



## **Reimagine Church sermon series: Module 1 - Building Missional Culture**

Please feel free to give your own title to the series, and your own examples, humour, and illustrations to each talk. The messages must come alive through your own experience

Please note that there are two different options for week 6. You may decide to do both and add another week to the series if you want to.

### **Week 1**

#### **Title: The best way to live**

Key scriptures: Matt 28:16-20, Matt 22:37-39, Jn 10:1-11

Set up:

We all have a need to give our lives for something significant, something of eternal value. We settle for less far too quickly. It is in giving our lives for what matters to God, that we discover the unique reason for which we were created and so our ultimate fulfilment.

No one ends their life thinking that they wished they had worked longer hours at the office, watched more box sets, had more expensive holidays, or spent more time on social media. For each of us it is the significant relationships that we have made that are the most important. In particular it is those we have invested in – family, friends, and mentees, those we have helped along the way to go further in their own lives. They are the ones who will turn up at our funeral and express their deepest appreciation for a life well lived. Jesus called this kind of investment ‘making disciples’. So what does that really mean

To prioritise making disciples means being led by the Spirit of God to those God is bringing into our lives, those he wants us to invest in. Sounds simple doesn't it. In reality there are many distractions, discouragements, diversions, and even deceptions to keep us from this most rewarding of preoccupations!

Key points: Unpacking Matt 28:16-20

1. The journey begins with doing what he tells us to do. That's a non-negotiable. They went to Galilee '**where Jesus told them to go**' Matt 28:16. To start anywhere else makes nonsense of being a Christ-follower (the key is in the word follower). If he really is God, why would we want to do anything else. We are his sheep and we can hear his voice Jn 10:3. He knows best. He knows what will bring us the 'abundant life' he promises Jn 10:10.

2. Having settled the issue of following wherever he leads, we come to worship, Matt 28:17 '**When they saw Him they worshiped Him**'. Developing our love relationship with God is the highest priority. It is only as our love for him grows that our love for others will increase. The greatest commandments were to first love God, and then love others (Matt 22:37-39). It all starts with our relationship with him. If our relationship with him is weak, on-off, self-focussed, based on fear or guilt, or just a Sunday only relationship, then we have to start this exciting journey by re-establishing our vital connection with him, the Father who utterly loves us, the Son who gave his life for us, and the Spirit who lives in us. As God's love fills our hearts we have the motivation to 'go and make disciples'

3. Even the disciples who had lived with Jesus for 3 years, when they saw him risen from the dead, we are told, '**some doubted**'. This gives us courage when we have doubts and fears about what 'making disciples' might entail. It's OK to have doubts and fears Matt 28:17. 'but some doubted'

4. We can have confidence in the authority that has been given to him by the Father, and in which he now sends us out to go and make disciples, Matt 28:18-19. '**All authority in heaven and earth had been given to me, therefore go and make disciples**'. It's not about us, it's about him.

5. In whatever he leads us into, we can have courage, not because we are clever / strong / eloquent / charismatic / popular / confident in our own abilities, but because he is with us Matt 28:20. '**I am with you always till the end of the age**'. It's all we need to know.

Challenge - What one thing could you do this week to develop your love relationship with the Lord? Who might you tell your idea to – someone who could encourage you to put it into practice?

Option - Pause and see if God brings something and someone to mind.

## Week 2

### Title: The power of identity

Key scriptures: Gen 1:26-28, Acts 1:8, 2 Cor 5:17-20

Sets up:

We are all motivated in what we do by something. For some of us it's the expectations that others put on us or fear of what others will think, for some it's guilt or trying to keep the rules, for some it's the need to prove ourselves, for others it's the hope of earning God's favour. We have many inadequate or wrong reasons for doing things!

What is God's intention for our motivation for the things we do in life? It's the desire to become all that he has created us to be. 'Being before doing' instead of 'doing before being'. This means that we act out of who we are rather than performing in order to gain a sense of self-worth. So what kind of motivation would God want for us as we think about going and making disciples? Unless we get this right we will either run out of steam, or maybe never get started.

Key Points:

God created us in his image to be like him, Gen 1:27. It's only as we get to know God better that we will understand who we are, who and what God has created us to be. When we discover who we are we understand how we 'get to live' in the light of that. So often when it comes to serving God in general, or making disciples in particular, we operate out of 'got to', rather than 'get to'. God's call on Adam and Eve to 'be fruitful and multiply' (the same call on us today to go and make disciples who make disciples) comes immediately after the statement that they were created in his image.

