

of Following Jesus

772
were walking along the road, a
to him. "I will follow you
you go."
plied, "Foxes have holes and
air have nests, but the Son of
place to lay his head."
to another man, "Follow me."
plied, "Lord, I will follow you
wherever you go."

773
who rejects you rejects me; but he who re-
jects me rejects him who sent me."
The seventy-two returned with joy and
said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us
in your name."
plied, "I saw Satan fall like light-
ning from heaven. ¹⁹I have given you au-
thority to trample on snakes and scorpions
and to overcome all the power of the ene-
my; nothing will harm you. ²⁰However, do

2017 STARTER KIT WEEK 11

CALLED TO SPREAD THE NEWS

FOR YOUR YOUTH GROUP OR SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

as about to go. He told them,
est is plentiful, but the workers
k the Lord of the harvest, there-
nd out workers into his harvest
I am sending you out like lambs
ves. ⁴Do not take a purse or bag
and do not greet anyone on the

you enter a house, first say,
his house. ⁶If a man of peace is
peace will rest on him; if not, it
to you. ⁷Stay in that house, eat-
inking whatever they give you,
ker deserves his wages. Do not
nd from house to house.

you enter a town and are wel-
what is set before you. ⁹Heal the
re there and tell them, 'The king-
d is near you.' ¹⁰But when you
n and are not welcomed, go into
and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your
sticks to our feet we wipe off
u. Yet be sure of this: The king-
d is near.' ¹²I tell you, it will be
able on that day for Sodom than
wn.

to you, Korazin! Woe to you,
For if the miracles that were
in you had been performed in
idon, they would have repented
sitting in sackcloth and ashes.
ll be more bearable for Tyre and
he judgment than for you. ¹⁵And
naum, will you be lifted up to the
you will go down to the depths. ¹⁶
ho listens to you listens to me; he

privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see
what you see. ²⁴For I tell you that many
prophets and kings wanted to see what you
see but did not see it, and to hear what you
hear but did not hear it."

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law
stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he
asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal
life?"

²⁶"What is written in the Law?" he re-
plied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷He answered: "'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, 'Love your neighbor as
yourself.'"

²⁸"You have answered correctly," Jesus
replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he
asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰In reply Jesus said: "A man was going
down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he
fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped
him of his clothes, beat him and went away,
leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened
to be going down the same road, and when
he saw the man, he passed by on the other
side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to
the place and saw him, passed by on the
other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he trav-
eled, came where the man was; and when
he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went
on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his
own donkey, took him to an inn and took

HERE IS WHAT WE PROVIDE IN EACH SESSION:

1. A brief reading on the topic. This can be read, but of course should be shared instead in the leader's own words, adding or subtracting details that fit your group. Usually, there are Bible readings and questions worked into the text.
2. A short devotion that brings home the principles of the topic of the week. This is intended to be shared with the whole group.
3. An activity suggestion. These are simple, requiring few, if any, materials, but we all learn and retain better if we do something physical with what we've heard and seen.
4. A short skit. If you have time to rehearse and learn, these can be done on different weeks, or even for other meetings such as church services. But they can also be and done in impromptu fashion, each person reading his/her part expressively. Always allow time to discuss people's reactions after skits.
5. Very important: Each week's starter kit includes a page called "7 Days of Soul Food." Print these out and give copies to each person, or give each person the link if they have online access. These are personal applications that will carry the devotion through the whole week. It is highly recommended that each person begin some sort of prayer journal and use it all year. We general think of journals as being full of writing, but if you don't like to write, you can draw, doodle, paste in pictures that bring the lessons of the week to mind — anything that helps you draw closer to God.

THE STORY

CALLED TO SPREAD THE NEWS

The basic concept of the Great Commission was not one of the things that Martin Luther first learned about during his Bible study. The Catholic Church was already very active in spreading its beliefs far and wide. There were three problems: 1) many of the beliefs did not stand up under careful Bible study; 2) the motivation was fear—they wanted to save people from the ever-burning hell of an angry God and increase the number of people under the church's control; and 3) their methods were often by force, even torturing or killing those who refused to go along with them.

