

MISSIO *Dei*

Missio Dei

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Preface

I am excited that you are joining us for a church-wide series that we have called *Missio Dei*, a Latin term for “the sending of God” or “the mission of God.” At CVC we sometimes say we want to “go to heaven and take as many people with us as we can.” We also say that we want “to do good deeds to create good will so we can share the good news.” But for most of us, our talk is better than our walk when it comes to serving people and reaping a harvest.

Reason for alarm

Recently, one of our church planters, Andy Sikora of Renew Communities, shared some alarming statistics. 70% of Americans have no meaningful church connection. 94% of churches are plateaued or declining. Protestant denominations lost 9.5% or 4.5 million people in one year while population grew 11.4% or over 24 million. There are approximately 3,200 churches that close each year and only 3,600 new ones that are started each year. We are losing ground in America.

Then Andy said something even more alarming. He quoted a missional church leader, Alan Hirsch. On average, 40% of the people in our community are receptive to church as they know it, while 60% of the people in our community are opposed to church as they know it. These people are never going to attend our church because they have no good thoughts about it. Unless something changes, this 60% will probably never encounter the gospel and likely never be saved. That really bothers me. I hope it bothers you.

Missional living

The fix isn't for us to do church better. We must be the church better. We must learn to carry the gospel out into the community where life-on-life happens. As Andy says, “We need to spend more time out there with the 60% than in here—in church. We have to believe there's more to life than going to church.” We must learn to emphasize how we're constantly sent as missionaries to hurting, lonely, and needy people. In short, we need *Missio Dei*. We need to learn to live missional lives.

Brokenness

All around us, we see the effects of the fall. Broken lives. Addictive behaviors. Wrecked marriages. Abusive relationships. Oppression. Injustice. Job uncertainty. Foreclosures.

It's into this broken world that Jesus comes. God is on a mission to renew all things. He is working through His people to bring transformation into a fallen world. And He is seeking a people who will join Him in healing the brokenness in our lives, in our communities, and around the world.

Following Jesus

But for Jesus to heal the brokenness through us, we will have to readjust our lives around the life, mission, and teaching of Jesus. Too often, God's people withdraw from the culture and hang out in holy huddles without ever truly engaging the brokenness in our world.

What if we began to truly show God's love through our everyday lives to a world we know God loves? What if we really had a dynamic vision for serving the broken people around us? What if we joined together with other Christ-followers in community and learned to develop new ways of life that helped us join God in His mission? What if we really served and loved in a way that we actually begin to see Jesus transform lives, families, and communities?

Missio Dei is a verse-by-verse study through Luke 9:57-10:42. It is designed to prepare your heart and activate your life to join God on His mission. We'll start on a path of building life-long practices that will help us focus on being joyful servants as we participate in the mission of God.

Using the Missio Dei devotional and Community Group guide

The Missio Dei book contains 8 weeks of daily devotionals and Community Group discussion guides.

Each week has a devotional reading for 5 of the 7 days of the week. Why not 7 for 7? The 5 for 7 approach gives you a little cushion in case you miss a day or two. Catching up if you get behind won't seem so overwhelming.

Each daily devotional consists of a title, a scripture reading for the day, a short devotional thought based on the passage, a few questions for reflection and application, and a short prayer.

The scripture readings are purposefully short. This will allow you to continue with other Bible reading plans you may be currently following. In fact, we encourage you to read large portions of scripture on a daily basis.

The devotional thoughts are simply designed to promote missional living. They are not, of course, meant to be exhaustive in explaining the texts. For additional insights, you may want to use resources from study Bibles or commentaries.

The questions for reflection and application are designed for 2 purposes. First, they can be used for personal reflection as you use your devotional each day. You might want to jot down a few notes in the space provided or use your own journal to respond in a more extensive way. Second, the questions can be used by your Community Group leader as he or she encourages application.

The prayers have been written as guides to prompt your own praying. Read through the prayer for each day. Then, use the phrases and sentences in the printed prayer as a guide to form your own prayer in your own words.

The daily devotionals may also be used for family devotions. You might encourage each family member to do the devotion individually. When you gather as a family, someone could read the

text. Another person might read the devotional. Each family member could share answers to the questions. Finally, another person might read the prayer and then pray in his or her own words.

The book also contains a section called “Missional Opportunitites.” It is a listing of Christ-centered and secular organizations in Northeast Ohio that you might want to consider.

Keep in mind that the Missio Dei series is a study through passages in Luke 9-10. The weekend messages will go verse-by-verse, paragraph-by-paragraph through this section of scripture. The Week 1-8, Day 1 devotionals will deal with the Luke passage that will have been taught the previous weekend at CVC. The following devotionals for each week come from cross references that shed further light on the Luke passages. The Week 1-8, Days 2-5 devotionals are designed to help you further reflect on and apply the Luke 9-10 texts.

The Story

In the back of the devotional guide is a booklet called “The Story.” As you live your life on mission as a sent one who loves the last, the least, and the lost in practical ways, you will, no doubt, find yourself with opportunities to share the gospel, the good news. “The Story” is a practical tool for you to use to share with others how they can come into a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior. Please make every effort to learn how to share “The Story” so you can be equipped to share the gospel clearly when God gives you the opportunity.

No regrets

I have never met a person who said, “I regret following Jesus.” And I have never met a person who said, “I regret following Jesus more fully.” Instead, people say that their greatest source of joy has been found in following Christ.

This study has been designed to help you follow Jesus more fully as He seeks to accomplish His mission in this world. He chose you from the very foundation of the world to join Him. It’s a joyous adventure. It’s truly an abundant life when we actually engage people who are far from God in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to share the gospel.

Rick Duncan
North Royalton, Ohio
July, 2011

Acknowledgements

On my first mission trip to Ghana, West Africa, I learned an African proverb, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Truly, Missio Dei has been a “together” project. Thanks are due to many people.

Thanks first goes to God. This series was a topic I believe God placed on my heart in the fall of 2010. I felt the Lord leading us to stress personal and corporate evangelism as an emphasis for CVC in 2011. When it comes to loving the world, it seems that we are better at either giving or going to the uttermost parts of the earth than to our own Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (Acts 1:8). So, God prompted this series as a way to move us to be missionaries to those who are closest to us.

Then, early in 2011, Chad Allen, CVC’s Co-teaching Pastor, and I took a retreat day together at the Jesuit Retreat House to plan the preaching for the rest of the year. That’s when we landed on Luke 9-10 as the primary texts to exegete for Missio Dei. I am so grateful for Chad’s wisdom and insight as we planned this series.

Thanks to the elders and staff of CVC for writing the daily devotionals. I so much appreciate their passion for the mission of Christ and their insight into the scriptures. You can find a list of the devotional writers on page 83. Amber Holmes and Eddie Elliston served diligently to help edit the daily devotionals.

Thanks to Gary Nave for writing the Community Group study guides. Gary’s delight in discipling believers through groups shines. Amber Holmes worked to make sure the missional activity assignments for the Community Groups were consistent with the scripture assigned to that week and appropriate for families as well as for singles.

Amber, Gary, Chad Allen, and Dean Siley served with me on the Missio Dei Team. Their assistance in thinking through all aspects of the project (with timelines!) has been invaluable.

Staying on task has been much easier because of the gracious leadership and support provided by Jane Rutti, CVC’s Pastoral Assistant, and Elena Golsch, Assistant to Pastor Rick Duncan.

The creative artwork and design for the project was also a team effort. Amber (again!) and Bryan Karas collaborated beautifully to make the book attractive as well as functional. Paula Zorc from Zorc Photo and Design provided layout and technical assistance. Jeff Ziolkowski and Tom Sawyer contributed to the creation of the cover concept. Laryssa Ziolkowski helped us greatly as proof-reader extraordinaire. Thanks to Keith Jaworski and North Coast Litho for printing the book. Keith has been a good friend of CVC for many years.

A special thanks goes to the family members of all our staff and leaders at CVC. Truly we couldn't do what we do without your help, your prayers, your encouragement, and your support.

Finally, thanks to all the members and attenders of CVC. Your generosity makes it possible for your staff to serve. We don't take that for granted. Your desire to grow as passionate followers of Christ inspires your staff day after day. It is truly a privilege to serve Jesus with you.

Rick Duncan

57— AS THEY WERE GOING ALONG THE ROAD, SOMEONE SAID TO HIM, "I WILL FOLLOW YOU WHEREVER YOU GO." — 58 AND JESUS SAID TO HIM, "FOXES HAVE HOLES,

AND BIRDS OF THE AIR HAVE NESTS, BUT THE SON OF MAN HAS NOWHERE TO LAY HIS HEAD."

59— TO ANOTHER HE SAID, "FOLLOW ME." BUT HE SAID, "LORD, LET ME FIRST GO AND BURY MY FATHER." 60— AND JESUS SAID TO HIM, "LEAVE THE DEAD TO BURY

THEIR OWN DEAD. BUT AS FOR YOU, GO AND PROCLAIM THE

KINGDOM OF GOD. 61— YET ANOTHER SAID, "I WILL FOLLOW YOU, LORD, BUT LET ME FIRST SAY FAREWELL TO THOSE AT MY HOME." 62 JESUS SAID TO HIM, "NO

ONE WHO PUTS HIS HAND TO THE PLOW AND LOOKS BACK IS FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

LUKE 9

RADICAL FOLLOWERS

Luke 9:57-62

In these verses, we see scenarios of three people who talk of following Jesus. In each case, Jesus sets the bar higher. Jesus seems to be seeking to talk them out of following Him. “Follow Me even if it means becoming homeless, even if it means missing out on a family funeral, and even if it means not saying “Goodbye” to the people you love the most.” That is radical, not tame.

WEEK 1
DAY 1

Too often, we are tempted to give Jesus superficial devotion. As David Platt in *Radical* says, “(We) take the Jesus of the Bible and begin twisting Him into a version of Jesus that we are more comfortable with. A nice, middle class, American Jesus. . . A Jesus who wants us to be balanced, who wants us to avoid dangerous extremes. . . A Jesus who is fine with a devotion from us that does not infringe on our comforts. . .”

The Jesus of the Bible, though, is worthy of supreme devotion. Jesus looks for followers who will not settle for casual, comfortable, complacent Christianity. Jesus looks for radical followers who forsake worldly priorities so their lives count for the good of others and for the glory of God. That radical commitment calls for loving one’s neighbors enough to influence them into a willing radical submission to Jesus as well. A radical follower of Jesus will personally take on God’s mission of seeking and saving the lost.

- *What about Jesus makes Him worthy of your supreme devotion?*
- *Given Jesus’ replies to the three would-be followers, what do you suppose their conflicting loyalties were?*
- *What competing loyalty is keeping you from being a truly radical follower of Jesus and what would repenting of that competing loyalty look like for you?*
- *What is keeping you from a radical commitment to engage in the mission of God?*



Jesus, You are worthy of my supreme devotion. For too long I have pursued the fleeting things of this world. Give me the grace to follow You however and wherever You lead. I want the world to see in me what You can do in, through, with, and for someone who is determined to be a radical, passionate follower of Christ. Lead me to be a radical witness for You wherever I go.

DEATH TO SELF

The young mom was face to face with her infant son. For weeks now he attempted to move from his baby babbling to an actual word. She could tell this was the moment. He was trying so hard to form a word and he was starting with the “M” sound. Was he trying to say “Mama”? She tried to help him, “Ma-ma... you can say it baby boy... ma-ma!” He pressed his lips together and out it came... “mu... mu...ma... mine!”

WEEK 1
DAY 2

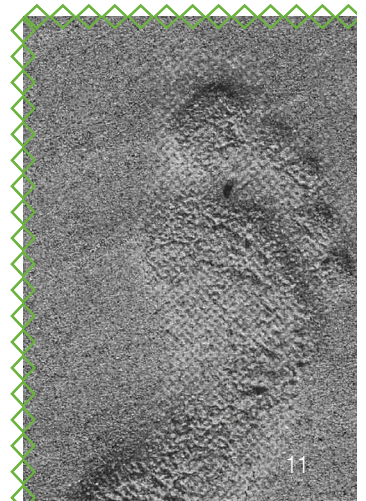
It seems from our infancy the number one person we live to please is self. It is natural that we use all our relationships, pursuits and experiences to feed our own sense of worth and importance. That is why it makes perfect sense that Jesus tackles the need to deny ourselves and to sacrifice our own wants and desires to follow Him faithfully.

The theme through Luke 9:23-27 is to die to self in order to follow Christ. Following Christ means laying down our own desires and living a life of daily self-sacrifice (v. 23). Following Christ means not clinging to our life and what we want out of it, but to live for what Christ wants (v. 24). Even if we were successful in achieving worldly success and giving self all that it desired, but did so at the expense of losing our very own soul, how foolish would that be? (v. 25).

When we deny ourselves and follow Him, it means that we won’t be ashamed of Jesus and His words (v. 26). Following Jesus means joining Jesus in His mission. Denying ourselves means that we will actively engage in what Christ came to do.

- *As you reflect back on your decision to follow Christ, in what ways have you denied yourself and what sacrifices have you made to be faithful to Jesus over your own desires? List any specific examples that come to mind.*
- *In what ways have you failed to deny yourself in order to follow Jesus and join Him on His mission?*
- *Is there anyone or anything in your life that you are still clinging to that prevents you from following Christ as wholeheartedly as He has challenged us?*

Jesus, You are truly worth following. You are perfect in all Your ways. Thank you, Father, for helping us sacrifice personal ambitions, possessions, relationship and the things that would detract us from living for Jesus instead of ourselves. Help us examine our lives for whatever remains in our grasp that prevents us from living a life of selfless devotion to Jesus. Give me the grace to say “No” to myself and “Yes” to You.



STRONG TOWERS

Luke 14:25-33

At times, we enthusiastically pursue a passion and do not count the cost. Life closes in. Schedules book up. Money is spent elsewhere. Well-intended commitments are pushed to the back burner. It's going to be difficult. The decisions we make in life don't come without physical, financial, or relational difficulties.

WEEK 1
DAY 3

Consider the tower mentioned in verse twenty-eight. A tower makes a major statement to any landscape. It sends messages of security and watchfulness. A partially constructed tower says much more—out of resources, thieves welcome, or abandoned property. People who quietly disregard the cost of discipleship say more than they know.

Let's not forget, there is an adventure to the cost of discipleship. Do not be overwhelmed by the high demands of following Christ, but encouraged that we are not left alone to fulfill them. God desires to extend our schedules, money, and relationships to His glory. Many missional people seem unaware of the sacrifices they have made throughout the years. Series of decisions culminate into a life of missional moxie, missional nerve.

"Our service does not have to be an amazing venture that the grateful locals are still going to be talking about decades later. But as we go with a servant's heart, the Lord will bring people and opportunities across our paths in order to train and direct us... This will then build momentum, bear fruit, and genuinely begin to change that mission context in tangible ways." (Mike Breen & Alex Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities: A Field Guide*)

Sit down and count the cost, bear your cross, and truly consider the weight of discipleship. Jesus and His mission must be more important than any relationship (v. 26), than any agenda (v. 27), and than any possession (v. 33).

- *What are my unfinished towers?*
- *How have I disregarded the cost of discipleship?*
- *How can I honor God more with my schedule, finances, and relationships?*

Lord, You are faithful despite my failings. Open my eyes to the unfinished towers in my life. Grant me a teachable spirit and willingness to embrace the adventure of discipleship. Stir within me a desire to be a part of where You are already at work so that I can glorify you with my whole life. Amen.



FISHERS OF MEN

Jesus called the fishermen (Peter and his brother Andrew, James and his brother John) to leave their profession behind and to immediately begin following Him. He would take them from fishing for fish and make them fishers of men. The calling carried with it a cost, for it involved not only leaving their profession, but also their family responsibilities.