So who are we? In general terms we are sons and daughters of God, loved by him as members of his family, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Rom 8:15-17. But in specific terms in relation to making disciples we are..

1. His witnesses. Jesus promised his disciples that they would **be** his witnesses, Acts 1:8, not that they should go and **do** witnessing. Witnesses is who we are, because of what we have seen and heard (it's what a witness in court reports). Peter and John put it this way; in Acts 4:20 they said 'we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard (witnessed). They were witnesses, and they acted out of who they were, not what they thought they should do. They couldn't help themselves!

2. His ambassadors, 2 Cor 5:20. Paul says we are new creations, 2 Cor 5:17, and because of that we get to (not got to) be (not do) his ambassadors. It's who we are, both by original design, and by new birth. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation. It's a gift, a

blessing not a curse or a pressure. We are reconcilers, we are ambassadors, and we are witnesses. It's just who we are.

So as we reflect on who we are and how we reflect the image of God, we start to change the way we think about his great commission to go and make disciple-makers. We see ourselves as created to **be** disciple-makers, to be those to bring out the image of God in all of his created children, those who call people into their original design, those who demonstrate that original design in their own lives and invite other to discover the same.

Does this feel very different, it should!

Challenge - How do you see yourselves? How does God see you? What truths could you meditate on this week to help shift your perspective? Who might you share those insights with

Option - Pause and see if God brings something and someone to mind.

## Week 3

### Title: The power of prayer

Key scriptures: Jas 5:16, Eph 6:19, Lk 10:1-2

Set up:

John Wesley said 'God does nothing except in response to believing prayer'

Jesus taught his disciples to pray 'your kingdom come'. If we want to see God's kingdom come to our families, friends, work colleagues, streets, neighbourhoods, towns and cities, then we need to pray. Jesus taught about prayer, he modelled prayer; he told his disciples 'this kind (of demon) only comes out with prayer and fasting'. Jesus lived a life dependant on his Father, with regular rhythms and times set aside for prayer. He said 'I only do what I see the Father doing'.

We can do no more than imitate Christ in this respect

Jesus also said in relation to the mission and the harvest, that we need to pray for more workers (Lk 10:1-2). So how do we pray?

Key points:

1. For boldness – The disciples prayed for boldness in speaking the word in Acts 4:29-31. Paul asked the Ephesian church to pray for him to have boldness in preaching the gospel. Eph 6:19-20. Fear is one of the greatest obstacles to being confident witnesses and ambassadors for the gospel.
2. For open doors for the gospel, and wisdom and grace (saltiness) in how to use them. Col 4:2-6. There may be opportunities all around us that we don't see or don't take, or don't know what to do or say when they appear!
3. For specific people to open their hearts to him. God has put people all around us, some of whom will be open to spiritual conversations and invitations (more of that on another week). We can pray for these people, particularly those we can really invest in spiritually
4. For the ability to cultivate an effective, enjoyable, and fruitful prayer life. Paul said we were to pray with 'all kinds of prayer', Eph 6:18. This suggests that we should be willing to experiment, to vary, to try out different rhythms and types of prayer, till we find what works for us. We know we will need to persevere, Lk 18:1-8, to see the breakthrough we long for in others lives

Challenge – how about starting to meet regularly with one or two other people to pray these kind of prayers. Make a note to talk to them about this this week.

Option – Pause and see if God brings someone to mind

## Week 4

### Title: The power of story

Key scriptures: Acts 4:20, Rev 12:11

Set up:

We are all creatures of story. We tell stories. We love stories. Every culture in the world including ours has its stories. We all have a story. Our family has a story. God has a story. Connecting people to God's story and our story is a privilege and skill. Confidence in our story doesn't always come naturally. Not many of us are skilled storytellers who are able to keep our audience on the edge of their seats. But we can learn skills and grow in confidence by experience

Our story is unique. Some have dramatic stories of change when we came to Christ. Others have less eventful stories, but they are equally powerful when told well. 'Most of us are like the rest of us'. If your story feels ordinary, you will be like most people, they will relate to you.

