

Each day we will look through some passages from the Bible to further look at a component of our out relationship with the missing. Each day will also include some background on what was happening during the time that the scripture is talking about, some reflection or discussion questions and a prayer direction to guide you as you pray. In addition, one of our pastors will be doing a short podcast each day giving their reflection and some application. You can find it at www.iheardsomethingcooltoday.com.

Enjoy the Journey

Day 1 – It's all in the view

From the Bible: Matthew 9:35-38

Background: Scan the entire chapter 9 of Matthew. Jesus heals 5 people and raises a girl from the dead. Sandwiched in between some of those are the calling of Matthew to be a disciple and a discussion with the religious leaders. The passage you read is the very end of Matthew 9 and is followed by Jesus sending out the 12 disciples to do the ministry that he been modeling for them. These four verses (35-38) give us a picture of Jesus. We see the external things he was doing. He was going through the towns teaching people about the Kingdom of God and healing people. Verse 36 gives us the internal motivation that drove him to do those things. It was how he viewed those who were not in a relationship with him. These people were far from him and most likely acted like that. I bet they did mean, hurtful things, but Jesus was not turned off or angered by them. It says he sees them for what they really are; lost, roaming aimlessly without direction. His heart breaks for them and he is driven to do what he can to bring them into the Kingdom. He passes on his view to his disciples so that they will have the same internal view and desires for those they will come into contact with as he sends them out.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- Think of the people who are far from God that you come into contact with, what are your initial thoughts of them?
- Are they the same thoughts that Jesus says he has of them (vs. 36)?
- Do you need a vision correction?

Prayer Direction: Ask God to help you see people the same way he sees them. This takes having his own heart so ask God to reveal where your heart is differing from his and repent of whatever he shows you. Like Jesus tells his disciples in verse 38, ask God to send out workers into his harvest field and commit to being one of those workers. Begin praying for the missing in your life daily if you do not already.

Day 2 – Fishers of men

From the Bible: Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11

Background: I think I would enjoy how they fished than how we mostly do it. Sitting on a shore or in a boat for hours waiting for a fish to come and bite the hook is boring. When they fished, they would take their boat into an area, drop a net in the water, toss a bunch of bait in the area and then pull the net in hoping to catch in it a lot of fish. We are not sure if Jesus already knew the fishermen listed (Peter, James and John) or just hops in the boat of these guys and asks them to push out so he can teach the crowd. He then repays them their service to him by giving them a mountain of fish in their nets. He then invites them to leave their boats, but not their skills. He says he wants them to focus on fishing for people instead of fish. During the next two days we are going to look at some parts of following Jesus' example as we fish for people. Before we go there we must first set our minds and lives to do it. It is not a suggestion to do the out; it is a command of God because he loves all people and wants a relationship with everyone. Remember yesterday's topic, we must have the same vision of people who are far from God and the same heart for them or it will come off fake and unrewarding for both you and them.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- How would you grade yourself on your out?
- Who in your sphere are you deepening a relationship with and seeking to share the love of God with?
- Have you had any spiritual conversations with someone far from God in the last month?

Prayer Direction: Take some time to recommit yourself to God and to his mission to reach everyone. Ask God to deepen your love for Him, for the people he has created and for courage to be his fisherman of people.

Day 3 – The message

From the Bible: John 3:16-21; Acts 2:37-39; Acts 26

Background: Yesterday we looked at fishing in the New Testament times. If they simply threw their nets out and pulled them back in it would be merely accidental if they caught fish. They instead spread bate out in the water to attract fish to the area their nets were and then pulled them in along with the fish. We have to have a message to draw people to God and we have

