

## JOINING JESUS ON HIS MISSION

### SESSION 1: Chapters 1-2

**Warm Up: Recall you best family vacation. What made it so special?**

Consider and reflect on these scripture passages:

**THE OLD COMMISSION:** *5 And now the Lord says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him — for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength — 6 he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” (Isaiah 49:5-6 NRSV)*

**THE GREAT COMMISSION:** *16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28.16-20 NRSV)*

**THE “GET AFTER IT” COMMISSION:** *6 So when they [the disciples] had come together, they asked him [Jesus], “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. (Acts 1.6-9 NRSV)*

#### DISCUSSION GUIDE : : What’s Jesus Up To? Joining Jesus Chapters 1 & 2

*“Lord, take me where you want me to go; let me meet who you want me to meet; tell me what you want me to say and keep me out of your way. Amen.” – The daily prayer of Father Mychal Judge, NYFD chaplain, killed in the 9/11 attacks at the World Trade Center*

*Jesus is on a mission He has been sent by his Father on a grand adventure to redeem and restore human lives to his kingdom. Jesus is already on the loose out there in our neighborhoods, workplaces and schools. He is already doing the heavy lifting of working in the lives of every human being we see. And he invites us to join him. “Come follow me” (Mark 1:17).*

Definitions:

- “**Missional Living**” is joining Jesus on his redemptive mission and living each day as if it were a mission trip into our own community. We are Neighborhood Missionaries.
- “**Missional Community**” is a smaller group of local neighborhood missionaries who gather regularly in order to support each other as we learn to join Jesus on his mission.
- “**Neighborhood**” is any network of people to which we have regular access. Who are the people who live near us, work near us, play near us, etc.?
- “**Neighboring**” is any interaction that helps foster friendship between neighbors. Neighboring puts us into the position of finding out what Jesus is already up to in the lives of people near us.

1. The premise of this book is that Jesus is already on the loose in our community doing the heavy lifting of pursuing his Father's mission in people's lives. All we have to do is join him. What is the difference in joining *with* Jesus on mission and doing mission *for* Jesus?

2. What was one idea, phrase or story that stood out the most to you moment you in the first chapters?

3. Which definition(s) discussed do you still have questions about?

4. What have you learned about being an everyday missionary so far?

5. What are some of the "new things" Jesus is asking you to notice, believe or wrestle with?

6. What is Jesus inviting you to do in response to today's discussion?

Read again the three "Commission" passages from the beginning of this lesson. How are these three commissions similar? How are they different, what is unique about each? What is God calling his people to do in each commission? What are the challenges we face in following God's call as a church? What about you personally?

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### **SESSION 2: Chapters 3-4**

**Warm Up: What is your favorite water-based activity and why? (swimming, fishing, ice skating, skiing, etc.)**

Dear Friends,

Last session we were asked to consider how is Jesus trying to get our attention, and how we need to reconsider our assumptions on what it means to follow him. We also reflected on his mission or “grand adventure to redeem and restore human lives to the kingdom of his Father”; how he does

not ask us to go on a mission *for* him but instead *join* him on his mission. We join the mission by engaging our neighborhoods or circles of influence with the message of Christ’s redeeming work.

This week we continue this study together by looking at how the church and cultural landscapes have changed around us as well as looking at what might cause us to stall in joining Jesus in his mission. Let’s begin by reading and reflecting on these scripture passages:

#### **Adjusting to a Changing Landscape**

*<sup>1</sup>On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup>Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. <sup>3</sup>But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. <sup>4</sup>Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. <sup>5</sup>Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. <sup>6</sup>When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. <sup>7</sup>For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup>So there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:1-8 NIV)*

#### **Jesus’ Followers Uniquely Equipped to Engage the Culture**

*<sup>16</sup>So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (Galatians 5:16,22-26 NIV)*

#### **Stop Stalling and Do Something**

*<sup>11</sup>Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup>Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:11-14 NIV)*

#### **DISCUSSION GUIDE: The River Moved Are You Stalling?**

“Jesus is inviting me to join him on his mission.”

This is an important mindset change for most U.S. church members. Jesus does not give me a mission to do for him. Jesus is on a mission and he invites me to come with him. I’m not a Jesus-salesperson. I’m a Jesus-follower. The U.S. has become one of the largest mission fields on the planet. The river has moved. The odds are very good that right now, wherever you live in the U.S., people in your neighborhood and workplace are largely unconnected to a local congregation and may not be connected to Jesus at all. We are no longer a church who is servicing a community filled with a variety of Christians. We are now a church who finds itself needing to be on mission in a mission field.

