

# DISCIPLESHIP: WHERE TO START?

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## INTRODUCTION

The most important missional conversation, the most compelling, the most invigorating, missional conversation, the one that our Lord Jesus Christ is the most interested in, is the missional conversation that you and I will have with those who don't know Him yet - those who are lost, those who are last, those who are least, and those who are lonely.

And we know from the Word that, as far as Jesus is concerned, the fields are ripe unto harvest. The time is now. It's not four months from now. It's not when we've got our act together, when we've got our budgets together, when we've got our stuff together. The time is now. People are hungry and desperate for Jesus Christ now.

And the wonderful thing is our Lord is so faithful, he shows us in his Word a way, a strategy through which you and I, regardless of race or gender, regardless of denomination, regardless of finances, budgets, multi-



site, mini-site, regardless of all, he shows us a strategy in which we can connect with those he's placed in our heart to reach.

## JESUS' STRATEGY

Luke 10:1-12

"After this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them two by two ahead of him, to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Go, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first, say, "Peace to this house."

If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him. If not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, 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 set before you, heal the sick who are there, and tell them the kingdom is near you.

But, when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into the streets and say, "Even the dust of that town that sticks to your feet, we wipe off against you, yet be sure of this, the kingdom of God is near." I tell you, it will be more bearable on that Day for Sodom than for that town.' "

And then, moving to verse 16:

" 'He who listens to you, listens to me. He who rejects you, rejects me. He who rejects me, rejects him who sent me.' The 72 returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.' "

We don't even know who these guys are, these 72 nameless and faceless disciples whom Jesus sends out on a mission. You see, there's something about their



walk with the Lord and what Jesus guides them in, that speaks to all of us, wherever we're at. It's for all of us, it's for every man or woman who calls himself a follower of Jesus.

## A REPRODUCIBLE STRATEGY

You see, what Jesus sends them to do is to look for the person of peace. And it's a reproducible strategy. We already see it in Luke 9, when Jesus sends out the 12.

We see it in the book of Acts with Peter and Cornelius, Paul and Lydia, Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch, looking for these people who are people of peace.

And what we see in scripture is the person of peace is the one who welcomes you - who will receive who you are. Who is open to you. Open to what you have to say about Jesus. Who is open to the life you live because of Jesus?



But they're also someone who serves you. So often when we're seeking to minister, we want to do everything for somebody else, but the person of peace often wants to make a contribution in some way.

Now, your person of peace could be a passing relationship. Recently, I was in England and the guy who collected my friends and me from the airport and took us to our church in Sheffield was a person of peace.

He was open to us. He welcomed us. And it wasn't that he was going for the tip, he'd already been paid. He was being generous with his time and asking how we were doing and everything that we needed. He was open to the fact that we wanted to serve in a church in some way.

Sometimes your person of peace is a permanent relationship. After a time away from the Lord at 18, I came back running about six months later. And my best



friend, my closest friend, was one of those people who was open.

And, although my lifestyle had to take some radical changes, she welcomed what God was doing in my life. She was interested. She was doing all that she could to keep me walking with the Lord.

## RELATIONAL GATEKEEPERS

Another person of peace. Sometimes, like a Lydia, a person of peace is a gatekeeper to a community.

When we were seeking and when we lived in Phoenix to reach out to the Hispanic community, we discovered our person of peace was actually a Bhutanese refugee: a young man called Kumar.

And when we went to him and said, "We just want to serve the community in the name of Jesus," he said, "Come and meet my entire family. My entire extended





family, cousins, brothers, sisters." None of them were related by blood and such, but they were family. And it was an opportunity to share the Gospel.

My first question for us is, Who are your people of peace? Who are the people in your life? And if you don't have one, you probably need to get out a bit more. But, who are the people of peace who are open to you, who welcome you, who serve you? And the kingdom of God is nearby.

And it's not about the music we plan. It's not about the sounds or the songs that we sing or the sermons we preach. We're in their lives. They may be fleeting moments.

They may be people nearby. They may be a gatekeeper to the area where God has burdened our hearts.

Are you looking for the people of peace? Are you encouraging your teams that you lead to look for the people of peace? Are you encouraging your faith



communities together to be praying for, looking for, seeking the Lord about who the people of peace are?

Because they are hungry for the Gospel. They are hungry to know Jesus. And what does Jesus say to the disciples? He says, "When you meet him, tell him the kingdom of God is near."

## EASIER THAN YOU THINK

We also see this strategy unfold in Matthew's Gospel, and Jesus says this: "As you go, preach this message. The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you've received, freely give."