the very best one there is. Jesus talking to a religious leader in John 3 tells him about being born again, about being transformed. He says that God loves us passionately, we matter to him. Acts 26 is Paul telling his story to a Roman leader. He makes it clear that he rebelled against God even when he was doing his best to serve Him. We have all rebelled against God because that is what sin is, rebellion against God. We have offended God by our sin and rebellion, but there is more good news. Jesus Christ lived, died and was risen so that we can have restored relationship with God. Peter tells us in Acts 2 that we must repent; to turn from our ways to God's ways. As we take this message to people we must remember some things. Things are changing in our society and we can no longer assume some things we use to be able to. We can no longer assume we have a shared moral code with everyone. People are becoming increasingly relativistic which means what is right for you may not be right for them. We can no longer assume childhood exposure to church. This means we can't assume they know even the basics. This is not always a bad thing as it also means they will not have heard it all wrong. We can no longer assume a common spiritual language. We speak a Christianese language and don't even realize it. Make sure you can explain the message of Jesus using everyday language, not are code words.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- In your own words, what is the message of Jesus?
- How did that message grip your heart and lead you to be transformed and follow God?
- Thinking of the people you are wanting to reach for Christ, how will they hear this message and how do you need to model it and speak it for them to truly understand the basics that they matter to God, they have offended him and that he wants to restore the relationship through their repentance and turning to him.

Prayer Direction: Ask God to make clear the message in your mind and in your heart. Ask God to reveal how to clearly live out and communicate this message to those that you are in a relationship with that are far from God. Ask for the perseverance to keep on living, loving and reaching no matter how you are responded to.

Day 4 – Where are you?

From the Bible: Luke 5:27-32; 19:1-10

Background: Day 2 we shared how they fished in those days. The fisherman would have had the most skills, the best equipment and even the best bait, but if they were in a place where no fish were, they weren't catching any. Jesus modeled this for us. He spent time with the Father, he spent time with his group and he spent time with people far from God where they were. He

didn't station himself somewhere for 3 years and say everybody come to me. He went to where they were. He was even ridiculed and questioned by the religious leaders for doing this, but he had different goals and passions than they did. He wanted to share with people far from God the great news that God loves them and wants to restore the relationship with them that has been broken by their offensive rebellion against him. Being where the missing are may require us to change our patterns of life but I think for most of us it is just being aware of those we are already around; at our work, in our family, in our neighborhood, in our circle of friends and sharing that same great news with them.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- Where are the places you spend your time now? List them out and don't forget about the places you go with your kids if you are a parent.
- Who do you come into contact with in those places you are that are not Christians?
- How can you invest in those people and share the great news of God's love for them with them?

Prayer Direction: Ask God to open your eyes to those people you are already in relationship with that he is working on and softening their hearts. Ask God to reveal to you how you can get on board with what he is already doing in their lives.

Day 5 – Serving those in need

From the Bible: Luke 9:10-17; Matthew 4:23-25; 10:5-8

Background: Jesus didn't simply meet people's spiritual needs. In fact, most of the time he started with their physical needs and then moved to their spiritual need. His disciples wanted to send the people away to get food and he said you feed them. He modeled for the disciples by healing, casting out demons and meeting people's physical needs and then he instructed them to do the same. There are a lot of great problems facing our world. Disease still runs rampant in our world, in spite of our abundance of food people still go hungry, we know more than ever before but lack of education is still a huge problem, people are homeless and many more. We are called to meet those needs and be used by God to offer help and hope to people. We cannot forget about the practical help that people need, when we show we care about those needs, people might be more open to the hope we can bring for their spiritual needs.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- When looking at the list of needs in the world and any others that you know of, which one's really grip you and make you mad that they exist? They all should to some degree but which one's really bother you.
- What are you doing about those need(s) in the world?
- Do you know any other people with a similar passion that you can team up with?
- Thinking through your list of the missing in your life, what needs to they have that you need to meet?

Prayer Direction: Ask God to deepen your burden for the causes he is passionate about and wants you to team up with Him to solve. Ask him to connect you with people of similar passion and to give you visions of how to begin and progress to making a difference. Ask him to open doors that seem unopenable to meet these needs locally, nationally and worldwide. Ask God for his vision to see people's needs even without them telling you of them.