

Joining Jesus

*Ordinary People at the Edges
of the Church*

Moses Chung

AND

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Discussion Guide

1

To Every Town and Place

“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.” —Luke 10:1

1. The authors, Moses Chung and Chris Meehan, call Spirit and Truth in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania a “full-fledged Luke 10 congregation.” Read Luke 10: 1-12. The authors will reference this passage frequently throughout this book and use it as a framework. What do you think it means, or looks like, to be a Luke 10 congregation?
2. Place matters. It’s in a place where peace, or shalom, can occur. Sometimes we think that we have to travel overseas to share the gospel, but mission is right outside our door! What do you notice about the place where God has “sent” you? It might be your neighborhood, workplace, school, or somewhere else. What would it look like for shalom to come to this place?
3. Taehoo Lee chose to be God’s emissary right where God has placed him. He shared that he sees his role in his community as helping to bring hope and healing. Some of the ways he does this is through seemingly small gestures such as shoveling snow for elderly neighbors, mentoring students, going to court with those who need support, and praying with people. What “small things” might God be asking you to do in your community that could help bring hope and healing?
4. Chung and Meehan describe Spirit and Truth Fellowship as being “a ministry that went beyond being defined by a church building.” What do you think that means? What are some of the examples from Spirit and Truth’s story? What does that look like, or what could that look like, for your church or faith community?
5. “When we started here, we already had a vision—and that vision was to let the community direct that vision,” said Sue Baker. What are some ways you saw Spirit and Truth letting the community direct the church’s vision? How might you and your church take steps to let your community direct the vision for your ministry?
6. The authors write that: “Ultimately, we come not to save but to be changed; we come carrying love and try sharing it wherever we are.” Can you describe a situation where you—or your church or faith community—sought to help someone or meet a need but were changed in the process? What do you think this means as we seek to be witnesses for Christ? What attitudes or postures might we need to adopt in order to experience change ourselves?

2

Like Lambs among Wolves

“Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals.”—Luke 10:3

1. What are some of the similarities you notice between Aurora Commons in Seattle, Washington and your church or faith community? What are some of the differences?
2. Pastor Andy Carlson of Awake Church in Seattle noted that the people with whom they work and minister are “ailing and alienated in a number of ways” and have “found themselves on the fringes of Christianity.” Who in your community do you see “on the fringes of Christianity?” How could you, your church, or your faith community welcome them?
3. Nate and his girlfriend Kate don’t identify as belonging to any religion. They found a home at Sanctuary CRC in Seattle for a while, but then stopped coming. “I guess the traditional Sunday thing just became less of a big deal to us,” said Nate. What do you think he means by “traditional Sunday thing?” How can you and your faith community live out the gospel every day of the week, and maybe in “non-traditional” ways?
4. Chung and Meehan write: “God is already at work in the world ahead of us and we need to follow God there and join in what God is doing, whether that is outside the Seattle Union Gospel Mission or on the playing fields where kids make tackles or hit home runs.” Where do you see God at work in your neighborhood that may not necessarily fit in with your idea of what mission looks like?
5. Ben Katt, who planted Awake Church, said that he’s noticing shifts in the church in Canada and the United States: younger generations are leaving the church, churches are closing, and seminaries are shutting down. It sounds discouraging, but Katt said, “I find these shifts intriguing” because they can invite “us to pay attention to how God’s Spirit is on the move.” What shifts do you notice in your country and/or your community? How do you think God is on the move through these shifts?

3

And Who Is My Neighbor?