Our story is the most powerful way to share the good news about Jesus. A key principle of the gospel is that it has to be incarnated to be understood properly. It is not a set of propositional ideas but good news about how God rescues and changes us. As such it is only as others can see that through the lens of our life that it becomes real. When The apostle Paul was brought before the authorities, he used his story to share the good news. Acts 22 before the crowds, and Acts 26 before King Agrippa. When Peter and John did when they were brought before the authorities in Acts 4:20, they simply said 'we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard'. That's their story

Our story is powerful to defeat the enemy. It's been said that a person with a testimony is never at the mercy of a person with an argument. The testimony wins every day. Rev 12:11 'they over came the enemy by the word of their testimony (their story), the blood of the lamb (the finished work of Christ on the Cross), and loving not their lives unto death (living a sacrificial life in service of the one we love).

The elephant in the room here is that we don't all feel that connected to God, such that we have up to date stories of God doing things in our lives. We may have a story of how we came to Christ 15 years ago. But what did he do yesterday, last week or even last month. This is a challenge to all of us to be cultivating a day to day relationship with the Father, allowing his love to change us; with the Son, allowing his power to work through us; with the Spirit, allowing him to lead us? What adventures is he leading us into? What are we hearing him speak to us? How is he helping us and changing us?

Key points:

So what does it mean to be building our story?

1. Building a daily rhythm of connection with God, listening to his voice, responding to his promptings, taking risks, having fun in community with others who are learning to do the same
2. Maybe in keeping a journal of prayers so we can see when they are being answered. It's so encouraging when we see God answering our prayer. We can also keep a note of things he is saying to us.
3. We can learn to tell our story and practice it with others. We'll be doing this in the small groups

Challenge – what do you want to be doing to build your story? How about making yourself accountable to someone for doing the thing that is coming to mind

Option – take a moment now to consider what you will commit to doing. Listen to the quiet voice of the Spirit. And who will you be accountable to for putting that into practice.



## Week 5

### Title: The power of the person of peace

Key scripture: Lk 10:1-11

Set up:

When it comes to being his witness we are not called to try and convert everyone. We are simply called to be a witness. It's God's job to soften, change and convert hearts. God does want 'all men and women to be saved' (1Tim 2:4), and for 'none to perish' (2 Pet 3:9), but that is not meant to be a pressure that drives us. Some have even had mental breakdowns under the stress of thinking that it's all down to us. In fact it's all down to God.

So in practice how do we decide where to invest our time and energy in becoming what we already are – his witnesses, his ambassadors? We have limited amounts of both time and relational energy. Jesus demonstrated this well. He didn't try and persuade everyone to follow him. Whilst everyone had the chance to do so, he clearly differentiated whom he was to deeply invest in, and who would be a passing relationship. In fact he was at pains to put some people off (consider the Pharisees and the rich young ruler). We need to be helped to have the same discernment

Thankfully Jesus has shown us a clear way of doing this in the story of his sending out of the 70. We call it the person of peace principle (man of peace in the story). This is really liberating, and causes us to be so much more fruitful.

Key points: (from Lk 10:1-11)

1. The disciples are sent. We are also called to 'go'. To be disciple makers we too have to be willing to 'go'. Across the street, across the office, across the city or even across the world. Where is God calling us to go?
2. They went in pairs. God doesn't expect us to do this by ourselves. Where are our spiritual family? Who are we praying with? Who are we sharing life with? Who are we 'going' with? If we don't feel we have anyone who will share in this adventure with us, we need to 'pray to the Lord of the Harvest that he will send out more workers'. What is the implication of God being called 'the Lord of the Harvest'?
3. They blessed everyone, healing the sick, proclaiming good news, blessing every person with God's 'shalom' peace, but they only stayed and invested quality time with the person of peace. They were the ones who welcomed them, listened to them, and offered them hospitality. We could say that they were 'spiritually interested', or that they were 'leaning in'. How could we discern who that is in our life? Conversely

are there relationships we should move on from?

When we discern who the people of peace are in our lives, it takes any sense of strain out of being his disciples. The adventure simply becomes finding them, loving on them, sharing out story with them, and offering them opportunities to go on a spiritual journey (invitations to church, go on an Alpha course etc)

Challenge - Can you think of anyone who you already know is a person of peace to you (they like you, listen to you, and may even want to bless or serve you in some way)? If so then why not ask God 'What's next Lord?' In other words what is the Lord asking of you to do next in your relationship with them? If not then start to pray for God to show you people of peace around you.

Option - Take a moment now to see if God brings someone to mind, and if so what he might be leading you to do next by way of investing in the relationship. Consider who you will share this with as a matter of prayer.

## Week 6 (option A)

### Title: The power of good news

Key scriptures: 1 Cor 9:19-23, Jn 1:14, Acts 17:22-31

Set up:

Can you remember when you were last told really good news? Your favourite football team winning a spectacular victory, Mo Farah winning his third gold in the London Olympics, a new baby being born in your family, or getting a great new job. Good news spreads quickly. It doesn't take any effort.

