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EPISODE 7

SMALL GROUP

Life



Connections

WIRED FOR COMMUNITY

Creative Group

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SCENE 2

A SACRED CONNECTION

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR HUMANS TO FIGURE IT OUT. Even before we were taught that we should pray, most of us did it—even if it was just an internal cry for help. Before pithy acronyms to help us pray more effectively and study our Bibles; before best-selling books that offer the seven keys to a great Christian life; and before manuscripts, lessons, and *Small Group Life* curriculum to facilitate our discussion about doing life with God, we cried out to Him. It only took people a few generations of experiencing life without God in the garden to figure out that humanity was unraveling at the speed of sin—and that we need God.

Could it be that turning to God when faced with adversity is a fundamental instinct? We may pursue things other than God, but ultimately they leave us wanting. Is it possible that embedded into our souls is the urge to call out to Him when our lives are a mess? Like a hurting child to his caring parent, it only makes sense that the created would instinctively want to connect with the Creator. We can ignore our internal affinity for God for a season, but the truth is that our hearts are inextricably linked to Him.



This
Kurdish
warrior

AAH

CONNECT

10 min.

- 1** The online social community has exploded since the beginning of this millennium. Over 500 million people are on Facebook alone.
What's the best part about the social media experience?
What's the worst part about it?

- 2** Are there significant people from your past with whom you have lost contact? Have you desired to or actually reconnected with them?
What is the story behind your desire to find and reconnect with them once again?



"We need to find God, and He cannot
be found in noise and restlessness.
God is the friend of silence. See how
nature — trees, flowers, grass —
grows in silence; see the stars, the
moon and the sun, how they
move in silence. We need silence to
be able to touch souls."

— Mother Teresa

GROW

40-50 min.



This session's video can be
streamed or downloaded at
www.lifeway.com/sg1

Leader: *Throughout this study you will come across text similar to the following paragraph. As you prepare to lead the study, decide how you want to present this material to the group.*

As He entered Jerusalem one last time, Jesus understood the true essence and purpose of prayer. That's why when Jesus entered the temple area, His anger was directed toward those using the temple for their own personal profit rather than as a place to pray. Many people were selling sacrifices and exchanging currency at inflated prices:

"And He said to them, 'It is written, My house will be called a house of prayer. But you are making it a den of thieves!'"

MATTHEW 21:13

1. CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH CALLING THE TEMPLE A "HOUSE" OF PRAYER. WHAT WORDS COME TO MIND THAT DESCRIBE A HOUSE OR HOME THAT YOU MIGHT NOT INITIALLY THINK OF WITH CHURCH OR TEMPLE? (INTIMATE, WARM, CENTRAL, ETC.)
2. MARK 1:35 STATES THAT, "VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING, WHILE IT WAS STILL DARK, HE GOT UP, WENT OUT, AND MADE HIS WAY TO A DESERTED PLACE. AND HE WAS PRAYING THERE." DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE PLACE WHERE YOU MEET WITH GOD? WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT IT? SHARE WITH THE GROUP.

Jesus had a few places He liked to go to pray and connect with God. Scripture records that when Judas was ready to betray Jesus, he knew where to find Jesus because they all used to go there often (John 18:1-3). It is on the journey to this special prayer place that we find Jesus praying in John 17:

¹ Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said:

Father,

the hour has come.

Glorify Your Son

so that the Son may glorify You,

² for You gave Him authority
over all flesh;

so He may give eternal life

to all You have given Him.

³ This is eternal life:

that they may know You, the only true God,

and the One You have sent—Jesus Christ.

⁴ I have glorified You on the earth

by completing the work You gave Me to do.

⁵ Now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence
with that glory I had with You

before the world existed. JOHN 17:1-5

Jesus prayed that His life on earth would mean something. He prayed that His energy would be spent on the most valuable thing—God's glory. As you think about the following questions, ask yourself "What do I value the most in life? Do I spend time praying for what I value the most? Do I pray for what really matters?"

Leader/Question #3: Prayer is a spiritual discipline that Jesus emphasized often to His disciples by word and by example.

3. WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH IN LIFE? HOW DO YOU THINK CONNECTING TO GOD THROUGH PRAYER WILL HELP YOU IN THIS ENDEAVOR? IS PRAYER MORE THAN A WISH LIST TO YOU? EXPLAIN.

4. HOW COMFORTABLE WOULD YOU BE PRAYING THIS PRAYER TO GOD: "GOD, USE ME TO GLORIFY YOUR NAME!"—EVEN IF YOU DID NOT KNOW WHERE THAT PRAYER WOULD EVENTUALLY TAKE YOU? EXPLAIN.

5. HOW DO YOU THINK PRAYING SUCH A CHALLENGING PRAYER HELPS YOU CONNECT TO GOD MORE INTIMATELY?

Leader: Explain that no matter what the situation is, good or bad, honest prayer is a type of worship.

There were many Old Testament believers who followed their instinctive desire to call out to the Lord. David seems to have prayed to God his entire life, and many of those prayers were captured in the Psalms, like the one below. Then and now, prayer facilitates true worship.

1 Be gracious to me, God,
according to Your faithful love;
according to Your abundant compassion,
blot out my rebellion.
2 Wash away my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I am conscious of my rebellion,
and my sin is always before me.
4 Against You—You alone—I have sinned
and done this evil in Your sight.
So You are right when You pass sentence;
You are blameless when You judge.
5 Indeed, I was guilty when I was born;
I was sinful when my mother conceived me.
6 Surely You desire integrity in the inner self,
and You teach me wisdom deep within.
7 Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones You have crushed rejoice.
9 Turn Your face away from my sins
and blot out all my guilt.
10 God, create a clean heart for me
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

PSALM 51:1-10

Leader/Questions #6-#8: There is much we can learn from the heartfelt prayers of other believers.

6. CIRCLE OR HIGHLIGHT KEY PHRASES THAT STAND OUT TO YOU FROM DAVID'S PRAYER OF CONFESSION. WHAT THINGS ARE BEING COMPARED/CONTRASTED?

7. TO WHAT DEGREE DO YOU FEEL (OR HAVE YOU FELT) THIS KIND OF OPENNESS WITH GOD?
HOW HAVE THOSE TIMES OF OPENNESS AFFECTED YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY?

First Samuel 1 tells the story of a woman in misery because of her inability to conceive. Hannah poured her heart out to God in prayer, begging Him to give her a child. God did as Hannah asked, and here is her response to His faithfulness:

1 My heart rejoices in the Lord;
 my horn is lifted up by the Lord.
 My mouth boasts over my enemies,
 because I rejoice in Your salvation.
2 There is no one holy like the Lord.
 There is no one besides You!
 And there is no rock like our God.
3 Do not boast so proudly,
 or let arrogant words come out of your mouth,
 for the Lord is a God of knowledge,
 and actions are weighed by Him.
4 The bows of the warriors are broken,
 but the feeble are clothed with strength.

1 SAMUEL 2:1-4

8. WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU THE MOST ABOUT HANNAH'S PRAYER TO GOD? IN WHAT WAYS CAN YOU IDENTIFY WITH HER?
9. BEING ABLE TO EXPRESS WHO GOD IS BECAUSE OF WHAT HE HAS DONE IS THE ESSENCE OF PRAISE AND ADORATION. THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOU PRAYED TO GOD BECAUSE HE CAME THROUGH FOR YOU. DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE.

Whether we are in deep despair and confessing sin or on top of the mountain experiencing victory, we can speak openly with God. He is our Creator, and nothing we say will take Him by surprise. He wired us to be in community with Him, so it's natural that we call upon Him no matter what our circumstance.

Leader: Before transitioning to Serve/Go, found on page 37, close with a time of individual prayer, allowing members to write down an open and honest prayer to God.

SCENE 2

2nd take

CONNECT

15 min.

- 1** If you had to choose one avenue by which to connect with God, learn from Him, and respond for the next three months, which of the following ways would you choose? Why?

- ☐ Solitude
- ☐ The great outdoors
- ☐ Movies and media
- ☐ Literature and books
- ☐ Science and technology
- ☐ Art galleries and museums
- ☐ Social gatherings and people-watching
- ☐ Volunteering and serving
- ☐ Other: _____

- 2** When you pray, what do you talk to God about the most? Why do you think this is the case?

