

NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE 7

The Mission Surrounds Us

*"For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost."
– Luke 19:10 TNIV*

"...The church cannot be passive about the lost. Look at the Parable of the Good Shepherd. Ask yourself what church wouldn't be satisfied if 99 percent of its community were in the fold. But the Good Sheppard drops everything to go after the one percent that is not in the fold. And the reality is, what church wouldn't be satisfied if 50 percent of the community were in the fold, or even 10 percent? If we as a church don't share that passion Christ has for the lost, we have missed our reason for being. The lost are why Jesus came to this world. And we must remember that each of us is a beneficiary of His passion for lost souls. He came, seeking to save the lost. Those of us who have been rescued must in turn, by word and deed, proclaim the saving gospel to dying souls around us."¹

Word and deed. This world will not be won by what we say; they must see our hands and feet at work. Lost people do not want to hear that we care, they want to see it. The days of unbelievers visiting our churches, meetings, or home-groups by their own will, cultural morality, or personal desire are long gone. We cannot do 'church as usual' and expect people to come to us. We must go to them. This is mission and everyone is called to it – not simply our campus pastors and church leaders. We are all called to be missionaries wherever we are. We are all called to participate in the mission that God sent His only Son to die for over 2,000 years ago. We are all called to win the lost.

Unfortunately, many Christians relegate missions and ministry to Sundays, while functioning as engineers, doctors, students, teachers, or athletes only the rest of the week. But our mission field is wherever we are and we are called to be missionaries all of the time. To think – we spend eight (or more) hours a day, five days a week, in locations filled with people destined to spend an eternity separated from God, and we often don't think twice about sharing our faith and putting the teachings of Jesus into practice.

We let opportunities to share the gospel with people at work and in our classes pass us by because of absent-mindedness, yet we jump at the chance to go overseas and share the gospel. We idealize ministering to orphans in other countries, forgetting the countless children who need to see Jesus through our love and in our homes right here in America. We often think of the mission field as 'somewhere far away' and mistake our call to be missionaries as a job we fulfill in the timeframes we determine. 'If only we can just get through the work week or school week, then we can be missionaries, then we can minister.'

But the truth is, if we don't learn to be missional on campus, when there is more time available and community is built in around us, how will we ever be missional in the marketplace when our time is no longer our own and connecting with people is not such a given? How will we be focused and effective in overseas missions when

Pre-Article Question:

1. What was the nicest thing someone has ever done for you? What sacrifices, fears, or obstacles did they have to overcome to help or reach you? How did their heart and sacrifice impact you?

spending time with our lost roommate or group partner is the farthest thing from our mind? We must become fervent in our prayers that God would give us eyes to see the lost people all around us: living next door; sitting beside us in class; working one cubicle away. And, that once our eyes are opened, we would not hesitate to reach out and let Jesus speak and minister to them through us – no matter when it is, regardless of where we are, and in the midst of whatever we may doing.

“It is not that evangelism is 100 percent God’s activity and 0 percent ours. It’s not even a fifty-fifty deal. Evangelism is 100 percent both: 100 percent God and 100 percent us. That is the mystery of the incarnation, how God came to us in Jesus. Jesus was 100 percent God and 100 percent human. That is the way God works through his church. He fills 100 percent human beings with his 100 percent divine Holy Spirit. That is the way God’s work and witness in the world goes forward.”²

Knowing we must be missionaries to those directly around us, we must then ask, ‘How do we reach the lost of the 21st century western world?’ Two words Jesus used in the gospel of Luke help our efforts take shape: fishing and seeking. While speaking to Simon, Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people,” (Luke 5:10 TNIV). He went onto say, “For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost,” (Luke 19:10 TNIV). A fisherman does not set out to sea without the right equipment, nor does an explorer set out to find something without properly preparing himself. So it is with us. We must be properly equipped and prepared to be able to see and meet head-on the challenges that come with ministering to those around us. It requires a willingness to make an effort, knowledge of the truth we possess in Christ, real relationship so as to be able to reach out sincerely, prayer, and faith for divine grace and intervention. The work of seeking and saving the lost in both this day and age and in our culture is not easy, may take time and, in most cases, happens through authentic, sustained relationships where trust has been established.

“People today are looking for truth that is experiential, for communities in which faith is lived out and for spiritual experiences that are tangible and real. So experience comes before explanation. Second, people today are looking for a safe and accepting community in which to work out their identity. So belonging comes before believing. Third, the battle for allegiance today is a battle for people’s spiritual and moral imagination. So image comes before word.”³

We were made to be in relationship with God – He is our true home. And each and every human being on the planet is lost until they find their way back to Him. Having been brought home ourselves, how can we not point out the way to those who move in and out of our lives on a daily basis? We must be attentive to the people around us, make ourselves available to them, and share Christ – not just through our words, but by investing in genuine relationships and honest acts of love. As we do, we will find that the mission field – and our place in it – is not quite as far off as we once imagined it to be.

Scripture Questions:

1. How would you describe your heart for reaching unbelievers? Why would you describe yourself this way?

2. Richardson, Rick. *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000. 21.

3. Richardson, Rick. *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000. 51,52.

Scripture Questions:

2. What do you believe are the attitudes your non-Christian friends have towards Christianity? What are their questions? What offends them?
3. Read Matthew 9:35-38. What strikes you about Jesus' heart for the crowds of people surrounding him? What does Jesus say about the harvest? What does He desire to use in order to harvest souls?
4. Read Matthew 18:10-14. What does this verse reveal about Jesus' heart for lost people? Our culture often measures success numerically. How does this verse keep us grounded in the value of one person to God?

Application Questions:

1. What are some practical steps we can take in becoming people who have a greater heart for the lost? How can we hold each other accountable in this small group for being people who grow in love and action for and toward non-Christians?
2. What are some important questions we should be prepared to answer? What are some scriptures and extra resources we can study in order to be prepared to witness for Christ?
3. How can we be more missional in our study groups, to our roommates, hall mates, or co-workers? What are some Chi Alpha events that are potential outreach opportunities?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for sending Jesus to suffer and die so that we might be saved. Thank you that Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted and seek and save that which was lost. Thank you that He is our Good Shepherd. Help us to follow His example and seek out those in need of shepherding. Help us to care for those who do not know you in our campus. Help us to give our prayers, time, and finances to help further your cause in reaching these individuals. Forgive us for our apathy and unwillingness to invest in non-Christian relationships. Give us your wisdom and fill us with your power when we share the gospel, that others might see you through us. We want the lost to see you and be brought home into your fold. Let our own testimonies of redemption fuel us on to reach out to those who have yet to believe in you.

Prayer Partner Assignment:

Memory Verse:

Luke 5:10 "and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.'"

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Meet with your prayer partner from this week for a meal and discuss some ways you could build more trust with your non-Christian friends and expose them to a soul awakening experience of the Christian message. If you don't have any non-Christian friends, please spend time with your prayer partner discussing some ways you could make one more friend.

Additional Scripture:

Proverbs 11:30

Matthew 9:35-38

Mark 16:15

Luke 19:1-10

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 13:47

1 Corinthians 9:19-23