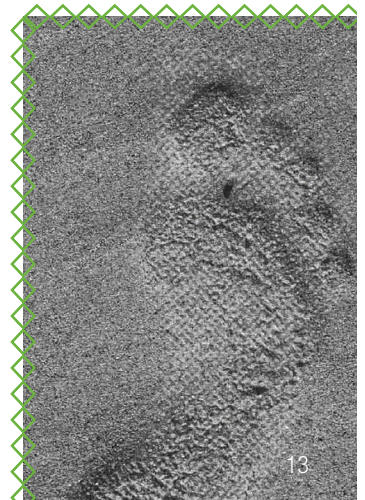
WEEK 1
DAY 4

The imagery of these men fishing with “nets” is significant in that Jesus was not calling them to fish like a person fishing with a line and pole, just to catch a single fish. Rather, Jesus was calling them to cast nets widely and to gather many to Him, so many could hear the Good News and be saved. Also, the imagery of sitting on the shore under a tree and lazily “hooking” a fish is quite different from the imagery of these men casting nets. Fishing with nets can involve long hours of dedicated and strenuous work, often with mixed results.

Jesus may not call all of us to leave our professions and families, but He does call all of us to spread the Good News within our “nets of influence”. Our sphere of influence may be with family, friends, at the workplace, at school, or a place we shop. He may also call us to cast our net of influence into areas outside our comfort zone which makes us rely more on Jesus and less on our own abilities. Jesus is still calling us today and inviting us to join Him in His missionary work. It’s a radical call for dedicated and strenuous effort to catch men, women, youth, and children for Jesus.

- *How are you being intentional in seeking to use your “nets of influence” as a missionary to spread the Good News?*
- *How will you become more dedicated and strenuous in your efforts to catch fish for Jesus?*
- *How has the Lord Jesus been calling you lately? Has He put someone on your heart to fish for? Who is it? Have you responded?*

Jesus, I praise You for calling me to fish for You. Forgive me for failing to impact my sphere of influence for You. Help me to use my gifts to draw those within my net of influence to You. Help me to step out of my comfort zone so that I might be an effective fisher of men.



NEVER DISQUALIFIED

John 21:15-23

Hopefully, growing up you had fantastic parents and an amazing family. Like most children and nearly all teenagers maybe you disappointed them at times—times when you let the family down. However, you were likely never disqualified from being a part of the family. You were always accepted and the invitation to participate in the life of the family was never removed.

WEEK 1
DAY 5

It is the same with our Father in Heaven. Imagine the shame that Peter must have felt after his denial of Christ in John 18. Now here in chapter 21, we see Peter restored in his relationship with Jesus.

However, he is not only restored to relationship. More importantly, he is restored to **mission**. Jesus, in His commissioning Peter to feed His sheep reminds the disciple that not only has his sin not disqualified him from God's love it has also not removed Peter's calling. "You are still invited to live the life I have for you, Peter. Live on mission. Follow Me."

Christ calls us to live out the adventure of laying down our lives passionately for the sake of His Kingdom. Our mistakes, our shame, our sin—nothing can separate us from God's love—and nothing can separate us from God's invitation to live with passion and joy the life we were created to live.

- *Remember a time you have felt justifiably ashamed over your own actions. What emotions or thoughts were primarily taking place for you?*
- *Dream of what specific purposes God may have for your life. In what ways have you allowed shame or fear to rob you from that experience?*
- *In what ways is God reminding you that you are, in Christ, still being forgiven, qualified and eternally invited to follow Jesus and live on mission for Him?*



God, I praise You for both your perfect forgiveness and Your ongoing invitation for me to live as a part of Your family. Forgive me for believing the lies of my guilt and my shame. Forgive me for allowing the enemy to ensnare me in traps that keep me from living to advance Your Kingdom. Set me free and remind me that I am welcome to share Your story of redemption. I am seeking to follow You with my life, my time, my passion, my energy, my dreams. Use me as Your missionary to a world in great need.

THE SETUP

Think of a time when you or someone you know was obviously making excuses for not doing something they said they wanted to do. How did it make you feel?

As you reflect on the worship services this past weekend, what impacted you the most (for example, a song, a testimony, a message point, an illustration, a visual, a challenge, etc)?

Luke 9:57-62

DIGGING DEEPER

- What was the main motivation behind each of the three excuses? Which of the three excuses for not following Jesus makes the most sense? The least?
- How did Jesus' blunt answers deal with each of the heart issues or conflicting loyalties behind their excuses? What was He asking them to do?
- What are some comforts that keep us from following Christ in a radical way? What kinds of distractions today keep us from being fully devoted followers of Christ?
- Paul, the apostle, gave up several things to follow Christ. Read Phil. 3:1-10. What kinds of things did He give up? What motivated Him to make these sacrifices? What kind of things might God ask us to give up today to follow Him? What would motivate us to make these kinds of sacrifices?
- What has being a follower of Jesus cost you personally? Examples might include: material things, a change of career, a change in location, or relationships with family, relatives, and friends.
- How would you react if God led you to leave where you live now and go to another city, state, or country? What thoughts would you wrestle with concerning this decision?

LIVING IT OUT

The missional challenges each week are designed to help us intentionally build relationships with friends, neighbors, co-workers, and strangers who are far from God. Let's engage in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to ultimately share the gospel. Whether you're an introvert or extrovert, let's move out of our comfort zones and normal patterns of living so that we are truly following the patterns of selfless service in the life of Jesus. Decide which of these activities you will do as a group, as families, or as an individual. As a group, you might want to make up your own missional challenge. Be sure to hold each other accountable.

- Have a cross-cultural experience—eat at an ethnic restaurant, go to a secular lecture, attend a different kind of church, participate in a festival, etc.
- Come up with a creative way to meet some of your neighbors you have not met yet.
- Strike up a conversation with someone you don't know—at the grocery store, church, coffee shop, etc. (It's not as scary as it seems.)
- If you do not know your local barista, bank teller, or waitress, start frequenting the same businesses and employees with the intention of building relationships.

WEEK 245678



SENT AHEAD, TWO BY TWO

Luke 10:1-2

2000 years later, Jesus is still visiting people. Jesus is still on mission. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is seeking to help and heal people in your world. So, today He is “about to go” to people in your circle of influence.

Jesus sends us ahead to people to whom He Himself is “about to go.” We are His advance men and women. We love and serve people. We speak good words about Christ. We prepare the way.

Remember: Jesus will do the saving if we will simply agree to serve as laborers in His harvest. Knowing this takes the pressure off.

More people are ready to be harvested than the harvesters who are delivering the Good News. We must pray for more people to be called to be laborers in their neighborhoods and marketplaces. This prayer for workers is the only specific prayer request Jesus gave His disciples.

“Being on mission means having open eyes that are looking for the hurting—the married couple living next door struggling with fertility, the frat boy who disguises his alcoholism with the statement, ‘Hey, this is what college is all about,’ the single mother who waits on you at the restaurant even though she has no idea how she and her child will eat tomorrow after her tips buy food tonight.” (Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, the Message, the Mission*)

WEEK 2
DAY 1

- *Why do you think Jesus sent His missionaries out 2 by 2? Who might be your partner?*
- *How is a person on mission like a laborer in a harvest field?*
- *Sometime today, call or visit a friend and pray together that Jesus would send forth laborers, including you, into His harvest.*

Jesus, You are the Lord of the harvest. People all around me are ripe, ready for You to change their lives. Too often I have been unwilling to go where You long to send me. And I have not prayed fervently for laborers in Your harvest. Help me pray more passionately and go more faithfully. I am Yours to use in Your harvest field.



MOTIVATED BY COMPASSION

WEEK 2
DAY 2

Imagine driving down the road, turning a corner and seeing dozens of cars pulled over with the drivers stranded. Imagine coming up on the scene and seeing many in need. Would you debate whether you have time to stop or whether someone else will do it? At that moment you may feel a tug of compassion. You may feel responsible to do something. From the messy blur you notice specific people....A young mom holding an infant, an elderly man who can barely walk, a well-dressed businessman with a lost expression looking under his hood, a teenage girl crying by her car. Motivated by compassion you would not only want to pull over and help, but you would hope numerous other drivers would take notice and pull over to join the effort as well.

This passage records a similar, but more desperate scene. As Jesus was traveling to cities and villages around the Sea of Galilee, He saw the great need of the people and was overcome by compassion. He not only "pulled over" to help, but also pointed out to His disciples the need for others to pull over and join the effort. Jesus saw a field of people ripe and ready for spiritual harvesting but lacking laborers willing to take on the task. Today's harvest field is just as ripe. People are without Christ and hurting; many of them are looking for answers and direction. The demand for workers to harvest spiritual fruit from the field of humanity is still a great need.

- *Are you helping with the harvest? Are you an answer to His prayer? Are you praying what He commanded?*
- *What did Jesus see that moved His heart so deeply?*
- *What needs do you see around you that stir a similar compassion within your spirit?*
- *Are you a "worker" who is helping bring in the harvest? Where and how are you currently serving so that you are active in bringing in spiritual fruit?*

God, I give You praise for being the Lord of the harvest. Forgive me for failing to see that people are harassed, helpless, and without a shepherd. Cleanse me from a lack of compassion. You know, O Lord, that the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. Help me to know it, too. Send laborers into the harvest here in Northeast Ohio and beyond. And yes, Lord, send me.

THE TIME IS NOW

John 4:34-38

These words of Jesus speak of the spiritual nourishment, the food, that comes from doing and accomplishing the work of the Father. We are all called to worship God through Bible reading, praying, and singing. But spiritual nourishment also comes from sharing the gospel with those who need to hear. We are called to help bring Jesus' work of salvation to completion. Our relationship with Jesus is not just to take in, but also to give out.

Yet so often we find excuses not to share about Jesus' work on the cross with our family, friends, co-workers or others that we encounter along the way. Jesus tells us not to wait, but to look around. People are waiting and ready to hear the good news.


Jesus says that the wage we receive from sharing our faith is the joy of working with Him and seeing others put their trust and hope into Jesus. We are able to see a harvest of believers gain eternal life.

The sower is the one who plants the seeds by sharing the message of salvation with others. The reaper is the one who is able to experience and see a person come to confess that Jesus is their Savior. Both the sower and the reaper can rejoice seeing a person put their faith into Jesus. Jesus labors for us and others labored in our lives so that we could come to a saving faith. Others did the work so we could receive the benefit.

Jesus noted the fields are white for harvest. Farmers know when wheat is white, it is overripe and in danger of being irretrievably lost. The harvest is ready. The time is now.

WEEK 2
DAY 3

- *Who were the sowers and reapers who labored for you in your life? How did that happen?*
- *How have you been spiritually nourished in the past by sharing the story of salvation with others?*
- *For whom have you been waiting to tell of the story of Jesus?*
- *What fields of the harvest are "white" and waiting for you?*



Lord Jesus, I praise You for laboring on the cross and in my life. Thank you for sending your workers into my life.. Forgive me for putting off until tomorrow what should be done today to reap Your harvest. May I find spiritual nourishment and joy in sharing the gospel. May I see how ready the harvest is all around me. Give me a boldness to live on mission in Your harvest field.

LABOR-INTENSIVE JOY

Labor: the word itself can give a sense of intense weariness, so much so that oftentimes the idea of labor is not naturally embraced. Yet the better part of our lives find us working at jobs, at school, and within our families and relationships. However, when we are confident our work is purposeful and the investment made will more than make up for the effort given, our perspective toward labor differs. The anticipated return for purposeful work can produce an energy, a joy, a fulfillment that makes the drudgery experienced during the task fade by comparison.

When we work as missionaries in God's harvest field, it can certainly be intense. Sowing the seeds of the gospel is hard work. And since we care about people without Christ and without hope, it is also emotional. We sow in tears.

The labor God desires from us in our lives may have to be done amidst difficult circumstances. The Bible reminds us about the vast amount of work to do in and for God's Kingdom. Our part in the labor can seem insignificant. Yet this passage assures us that people who persevere in the labor of God experience fulfillment—the joy—that only God-purposed work can give. We sow in tears and reap with joy. God's Kingdom is expanded and He receives more of the glory He demands and deserves. God's expectation **of** us toward His work is an invitation **for** us to join Him, promising a joy that only He can provide.

- *What might sowing the seeds of the gospel look like for you?*
- *What keeps you from sowing with tears—from being emotional about the plight of those without Christ and without hope?*
- *Keeping in mind the eternal ramifications, is your labor for God done with the same fervor as your earthly work that provides for your daily needs?*

*F*ather in heaven, in Your desire that none would perish You provide us circumstances and opportunities to sow the seeds of the gospel so Your work of salvation can take root in hearts. Forgive me when I have found the sowing too tiring, difficult, or bothersome to follow through. Instead, help me to understand the eternal impact of Your invitation for me to sow and to reap. Give me the strength, wisdom and perseverance to see my labor for You through to completion. Show me someone to labor for today. Fill me with the joy of reaping a harvest of souls for Your glory.

REAPING AND SOWING

Galatians 6:7-9

It is foolish to think that if you were to plant orange trees, you would harvest corn! It is ridiculous to even consider, right? Nature bears witness that what a person sows is what will be reaped. For some reason, it seems to be an obvious and ridiculous metaphor when talking about fruits or vegetables, but we forget the truth that it entails when we begin to talk about our walk as Christ-followers.

As ridiculous as it would be to think of a grape vine producing cantaloupe, it is just as absurd to think that a Christ follower would produce envy, bitterness, anger, jealousy, or the other similar outcomes (Galatians 5:19-21). If the Spirit of Christ is in you, the resulting fruit will be “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). If you discipline yourself spiritually, you will grow spiritually and experience the fruit that the Spirit freely gives. This kind of living will make us more attractive to those who don’t yet know Christ. The legacy of such a life will be seen in the influence one has in the lives of others.

One way to sow in the Spirit is to be doing good deeds (v. 9). As we live missional lives, doing practical deeds of kindness for the purpose of ultimately sharing the gospel, we can grow weary. But we must never give up. The Lord has promised us that if we keep sowing gospel seeds, we will reap a harvest of souls for Jesus.

WEEK 2
DAY 5

- *How are you tempted to sow in the flesh? How does sowing in the flesh impact your witness negatively?*
- *When and how have you grown weary in doing good, in doing practical deeds of kindness in order to share the gospel?*
- *What specific missional good deed might the Spirit be prompting you to do so that you can experience the joy of reaping?*

Dear God, You are the Author of the law of the harvest. We reap what we sow, more than we sow, and later than we sow. I confess, God, that I often sow seeds to satisfy my flesh. Thank You for Your grace that covers those sins. Please continue to root out that sin in my life so I can be more fully used by You. Help me sow seeds of practical deeds of kindness in order to win others. May I be part of reaping a harvest of souls for You.



THE SETUP

For each member of your group, have the rest of the group guess whether or not each person is an introvert or an extrovert and why. Then, ask the group member to share how he or she views himself or herself.

Ask each individual in the group to share a “living it out” story from Week 1’s missional challenges.

As you reflect on the worship services this past weekend, what impacted you the most (for example, a song, a testimony, a message point, an illustration, a visual, a challenge, etc)?

Luke 10:1-2

DIGGING DEEPER

- Why do you think Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs instead of by themselves or in larger groups?
- The Bible helps us look at life, the world, and people from God’s point of view. God sees people as lost or saved. According to Luke 10:1-2 as well as His words to the twelve in Matt. 9:35-38 and John 4:35-36, what does Jesus see when He looks at people? How can we start looking at people the same way He does?
- Jesus said there were few laborers spreading the Good News about Him. He exhorts them as they go to pray for more workers who are willing to go out and share the gospel. Note: He asked those laboring to pray, not spectators who were unwilling to go themselves. What keeps us from being laborers? Why is it easier for us to pray that God will lead others to spread the Good News?
- What struggles do you encounter with sharing your story (your testimony) and His story (the gospel) with others? What would help motivate you to do it more? Who is it easiest to share with? Who is it the most difficult to share with? Why?

