



ELIMMISSIONS

SMALL GROUP LEADERS NOTES: Mission and the Story of God – week 5

This week, we will explore the implication of the resurrection of Jesus for the Church's mission. Jesus is victorious over sin and death! He burst out of the grave in resurrection power to give full and eternal life to all who believe. The central message of our mission is the resurrection, for through it, Jesus redeems a lost and broken creation. Has our central message been diluted with the plethora of good works the Church does? How do you marry compassion ministries and proclamation ministry? What is our commission by Jesus to all who identify as disciples?

RECAP: Last week we explore act 4 of the Story of God: Redemption – what can you remember? How has it impacted you over the last week?

THIS WEEK: Read Act 5 – The Church (SHARE OUT THE READING OF THIS STORY):

After His death and resurrection, Jesus gathered His followers back together. He began to show them from their history and their sacred writings, that what had happened to Him was all according to plan. God was still on a redemptive mission, and He was sending them out to announce His reign to the world.

During the next forty days Jesus showed them His death and resurrection were needed to:

- Take the penalty for their sin on Himself.
- Defeat Satan.
- Redeem them from their slavery to sin.
- Secure the renewal of His creation.

Jesus' friends couldn't have been more excited. They were sitting in Jerusalem with Jesus, the one and true resurrected King. He was teaching them. He was about to take His throne and usher in the end of history. Finally, what they had been waiting, hoping, and longing for was finally here!

Not so fast. Jesus told Peter, John, and the others it was not yet time, and the story wasn't finished yet. There were more people who still needed to hear this good news about the victorious king and His good Kingdom. It was not yet time for His Kingdom to come in full. Jesus' disciples learned that they and their friends were going to be sent out into the world as ambassadors.

Just as those angels had heralded the good news of the Jesus' birth so many years before . . .
Just as Jesus had heralded the news of His Kingdom and showed people what life is like in His Kingdom .
. .

They, too, were going to be sent out to herald the good news of the true King's life, death, and resurrection. Together their lives and their voices would be a foretaste of and an invitation into the Kingdom life.

Before He ascended, Jesus told His disciples, "I am leaving you now, but I will come again one day. But for now, while you are here, I will send the Spirit of God to live in and among you. He will empower you for your mission to bring the good news of me and my Kingdom, making new disciples of me in every nation." Then He left, ascending to the right hand of the Father.

Jesus' followers (about 120 of them) sat in Jerusalem, waiting for the promised Spirit to empower them to live out the mission Jesus had given them. They waited and prayed as days went by. Finally, on the tenth day, the Spirit arrived with a great rush of wind, and tongues of fire were seen leaping above their heads. They were united, empowered, and directed to live out the mission Jesus had given them. To tell all these different people, they were empowered to speak in languages they had never spoken before in their lives so everyone could hear the good news.

At this time, many people came into town because it was the time of Pentecost, a Jewish feast that drew people to Jerusalem from all over to celebrate the end of the spring harvest and God's grace in providing for them. When those people heard the great sound of the wind, they came rushing to see what was going on. Peter and his friends, empowered by the Spirit, started to connect the dots for people, showing how their longings for a Deliverer, a true and perfect King, were fulfilled in Jesus, the One whom they had killed. He was truly the Messiah, the Deliverer, and they had to repent and believe this good news. Thousands of people believed the true story that day.

As time went on, Jesus' disciples were sent out from Jerusalem. They spread all over the known world. They told as many people as they could about the one and true King and what He had done. They set up communities of people who believed and lived according to this true story wherever they went. These were called churches, and those who followed this King were called Christians. Jesus' followers began to orient all of their lives around this true story, devoting their lives to serving each other, being a family that was not defined by cultural norms or racial boundaries but by their crucified and risen Saviour, learning from the Scriptures and one another, and living as missionaries to the world.

Many of those who followed Jesus were exiled, tortured, and even murdered for living their lives according to the true story. Still the good news of a risen Saviour spread, bringing freedom and forgiveness to people across the world. As the good news spread through the cities and out into rural communities, people of all walks of life began to see the truth of the story. One such man, Saul, was a religious leader whose life mission was to kill these followers of Jesus. Saul encountered the risen Christ, and his life was transformed by the power of the gospel to the point that he became one of the main missionaries we learn from, even today. (You might know him by his new name, Paul.)

As these communities spread across the world, some of Jesus' followers who had witnessed the risen Christ were directed by the Holy Spirit to write letters to these communities, teaching them how to live faithfully on mission. They answered their questions, corrected their errors, and redirected them back to Jesus and His mission, which was now theirs to carry out by the power of the Spirit.

Through the church, we see God is still on His redemptive mission. It is as the church lives out her mission to declare and demonstrate the gospel, that people are able to see what it is to live under the good reign of God and come to worship King Jesus.

This is the act of the story in which we find ourselves today.

RETELL THE STORY: In a few minutes retell the story as a group, see if you can retell the events of this story in the order they happened. As you do think through who God is, what has God done, who are we and how do we get to live in light of this?

Observe: WHO IS GOD?

Reflect: WHAT HAS GOD DONE?

Discuss: WHO ARE WE?

Act: HOW DO WE GET TO LIVE?

Questions to guide discussion:

1. Why is the primary role of the Church?
2. Are there any barriers to fulfilling the purpose for the Church as Jesus imagined it? What can you do to remove those?
3. What is the significance of Pentecost for living a missional life? Have you experienced this?
4. Why were the apostles willing to die for their faith in Jesus? Why have others followed their example?
5. What has it cost you to follow Jesus?
6. Where are you sent? Is Jesus calling you to consider cross-cultural mission? Why?
7. Who will you pray for, for proclamation opportunities? What action do you need to take?

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