As Neighborhood Missionaries, we have a simple mindset:

In order to join Jesus on his mission all we really have to do is enjoy people and then seek, recognize and respond to what Jesus is already doing in the lives of the people we are enjoying.

1. Stats: Millions have left the church; only 18-22% of “churched people” go to worship; <10% of adults under 30 regularly engage in a local congregation. Do these seem like realistic statistics to you? How do you think that the ‘church’ should respond? In our response what is the difference between being a Jesus follower and a Jesus salesperson?
2. What makes sense to you about the metaphor of the river moving?
3. What challenges do you (and your congregation) face now that the river has moved? What gives us hope in spite of these challenges?
4. Respond to the following quote from Greg Finke on page 41 of his book, “Because I am a Jesus follower living in the mission field of the U.S. that makes me a missionary, whether I realize it or not.
5. If we as Jesus followers are truly missionaries by the simple reality that we live in the U.S. (one of the largest mission fields in the world), what keeps many believers from living this out and joining Jesus in mission?
6. Do you struggle to move forward in mission out of a concern that you don’t know enough; do you still need to read more about missional living? If so how might you, or others, overcome these concerns?
7. Respond to this quote on page 47, “it’s not what you know that will change the world, but what you do with what you know that will change the world.”
8. How does the quote by Mark Twain: “*Anyone who has grabbed a bull by the tail knows five or six more things than someone who has not*” apply to joining Jesus on his mission?

**With all this in mind take another look at the scripture passages from the beginning of this lesson:**

How did the mission landscape shift for the early church in Acts 8? How did the church adjust and respond in faith? What can we learn from their example?

Read the list (pages 42-43) of things on that the culture is looking for that Greg Finke believes that Jesus followers are uniquely qualified to provide. How might the “fruits of the Spirit” that Jesus has given the church from Galatians 5 relate to these cultural needs? How might we respond to the reality that many in the culture no longer believe they will find these in the church?

In John 14 what does Jesus promise to his followers that believe in and join him in his mission? How do his words encourage you to stop stalling, simply learn about being a missionary, and start doing something missional?

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### **SESSION 3: Chapters 5-6**

**Warm Up: What is the most complex challenge you have ever taken on? How did it turn out?**

Dear Friends,

Last session we were introduced to the powerful metaphor of a river that moved, making a state-of-the-art bridge useless. This metaphor helps to describe how our ministry context has shifted. This week we will look at how Jesus was always on a mission and how following his example is not as difficult as we may have thought. Once again let's begin by considering a few Bible passages:

#### **At the House of a Sinner**

*He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. 3 And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." 6 So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19.1-10)*

#### **A Sinful Woman Forgiven**

*36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. (Luke 7:36-38)*

#### **God Promises His Spirit**

*22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. 24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:22-27 NRSV)*

**DISCUSSION GUIDE:** Joining Jesus on His Mission: Could It Be This Simple?

An Inefficiently Effective Strategy

*"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, that I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11.29-30)*

1. Read Matthew 11:29-30, what does it say about joining Jesus on his mission? What do these verses mean to you personally?

2. Read Sir Francis Drake's prayer at the beginning of Chapter 5 on page 51. React to the petitions in this prayer and reflect on their implications for the way we "do church" today.

3. Respond to Finke's quote on page 54, "it is of highest importance that we listen carefully to how Jesus divides up the work that needs to be done:

- Jesus does the incredibly complex work that requires the Son of God;
- We do the incredibly simple work that requires a little child."

4. What are your thoughts about the two things we are called to do:

- Enjoy people
- Be open to respond to the things that Jesus is already doing in their lives

5. In 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 Paul talks about "making himself a servant to all" in order to present the Gospel to even a few. How could this look today?

6. What surprises you about the way that Jesus chose to engage the task of bringing people into the Kingdom? (Remember how on the night he was betrayed and arrested Jesus said, "Don't you know that I could have asked the Father and He would have at once sent 12 legions of angels?") This would have been "power"! Jesus chose weakness instead, relationships, caring and loving people, even using flawed people like his disciples.

- a. Why might this also be the best approach for us today?
- b. If it is the best approach for us what keeps us from imitating Jesus' strategy today?

7. As a result of today's discussion, what is Jesus teaching you?

**With all this in mind take another look at the scripture passages from the beginning of this lesson:**

Sometimes we think we have to change people – and that scares us. How do Jesus' encounters with Zacchaeus and the woman he forgave speak to that perception? How then does God change hearts, what might be our role in "changing hearts"? In the story of Zacchaeus what is significant about the fact that Jesus went to his house? What impact did Jesus doing this have on this "sinner"? What can we learn from this as we engage people in our "neighborhoods"? The Ezekiel text talks about God's Spirit changing hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. How does this text relate to Christ's missional strategy to reach people?

