

ROAD TRIP DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 8

“Preach the word. Be prepared to encourage your people at all times. For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear... But you should keep a clear mind, and don’t stop telling others the Good News.”

2 Timothy 4:2-5

Like Paul told Timothy, “...don’t stop telling others the Good News”, we are never excused from being agents of God’s grace, no matter where we are or what the occasion. We have the temptation to compartmentalize our lives between “me time” and “God’s time.” But scripture doesn’t give us that option. Jesus told us in the Great Commission that we are to go on a life-long road trip to every corner of the globe to make him known to all people. This final commandment is found in all four gospels, and each focus on different ways we can carry out this mandate.

Matthew’s version is the best known, and focuses on Growing Disciples—“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”—Matthew 28:16

Consider This...

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Matthew focuses on the importance of being disciples who make disciples. He says that we all play a role in bringing people into the faith (baptism), and in instructing believers to adhere to ALL the teachings of Jesus. These teachings start with the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus told us to “seek first the Kingdom of God,” and end with his final sermon to “do for the least of these.” That’s what “going into all the world” means. It isn’t merely about geography, but about the little ones, the left-out ones, the weary, overburdened, and helpless ones.



Consider This...

Mark’s account is brief, like his gospel, and he focuses on the proclamation of the Good News.

Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. Mark 16:15

Like the songwriter put it, “If we don’t tell them, how will they ever know?” That is why Paul reminded Timothy to take advantage of every opportunity to share the good news. This doesn’t mean we preach at people, but as Saint Francis said, “preach at all times, and when necessary use words.”

Luke’s account focuses on being agents of reconciliation.

“Proclaim the message of forgiveness and repentance in the authority of my name to all the nations.”—Luke 24-45-49

In Luke, Jesus couches the Great Commission in terms of the year of Jubilee. The Torah decreed that every 49th year slaves and prisoners were to be set free, debts forgiven, and property returned to the original owner. And early in his ministry, Jesus declared that he came to establish the era of jubilee. He said...

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come...” All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he told them, “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”—Luke 4:18-21

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The Great Commission is about announcing God's favor. Not only on perpetrators of sin but also for those against whom sin has been perpetrated. The good news is that all can be forgiven and made right with God and with each other... Forgiveness and repentance therefore aren't only a ministry of absolution, but the announcement of total liberation of any form of oppression. The early church grew because it became known as the defender of the underdog.



Consider This...

John's Great Commission takes on an incarnational emphasis.

"Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.'" Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."— John 20:19-21

John opened his gospel by telling us that "Jesus became human and made his home among us." John 1:14. And he closes by telling us to be the presence of Jesus in the world, bringing joy and peace to all.

John understands our mandate to include social as well as evangelistic responsibilities. When Jesus said "when you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven," he didn't mean we have the capacity to withhold forgiveness. Rather, he wants us to know that grace is mediated through people of good will. When we become the presence of Jesus in their lives, they experience forgiveness.

John beautifully illustrates this in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus came into her world and engaged her on a practical and personal level. As a result, she experienced grace and the ostracized woman became the evangelist to her people when she went back into town and said... "Come and see."

So, I want to remind us all that we are on a life-long road trip.

Whether we are at work, home, or school; on the ballfield or in the boardroom; whether it is on vacation or staycation...or even on a honeymoon; Christ has called us all to be on a life-long road trip to make Jesus known wherever we are.

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The Prayer

Today's prayer is the Wesley's Covenant prayer which John Wesley and the early Methodists prayed to renew their covenant to be used by God to spread the Good News...I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, exalted for you, or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing: I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen.

1. Like Matthew, are you inviting others to “come and see” and what God can do for them? Are you living into ALL that Jesus instructed so you can be the light and salt of the world?

2. Like Mark, do you have an “elevator speech” ready to use when given the opportunity to share the reason for your faith?

3. Like Luke, are you intentionally working for the cause of justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed? Are you an agent of reconciliation in the way you relate to others, or are you harboring ill will?

4. Like John, will you look for the opportunity to offer the presence of Jesus in the world, bringing shalom and joy to others wherever you are today?

The Questions