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*TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH
...AND YOUR BLOCK*



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THEME:

OUR GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY
IN THE GREAT COMMISSION

KEY SCRIPTURES: MATTHEW 28:18-20, ACTS 1:1-11

DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: SERVING HIS WORLD

OVERVIEW:

Have you ever had to say goodbye to a longtime friend or family member knowing that you would not see them again? If not, could you imagine what that would be like? What would you say? What would you want the other person to say?

Jesus' disciples experienced this final goodbye when he ascended into heaven after he had raised from the dead. The likely emotional roller coaster for the disciples of Jesus' death, resurrection, appearances and continuation of their relationship, and now his ascension culminated with this goodbye. While it wasn't quite a goodbye for good, as the Holy Spirit was sent as our advocate and helper (John 14-16), but in the physical human sense Jesus said goodbye with this final command and encouragement: "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." (Acts 1:8) this combined with Matthew 28:18-20 are Jesus' final instructions. In this series, we will unpack what the great commission is and what we are called to do about it.

BIG IDEA: Let's unpack the Great Commission. What is it? Why were these Jesus' last words? What is the current state of our world when it comes to people going and making disciples? This is one of the greatest faith movements and we get to be a part of the legacy.

KEY PASSAGES: Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Mark 16:15-16

TEACHING/DEVOTIONAL:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you". Matthew 28:18-20

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, these were His last words to His disciples. What a powerful command that has been obeyed over the centuries, passed to different nations, and now finally to you. If you are a Christ follower, you are a product of the Great Commission. It is amazing to think of the faithfulness of the previous 80+ generations since Jesus was alive, who carried on and pass on the torch of faith. Who led you to Christ? Who led them to Christ? Can you go back 3 generations of faith? Or more?

These disciples took Jesus' word to heart and have since been a part of the greatest faith movement that has led to 31% of the world believing in Jesus Christ. While Christianity is the largest religion practiced, this still means 69% of the world has not experienced the peace, hope, and love of our Savior. We still have a lot of work to do!

What an exciting commission we get to be a part of. The work is not even close to being done, but we are invited to be a part of the redemptive work, to go make disciples, baptize, and teach them to obey. There's an urgency to be faithful with the command Jesus gave us in Matthew 28. So, in our generation, let's continue that legacy that started with Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

SHARING LIFE:

1. Who was the person that led you to Christ? Do you know who led them to Christ? How many generations of faith are in your family?
2. What was your first reaction to the statistic that 69% of our world still doesn't know Jesus?

OPENING SCRIPTURE:

Read Matthew 28:18-20

1. What "action" word in this passage stood out to you (i.e. go, make disciples, baptize, teach to obey) and why?
2. Why do you think these were Jesus' last words on earth?
3. This week, try and memorize this verse.

PRAYER:

1. Take a moment to share prayer requests and pray for each other.
2. Pray for each other to boldly step into the "Great Commission" God has for you.

BIG IDEA: Now that we have identified Jesus wants to use us as part of His plan to reach those who are lost, what are our first steps? While the Great Commission focuses on others, our first steps begin with intimately furthering our relationship with God. When we are filled with the hope and joy that can only come from our relationship with Him, that hope and joy overflows in our pursuit of others.

KEY PASSAGES: John 12:1-8; Mark 12:28-34; Mark 1:35-39

TEACHING/DEVOTIONAL:

Have you ever performed a task for someone out of a sense of obligation? How about, out of a sense of joy? It could be the exact same task, but if you are doing it joyfully it can be a different experience!

I was moving cinder blocks and wood in my backyard and truly hated every minute of it. The wind and mist didn't help. I do enjoy hard work, but busy days and a crammed schedule left me itching to be done with this task. Contrast that with moving cinder blocks, mixing and pouring concrete to build a church for our Guatemalan brothers and sisters as part of Calvary's Guatemala Team. Serving alongside high school students who said they have never been happier. What's the difference? Joy instead of obligation. But where was the joy coming from? The joy was coming from our relationships with each other, our Guatemala brothers and sisters, but mainly our relationship with God that overflowed into the work at hand.

Serving and reaching out to others on an empty tank and out of a sense of obligation cannot be sustained, nor can it be effective. While things do get tough and it is necessary at times to buckle down to the task at hand, Jesus shows us why and how to fill ourselves with God first, before heading out.

