

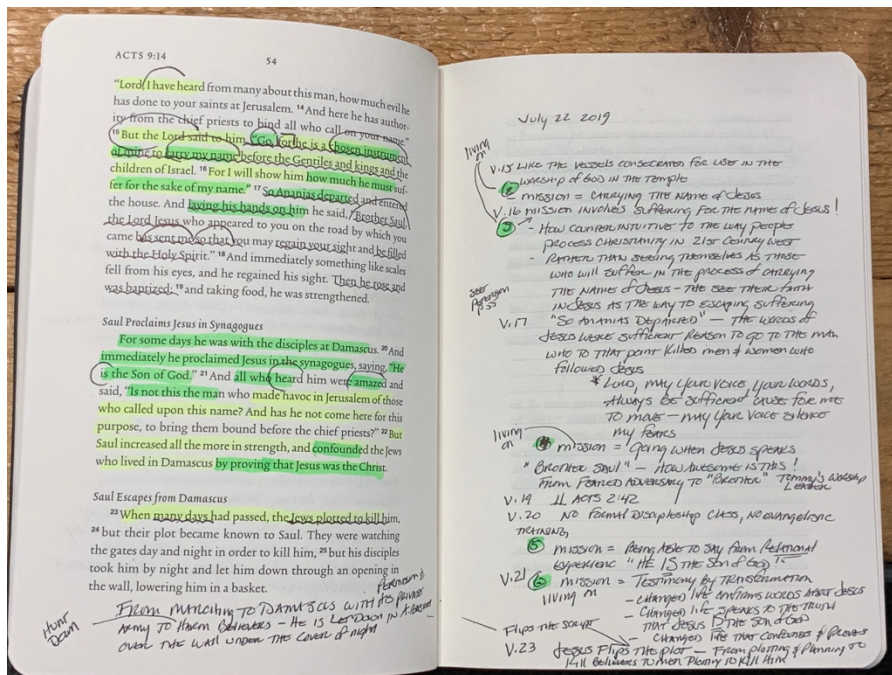
LITTLE THOUGHTS ABOUT OUR BIG MISSION

A Devotional Theology of Mission

Acts 8 and 9

I thought that I was going to teach from Judges 4-5 this morning. While we were in Hawaii I was so blown away when we came in our Bible bus reading to the story of the prophetess and judge Deborah! I literally sat there thinking — *This is what I want to teach on the Sunday we get back.* I was thinking of how the Book of Judges would be such a great sequel to the 5 weeks we spent looking at the last words of Moses to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 4, Deuteronomy 6 and Deuteronomy 8. The utter spiritual collapse and moral chaos of the nearly 400 years of the period of the Judges was owing to the failure of the Israelites to be **careful about and remember** what Moses had said to them only 30-35 years before Judges 2. I spent time on Thursday walking around in it in my mind — then nearly all of Friday and half of Saturday working on it — and around noon on Saturday I brought myself to say: *This is NOT God's Word for us on Sunday!*

But while we were in Hawaii, I had an amazing time in our Bible Bus readings in the book of Acts! I had so many devotional thoughts and responses to the passages that I was writing on the right hand side of my Scripture Journal.



But around Acts 8 I found myself writing “*Mission =*” or “*Living on Mission means*”. I started numbering them so they would stand out from my other notes. As I was wrestling with Judges 4-5 I started thinking — It’s not Judges and Deborah — It’s Acts and Missions.

So this morning is the first in a mini-series on Mission and Living on Mission. I believe it connects so well with the series we were doing on Monday nights on *How the Local Church Lives and Breathes*. Just as that series was not a formal theology of the nature of the church (Ecclesiology) — neither is this a formal theology of missions (Missiology). It is a collection of little thoughts about our big mission! Not “little” in the sense of insignificant or trivial; but in the sense of brevity (in our study of the book of Acts I had 15 pages of notes on one of the things we’re going to look at today). It’s a devotional theology of missions. So that’s pretty much the title of this series!

LITTLE THOUGHTS ABOUT OUR BIG MISSION
A Devotional Theology of Mission

Let’s open our Bibles to the Book of Acts — chapter 8.