“But he [an expert in the law] wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” —Luke 10:3

1. This chapter focused a lot on neighborhoods and neighbors. Who are your neighbors? What do you know about them?
2. We often think of a church building or a Sunday gathering as the key to ministry. But Karen Wilk, who started Neighbourhood Life in Edmonton, Alberta said that she has come to see her neighborhood and the people up and down her block as being the key. How might you and your church make your neighbors and neighborhood a more central part of your ministry? What are some of the first steps you might take?
3. When Doreen Hainsworth learned about Rick Abma’s ministry, Good Neighbour Coffee in Lacombe, Alberta something clicked for her. She said, “I find it liberating to meet new people and not feel it is necessary to invite them to church.” What do you think about this approach to ministry? Do you agree that it isn’t necessary to invite people to church? Why or why not?
4. Rick Abma of Good Neighbour Coffee shared the story about Joe, whose roof was in really bad shape. The neighbors rallied together and fixed the roof for him, and Joe’s parents drove nine hours just to see the neighbors in action. They had been telling Joe to move but when they saw what his neighbors had done for him, they were glad that he stayed. How do you think God wants to transform your neighborhood? How might he work through you and your neighbors to bring about that change?

4

Peace to this House

“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.” —Luke 10:5

1. Katherin Grimmius described her and her parents’ home in Hanford, California as a “home of peace.” What does that peace look like?
2. Pastor Joel Renkema of Visalia CRC in Visalia, California says that the Grimmiuses have learned throughout the years that ministry “to” and “for” cannot compete with ministry “with.” In your own words, what is the difference?
3. “We are not your normal church with its programs, Sunday services, and a big building. Our main aim is to find out how we can care for people,” said Nate Bull, one of the pastors of Hesed Community Church in Detroit, Michigan. Do you think those two things are mutually exclusive? Why or why not? Are there times when church programs, Sunday worship services, and big buildings get in the way of caring for people?
4. “We are here being good news and good neighbors,” said Kurt Rietema, who works alongside his wife with newcomers in Kansas City, Missouri to help them secure mortgages to purchase homes. Kurt said “being good news” and not “bringing good news.” What is the difference?
5. The authors write that “Randall and Beth, Kelli, Kurt and his wife, Hesed are all normal people just like any of us, but they are living extraordinary lives because of the presence of God’s Spirit in their lives and in their homes and in their acts of obedience of saying Yes! to God.” Is there something that God is asking you to say “yes” to? What is it? What’s holding you back?

5

Eat What Is Offered to You

“Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. . . . When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you.” —Luke 10:8-9

1. Layne Crawford, a member of The Village in Tucson, Arizona said she’s learned “to listen with grace as people tell their stories. This is the most powerful thing we can do—to listen with a heart of grace.” How is listening to someone’s story an act of hospitality? How can listening to someone’s story be a part of our Christian witness?
2. Beth Fellingner and her team planted Destination Church in St. Thomas, Ontario. “In coming here, we were joining God in what he was already doing. We are also doing whatever we can to be part of this community and to help the people in this place,” said Beth. In many ways, Destination positioned themselves as a guest in St. Thomas. How did you see this in the stories they shared? How could your church or faith community be a guest in your community?
3. Beth Fellingner calls Destination Church a “family of mutual hospitality.” Explain in your own words what “mutual hospitality” is. What role does mutual hospitality play in our Christian witness?
4. The Table in Denver, Colorado might not look like your typical church—it’s a ministry that calls itself an urban farm. They gather people in their neighborhood who want to plant and harvest food, and they gather for shared meals and donate their produce to schools, in parks, and other settings. How does this non-traditional faith community remind you of your church? In what ways do you and/or your church or faith community show hospitality to your neighbors? In what ways might you show hospitality to your neighbors?