- 3** If you could add one thing to your prayer life to make it better, what would it be?

GROW

40-50 min.

Leader: Read this paragraph aloud. Ask for a volunteer to read the Scripture for the group. Facilitate the discussion with the questions that follow.

Several Scriptures from Jesus Himself teach us basic principles about prayer. Most of these instructions come from Jesus' most famous sermon found in Matthew 5-7. This message is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount.

⁵ Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. I assure you: They've got their reward! ⁶ But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ When you pray, don't babble like the idolaters, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words. ⁸ Don't be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him. MATTHEW 6:5-8

1. HAVE YOU HEARD PUBLIC PRAYERS THAT CAME ACROSS AS LESS THAN GENUINE? WHAT DID THEY LOOK LIKE OR SOUND LIKE? HOW DID THAT IMPACT YOU?
2. DESCRIBE THE MOST SINCERE PRAYER THAT YOU HAVE HEARD OR UTTERED. WHAT DO YOU THINK MADE IT SINCERE?

3. WHAT ASSUMPTIONS ARE MADE ABOUT THOSE WHO ARE NOT SINCERE WHEN THEY PRAY? WHAT MIGHT IT MEAN THAT "THEY'VE GOT THEIR REWARD" (V. 5)?

4. WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL THINGS YOU CAN DO TO AVOID PRAYING INSINCERELY?

"Hypocrite"

In Greek language and culture, a "hypocrite" was an actor. On stage they pretended to be something or someone they were not. Many times they would put on a mask to disguise themselves—especially if they were playing several roles in one play. Many of the hypocrites in Jesus' day were the religious elite, and the majority of Jesus' harshest rebukes were aimed at them.

5. WHY DO YOU THINK RELIGIOUS PEOPLE PRETENDING TO BE CONNECTED TO GOD BROUGHT SUCH HARSH REBUKES FROM JESUS?

Commonly known as the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13 is actually better represented by the title the Model Prayer because Jesus gave it as an example for us to model our prayers after. Take time to read this prayer aloud as a group:

⁹ Our Father in heaven,
Your name be honored as holy.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And do not bring us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen. MATTHEW 6:9-13

6. WHAT ELEMENTS OF THIS PRAYER DO YOU USUALLY INCORPORATE INTO YOUR PRAYERS?
WHICH ONES NEVER REALLY OCCUR TO YOU?

7. IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE MODEL PRAYER DESCRIBE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son
into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!" GALATIANS 4:6

Leader/Question #8: Intimacy with God is an important attribute of Christ.

8. HOW DOES JESUS' INSTRUCTION ON PRAYER AWAKEN A NEW KIND OF INTIMACY FOR YOU TO EXPERIENCE GOD AS "DAD?" IS THIS NOTION AWKWARD, LIBERATING, STRANGE, COMFORTING, ETC.? EXPLAIN.
9. MATTHEW 6:10 SAYS WE SHOULD PRAY FOR GOD'S KINGDOM TO COME. WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE TO YOU? HOW WOULD PRAYING ALONG THESE LINES CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDES, EMOTIONS, AND BEHAVIORS?
10. VERSE 12 INSTRUCTS US TO KEEP OUR RELATIONSHIPS HEALTHY, HEALED, AND WHOLE—WITH GOD AND WITH THOSE AROUND US. HOW WOULD PRAYING ALONG THESE LINES LEAD YOU TO MEND FRACTURED RELATIONSHIPS?

Leader: Close this session by allowing each member to say a sentence prayer to God, asking Him to help them be always open and honest with Him. Then transition to Serve/Go, found on page 37, if you did not do it last week.

SERVE GO

10 min.

"Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

Worship God through prayer by taking the following challenge:

- 1 Choose one day of the week that you can pray for an extended period of time: 30, 60, or 90 minutes.
- 2 As you think about things that need prayer this week, write them down on note cards.
- 3 When it is time to pray, call upon your heavenly Dad and let Him hear your concerns.
- 4 Use the Model Prayer in Matthew 6. Also pray that God would be glorified in your life (John 17).
- 5 Do this once a week for a month and see if your relationship with God deepens.

