

Jesus-Centered Family on Mission with Him  
JCFoM Week 6  
Acts 11:19-30  
1/29/23

Introduction

**Exercise:**

- Where - work, live, play
- What - hobbies, activities, rhythms (how do you spend your time?)
- Who - friends, coworkers, neighbors, etc

WHERE	WHAT	WHO

**PRAY.**

Recap + On Mission

We are rounding the corner and heading towards home in our vision series – talking about what we’re going for in our vision to be a **Jesus-centered family on mission with Him.**

In part 1 we talked about being Jesus-centered. And we said that means Jesus is our **(1) Great High Priest** and **(2) King** - meaning he is the who forgives our sins and makes us right with God, but who also rules and reigns over us now and forever.

But then we added on to that and said ok – as we learn to revolve our lives around Jesus, that then leads to us revolving our lives more and more around each other. Christ brings us together as His Family. And as His family we learn to **(1) share our lives** and **(2) share our hearts.** To live the day in and day our reality of life together, and confess our sins so that we are united with one another as God’s people.

And we said week 1 that if you miss any part or parts of this vision, you’re left with some problems. If we were to stop at being a Jesus-centered family, we’re left with an insulated community. A bunch of people who like each other, try to care for one another, serve one another...

...but miss out on the story God has been writing from the very beginning and inviting his people into – **a mission to bring Himself glory among all people as they turn to worship Him.**

And so that’s where we turn our attention to in these final 2 weeks, the final part of our vision statement – **On Mission with Him.**

*What does it mean to not just revolve our lives around Christ and each other, but then to actually move out into our world inviting others to do the same?*

Or you could say it is this way that we'll explore these next 2 weeks, when we say "on mission with Him" we mean – **Ordinary everyday missionaries...for the good of Charlotte.**

**This week – ordinary everyday missionaries.**

### **Mission + The Church**

This has been the heartbeat of Jesus' Church from the very beginning.

If you would, go back with me in your mind 2,000 years. 33 AD. Jesus has come, lived a perfect life, died on a cross for the sins of the world, and yet 3 days later rose again, defeating Satan, sin, and death. And he's gathered the remaining 11 disciples on Mount Arbel overlooking the sea of Galilee.

It's a ragtag group of fishermen, a tax collector (social outcast), a political anarchist – no formal training just 3 years of following Jesus learning to be with Him and become like Him. One of their little group has just betrayed Jesus not that long ago, another one denied him 3x. They've been through the ringer. They're beat up, confused. It's no wonder in Matthew's gospel we read that even on this mountain some are doubting.

And Jesus looks at this group, and in his final words to them before ascending up into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father he says to them...

**Acts 1:8 - 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**

In other words, hey ya'll...you're up! I'm going to the Father, the Holy Spirit is gonna come down. Tag, you're it.

God's plan to take the greatest news there ever was – THE GOSPEL – Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins and life forever with God – God's plan to spread that across the world is a group of ordinary, beat up disciples, and those who will come after them, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

You will carry on this good news. You will be my witnesses. You will be the ones who take this to the world.

**The mission of God advances through Holy Spirit empowered ordinary, everyday men and women.**

SO...wait for the Holy Spirit then GO. GO preach the good news of Jesus!

**And the disciples do just that...**Just a short while later, they're joined by about 100 other folks in Jerusalem, praying and waiting for the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit shows up, bam. And the gospel takes off like wildfire. And it spreads and spreads and spreads where **in the course of the first 350 years of the early church you go from 120 to 34 million followers of Jesus.**

**The mission of God advances but...**

- Not through political power – Christianity for the first 350 years was a persecuted, fringe, outcasted religion.
- Not through full-time vocational ministry leaders and pastors – it was a very rare thing to be paid for ministry during this time.
- Not through awesome resources, devotional guides, or podcasts – no internet, no printing press, no seminaries.
- Not through great religious events – they mostly gathered in homes over tables to eat and celebrate Christ.