When Luther learned the glorious truth about God's free and abundant grace, not just to save a person's soul, but to give a person victory now and change the whole life, he was struck by an entirely new kind of missionary zeal. He preached everywhere he went, joyfully sharing this new understanding of how the Christian could live by faith.

We have already examined the idea of having a desire to share the gospel, and ways that we can strengthen that desire. This time we'll examine the fact that spreading the Gospel is an actual, God-given *calling* on every Christian life. The foremost way this calling is seen, and the one we usually think of first, is the call to paid ministry as a church pastor, a Bible teacher, a public evangelist, and so on. Some of you may have that call, whether you know it yet or not.

Beyond those possibilities, however, is the call for all Christians to be actively involved in telling others the Good News that God loves them—really—right now, as they are, and wants them in heaven with Him. As we study, we will bear both these realms of ministry in mind.

Let's look at the Great Commission as Jesus first gave it.

Have someone read **Matthew 28:18-20**.

What are the individual parts of this command? (*Invite a scribe to write the ideas the group comes up with.*)

Did you notice that the first sentence is, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"? When any church, human institution, or human being claims its own authority instead of leaning *wholly* on Jesus' au-

thority, they are in great danger. It's just like the Ten Commandments. They don't begin with "thou shalt," they begin with "I am." Only after we recognize God's authority over us, and only after we realize fully that that authority is complete love and compassion rather than force and vengefulness, *then* we eagerly begin to share the gospel. In fact, sharing becomes a way of life.

What are the next things Jesus asks us to do, in the order that He asks them?

(Answers will include: Make disciples, baptize, teach.)

Do you think any of these things are only for paid pastors to do? If so, why, and which things may any believer do?

In verse 20, what does Jesus end with? Again, it's reassurance of His presence and help.

We can find more details about our Great Commission in Acts. *Have someone read Acts 1:4-8.*

What does Jesus tell them to do first in verse 4? What do you think is the result when we try to witness without taking this step first?

Do you notice something the disciples get distracted with? What is it and what does Jesus tell them?

In verse 8 there is a specific order in which Jesus sends them. Why do you think this is so? Did you know that within one lifespan after Jesus went back to heaven, His disciples had spread the gospel throughout the then-known world from Great Britain to Asia, and including at least the northern parts of Africa?

Conclude this portion of the evening discussing briefly the makeup of the early church. Were there paid pastors? In what way? How did they decide what things were to be done by apostles and what things were done by members? How is our church re-formed (changed) today and why do you think it needs to be different in a different age?

To think about: What is *your* calling?

DEVOTION

Let's face it—following God's call in *any* direction always requires reformation and transformation. Let's consider the case of John Mark, a story from which we can learn a lot. According to Col. 4:10, John Mark was a cousin to Barnabas, one of Paul's most faithful helpers. We know from Acts 12:12 that John Mark's mother, Mary, had a large home in Jerusalem, where believers often gathered. This is where Peter went after he was miraculously released from prison.

One day, when Paul and Barnabas were there, perhaps at this very house, John Mark decided he wanted to go on a missionary journey with them. Of course he was welcome. There may have been other unnamed companions, as well; in Paul's letters he often mentions lots of co-workers that aren't necessarily "official" missionaries.

Have someone read **Acts 13:2, 3**. Here is where we get our first clue to the subject we are considering. Who does the Holy Spirit say to set aside for mission work? What do the others do to honor this call from God?

Notice that only Paul and Barnabas are actually set aside by prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands. This could be like our division of paid ministers from lay people. John Mark (and any other companions) were called by God just as you and I are, but were not called in the same capacity to be *set aside* for this work as Paul and Barnabas were.

So they set off. Chapter 13 details some of the difficulties they ran into, and apparently John Mark decided the missionary life was too hard after all. In 13:13 he leaves. Now, at this point, nothing is said about how or why he leaves. For all we know from this verse, it was all fine. But we learn differently a couple of chapters later.