1. MISSION HAPPENS ALONG THE WAY

Acts 8:25 Now when they (Peter and John) had testified and spoken the word of the Lord (in Samaria), they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Acts 8:40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

We tend to think of mission as a destination to a specific place. But the reality of mission in the book of Acts is that a lot of mission took place along the way! Mission happened as they were on the way home. Mission happened as they were passing. If we think of mission in those terms EVERYWHERE is a mission field. How many places and people do you encounter ON THE WAY in your every day life? Stopping at your favorite coffee shop ON THE WAY. Stopping at the gym before heading to work.

It's awesome that we had a team from Metro in Newark and in England at the same time. But we want to see ourselves on mission even on the way to mission!

CHECK THIS OUT — I'M SAVED — loving and serving Jesus — and on my way to a glorious forever in His presence **because** a Christian was living on mission ON THE WAY to a movie!

QUESTION — Every day all of us are ON THE WAY to something or somewhere! ON THE WAY going or ON THE WAY coming home — how do we see the world around us? Do we see people who at this moment in time don't have that future awaiting them? Do we see a broken world? Do we want the people we're looking at and encountering ON THE WAY of every day to be with us on that Day when God will wipe away every tear?

To be with us in that place where we will see GOD face to face? To be with us in that place where there is no more death, no more sin?

2. OUR MISSION IS ACTUALLY JESUS' MISSION

Acts 9:1–6 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "**I am Jesus**, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

Saul of Tarsus was on a Mission — The systematic, relentless, organized and violent persecution of the church

But Jesus was on a mission — Jesus was on a mission to love and save the man who hated Him — and transform the greatest enemy of the Gospel into the greatest advocate of the Gospel.

After His death and resurrection — before He returned to heaven He said in

John 20:21 “ As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

We are a part of His mission to seek and save the lost! Even the MOST lost! Even the greatest adversaries of the Gospel!

3. WHERE YOU LIVE IS WHERE YOUR MISSION IS

Acts 9:6; 10 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do..... ¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias.

Jesus' had a disciple in a specific place — the exact place where He needed a disciple to help a man in the baby steps of his relationship with Jesus; the man who would (by the grace of God and power of the Holy Spirit) shape the history of Western Civilization by the preaching of the Gospel and planting churches!

Transpose this encounter between Jesus and Saul from 32-33AD to 2019AD — from the road to Damascus to 80 East. Jesus could say: *Now there is a disciple in Roseville — Now there is a disciple in Rocklin — Now there is a disciple in Granite Bay — Now there is a disciple in Loomis — Now there is a disciple in Antelope — Now there is a disciple in Citrus Heights Now there is a disciple in Lincoln — Now there is a disciple in Sacramento — Now there is a disciple in Woodland — Now there's a disciple in Shingle Springs — Now there's a disciple in Auburn/Grass Valley*

Jesus has YOU in a specific place for His specific redeeming plans and purposes!! Jesus wants to send men and women your way!!

4. LIVING ON MISSION = “HERE I AM, LORD”

Acts 9:10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”

When I was reading this I had a bunch of questions: Was he young, or was he old? What did he do? What was his skill set? Was he a professional or was he a tradesman? Was he educated? Was He single? Was he married? Did he have

children? If he had kids, was he a grandpa? All of that would be the kind of stuff we would find under “*PROFILE*” in somebody’s social media account, right?

What is striking here is that Jesus didn’t give ANY of that information to Saul of Tarsus. Not because He was lacking the information and couldn’t fill it in. All Jesus gave was the man’s name.

It doesn’t matter if you’re — young or old — a professional or a tradesman — educated or not — single or married — rich or poor.

What matters is being able to say: *HERE I AM, LORD*

What matters is that you have let Jesus step onto the throne of your life. You’ve said, “*Lord, your Kingdom come.*”

QUOTE: The Vintage Church — “*In every way, the church is the people who have benefited from Jesus’ work on the cross, live in light of it, and gladly proclaim it.*”

When I read the words of Ananias my mind immediately went to the words of Isaiah the prophet 700 years earlier.

Isaiah 6:8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

My mind immediately races to the words of a young boy named Samuel about 1,000 years earlier

1 Samuel 3:10 NLT And the LORD came and called as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel replied, “Speak, your servant is listening.”

If you’re a believer — you and I should start every day with *HERE I AM, LORD*. *I’ve got stuff on my calendar — but feel free to change any and all of it! I want my agenda to fit YOUR agenda. If you need me in any way in any moment — SPEAK, LORD YOUR — I’M YOUR SERVANT and I’M LISTENING.*

THAT is where living IN the mission of Jesus begins!