## JOINING JESUS ON HIS MISSION

### SESSION 4: Chapters 7-10

**Warm Up: What is the most spontaneous thing you have ever done?**

Dear Friends,

Last session we considered how following Jesus on his mission is actually not as difficult as we may have thought. It simply means following his example of taking the time to enjoy people, especially those that aren't experiencing Christ's grace. This week we will look at what it means to seek what is already happening in people's lives through the lenses of God's Kingdom and Mission. Once again let's begin by considering a few Bible passages:

JESUS ALREADY AT WORK:

#### **Paul at the Areopagus:**

<sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. (Acts 17.22-23 ESV)

#### **Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch:**

<sup>34</sup> The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" <sup>35</sup> Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup> As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" <sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. (Acts 8.34-38)

#### **The Kingdom Parables: The Hidden Treasure, The Pearl, The Net:**

<sup>44</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. <sup>45</sup> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. <sup>47</sup> "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. <sup>48</sup> When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. <sup>49</sup> This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous <sup>50</sup> and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (Matthew 13.44-50 ESV)

#### **Jesus on His Kingdom:**

<sup>7</sup> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 7:7-8;6:33)

#### **Discussion Guide: Seeking What's Already Happening**

Definitions:

**The Kingdom of God:** God's redemptive presence and activity in human lives; this is already in process in the world around us.

**The Mission of God:** The redeeming and restoring of human lives to the Kingdom of God.

**The People of God:** The tangible evidence of God's redemptive presence and activity among us.

Considering these definitions, Bible passages and chapters 7-10 from the book discuss the following:

1) How do the texts in Acts suggest that the Resurrected Christ was moving and shaping things so that the Gospel could find receptive hearts? How is this different from the disciples creating their own success in proclaiming Jesus?

2) Distinction of the term “God’s Kingdom”: The Kingdom of God (or heaven) is the gracious rule in the heart of Christ the King. Generally we speak of 3 Kingdoms: 1) **Kingdom of Power**-in this Kingdom God rules all creation with his almighty power. 2) **Kingdom of Grace**-this being the church on earth, consisting of each one who believes in Christ ruling the human heart. 3) **Kingdom of Glory**-God’s heaven where all the dead in Christ await the final day (note: this is not our final resting place, the New Creation is our final resting place).

What are common themes you see in the Kingdom parables? As Finke writes about “God’s Kingdom”-to which of these definitions is he referring? How best do you recognize God’s Kingdom in our midst?

3) Think about Jesus who taught his disciples: “**Lift up your heads ... behold, the fields are white and already for harvest. Pray that the Lord of the Harvest send more workers into his harvest field.**”

- What is the field? What is the crop to be harvested?
- How did the fields become ready for harvest?
- What does the phrase-“Lift up your heads” mean to you?

4) As time allows read through the example of “bringing the Kingdom” that Finke provides on pages 84-85. As you read these stories consider the evidence that the Kingdom was near. Do you see some of these things in your own dealings with people?

5) The Kingdom of God comes to people-but God works out the mission of bringing his Kingdom through means namely His Word, Sacraments and forgiveness of sins. He also chooses to bring others into His Kingdom through people like you and me! How does this reality change the value of loving, serving and spending “unhurried” time with people around you?

6) Read and discuss the following quote from page 92 in the book, what do you think it means to be agents of God’s new creation?

*We’re called, here and now, to be instruments of God’s new creation which has already launched in Jesus and of which Jesus’ followers are supposed to be not simply beneficiaries but also agents.” (N.T. Wright)*

7) Based on the book and particularly chapter 10: What is the work of Jesus and what is our work in the mission of



## JOINING JESUS ON HIS MISSION

### SESSION 5: Chapters 11-13

**Warm Up: Share with the group what it was like where you grew up. What did you like about it? What did you not like it?**

Dear Friends,

Last session we completed Part 1 of Finke's book by considering what is already happening in people's lives considering that God's Kingdom and Mission are at work around them. This week we start Part 2 of the book or "how we join Jesus" by engaging the first two of five missional living practices:

- Seeking the Kingdom
- Hearing from Jesus

As we've done in previous weeks, let's begin by considering a few Bible passages:

#### **Being Prepared and in Position**

*13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." 15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have; but do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:13-15 NIV)*

#### **Seeking What is There**

*27 To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. 28 You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' 29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. 30 He must become greater; I must become less." (John 3:27-30 NIV)*

*"So I say to you: ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." (Luke 11:9-10)*

#### **Opening Up the Gospels**

*1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4 NIV)*

*24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. 25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. (John 21:24-25)*

*30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)*

#### **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

Chapters 11-13

1. Consider the following two quotes from page 97: "Wherever you go, there you are." – Winnie the Pooh  
"And wherever you are, Jesus is already working redemptively." – Greg Finke  
What does it mean to you as a Jesus follower that Jesus has placed you exactly where he is already at work?