Read or have someone read **Acts 15:36-38**. Ah. There was more to the story. John Mark didn't just leave, he "deserted them." And in so doing, he disappointed, inconvenienced, and angered Paul, and probably Barnabas, too, at the time. But Barnabas' name means "encourager," and he was more ready to forgive and give second chances than Paul, who was very strong-willed himself and didn't understand other people's weaknesses.

Yet.

Read the next two verses, 39-40. What happened? Do you think this

helped or hindered God's work? How much territory could they now cover, with two groups instead of one?

Fortunately, God had transforming and reforming plans for each of these men. One of the lessons Paul learned is given in **2 Cor. 12:7-10**. **Read this passage.** What is Paul learning? Do you need to learn the same lesson?

We don't know how Paul's and John Mark's reconciliation came about, but we do know that it did, because in two places, in Col. 4:10-11 and 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul recommends John Mark and even calls him his "son."

List some of the lessons you think can be learned from this story.

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Make a list on the board of all the things that have to be done in order to put on a large youth evangelistic series. Be sure not to leave out any behind-the-scenes work. Now figure out who in your group has the right skills for each of those tasks. Do you have everyone you would need? What kinds of skills, if any, are missing from your group? You could even decide to actually plan and execute the series, and then evaluate how well the skill sets fit together. What would happen if you mixed up the jobs and gave them to people who didn't have the right skills? On the other hand, how do you discover hidden gifts you didn't know God had given you until you try new things?

A 14-year-old girl was once assigned to speak in a large youth rally. She was so frightened she seriously didn't think she could do it at all. But she did, and today she is a speaker. Sometimes God brings out unexpected things in surprising ways.

SEVEN DAYS OF SOUL FOOD

SEVEN DAYS' WORTH OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind (Luke 10:27). To put it another way, body+heart+mind=one living soul.

We can't divide ourselves into different sections, but it's useful to look at these different aspects of ourselves and be sure we have a well-balanced faith that uses all the avenues of a soul. Each of these starter kits will include a week's worth of food for your soul in each of these four methods of understanding and expression.

Write about each of the following in your prayer journal this week. Each day strive to use language of emotions, thought, physical health and strength, or spirit on the given days.

DAY ONE: Re-read the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Write about things you already do or would like to do to fulfill your part of this mission. Also write about it if you don't think you do anything, and you would like to try. Ask God to show you one thing you can do.

DAY TWO: Heart. Read Acts 9:36-43. How did Dorcas work for God? If you asked her, do you think she would have considered what she did as gospel ministry? Do you think it was? How did she use her heart for others to help them find God? Prayerfully connect with these emotional themes and consider how God wants to work in your heart this week.

DAY THREE: Mind. Think through a mission statement for yourself. This can change as you change and grow; just create one for now, this stage of your life. How does God want to work in your mind this week?

DAY FOUR: Strength/body. In Bible times, there were only a few ways to "go into all the world." You could walk, ride an animal, ride in a cart pulled by an animal, or travel in a row-boat or sailboat. That was it. In some parts of the world, these ways are still largely used. How could you use your own feet to do what Isaiah 52:7 says? What are the ways God wants to strengthen your body this week?

DAY FIVE: Soul/spirit. As you prayerfully ponder the heart/mind/body insights God has given you so far this week, ask God to show you precisely what gospel calling He has for you right now, while you are young.

DAY SIX: You can practice on your family, community, and church. Find ways to share God's love that don't include preaching unless it is welcome and asked for.