6

He Felt Compassion for Him

“Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.” —Luke 10:33-34

1. When Don Sills attended Evergreen Ministries in Hudsonville, Michigan he started to see Jesus as a loving presence alive in others. What does it look like when you see Jesus as a loving presence alive in others? Think of a neighbor, a co-worker, a friend, or someone else you know. How do you see Jesus alive in them? When they see Jesus alive in others, what do you think that looks like for them?
2. “It is awesome to see those people who are hurt and ignored and to see them accepted and become outstanding members of our church,” said Donna Sills, a member of Evergreen Ministries. Who in your neighborhood is hurt and ignored? How could you and/or your church or faith community be a “Good Samaritan” to them?
3. Tom Kragt from Evergreen Ministries shared that his own struggle with alcoholism robbed him of just about everything in life, just like the man in the parable of the Good Samaritan. In what ways do you identify with the man who had been robbed? What has robbed you of things in life? Today, Tom is using his own personal experience in ministry. How might God want to use your past challenges and struggles to care for your neighbors?

7

Blessed are the Eyes that See What You See

“Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.’” —Luke 10:23

1. There are more than 30 Christian Reformed campus ministries present on public university campuses in Canada and the United States. Paul Verhoef and Pearl Nieuwnehuis work at the University of Calgary in Calgary, British Columbia. The authors write that campus ministers have “eyes that see” the needs that the students and faculty experience. What does it mean to you to have “eyes that see”? What are some of the needs you see where God has placed you?
2. Chung and Meehan write that “evangelism is meeting people where they happen to be, given that God is already at work in different ways with different people. It is a matter of seeing the kingdom alive in others, about kindling the fire already burning in a person’s heart.” How is this portrait of evangelism similar to, or different from, how you were taught about evangelism?
3. Agape and Ecclesia is a Christian Reformed campus ministry at Loyola University, a Catholic university in Chicago, Illinois. “Welcoming all students, regardless of their faith or lack of it, is an important aspect of the campus ministry, the only Christian Reformed Church campus ministry located at a Catholic university in the United States,” write authors Chung and Meehan. How does your church or faith community welcome people, regardless of their faith?
4. At Agape and Ecclesia, evangelism goes hand-in-hand with discipleship. It is done in the context of relationships and community. How do you see God at work in your relationships?

8

Lord of the Harvest

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”
—Luke 10:2

1. Prayer plays an important role in the mission at Ttokamsa Mission Church in Los Angeles, California. “In prayer we are not only offering our requests; we are hearing from the Lord, who works many mysteries in our lives,” said Pastor Ken Choe. How does prayer guide your (or your church’s or faith community’s) mission work, or Christian witness?
2. “We’ve learned that being a Christian is not [mainly] about God’s blessings. It is about providing community and facing challenges together,” said Nerini Shen, who found a faith home at The Tapestry in Vancouver, British Columbia. Here Shen says being a Christian is not just about receiving from God but also providing community for the world and being part of that community. What does being a Christian mean to you?
3. When Shelanie Chu started to become inactive in worship and church life, the Holy Spirit worked through her experience to nudge her. She decided to be part of a team planting a church. What difficult or confusing experience in your life are you experiencing right now? What might God be asking you to step into during this season?
4. First CRC of Richmond in Richmond, British Columbia was in decline for many years and then eventually closed. “Inertia had left them clinging to a way of worship and doing ministry that no longer worked,” write the authors. How can you tell when a church’s way of worship and doing ministry is no longer bearing fruit?

9

The Kingdom of God Comes Near

“But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’” —Luke 10:10-11

1. In this chapter, the authors share how missionaries in the past were “essentially channeling the Lord’s will and Word to and for them, instead of allowing them to grasp the Bible message for themselves.” What does it look like to walk alongside people and let the Holy Spirit work in their lives as they understand the gospel for themselves? What does this look like where you live?
2. Indigenous people gathered in Shiprock, New Mexico shared that they only recently have been able “to step into a new way of expressing their love for God, the Creator who they have known and yet are only now beginning to worship and praise in a context that works best for them.” Think of someone you know who might worship God differently than you. Maybe they are from another church denomination, or even just another church! Maybe they come from a different culture. What can you learn about God from the way they relate to God and express their faith?
3. “Much of ministry is being willing to take a risk, and God will take us as far as we’re willing to go,” said Stanley Jim of Window Rock CRC on the Navajo reservation in southern Arizona. What is God asking you to say “yes” to? What’s holding you back?
4. Bob Ippel, executive director of Rehoboth Christian School in Rehoboth, New Mexico, shares that reconciliation work is an important part of the school’s ministry. Christians made mistakes in the past and need to bear those mistakes in order to move forward in ministry. What need for reconciliation do you see in your church or faith community? Your neighborhood? How could you take the first step toward reconciliation?