LIVING IT OUT

The missional challenges each week are designed to help us intentionally build relationships with friends, neighbors, co-workers, and strangers who are far from God. Let’s engage in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to ultimately share the gospel. Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, let’s move out of our comfort zones and normal patterns of living so that we are truly following the patterns of selfless service in the life of Jesus. Decide which of these activities you will do as a group, as families, or as an individual. As a group, you might want to make up your own missional challenge. Be sure to hold each other accountable.

- Set an alarm for 10:02 every day to remind you to pray according to Luke 10:2.
- Partner up with friends to prayer walk your neighborhood, a mall, or a park. Ask God to show you the needs in your community. How might God want to use you to meet those needs?
- If one thing could be done in your neighborhood to let people know you care for them what would it be? Do that one thing this week.
- Who is hurting that God has put on your heart? Who is far from God that God has put on your heart? Pray for them every day during the Missio Dei series.

LUKE 10

3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say,

Peace be to this house!

6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. 7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. 8 Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. 9 Heal the sick in it and say to them,

The kingdom of
God has come
 near to **you**.



PERSONS OF PEACE

Luke 10:3-9

Jesus gave His followers specific instructions for their initial mission trip. While some of the specific instructions will differ for us, the same principles apply to us today.

When we join Jesus in His mission, we can count on some of the people in our circle of influence to be antagonistic. We are, after all, “lambs among wolves” (v. 3), but we must never forget that we will also find “persons of peace” (v. 6).

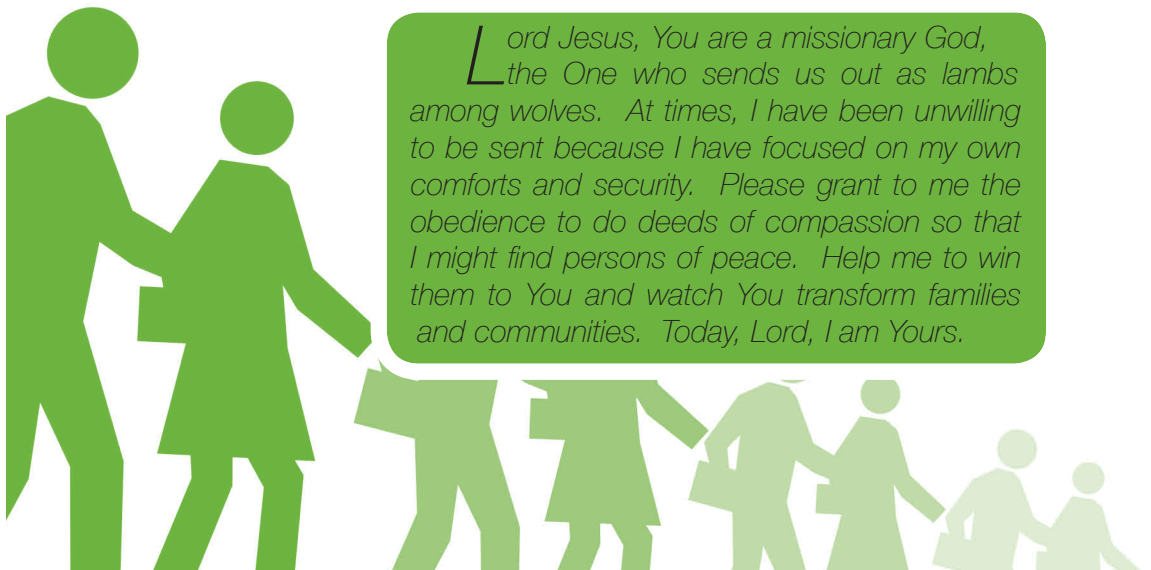
WEEK 3
DAY 1

How do we find the persons of peace? We do deeds of compassion. We care for the sick and bring the justice, mercy, and hope of the Kingdom wherever and however needed (v. 9).

A person of peace can be from any walk of life. He or she will be someone who will want to enter into authentic relationship with us. As we seek for ways to befriend and serve the person of peace, he or she will welcome us, listen to us, help us, and even, perhaps, support us in some way.

Once we find a person of peace, we can begin to focus our deeds of kindness for him or her. We act with no strings attached, of course. However our ultimate aim is to help that person enter into a personal relationship with Jesus. When the person of peace comes to faith in Christ, we may even see this person influence his or her entire family and the community for Jesus' sake.

- *How can we as “lambs in the midst of wolves” find protection when we encounter opposition?*
- *What are some signs that someone you know might be a person of peace? Write down the names of 2-3 people you know who might be persons of peace.*
- *What deeds of compassion will you do for one or two of these people?*



Lord Jesus, You are a missionary God, the One who sends us out as lambs among wolves. At times, I have been unwilling to be sent because I have focused on my own comforts and security. Please grant to me the obedience to do deeds of compassion so that I might find persons of peace. Help me to win them to You and watch You transform families and communities. Today, Lord, I am Yours.

ANNOUNCING THE MISSION

Do you remember the feeling of making that big announcement? I got the job! We are getting married! We are having a baby! I was accepted to that college! I am buying a house! Whenever we share great news, we like the element of surprise and love the congratulations from people we know and love.

Jesus was making His big announcement. It is one of the most subtle, yet significant scenes in the pages of the Bible. All eyes are fixed on Jesus. He is in the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth. The unsuspecting people see Him merely as the son of a local carpenter. They witness Him read from the beginning of Isaiah 61 about the ministry of the future Messiah. He then sits down and claims to be the fulfillment of that prophecy and in doing so communicates that He is the long awaited Savior of the world.

You could probably hear a fly buzzing on a camel outside! No standing ovation or high fives... just astonishment and eventually anger. However, it did not faze Jesus. He was on a mission to fulfill His purpose. He has a special mission to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed (v.18). And, what is exciting for us is we get to join Him on that mission!

WEEK 3
DAY 2

- *What are some things that keep the Holy Spirit from empowering you to live on mission like Jesus?*
- *When you think of serving the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed in your community or city, what specific activities come to mind?*
- *What excites you and/or terrifies you about verbally proclaiming the good news to those who haven't yet embraced Christ as Savior and Lord?*

Lord Jesus, I praise You that the Spirit of God was so obviously upon You. Your ministry of this earth clearly impacted the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. Forgive me for quenching and grieving Your Spirit and, as a result, not caring for those who are in need. May the Holy Spirit's power work in me and through me as I live on mission. Today, I purpose to join You in Your mission. Help me proclaim the good news and point others to the freedom and healing found in Christ.

HUMBLER, APPOINTED, AND SENT

Acts 26:16-18

We are often filled with pride that keeps us from seeing the harmful effects of our wrongdoing. Our pride powerfully blinds us no matter what our age, gender, career, friendships, or situation. Like Paul in Acts 26, we desperately need God to intervene and set us straight. It really is better to be humbled before we try to help others see the light.

WEEK 3
DAY 3

In the passage from Acts noted above, the biblical author is Luke. About 2,000 years ago, he was historically reporting on the Apostle Paul's trial for treason with great detail. Luke recounts Paul's courtroom drama. The most dramatic scene involves Paul's testimony of meeting Jesus face to face. Simply stated, Paul was humbled. Then he was commissioned to be a missionary. His eyes were opened and he was then appointed to tell people about having their eyes opened too through faith in Christ. Jesus alone can forgive sins and save from the power of Satan.

In spite of Paul's being humbled, he was unashamed of the calling he received. We, too, are to rise and stand. We, too, are to be servants and witnesses. We, too, are being sent by Jesus to open eyes so that people in our sphere of influence may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins (v. 18).

- *How might you need to be humbled by God? What would the bottom line evidence be that God has opened your eyes?*
- *Before meeting Christ, Paul worked hard at persecuting Christians. How has God changed the focus of your life's direction? Who will benefit from your calling?*
- *Who do you know whose eyes are currently closed and what kind act might you perform for them while asking God to open their eyes?*



Lord, I praise You because You are the One who opens the eyes of the heart. Cleanse me of my pride that keeps me from participating in Your mission in this world. Help me to see Jesus and humbly receive the message that He would speak to and through me. Burden my heart for those around me who are blind to the truth about You. By your strength, help me see others turn from darkness to light and receive forgiveness of their sins.



GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES

In the supreme authority given to Jesus by the Father, He sends us to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This command is not just an order to preach the gospel; it is a clear directive to make disciples. A disciple of Jesus is simply a follower of Jesus. We are to teach others how to follow Jesus and obey Him in everything He commanded. We all know lots of people who are not following Jesus. Our mission is to win them to Him. Telling is not enough—we must demonstrate how.

WEEK 3
DAY 4

Being baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a symbol of dying to ourselves and being made alive in Christ. Every disciple is called to lay down his/her life, take up her/his cross and follow Jesus. Following Jesus simply means following His example and living like He would. He was obedient to the Father and submissive to the Father's will, even unto death. In the same way we are called to be obedient followers of Jesus Christ.

The word “go” in Matthew 28:19 might best be translated as a participle, “as you are going.” The implication is that anywhere we go we are to see ourselves as disciple-makers. It is our constant calling. It is to be our lifestyle.

Jesus gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to go before us, counsel us, remind us and empower us to fulfill these commands. With these verses in mind we can no longer use our weaknesses as an excuse for not making disciples of Jesus. We have the presence, power and authority of God Himself to do this mission. Jesus promised—“I am with you always, to the end of the age”.

- *What difference does it make for you to know that the Lord Himself has given you the authority to make disciples?*
- *What are the excuses you most often use to keep you from making disciples of Jesus?*
- *What would you say to a person who claims that this mission of God to make disciples is optional?*

Lord, Jesus, I praise You for having all the authority in heaven and on earth. Lord, forgive me for looking at myself and my own weaknesses instead of Your power and Your promise to be with me always. I want You to use me to make more and better disciples for You! Please help me make Your commission my life's mission.

POWER TO GO FROM HERE TO THERE

Acts 1:6-8

After three years of orientation, training, seeing amazing miracles and now having the opportunity to walk and talk with Jesus, His disciples still did not understand a central theme of Jesus' teaching. They did not understand His teaching about the kingdom of God—God's rule. They continued to think of a kingdom that would overthrow the Romans and re-establish the prestige Israel enjoyed under David and Solomon.

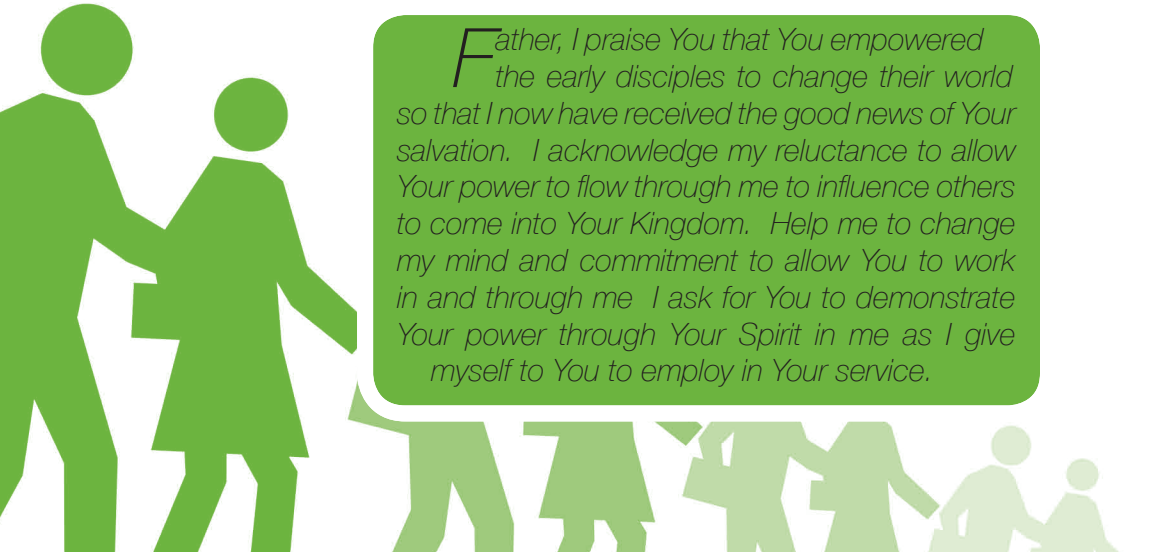
WEEK 3
DAY 5

Just before ascending, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would empower His disciples to begin as witnesses in Jerusalem outward to the end of the earth. The word, "witnesses" here comes from the word which is brought into English as "martyr." They were to testify/witness to this kingdom with power in a way that the kingdom of God would be established from Spain, across north Africa, around the northern Mediter-

ranean, and all the way to India in their generation. The influence of this band of unknown, ordinary men and women changed their world.

The empowering Spirit given to this small band is available for us as well. The Spirit's principal ministry is to testify to Jesus as the Chosen One to establish the kingdom of God. As the early disciples, we are in a similar way called to begin at home in our own Jerusalem and Judea and then to move out to change the world for Christ in our generation. If we will step out in faith, we can help Him change the world.

- *What will it take for you to access the power Jesus makes available for His missionaries?*
- *What changes need to take place in your life for you to be a witness?*
- *What is your Jerusalem? What is your Judea? What is something tangible for you to do to be a witness in your Jerusalem and in your Judea?*



*F*ather, I praise You that You empowered the early disciples to change their world so that I now have received the good news of Your salvation. I acknowledge my reluctance to allow Your power to flow through me to influence others to come into Your Kingdom. Help me to change my mind and commitment to allow You to work in and through me. I ask for You to demonstrate Your power through Your Spirit in me as I give myself to You to employ in Your service.

THE SETUP

Share about a time or place when you felt fearful. Then share about a time or place when you felt safe.

Ask each individual in the group to share a “living it out” story from Week 2’s missional challenges.

As you reflect on the worship services this past weekend, what impacted you the most (for example, a song, a testimony, a message point, an illustration, a visual, a challenge, etc)?

Luke 10:3-9

DIGGING DEEPER

- Jesus told the disciples to go as, “lambs in the midst of wolves.” That sounds very dangerous. Lambs are helpless and defenseless. Wolves are vicious and lethal. How does God provide us with what we need to go out into the world according to these verses: I Corinthians 10:4, Hebrews 4:12, II Peter 3:9, and Acts 4:29-31?
- What instructions were given and what were the disciples to do about their physical needs (food, shelter, and clothing)? Why do you think Jesus told them to do this? Why does making sure we have these basic needs met sometimes cause us to become anxious?
- How does Jesus define a person of peace (vv. 5-6)? What are some characteristics of a person of peace? Why are the disciples told to look for persons of peace?
- Verse 9 tells us that their assignment was to heal the sick and to tell them, “The kingdom of God is near you.” What is included in this message (see Luke 9:1-6)? How prepared are you to share the kingdom news with others? Explain.
- What are some positive baby steps that we can take to prepare ourselves knowing that we are defenseless lambs, to learn to trust God more, to equip us to share the Good News with others?

LIVING IT OUT

The missional challenges each week are designed to help us intentionally build relationships with friends, neighbors, co-workers, and strangers who are far from God. Let’s engage in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to ultimately share the gospel. Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, let’s move out of our comfort zones and normal patterns of living so that we are truly following the patterns of selfless service in the life of Jesus. Decide which of these activities you will do as a group, as families, or as an individual. As a group, you might want to make up your own missional challenge. Be sure to hold each other accountable.

