



SESSION 1

CHRIST CAME TO US

We are His mission; He is our solution.



WORSHIP

READING PLAN

By describing the earliest days of the church, the Book of Acts offers helpful information and inspiration for joining God in His mission. Use the space provided to record your thoughts and responses as you read.

Day 1

Acts 1:1-14

Day 2

Acts 1:15-26

Day 3

Acts 2:1-36

Day 4

Acts 2:37-47

Day 5

Acts 3:1-26

Day 6

Acts 4:1-22

Day 7

Acts 4:23-37

IDENTIFYING WITH JESUS

Here's a truth that's worth repeating: Jesus didn't come to earth simply to secure our salvation; He *is* our salvation. His mission involved making Himself available to all people as the solution to our primary problem. He came so that we could believe in Him and therefore receive forgiveness from our sin.

As we saw in Matthew 1:18-25, the way Jesus came into our world was totally unique in the scope of history. While any other king would have been born in a palace, Jesus was born in a stable. While any other king's coming would have been heralded throughout the kingdom and widely publicized to all available subjects, the announcement of Jesus' birth was given only to a few humble witnesses (see Matt. 1:20-23; Luke 1:26-35; Luke 2:9-14). While other children are given names that shape who they will become, the name given to Jesus declared who He already was.

Given the uniqueness of Jesus' incarnation, it's no surprise that people reacted in a number of different ways to His presence in the world.

Read the following passages of Scripture and record the different ways people responded to Jesus.

Matthew 2:1-12

Matthew 2:13-18

Luke 2:8-20

Luke 2:36-38

Luke 4:16-30

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to participate in His mission to redeem the world. We have experienced Christ as our salvation, and therefore we work to help others experience Him as well. Yet, we must understand that joining Jesus in His mission means we will encounter a number of different reactions and responses, as He did.

There will be times when people respond to your work with joy. They will see your actions and hear as you proclaim the gospel, and they will be glad. They will welcome you into their lives even as they welcome Christ into their hearts.

There will be other times, however, when people respond to your work in negative ways, including bitterness, scorn, anger, and even rage. When you join Jesus in His mission to redeem the world, you will experience strife and strain in your relationships, both personal and public. You will experience persecution in different forms. You will be confused at times, frustrated and angry at other times.

And Jesus knew all of this when He called you to follow Him:

¹⁸ If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you.

¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word I spoke to you: “A slave is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will also keep yours.

JOHN 15:18-20

When have you experienced negative interactions or negative emotions in your efforts to follow Jesus?

What rewards have you experienced while participating in Jesus’ mission for the world?

Jesus encountered trouble as He worked to redeem the people of this world. We will encounter the same. Yet, by following His example—by modeling His courage and reflecting His resolve—we can continue to persevere as disciples of Christ on a mission in our world.



PREPARING TO BE A WITNESS

The Bible teaches that there is no hope for anyone who doesn't believe and receive God's plan of salvation by accepting Jesus Christ. Think deeply about that for a moment. In the world today there are really only two groups of people: those who are saved and those who are lost. Yet, the wonderful news of the gospel is that Jesus came to save us all. Through a step of faith, the fate of lost people can be changed forever.

Those of us who have been rescued and reconciled to God have been entrusted with the message of salvation (see Matt. 28:18-20) and the ministry of reconciling others to Him (see 2 Cor. 5:18-20). How do we do that? Where should we start? How do we ready ourselves to be instruments for reconciling others to God?

Here are a few ideas to begin preparing yourself for life as a witness to God's plan of salvation.

1. Memorize and meditate on the Scriptures. Apart from knowing the Savior ourselves, there is little else that helps our confidence as witnesses more than knowing God's Word. Memorize a few verses and passages that explain what salvation is and why we need it. This discipline helps us be ready to share the truth whenever or wherever an opportunity presents itself.

If you're new to Bible memorization, the following Scripture passages are a great place to start:

- Romans 3:23-24
- Romans 5:8
- Romans 6:23
- Romans 10:9-10

What Bible verses will you memorize in the coming weeks?

2. Move toward unsaved people. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, which means He sought to encounter them. He looked for ways to engage with them. Likewise, we should look for opportunities to develop relationships with unsaved people. Grocery store clerks, neighbors, homeless people, barbers, coworkers, coaches—all who are not yet following Christ—these make up our mission field. Consider ways you can get to know these individuals in your sphere of influence in order to impact their spiritual condition.

As you identify people who need to experience Jesus as their salvation, be proactive in deepening those relationships. Pursue them with love, friendship, and patience. Knowing the lost people in your community will help you understand how to share with them in a way that intersects with their lives.

Which people in your life need to experience salvation? Make a list.

3. Make prayer for lost people a priority. When we pray for those who need salvation, we stand as intercessors between God and them, seeking to bring God closer to them and them closer to God. As we plead for God's intervention in the lives of lost people, He begins to work in their hearts. Not only that, He also begins to sensitize our hearts to the point where we share His burden for them.

No one wants the lost to be saved more than God. By seeking Him, He also opens our eyes to opportunities to share with them.

Commit to praying each day for the people on your list (above).

4. Prepare your personal testimony. The story of what Christ has done for you personally is one of the greatest tools you have for leading others to an awareness of the Lord's calling on their lives. When people see and hear you, they encounter living proof of the power of Christ to save a soul and transform a life.

It's important that you're able to share your testimony in a concise, straight-to-the-point manner. Perhaps the simplest way to be sure that what you share is clear and concise is to write it out. Doing so helps make a long story short. And committing your testimony to memory helps you be able to share it whenever or wherever an opportunity arises.

How would you describe your testimony? See if you can record it in the space below.