

GOD'S MISSION

SESSION 7



SMALL GROUP SERIES

FOUNDATIONS

THE SALVATION ARMY - USA EAST

“A DIFFERENT MODEL WAS INSTITUTED IN THE GREAT COMMISSION JESUS LEFT THE CHURCH. THE FIRST GOAL HE SET FORTH FOR THE EARLY CHURCH WAS TO USE HIS ALL-ENCOMPASSING POWER AND AUTHORITY TO MAKE DISCIPLES..... HAVING MADE DISCIPLES, THESE ALONE WERE TO BE BAPTIZED INTO THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. WITH THIS TWOFOLD PREPARATION THEY WERE TO BE TAUGHT TO TREASURE AND KEEP “ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU.” THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE FIRST CENTURY RESULTED FROM FOLLOWING THIS PLAN FOR CHURCH GROWTH-A RESULT HARD TO IMPROVE UPON.”

~ DALLAS WILLARD

GOD'S MISSION

God's mission for us should impact our daily living. Following Christ's redemptive act, He called us to an active, relevant faith in Him. In the Great Commission and Great Commandment we find not only some of the last words of Christ, but also His hope for what His followers would live out in the prayer "on earth as it is in heaven."

Opening Question

- What parts of the story draw your attention?

Watch the DVD

The Resurrection

Matthew 27:57 - 28:15

⁵⁷ As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb. ⁶² The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, "After three days I will rise again." ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

¹ After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." ⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." ¹¹ While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³ telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

What part(s) of the story did you relate to easily?

What parts made you scratch your head?

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List the evidences for the resurrection. Below are some to consider as a group, although not all need to be discussed or expounded upon.

1. The disciples were transformed and instead of running away, they became bold, even to the point of dying for their beliefs.
2. Eyewitness accounts – appearances and writings.
3. Women were the first witnesses -
(In a culture where women were discounted, their testimony would not be considered credible)
If this were not true, it is highly unlikely that his followers would advertise that the first witnesses were women.
4. Disciples were too authentic to be fictional.
5. There was no body – the tomb was empty.
6. The stone was rolled away.
7. The soldiers who guarded the tomb would suffer death if the tomb was tampered with. It was sealed shut.
8. The good news spread and the 'church' grew and still survives.
9. Countless prophecies were fulfilled.
10. Despite the scrutiny of the resurrection story by scholars, no coherent scenario can explain all the evidence as well as the Biblical account.
11. Jesus was worshipped as Lord following the resurrection and not venerated as only a good teacher.
12. Burial preparation involved applying approximately 70 pounds of spices.
The spices would make the clothes adhere to the body, but this cloth was left separated from the body after the resurrection.

John 20:27

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

A huge transformation occurred in these two men and the others among the ranks of the disciples and friends of Jesus. Why? Because of the resurrection, the _____ of life eternal, and as we see later in Acts 2, the indwelling of the _____.

Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20

Did you notice that all power given on heaven and on earth is given to us?

1. It was in this enormous power that the _____ could be bold.
2. The disciples were making _____ who made _____ who made _____.
People were coming to Christ and becoming mature.

Election

The ninth doctrine of The Salvation Army affirms, "We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ."

1. Losing our faith, would mean, like Adam, taking back _____ of our life, denying Christ's atonement for us.



2. John Calvin argues in his fifth principle that for a person who is saved it is _____ for a person to backslide and lose their salvation from God.

Activity

To help us understand this concept and its implications for our own spiritual well-being, answer these two questions in your group:

1. How can we guard against the danger of falling away from our faith?
Hebrews 2:1-3, 6:4-6, 10:19-39, Romans 11:22-24
2. What are the safeguards against backsliding that these passages teach?
Colossians 1:22-23, John 15:16, 1 Corinthians 10:6-13, Rev. 2:4-5

The Church

1. The people, not the _____ are the church.

The term “church” comes from a Greek word, ‘ekklesia.’ If we look at the meaning of the two parts of the word, we find ‘ek’ (out), and ‘clesis’ (calling). The church are those called out to come together for assembly. Although the term suggests a temporary gathering for a set duration, i.e. time of worship, the New Testament use of the word had a continuing sense that people are the church and not just a meeting.

“One doesn’t try to become a saint; one doesn’t try to become a ray of light. One simply tries, from the twilight in which we are, to enter into God’s light in adoration in worship, in prayer, in obedience. And it just happens, because anyone who would set his mind towards becoming a saint would end in nothing but pride and silliness. Humility is part of it, and humility means being capable of listening to God, and doing and being what he expects us to be, without asking more. What happens next is God’s.” [Metropolitan Anthony, *Different Gospels*.]

2. A fellowship, not of saints, but _____ who have been saved. We are not better than anyone else. We all fall short and need his _____. (Romans 3:23)

As we let God be the light of our life look at what happens:

Romans 12:5-21

⁵ So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. ⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. ¹⁷ Do not repay evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

²¹ “If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

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2 Corinthians 5:18-19

¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:
¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Service Motivation

[illegible]

1. We are called to a ministry of _____.

Set Apart

What is our reaction to this? Is it one of excitement and enthusiasm like the disciples following the resurrection of Christ? Or one of duty – having to do it because we are told to?

What motivation do you think would last longer – duty because you are told to, or out of a loving gratitude because you want to? There may be times for both, but overall, serving out of gratitude lasts longer. Service out of duty can lead to burnout if we fail to stay in the love relationship with Christ.

The familiar song, ‘By the pathway of duty, flows the river of God’s grace,’ is great, especially as a temporary band aid when our faith requires it. But my challenge to you is to jump into the river, immerse yourself in God’s grace, and then serve out of gratitude for what He has done for you.

Closing Activity & Application

Read Romans 12 as a group. List the characteristics of the church and how they should function.

Questions to Consider

1. Where do you see God’s church at work today?
2. Is the church fulfilling His commission to make disciples who love Him and their neighbors?
3. Is the church making disciples who are growing in their faith?

These are tough questions. Take a few minutes to think and discuss these questions as a group. During your prayer time commit to pray about some of the answers and discussion you have had today.