Well, that's a low bar, but it's what the Lord is encouraging his disciples, then and now, to do.

Tell the people of peace in your life that the rule of God is near, that God wants to move in a particular way. So,



John, our taxi driver, he said to us at some point in the conversation, that he'd been baptized 20 years before. And we realized there was an opening.

He'd walked away from God. His daughter had had a terrible diagnosis. And he was sobbing as he drove us to our destination. At the end, when we got there safely and alive, we said, "Can we pray with you? Can we pray that God blesses you?" An open door, suddenly.

My friend, whom I'd walked alongside for years, she wasn't going to come to the Lord straightaway. She was looking to see if my life had changed. There have been many of us who have people in our lives, family members, loved ones, people in our community who we're serving.

And they need to see that the kingdom of God is near through our lifestyles, as well as taking those opportunities to say, how can I pray for you? Hearing when they're sick. 'Can I pray with you or pray for you?'



Testifying. Remember testimony, about what Jesus used to do in our lives? When was the last time we testified about what we were thankful for, what he's done?

Reminding everybody that our God is glorious, that our God is wonderful, that our God is great.

## SEE THE OPPORTUNITIES

It's an opportunity when we have a person of peace in our life. With Kumar, we didn't know what to do. We broke every food law every time we tried to serve our friends. But the kingdom of God was near and the Lord took our weak efforts and transformed people's lives.

And so the way that we responded to this openness was to equip our refugee friends to get assimilated into society, taught the kids to read, got people what they needed, but, also offered prayer. We said, "what can we pray for, for you? How can we bless you? How can we serve you?"



When there was a woman who was pregnant and never had a baby shower, all the older ladies of our church who knitted like it was going out of fashion, knitted - it was amazing. And they wrapped this family in love. And they began to hear that the reason why we lived this way was because we loved Jesus.

We did these things in the name of Jesus, serving Jesus. And the six months into our journey together, we began to hear our friends say, "You know, I'm from a Hindu background, but I now call on the name of Jesus."

Who are your people of peace? And, when you connect with them, are you telling them that the kingdom of God is near? Are you demonstrating? We had a missional community that used to go out to the club scene.

And every night that they were there, they would wipe up the vomit. They made sure everybody had a bottle of water. And when they were dehydrated, a chocolate



when they were low on sugar, and got home safely. None of the clubbers came to Christ because they were kind of off their faces at the time.

But the doormen watched the Christians week after week, come in the name of Jesus and wipe up the vomit, give them water, no condemnation, and get people home safely.

And they began to say, "We want to know your God." Our people of peace were at the door. And they were the gatekeepers to the club scene. And we saw many come to faith.

Who are your people of peace? Are you encouraging your teams, your friends, to look and search? Are you praying and saying, "God show me who my people of peace are and show me how to minister this week?"

We have nothing to offer but Jesus. And what a thing to offer. What a One to offer!



## WHAT'S YOUR RESPONSE?

But let's remember this as we consider this missional conversation, as we consider our call to respond to the Great Commission. Every generation of Christians has to decide what their response will be to the call of God. We will have to decide how we will respond to the lost, the last, the least, and the lonely.

If not us, then who? If not here, then where? If not now, then when? And the Lord in his goodness and in his greatness to us, has given us in his Word a simple strategy. Don't get caught up about the people who don't want to know, but seek out the people of peace.

Then when you see them and when you meet them, tell them that the kingdom of God is near.

And it may not happen overnight. We've noticed this Christianity thing is no silver bullet. But, as we're faithful, we'll see the Lord move.



My encouragement to each and every one of us is that our lives are open. Our hearts are open. Our minds are open to the people of peace that God would love to send our way.

And when we see them, that we, like Isaiah, when God said whom shall I send? And we'll say, "I'm stepping up, Lord Jesus. Send me." Amen.





**Bio:**

*Jo Saxton is a director with 3DM, a movement helping churches develop discipleship cultures. Originally from the UK, Jo was college pastor at St. Thomas Church, Sheffield, England, planting missional congregations amongst college students and young adults. Since moving to the US six years ago, Jo has served on church teams discipling young leaders and planting missional communities in areas ranging from the suburbs to the inner city. Jo is also the author of *Real God, Real Life*, exploring authentic spirituality in today's world (released in 2010) *Influential* (2011) exploring the subject of women in leadership. Jo is married to Chris, a pastor and they have two amazing daughters, Tia and Zoë.*