

***Joining Jesus on His Mission* by Greg Finke**
Devotional & Small Group Study – WEEK FOUR

DAY 22 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below.
- During days 22-28 (at your own pace) read chapters 11 thru 16 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 22-28, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

"...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8b ESV)

As a follower of Jesus this is your identity. You are His witness, with emphasis on His. We have Jesus wherever we go (or maybe better said, He has us and uses us wherever we go).

Finke shares in chapter 11, "Jesus is very clever. Wherever he wants you to start being a missionary, he already has you there...As the great theologian Winnie-the-Pooh once observed, 'Wherever you go, there you are.' To which I would simply add, 'and wherever you are, Jesus is already working redemptively.'"

I used to pray daily for God to open up an opportunity for me to share His love with another. A well-intentioned prayer, but it falls short of the truth. I don't need to pray for God to open up an opportunity for me to share the love of Jesus with others—He provides those (plural) wherever I go. The prayer has changed to something like this, "Dear Lord, help me to better join you today on the multiple opportunities you WILL provide me to share your love and good news wherever I go."

How does the idea that "wherever you are, Jesus is already working redemptively" mess with you and/or give you new perspective about being His witness in your community?

DAY 23 OF 42

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"Seek first the kingdom of God..." (Jesus in Matthew 6:33 ESV)

Finke writes in chapter 12, "Are you sometimes irritated by the people who interrupt your day? I know I can be. Maybe now is a good time to stop seeing such moments as interruptions and start seeing them as appointments...appointments set up by God without consulting us...Wherever you go, there you are, and wherever you are, Jesus is already up to something. Therefore, coincidences become God-incidences. Good luck becomes God's anonymous provision. Bad luck becomes God's redirection of our plans."

So here is my "interruption" story...

On one summer night I was in a lousy mood, crabby and didn't want to be around anyone. I was at my worst and was really behaving like a jerk. My son wanted to play with me and I refused multiple times. Embarrassing. I only wanted to my own thing and didn't want any interruptions. Then my son wore me down enough to get me to begrudgingly play with him, his friend and his dad. While the boys were running around, his friend's dad began to open up about some tough stuff going on in his life and even shared something like, "I'm not sure why I'm telling all of this to you." I was most surprised. It pretty much shocked the jerk out of me. I listened and with the Lord's help and power showed the love of Jesus to this hurting man. This "interruption" unbeknownst to me was a God-incident. It is when the jerk shocked out of me when God opened my eyes and helped me to get over myself and seek His kingdom first.

What God-incident, first interpreted as an interruption, have you experienced in your life? How may you pray to God to open your eyes to seek His kingdom first?

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"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." (God the Father speaking of God the Son in Matthew 17:5 ESV)

Finke explains in chapter 13, "If we want to recognize what Jesus is telling us or showing us in our daily lives, it begins with us being deeply familiar with what he's already shown us and told us in the Gospels.

Let's add something new to these daily devotions. For the next 26 days, which will take us to nearly the last day of this 42-day journey, let's read one chapter from the Book of Matthew each day.

While we read each day's chapter, consider Finke's words, "Don't read to get through the words of Jesus. Read to get the words of Jesus through you."

May we also then practice what Jesus is teaching us. As James wrote, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only..." (James 1:22a ESV)

We will start with Matthew 3 where we first see Jesus in His adult ministry.

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"So Philip ran to [the Ethiopian] and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.' And the eunuch said to Philip, 'About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus." (Acts 8:30-35 ESV)

The church I attended years ago did a sermon series focused on evangelism titled, "Talking to Your Friends About Faith." I had the opportunity to teach a Saturday morning workshop during this series on how to do just that. In my opening remarks I shared that really we could change the title to "Listening to Your Friends About Faith" because when it comes down to it, listening is 90% of the conversation. In listening we better meet people where they are at when sharing the Good News of Jesus.

And good news to you introverts, as Finke writes in chapter 14, "...a strong argument can be made that introverts are actually better suited for missional conversation—once the difficulty of initiating conversation is overcome—because they would rather ask questions and listen than hear themselves talking."