- What is an interest or a hobby you’ve always wanted to pursue? Get started. In the process, start building relationships with some of the new people you meet.
- Strike up a conversation with a stranger—talk about family, the weather, gas prices, etc.
- Who are the people of peace in your sphere of influence? Find a way to bless 3 of them this week.
- Begin planning a party for week 5. This party/event should be a connection point for family members and friends who are in need of the gospel.



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IT'S NOT ABOUT US

Luke 10:10-16

WEEK 4
DAY 1

When we go on mission, it is our hope that everyone will respond positively to our acts of kindness and to the message of Christ. However, Jesus Himself tells us not everyone will receive us kindly. History confirms it.

Jesus mentions five Jewish communities where opportunities for repentance were presented, but where no repentance occurred. The kingdom of God came near and the King was rejected. Where no repentance occurs, people always perish (Luke 13:3) and judgment always comes. And, that fact should always break our hearts.

When people do not respond well to our acts of kindness and conversations about Jesus, it will hurt. However, we should seek not to take it personally. We must consider they are really rejecting Jesus, not us.

So, what do we do in the face of rejection? We process the hurt with Christ and in community. And then, we simply move on. We keep looking for others—for responsive, repentant people, for the man or woman of peace (Luke 10:6).

Do not miss the promise in this passage. When we do deeds of compassion, some people will want to hear us gladly (v. 16a). And when they hear us, they will actually be hearing Jesus.

- *Can you think of a time when someone rejected your efforts to love them and point them to Jesus? How did that make you feel?*
- *How did you handle being rejected? What would you do differently?*
- *Jesus said, "The one who hears you hears me" (v. 16a). If we are spokespersons for Jesus, how does that influence the ways that we relate and the things that we say?*

Truly, Lord, You are a God to be feared. You are a just Judge and we will all stand before You one day and give an account of our lives. Cleanse me for all the times when I have rejected You and have not heard You gladly. As I live my life on mission for You, I ask You to help me handle any rejection with graciousness. Help me be a loving and accurate representative of Jesus so that the ones who hear me hear Him.

SHAKE IT OFF!

WEEK 4
DAY 2

“What you are teaching will not work here.” This response was not quite what the short-term missionary to Bangalore, India was anticipating. The missionary was part of a team of 12 who were seeking to train 30 church leaders on how to start an evangelism-training ministry. This comment was from a man who over time proved to be highly critical. The missionary started to feel discouraged. The next day the missionary found himself at a park with this man and another team member discussing religion with a young Hindu college student. She seemed very intrigued as they shared the gospel and how forgiveness of her sin could only be found through a relationship with Jesus Christ. After sharing the gospel, she enthusiastically prayed to receive Christ as her Savior and said, “Thank you so much for coming all the way to India to share such good news with me!” Afterwards, the man who had been critical not only apologized for his attitude, but became one of the most positive and involved participants of the course.

As we live on mission for Christ, moments will come when we experience discouragement, opposition and even persecution. In those moments we just have to shake off the dust and keep pressing on. That action is exactly what we see in today’s reading in Acts 13. As Paul shared the good news of Christ, it had a mixed impact. Some received it and joyfully believed (v. 48), and others were agitated and stirred up opposition (v. 50). However, Paul & Barnabas shook off the dust and pressed on (v. 51), and because they persisted, the Holy Spirit filled them with joy (v. 52).



- *What experiences have you had with discouragement and opposition as you have tried to live and share your faith?*
- *In difficult moments when have you abandoned the mission out of discouragement? When have you shaken off the dust and pressed on?*
- *At what point should a person shake off the dust from his/her feet and move on?*

● *How do you see God supplying you with perseverance and joy as you live on mission for Him?*

*F*ather, thank You that the power of the gospel overrides any opposition I encounter or any discouragement that I experience. I acknowledge that I am facing some difficulties in witnessing. Give to me a will to persist and wisdom to know when to “shake the dust off” and move to witness to others. Grant me the joy of seeing others come to accept Christ as Lord through my testimony as I seek to share in His mission.

WEEK 4
DAY 3

The Apostle Paul was said to be "...occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus." Paul was following Jesus and teaching others to do the same. However, it was also clear that some people were just not ready to hear what God had to say through Paul. In this situation in Acts, the group was identified as Paul's own people (the Jews). They opposed him and reviled him.

So, Paul radically shifted his ministry directions in his efforts to connect with other people who would be more receptive. He changed from reaching out to people who were like him, to reaching for people who were repugnant to his people—the Gentiles.

Sometimes, God calls us to follow in unexpected directions. He leads us in ways that are radically different from what we would naturally think. How do we know when He wants us to keep at it with people who are not listening (like the Old Testament prophets)? Or how do we know when should we change our focus, maybe to more receptive people? We must serve both groups. We are to be radically available and bold to do what is pleasing to God no matter what.

One thing is for sure, God has a people and He wants to use us to reach them. Therefore, we must not be afraid. We must not be silent. God is with us. He will protect us. He longs to use us to reach the many in the city who are His people.

- *Why do you think God spoke to Paul's fear in this passage (v. 9)? What are the fears you face when you think about reaching people and living on mission?*
- *How can you remind yourself more and more of God's presence and protection as you purpose to live missionally for Him? What can keep you from seeing that there are many in the city who will respond to the gospel?*

Lord, I praise You for being the God who is with me and who will protect me as I live on mission for You. Cleanse me from the fears that keep me sidelined from service and that shut my mouth as a witness. Show me who the responsive people are in my sphere of influence. Give me the grace to persevere in my mission for You. It is your Word that compels me to trust you and move forward.

REWARDS AND REJECTION

WEEK 4
DAY 4

As missionaries we should be filled with a burning desire to share the good news of salvation with others. We have responded to God's call. Our desire is to bring as many as we can to receive Christ as Savior. We expect God will honor and bless our work. And He does honor and bless our work according to His promise.

The verses for today, however, also have a sobering flip side. While the verses indicate that people who welcome and respond to the messenger's message will receive the Kingdom, they also imply some will not welcome the messenger nor respond to the message.

A high school student was horrified to learn of the staggering number of abortions that take place in the U.S. each day. She decided to participate in a church-sponsored national protest called the "Day of Silence for the Unborn". Participants went to school that day wearing a white shirt and red tape over their mouths. They did not speak to anyone as a symbol of the absence of a voice for the unborn child in the "choice" to end a pregnancy. Her expectation was that everyone would see and understand. Surely God would bless everything she did that day. Some people did see and understand and offered sympathy for the cause. Many others, however, greeted her with total indifference and some with outright disdain and mockery.

So, did God not honor and bless her work? Of course, He did. Some, in fact, were changed by the message that day. And, only God knows the seeds that were planted that day that He will use to accomplish His purposes in someone who heard and rejected the message initially.

What we must remember is that even Jesus Himself was rejected—by His family, His home town, and even His closest friends (John 15:18-21). God expects His people to be prepared to tell others of the hope that is within them (1 Peter 3:15), to understand the cost of following Him (Luke 9:57-62) and faithfully move forward. He will do the rest and, in the process, great blessing comes to the messenger and those who truly hear the message.

- What are two or three things you see as an injustice that would move you to step out for your faith.
- What risks will you take today to be blessed by God as His messenger?



*F*ather in heaven, I know that You are in control of all things. Sometimes I am reluctant to do Your will because the cost seems too high for me. Lord, help me today to see that it is more costly not to follow Your will for me. Help me to know that when I follow Your plan You will find a way to use me to advance Your Kingdom and pour out Your blessing upon me.

JUST LIKE JESUS

John 12:48-50

WEEK 4
DAY 5

Rejection does not feel good. It is especially difficult when we are offering good news to others. Our initial response might be to lash out in anger and hurt, or, perhaps, we attempt to force-feed the truth. Maybe our sadness overwhelms us and causes us to avoid the future possibility of rejection by remaining tight-lipped.

We need to remember that Jesus, Himself, was rejected. Not only can we find comfort in the fact that Jesus understands what we are facing, but we can also see a clear example of His response. Jesus' mission on earth was not to judge. It was to save (v. 47). Those people who reject Jesus and the gospel will be judged one day (v. 48), but our concern should be the same as Jesus' concern... speaking exactly what God the Father has commanded us to say and speak (v. 49).

Oh, what joy it is to bring the gospel to one who does accept it! For that soul, it is eternal life (v. 50). To bring good news was Jesus' mission, and it should be ours as well. The absolute delight of bringing the good news to those whose hearts are ready and willing to hear it is the motivation that brings us to share God's word with the next person we meet, even after we have been rejected. When we keep our focus on delivering God's message to a world without hope, we can handle rejection just like Jesus.

- *When people reject the gospel, how might it help you as a missionary to remember that they are not rejecting you, but are rejecting Jesus? When have you been tempted to judge someone who rejected the gospel? How can it change your perspective to remember that God is the judge?*
- *Jesus came to save the world, and He stayed on mission by being obedient to God, His Father. What are some areas of disobedience in your life that are keeping you from living missionally? What are some new ways you can be obedient to God as you reach out to a world without hope?*

*F*ather God, You are holy and worthy to be the final and righteous Judge. Forgive me for the times when I have tried to play the role of judge. Forgive me for the times when I have disregarded Your plan and have chosen to do things my own way. Please show me exactly what to say and speak. Help me to obey You even when facing rejection. I want to be just like Jesus. Let me respond with patience and be motivated by love.

Luke 10:10-16

THE SETUP

What was going on in your life when you became receptive to Jesus and the gospel?

Ask each individual in the group to share a “living it out” story from Week 3’s missional challenges.

As you reflect on the worship services this past weekend, what impacted you the most (for example, a song, a testimony, a message point, an illustration, a visual, a challenge, etc)?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What can we learn from verses 10-11 about sharing our story and His story with receptive and unreceptive people? What should we do when people want to argue with us or openly reject the gospel? What kind of people should we pray for God to lead us to? People go through seasons of life when they may be more receptive to Jesus than at other times. Brainstorm about some times when people may be more open to Jesus and how we can reach them during those times.
- Jesus performed many miracles in Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Read Luke 4:16-21, Luke 9:10-17, Matthew 4:13). He said that other cities like wicked Sodom (Genesis 19) and Gentile cities like Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia (Read Ezek. 26:1-6; 28:20-23) would be less severely judged. Why did Jesus share this? How might this apply to people (especially in America) who have clearly heard the gospel and yet reject it?
- What does verse 16 teach us about the responses of others to the gospel? How can this help us to deal with rejection and to be more bold about talking to others about Jesus? Share a time when someone responded positively to you and a time when someone responded negatively.
- Read II Corinthians 5:17-21. What is an ambassador? Why are we ambassadors and what does God want us to do?
- Sometimes we don’t share our story and His story with others because we don’t feel prepared. How could we become better prepared?

LIVING IT OUT

The missional challenges each week are designed to help us intentionally build relationships with friends, neighbors, co-workers, and strangers who are far from God. Let’s engage in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to ultimately share the gospel. Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, let’s move out of our comfort zones and normal patterns of living so that we are truly following the patterns of selfless service in the life of Jesus. Decide which of these activities you will do as a group, as families, or as an individual. As a group, you might want to make up your own missional challenge. Be sure to hold each other accountable.

- Review the booklet called “The Story” in the back section of your Missio Dei book. Memorize the plotline: Creation, Fall, Rescue, Restoration. Learn to tell “The Story” in your own words. Practice sharing “The Story” with someone in your community group.
- Tell a friend or family member who needs the gospel that you are seeking to learn a new skill. Ask them if you could share “The Story” with them.
- Attend CVC’s October 15 “Share your faith” evangelism training event with Ken Silva, Chad Allen’s pastor for many years. Ken is now Vice President of Evangelism Explosion International.

17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" 18 And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on

LUKE 10: TWENTY

17 through

serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

SATAN FALLS

Luke 10:17-20

WEEK 5
DAY 1

Whenever we turn our heads, hearts, and hands inside out to care for the least and the lost, we find ourselves engaged in spiritual warfare. We will face demonic and Satanic opposition. The enemy will not easily give up the people held captive through poverty, abuse, lack of education, injustice, or family dysfunctions. The difficulty of the inevitable conflict must not discourage us, though. We go out on mission in Jesus' name, following His call and operating in His power. In Jesus,

people under demonic oppression will be set free. And, this deliverance is always a source of great joy (v. 17a).

When we are sent out by Jesus on mission, we will see Satan's power over people broken suddenly and decisively (vv. 17b-18). Even though we will face physical and spiritual opposition, we can have the confidence in the authority and the safety that come through Jesus (v. 19a). Nothing can harm us without first going through our loving, wise, and powerful Father's filter (v. 19b).

Victory in spiritual warfare as we are used by God on mission is truly a source of great joy. However, we should always rejoice more in what God has done for us in our salvation than through us in our ministry (v. 20). We must never forget that we were sinners who deserved the wrath of God. However, God so loved us He sent Jesus to rescue us when He died for our sins and rose for our justification. The grace of God – unmerited favor – must be the source of our greatest joy. That same grace fuels our motivation for mission. What we have received, we freely give.



- *Where and how have you seen spiritual opposition take place as you have sought to be more and more missional?*
- *When you think about the inevitability of spiritual warfare, what are some things that give you strength, comfort, and hope?*
- *How can the fact that Jesus has worked for you in salvation fuel your faith that He will work through you on mission?*

You, Lord Jesus, have already disarmed our spiritual enemies through Your death and resurrection. I know You are victorious, but too often, I have lived like You are losing. I have shirked my responsibility to wage spiritual war by refusing to engage in activities that will set captives free. I ask You to enable me to care for the least and the lost in ways that result in my seeing Satan fall like lightning. So, Jesus, I am Yours. Wage Your spiritual war through me.

PLAN THWARTED

It was a classic movie plot. The bad guy comes up with a devious plan to harm lots of people. The bad guy includes a bomb in that plan. The bad guy strategically places bomb in hopes that his evil plan is carried out. The good guy finds bomb and deactivates it just in time (complete with suspenseful music in the background). The bad guy's plan is thwarted. The bad guy is captured by the good guy and is defeated. Hundreds of movies have been made with some variation of that same plot, but they all seem to be entertaining.

That same plot has also been carried out in the spiritual realm. Satan (the bad guy), comes up with a devious plan to deceive mankind in the Garden of Eden resulting in physical death (Genesis 3). And, if he is not already proud of that accomplishment enough, he then thinks he accomplished killing off the Savior (John 19:30), but his plan is thwarted! Christ rises from the grave and "deactivates" the bomb of death that the devil thinks he has planted (Romans 6:4-11). Here in Hebrews 2 we see the language very clearly. Jesus rendered the devil powerless (v. 14) and delivered us from the fear of death (v. 1).

Knowing all this victory leads us to be on mission for Christ without fear! We know that we have an adversary, we know that he will try to oppose the work of the Lord, but we also know who has won the war and that we do not fight **for** victory, but that we fight **from** victory.

WEEK 5
DAY 2

- *How does knowing that Jesus not only has overcome death, but also the fear of death strengthen and lead you in everyday life?*
- *How does the overcoming work of Christ play a factor in how you live on mission and how you share your faith?*
- *If the fear of death has been conquered and all other fears pale in comparison to the fear of death, then what is preventing you from living a passionate life on mission in Christ?*

I praise You, Jesus, for conquering death and the fear of death for us. Forgive me for the fear that keeps me from living as Your missionary in this world. Thank You for the power and victory You provided for us. I ask you to help me overcome other fears that may be preventing me from living a life fully devoted to your mission to reach the people around me who need Jesus.