SCRIPTURE NOTES

Matthew 21:13 Jesus' quote is from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. The commotion in the Court made the temple unsuitable as a house of prayer. Zechariah 6:12-13 foretold that Messiah would purify the temple. (See Zech. 14:21.)

John 17:2 God's granting of authority to Jesus (5:27) marks the beginning of a new era (Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:13-14; see Matt. 11:27; 28:18). **3** Eternal life comes from knowing God and Jesus, the sent Son (1:4; 5:26; 20:31). Knowing God is not confined to intellectual knowledge; it involves living in fellowship with Him.

Psalm 51:5 While not aiming to strictly identify the origin of human sinfulness with events at biological conception, David recognizes that sin pervades humankind as a universal condition from the very outset of our existence. Sin is everywhere and in everyone, and David confessed that it had been with him since birth.

Matthew 6:5 Standing in the synagogues (gathering places for Jewish worship) or on the street corners when praying ensures that many people saw the hypocrites praying; but Jesus taught that God has no regard for such actions. **6** Since the true disciple prays for a heavenly rather than a human audience, privacy is ideal for genuine prayer. Jesus described the Father as the One who is in secret. God is ever-present. The disciple can encounter Him in the most obscure locations.

Matthew 6:9-13 By commanding His disciples to pray like this rather than simply “pray this,” Jesus demonstrated that this prayer was offered as a model rather than a mantra to be recited. The first person plural pronoun **Our** implies that Jesus intended this prayer to be a model for corporate prayer, i.e., a prayer for when disciples gather as a group.

Galatians 4:6 Christians receive adoption as sons instead of being a son of the bloodline. Jesus Christ is the only Son naturally related to God the Father. All other sons (including females, since "sonship" was a legal status) are by adoption.

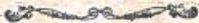
Abba means "Father" in Aramaic, but it has a personal tone, such as "Daddy" or "Papa."

PRAYER

Scripture Notes are excerpted from the *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010). Visit MyStudyBible.com.

1. Facebook statistics, Facebook.com [cited 16, Nov. 2010]. Available on the Internet: www.facebook.com/#/press/info.php?statistics.

Mother Teresa quote can be found on the Internet at www.thinkexist.com.



SCENE 6



A GLOBAL CONNECTION

DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THERE'S POWER IN THE GOSPEL? Explaining why he wasn't ashamed of this good news, the apostle Paul wrote, "It [the gospel] is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Jesus' story is powerful enough to have transcended all time and to have changed many lives. The gospel needs no validation from us. It needs no "wow factor." It just needs to be shared.

William Carey was so convinced of this truth that he took the risk as a young cobbler-turned-minister to oppose the established views of the church in his day and move to India. David Livingstone risked much by taking this message to the heart of Africa. David Brainerd died among Native Americans who were otherwise neglected by the early settlers.

The message of the gospel began in a poor corner of the Roman Empire. It spread throughout Asia and Europe before coming to the New World and now is making its way back again to the generations of nations that have since forgotten its truth. Will God's fame be restored among the nations? Let's examine our role in seeing that it is.

What would happen if
the corner never heard
the gospel?

TO
ALL
People



CONNECT

10 min.

Leader: Be sure to have a copy of or access to Coca-Cola's mission statement for the following activity.

If you visit Coca-Cola online (thecoca-colacompany.com), you can find the company's mission statement, vision, and values. Like the gospel, Coca-Cola has travelled the world with an audacious goal.

- 1** How do you first respond to a mission statement like Coca-Cola's? Choose the statement that best describes your response.

- That's pretty cool.
- That's way too audacious.
- What does any of that have to do with drinking a soda?
- I want to work for Coca-Cola.
- This is totally impossible.
- Where was this mission statement when you introduced "New Coke" in 1985?
- Other reaction: _____

- 2** Why is it important for companies, families, or individuals to have a clear and concise mission or purpose statement?

*'Some wish to live within the sound of
a chapel bell; I wish to run a rescue
mission within a yard of hell.'*

-C.T. Studd



GROW

40-50 min.



