

SMALL GROUP GUIDE: Missio Dei - Finding Your Place in God's Story

WEEK 1 - God is a sending God

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: Either share with the group one of the best gifts you've ever received, or the one of the best trips you've ever taken. What was it that made it one of the best?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *John 3:16-17, John 17:20-23, Genesis 12:1-3, Isaiah 6:1-8, John 20:21-22*

Notice the why behind God's sending.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. Many of us grew up memorizing John 3:16, but why might John 3:17 be just as important to commit to memory? What does God do in these verses and why does he do it?
3. What does John 17:20-23 say is a sign that God is the one who sent the Son?
4. When God sent Abram, did he tell him where he was going? And what was it that Abram was to do when he got to this other place?
5. What did Isaiah come to realize in the presence of God? Once he's been cleansed, forgiven, then he's open and ready to God's call. Why must one come before the other? Do you think Isaiah was scared at all, or simply confident in God's presence and call?
6. What two gifts did Jesus give before sending the disciples? Considering all the verses above, what were they/us sent to do?

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. In what ways have you experienced God sending Himself to you (His Word, His Church, His people)?
2. When God comes to you, is it in love or with condemnation and a pointing finger? Explain your answer.
3. Oftentimes, when God calls, we look at ourselves and why we can't possibly do whatever it is he asks us to do. Example: Isaiah was a man of unclean lips. Why are we so quick to look at our own faults and weaknesses, instead of trusting in God's call?

4. God is sending you, us, into this world right now. What are some of the ways we go into His world to be a blessing, to show his love, to reveal more of who He is?

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Personalizing God's Why

- Re-write John 3:16-17 and use your name in the place where it says "world."
- Then, re-write it using the name of an enemy, or someone who is challenging you.
- Journal your insights through this experience as you meditate on these truths this week.

Invite the group to check in next week about their experience.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

- God sent Himself to us, and sent us to others. Do you sense an area in your life where God is sending you to be a blessing, share his love, carry his peace, etc...?
- Is there something holding you back from answering that call and if so, what, and what would it take for you to let go and say along with Isaiah, "Here I am, send me!"

CLOSING PRAYER (Leader or Participant Reads), from the hymn, "Here I Am, Lord"

GOD: I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?
US: Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

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WEEK 2 - The Broken World God Loves

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: If you had just moments left to live, what is a piece or two of wisdom that you would want to make sure were passed down to those you care about? Something you've learned in your journey that you wish you knew earlier, or that someone had told you?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *Genesis 1:31, 3:6-7, Romans 8:19-22, Micah 6:8, Luke 4:18-19, Isaiah 65:17-19*

Pay attention to how God continues to chase after us, even when we run the other way.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. How, in a perfect world, do you think Adam and Eve could have sinned? They had everything, what made them want more?
3. Why didn't God just start over after Adam and Eve sinned, as opposed to letting sin take over this world?
4. Why do you think creation groans? Do you think, somehow, creation knows what it was originally meant to be before sin and brokenness?
5. Put Micah 6:8 into your own words, what it means to do what is right, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. What does this look like in our world today? Why is it important to do all three of these things together, instead of just separating them out?
6. Do you think Jesus knew exactly where to unroll the scroll so he could read that specific verse? What does a mission statement like Luke 4:18-19, do for someone when they face challenges and hard times?
7. From the moment we broke our world, God's plan was set in motion to restore it. How does knowing this help you live in this broken world, right now, with more hope?

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. In this broken world, do you see yourself as more broken, whole, or in process? If in process, what does that mean to you and what joy and/or peace do you find in that knowledge?
2. In what ways do you, or we, groan inwardly as we long for things to be made right?
3. Can you think of some things like grief and loneliness that we were never meant to experience, sharing why you think they are so hard for us to navigate?
4. Because it's always good to spend time thinking about the day when all things are restored and created new, what do you look forward to about heaven? The new earth? Who are you anxious to see? What are you anxious to do? What questions do you have for God?

