

***Joining Jesus on His Mission* by Greg Finke**

Devotional & Small Group Study – WEEK ONE

DAY 1 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below.
- During days 1-7 (at your own pace) read chapters 1 and 2 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 1-7, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:14a NIV)

1. What does it mean to you to know and believe that God through His Son Jesus became flesh and made His dwelling among us?
2. What further impression does John 1:14 from *The Message* give you - "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood"?
3. Finke writes in Chapter 1, "...in order to join Jesus on his redemptive mission, we need to actually be with (dwell with) people who don't yet know him." Think about whom you live by, whom you work with, those in your community with whom you cross paths with regularly. **Who are you dwelling among?** Write these names down. Begin praying for these individuals *daily* that they would one day know Jesus as you do.

DAY 2 OF 42

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"And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, 'Do you see anything?' And he looked up and said, 'I see people, but they look like trees, walking.' Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly." (Mark 8:22-25 ESV)

There was a time in the winter when my car was parked on the driveway the entire night. The following morning I found that all of my car windows were frosted. I hit the heat on and cranked up the defrost. In only a few minutes, what I couldn't at first see through my windows, *things right in front and around me*, eventually became crystal clear.

1. When you came to faith in Jesus or when you've matured in your spiritual life, what was a particular nugget found in God's Word that at first looked fuzzy/foggy/blurry but then (by the Spirit's help) you came to see clearly as truth?
2. Finke writes, "People struggle to put it into words, but we're sensing that Jesus is up to something, showing us something new, inviting us to perceive what he is doing *next*. It seems to be right there in front of us and yet still just outside our ability to see clearly or articulate fully. We are like the blind man in Mark 8:22 who is beginning to see but cannot quite make out what he is seeing." **Can you relate?**
3. When it comes to living out Jesus' mission in reaching more and more people with His love and good news, this could be uncharted territory for you. Yet the mission has always been there right in front of you...you've just never seen it. **What do you find exciting/challenging** (maybe even scary)/**inspiring/moving about this missional adventure Jesus has given you?**

DAY 3 OF 42

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"And he [Jesus] said to them [His disciples], 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him."
(Matthew 4:19-20 ESV)

1. What has following Jesus looked like in your life? What net(s) have you left behind? What have you "lost" for the greater gain of knowing your loving Savior, Jesus Christ?
2. Finke writes, "...Jesus is moving out on his mission to redeem and restore all people to his Father's kingdom. And he invites us to join him. 'Come, follow me.' Joining Jesus on his redemptive mission is what I mean by the term 'missional living.' 'Missional living' is simply living each day as if it were a mission trip. The difference, of course, is that instead of being on a mission trip to a foreign land, we are on a mission trip to our own community. We are 'Neighborhood Missionaries.'"

In following Jesus and living as a neighborhood missionary what "loss" may you personally experience for the greater gain of your neighbor or friend knowing and coming to faith in Jesus?

DAY 4 OF 42

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the follow-up to yesterday's verses... "And going on from there he [Jesus] saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."
(Matthew 4:21-22 ESV)

Eventually Jesus appointed 12--a small group--to join Him on His mission (see Mark 3:13-19). And the whole world changed...

Finke writes near the close of chapter 1, "Think of a 'pinch of yeast' as it gradually spreads through 'the loaf' of our congregation...**We start with the few** who are ready and willing to come along with us and put the mindset and practices of a Neighborhood Missionary into play as part of our everyday lives."

- Whether you are reading Greg's book and this devotional on your own or with your small group, we are certainly early enough in this process (only day 4 of 42) for you to invite another, **a few**, to join you. Who may you invite to be a part of this 6-week journey?

(HINT: You may be wondering, "who would I invite?" One place to look--think of those who may be doing life in the same neighborhood/workplace/etc. with you. The more, joining you in reaching your neighborhood for Christ, the merrier.)

DAY 5 OF 42

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"For God so loved **the world**, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 ESV)

You're familiar with the verse, right? Not everyone in the world is. Certainly not football fans who watched Tim Tebow and the Denver Broncos defeat the Pittsburgh Steelers in the NFL AFC wildcard playoff game. By the next morning, John 3:16 was ranked as the top-searched item on Google. Maybe we all need to be reminded of this verse and its significance. Maybe our eyes need to be reopened to **the world** and all of the *neighborhoods* we live in as we go about His mission.