Notice from the above account that Philip did initiate the conversation, but after listening to the Ethiopian and hearing what he was struggling with, "then Philip opened his mouth..." What a perfect example!

Finke closes chapter 14 with these words and a question, "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?"

And speaking of listening, from reading Matthew 4, what do you hear Jesus teaching you? What act of faith is He challenging you to practice?

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"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10 ESV)

*Good works can come in the smallest forms, even in just a smile...*Years back, at a coffee shop I frequented, one of the baristas came up to me and said, "Thanks for always coming in with a smile. Some of those Fridays when you'd come in, I may have been in a bad mood and down on life. Then I'd see you walk in smiling and think, well, maybe things aren't as dark as they seem. Maybe there is hope for the day." I had no idea! I feel blessed by God to be able to tell this story because we don't always get to hear the impact God uses through us in another's life. But these simple acts of doing good do make an impact.

As Finke points out in chapter 15, "...it is important that people see Jesus in us before they hear about Jesus from us. The good works he has prepared in advance for us to do become visible proof that Jesus is real. Words regain meaning because through our simple acts of kindness, people are seeing that the kingdom of God has come to them."

So what good can you do in your community? How can you help make the kingdom and grace of God a little more real to people with whom you cross paths? How can you show the love of Jesus even in the smallest forms?

In your reading of Matthew 5 what does Jesus teach on doing good? After listening to Him, what good will you put into practice today?

"...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthews 5:16b ESV)

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"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
(Matthew 6:10 ESV)

I led a men's Bible study group that met at a local diner. Near the close of one meeting we asked our waitress if there was anything we could pray about for her. It was a simple question. But it made an impact. She first stepped back, expressed a surprised look, and then quickly, replied, "Yes. I have a couple things you can pray about." Later she enthusiastically asked if she could share a third request. Of course we said, "Yes!" After the first exchange she left our table with a tear in her eye. She earlier shared, "You've made my day!" We prayed for her at our table after she walked away. It was a great experience.

Not to diminish the story, but considering Finke's words in chapter 16, I wonder what deeper impact could have been made if we prayed out loud with her in our presence. The trick would have been to keep it short, but take a look at one of Finke's examples of a short and simple prayer, "Dear Jesus, you already know my friend here has found out his wife has cancer. We're scared. We invite you into our trouble. We ask you to heal her and help us to trust you as you work out your plan for her life. Amen." I reread that prayer and timed it. That took 14 seconds. 14 seconds would likely not have been interfered with our waitress' work. Something to try next time.

Finke offer multiple ways to minister to others through prayer. A few of these include:

- "We can use our morning devotion time to prayer for our neighbors..."
- "Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer we can be more intentional about inviting the kingdom to come and the will of the Father to be done in our neighborhood, workplace or school as it is in heaven."
- "Jesus tells us to ask the Father to send out workers into his harvest (see Matthew 9:37)"

**In your reading of Matthew 6, in what ways does Jesus teach us to pray?
What will be your next step in ministering to others through prayer?**

DAY 28 OF 42

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"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19a ESV)

As I think back some of my best spiritual conversations happened while chaperoning at my son's class trip, taking my car to the mechanic, at a Starbucks, out to lunch at a local restaurant, and when walking my dog.

We revisit Matthew 28:19 (previously discussed on day 8).

The big question for joining Jesus on His mission is WHEN? When can I get this accomplished in an already packed schedule?

Finke unpacks this at the end of chapter 16, "As most people know, Jesus says in Matthew 28, 'Therefore go and make disciples...' What you may or may not know is that the Greek participle that is most commonly translated as 'go' in Matthew 28 is literally to be translated as 'while going.' 'While going, make disciples...' That changes a few things, doesn't it? Jesus isn't saying, 'go' as in 'go find room in your hectic day to make disciples,' but is rather saying, 'while you are going through your hectic day make disciples.'...Our hectic life is our missional life...We don't have to struggle to add another layer of volunteer hours to our lives in order to 'be missional.' Our lives as they are now are missional... if we open our eyes to see."

How does this un-complicate things for you as you join Jesus on His mission?

From your reading of Matthew 7 - "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:24 ESV)

Week 4 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?