DAY SEVEN: Use day 7 to create something beautiful that reflects what you have learned. Write a poem or song or story. Create a poster. Write a letter. Paint or draw a picture. Make a sign. Do some sidewalk chalk art or writings. Build something. Create a podcast or blog post or Twitter post(s). Make food and give it to someone in need. Use whatever creativity God has given *you*. We all have something. Share the love!

a short skit

CALLED TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

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A SHORT SKIT (ABOUT 15 MINUTES)

CHARACTERS

1. John Mark
2. Paul
3. Barnabas
4. Mary, John Mark's mother
5. Other people, if desired (early, in Mary's house; later, with Sergius and Elymas)
6. Voice of Holy Spirit (someone with strong voice, reading from farther back in room)
7. Elymas the sorcerer
8. Bar-Jesus the false prophet
9. Sergius Paulus the proconsul
10. Silas

PROPS

1. Designate one area as the king's chamber in Act 1 and the rooftop in Act 2.
2. Let the other side of the room be the outdoors, unless you do this skit outside.
3. For Act 3, it would be good to have a table or desk with a chair, and paper and pen.

Act 1

(Group is in **Mary's** house, with John Mark, Paul, and Barnabas.)

Mary Welcome to my home! Please tell us some stories of the work you are doing for God. How are people receiving you?

Paul We have traveled many places, and there are often hardships. Most people don't listen, or even mock us, but some accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ, blessed be His name!

Barnabas It's just wonderful how many men and women, and even children, too, love to listen to stories of Jesus' life!

John Mark I would love to go with you next time you go!

Barnabas You would be welcome!

Mary (clasps her hands together in joy) Oh, my son! This is wonderful!

Voice of Holy Spirit "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

(Everyone looks startled, then they act out prayer, fasting, and laying hands on Paul and Barnabas.)

Everyone Good-bye, good-bye! God bless you!
(Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark go away from group.)

Act 2

Group including **Elymas** the sorcerer, **Bar-Jesus** the false prophet, and **Sergius Paulus** the proconsul stand together. There could be other people as an audience if desired.

Bar-Jesus (to Sergius) I'm telling you, my lord, these men are false! They are turning the people away from the true faith and claiming that their prophet, a criminal who was rightfully put to death by Rome, has risen again! (He looks contemptuous.)

Elymas Paul and his companions are stirring up the city! You should arrest them!

Sergius I want to hear what they have to say for myself. Summon them here. (The other two bring Paul and Barnabas and John Mark to him. Mark looks scared and hangs back behind the others.)

Paul My lord, I am happy to tell you the true story of Jesus, who lived and died for us all, even Gentiles!

Sergius (looks interested) For *all*? Really?

Barnabas Oh, yes, sir. Jesus is God's only Son, and He loves every single person, man or woman, boy or girl, poor or rich!

Elymas Lord, you can't listen to them! They're crazy!

Paul (looks sternly at Elymas) "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time."

Elymas (cries out and grabs his eyes) I can't see! I can't see! Help me! (He gropes for a hand and Bar-Jesus leads him out.)

Sergius (amazed) I believe!

John Mark (backs away, looking scared, stammering) Uh, I'm going...I think I need to go back home now. I, uh, I think I shouldn't have left my poor mother alone! Bye! (Paul and Barnabas call after him, but he leaves.)

Act 3

(Paul and Barnabas and a few others are standing together talking. Silas is among the group. John Mark is there, looking ashamed and humble. He should react to the discussion as it develops.)

Paul Let's go back and visit the cities where we've been and see how they are doing.

Barnabas That's a good idea! Let's take John Mark with us.

Paul (angrily) That quitter! I'm not taking someone who deserted us as soon as things got a little difficult!

Barnabas Brother Paul, the Lord is forgiving and I think we should be, too. The boy needs another chance.

Paul Not with me he doesn't! If you take him, I'm not going!

Barnabas Fine! Then I'll take him with me and go a different direction. We can sail to Cyprus.

Paul Go then! Silas, will you go with me?

Silas (a little embarrassed) Uh, yes, certainly, brother Paul.

(The two groups separate and walk in two different directions.)

John Mark

Thank you, Barnabas, for standing up for me. I promise I'll do better this time. I have reformed, by the grace of God. In fact, I'm thinking about collecting stories and writing a book about Jesus' life. (The two walk away, their voices falling into a murmur.)