

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

Devotional & Small Group Study – WEEK SIX

DAY 36 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below AND Matthew 15
- During days 36-42 (at your own pace) read chapter 19 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 36-42, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

"Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.' And the disciples said to him, 'Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?' And Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' They said, 'Seven, and a few small fish.' And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over. Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children." (Matthew 15:32-38 ESV)

Finke titles chapter 19 - "With a Little Help From My Friends." It is about the importance of encouraging one another as we join Jesus on His mission. We will dig into chapter 19 this week, but to start things off, let's look at Jesus and His not only words of encouragement but His acts of encouragement.

In the above text, we read about Jesus feeding the four thousand plus. When faced with a hungry crowd, Jesus' disciples asked, "Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?"

WHAT?!?!?!?

Take a peek at the preceding chapter. Didn't Jesus just feed a larger crowd not too long ago from five loaves and two fish?

How soon we forget the amazing work of Jesus in our lives. And yet despite (and probably because of) our forgetfulness, He continues to pour on the blessings and encouragement into and onto us so that we may move forward in our work for His kingdom.

What does this teach you about the importance of encouraging one another as we reach our communities with the love of Jesus?

DAY 37 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below AND Matthew 16
- During days 36-42 (at your own pace) read chapter 19 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 36-42, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..." (Hebrews 10:24-25a ESV)

Finke in chapter 19 defines a missional community as such, "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."

- **What elements of this definition do you find in Jesus' missional community (His disciples) as read about in Matthew 16?**
- **How does Finke's definition of a missional community compare with the small group and/or ministry team of which you are a participant?**
- **How could your small group or ministry team take on the characteristics of a missional community? What first step would be necessary for this to happen? How and when will you and your group/team take this first step?**

DAY 38 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below AND Matthew 17
- During days 36-42 (at your own pace) read chapter 19 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 36-42, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

GATHER - "And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves." (Matthew 17:1 ESV)

GO - "And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to [Jesus]..." (Matthew 17:14a ESV)

GATHER - "As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them..." (Matthew 17:22a ESV)

GO - "When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter..." (Matthew 14:24a ESV)

Finke shares in chapter 19, "Throughout time, the rhythm of God's people has been to gather and then go, to come together for worship and Bible teaching and then go out for life and mission, to gather for word and sacrament and then scatter into the harvest fields." Look at the pattern of gather and go in Matthew 17.

What advantages, for you personally, do you find in this cycle of gathering and going? How are you experiencing this cycle in your life? Where are you finding interruptions to this cycle? What needs to happen to keep this cycle moving fluidly?

DAY 39 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below AND Matthew 18
- During days 36-42 (at your own pace) read chapter 19 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 36-42, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

Jesus said to His disciples, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.'" (Matthew 18:10-14 ESV)

In a small group meeting I attended, we went around and shared our missional stories. We heard a story of one being very intentional in meeting his neighbors. We heard stories from a couple members on the challenges of seeking the Kingdom during a busy work day. We heard a story of one regularly offering the words "God bless you" when encountering strangers. We heard of conversations one has with a co-worker who does not believe in God. We listened to each other. We learned from each other. We encouraged each other to continue being about Jesus' mission.

I can only speak for myself, but I know hearing such missional stories brings more to the surface the missional values found in Scripture which in turn move me to practice living missionally and I know, from the Word and the Spirit's lead, more stories will be produced.

Finke says it well in chapter 19, "...when we hear each other tell our stories about how we saw God working last week, it inspires us do the same. Not only are we inspired, we gain insights and tools for how to do it. When we hear each other's stories about talking with people, we recognize how close we have been to being able to have a similar story. When we hear each

other's stories about struggling, we realize we're not the only ones who struggle and we can help each other re-engage the missional adventure."

What about you? Are you a part of a group, a missional community, processing these things together? If not, how may God use you to form one?

DAY 40 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below AND Matthew 19
- During days 36-42 (at your own pace) read chapter 19 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 36-42, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42,46-47 ESV)

What elements of starting strong and remaining strong as a community--which joined Jesus on His mission--do you find in Acts 2?

Let's look at the reverse side of things...

As Finke shares in chapter 19, "As I coach missional communities, it is not unusual for a group to start strong, but then begin to fade after a season. The reasons for this are predictable:

- They stop meeting regularly. When we stop meeting regularly, we stop receiving the support, encouragement, insight and accountability we need to stay on the adventure with Jesus.
- The missional stories start to become general and redundant...It is usually because we have stopped being intentional about putting the 5 Practices into play in our daily lives.

- Even with the 5 Practices in play, it seems like not much is happening kingdom-wise. When this happens it is often because prayer has become less important in our group time."

What are ways to counteract the potential slide for your group from continuing to join Jesus on His mission together?

What are you hearing from Jesus today in Matthew 19?

DAY 41 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below AND Matthew 20
- During days 36-42 (at your own pace) read chapter 19 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 36-42, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up..." (1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV)

While joining Jesus on His mission, it is very easy to get discouraged. We desire to see people clearly cross the finish line--come to know Jesus, be baptized. God, however, may be using us in very needed ways while folks take spiritual steps preceding their confession of Him as Lord and Savior. Because of our discouragement, we can quickly give up. This is why we need each other for encouragement and for building one another up.

Finke shares some stories near the end of chapter 19. Based on their circumstances and personal make up, who do you most relate to?

- **Stephen - the somewhat introvert, idealist, who "likes to think things out and see things go according to plan."**
- **Sam - the amateur tattoo-artist, introvert ex-marine who is out of the country more days for work than he is home in the States.**
- **Mary Ann and Jason - "underemployed, and struggling to make financial ends meet," but who are "ready to rethink a lot of things"**

in their life and learn how to look for what Jesus was doing in their life."

What does a missional community mean for each of these individuals? From what you read, how were they encouraged and built up by the members of their community? What is this saying to you?

What do you learn of the 5 Practices in Matthew 20?

Seeking the Kingdom (Matthew 20:1-16); Hearing from Jesus (all of Matthew 20); Talking with People (Matthew 20:20-34); Doing Good (Matthew 20:20-34); Ministering Through Prayer (Matthew 20:29-34)

DAY 42 OF 42

READING GUIDE:

- Read today's devotion below AND Matthew 21
- During days 36-42 (at your own pace) read chapter 19 from *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.
- After days 36-42, meet with your small group and discuss the 5 questions found on the back of this week's devotions.

"And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" (Matthew 21:9 ESV)

The Hebrew word for *Hosanaa*, Hhoshiah nnah, means "Save now!" What does this say about the urgency of Jesus' mission to save those... who do not yet know Him, who are lost in sin, who are addicted to things that would harm them (and those around them), who are broken, who have never known grace, who have been abused, who have been persecuted, who have been bullied, who have received no mercy, and so on?

What does the urgency of "Save now" say to you as you join Jesus on His mission?

Week 6 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?