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Reflecting on Your Journey

- In your life with God, where have you seen growth? What are things you used to struggle with, that are not a struggle for you now? Where have you experience his healing?
- What areas are still hard for you; places in your heart and your life where you know you still need God's healing presence?
- Over the next week, take time both to share your gratitude with God for the things he has done in your life, as well as to surrender the things you want him to heal.
- Also reflect, each day, on one thing you look forward to about the new heavens and new earth.

Invite the group to check in next week about what they discovered.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

1. Knowing that God came to a broken world, even took on our brokenness, how do you and I practice growing in empathy for the brokenness in the world around us?
2. It can be easy to get overwhelmed by how much brokenness there is. What is area, place, or person's life that we can be a blessing to this week to help bring more of God's love into the world around us?

WORDS OF WISDOM to Memorize

3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." (Revelation 21:3-4, NLT)

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WEEK 3 - Jesus as the sent One

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: What is one of the most precious finds you've ever had? Maybe it was a home, car, an item of memorabilia, a letter someone wrote you that you hold on to and read from time to time...? Share about that find and why it's so special to you?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *John 1:1-14, Philippians 2:5-8, Luke 15:4-6, John 4:7, 9-10, Mark 10:45*

We serve a God who goes in search; who doesn't leave us to our own devices or even instruct us from afar. Rather, a God who takes on our brokenness, lives among us, eats with us, and seeks us out when we are lost.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. Compare John 1:1-6 to Genesis 1:1-2. Do you see the members of the Trinity represented in these verses?
3. What were some of Jesus' "mission statements" for why he came to this earth? (hint: some were given in the passages read today, but there are more)
4. What divine privileges did Jesus give up to take on our flesh?
5. What were some of the ways Jesus served us in his time here on earth?
6. What was the gift God gave us as described by Jesus in John 4:10?

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. Jesus took on flesh and dwelled among us. Paul tells us to clothe ourselves with Christ (Romans 13:14). What do we put on or clothe ourselves with Christ?
2. In a world that's all about clicks, likes, and follows, how do we keep the attitude of Christ and remain humble, ready to serve, whenever and wherever is needed?
3. Thinking of the parable of the lost sheep, what are some of the ways we can go in search of those who are lost without pushing them away at the same time?
4. What are some practical ways we could have the same attitude of Christ in our homes? At our work? In our church community?

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Kneeling Prayer

- The posture of kneeling in prayer is one of submission, submitting to God and His authority. It is a posture of humility. For this one week, before you start your day, kneel to pray and offer up your way for His way.
 - One potential prayer for the morning - Father, take me today as wholly yours, as I lay my plans at your feet. Use me today in your service, that all my work would come to fruition in you. Abide in me, as I desire to abide in you. Amen
- Kneel before going to bed, thanking Him for His guidance and provision throughout your day. Be specific.

Invite the group to check in next week about their experience.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

1. What is one area in your life right now that you wish to be more like Jesus?
2. Who is one person this week that you could bless by serving them?

SCRIPTURE TO MEMORIZE (Leader or Participant Reads)

14 So the Word became flesh and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. (John 1:14, NLT)

SMALL GROUP GUIDE: Missio Dei - Finding Your Place in God's Story WEEK 4 - The church as the sent community

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: Think of something in your life that was a big deal to you, something that you know you couldn't have done on your own. Who did you partner with and what lessons did you learn from that experience?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:42, 44-47, Ephesians 4:11-13, 1 Peter 2:9-10*

Jesus gave birth to the church, His body, a new race of humans filled with His Holy Spirit, called and equipped to bring more of heaven to earth. This is done as a great partnership between us and our Creator.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. Notice how in Matthew 28:17, they worshiped the risen Lord, and some doubted. However, what does Jesus say to them about their doubts in verses 18-20? What is significant about this?
3. The disciples were told to wait to move until they received power from the Holy Spirit. So why wait? Why is that waiting hard for us today and have you found anything that makes it easier? And what were we to be witnesses of, and who were we to witness to, as described in Acts 1:8?
4. In Acts 2, what actions did the community do together that not only strengthened them, but made them better witnesses for Jesus?
5. The gifts Christ gave to the church in Ephesians seem to be all the public ones. What other gifts are given to Christ's church that are not so public, but are deeply critical?
6. What are the dark spaces Jesus calls us out of in order to walk with him in his light?

