and it's God's saying, "shut up" to the warring armies of the world. It's not a babbling brook, it's a burned out tank you should think of because God, the warrior, has finally spoken and said, "That's it. I'm done with war." And he brings it all to an end. Now that will lead to settledness of soul that would enable me to have a life like it's a babbling brook.
- Mingo Palacios: [20:03](#) But don't you always see it with a few daisies on a like carved out piece of wood? But it's in the sense of heightened tension and stress, the fact that there can

be rest found even in that extreme tells you that God is able.

Erik Thoennes: [20:20](#) Amen.

Mingo Palacios: [20:20](#) So you can't sit and say, "Ah, I'm just in a place where it's not possible."

Erik Thoennes: [20:24](#) No matter where.

Jay Johnson: [20:25](#) And the time when you need it the most. Time that you need it the most.

Erik Thoennes: [20:28](#) When you think of Paul sitting in prison in Philip singing praises to God with an obvious settledness of sou. If we let our circumstances dictate our attitude, our affections, our confidence in God, we're going down a horrible path.

Mingo Palacios: [20:48](#) It's too good. It's like you don't want the episode to end but it has to.

New Speaker: [20:54](#) [laughing]

Mingo Palacios: [20:54](#) If you're listening to this at work, I hope it gives you rest. Thank you so much for listening to the podcast, guys. We know time is something you don't get back, and so I prayed this was an investment. It wasn't time wasted and for the pastors on this side of the microphone, we want you to know that we love you. Your ministry matters. The Lord is doing big things in your world and as you continue to submit yourself to Him, my belief is that you're going to see His will

unfold in front of your very eyes. We love you guys.
We'll talk to you guys soon.

Mingo Palacios: [21:28](#)

We hope today's insights left you feeling inspired and propelled towards your greatest potential. Thanks again for joining us for another episode of the PD Podcast. Until next time.

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