**We believe this with everything we have as a Church. That Jesus' strategy, then and now, to get the gospel to the world is Holy Spirit empowered, ordinary, everyday men and women.**

This charge Jesus gives His disciples is His plan and His command for you and for me. The Lord would say to us – the Holy Spirit will come upon you (you ragtag group of accountants, teachers, managers, stay at home moms, nurses with all your doubts and uncertainties and failings) the Holy Spirit will come upon YOU and you will be my witnesses in Charlotte, and in all North Carolina, and the southeast region and to the end of the earth.

To be a Christian is to be a missionary. If you claim Christ, you have a mission to take the gospel to the world.

**Tony Merida – “The only difference in a believer sitting in his or her American home and a foreign missionary on the field is *location*, not *identity*.”**

**The gospel spreads through God's people centering their lives around Jesus and around each other and then inviting others to experience the life-changing grace of God and do the same.**

### Acts 11 - Walkthrough

So grab a Bible, head to **Acts 11**. I want us to spend the rest of our time today looking at one specific group of Holy Spirit empowered, everyday ordinary Christians in the early church – The church in Antioch. Let's walk through the story together, I'll pull some things out as we go – and then I'll circle back after that and apply it into our lives and into our church family as we consider what it means to live as everyday ordinary missionaries.

Sound good? Alright, love it.

**19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.**

What's happening in Acts 11 is a reference back to Acts 6+7 where Stephen, one of the early leaders in the church in Jerusalem is killed because of his preaching of the gospel.

And this is what we read in **Acts 8:1 - And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.**

Now that's a really key phrase – *except the apostles*. Keep that in mind, hop back to chapter 11...

**19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus.**

A group of folks, scattered because of persecution, on the run for their lives, find themselves in Antioch, sort of wound up there at no choice of their own because they couldn't stay in Jerusalem or they'd be killed. Find themselves in a random place, totally different culture – Hellenists (Greeks, not Jews) – and what do they do?

***Spoke to them, preaching the Lord Jesus.***

They're like – well we're here now – guess we'll start telling you about Jesus.

**21 And the hand of the Lord was with them** [That's a phrase used throughout the Scriptures to describe the power and presence of God. God's power and presence was with these Christians as they preached the gospel, and what happens?], **and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.**

**22 The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.**

Apparently the gospel is taking off like wildfire in Antioch that news gets back to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, and they send Barnabas – go check it out. What is happening in that city?

**23 When he came and saw the grace of God,**

That's Luke's description of what is happening in this church – the revival that is breaking out. Tons of people coming to faith in Jesus. Their whole lives being turned upside down in the most wonderful way. It's all a grace gift from God.

**he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.**

There's that phrase again, 2nd time – a great many people were added to the Lord. Revival breaking out in the city of Antioch. Barnabas encourages them – keep going. Remain faithful to God. This is a miracle. In fact, Barnabas is so floored by what's happening, look at what he does next...

**25 So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.**

Up until this point, those who followed Jesus were called “followers of the Way” or just simply “the Way”. It came from Jesus saying about himself - “The Way, the Truth, and the Life”. However in Antioch, they are given a new name – here they are first called *Christians*.

And this is not a good thing. This is a derogatory term placed on them by others in the city. It was a way of mocking them. “Christian” means “little christ”. These folks' lives were being so drastically changed by the gospel - they had become so Jesus-centered, that others in the city started calling them “little christs” to make fun of them. In their culture, their lives revolving around Christ made no sense to those around them and came off as silly and naive... sound familiar?

So notice – the gospel is preached in Antioch and one of two things happen.

- Some people are repenting, surrendering to Jesus, counted among that “great many people added to the Lord.”
- Others are mocking them, belittling them, attacking them.

But there's no ignoring it – the gospel has taken this city by storm.

*We'll stop the story there. If you were to keep reading the rest of chapter 11, and then over to 13, 14, and 18, the church at Antioch becomes sort of a missionary training ground. It serves as the launching pad for so much of Paul's church planting and missionary work in the rest of Acts. Time and time again Paul keeps returning to Antioch and to this church to be encouraged, to receive help, to rest, and to be sent again to carry the gospel to more places.*

**The Holy Spirit uses the death of Stephen, to move some followers of Jesus into the city of Antioch, and with the hand of the Lord upon them, they preach the gospel, tons of people are saved, revival is breaking out, and this church becomes a center for church planting for the rest of the ancient world.**

## Everyday Ordinary Missionaries

### *What an incredible story! What does it mean for us?*

I think the invitation for us, as we consider what it means to be ordinary, everyday missionaries, is to be more like the church in Antioch and less like the church in America. To participate in this expansive, cosmic, ancient mission of God to fill the earth with people who give Him glory, that's going to take **3 distinct mindset shifts.**

You will have to shift your thinking in 3 very specific ways to retrain yourself towards the mission of God. This is where I want to spend the rest of our time together.