This session's video can be
streamed or downloaded at
www.lifeway.com/sgl

Leader: Throughout this study you will come across text similar to the following paragraph. As you prepare to lead the study, decide how you want to present this material to the group.

At some point after His resurrection, Jesus gave a few last instructions to His followers: go, baptize, make disciples, and teach (Matthew 28). The going part was meant for not only their people but all nations. These instructions continue to drive the church's mission today and are often referred to as the Great Commission.

⁴ While He was together with them, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "This," He said, "is what you heard from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked Him, "Lord, are You restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?"

⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ACTS 1:4-8

1. THERE IS ALWAYS EXCITEMENT AND ANTICIPATION WHEN YOU KNOW A BIG PROMISE IS ON THE WAY TO FULFILLMENT. HOW DO YOU THINK THE DISCIPLES FELT WHEN JESUS TOLD THEM TO WAIT FOR GOD'S PROMISE?
2. YOU READ EARLIER THAT THE GOSPEL CONTAINS ITS OWN POWER (ROMANS 1:16-17). IN THIS PASSAGE, WE ARE PROMISED GOD-SIZED POWER THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WE SHOULD RESPOND TO THIS PROMISE AND THIS POWER?

Leader Questions #3 and #4: Sharing one's faith and supporting missions are important spiritual disciplines.

3. JUST AS JESUS IS AT THE CENTER OF THE GOSPEL'S POWER, THE HOLY SPIRIT IS AT THE CENTER OF YOU SHARING THE GOOD NEWS. WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE IN RELYING ON THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER TO ACCOMPLISH KINGDOM WORK? EXPLAIN.

4. IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE WOULD YOU NEED GREATER EMPOWERMENT FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR YOU TO CONNECT TO THE NATIONS AND LIVE ON MISSION WITH GOD?

Paul sees the progression of the gospel as originating with the Jewish people, then being proclaimed to the rest of the world. His logic is simple (and inspired), as he communicates how important it is for Christ-followers to be ready and willing to be used by the Holy Spirit to connect with other nations.

"panta ta ethne"

Sometimes translated "all nations," this phrase actually reflects not a geopolitical force but an ethnolinguistic group of people. Missiologists often refer to people groups or unreached people groups (UPGs) in the church's work to fulfill the Great Commission. Rather than trying to connect with countries or regions—China or Africa, for example—our mission is more focused by remembering the people in those countries—the Han, the Hui, the Zulu, or the Maasai. Our task is to see that the gospel crosses cultural barriers in addition to national borders.

Leader: Have someone read this passage, and then answer the questions below as a group.

¹⁴ But how can they call on Him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things! ROMANS 10:14-15

5. CONTINUE PAUL'S PATTERN: "AND HOW CAN THEY BE SENT UNLESS THEY _____." HOW DOES YOUR ANSWER INVOLVE YOU IN THE BIG PICTURE OF CONNECTING TO THE NATIONS?

Crossing cultural boundaries has always required an extra measure of faith for God's people. Consider Joshua and Caleb as they reported about the giants they had seen in the Promised Land. Or Jonah as he reluctantly entered the great city of Nineveh. Thankfully, God gives us the faith we need when He calls us to such a task.

¹ Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: ² "Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach the message that I tell you." ³ So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the Lord's command. Now Nineveh was an extremely large city, a three-day walk. JONAH 3:1-3

6. VERSE 3 SEEMS TO IMPLY A PRETTY QUICK TIMELINE FOLLOWING VERSE 2. WHAT DO YOU THINK WENT THROUGH JONAH'S MIND BETWEEN THOSE TWO VERSES? HAVE YOU EVER FOUND YOURSELF IN THAT GAP? DESCRIBE.

From Palestine to Nineveh to the next dark and distant land where the church must go, the Book of Revelation gives a glimpse of the future for those who believe in Jesus. Around God's throne, a multitude of peoples gather to worship Jesus, The Lamb:

⁹ After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were robed in white with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

**Salvation belongs to our God,
who is seated on the throne,
and to the Lamb! REVELATION 7:9-10**

7. READ REVELATION 7:9-10. FOR EVERY NATION OR PEOPLE GROUP TO BE REPRESENTED IN HEAVEN, WE MUST CONSIDER THAT GOD HAS ENTRUSTED US WITH HIS STORY. WHY DO YOU THINK GOD WOULD DO THIS?