In the John 12 passage, something of great monetary value was dedicated to serving the person of Jesus, the Son of God. If I'm honest (ignoring Judas' ulterior motive as noted by John in verse 6) Judas' reaction that the perfume should have been sold and money given to the poor doesn't seem all that problematic at first. In the Gospels Jesus talks about being generous with our money, taking care of those around us, and seeking to serve. Loving others in these and many other ways is much of what God calls us to do, but He also calls that the second greatest commandment. As Jesus laid out in Mark 12, the first and greatest commandment is to love God with all that we have.

When Jesus said, "You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me" it hit me like a cinder block! From a strictly human perspective, giving to someone lavishly who is not in need seems problematic. But when we reorient ourselves to the reality that Jesus is the Son of God, is one with God, and is God, that changes everything. God first, then others.

How is an intimate relationship with God started, and just as important, how does it continue? Often it is in the quiet and unseen times of our life. Even the Son of God pulled away from the noise of life to spend time with His Father, who He was One with (John 10:28-30). In Mark 1, Jesus made the first priority of His day to pray and pursue God. At times His disciples didn't seem to understand this priority when they said, "Everyone is looking for you!". Jesus redirected their day's plan in verse 38 to spend time in prayer with the Father and a continuation of His purpose from "He who sent me".

To those wanting to jump in and serve God by pursuing the Great Commission and spreading the Word to those around you, God first invites us to commune with Him. With the veil torn, we can pursue a direct and intimate relationship with God. The Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Helper lives in us! To those wanting to continue serving and "make disciples of all nations", I find that it takes a daily, hourly, almost minute-by-minute check-in with God to keep joyful in that pursuit. What will you find?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

SHARING LIFE:

1. What does your intimacy with God look like?
2. What do you think should be added or subtracted for that relationship to grow further? Be sure to borrow each other's ideas and see how God blesses your life!

OPENING SCRIPTURE:

Read John 12:1-8

1. When are you at the feet of Jesus?
2. What "good things" in your life tend to take priority over intimacy with God?
3. Reflect on how that happens.

PRAYER:

1. Take a moment to share prayer requests and pray for each other.
2. Pray a blessing over each other's pursuit of God to be distraction free.
3. Ask Him to lead you to where He wants to use you.

BIG IDEA: God has given us the unique and essential gift of prayer. Especially when things get overwhelming in this world, as they often do, prayer is a tool we can use to help us discern and align our hearts to the Lord. We have the privilege to join in and pray for the billions around the world who still do not have a relationship with Him. He wants us to draw close to Him, to care and intercede in prayer for the world He created. Our call is to pray, so let's jump in!

KEY PASSAGES: Read Matthew 6:9-13, Philippians 4:6-7

TEACHING/DEVOTIONAL: Looking at the state of our world, and specifically the 69% who still have yet to know Jesus personally, it can quickly become overwhelming. I know at least for me, I come up with a million ideas but then default to, "Can I even make a difference?". I then become paralyzed thinking of all the reasons why I should not even try, I am only one person and won't be able to make a difference. Ever been there? I have learned time and time again, and usually the hard way, that my first response should always be prayer, asking God what He wants me to do. While that response might sound trite, I can tell you that is the best way to align my heart with God's heart and to answer that ever-lingering question of, "What can I do?".

If you're not sure where to begin? Below are three ways you can start...

1. Pray for your heart to be aligned with what God wants you to do.

Prayer is a tool to realign our hearts and remind our souls of who God is, who we are, and the purposes He has for us and the world. He gave us all a mind, heart, and passion and purpose and does not want us to be overwhelmed by the problems in this world. He wants to lead us, day by day, to determine what we need to do as we look for way to serve Him. Start simply by inviting the peace of God to enter in your heart and mind. Ask God, "What do you want to teach me today?". See where your prayer goes from there. Take time to listen and align your heart to His.

2. Pray for Global Staff and Strategic Partners around the world.

While our personal calling might not be to physically, "go to the nations", we are called to participate in the Great Commission. One of the simplest, yet most powerful ways to do this is through prayer. When I ask our Global Staff how can we best support them, their answer is always, "Pray". They are on the frontlines in places where there is often opposition or resistance to the Gospel, and they need support and encouragement. There is a never-ending stream of prayer requests from our 33 Global Staff and Strategic Partners. If you don't know how to start praying for our partners email, global@calvarylg.com to get on the list to receive a monthly email with their prayer requests. That's a practical and easy way to participate in the Great Commission!