Gospel simply means 'good news'. How did you hear the good news about Jesus? Who passed that good news on to you? How has it been good to you? In what ways could you say that good things have come into your life as a result of it? How has the good news changed you in positive ways?

Key points:

1. We need to be able to express how the good news has been good news to us, but we also need to understand how the good news is good for those we are reaching out to. For example is it that Jesus brings security and peace to anxious and worried people? Is it that he brings meaning and purpose to those whose life has become a meaningless treadmill? Or is it that he fills broken hearts with his love? The gospel is unchanging, but the way we communicate it needs to be expressed uniquely for the people we are connecting with.
2. Jesus came to a specific people at a specific time. He could have just broadcast his message from heaven, or sent an angel. Instead he became a man, a Jew in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine. As John 1:14 says in the Message translation 'The word became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood.' Paul said to the Corinthians 'I have become all things to all men that by all means I might save some' (1 Cor 9:22). He demonstrated that well when with the Athenians, quoting some of their poets, and using their cultural references as a bridge to the truth about Jesus. Acts 17:22-31.
3. We need to learn how to express the good news about Jesus in a simple way, perhaps using simple symbols like the4points [www.the4points.com](http://www.the4points.com)  
Explain the 4 points of the gospel

But we also need to be able to express the good news in a variety of ways. For example he is

- Forgiveness we could never deserve
- Freedom we could never attain
- Fulfilment we could never imagine

Challenge - What would good news be to those you work with or live near? How could you communicate the good news to them? How could Jesus be relevant to their lives, their questions, their challenges, and their brokenness? How do the life, death and resurrection of Jesus become relevant to them?

Option – why not take a moment now to think of one or two people you know and ask the question ‘what would be good news to them?’ Commit to praying for an opportunity to share Jesus’ good news with them.

## Week 6 option B.

### Title: The power of invitation

Key scriptures: Jn 1:35-45, 2 Tim 1:7-11

Set up:

Jesus invites some to follow him in Jn 1. Then Andrew goes and finds his brother Simon, and Philip goes and finds Nathanael. Jesus invites us and we get to do the same. Jn 1:35-45

There are many things we can invite people to – a catch up in a coffee shop or pub, a church service, an Alpha course, a meal in our home, a trip to the footie, and ultimately to follow Jesus

So why don't we invite people? Many of the reasons track back to fear. Fear of rejection, or embarrassment; fear of not knowing the answer to their questions; fear that they won't like the church, that it may 'spoil' our friendship, and ironically, that they may say 'yes' to an invitation and we are obliged to make good on our invite

We need to foster a culture of invitation in our church (see the book by Michel Harvey – Creating a culture of invitation in your church). As well as using centralised events like Christmas, Easter and Harvest as invitational opportunities, consider the other opportunities we have to invite people to social activities with our friends and small groups.

Key points

1. We must recognise that invitation is 'for the many not the few', to quote a well known UK politician. We all play our part in inviting friends and family to the events we put on as church. Each of us will reach people that no one else will reach. It's hard to believe that only **2%** of Christians invite others to church, but **15%** of the unchurched say they would attend if invited by a friend or family member. **Check stats**
2. We need to overcome our fears of inviting, realising that the worst thing that can happen is that they say 'no' (for some the worst thing might actually be that they actually say 'yes!'). 'God hasn't given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.' 2 Tim 1:7. Fear comes from the enemy who wants to paralyse us (paralysed with fear). God has given us a sound mind so that we can see through the enemies tactics, 'feel the fear and do it any way' as the book title says. We will never not feel those butterflies in our stomachs when about to invite someone to something spiritual for the first time. It's a sign that we are alive! Not a sign that we shouldn't do it. Most of us on our journey to Christ were invited to something by someone else. It's a privilege that we get to do the same for others.

3. Most of us already know someone we could invite to something.

Challenge – Whom could you invite? Pause for a moment and see if God brings someone to mind. Would you commit to pray for an opportunity to invite them to a church service, a small group social, or an Alpha course or equivalent? (Note to pastor – it would be very helpful if you have some kind of guest service within a few weeks from bringing this message)

Option – consider praying regularly with another Christian prior to inviting the friend. Someone else knowing what you are intending to do, and supporting you, and offering accountability for doing it makes it 10 x more likely that you will follow through on the invitation!