

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

Devotional & Small Group Study – WEEK FIVE

DAY 29 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below.
- During days 29-35 (at your own pace) read chapters 17 and 18 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 29-35, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

"When he [Jesus] came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him." (Matthew 8:1 ESV)

"When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him..." (Matthew 8:5a ESV)

"And when Jesus entered Peter's house..." (Matthew 8:14a ESV)

"And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him." (Matthew 8:23 ESV)

"And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him." (Matthew 8:28a ESV)

In chapter 17, Finke shares, "Remember how we said 53% of Americans have almost no one to talk to? There are reasons for that. And one of the reasons is that we can live within 20 feet of other people, and it's normal not to get to know each other. Recently I read that 30% of Americans know none of their neighbors." He later shares the idea of having a neighborhood party and we will get into that tomorrow and the next day.

For now, let's look at Jesus from Matthew 8. Look at the verses above. What do you see?

I see Jesus always on the move and initiating contact with others. Now some made steps toward Him when they came within His vicinity, but He took the first relational step in making Himself present and available with people.

What do you learn from Jesus' example? What is He teaching you? Even before planning a party, how can you take a next step towards being present and available with your neighbors?

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"As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But when he heard it, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'" (Matthew 9:9-13 ESV)

Finke shares in chapter 17, "...if we are going to learn how to join Jesus on his mission, our neighborhood is a logical place to start...How do we start? How do we join what Jesus is doing in our neighbors' lives if we don't even know their names? The Finkes' conclusion? Have a party."

Some people refer to the above Jesus account as a *Matthew Party*. Those in attendance at a Matthew party are a mix of Jesus followers and those who do not yet know Him. It is an opportunity for people to let their hair down, be themselves and enjoy the company of others. It is an opportunity to burst the "Christian bubble" for Jesus followers who only know other believers. It is an opportunity for those who do not yet follow Jesus to see that Christians can enjoy a good time too.

Whether it is having many neighbors over or a few who live on either side of your home or apartment, what will be your next step to break the ice and maybe even...PARTY!!!!?

DAY 31 OF 42

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"And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him." (Matthew 10:1-4 ESV)

Unhurried Time + Proximity + Activity (usually involving food) = Conversation
Conversation x Over Time = Friendship

I love this neighboring formula which Finke shows us in chapter 17.

Take a close look at it. Reading through Matthew 10 and other accounts of Jesus, how do you find Jesus having modeled this formula with His disciples and others He encountered?

How does Jesus' example, with insight from the neighboring formula, give you a better grasp on developing friendships with your neighbors?

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"Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." (found in Matthew 11:28-30 MSG)

Finke wraps up chapter 17 with 3 questions:

1. Who are these people?
2. What is Jesus already up to in their lives?
3. How can I join him?

Look closely at question 2. Read the verse (above) from Matthew 11. How does this verse help you gain a better grasp of question 2? How does it provide both instruction and relief?

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"And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' And he answered, 'You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.' But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who

stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' And Jesus said to him, 'You go, and do likewise.'" (Luke 10:25-37 ESV)

In your reading of Matthew 11, compare verses 9-14 to the parable of the Good Samaritan. How was Jesus a neighbor to the man with the withered hand?

Finke, referring to Jesus' question in Luke 10:36, comments, "It is a clever question because it puts the reader into the position of wanting to be a part of the right ending to the story. In other words...I don't want to be that person who is in too much of a hurry or too full of themselves to be a neighbor to someone in their path. I want my story to be like the Samaritan's story. Jesus' response? 'Go and do likewise.'"

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? How will you go and do likewise?

DAY 34 OF 42

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"As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." (Matthew 13:23 ESV)

Here Jesus explains the hope for us as His disciples--as we hear the Word, understand it, live our lives by it, we will bear fruit. We will make disciples who make disciples and so on and so on. This is also the hope for those in our lives who do not yet know Him.

As we join Jesus on His mission, our role is to help our neighbors gain a hearing of the Word so that they may understand it. This begins in an environment of conversation and trusting relationships.

"Neighboring Environments can be planned intentionally or happen spontaneously (that is, we can put ourselves into position to have spontaneous but meaningful encounters with neighbors)."

Below is a short list of neighboring environments Finke shares in chapter 18:

- Have a cook out or ice cream party and invite your neighbors.
- Have a fire in the fire pit, provide the ingredients for s'mores and invite your neighbors.
- At work look for someone who is regularly overlooked and underestimated. Invite them to lunch with you and one or two other employees.
- Find reasons to be in your front yard rather than closed up in the house or apartment. Watering flowers, weeding, sitting on the front porch or driveway, etc. puts you into position to see who might wander by.
- Be a "regular" at a lunch spot. Start to get to know the wait staff and other "regulars." Tip well.

Finke shares a total of 30 ideas. Check them out!

What idea did you most gravitate to? What will be your next step to execute that idea?

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"And after he had dismissed the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain by himself to pray." (Matthew 14:23a ESV)

It doesn't say in Matthew 14 what exactly Jesus prayed about. But this time of prayer happened after His feeding of the 5,000 plus. Just a guess that their salvation was included on His mind and heart in prayer to the Father.

As Finke mentions at the end of chapter 18, "And what do we do before, during and after we start our missional work of neighboring and putting the 5 Practices into play? We take up the missional gift of prayer." In the Appendix at the end of the book Finke provides a tool to help us with this—a Neighborhood Prayer Map.

How will you start drafting your map today? It can start with just one household.

Week 5 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?