3. Pray for our world.

Scrolling through the news, social media, the internet an overwhelming feeling can creep in. Our world so desperately needs the hope, peace, and love of Christ. The good news is God is not overwhelmed by the chaos in our world. Let's join Him and pray. A simple way to start is to add a few minutes of prayer time after you read the news. Ask God to lead you as you pray.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

SHARING LIFE:

1. How is your prayer life currently?
2. In regard to our country and our world, what is overwhelming to you today?

OPENING SCRIPTURE:

Read Matthew 6:9-13

1. Jesus gives us a great example on how to pray. Take some time to read through it and pause to reflect after each sentence.

Read Philippians 4:6-7

1. When reading the news or going through social media, is there anything causing you to be anxious?
2. God wants you to present your prayer requests to Him. What does He want you to pray about?

PRAYER:

1. Take a moment to share prayer requests and pray for each other.
2. Recall something you read in the news this past week.
 - a. Pray for the victims.
 - b. Pray for the local community.
 - c. Pray for local believers to be the hands and feet of Christ.

BIG IDEA: In the Early Church, we see a great example of Barnabas and Saul being sent out by their local church to minister to people in another country. We will take a look at what Calvary's role is to come alongside those who are called to the "ends of the earth". God uses the church to support, encourage, and send out those who are called. How are we called to financially support those out in the field?

KEY PASSAGES: Acts 13:1-5, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

TEACHING/DEVOTIONAL: Acts 13 is a beautiful story of the first missionaries. Barnabas and Saul were from the church in Antioch, a major city and center of Christian faith after Jerusalem. They were faithfully seeking the Lord by praying and fasting to see where the Holy Spirit would lead them to "go". While they were waiting, the Spirit called them to Cyprus to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews there. We see how their local church in Antioch released them to fulfill what God sent them out to do. The church pledged their support by laying on hands, commissioning, and sending them off.

For the past 73 years, Calvary's passion and focus on sharing the Gospel around the world has continued in the tradition of sending out missionaries (or what Calvary calls Global Staff). Individuals and families who have sought the Lord through prayer and fasting have continued to be led by the Holy Spirit to go out, to multiply national leaders, plant churches, share the Gospel with the unreached, and help those in need. Calvary has been there to support them, commission them, and send them off.

In addition to prayer, one of the major ways we partner with our Global Staff is through financial support. This enables them to live and minister in a part of the world to which the Lord has called them. While they are on the frontlines in countries bringing the hope and the love of Jesus, we get to help them fulfill their calling. We have a unique, yet essential privilege and opportunity to come alongside them. Over 80% of funds given to the Global Outreach Budget are invested outside of Calvary's walls to support the work of our partners in 25 countries.

Perhaps you might not be able to go on a GO Team this year or your personal call might not be to "go to the nations", but you can be a part of the Great Commission by financially supporting those who do go. Maybe your call in this season of life is to support and empower the 33 Global Staff to continue God's mission, to reach the lost and unchurched, raise up disciples, and care for those in need around the world? By giving, you continue Calvary's legacy of living out Jesus' Great Commission.

If you are interested in giving to support our amazing Global Staff, designate your gift to, "Global Outreach".

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

SHARING LIFE:

1. Do you know of anyone who is a missionary? Do you know any of Calvary's Global Staff? Where do they live? What is their ministry?
2. Did you ever think of tithing to a church as being a part of the Great Commission?

OPENING SCRIPTURE:

Read Acts 13:1-5

1. Have there been times when you have waited on God by praying and/or fasting? What was your experience like?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

1. What does it mean to be a cheerful giver?
2. Calvary believes that giving back, or tithing, is an act of worship to God. Why do you think it is an act of worship?

PRAYER:

1. Take a moment to share prayer requests and pray for each other.
2. Pray for God's wisdom as you consider if part of your calling is to give so others can minister around the world.

BIG IDEA: It's a domino effect.

-Getting to know people outside the Body of Christ helps us truly be compassionate. Compassion leads to a desire for empathy. Empathy leads to a desire to actively invest in others. Investing in relationships with others outside the Body gives us a place to pursue the Great Commission.

-Getting to know people inside the Body of Christ helps us truly be compassionate. Compassion leads to a desire for empathy. Empathy leads to a desire to actively invest in others. Investing in our relationships with others within the Body gives us a place to encourage one another while learning how to work together to pursue the Great Commission.

KEY PASSAGES: Acts 1:8, Romans 12, 1 Peter 3:15,

TEACHING/DEVOTIONAL: Have you ever had a massive miscommunication with someone over email or text? Something completely unintentional? Something seemingly harmless can lead to blame and resentment.

On the other hand, have you had an apparent mess quickly resolved with an in-person chat or sharing a meal? Words alone leave gaps that must be filled. Non-verbal communication, tone, and mutual understanding can resolve the stickiest of situations. But knowing who the person truly is in the first place fills in a lot of those gaps ahead of time. We are wired as relational beings, both with God (see Week 2) and with others. When we know each other, we can more easily, "rejoice with those who rejoice [and] mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15).

