

REACH

GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES

Adapted from "All of Jesus for All the World" by The Alliance Center for Leadership Development, Project 2819. Used with permission.

PREFACE

Recently, one of our church members was given a beautiful picture during one of her prayer times. It was an image of a house—a big house—and the house had a huge door that was wide open. In processing with the Lord what this image meant, it became clear that this door is the door of grace and it is wide open for anyone to enter into God's home—to be with God.

God has entrusted each of us, as His beloved children, to reach out and invite others through the wide open door of grace into our forever home. We do this by demonstrating and declaring the Good News: that God wants to re-establish His relationship with us. He wants to be with us and He wants us to be with Him.

What an overwhelming joy to get to experience this restored relationship and to share that good news with others—in our neighborhoods and in the nations.

Thank you Jesus for the wide open door to your home of grace.

MISSION FROM THE START

LESSON 1



From the beginning, God has always been on mission.

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “missions”?

One of the most common passages people think of in relation to “mission” is **Matthew 28:19-20**. This passage, which Jesus gave to His disciples, is traditionally called the “Great Commission.” Here, Jesus commanded His followers to go and *“make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.”* However, the Great Commission is not the beginning of missions. Rather, the Great Commission is the fulfillment of what God had promised and set in motion in the Old Testament.

So, let’s take a step all the way back to Genesis, where it all starts. In Genesis, we meet a man named Abram, who later had his name changed to Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-3 says: *“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.’”*

When God called Abram, He did so with a promise. God promised that all the families and nations on the earth would be blessed through Abraham’s descendants. This promise to Abraham was a crucial step in God’s plan to restore the relationship with His children that was broken in the Garden of Eden. (**Genesis 3**)

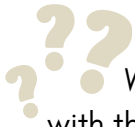
When God asked Abraham to leave the land of his father’s household, He promised to give him an even better land and to make him into a great nation. To seal this promise, God changed his name from Abram, which means “exalted father,” to Abraham, which means “father of a multitude.” At that time God said to Abraham, “*I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them! I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.*” (**Genesis 17:6-8** and **Genesis 13:14-15**)

But, this blessing that God promised to Abraham would not just be for him—it would spill over to all mankind.



What makes these Old Testament passages central to our understanding of the missionary heart of God?

So, God promised to give Abraham land, children, and a blessing, but what does this have to do with missions today? To answer this question, it is best to first define what we mean when we use the word "missions." **When we send someone from one place to another with a specific purpose, we say that they are on a mission. This person carries a particular message to share, given by the person who sent them.**



When have you been sent on a mission? Think outside the box with the "being sent from one place to another for a specific purpose" definition in mind. (For example: spouse sends you to the grocery store to find milk, you're serving someone legal papers, etc.)



How might the list of examples you came up with give some new insight into how to understand the biblical idea of mission?

From the beginning, God has been sending people on missions. He sent Abraham, as we just saw, with the promise that through Abraham, all the nations would be blessed. Later He would send Moses, David, and others. Even Jesus was sent by God to proclaim: *“Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”* (**Matthew 4:17**)

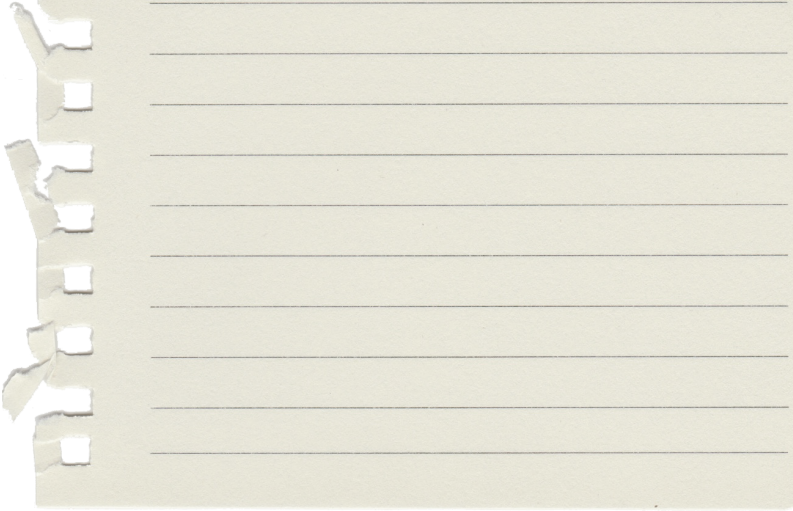
And each time God sent someone, there was an important message they were communicating: **God wants to re-establish a relationship with His people.**

Today we, as followers of Christ, continue to bear His mission. We are still called to communicate the message that God wants a relationship with each and every person.