5. LIVING ON MISSION = CARRYING THE NAME OF JESUS

Acts 9:15–17 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to **carry my name** before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

For sure Jesus meant that Saul of Tarsus was going to carry His name before gentiles and kings and the children of Israel in the sense of proclaiming His name to people and places.

But if you’re a Christian you and I need to be conscious of the fact that we *carry* the name of Jesus wherever we go and we *carry* the name of Jesus into whatever we’re doing. The way we live affects the way people think about His name when His name is spoken.

Acts 11:26 ...And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

The way those believers lived looked so much like the Jesus they proclaimed that they were called *Christians* — *Christ-like*.

When we walk out of these doors we are on mission — we’re carrying the name of Jesus. We should carry His name well wherever we are and in whatever we’re doing — and we should carry it with us in the sense that we’re READY to speak His name.

6. LIVING ON MISSION INVOLVES SUFFERING FOR THE NAME OF JESUS

16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

This is SO counterintuitive to the way the Gospel is explained and the way men and women process and understand the Gospel in 21st century church culture. The average church goer understands the Gospel and faith in Jesus as the way to ESCAPE suffering. They don’t think that following Jesus will involve suffering for the sake of the name of Jesus.

7. LIVING ON MISSION = GOING WHEN JESUS SPEAKS

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house.

The words of Jesus were all Ananias needed to go to the man who up that point killed men and women who loved and followed and proclaimed the name of Jesus.

***** Lord, May Your voice, Your words, always be sufficient cause for me to MOVE — may Your voice silence my fears.**

Look at what Ananias calls Saul of Tarsus

And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul,

How awesome is this!! From feared, violent adversary of Christianity to BROTHER! THAT is the outcome of mission

8. MISSION IS THE NATURAL RESPONSE TO MEETING JESUS

Acts 9:19–21 For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰ And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

Paul met the living Jesus and he couldn't wait to tell the world about Him!

9. MISSION = TESTIMONY BY TRANSFORMATION

Acts 9:21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?”

JESUS FLIPPED THE SCRIPT! The one plotting and planning to kill those who proclaimed that Jesus is the Son of God is now the one proclaiming that Jesus IS the Son of God.

That transformation confounds — but it also proves spoke to the truth about Jesus — He really IS the Son of God.

BY THE WAY — Jesus FLIPS THE SCRIPT in more than one way — Saul of Tarsus used to plot and plan to kill Christians — but now others were plotting and planning to kill him.

10. LIVING ON MISSION REQUIRES ENCOURAGERS

Acts 9:26 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, **for they did not believe that he was a disciple.**

THAT had to be discouraging!!

²⁷ But — Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

There is mission that God has in mind — people God is going to use in that mission — that just need an endorsement — just need to be introduced to the local church. That is what Barnabas did! He didn't leave Paul discouraged and on the outside looking in. He TOOK Paul to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. HE told Paul's story — HE confirmed the legitimacy of Paul's conversion and the legitimacy of his gifting — and boom!

So — As the result of Barnabas encouraging Saul

he (Saul) went in and out among them at Jerusalem,

Saul went in and out among them. The outsider was embraced as an insider.

preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. ³¹ So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up.

***** Lord, May I be a Barnabas — may see your work in and your hand upon the "Sauls" in my life!**

***** Lord, May there be a Barnabas in my life!**

11. LIVING ON MISSION = WALKING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD AND THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

³¹ And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

walking in the fear of the Lord

The “landscape” of living on mission can change. In one chapter of Acts they went from persecution to peace. And that would change again. But in persecution or peace — they stayed on mission because they lived as though God was watching their affairs. It is so good to know that God is watching! Nothing escapes His watchful eye. He sees what we can't see. And when you really understand that you want to live in a way that won't break His heart.

walking in.... the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

They were able to live on mission in the face of persecution because they didn't walk in the comfort of material things — or the comfort of calm circumstances. They LIVED in the comfort of the Holy Spirit in hard times and in good times.

Couples fail to live on mission in their marriage because of financial hardship. Churches fail on mission (split or fold) when they face difficulty because they were wanted the comfort of convenience or location or facilities.