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. How do you and I remember to partner with God regularly, so that we aren't just doing things for him, but with him?
2. Throughout the call of God to partner with us, the idea of being of one heart, united, continues to come up. How is this accomplished in a world so deeply divided?
3. What is your view on the Holy Spirit's indwelling in us, today? Does it still happen? What does it look like? How do we receive the Spirit?

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Waiting and Sending

- Spend the next seven days praying over what God is ready to partner with you on to bless others and his church.
- As part of that prayer, ask for even more of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you into all truth (i.e. the full presence of Jesus), and equip you for his call
- At the end of the seven days, write out any areas you feel more convicted where God wants to use you to serve and bless others and his church.

Invite the group to check in next week about their experience.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

1. Knowing we are all called to participate in mission of God, what are some of the ways you feel gifted to help be His witness and build up His church?
2. What are two ways this week that you can show others "the goodness of God"?

CLOSING PRAYER (Leader or Participant Reads)

*Abba, Father,
You chose to partner with us,
Help us to partner with you,
To build up each other,
To serve your church,
And to help bring more light into the darkness.
With your Spirit within us,
And your Word to guide us,
May we, your church, represent you to the world you died to save.
Amen*

SMALL GROUP GUIDE: Missio Dei - Finding Your Place in God's Story WEEK 5 - Until He Returns

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: How do you imagine the return of Jesus to this earth? Use your imagination. What do you see? Hear? Feel?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *Matthew 24:14, Revelation 7:9-10, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, Micah 6:8, James 2:14-17, Revelation 22: 12-13, 20*

Jesus has given us a job to do until he returns, and it involves all of us to all of us for all of Him.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. In our modern world, with technology, do you think there are lots of places and people that haven't yet heard the gospel? Are there people who live in 1st world countries who you think haven't heard? Explain your answer.
3. If there are people from every nation, tribe and language in heaven, why do so many faith traditions think only they will be saved?
4. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul tells us that Christ gave us a task to do (verse 18-19). What is the task and how do we go about accomplishing it?
5. What does it mean to you that God is making his appeal through us? He could have chosen anyway, but he chose us.

6. How do you reconcile the idea of faith and works when it comes to salvation? Does one of them save you? Why are they both “required”?
7. Revelation 22 was written close to 2,000 years ago. So what do you think Jesus meant by “coming soon”?

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. Describe what you think evangelism is? How might you and I learn to live evangelistically, instead of just doing evangelism?
2. So many have been hurt by the church, or those professing to follow Christ but not acting anything like him. What does the ministry of reconciliation look like to the hurt, the traumatized, or even the tired of religion folks?
3. Which comes first in the life of a follower for Jesus, faith or works? Explain.
4. Who are some of the people from the many nations and tribes that you look forward to meeting, talking to, learning from, when we gather in heaven?

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Living Word

- St. Francis of Assisi once said, “Speak the gospel always; when necessary, use words.”
- This week, seek to find ways to be a blessing, to share Jesus, and to participate in the ministry of reconciliation without saying a word. This can be super challenging for us task-oriented people, so spend time in prayer each day, asking God for help to know how to do this, opening your eyes to see the opportunities, then GO and be his witnesses in all the world.

Invite the group to check in next week about their experience.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

1. Who is someone in your circle of influence that you know needs God’s ministry of reconciliation? What’s one thing you can do this week, for them, to help them know God loves them and is thinking about them?
2. Jesus is both coming soon, and already here thru his Holy Spirit. How do we live, today, celebrating the God who is with us now, while looking forward to the God who is coming soon?

CLOSING SCRIPTURE (Leader or Participant Reads):

9 After saying this, [JESUS] was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. 10 As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!” ...[SO GO AND]... “be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:9-11, 8b, NLT)