2. List the five missional practices that Finke Identifies in Chapter 11:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

Which of these is the most challenging for you?

3. Finke is advocating, “Living life as if we are on a mission trip every day.”

Missional living is about a lifestyle!

- a. Why is this different from a congregational mission or outreach program?
- b. Which approach do you find more appealing personally, and why?

4. The Kingdom of God has a “look and feel” among those who are the people of God (or at least it should!). What is the Kingdom like among believers? According to the Bible it’s where the fruits of the Spirit are present (Gal 5:22-23). It’s where love exists among the brethren (John 13:35). But what does the presence of the Kingdom look like among those who are not yet believers? Discuss the following:

a. It will usually look like human need. It will look like where love, hope or redemption are needed. We can look around and ask ourselves, “Where can grace be applied? Where can a little love and truth make a difference?” (Finke, p. 84)

b. How important is it for those in the Kingdom to have the “look and feel of the redeemed” for those that don’t yet believe? How does this happen?

c. Given what we’ve learned so far, “How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week?” How has Jesus shown you what is happening in his Kingdom?

5. According to Chapter 13 what are some of the ways that we listen to or hear from Jesus?

6. Finke suggests that the best way to get to know Jesus is from reading the Gospels. What are some of the reasons why this might be important?

7. Discuss and briefly summarize Finke’s suggestions for getting into the Gospels: How can you put these suggestions into practice?

With all this in mind take another look at the scripture passages from the beginning of this lesson:

How does the passage from 1 Peter support the missional idea of getting into position every day? What does Peter say are the keys to “being prepared?” How do the verses with the quotes from John the Baptist and Jesus relate to seeking God’s Kingdom among us? What does God’s part look like here, how about ours? In what way do the passages under the title “Opening up the Gospels” support the importance of reading the Gospels in order to hear from Jesus?

## JOINING JESUS ON HIS MISSION

### SESSION 6: Chapters 14-16

**Warm Up: Share one story from your life that has been meaningful or impactful for you.**

Dear Friends,

Last session we started working through part 2 of Finke's book by studying the first two missional living practices. This week we will look at the other three practices:

- Talking with people
- Doing good
- Ministering through prayer

As in previous weeks let's begin by considering a few Bible passages:

#### **Caring Enough to Listen, Talk, and Help Others**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. <sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.*" <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9.35-38)

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. <sup>35</sup> By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late." <sup>36</sup> Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." <sup>37</sup> But he answered, "*You give them something to eat.*" (Mark 6.34-37)

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. <sup>5</sup> For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. <sup>6</sup> If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. <sup>7</sup> And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort." (2 Corinthians 1.3-7)

#### **The Power of Prayer**

<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5.13-16)

#### **Discussion Guide**

"It's hard not to like someone once you know their story" – Fred Rogers

1) Discuss the quote above from "Mr. Rogers." How has this worked in your life? How can hearing people's stories help you join Jesus on His mission?

2) The opening sentences in this chapter says, "God can do more with two people talking with each other than he can with two people successfully ignoring each other." Why does this make so much sense? How might this reality

influence our relationships 1) With each other? 2) With family? 3) With neighbors? 4) People with whom we are in regular contact?

3) What makes it so easy to ignore people? Do you think as a society it is easier or harder to have conversations with people? How has having a “conversation” with someone changed over time?

4) Read together the paragraph that begins on the bottom of page 113 and finishes on page 114. How can you identify with what the author writes here? How can we, as Christ followers, change these trends?

5) What advice would you give to the “introverts” as well as the “extroverts” as they engage others as they join Jesus on His mission?

6) Respond to the following quote from page 119: *“What if random acts of kindness aren’t so random? What if the unplanned good we go around doing for people is actually planned out by God? In fact, that’s how it works. Ephesians 2:10 says, ‘For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.’*

7) Intangible to tangible – that’s what doing good is all about! The Kingdom of God is largely invisible, so when we think of the Kingdom becoming tangible or visible it happens through the participation of the people of God. Discuss examples of when the Kingdom of God has become tangible to you.

8) Our ever-present, yet invisible Savior Jesus is with us ... we know Him and trust Him. But how about those who don’t yet know Him? How can our simple acts of daily goodness help people see Jesus in a tangible way?