#### **1. From "That's their job" → To "I'm sent by God"**

**Acts 8:1 – and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.**

**Acts 11:20 – 20 But there were some of them...**

"Some of them." Not Peter. Not Paul. Not Luke. Not John. "Some of them..." They're not even named! They don't even get their names in the Bible!

You want to talk about ragtag? The disciples who get named are ragtag and ordinary – we know the baggage that comes with them. How much more this group that doesn't even get named. They're just "some of them"...

But notice their attitude – "We will do it". It's not someone else's job. This mission isn't just for the apostles. This mission isn't just for the leaders, the pastors, the deacons. **We will take responsibility.** I know we're just "some of them", but we have the Holy Spirit too, and we're ready to be used by God to take the gospel to the world!!

Some of us talk ourselves out of sharing the gospel by believing the lie that evangelism or mission is the job of a select few that are gifted in it or really good at it.

Others of us talk ourselves out of mission by believing the lie that evangelism or mission is the job of the pastors. My job is to bring people to church and your job, preacher man, is then to present the gospel in a really awesome way so they'll believe.

But church, don't miss the beauty in the details of Luke – "some of them" preached the gospel. They didn't send for Barnabas – "Hey, we're in Antioch and there's some folks here who don't know Jesus, can you come preach to them?" What do they do? They get to Antioch and start preaching!

The mission of God advances through Holy Spirit empowered, ordinary, everyday men and women.

**This is why our mission plan as a church, has very little to do with big missional events and initiatives, and much more to do with training you and your group to be missionaries together. As a church we want to spend an inordinate amount of more time, energy, and resources trying to equip you to share the gospel than we do hosting big amazing events for you to bring people to.**

Is there anything wrong with big events for you to bring people to? Not at all. That's why we have parties on Easter. That's why we're having a party for the super bowl tonight. For you to have things to invite people into to experience church family and see the gospel through how we love each other.

***We just think the kingdom of God is meant to advance more:***

- Through you being in love with Jesus at the neighborhood poker night.
- You being in love with Jesus at the office happy hour.
- You being in love with Jesus at the friend's birthday party.
- You being in love with Jesus at your kids class valentine's day party.

That's how the gospel has always spread - everyday ordinary people in their everyday ordinary lives, and that's how we believe it will continue to spread today. So we'd rather give the limited time, money, and energy we have to training you to reach your neighbor. Because you're the one who knows them. You're the one who has a relationship with them. You're the one who can get them around your group to love and serve them.

## 2. From "I don't have time" → To "Where has God put me?"

**Look back at v20 - 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus.**

Let's face it, a HUGE barrier to us living a missional life is our busyness. We're so busy as Americans. We talk about this all the time – it's a badge of honor in our society to run from one thing, to the next, to the next. To fill our schedules. And we think because of that we crowd out our ability to live on mission.

I'm supposed to be Jesus-centered – all these spiritual practices prayer, Scripture, sabbath.  
I'm supposed to be family with these people – you told me to revolve my lives around them.  
How in the world am I supposed to have time for mission and sharing the gospel?

But notice the mindset shift – It's NOT from "I don't have time" to "freeing up our schedule". Which maybe that'd be helpful for some of us. Instead it's from "I don't have time" to "Where has the Lord put me?"

This group of "some of them" get to Antioch, and they're not bemoaning no longer being in Jerusalem. They find themselves somewhere and they start doing what they're called to do. Here we are, we're in Antioch, let's start sharing the gospel.

So the question becomes – where have you found yourself? Where are the places you're already going? What are the things you're already doing...AND how can you leverage that for the spread of the gospel?