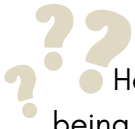
1 Peter 2:9 says, *“for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.”*

Like Israel in the Old Testament, the Church has been commissioned by God to be on mission. We are ambassadors of the Gospel of Jesus. We are called to bring the message of Jesus to a lost and dying world. As Paul puts it, *“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.”* (**2 Corinthians 5:17-21**)

Reflection: As you read these Scriptures (**1 Peter 2:9;**
2 Corinthians 5:17-21), what grabs your attention?



A spiral-bound notebook with a torn left edge and several horizontal lines for writing.



How are you a part of this message of reconciliation and love being demonstrated and declared to our community?



Five horizontal lines for writing.

Psalm 67:1-5 echoes the promises made to Abraham, Israel, and to us as followers of Jesus.

1 May God be merciful and bless us.

May his face smile with favor on us.

*2 May your ways be known throughout the earth,
your saving power among people everywhere.*

3 May the nations praise you, O God.

Yes, may all the nations praise you.

*4 Let the whole world sing for joy,
because you govern the nations with justice
and guide the people of the whole world.*

5 May the nations praise you, O God.

Yes, may all the nations praise you.

Reflection: Take some time to write a prayer of blessing and hope for your neighborhood and the nations.

A piece of light-colored paper with a torn left edge, featuring ten horizontal lines for writing. The paper is positioned below the reflection prompt.

Hopefully this lesson has helped clarify the truth that God has been on mission from the beginning. God loves us—He always has and He always will. He longs to be in relationship with every one of us.

We who follow Jesus are invited to join Him in accomplishing His mission—the Good News that He desires relationship with us and He did the work on the cross in order to accomplish it. He has invested in us, we are His holy and special possession. He is with us and for us and He is sending us.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



MEMORIZE PSALM 67:1-2

1 May God be merciful and bless us.

May his face smile with favor on us.

*2 May your ways be known throughout the earth,
your saving power among people everywhere.*



DEMONSTRATE AND DECLARE

Take some time this week to answer this question: Where has God placed me right now to be an influence, and what am I intentionally doing to bring Jesus' message and blessing into this space?

Sermon Notes

THE URGENCY OF MISSIONS

LESSON 2

Start by reading about this description of the return of Christ found in **Revelation 21:3-7** and **22:1-5**. As you read, imagine the joy and reverence of eternity in the presence of God and with each other.

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." 5 And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." 6 And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. 7 All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

1 Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations. 3 No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. 4 And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. 5 And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.



When you think about the return of Christ, what anticipations rise up in you?



How does your anticipation impact your longing for others to know Jesus?

Before Jesus' ascension (**Acts 1**), He told His followers that He would come again—since then, Christians have been waiting for His return. His early followers, and indeed the Church in general, understood that Jesus' return would be imminent. That is, Jesus could return at any time. This understanding, that it could be any minute, has fueled a deep sense of urgency within the Church over the centuries to share the Gospel—to be on mission.

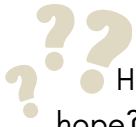
Matthew 24:14 says, *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* These words from Jesus were in response to the question asked by the disciples: *"When will the end of all things happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age."* (**Matthew 24:3**)

Matthew 24:14 underscores the purpose and mission of the Church. The Church has been commissioned by Jesus to proclaim the good news of the Gospel to all peoples and nations as we await and look forward to the promised return of Christ.



How does the importance of this commission sit with you? What does it stir in you? What does it mean for your day to day life?

The message of Jesus is one of hope. When Jesus was on earth, He looked over the crowds and felt compassion for them, stating that they had been harassed and were helpless, just *“like sheep without a shepherd.”* As followers of Christ, we get to show the compassion and love of Jesus to all those around us.



How have you experienced the message of Jesus as one of hope?



As you look out on your “crowds” (your community), what moves you to compassion?

In **John 4:35-38**, we hear Jesus speaking with his disciples. Jesus said, *“You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! You know the saying, ‘One plants and another harvests.’ And it’s true. I sent you to harvest where you didn’t plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest.”*



Jesus’ command to bring people to eternal life, through the Gospel, is still true today. Where do you see a ripe harvest in your spheres of influence? (a person, a need, a people group, etc.)

Reflection: Spend some time writing a prayer over those people who need compassion and those who may be ready to respond to God's message.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



MEMORIZE MATTHEW 24:14

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."



DEMONSTRATE AND DECLARE

How would you tell someone about what heaven's going to be like?

How could you share the hope that the return of Jesus gives you in your day to day life?