9) Mother Teresa said: *“Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.”* With that in mind consider:

- a. How can we plan to do good things in advance?
- b. How can we serve others in small, unplanned ways?
- c. How can we make the Kingdom more tangible to others?

10) Why is prayer such an important part of joining Jesus on His mission? Have you ever said to someone, “I’ll pray for you” but because you didn’t write it down you forgot? What if when someone asked you to pray for them or you offered to pray for someone, you did it right then and there? Do you think you could do this? Why or why not?

Now let’s conclude by taking another look at the scripture passages from the beginning of this lesson:

What do the passages under the heading: “Caring enough to Listen, Talk and Help Others”, describe as the “right attitudes” to have toward people as you engage them on a daily basis? How do these same attitudes apply to responding to the opportunities God gives us to “do good” toward others?

Read again and discuss the passage from James 5. Now try something that might be a little tough for some of you. In your group take turns praying: both general requests to God and specifically for the person on your right.

## JOINING JESUS ON HIS MISSION

### SESSION 7: Chapters 17-19

**Warm Up: What is the biggest insight or learning you have had in this study?**

Dear Friends,

For the last couple of sessions we have been working through the five missional practices that when lived out help position us to join Jesus on his mission. This week our study comes to an end and we start looking at how we can encourage each other to take what we have learned and live it out in the “real world.” As in previous weeks, let’s begin by considering a few Bible passages

#### **Considering Those God Has Put Before Us**

*5 “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ 6 If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.” (Luke 10:5-7 NIV)*

*10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:10-13 NIV)*

*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.’ 28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” 37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:27-29, 36-37 NIV)*

#### **Spurring One Another On**

*19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,<sup>20</sup> by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,<sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God,<sup>22</sup> let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.<sup>23</sup> Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,<sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10.19-25)*

#### **Discussion Guide: Chapters 17-19**

“Let’s make the most of this beautiful day, since we’re together, we might as well say; would you be mine, could you be mine, won’t you be my neighbor?” – Fred Rogers

1) Do you tend to hide out in your home (after school, work, etc.)? Why? Why do you think this has become such a trend in our society?

- 2) How can you share what is going on in the lives of your neighbors? What do you know about your neighbors; what do they know about you?
- 3) Finke writes: 53% of people have almost no one to talk to; 30% know none of their neighbors. How can we make a positive impact on those realities?
- 4) Respond to Finke's quote on page 137, "believe it or not, God put you in your current neighborhood for the same purpose; ... either way, it is not too late to join what Jesus is up to in your neighborhood.
5. What do you think of Finke's neighboring formula on page 139? Put this in your own words:  
 Unhurried time + Proximity + Activity (usually involving food) = Conversation x Over Time =  
**FRIENDSHIP**
6. Here are the missional questions that this approach gets to:
- Who are these people?
  - What is Jesus already up to in their lives?
  - How can I join Him?
- Who are some of the people around you that you can start applying these questions towards?
7. Look at the Neighborhood Prayer Map (in back of the book) Take time to briefly sketch out your immediate community and to the extent that you can describe your neighbors. Start praying for them. What are some steps you can take to better fill out your map?
8. Look over the lists of Intentional and spontaneous neighboring suggestions on pages 149–151. Pick three or four that you think you could do in your own community
9. Read and respond to how Luther approaches the need for Christians to gather and encourage one another, "*As in other matters that have to do with faith, love, and patience, it is not enough just to teach and to instruct, but there must also be daily exhortation, so that on this subject we must be persistent in preaching, lest people become indifferent and bored. For we know and feel how the devil always sets himself against this and every other Christian activity, hounding and driving people from it as much as he can.*" (Book of Concord; page 471)
10. On page 154 Finke defines "missional communities" as, "a smaller group of people who gather regularly in order to support each other as they learn to seek, recognize and respond to what Jesus is doing around them every day as he carries out his redemptive mission." Based on this definition how would you feel this group is a missional community?
11. Consider the following from page 178: "*Joining Jesus' mission is not so much about changing the whole church as it is about changing our own mind-set and practices and inviting a few friends to come with us*". What is Jesus inviting you to do in response to what you learned in this book and these studies?

Now let's conclude by taking another look at the scripture passages from the beginning of this lesson: How do the Passages under the heading "*Considering Those God Has Put Before Us*;" describe what a neighbor looks like? How do they show the importance of simply being a neighbor to others in Following Jesus on His Mission? According to the Hebrews passage God's word encourages us to stir up one another; to push each other into love and good works. Do you feel that happens enough at our church? How might we do this better?