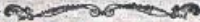
8. DISCUSS WAYS YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE RIGHT NOW. LOOK AT THE EXAMPLES BELOW AND THEN ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SHOW YOU THE PRACTICAL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HAVE A GLOBAL IMPACT FOR GOD.

- Contribute financially to a publishing ministry that is translating the Bible into a new language.
- House an exchange student from a foreign country.
- Partner with an organization like Compassion International to ensure a child will be cared for.
- Have your small group adopt a UPG. Check www.prayerthreads.imb.org for more details.
- Insert other ideas from the Holy Spirit here: _____

Leader: *Close in prayer, focusing specifically on Question #8. Let each group member share one way they feel compelled to impact the world for God and then pray that God will make those opportunities available. Then transition to Serve/Go, found on page 101.*



SCENE 6



2nd Take

CONNECT

15 min.

Leader:

Begin by showing the following clip from the movie *End of the Spear*. Read the scene set-up found on page 107. Cue the DVD to chapter 14 entitled "Forgiveness" and play it from 1:04:11 through 1:10:06.

Then discuss the following questions.

- 1 This is a true story about a group of missionaries who lost their lives attempting to connect with other nations. Do you think this type of mission work is a thing of the past or still relevant and necessary?
- 2 Dayumae finally shares the gospel with Kimo. What is your first response to her version of the good news? Why do you think the gospel can be translated into any language and crossed over into any culture?

GROW

40-50 min.

Leader: Read aloud the paragraph below. Ask someone to read the Scripture for the group. Facilitate the discussion with the questions that follow.

By this time in Paul's ministry journey, he has chosen Timothy to accompany him. They are traveling to unreached parts of the world to share the good news. Something peculiar happens, though, and it affects and redirects where Paul and Timothy will go:

¹Then he went on to Derbe and Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish woman, but his father was a Greek. ²The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him. ³Paul wanted Timothy to go with him, so he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, since they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴As they traveled through the towns, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem for them to observe. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.

⁶They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia and were prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the message in Asia. ⁷When they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸So, bypassing Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹During the night a vision appeared to Paul: A Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, "Cross over to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to evangelize them.

ACTS 16:1-10

1. IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY DESCRIBED ABOVE SEEM OUT OF THE ORDINARY BASED ON WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT GOD AND HIS MISSION?

2. WHY DO YOU THINK GOD WOULD STOP HIS MESSENGERS? HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED THIS KIND OF "HOLY HALT" WHEN SHARING YOUR FAITH?

Leader/Question #3: Following the Spirit's leading is an attribute of Christ that is invaluable to the Christ-follower.

3. WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKS, SOMETIMES IT'S "YES" AND SOMETIMES IT'S "NO." HE CAN SPEAK TO YOU WHEN YOU ARE AWAKE OR ASLEEP. WHEN YOU CONSIDER YOUR JOURNEY IN CONNECTING WITH THE NATIONS, HOW ARE YOU EXPECTING THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GUIDE YOU? WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE PAST?

Philip was on mission—ready to connect to the nations—when he encountered an Ethiopian man:

"The Spirit told Philip, 'Go and join that chariot.'"

³⁰ When Philip ran up to it, he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

³¹ "How can I," he said, "unless someone guides me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ACTS 8:29-31

4. THIS KIND OF DIVINE ENCOUNTER STILL HAPPENS TODAY. HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL KNOWING YOU MAY NEED TO GET OUTSIDE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE IN ORDER TO FOLLOW THE SPIRIT'S LEAD? DESCRIBE THE CHALLENGE FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE.

Leader/Question #5: *Our focus here is on helping the group see the ripple effect God can have on people through our obedience.*

5. WHAT MIGHT THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND COWORKERS BE IF YOU ALLOWED YOUR LIFE TO BE INTERRUPTED BY GOD FOR THE SAKE OF THE NATIONS?

Read this passage about a married couple that was used by God to help someone else on his journey.

²⁴ A Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, an eloquent man who was powerful in the use of the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus.