Here are a few examples. Some aspects of these examples are of relationships built within the Body of Christ leading to encouragement and working together for the sake of the Great Commission (Romans 12:3-8). Other aspects are outside the Body of Christ for the sake of the Great Commission and furthering His Kingdom as we follow after Him.

From global to local to personal:

GO Teams: When Calvary sends a GO Team, we strive to send them where we are already financially and prayerfully supporting a Global Staff (missionary) or Strategic Partner (organization) on a monthly basis. That tackles one major hurdle, bridging the gap of relationship between us and those we are meeting for the first time in-country. A couple years ago Calvary sent a water-well-repair teaching team to Cambodia. No one on the GO Team had been to Cambodia before and only a few had met our in-country contact/-Global Staff, Radha Manickam and his brother Ravy. Calvary had developed these relationships for many years, thus the team's relationship development with our Global Staff, while preparing for the trip and in-country was effortless. This enabled trust, teamwork, and meeting many more people for the sake of serving others and helping encourage the relationships they already had with their communities in Cambodia. Likewise, many current and former Calvary high school students and staff regularly interact online with our brothers and sisters in Guatemala, those they had met as long ago as 2010. In person they spent time encouraging, laughing, praying, working, and sharing life together. That continues today from a distance, enabled by the relationship previously developed.

Local Community: God has blessed Calvary with the opportunity to serve the local community in many ways, including the House of Hope. At first glance, it is a food pantry serving those in need. With a closer look, its most important, while meeting physical needs, is meeting spiritual needs. It's a meeting place for new relationships, counsel, and where God is met in prayer. Before the physical distancing as a result of COVID-19, I regularly would hear stories from my family members serving there of people they had met, prayed with, and served alongside. Now most of those relationships that were built are able to continue during this time of physical separation. Serving, thanking God, and praying for those relationships can continue from a point of empathy and compassion.

We could go on and on about the different ways local community relationships can be built on a daily and weekly basis for the sake of getting to know others and spreading the Word. For example, student pastors serving on local school campuses, zoom calls, and Instagram; Calvary's participation with our country and area's resurgence of the racial equity conversation; community groups, 'sprout' groups, Couriers class, and other groups continuing to meet online despite the physical distance and many, many more!

Personal: God has blessed us with opportunities to participate with Global Outreach Teams and serving our Local Community. If you want to dive in, reach out to someone at Calvary and find out how! But this area is where we get to participate in God's Great Commission each and every single day. Jesus asked His disciples to remain in Jerusalem for a time (Acts 1:4), then He told them to be a witness for Him, and the first place mentioned was Jerusalem! They were to spread the Word, pursue the Great Commission right where they were. Yes, to GO is exciting and God can teach us a lot about who He is from a different perspective. Yes, to set aside a dedicated time on a weekly basis to serve is an awesome commitment to how God wants us to be. But God also wants us to pursue His Kingdom outside of those siloed times, in the course of life, including its interruptions.

One Strategic Partner Calvary supports financially on a monthly basis and constantly in prayer and relationship, is Emmanuel Ministries Calcutta in India. Among the many arms of their ministry, Calvary supports their outreach to children living on the street and who are addicted to drugs. Our contact, Premila, attended the Global Strategy Team meeting at Calvary in 2019 and recounted something her husband, Vijayan, often said about their ministry, "My life is interruptions, and I wouldn't have it any other way." Jesus' life, as told in the four Gospels, was essentially interruption after interruption. He met people where they were, most often right around Him, reached out to heal, and traveling many miles to sit and empathize with others. Pursuing the Great Commission in small everyday ways, is a large part of what God is calling us to in following Him each day. When we know our own story and relationship with God, the genuine relationships we pursue around us open up our call. "In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). This gentleness and respect, that comes from relationship and striving for empathy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SHARING LIFE:

1. What ways are you involved or want to be involved in what God is doing globally? Ex. praying, giving, going, etc.
2. What ways are you involved or want to be involved locally? Ex. praying, giving, going, etc.
3. Who is God asking you to reach out to in the course of your days?
4. Who is God asking you to encourage either inside or currently outside of the Body of Christ? Share some stories.

OPENING SCRIPTURE:

Read the key passages above.

1. Sit quiet before God. Where is He nudging you? Who is He nudging you toward?

PRAYER: Take a moment to share prayer requests and pray for each other.