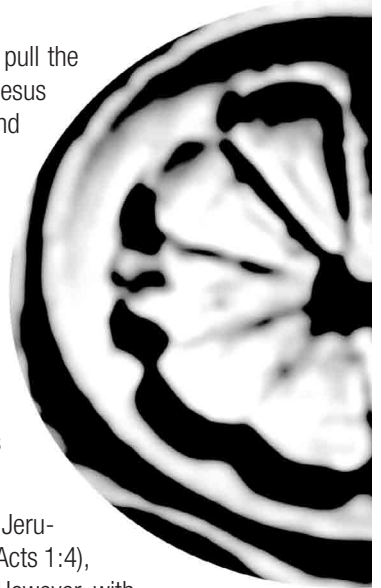
JESUS SENDS HELP

John 16:7-11

Sometimes, the mission Jesus gave us to share our faith and testify about Him can feel like an insurmountable task. Remember Jesus and His ministry? The world did not want to hear what He had to say. They did not want to believe. They hated Him. They ended up hating Him so much they killed Him. He warned us about them when He said, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18).

So what are we to do? Do we shrink back? Do we go back to bed and pull the covers over our head? Do we keep our mouths shut? Of course not!. Jesus knew the problem. Like always, He had a plan. He sent us a Helper. And oh, what a Helper!

It would seem if Jesus did not have to leave, everything would be fine. If He were here to stand by our side (or we could stand behind Him), then everything would be great. However, while His leaving us might seem like a bad idea at first, He actually went away for our good. Unless He died and went away, the Counselor, the Helper, the Holy Spirit could not come to be with us. We need the Holy Spirit's help to accomplish our task. We need Him to empower us to testify. We don't bring conviction. He does (v. 8-10). We don't defeat Satan, the ruler of this world. He does (v. 11).



WEEK 5
DAY 3

Just as Jesus instructed the early disciples not to leave Jerusalem without the Helper, the gift the Father promised (Acts 1:4), so we too should not go out without the Holy Spirit. However, with the Spirit's help, we are more than ready. We are more than conquerors. We are unstoppable. And the insurmountable task becomes not only doable, but joyful too!

- *How can you actively seek the Holy Spirit to have more control over your life and witness?*
- *Since it is the Holy Spirit's job to convict others of sin and to judge the ruler of this world, how will that affect your boldness as a missionary today?*
- *What will you do today to glorify and praise God for the Spirit's work through you?*

praise You, Father, Son, and Spirit as the one true God. Thank You, Jesus, for knowing my needs and giving me Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for generously calling me to Your work here on earth. Forgive me for not always responding to Your call to action. Fill me and anoint me with the Spirit. Let me see Your Spirit convict others of their need for Christ. Let me see Your Spirit judge the ruler of this world. With Your help I will obediently go where You call, boldly tell the world of You, and give You all the glory.

SATAN DISARMED

Most of us have experienced the loss of loved ones. We feel helpless. The dead are obviously unable to help themselves through any power of their own. Likewise, apart from Christ we are spiritually dead and have no power until God makes us alive in Christ.

WEEK 5
DAY 4

Through Christ we are forgiven (v. 13). And this is because of the resurrection of Christ, as well as His death; for, *“as He died for our sins, so he rose again for our justification”* (Romans 4:25). Whatever was in force against us is removed. He has obtained for us a legal discharge from the debt we owed which was against us (v. 14). He has obtained victory for us over the powers of darkness (v. 15).

The devil and all the powers of hell were conquered and disarmed by the dying Redeemer. The first promise pointed at this: the bruising of the heel of Christ in his sufferings was the breaking of the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15). As we live in Christ, we share in this victory and must live as though it is true for us, because it is. Satan has lost his power and death has lost its sting. We can move forward in faith with confidence that our Lord has secured our eternal future.

We must not keep this to ourselves; we must share this with others today. Our mission field is right in front of us. It may be an adult child who says, “I do not believe in God.” It may be a coworker who says, “I believe in God but I don’t know what that is.” It could even be a passerby looking for hope in a hopeless situation. We only need to stop and engage, take the time to listen to their story and then share ours ... today.

- *Where do you find yourself feeling legally responsible for a spiritual debt that has already been paid?*
- *How will you choose to start living victoriously in your walk with Christ in the places you feel defeated, knowing that He goes before you and behind you with His hand of blessing upon you?*
- *How will you share this freedom with others today?*

*F*ather, You have set me free through the death and resurrection of Your Son. I know my days are numbered here Lord Jesus but my eternity with You is without number. Give me the grace to live out my faith daily so that others will see You in me. Give me the courage to speak boldly of Your love for them. May You use me as Your missionary to give life, forgiveness, and victory to people who do not yet know You.

BEING A CONQUEROR

Revelation 12:7-11

WEEK 5
DAY 5

Admittedly, this is a difficult passage to interpret. Does it describe the original casting of Satan and his demons out of heaven (See Revelation 12:4 and Isaiah 14:12-15)? Does it describe the triumph of the cross of Christ (See Colossians 2:15)? Does it describe the defeat of the devil after intensified demonic activity on earth during the last days? Commentators are divided.

What is certain, though, is that the power of God and the authority of Christ over Satan means that the great dragon is doomed. God's people who cooperate with Him in His mission can participate in Christ's conquest over the enemy.

In Luke 10:17, the disciples were amazed. They had seen the authority Jesus had, but now they realized that they too were empowered. As the first gospel carriers they met up with the great serpent and his angels. The disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit and authorized by Jesus Christ, conquered their foes.

They acted in faith to overcome Satan and his demons.

This cosmic battle continues in our generation. As we carry the gospel of Jesus Christ and push back the enemy's ground, we will be confronted. The forces of darkness will oppose the Kingdom of light, but ours is the victory in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

We conquer because He conquered. We walk in His authority and can pull down the strongholds of our enemy.

You can expect a backlash for every victory. Our enemy is relentless. But remember that he is defeated. As we join Jesus in His mission, we are joining the One whose victory is certain.



- *How are you experiencing the push back in the spiritual war for the souls of men, women, boys, and girls?*
- *Where do you need to use the authority of the blood of the Lamb? Where are you to share the word of your testimony?*
- *How does seeing Satan as a defeated foe give you greater confidence to live missionally?*

*F*ather, praise You for the victory of Jesus Christ and the power and authority I can have in His name. Forgive me for the times when I live like a missionary who is defeated. Help me to understand this position that I have as Your child and Your ambassador. As I live on mission, teach me to wield Your authority, victoriously bringing You all the glory.

Luke 10:17-20

THE SETUP

Share something you did or accomplished that made you feel good.

Ask each individual in the group to share a “living it out” story from Week 4’s missional challenges.

As you reflect on the worship services this past weekend, what impacted you the most (for example, a song, a testimony, a message point, an illustration, a visual, a challenge, etc)?

DIGGING DEEPER

- What was life like for the 72 disciples when they went out? What authority did Jesus give them? What would it have been like to be one of them? Have you ever been on a mission trip or have you ever wanted to go?
- What can we learn from the following passages about our victory over Satan? Romans 8:31-37, I Corinthians 10:13, Ephesians 6:10-20, Colossians 2:13-15, and James 4:1-8, and Revelation 20:10.
- It would be natural for the disciples to rejoice about the miraculous things God did through them. What temptation could this lead to? Jesus however, tells them to focus more on the joy of their salvation. Why is it important that we rejoice more about our salvation? What should this lead to?
- Jesus told them to rejoice because their names were written down (literally “they have been written and stand written”) in Heaven (verse 20). This is a statement of assurance of our salvation as believers in Christ. Many people are unsure of their salvation. What, according to the following verses, happens to those who realize they are a sinner and put their trust in Jesus’ death on the cross to pay the penalty for their sin: John 5:24, John 10:27-30, Romans 8:33-39, Ephesians 4:30 1 John 5:11-13? How does having or not having assurance of our own salvation affect our ability to share the Good News with others?
- God has specific things He wants us to accomplish (Eph. 2:10). He wants to use us as His tools to accomplish His will and to glorify Him (Matt. 5:16, 1 Pet. 2:12). Do you have a desire to be used by God to accomplish His will and glorify Him? Can you share a time when you sensed that God was using you? How did it feel?

LIVING IT OUT

The missional challenges each week are designed to help us intentionally build relationships with friends, neighbors, co-workers, and strangers who are far from God. Let’s engage in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to ultimately share the gospel. Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, let’s move out of our comfort zones and normal patterns of living so that we are truly following the patterns of selfless service in the life of Jesus. Decide which of these activities you will do as a group, as families, or as an individual. As a group, you might want to make up your own missional challenge. Be sure to hold each other accountable.

- Look through the list of missional opportunities beginning on page 76. Many of these groups serve people who are oppressed by forces of darkness. Where and how would you like to see Satan fall? Call one of the organizations and see how you might volunteer.
- Have a party or social event. Invite any people of peace you know.

B 250
LES 200
SEDARE 150

THEEYESTHAT 100
SEEWHATYOUSEE 75
FORITELLYOUTHATMANYPRO 50
PHETSANDKINGSDESIREDTOSEEWHATYOU
SEEANDDIDNOTSEEITANDTOHEARWHATYOUHEARANDDIDNOTHEARIT

THE FATHER'S GRACIOUS WILL

Luke 10:21-24

WEEK 6
DAY 1

The ones who have been sent out on mission by Jesus return with joy. The followers of Jesus have been used by the Father to serve the least and the lost. The enemy has been defeated. Victories have been won. The trajectories and destinies of lives have been changed. So, Jesus expresses His gratitude to God, His Father.

Any positive responses to our missional efforts originate in God. The Father often hides spiritual truths from the proud and the powerful (v. 21a). However, He delights in revealing spiritual truths to followers whom the world would say are “weak” (1 Cor 1:26-31). This is why we focus our missional efforts on people with hurts, on people the world has marginalized (v. 21b).

When we engage in missional living, we are participating in the inscrutable relationship between the Father and the Son. Jesus and his Father (along with the Holy Spirit) are sovereign in our salvation. So, when anyone comes to salvation through our serving, it is because Jesus, the Son, has chosen to reveal the Father to them and because the Father has drawn them to the Son (John 6:37-40, 44).

Rather than discouraging our missional efforts, these truths encourage us. We know some of the least and the lost people we serve will respond. Jesus will reveal Himself and His Father to them. We do not have to do a “sales job” on anyone. We do not have to be expert evangelists. We simply serve the people, share the good news, and watch God work to draw men, women, boys, and girls to Himself. And, since we do not know who will or will not respond, we seek to serve as many people as we can while trusting that God will indeed save some.

- *Why do you think God delights in revealing spiritual truths to those who are childlike, to people the world has marginalized?*
- *How will you reach out today to someone who comes to mind when you think of the terms “child-like,” “weak,” “hurting,” and “marginalized?”*

Our Father in heaven, I give You praise for Your sovereignty in my salvation. Thank You for choosing to reveal Yourself to me. At times, I can be cynical and disbelieving about Your work in the world. So, I sometimes choose not to serve. Today, Lord, I ask You to help me trust that You are drawing Your children to Yourself and that You want to work through me. I will do the serving because I know You will do the choosing.



NOT NEEDED, BUT WANTED

A dad asked a young son if he would like to mow the lawn with him. The son enthusiastically said, "Yes." As they started prepping the mower and getting ready, the son became a little quiet and withdrawn. When asked what was wrong the son said that he thought the dad wanted him to mow the lawn **for** him. Obviously, that idea was overwhelming for a 9 year old. Poor Kid! It must have been daunting for him as he thought about trying to operate the mower, push it uphill, and take this responsibility as his own. Prepping the mower, buying the gas and pushing that contraption around the yard is the dad's responsibility. The dad just wanted to invite his son to be with him as he did the job. He did not need him to mow the lawn. The dad could accomplish the task without the son but wanted to include him. When the dad explained that he invited his son to mow the lawn **with** him, he cheerfully re-engaged.

Have you ever been overwhelmed by the daunting task of reaching out to the lost? Have you ever thought that if you mess up your testimony when sharing Christ it could cost them eternity? When you have missed opportunities to share Christ have you ever felt like that was their shot and now it is too late?

We cannot forget it is God who does the work. We do not save souls, He does. We see in today's passage that it is the Father who draws people to Himself (v. 44). We are not responsible or even capable of drawing the heart of people to God. Even though we can share our story and provide biblical instruction, all the information and teaching ultimately comes from God (v. 45). God does not need us to reach the lost, he can accomplish it without us, but he does include us in the mission.

Jesus is restoring lost people to Himself and He invites us to be part of it. We can rest in knowing God is sovereign and that He reigns over the process and the outcome. Understanding this motivates us to be faithful and to fully engage in living on mission for Christ.

- *How did God draw you into a relationship with Himself?*
- *How have you seen and heard of Him drawing others?*
- *How can you explain your understanding that it is God who ultimately draws and instructs people but yet we still are invited and commanded to be part of reaching the unchurched?*

WEEK 6
DAY 2



*praise You, Lord, for drawing me to Yourself and instructing me.
I thank You for being Sovereign over all things. Please help me to be an active and obedient participant in reaching the others for Christ. (Name three people by name who need the Lord.) Please work through Your Spirit to draw these dear ones to Yourself as You send me and other believers to interact and work with them.*

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:14-16

WEEK 6
DAY 3


Jesus is referred to as a shepherd throughout scripture (Micah 5:4, Hebrews 13:20). By definition, a shepherd is one who herds, tends, guards, protects, guides, and watches over sheep. Jesus is not just a shepherd, but the good Shepherd. Those of us who have turned from our sin and believed and trusted in Christ belong to Him. We are under His care. He knows us, and we know Him. The relationship is to be close and intimate, just as it is between Him and His Father.

This Shepherd is like none other, as He "...lays down His life for the sheep" (v. 15b). Matthew Henry insightfully comments, "Thousands of sheep had been offered in sacrifice for their shepherds, as sin-offerings, but here, by a surprising reverse, the shepherd is sacrificed for the sheep." Jesus obediently submitted to death on a cruel cross out of obedience to His Father, and out of great love for us to free us from sin and restore us to God. By the sacrifice of this Shepherd, we have been forgiven.

However, we are also reminded of "other sheep" who are not yet with us (v. 16). His sacrifice has purchased them as well, and they have not yet come into the fold. As the good Shepherd, Jesus is determined that the ones the Father has chosen from eternity would also hear His distinct voice, respond, and come in. We sense here the resolution of Jesus to bring this to pass, as He says "I must bring them also..." (v. 16b). This outcome will be a reality in some way. This Shepherd will bring in all that the Father has given Him.

With more sheep yet to be reached, will you be a willing and an available vessel to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth? Although He is not in need of us, He chooses and delights to use us. At the end of the day, His desire is to bring all kinds of people all together into one flock over which He will be the Shepherd for all of eternity. Let us follow His lead.

- *How does knowing Jesus as the good Shepherd motivate you to be on mission to help others come into His flock?*
- *How could you be more surrendered and available to the good Shepherd for His use?*
- *Make a list of 5 people you know who may be "other sheep" who have not yet come into relationship with the good Shepherd. Faithfully pray for them.*



Dear God, thank You that You have pursued me and brought me into Your fold by Your great mercy, grace, and love. You are a good Shepherd. Please guide me and direct me, according to Your will. Stir me up to move out of my comfort zones, that many others would come to know You and be known by You. I yield myself to You today. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

John 15:16

DEPENDENT IN ALL THINGS

God has chosen us. Many people are caught up in the false idea that we choose God. Scripture is clear again and again that He is the one that chooses us (See Ephesians 1:4). In spite of our completely sinful nature God has chosen us to be separate, to be holy. He has appointed us to bear spiritual fruit; that is, we have works to do and people to bring to saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. However, we have no power in and of ourselves to make this happen. The Spirit who enables us and lives in us gives us all we need to engage in this mission.

Our fruit should abide. The fruit that Jesus bears through us will remain. It is God who brings all who have been called to His son all the way to glory (Romans 8:30). God is the one who accomplishes His mission through us.