PRAY

We recommend closing each group time with prayer. This would be a great time for you to offer group members an opportunity to share about and receive prayer for needs in their lives. Also take time to celebrate how God is working in the lives of your group members as they live on mission. As you close your group time with prayer, consider the prayer below as an example of how to pray for God to work in light of this lesson.

Jesus, we accept Your commission. Give us the courage and strength we need to live in obedience to Your call to share the good news with our world. Help us rely on the power of Holy Spirit as we step out in faith to share the hope You've given us. We can't wait for Your return, Lord Jesus. May Your Kingdom come as we share the good news with others. Amen.

REQUESTS:

Sermon Notes

PARTNERING WITH HOLY SPIRIT

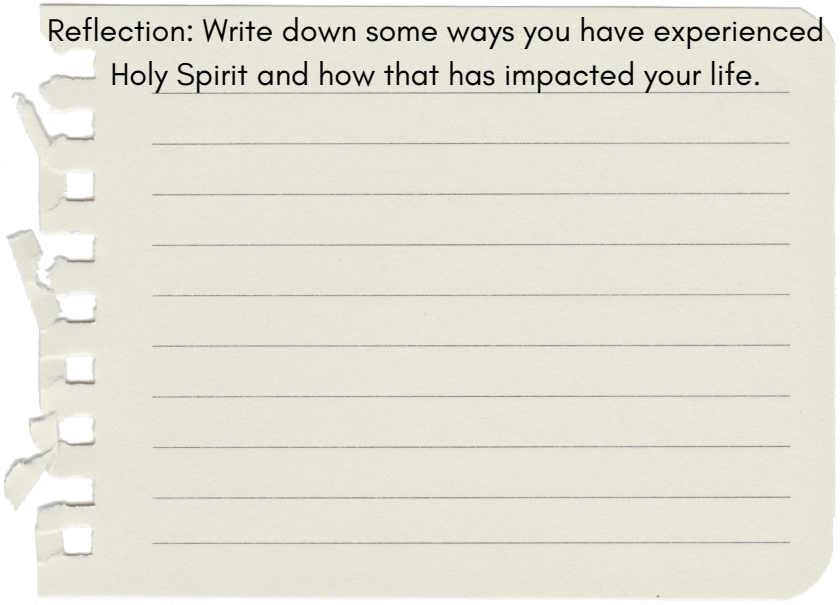
LESSON 3

The Bible tells us that the Church effectively shares the Gospel because the Holy Spirit is working through each of us to fulfill the Great Commission. As Holy Spirit lives in and empowers each follower of Jesus, the Church partners with God's global work of revealing all of Jesus for all the world.

As Jesus was completing His earthly ministry, He met with His disciples and provided them with some final instructions. These instructions would shape them personally and shape the Church that Jesus would soon establish.

Jesus told His followers that the Father would send them Holy Spirit once He was gone. Holy Spirit would be their advocate, comforter, guide to the truth, and the one who testifies about Jesus. (**John 14:15-21; 16:5-15**)

Reflection: Write down some ways you have experienced Holy Spirit and how that has impacted your life.



A piece of light-colored, lined paper with a torn left edge, resembling a page from a notebook. The paper is positioned below the reflection prompt and contains several horizontal lines for writing.

Then, right before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told his followers to wait for Holy Spirit to come. The disciples did not have to wait long (**Acts 1:4-5**). A few days after Jesus ascended, Holy Spirit came upon 120 disciples who were praying together on the Jewish holiday, Pentecost (**Acts 2**). Those followers were filled and empowered to testify of God’s wonders and shared the Good News of the Gospel with everyone they met.

In **Acts 1:8**, Jesus said something incredibly life-changing: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* As followers of Jesus, we have been empowered by Holy Spirit to be a witness to the life and testimony of Jesus. This means we can look beyond our own personal limitations and trust that Holy Spirit will give us what we need in the moment.

Maybe you’re a new Christian and you don’t know much about the Bible yet, maybe you’re not the most confident person in the room, maybe you feel you don’t have the strength to share Jesus with others across town, let alone the world. That’s okay. Holy Spirit is the one that empowers us. We have the power of God within us, we don’t have to do anything in our strength or power alone.



As you reflect on your own journey, when have you most clearly experienced the power of Holy Spirit?



What can it look like practically to be “empowered” by Holy Spirit in order to share the Gospel with others? (Think about conversations, promptings, acts of justice and generosity, etc.)

Let’s look closer at the end of **Acts 1:8**: *“You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

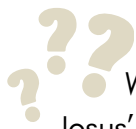
Jesus first said that His disciples were to be His witness in Jerusalem. This was their hometown. When we think of our “Jerusalem,” consider those who are around you and who form your inner circle, such as your family members, neighbors, co-workers, fellow students, and friends. We have a holy calling to share the Gospel message with those we know, love, and live among.