**"We need to move from a mindset of additional to intentional. What if God has actually given us this amazing way of seeing life that would make all of life one big, huge opportunity for discipleship and mission? Like everything we're already doing, what if it's already an opportunity, perfect for discipleship and mission?"** – Caesar Kalinowski

**In other words, I'll say it even more clearly, wherever you are and whatever you do, God has you there to be a witness for Him:**

- You're not living in the neighborhood you're living in because of its location in the city, or its proximity for your job, or because of its affordability. You might think that, but God put you there to be a missionary.
- You don't go to the gym or workout class you go to because it's your preferred way to stay healthy. God has put you there to be a missionary.
- You don't frequent your favorite coffee shop 5 times a week because they have your favorite gingerbread latte. God has put you there to be a missionary.

So – EYES UP. Here I am. Everywhere I find myself I step into that space ready to share the gospel.

## 3. From "there's no way" → To "The hand of the Lord is with us"

Verse 21 is absolutely critical to everything that takes place in Antioch. Look back at it with me. It says about these “some of them” folks in Antioch – **21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.**

### **The hand of the Lord was with them.**

If I get to pick one thing that I want to be a characteristic of our church, that’s what I pick. For the hand of the Lord to be with us. For His power and His presence to be doing the miraculous among us – namely saving people and bringing them to Himself.

**I would argue that nothing else really matters if you have that, and nothing else really matters if you don’t have that.**

- You might feel like you’re the worst evangelist ever. You have no idea how you’d answer any questions about God, or the Bible. You might be the most awkward person ever when you meet someone new. But if the hand of God is with you...
- You might think – no I know that coworker, I know that friend, I know that family member – they’ve made it clear how uninterested in Jesus they are. But if the hand of God is with you...
- Listen, what about our church? We meet on the 3rd story of a YMCA in a group fitness room. And if the hand of God is with us then we just need space...

**It’s my firmly held position that the number one reason we don’t live into the mission of God - is not fear. Is not a lack of theological knowledge. Is not busyness. Is not thinking it’s someone else’s or the pastor’s job.**

**The number one reason we don’t join in the mission of God is that we don’t think God will save.**

- Because I know if you believed God would save your neighbor, you’d leave here and immediately go share the gospel with them.
- I know if you believed God would save your coworker, you’d walk into their office first thing Monday morning to share the gospel with them.
- I know if you believed God would save your friend, you’d call them so quickly this afternoon to share the gospel with them.

**So the question then becomes, not will you live on mission but rather – do you believe the Hand of the Lord is with you?**

### **[LOOK AROUND YOU]**

This is God’s plan to take the gospel to the world. The people of God. This has been His plan for the last 2,000 years and will continue to be His plan until Christ returns – **The mission of God advances through Holy Spirit empowered ordinary, everyday men and women.**

That’s what we’re after as a church. A Jesus-centered family on mission with Him. Moving into our world, revolving our lives around Jesus and one another and inviting others to do the same.

### **Conclusion**

So here's how I want to close...

***So I want you to look back at your three lists.***

Here's how I want to end today. God has put you into these places as a missionary. If you're a Christian, you're a missionary.

So here's what I want you to do, take just a few minutes as we close, we'll create space and I want you to ask yourself this question –

**What would I do today if I was convinced the hand of the Lord is with me?**

- Would you come up with an excuse to have a party and invite your neighbors to start building friendships?
- Would you go cut someone's grass as a chance to show them Jesus?
- Would you see if anyone was interested in a lunch time bible study at your office?
- Would you invite someone to hang out with your Community Group, come to a group night or come to church?
- Would you have a conversation you've been intimidated by?

[Time of reflection for 3-5 minutes]

**Close - What if our story was a "some of them" story?**

- Some of them started a church in Charlotte, and the hand of God was with them.
- Some of them sacrificed time and energy and comfort and money.
- Some of them risked their reputation.
- Some of them shared the gospel with their neighbors and saw people come to faith.
- Some of them served the vulnerable in the city simply because Jesus first served them.
- Some of them saw God move in power and a great number of people added to the Lord.

What if we live to just be "some of them" and we give our lives away, spend ourselves – every last drop of energy we have – and then we die and we're forgotten.

I can think of no a better way to spend my life.

**Pray.**