Finke in chapter 2 refers to a *neighborhood* "as any network of people to which we have regular access...obviously the 'neighborhoods' where we live qualify as do the 'neighborhoods' of our workplaces and schools...but there are many other 'neighborhoods' in which we regularly find ourselves. For instance, some of us have access to recreation leagues, yoga classes or craft beer clubs. Some of us are band parents or soccer moms, or we routinely wait with other dads as our daughters finish up dance classes. Some of us volunteer with community revitalization groups or social service agencies...Some of us are at country clubs, community centers or the Y." The list goes on.

- **So what neighborhoods do you live in?** A few days ago you were asked to list and pray for those in your life who do not-yet-know Jesus. Today make a list of your various *neighborhoods*. Maybe through this activity more people for whom to pray for will come to mind--people you never thought of praying for before. Maybe your sensitivity for the significance of John 3:16, God's love for the whole world, will grow in your heart and mind as you go about Jesus' mission.

DAY 6 OF 42

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"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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20 ESV)

For many *in* the church the word "evangelism" is found scary and intimidating. Why is that? When I began reading books on evangelism back in the '90s, while inspiring because they were certainly about people coming to know Jesus, they seemed to focus more on what *we did* for Jesus' mission. These books alluded that one's conversion to Christ would happen because of our sole efforts. That is scary...and false. Such writings put more emphasis on the "go therefore...", making readers feel alone in the act of evangelism, and less emphasis on the "I am with you always."

Finke takes this further in chapter 2, "Jesus is inviting me to join him on **his** mission. He does not give me a mission to do *for* him. Jesus is on a mission and he invites me to come *with* him...a great relief. If I go *for* Jesus, I am doing the work and seeing the results of what I can accomplish. When I go *with* Jesus, he is doing the work and I am seeing the results of what Jesus can accomplish. One is hard, the other is fun. One is exhausting, the other is energizing. One causes me to worry ('Did I do everything correctly?'), the other causes me to be at peace ('Let's see what Jesus does next.') One tempts me to force things with people, the other invites me to keep loving people."

- How does the above give you a new mindset on evangelism and what it means to be a missionary in your neighborhood?

DAY 7 OF 42

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“Look, I tell you, lift up our eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.” (John 4:35b ESV)

[*names are changed in this story*] Years ago I worked on a 3-person team. This included our supervisor, Doug, and my friend, Randy. Randy and I were Christians. Doug wasn't. Doug in fact shared critical comments with other workers about Nancy, a Catholic, who attended early morning services every day. He'd grumble, “Why would a person go to church so much? Seems ridiculous!”

After a year or so of relationship building, spending more than 8 hours a day together plus weekend hours, Doug asked us, “Why are you guys so happy?” I don't remember exactly what our response was, but it was something as short, “Jesus.”

Weeks or months later (I don't recall) an opportunity came when a famous Chicago Bears player was going to speak at a local church. We knew Doug was a big Bears fan and invited him to join us. He was enthusiastic (ripe) for this invitation. Long story short - Doug went to the event and soon became connected at that church. He was baptized there and (funny how things work out) ended up attending services twice-a-week (on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings).

Near the close of chapter 2 Finke gives us a mission lesson, “...if people are not ready, it is almost impossible to pick them. But once they are ready, they'll come looking for you...Our job is not to try and hurry people along in the ripening process. Jesus is in charge of ripening people. Our job is to watch for people who are ripe.”

Finke asks us, “So, who is ready for good news in your ‘neighborhoods?’”

Pray today that God would open your eyes to see the harvest God has prepared before you. Pray for how God may use you in whatever way to help people take a next step--a next step leading to that Jesus-step of receiving and believing in Him.

Week 1 Small Group Study

In his book, Finke recommends the following 5 questions (in bold) to be asked at small group gatherings. An additional question or two are added to help you unpack the bolded questions:

1. **How did you SEE God at work in your life this week?** What's God trying to have you pay attention to?
2. **What has God been teaching you in HIS WORD?** (Like through the daily devotions in this booklet) What's God inviting you to believe?
3. **What kind of CONVERSATIONS are you having with pre-Christians?** Finke wrote, “The practice of talking with people happens in many ways. However, all of them boil down to this: Jesus can do more with two people who are talking with each other than He can with two people who are successfully ignoring each other. So what kind of conversations are you having with the people around you?”
4. **What good can we DO around here?** What is God asking of you and how do you think you are to respond? What good can we do *as a group* in our communities to show Jesus' love?
5. **How can we help you in PRAYER?** What do you want us to ask you about next week?