

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: WEEK 1



Follow Me

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ACTS 1:4-8, MATTHEW 14:13-14, EPHESIANS 2:8-10
11/12/2017

MAIN POINT

God wants to use you to help rescue the world.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is one thing you can do well that not many other people can do well?

How often do you get to use this talent? When was the last time you did?

Do you think most Christians think a lot about doing extraordinary things for God? Why or why not?

Most of us spend the majority of our lives doing normal, everyday kinds of things. But God has always used ordinary people to do extraordinary things. In fact, when Jesus was on the recruiting trail for His first followers, He didn't visit the best schools or most prestigious families; He instead went to the shore and found common, everyday fishermen. That's incredibly encouraging for normal people like us, because it means that when ordinary people are willing to follow Jesus, God will use them to do extraordinary things. God asks people of all stages and circumstances of life to simply "follow me."

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 1:8.

In Acts 1, Jesus gave His last instructions to the disciples before He ascended into heaven. Much like the Great Commission it was a call to reach people with the good news of the gospel and spread the message of Christ. God wants to use you to help rescue the world.

What does it mean to be Jesus' witness? What are we witnesses to?

Why was the Spirit important for the disciples' mission? Why is He important for ours?

Jesus told the disciples to wait because He knew that He was about to ascend to heaven. With His ascension the

disciples would have been alone, but Jesus called them to wait for the Holy Spirit to come. The Spirit would be the power to accomplish the mission He had given them in the Great Commission and the mission He gave them here. The Holy Spirit is the power to live the Christian life and to reach others with the truth of Christ. When we follow Jesus, His Spirit empowers us to rescue the world.

Where do you feel called to be Christ's witness?

In what circumstances is it easy for you to share God's love with others? In what circumstances is it difficult?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 14:13-14.

What do we learn about Jesus from these two short verses? What just happened, and why would it cause Jesus to withdraw to a desolate place?

What example does Jesus set for our ministry to others?

The phrase "When Jesus heard about it" (v. 13) refers to the death of John the Baptist, who was killed by Herod. Hearing about the death of His cousin and friend drove Jesus to retire to a "desolate place" to be alone to mourn and spend time with the Father. Jesus is not a God who is distant from us, but One who experienced our sorrow and acquainted Himself with grief. However, His compassion didn't only extend to His friends, but also to all who came to Him.

Who were these people who were coming to see Jesus, and why were they drawn to Him?

Crowds followed Jesus everywhere He went, some seeking His teaching and others pursuing healing. Imagine the situation Jesus found Himself in: Jesus wanted to be alone but could not find the space to be alone because the crowds would not stop following Him. Naturally, most of us would have been agitated. Yet Jesus was not agitated, He was compassionate upon the people and chose to serve them. In much the same way, every day there are people in your life who need to experience Christ's love.

Why did Jesus take the time to heal these people? What was the focus of His ministry in these moments?

How closely would you say your reasons for serving others align with Jesus'?

The focus of Jesus' ministry in these moments was the glory of the Father over and above the rest He desired. Sometimes serving others to the glory of God calls us to put aside our preferences and do what is best for someone else. Serving this way is not something that comes naturally to us, but is born in us as we learn to walk with Jesus and follow Him.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 2:10.

Who are the "we" in Ephesians 2:10? What were we created in Christ Jesus to do?

Why do you think God wants us to know that we are His workmanship? Is it difficult for you to believe this about yourself? Why or why not?

If we don't follow Jesus now, who all misses out?

If God has prepared these good works for us to do, how does this affect the way you live your life tomorrow at work, school, or home?

One of the goals of salvation for us is the fruit of Christlike character and of good deeds. In eternity past God prepared ahead of time that His redeemed people would do these good works as evidence of His grace. Here is His power not only in giving us new life but also in helping us to walk in good works throughout this life and into eternity. We cannot do anything to earn salvation. Yet God means for us who have received salvation to produce good works. If we have been given new life, raised with Christ, and seated with Him, we will certainly do good works as evidence that we have received this great salvation. If we don't follow God in obedience today, everyone we encounter misses out on an opportunity to see Him through us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is standing in the way of you embracing Jesus' call to follow Him more fully?

How do your daily habits and routine need to change in response to that call?

PRAY

Thank God for the call to follow Jesus. Ask Him to continue to help you embrace what it means to follow Him and be an ambassador for His kingdom.

COMMENTARY

ACTS 1:8

Some have suggested that this key verse of our book may contain a threefold table of contents: Jerusalem, Acts 2:42–8:3; Judea and Samaria, Acts 8:4–12:24; ends of the earth, Acts 12:25–28:31. We cannot know if Luke had that kind of division in mind, but the book unfolds in a fascinating manner somewhat along that pattern. Notice that the call to witness is not limited to any select group of people, since it spreads from the apostles to the 120 believers and on throughout the pages of Acts. Nor can we restrict it only to service in our own churches or to some kind of "professional ministry." Every believer should be a "world Christian," able to function for the Savior from the other side of the street to the other side of the world.

MATTHEW 14:13-14

14:13-14. While we cannot be certain of the specific reason Jesus withdrew, it seems to fit the context if we understand him to be moving further from the centers of opposition to the countryside. It is also possible that Jesus had heard Herod was beginning to focus attention on him (14:1-2), so he withdrew to avoid the kind of treatment John had received.

Matthew's language gives a fourfold emphasis to Jesus' desire for solitude: (1) he withdrew; (2) he went by boat so the crowds on foot could not follow him; (3) he went to a solitary place; and (4) he went privately, emphasizing separation from the crowds, not from his disciples. If we assume that Jesus withdrew to mourn John's death, we see that Jesus had a deep emotional side and desired to be alone with his circle of friends.

In Luke 9:10 we are told that the "solitary place" was near Bethsaida, which was most likely on the northeast coast of the Sea of Galilee. The people, in such desperate need of a shepherd, and perhaps also being shaken by John's execution, followed by foot when they learned of Jesus' departure. From the towns emphasizes the desolate setting to which they followed Jesus.

Verse 14 implies that the crowd arrived at Jesus' destination ahead of him (clearly stated in Mark 6:33-34). It is possible that his journey by boat never took him out of sight of land. Those on land could have watched as they ran, anticipating

where he would land. The crowd was large, and the crowd was needy. Even though he had not had a chance to process his grief over John, the Messiah-King had compassion on the people, and he went back to work, healing their sick. So strongly motivated was he to fulfill his mission of compassion that he put aside his deep personal needs until later that evening (14:23).

EPHESIANS 2:10

One of the goals of salvation for us is the fruit of Christlike character and of good deeds. In eternity past God prepared ahead of time that His redeemed people would do these good works as evidence of His grace. Here is His power not only in giving us new life but also in helping us to walk in good works throughout this life and into eternity. We cannot do anything to earn salvation. Yet God means for us who have received salvation to produce good works. If we have been given new life, raised with Christ, and seated with Him, we will certainly do good works as evidence that we have received this great salvation.