²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught the things about Jesus accurately, although he knew only John's baptism. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. After Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him home and explained the way of God to him more accurately. ²⁷ When he wanted to cross over to Achaia, the brothers wrote to the disciples urging them to welcome him. After he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace. ²⁸ For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating through the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.

ACTS 18:24-28

6. AQUILA AND PRISCILLA INSTRUCTED APOLLOS ABOUT THE WAY OF GOD "MORE ACCURATELY." WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS SAYS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MESSAGE ITSELF AS WE CONNECT TO THE NATIONS?

7. DESCRIBE PRISCILLA, AQUILA, AND APOLLOS—STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, ETC.

8. HOW CAN YOU TAKE THE ACTION FROM THIS STUDY AND APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE TODAY?

A Call to Missions

Sometimes we discuss God's calling on specific individuals, but other times we talk about God's general calling for all Christ-followers. There really shouldn't be any tension between these two notions. God commands everyone to be on mission within his or her regular sphere of influence, but He also calls some individuals to take the good news around the world.

Perhaps God hasn't asked you to travel the world with His message. When you hear about global missionaries, let it remind you of your role in local missions. Don't discount the role you have in your local area because all people, near and far, need God. Instead, let it remind you to pray for those who are connecting to the nations and to support them financially when possible. Always be open to the possibility that God might call you to serve globally as well.

***Leader:** Close in prayer. Ask God to show you the specific mission He has for you. Then transition to Serve/Go, found on page 101, if you did not do it last week.*

SERVE GO

10 min.

Connecting to the nations—where do we begin?

Missions opportunities are endless. There are short-term and long-term opportunities. Sooner or later, God might ask you to spend a week or the rest of your life connecting to the nations globally, teaching the gospel to people around the world. In the meantime, consider the following options:

➤ **Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.**

The Holy Spirit is active in sending those who are called around the world. He will never steer you or your family in the wrong direction. If you don't know what to do now, ask Him. Be patient—He will show you.

➤ **Adopt a nation.**

Find out the social, spiritual, and physical condition of a nation and post the needs somewhere in your home—on the fridge, a bulletin board, or bathroom mirror so you see them every day. Let the list remind you and your family that God has asked us to connect to the nations. Visit www.imb.org/main/aroundtheworld.asp for a listing of people groups you can support.

➤ **Research worldwide missions organizations.**

Your church. Find out what your local church is already doing to connect with the nations.

Local associations. This might be within your denomination, or it may involve a cross-denominational partnership in sending mission teams across the world. Visit the International Mission Board (<http://going.imb.org/>) and the North American Mission Board (<http://www.namb.net/vols/>) or your own group's sending body for mission opportunities.

➤ **Logon to www.rightnow.org/ServeNow/.**

Search the different ways you can “serve now,” including short-term church planting, business managing, literacy teaching, and serving as a midwife.

SCRIPTURE NOTES

Acts 1:6-7 Restoration of the kingdom of Israel was something for which all first-century Jews longed. It was commonly believed that Messiah, son of David and heir to his throne, would accomplish this restoration. Jesus deflected the disciples' misguided question and repeated His command that they were to be His witnesses near and far (Matt. 28:19).

Romans 10:14-15 What must occur for someone to call on the name of the Lord? Someone must first be sent to proclaim the gospel message, and then listeners must pay attention and believe. In the absence of any one of these factors, no one can call on the name of the Lord.

Acts 16:9 God gave Paul a vision to communicate His will for the direction his ministry should take, just as He had done with Peter (chap. 10). Paul saw a Macedonian man plead with him to cross over the Aegean Sea to Europe and help them. Thus it seems Paul was restricted from preaching in other places because God planned for him to "evangelize" (v. 10) in Macedonia.

Acts 8:29-31 Philip's question and the Ethiopian's response imply that the Old Testament passage the eunuch was reading (Isa. 53:7-8) required interpretation in light of what God had done in Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 18:26 We see here that speaking boldly about Jesus is not enough. One must also accurately understand the faith. Priscilla and Aquila did both Apollos and the kingdom a favor by taking time to instruct him.

PRAYER

Name

Request / Praise

Answered