Why then do we need to worry? We have been given a command and we have an opportunity to be a part of what He is doing. He does not **need** us, but He allows us to engage in His mission. We willingly do what Jesus says because our hearts are humbled, grateful, and awestruck at a Savior who would not only lay down His life, but give us everything that we need to carry out His mission.

Go on this mission—the mission of God. Fight for the souls of your family, friends, and others. Breathe in deeply the truth that the burden for growing, keeping, and seeing that fruit into eternity is in the hands of Jesus. Take a moment and meditate on the fact that God has chosen you. If you know Jesus Christ as your personal savior, you have had grace and mercy unjustly bestowed on you. This is a stunning thought that ought to motivate us to live more and more missionally.

- *What changes need to take place in your life for you to bear fruit? To bear more fruit?*
- *The fruit you bear will remain. The people Jesus reaches through you will stay reached. How does knowing this affect your enthusiasm for being on mission?*

WEEK 6
DAY 4



Lord, I know that I am dependent on You for all things. Thank You for choosing me. Thank You for Your promise that You will bear fruit through me. Embolden me and empower me through Your Holy Spirit to go on this mission with You. I believe that there is more fruit yet to come in the lives of my family and friends. We trust You with those who we love so dearly who are not abiding. I lay my life at Your feet that You might use me for Your great Name.

THREE MISSIONS

John 17:24-26

WEEK 6
DAY 5

In these final few verses of John 17, Jesus talks to His Father and points to His desire for us. His desire is that we “may be with (Him) where (He is).” Jesus desires to see us, His disciples, *completed*—to be in heaven with Him—for His sake and for ours. Throughout these verses Jesus’ desire is to point to His Father’s glory, and God’s desire is that His glory may be seen through His Son.

Everything that Jesus did on earth pointed to His Father’s glory. He says, “I made known to them Your Name.” The perpetual mission of Jesus is to make God known to man. So we see three missions in these verses. 1) The mission of God is to be glorified. 2) The mission of Jesus is to make God’s glory known. 3) Our mission is to know Jesus and make Him known to others so that all people might be reconciled to God.

As we go on mission and seek to make Jesus known, we can have confidence that some people will respond. It’s not our clever explanations, marketing, or missional living that wins people over. It’s the work of the Father and the Son.

Notice that verse 24 indicates that the Father has given people to Jesus. Those who are saved—who are in heaven and seeing the glory of Jesus—are gifts from the Father to the Son. When we live missionally and share the gospel, we are participating in divine gift-giving within the Trinity. The Father gives the Son His people.

Notice that verse 26 indicates that the Son makes known to people the Father’s name. Those who are saved—who for all eternity will experience the same love that the Father has for the Son—come to know the Father through the work of the Son. When we live missionally and share the gospel, we are participating in what the Son does to introduce people to the Father.

The pressure is off. We simply live missionally. We simply tell His story. And we watch the Father give people to the Son and we watch the Son introduce people to the Father.

- *How does knowing that the Father gives people to the Son take the pressure off you when it comes to missional living and witnessing?*
- *How does knowing that it’s really the Son who makes the Father known to the people encourage you in evangelism?*
- *How will you actively complete your mission (to know Jesus and to make Him known to others) today?*

*F*ather, I want Your glory to be known. As I look around this beautiful creation I am in awe of You, the Creator. You have given me the mission of pointing to this glory so that others may know You. As I live my life, may I always be on mission to know You and make You known. Fill me with Your power to boldly proclaim the glory that is due You.



THE SETUP

Share an event that happened to *someone else* that caused you to rejoice and feel happy.

Ask each individual in the group to share a “living it out” story from Week 5’s missional challenges.

As you reflect on the worship services this past weekend, what impacted you the most (for example, a song, a testimony, a message point, an illustration, a visual, a challenge, etc)?

Luke 10:21-24

DIGGING DEEPER

- What caused Jesus to rejoice when the 72 returned? It is good to know that our salvation does not depend upon how rich, how smart, or how educated we are (v. 21). Who does God delight to reveal Himself to (Read Acts 4:13, I Corinthians 1:26-30)?
- Why do you think God loves to reveal Himself to those who are childlike (v. 21) and who are weak in the eyes of the world? Who, then, are the kinds of people we ought to focus on serving and winning to Jesus?
- Verse 22 says that no one can know who the Father is except those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. This seems to put the burden of responsibility for convincing people onto God, not us. How can this give us greater boldness as missionaries and witnesses?
- When we talk to people about their faith we will sometimes find that they will have a faith that is eclectic, a pick-and-choose self-made religion composed of bits and pieces of Christianity and other religions plus their own ideas about God, Jesus, and salvation. They say, “All that is important is that you are sincere about whatever you believe.” Many people see the Christian faith and the Bible as narrow minded. What can we learn from verse 22 about how to answer them? (Read John 14:6, I John 5:11-12.)

LIVING IT OUT

The missional challenges each week are designed to help us intentionally build relationships with friends, neighbors, co-workers, and strangers who are far from God. Let’s engage in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to ultimately share the gospel. Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, let’s move out of our comfort zones and normal patterns of living so that we are truly following the patterns of selfless service in the life of Jesus. Decide which of these activities you will do as a group, as families, or as an individual. As a group, you might want to make up your own missional challenge. Be sure to hold each other accountable.

- Think about someone at school or work that others marginalize or ridicule. Invite that person to meet you for breakfast, lunch, or coffee.
- Send a hurting person who is far from God an encouraging text, email, or card.
- Catch up with an old non-Christian friend that you or others have been neglecting.
- You’ve been blessed. Bless some unchurched person in your neighborhood, on the job, or in your class in a tangible way (for example, with baked goods, through acts of service, with a home-made dinner, or by simply hanging out).

An aerial photograph showing a dirt road winding through a dry, hilly landscape. On the right side of the road, a hillside is covered with a dense settlement of small, simple buildings. A bus is parked on the road, and several cars are visible in the distance. The overall scene suggests a rural or developing area.

"And who is my neighbor?"

LUKE
10:25-37

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OPEN EYES, OPEN HEART, OPEN HANDS

Luke 10:25-37

WEEK 7
DAY 1

The story begins with a lawyer asking Jesus a question, “How do I inherit eternal life?” Jesus invites the lawyer to answer the question himself. The lawyer summarizes the Old Testament Law, “Love God and love your neighbor.” Jesus says, “Good. Now go do it.” The lawyer looks for a loophole, “Who is my neighbor?”

Jesus is not teaching here that we are saved by keeping the law. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, faith without works is dead (James 2:14-17). Our faith is the root of our salvation, but our good works (loving God and our neighbors) is the fruit of our salvation and demonstrates our faith.

Jesus then tells a story to illustrate what a truly saved person will do when confronted with an opportunity to help someone in need. They are all around us—bruised, broken, battered people. Some are hurting physically. Most are in pain emotionally and spiritually. They are in our offices, our neighborhoods, our restaurants, our schools, our churches and our families. Do we see them? Do we help?

We have many reasons why we tend to avoid people in need. We say things like, “Someone else will do it.” “Things have a way of working themselves out.” “I’m just too busy right now.” “I believe that charity begins at home.” “I ‘got burned’ last time I tried to help.” “Hey! You brought this onto yourself!”

In the story, two busy religious leaders pass by the man in need. However, when confronted with the half dead Jew, the Good Samaritan opened his eyes (v. 33a), opened his heart (v. 33b), and opened his hands (v. 34-35). It is clear. Our mission is to see genuine need and to come alongside that person in need so we can be “Jesus with skin on” to him or her.

- *When was a time in your past when you “walked by” someone in need? How did you feel about “walking by” them? Who do you need to make time for this week?*
- *What are some excuses you tend to use to keep yourself insulated and isolated from need, from bruised, broken, battered people? How will you seek to eliminate those excuses in the future?*
- *When you think of living with open eyes, open heart, and open hands, who is a person in need who comes to mind? What will you do for him or her starting today?*

Lord Jesus, You are the Ultimate One with open eyes, open heart, and open hands. You saw me helplessly broken by my own sin. You stopped for me. You saved me. And I worship You. I have not followed Your example. I am not enough like You. Change me. Point me today to someone in need, and help me help them.

DO THE UNEXPECTED

On October 2, 2006, Charles Carl Roberts walked into a small Amish school in Pennsylvania and shot 10 girls then committed suicide. Five of the girls (ages 7-13) died. Expressing anger and hate would be completely understandable for the Amish community in light of this horrific event. Instead, the Amish did what was unexpected... they poured out expressions of love and forgiveness.

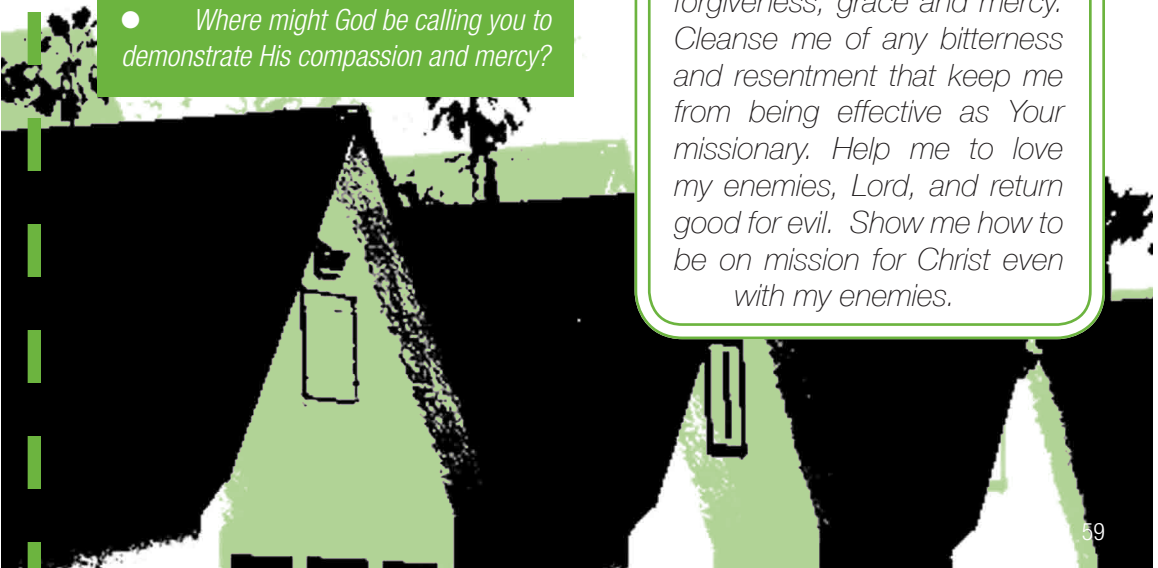
Members of the Amish community visited the Roberts family after the shooting, attended Roberts' funeral, started a charitable fund for the shooter's family and expressed great compassion. The wife of the shooter, Marie Roberts, wrote a thank you letter to the Amish stating, "Your love for our family has helped to provide the healing we so desperately need. Gifts you have given have touched our hearts in a way no words can describe. Your compassion has reached beyond our family, beyond our community, and is changing our world, and for this we sincerely thank you."

Jesus calls his followers to be different. He calls us to stand out and live by a higher standard. What better way to be different than to do the opposite of what the world expects from us? We are to not just do the expected and natural, but the unexpected and supernatural. It makes a bigger impression and impact on others when we do the opposite of what they expect, especially if it is the opposite of what they deserve. This teaching is tough!

WEEK 7
DAY 2

- *What are areas of unforgiveness in your life? How will you forgive so you can live on mission for the very ones who have hurt you?*
- *How can loving your enemies make you more fruitful as a witness?*
- *Where might God be calling you to demonstrate His compassion and mercy?*

Lord, You are the Supreme example of forgiveness, grace and mercy. Cleanse me of any bitterness and resentment that keep me from being effective as Your missionary. Help me to love my enemies, Lord, and return good for evil. Show me how to be on mission for Christ even with my enemies.



GRACE IS THE EVERYDAY

Titus 2:11-14

Notice something about the way this passage is written: *It is all one sentence.* Standing as the foundation of this thought is the idea that “the grace of God has appeared.” After making that statement, the author then explains the effect of God’s grace.

WEEK 7
DAY 3

Far too often we consider grace to be the tool through which God redeems us out of our former sinful lives, redeeming us as sons and daughters of God—and this perspective is true. However, we must keep in mind that the same grace that saves us from our sin is the same grace we need to “renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.” The grace of God has appeared—yes “bringing salvation,” but also then “training us... to live.”

How quickly we move from accepting God’s grace to attempting to live out His will for us on our own strength, and how quickly we fail to even come close to living “godly lives in the present age.”

Notice that godly living means that we will be zealous for good works (v. 14). Grace works. We are to be people who are looking for ways to bless people around us who are in need. Our good works create good will so we can share the good news.

Missionary to Thailand, Charles Harvey, describes his daily routine of following Christ. “I wake up every day, fall to my knees and die.” Only then, when we have daily surrendered to the joy of dying to our selves, can the grace of the life of Jesus Christ living through us be the reality of our daily experience – a daily experience that will include being passionate about doing good to those in need.

- *How is God’s grace active in your daily life? What transformations have taken place since you began to follow Christ?*
- *In what ways are you now attempting to live a godly life on your own strength? Take time today to pray and hand over the battle to Christ living in you (Galatians 2:20).*
- *How can being a recipient of God’s grace motivate you to be more zealous for good works?*

*F*ather, I am very aware of how undeserving I am. I express my deepest gratitude for Your grace. Forgive me for attempting to live in my own abilities and my own strength. May what I have received motivate me to give to others. I surrender and proclaim that the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God – who loved me and gave Himself for me.

DEVOTE YOURSELF TO DOING GOOD

We have been given an incredible gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Our gift giver, Jesus, has asked us to love others as we love ourselves by doing good works and to tell others about His gift of grace and mercy that we have received. We are to **devote** ourselves to doing what is good so we need to take it seriously and not just fit it into our spare time. We have to be intentional about it.

So how are you doing? Are you too busy to take an interest in the people God has put in your path? After all, we have cell phones, iPads, text messages, voice mails, day planners, DVD's, satellite, reading programs, kid's activities, Bible studies, Community Groups. Most of us are much too busy to care very much.

Now the question becomes, "What if God is using **you** as His hands to reach out and care for a lost sheep who is ready to fall off a cliff (or has already fallen off a cliff)? What if **you** are the one to look into the person's eyes and really care about how that person is doing? Are **you** the one to ask a couple of questions---to care deeper? Are **you** the one to give an encouraging word or the one to just listen? What if **you** are the one to share God's story? What if **you** are the one God is using to save a life? Think about it (but not for too long). Don't miss what God is doing in your life and in the lives of those He has put in your path.

WEEK 7
DAY 4

- *Whom did God send your way whom you missed this past week because you were too busy or did not care?*
- *What does "devoting yourself to doing what is good" look like in your life? Is it slowing down or speeding up? Is it listening or speaking? Is it caring or sharing? Is it focusing on others or on yourself?*
- *What one "good thing" will you do for God today to impact a life for eternity?*

Lord, I praise You for Your grace and for Your mercy. Thank you for calling me to You. Forgive me when I live my life focused just on me and not on You and the people You have placed in my path. Help me to have eyes that see how You are working in the people around me. Use me to impact the people around me by doing what is good and sharing Your incredible gift of love.

AMAZING GRACE...THE PERFECT GIFT

Ephesians 2:8-10

This passage is simply the cornerstone of our salvation. Because of the unfathomable love that God has for us and His unmerited favor on us, He has lavished us with this gift.