10

Your Names Are Written in Heaven

“However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” —Luke 10:20

1. Chung shares that recent missiologists have noted the need to move from human agency at the center of mission to God’s agency at the center. In your own words, what does that mean? What does that look like for you or your faith community where you live?
2. Sahali Fellowship in Kamloops, British Columbia participates in Go Local. “People are beginning to pay attention to God’s creative Spirit moving everywhere—at home, at work, in friendships, and even in ‘chance’ meetings. They see God’s hand in all things,” write the authors about the church’s experience. Take a moment and reflect on your day, or your past week. How have you seen God at work in a “chance” encounter or in your day-to-day interactions?
3. “Go Local isn’t about praying for things we want or for things in a church or its ministries to go a certain way. It is about being available and open to whatever surprises and seemingly wild ideas God has for the congregation,” write Chung and Meehan. What might that prayer sound like?
4. Through the Go Local process, Angela Vanmeurs in Grand Haven, Michigan discovered that normal experiences like grocery shopping can be turned into holy encounters. She just had to be more present in the moment and intentional about listening to the Holy Spirit. What’s a “normal” part of your day or week where you could be more intentional?
5. Doug Enfeld in Grand Haven said that his prayer is that he hopes more people in churches start to see that the Holy Spirit is already present and working in their communities in so many ways—and that we simply need to follow the Holy Spirit’s lead. What’s one step you can take today to follow the Holy Spirit’s lead?
6. “The big project, growing the church to fill the seats on Sunday, is not what it’s about. Instead, it is about finding ways, personal and communal, that are unique to your congregation—ways of being faithfully present with and among your neighbors and joining the work of the Lord together there,” write Chung and Meehan. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Afterword

1. The authors have used Luke 10 as a framework for sharing the stories in *Joining Jesus*. Luke 10 offers believers a vision for understanding how the church is to faithfully participate in God’s mission, shares Cory Wilson. What does it mean to be a Luke 10 congregation? How have your thoughts about a Luke 10 congregation changed while reading the testimonies in this book?
2. Reformed theology teaches that “every square inch” is part of God’s kingdom, and that God can be found—and is at work—outside the four walls of a church building. How do the stories shared throughout *Joining Jesus* reflect that belief?
3. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells his disciples: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” There’s an emphasis on place in this verse, says Wilson. God has placed you somewhere, too. If you think about this place—whether that’s your neighborhood, workplace, or somewhere else—as a parish, how does that change how you think about the place? How does that change how you think about yourself?

Resources

Go Local

A process of faith formation for mission. Participants learn postures and practices that develop them for joining God's mission. Go Local focuses on helping Christians understand how to connect with their neighbors and lays a strong foundation for a life lived on mission.

resonateglobalmission.org/golocal

Healing Hearts, Transforming Nations

A workshop-based ministry that addresses conflicts with Cross-Centered Healing and Reconciliation Throughout the World.

resonateglobalmission.org/HHTN

Journeys into Friendship

A networked community of believers who are dedicated to building relationships with people from a variety of cultures and faiths. It provides a space for you to learn and share with other people on the same journey.

resonateglobalmission.org/journeys

Witness: Equipped to Share the Good News

A self-guided course designed to equip you for sharing Christ's love with your neighbors. It will help you reflect on what it means to be a witness for Christ—and then to take practical steps to join God at work in your neighborhood.

resonateglobalmission.org/witness

More Resources from the Christian Reformed Church:

<https://network.crcna.org/>



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