As you think about your inner circle, who comes to mind?



What could it look like for you to begin a conversation with them about Jesus?



What could it look like for you to practically demonstrate Jesus' love toward them?

Jesus next mentioned Judea. This is the broader region surrounding and containing Jerusalem. Today, we can consider Judea to be those outside our inner circle as well as our neighboring towns, cities, and states. We get to share Jesus with those whom we bump into at the supermarket, the doctor's office, the gym, a sporting event, or just on the street, along with those in our broader geographical community.



Where do you go during your week? How do you typically interact with the people you meet?



What does it mean to be the love and light of Jesus to those you interact with?



What could it look like to courageously be the “kindest person in the room”?

Jesus then went on to mention Samaria. Now, Samaria was a part of the map that good Jewish people avoided. They did not want to go there. Think of it as “the wrong side of the tracks.” There are places in your community where you don’t want to go because you are uncomfortable in some way.



What places come to mind?



Why do you avoid those places/people?

Reflection: Write a prayer for courage, compassion, and Jesus' eyes to love those people and places that make you uncomfortable.

Finally, Jesus told His disciples to be a witness to the very ends of the earth. All people must hear about Jesus. There are a little over 3 billion people who have yet to hear about and know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Most of these people are in remote places. Reaching them with the message of the Gospel is, at times, difficult and dangerous. But the sacrifice is worth it.



How are you, your Life Group, and/or your church taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth?

When you think about sharing your faith, reaching the nations and neighborhoods, and being an example for Jesus in the world it might seem scary or intimidating. But, we are not alone. Jesus gave us Holy Spirit, so that we could succeed in accomplishing the Great Commission. And make no mistake, Jesus will be with you wherever you go. Jesus finished the command of the Great Commission by stating the following, *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*



How does it make you feel knowing that you are not alone?
What practical things can you do to remind yourself of Holy Spirit's presence in your life?



Read **John 20:21**. What did Jesus give to His disciples along with the mission to share the Good News? What does it look like to receive this same gift from Jesus today as we seek to share the Good News?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



MEMORIZE ACTS 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”



DEMONSTRATE AND DECLARE

As you continue to consider your answer to the question: Where has God placed me right now to be an influence, and what am I intentionally doing to bring Jesus’ message and blessing into this space? Think about what a creative, Holy Spirit empowered, first step could be for this week.

If you are willing, give your Life Group permission to ask you about it—to hold you accountable.

Sermon Notes

HOW WILL THEY HEAR?

LESSON 4

After Jesus' followers were given Holy Spirit, the Church began to grow rapidly. The Jewish religious leaders continued to plot how to destroy this growing movement. One of the most passionate of these leaders was a man named Saul. He was a witness to the first martyrdom and traveled everywhere in order to destroy the Church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison (**Acts 8:3**). Saul's greatest mission was to shut the Church down.

Then, in a shocking turn of events, Saul was confronted by Jesus Himself in a miraculous conversion experience. Read **Acts 9:1-31** below.

Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

"Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord!" he replied.

The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."

"But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."

But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength.

Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!"

All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus' followers in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And didn't he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?"

Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers,

but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to murder him. When the believers heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.

The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord.

And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.

Now, pause for a minute. Let the fact that God called Saul, renamed him Paul, and then used him as His first modern missionary sink in. Your past mistakes and current flaws are of no great concern for Jesus. When Jesus calls us, He transforms us. Jesus doesn't just ask well-put-together, articulate people to share His message with the world. If you are part of the Church, then you've been called. This means Jesus will give you the ability to bring the Gospel to your neighbors and the world, regardless of the character flaws or skill deficiencies you think might hold you back.



The first missionary of the New Testament was a former church persecutor. What are some of your reactions to that truth?

Reflection: What are some of the things that hold you back when it comes to being on mission?

Reflection: Pause and ask God what He wants to say to you about those things.

Let's fast forward in the life of Paul. As Paul continued to live out his call, he wrote letters to multiple churches throughout the area. One of those letters was to the church in Rome. In this letter (Romans) he laid out his approach to living out the Great Commission.

Romans 10:14-15 says: *“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”*



What would it look like for you to live out the answers to Paul’s questions in this passage?



What are some everyday creative ways to both demonstrate and declare the Good News?

Reflection: When you hear the words “beautiful feet”
what stirs in you?

According to the Joshua Project, there are at minimum 5,984 ethnic groups that are unreached—who have never heard the Gospel in their own language. That is in addition to those who have access, but have not responded to the Good News.