WEEK 7
DAY 5

And yet so often, as believers, we feel obligated to try to work our way to God through service, good deeds, excellent church attendance, and giving. The gift of grace is free and it is given through faith by the Holy Spirit and all the glory is given to God for this gift. Even our faith is a gift. Paul is saying in this passage that absolutely nothing is of our own doing—not salvation, not grace, not even the faith that is exercised to receive salvation.

Many of us may have been taught that we had to follow certain rules and perform good deeds in order to obtain salvation. But our good could never be “good enough” to earn salvation...to please a holy God. Salvation is something only God can do through Jesus Christ and we can only boast in Him alone!

Out of our gratitude for His free gift, we as believers will seek to do good things—to help and serve others with kindness, love, and gentleness. While no action or good works we do can help us obtain salvation, God’s plan is that our salvation will result in acts of service to Him and to others. We move ahead in this life of grace doing the good works that God planned for us long ago. The new life in Christ that God gives us cannot help but express itself in good works.

Just as God planned salvation in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world, so He planned that believers should do good to others. And those good works give us credibility in the eyes of others so we can share the good news.

- *How could the truth that we are saved by grace through faith be abused and cause some to fail to do good works?*
- *What are some of the good works you feel God created you to do that you have not yet done?*
- *What are some initial steps you can take to get moving?*

Heavenly Father, You are the awesome giver of this amazing gift of salvation. Thank You for showing Your favor on me when I didn't deserve it. Help me to reach out to someone who has not accepted Your gift of salvation by serving with kindness and love. Lord, I give You all the glory and boast in You alone.

THE SETUP

Share a specific time when you saw someone in great need or distress. What emotions did you feel? Pity? Empathy? Annoyance? Anger? Sadness?

Ask each individual in the group to share a “living it out” story from Week 6’s missional challenges.

As you reflect on the worship services this past weekend, what impacted you the most (for example, a song, a testimony, a message point, an illustration, a visual, a challenge, etc.)?

Luke 10:25-37

DIGGING DEEPER

- Summarize and put into your own words the conversation between the lawyer and Jesus in verses 25-29. Why do you think the lawyer asked this question? How did Jesus turn it back on him? Why do you think the lawyer responded the way he did? How did the lawyer respond? How should the lawyer have responded to Jesus?
- Share a time when someone helped you out of a difficult situation when you needed help. Share a time when you helped someone else. How did you feel in each situation?
- What are some reasons why we don’t respond like the Samaritan to the needs of others? What natural inclinations make it easier for us to act like the priest and the Levite? What legitimate excuses could all three of these men have made for not helping the man who was beaten up?
- Why do you think this Samaritan, who was hated by Jews for being half Jew and half Gentile, helped this man? How was the Samaritan’s response to the beaten man practical?
- What did Jesus command the lawyer to do in response to the parable?
- In what practical ways can we as individuals and groups of Christians be more like the Samaritan?

LIVING IT OUT

The missional challenges each week are designed to help us intentionally build relationships with friends, neighbors, co-workers, and strangers who are far from God. Let’s engage in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to ultimately share the gospel. Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, let’s move out of our comfort zones and normal patterns of living so that we are truly following the patterns of selfless service in the life of Jesus. Decide which of these activities you will do as a group, as families, or as an individual. As a group, you might want to make up your own missional challenge. Be sure to hold each other accountable.

- Respond willingly and sacrificially to at least one interruption that comes your way this week.
- Do more than explore the missional opportunities starting on page 76. Give your time and talent to help someone who is hurting. Have a “first serve” experience. Be a volunteer to see if the organization might be a good fit for you.
- Meet someone’s practical need this week (for example, rake a neighbor’s leaves, tidy up a flower bed, or clean out someone’s gutters).

WEEK 8



SERVING OR SITTING

Luke 10:38-42

WEEK 8
DAY 1


When we live missional lives and serve the least and the lost, it is tempting to let the work of the Lord crowd out the Lord of the work. When that happens, we quickly run out of spiritual resources. And, we have nothing left to give to those in need.

Martha lived with her sister, Mary, and their brother Lazarus. The two sisters invited Jesus to a meal at their house. Martha stayed busy serving while Mary was caught up in conversation with Jesus. Martha complained because Mary stopped serving to sit at the feet of Jesus.

Since our culture promotes busyness, many of us might side with Martha. We would expect Jesus to come down hard on her sitting sister, but Martha was “distracted.” The word translated “distracted” means “to be pulled away.” Martha was pulled in too many directions. She was pulled away by her sense of “duty.”

Jesus did not scold Martha for serving Him. Serving was necessary. Her problem was that she made serving, not sitting, the priority. Some make this concern a “serving vs. sitting” issue. However, notice Jesus never really condemns Martha for serving. In fact, it appears that Mary served, too. Martha says, “My sister has left me.” Sitting vs. serving is not an either/or issue. It is a “both/and” issue. In this case Jesus makes it clear that sitting must take precedence over serving.

So, let us live missionally, but let us always have regular, unhurried time with Jesus by reading His Word and connecting in prayer. We must love Him first before we love His people. Why? This approach will replenish our spiritual resources so we can serve the last and the least more effectively. And in this way, we will give the Lord an opportunity to direct our serving. Sitting or serving? Choose both. Sitting without serving is lifelessness. Serving without sitting is powerless. Sitting **and** serving is fruitfulness.

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- Who do you tend to be most like in this story—Mary or Martha? Why do you say that?
 - Why does Jesus say that Mary's choice is better than Martha's?
 - What changes do you need to make so that sitting at the feet of Jesus will become more and more a priority for your life? How do you think this will affect your service to others?

Lord Jesus, You are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in Your wisdom and power. You supply direction and energy so that I can serve others effectively. Yet, I sometimes try to serve in my own understanding and strength. That is when I quickly run out of resources. I want to learn how important it is for me to sit at Your feet before I serve Your people. Here I am, Lord. Now, send me.

PREPPING FOR THE JOURNEY

What do you do when you are about to leave on a road trip? Most people get up early, check the oil, fill the car up with gas, test the tire pressure, clean the car up inside and out, load it up for the day and then get ready to leave. We want to feel prepared for the journey. Each day is a journey, especially living on mission for Christ. We never know what's in store for us each day. Even Jesus said "...each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34). It is interesting to think that we will put so much effort into preparing for a trip, but far less preparation for our day. Sure, we may shower, get our clothes ready, eat breakfast, and write a "to do" list, but do we exert the same level of intentionality to prepare our hearts, minds and souls for the day?

WEEK 8
DAY 2

Jesus had just finished a full day and night of teaching and healing in Galilee. He was going to spend the next day traveling and teaching. So, how did He start the new day? He woke up early. He removed himself from the distraction of his environment. He spent unhurried and focused time in prayer. Jesus modeled for us a perfect way to prepare for the journey of each new day. How strange does it seem that as people living on mission for Christ, we oftentimes go into each day without communing with Christ? We get refueled, refreshed, focused and prepared when we begin our day at the feet of Jesus. Our personal devotion time provides inner refreshment, renewed intimacy with God, and strength for facing the seen and unforeseen challenges of each day as we live on mission for Christ.

- *Jesus went away in the morning. When is your ideal time to be alone with God? Are you giving yourself enough time so that you are not hurried?*
- *Jesus went away to a secluded place. Where is your ideal place to be alone with God? Are you giving yourself enough distance from distractions so that you can focus?*
- *When you are faithful in spending time with the Lord, how have you seen it prepare you for the mission He has for you each day?*



Lord Jesus, forgive me for when I fail to make time to be with You. I am not fully prepared for each day without spending time with You. I cannot live on mission without being connected to You. I want to spend time with You. I need it. I ask that my times with You bring refreshment, energy, focus and a spirit of preparedness for Your mission for each day. Amen.

WEEK 8
DAY 3

Rhythm. It defines and delineates so much of the way we experience reality. From the cycle of sunrise and sunset, to the broader ebb and flow of winters and summers, to the pace of our very own heartbeats; rhythm creates order in which we can experience dimensional time.

As followers of Christ we strive to live as He lived—and the rhythm of His existence must become as much a part of our character as it was His.

In our insanely fast-paced culture we frequently err in one direction or another.

Some of us surround ourselves with activity—and computer screens of one variety or another. Some of us fall into patterns of sloth and the goal of relaxation becomes an idol for us.

Christ and His disciples demonstrate a rhythm of intense dedication, striving, and labor for the sake of the Kingdom—punctuated by times of rest in order to refill on the fuel of time with the Father. Let us strive to reject the mandates of our society and the greedy desires of our flesh. Let us break our bodies and pour out our blood in remembrance of our Savior and in working to further His Kingdom—and then let us not rest idly or wastefully, but give ourselves to the rhythm of finding peace and recuperation in the presence of our Father.



- *Do you fill your life exhaustively with busy-ness? Do you spend your leisure time in a way that honors God? What needs to change for you to find a God-honoring rhythm?*
- *What one item on your weekly schedule can be dispensed with in favor of a mission-oriented, Kingdom-building activity?*
- *What one item on your weekly schedule can be dispensed with in exchange for God-centered relaxation and rest?*

*L*ord, we praise You for the life you lived as a perfect display of humanity. You showed us the best possible way to go through this existence. You exchanged temporary comforts for eternal joys. Forgive us for both our wasteful busy activity and our self-centered times of leisure. Help us to live lives of passionate and exhaustive labor for Your Kingdom—and help us to find perfect rest and comfort in You. You are our strength, You are our energy, our passion, our guide. We surrender our every moment to You—our schedule today, this week, and ongoing is Yours to determine and guide.

SEEK TO SEEK

These verses in Isaiah are part of the “Servant’s Songs” and deal with the servant’s mission. These are prophetic words that illustrate and explain the patterns in the life of Christ.

Jesus understood the importance of spending time daily with the Father. Morning after morning, Jesus listened to His Father. He learned all that He needed to know to live out the mission the Father planned for Him for that day. Jesus had open ears and a well-instructed tongue. Jesus encountered weary people day after day. His time with the Father meant that He had a well-instructed tongue so He could offer help to the weary. Jesus was able to share God’s truths with them in word and in deed.

WEEK 8
DAY 4

Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve. Because He spent time with the Father, Jesus was able to bless the weary and the worn, the least and the last.

God has a mission that will ultimately be accomplished by the power of His word. God invites us to participate with Him on that mission. Be willing to seek the Father’s face daily and to learn from Him, so you can be part of His mission to sustain others.

- *What changes in your life can you make to make you more teachable and equipped for your mission like Jesus?*
- *Who do you know who is weary and discouraged? How can you be better prepared to encourage them? What word from the Father might He want you to give to them? How do you feel when you seek to offer words of encouragement?*



*F*ather in heaven, I want to be more teachable like Jesus. Forgive me for those times when I do not make daily time with You a priority. I want to be a servant that meets others’ needs in a way that is pleasing to You. Stir in me a heart that is on mission for You and cares for the least and the last in a way that shows off Christ in me. Send me on a mission to sustain the weary with words from You.

THE INVITATION

Matthew 11:28-30

WEEK 8
DAY 5

Christians on mission for God to reach out for the kingdom get tired and weary. Jesus invites fatigued missionaries to come to Him in Matt. 11: 28-30, and promises He will give rest. Sounds easy—sounds refreshing—sounds like what we need, but it is difficult to actually “do.” Why? We are much better at doing than at being.

The invitation from our Lord requires coming to Him, sitting at His feet, and hearing His voice to receive the refreshment and restoration our souls so desperately want and need.

Ahhh--but, wait! We also have the opportunity to influence the people we are praying will come to know the Lord. Planned, deliberate resting is not something the world sees too often. Doing is seen as productive. Being still is not valued.

The world is running so fast that many cannot hear the invitation to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Technology, over-loaded schedules, materialism, and the like keep us and those we seek to reach from truly resting and hearing.

A believer's rest most often happens at the feet of their Lord. However, it can also happen when we simply slow down. What if our neighbors or those we love saw us resting on the Sabbath, playing with our family and friends, or sitting on our front porches with elderly parents and neighbors? What if our neighbors saw us taking long walks down the street where we live? Maybe we would have time to hear the stories of the ones who are closest to us and the ones around us who may be far from God. Maybe, in accepting the invitation to be restored by our Savior, we might receive the opportunity to tell the great salvation story of a Savior who gives rest to the weary.



- *How have you ignored the invitation to receive rest from the Lord and continued to live a life of serving Him so that you end up feeling tired and weary?*
- *What has been the outcome when you have continued to live and serve on mission in your own strength?*
- *What are some creative ways to build relationships with those in your neighborhood as you rest from the busy-ness of life and ministry?*

Dear Lord, I praise you for being a God who cares so deeply for me. Thank You for the invitation to come to You and receive rest for my soul. Forgive me for the times I have continued to serve You in my own strength, even when I am weary, tired, and burdened. Please show me when I need to slow down and be still, and help me to be obedient to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to rest. I pray others will see more of You in me as I live on mission because You have refreshed me. Amen.

Luke 10:38-42

THE SETUP

Share a time when you felt especially close to Jesus. What were the circumstances?

Ask each individual in the group to share a “living it out” story from Week 7’s missional challenges.

As you reflect on the worship services this past weekend, what impacted you the most (for example, a song, a testimony, a message point, an illustration, a visual, a challenge, etc.)?

DIGGING DEEPER

- In what ways are you like Martha and Mary? How are you like Mary or Martha at home, at church, at work, in your neighborhood, or in your spiritual life? How are you like Mary or Martha with family, friends, associates, and neighbors? What have you missed because of being too much like Martha?
- What did Martha accuse Jesus of not doing? What did she accuse her sister Mary of doing?
- What did Martha want Jesus to do? How did Jesus respond to her?
- We don’t know how Martha responded to Jesus’ loving admonishment in verses 41 and 42. How might she have responded?
- In the future, how could you respond better to those times when you are tempted to act like Martha? How can you make more quantity and quality time with Jesus? With others?
- Life is busier than ever before. It seems like we rush through life. How much do you think Martha learned from Jesus as she tried to listen while multi-tasking?
- What are some steps we can take to reprioritize our lives so that we can have more quality and quantity time with Jesus?
- Especially after we have been busy living missionally, why is it important to sit at Jesus’ feet and learn from Him?

LIVING IT OUT

The missional challenges each week are designed to help us intentionally build relationships with friends, neighbors, co-workers, and strangers who are far from God. Let’s engage in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to ultimately share the gospel. Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, let’s move out of our comfort zones and normal patterns of living so that we are truly following the patterns of selfless service in the life of Jesus. Decide which of these activities you will do as a group, as families, or as an individual. As a group, you might want to make up your own missional challenge. Be sure to hold each other accountable.

- Engage in a media fast for a day, for a few days, or an entire week. Don’t text. Use technology only for work-related or school-related projects. Invest the extra time in Bible reading, prayer, and conversations with family and close friends.
- Develop a specific plan as to how you will refuel your life by spending even more regular, unhurried time with Jesus over the next two months.
- Make sure that this week’s Lord’s Day is truly a Sabbath rest day for you. Spend it reading the Word of God and good spiritual literature, praying, and, weather-permitting, taking a long walk with a family member or friend.

For Further Reading

Breaking the Missional Code

by Ed Stetzer and David Putman

Churches are encouraged to act in their communities as missionaries would in a foreign land. We can no longer afford to follow outdated models of outreach. Stetzer and Putnam write, “We have to recognize there are cultural barriers (in addition to spiritual ones) that blind people from understanding the gospel.”

Compelled by Love: The Most Excellent Way to Missional Living

by Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation

We are challenged to make a difference for Christ right where we live. *Compelled by Love* gives us a platform for personal application as we understand what missional living is all about—it is simply the calling to love others. Understand your role within the mission of God as you integrate love into all aspects of your missional calling.

Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God

by Francis Chan

Are you hungry for an authentic faith that addresses the problems of our world with tangible, even radical, solutions? The answer to religious complacency isn't working harder at a list of do's and don'ts. It's falling in love with God. And once you encounter His love, you will never be the same.

The Externally Focused Church

by Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson

The church must get out of our buildings and comfort and into our communities. Would the community notice if our church suddenly vanished? Explore the way many churches have been light and salt in their Jerusalem and Judea. Rather than creating ministries, we can partner with organizations that already help people in need.

Generous Justice: Finding Grace in God Through Practicing Justice

by Timothy Keller

Keller answers the question, “Why should we look to the Bible for guidance on how to have a more just society? Those who experience grace should be highly motivated to practice justice. Generous justice show how believers should lead the way toward a new understanding of modern justice and human rights.

Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

by David Platt

We are admonished to consider how we have manipulated the gospel to fit our cultural preferences. Jesus said we would leave behind security, money, convenience, even family for Him. What might happen if a “successful” suburban church decides to get serious about the gospel according to Jesus?

Right Here, Right Now: Everyday Mission for Everyday People

by Lance Ford and Alan Hirsch

We are equipped to live missionally regardless of situation, vocation, or location. It's more than simply having block parties or spending more time downtown. We need to see a way of living faithfully to God's mission in the world, right here, right now. Discover what it means to be an involved, concerned, missional Christian.

unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity

by David Kinnaman

The Apostle Peter instructs us to give others good reason for the hope we have in Christ, but to do so with “gentleness and respect.” Unfortunately, in the eyes of many non-Christians today, the church has done just the opposite. Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, has compiled startling research among the unchurched and learned that Christians are too often known for the issues we stand against, rather than the hope which we stand for. According to the research, believers are seen as too judgmental, too political, and often hypocritical. This book will help us better understand the culture where we've been called to live on mission.

Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship

by Alan and Debra Hirsch

Discipleship is costly. Are we willing to critique and even challenge much we've been taught for the sake of the kingdom? Jesus was untamed, and he calls his church to be the same. This book seeks to answer the question, “How are we to think and live day to day as followers of Jesus?” Get a vision for a distinctly mission-shaped way of living out your faith.

Additional “Living It Out” Ideas

Thanks to Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, authors of TANGIBLE KINGDOM PRIMER, for several of these practical ideas. Amber Holmes also provided some of the ideas listed below.

- Attend a school board meeting.
- Check out a local art gallery.
- Cross your street. Do something to bless or simply talk with one neighbor on your street with whom you haven't built a relationship yet.
- Do a project to beautify your neighborhood.
- Cross a social, political, or ethnic barrier. Go with a friend and eat in a part of town that is unfamiliar to you or attend an event that represents a different part of culture.
- Help a neighbor with a project or a chore.
- Spend some time in a shopping mall, a downtown café, or a coffee shop that overlooks a busy crosswalk, a popular park, or a college campus area. Simply sit still, look at faces, and pray silently for the people you see.
- Bless a waitress by tipping extra generously.
- Be an example of Christ in the customer service line.
- Bless one person, without any strings attached and without getting any acknowledgement.
- Use the yellow pages to make your own list of people and organizations who are helping others in practical ways. Call several organizations to find out how you might help.
- Go to that unlikely Facebook event.
- Send flowers or a gift card, mow a lawn, mentor a young person, clean up a park, help someone for free—construction, decorating, babysitting, cooking.
- Spend time with a friend who is having a rough week.
- Take your kids to a park or a playground where there are other families to build friendships with.
- Clean out a closet, your attic, or your basement. Give the useful things away. If you have a yard sale, give the money away to bless someone in need.
- Take a walk in your neighborhood. Stop and introduce yourself. Engage in conversations. Remember the names of your neighbors.

- Be selfless in a conversation this week. Start asking good questions and genuinely take interest. You never know what may be on their heart. You may earn the right to be heard.
- Connect with a new family.
- Take the dog to a dog park, strike up a conversation.
- Engage in a conversation with someone you live by/work with/go to class with that you don't normally talk with.
- Take an active role in loving someone you have a difficult time loving.
- Discover one thing about where you live/work/go to school that helps you understand that place better.

Missional Opportunities

Each of us know of problems in our world that bring tears to our eyes or make us want to pound a table and say, "That needs to change!" Often, that very issue is where God may be calling us to serve on mission as volunteers.

Below is a list of over 40 organizations in NE Ohio that you might want to consider. You will notice that some of the organizations are Christ-centered and Bible-based while many organizations on the below list are not specifically Christian.

Why would we suggest that you prayerfully consider serving on mission with a secular organization as well as with a Christian organization? Serving people by volunteering in a secular organization that is spiritually neutral and morally beneficial can be a good way to show skeptical secularists that followers of Jesus really do care. You might find yourself building relationships with non-Christian volunteers as well as clients.

Think about a need or an issue that deeply burdens you. Ask God to draw your heart toward a need or an organization. Prayerfully read through the list. Check out the organization on the web. Make a call and talk to some of the leaders. Ask for names and contact information of others who have volunteered. Have conversations with others who have already volunteered. Visit a meeting or an event. See if the opportunity to serve with the organization is a good fit for you. Try before you buy! Keep asking God for confirmation.

If you make a good connection, then consider making a longer commitment. If the relationship doesn't seem right, then say, "Thanks for the opportunity" and start the process over again with another organization.

Abigail Ministries

Bringing hope, healing and empowerment to women who find themselves in abusive relationships.
www.abigail-ministries.org
440-281-7136

American Policy Roundtable

Restoring the historic Judeo-Christian principles to American public policy.
www.aproundtable.org
800-522-VOTE

The Arc of Greater Cleveland

Empowering persons affected by intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) through advocacy, education and the promotion of activities that improve quality of life.
www.thearcofgreatercleveland.org
216-622-0755

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Cleveland

Help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with measurable impact.
www.bbbs.org
216-621-8223

Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Cleveland

Provide children who are most in need a safe place to grow, learn and realize their full potential—because they will become tomorrow’s parents, workforce and leaders.

www.clevekids.org

216-883-2106

Care on the Square

Providing life needs and spiritual support for homeless and shelter residents.

www.careonthesquare.org

440-546-9565

The City Mission

Serving those who are struggling with homelessness, poverty, and various crises, meeting them at their point of need with practical help, loving concern, and spiritual direction.

www.thecitymission.org

216-431-3510

The Cleveland Foodbank

Alleviating hunger by providing food and support to community organizations that feed the hungry.

www.clevelandfoodbank.org

216.738.2265

Cleveland Leadership Center

Building a continuum of civic leaders committed to our community's excellence by serving as a catalyst for civic engagement.

www.cleveleads.org

216.592.2400

Cleveland Pregnancy Center

Providing hope and healing to women and their families in the greater Cleveland area from a pro-life perspective.

www.clevelandpregnancyhelp.org

440-243-2520

Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

Serving survivors of sexual violence and those who support them with free comprehensive healing and advocacy services, and to creating social change in the community through education, training, and activism.

www.clevelandrapecrisis.org

216-619-6194

The Collaborative Initiative to End Human Trafficking

Educating and advocating for the prevention and abolition of human trafficking, while connecting services on behalf of trafficked persons.

www.collaborativeinitiative.org

440-356-2254

Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland

Serving the low-income people of Greater Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

www.ceogc.org

216-696-9077

Crossroads Hospice

Surrounding patients and families with a team of caregivers who not only address physical distress, but emotional and spiritual issues as well.

www.crossroadshospice.com

216-654-9300

Eden, Inc

Developing, providing, and encouraging the availability of safe, decent, affordable housing and housing support services for persons who are low-income, mentally ill, and/or disabled.

www.edeninc.org

216-961-9690

Father's Love Ministry

Sharing the gospel through a variety of different means: in nursing homes, at food banks, in public school, and through hospital visitation.

440-838-5459

Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Presenting to athletes and coaches and all whom they influence the challenge and adventure of serving Jesus Christ.

www.clevelandfca.org

216-973-7199

Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity

Eliminating poverty housing across the globe and in NE Ohio.

www.gchfh.org

216-429-1299

Healthy Fathering Collaborative of Greater Cleveland

Supporting and empowering fathers to develop their assets as nurturers, caregivers and providers of their children.

www.neofathering.net

216-245-7842

International Friends

Seeking to promote unconditional friendship and hospitality for international students and scholars.

www.international-friends.org

440-884-1177

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA

Seeing students and faculty transformed, campuses renewed, and world-changers developed.

www.intervarsity.org

216-382-1313

Kairos Prison Ministry

Providing hope through Jesus Christ and Christian community to inmates and their loved ones.

www.kairosohio.org

614-268-4333

Koinonia Homes

Partnering with people who have developmental disabilities to achieve, healthy, fulfilling, enriched lives.

www.koinoniahomes.org

216-588-8777

L'Arche Cleveland

Making known the gifts of people with developmental disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships.

www.larchecleveland.org

216-721-2614

Love, Inc

Partnering with local churches to meet crisis needs in our community.

www.loveinccuyahoga.org

216-459-0405

MADD Northeastern Ohio

Aiding the victims of crimes performed by individuals driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

www.madd.org

216-265-9229

Make a Wish Foundation

Granting the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy.

www.makeawishohio.org

216-241-3670

The Neighborhood Leadership Institute

Developing grassroots leadership that will contribute to rebuilding the bonds of community and improving the quality of life for neighborhood residents.

www.neighborhoodleadership.org

216-812-8700

NEO360

Training leaders to restore communities through collaborative church planting.

www.neo360.org

440-241-8703

Prison Ministry at CVC

Sharing the gospel of Jesus with those in prison.

440-838-1244

Malachi House

Serving terminally ill persons, without cost or regard to gender, race, religion or national origin.

www.malachihouse.org

216-621-8831

Providence House

Protecting children, empowering families, and building communities.

www.provhouse.org

216-651-5982

The Salvation Army

Serving the needy, hungry, and hurting in Greater Cleveland since 1872.

www.use.salvationarmy.org

216-861-8185

Seeds of Literacy

Providing basic education and GED preparation free of charge for adult literacy in the Cleveland, Ohio area.

www.seedsofliteracy.org

216-661-7950

South Hills Lend a Hand

Serving emergency supplies, cleaning supplies, and paper products to those in need in Brecksville, Broadview Heights, Independence, and Seven Hills.

440-526-0514

Special Olympics Ohio

Providing year-round sports training and competition opportunities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

www.soooh.org

440-582-8433

The Twelve of Ohio, Inc.

Specializing in foster care and adoption services.

www.the12inc.org

330-837-3555

Village Grace Mission Center

Assisting, inspiring and equipping urban families to become interdependent, productive community members.

www.villagegrace.com

216-341-2419

Voices for Greater Cleveland Children

Impacting the changes in public policy that improve the health, safety, education, family stability and childcare of Greater Cleveland children and their families.

www.voicesforclevelandschildren.org

216-881-7860

Volunteers of America Greater Ohio

Helping rebuild lives so people can reach their full potential.

www.voago.org

440-717-1500

Welcome House

Helping individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities live full and rewarding lives by providing a variety of residential services in an atmosphere of a caring community.

www.welcomehouseinc.org

440-356-2330

Young Life

Impacting high school and middle school kids for Christ in the North Coast Region.

www.sites.younglife.org/sites/NorthCoastRegion

440-787-7038

Youth for Christ

Reaching young people everywhere, working together with the local church and other likeminded partners to raise up lifelong followers of Jesus.

www.yfc.net

216-252-9881

This is certainly an incomplete listing of volunteer opportunities in NE Ohio. Please send an email to connect@cvconline.org to suggest additional opportunities for future publication.

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Week 1

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Day 1: Rick Duncan
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Community Group Guides

Gary Nave

A special thanks to Amber Holmes and Eddie Elliston who helped to edit the material in Missio Dei.

Glossary

evangelism — “Presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ to men, women, boys, and girls that under the conviction and regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, they will confess their need for the Savior, repent of their sin, trust Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, and serve Him in one of His churches.” (This definition has been adapted from the definition written by Grey Allison, Founding President of Mid America Baptist Theological Seminary.)

good deeds — The practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness that believers do in order to demonstrate the love of God to others. All believers have been created and then saved to do good deeds (Ephesians 2:10). All believers are to be zealous to do good deeds (Titus 2:14). This is the way followers of Jesus fulfill the Great Commandment in loving our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39). Followers of Jesus seek to live in ways that bring justice to the oppressed, mercy to the poor and needy, and freedom to the captives. We must keep in mind that good deeds, while certainly commendable in and of themselves, must be accompanied by a gospel proclamation of man’s need for a Savior.

good will — The positive and receptive attitude that recipients of a believer’s good deeds begin to have toward believers and, ultimately, toward the gospel. Followers of Jesus let their light shine and do good deeds so that those who are alienated from God will desire to know and glorify God (Matthew 5:16). We do good deeds to create good will so we can share the good news.

good news — See “the gospel” below.

the gospel — The Greek word is *euangelion* (*eu-* “good”, *-angelion* “message”). The gospel is the good news that Jesus, God the Son, came into this world and gave up His life as a substitutionary death on the cross and was physically resurrected. All who put their faith and trust in Him will not suffer the wrath of God for their sin because He died in their place for their sins. Through the grace of God, when a person repents of their sin, confesses the Messiah as Lord, and believes in His resurrection, he or she is given abundant life, eternal life. Tim Keller says it this way, “It is...important to realize that the gospel is primarily about how our alienation with God is addressed and removed by the work of Christ.” The good news of the gospel is, as J.I. Packer says, “God saves sinners.” The gospel is a very specific message. Some people seem to want to say that we can “live” the gospel. Strictly speaking, it is not possible to “live” the gospel. The gospel is something to be spoken.

missional church — A church that believes and behaves in light of the fact that Jesus has sent His followers into the world just as the Father sent Him into the world (John 20:21) to seek and save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). A missional church seeks to gain influence in its context by serving people in sacrificial, practical ways. A missional church sees itself as the heart, the hands, the voice, and the feet of Jesus. A missional church does not merely send people out to do missions. Rather, the church is the mission of God to the world. A missional church seeks to cooperate with God to heal the world and reconcile people to God. The church fundamentally is a people sent on mission. Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17).

missional living — Engaging in practical deeds of service and purposeful acts of kindness in order to share the gospel. We are to engage in missional living as a 24/7/365 lifestyle, not as a program of a church that we can take or leave. It is not to be seen as something we add to our lives. Missional living is to be the normal way we live our lives with our family, in our neighborhoods, at school, and in the marketplace. We are always on mission.

missio Dei — A Latin phrase meaning the mission of God or the sending of God. God is a sending God, a missionary God, who has called His people, the church, to be missionary agents of His love and glory. God is a God on mission. And God has sent the church on mission. “As the Father has sent me,” Jesus said, “even so I am sending you” (John 20:21). Missions is not just a function of the church. And the church is not just the outcome of missions. Rather, both are grounded in a Triune God on mission. The Father sent the Son; the Father and Son sent the Spirit; and now the Spirit sends the church.

missionary — One who is sent by God to do His work and share His word with people who need to be reconciled to Him. Every believer is to live out his or her calling as Christ's ambassador to those who do not know Jesus (II Corinthians 5:20). This means that we all must see ourselves as missionaries cleverly disguised as plumbers, doctors, homemakers, teachers, clerks, carpenters, saleswomen, lawyers, coaches, roofers, nurses, students, etc. We must care about the eternal and temporal condition of those with whom we come in contact. We must discover our identity as a people sent by God into the world as gospel witnesses. Every believer is a missionary sent by the Spirit into his or her context. We must seek to participate more fully in God's mission.

witnessing — sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God. (This definition has been adapted from the definition written by Bill Bright, founder of Cru, Formerly Campus Crusade for Christ.)