Additionally, billions of people are held captive to poverty and disease, as well as spiritual, political, and religious oppression. These realities often blind people to the transforming power of the Gospel. Jesus identified with the poor and oppressed when He shared a quote from the prophet Isaiah at the beginning of His earthly ministry: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.”* (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus made it clear in this passage that a significant part of His mission, and therefore of ours, is bringing the freedom and light of the Gospel to those oppressed and suffering.



How can we partner with God to bring freedom and light to those in oppression?

Reflection: Read **Luke 4:14-21**. Take some time to imagine Jesus in the temple as He essentially reads His life's mission statement.





What words would you use to describe your life's mission?

Our journey won't look exactly like Paul's. God gave Paul certain gifts and tasks that He has not given us. However, we all have been called and gifted by God. And, we all get to live out His mission.



As we live out God's mission alongside each other, we can sometimes fall into the comparison trap. What has that looked like in your life? How can we protect ourselves from comparison as we partner with each other in answering God's call?



One of the differences to be celebrated is seeing faith through the eyes of those who are coming to America from other places. Those who are believers have a rich faith history and we can learn a lot from them. Read and respond to the following quote:

"As immigrants arrive on the shores of the United States, they bring with them not just their luggage but also their faith. What if immigration is the very tool that God uses for the revitalization of Christian faith in North America?"

— Stanley John —



How can we celebrate the differences that God has created in us—the creative ways that God shows up in each one of us—as we partner together?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



MEMORIZE ROMANS 10:14

“But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?”



DEMONSTRATE AND DECLARE

Below are a few ways you can engage with others from around the world who may have limited access to the Gospel. This week, consider how you or your Life Group could engage with one of these areas.

- Salem Alliance supports multiple international workers in places that have limited access to the Gospel. Check out our website to learn more about each of these workers and how you and your Life Group can partner with them.
<https://www.salemalliance.org/serve/nations/international-workers/>
- Salem for Refugees is a great way to engage with our new neighbors from around the world. www.salemforrefugees.org
- Salem Alliance has a thriving refugee ministry that includes Baraka and the International Prayer Gathering, as well as other ministries. Click here to learn how to get involved:
<https://www.salemalliance.org/ministries/refugees/>

Sermon Notes

IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

LESSON 5

Take some time to read **Luke 10:25-37** below.

One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?"

The man answered, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

"By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

"Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

"Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."



As you read this familiar story, what grabbed your attention?

Reflection: How have you experienced God's love in your life recently?

Reflection: Take a moment to express your love to God with your soul, heart, mind, and strength.



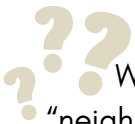
Read and respond to the following quote:

“In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus teaches that love is what God built us to do, that love is the essence of what it means to be human. In this story, we see that real love doesn't begin until you see that you can't really love—it doesn't begin until you see you're a sinner saved by grace alone. We also see that real love begins when you're stunned into silence by the love of Christ for paying your debt. Once you've experienced and been humbled by that kind of love, then you're capable of concrete and costly love toward others.”

— Timothy Keller —



Who is your neighbor? What can expressing genuine love toward them look like?



What are some ways that you limit the definition of “neighbor”? How is Jesus inviting you to change some of your preconceived notions?



What can it look like to bear someone's burden in love like the Samaritan? How can that point them to Jesus?

1 John 4:7-12 says:

7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. 8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. 10 This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. 12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.



How does this passage encourage you in your calling to love those around you?



What stands out to you as you read the quote below?

“[Love] is not a virtue innate in us nor is it learned behavior. It is ‘from God.’ He is the originator—the giver of love. Furthermore, whoever truly loves ‘his brother’ not only is born of God but also ‘knows God.’”

— Kenneth Barker —



How does understanding that our love is from God change the way we view, approach, and treat one another?

Reflection: God, how do You want to use me to reflect Your love toward others?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



MEMORIZE LUKE 10:27

"He answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind', and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"



DEMONSTRATE AND DECLARE

This week, take time to notice your interactions with your "neighbors."

Consider coming up with a phrase or prayer you can repeat to yourself to help remember the call to love them.

Notice how God changes your heart towards them.

Allow this phrase or prayer to prompt loving actions and words that could point them to Jesus.



PRAY

We recommend closing each group time with prayer. This would be a great time for you to offer group members an opportunity to share about and receive prayer for needs in their lives. Also take time to celebrate how God is working in the lives of your group members as they live on mission. As you close your group time with prayer, consider the prayer below as an example of how to pray for God to work in light of this lesson.

Sermon Notes