



# 08

## SESSION EIGHT

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# Jesus Appeared to the Disciples

### SESSION SUMMARY

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In this session, we see how Jesus spoke to His disciples on the evening of the day He was raised again to new life. The instructions Jesus gave His disciples reflect the mission of God that drives the storyline of the Bible. God the Father sends His Son, God the Son sends His people to the world, and the Father and Son send the Spirit to empower us for mission. As followers of Jesus, we are a sent people who are being formed in the image of our sending God and our suffering Savior. We are not alone on our mission but are all the while empowered by the Spirit of God.

### SCRIPTURE

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John 20:19-23

# THE POINT

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**Just as God the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus also sends us to be on mission.**

## INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

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### Option 1

There are two kinds of witnesses. The first is someone who sees something happen. The second is someone who has experienced something personally. Both kinds of witnesses are important. But the first kind changes your perspective; the second kind changes your identity.

Consider the examples from Scripture of witnesses who were forever changed after an encounter with God. Abram became Abraham. Moses went from refugee to deliverer. Ruth went from being a widow picking up leftovers to being the wife of the landowner. One day, David was a shepherd boy; the next, he was anointed king. Mary was an ordinary teenager until an angel told her she would be the mother of the Messiah. On the road to Damascus, Paul went from murderer to missionary. The list could go on.

There's a difference between watching others follow Jesus and following Him daily ourselves. The watchers witness something. The followers become witnesses of Someone.

- **What is something remarkable you have seen that changed your perspective?**

### Option 2

Place students in two large groups. If desired, allow students to come up with fun names for their groups. Ask Group 1 to play Simon Says, and instruct Group 2 to watch the followers. Group 2 will tell you when someone from Group 1 has neglected to follow Simon's instructions. Those who do not obey what Simon says must take a seat where they are. Allow Group 1 to play Simon Says for three minutes, and then switch it up so that Group 2 is playing Simon Says and Group 1 is helping you keep an eye on the followers. After allowing Group 2 to play for three minutes, call the entire group together. Ask:

- **How did you know what Simon said when you were a follower? How did you know what Simon said when you were watching the followers?**
- **Which time did you remember who acted as Simon?**

When playing Simon Says, you have to pay attention to Simon directly. Some people will intentionally throw you off or fake you out, and cause you to have to sit out for the rest of the game. And those watching from the sidelines won't let you get away with a wrong move. When following Jesus, it's important that our focus is on Him. We are His witnesses, not witnesses of His followers. While His followers can often teach us about Him, He should be our main point of interest and information.

# HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

## THE POINT

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**Just as God the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus also sends us to be on mission.**

## CHARACTERS

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- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **The Disciples:** the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him, take part in His ministry, and share the gospel with others

## PLOT

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The night of Jesus' arrest, His disciples abandoned Him and scattered. Terrified and overwhelmed with fear, the disciples ran because they thought that would be the only way to save themselves. Our story picks up with a frightened bunch of disciples who were hiding in fear of the Jews and all that had happened, only to be completely amazed when Jesus revealed Himself to them.

## TIMELINE

**JESUS SENDS**  
*The disciples witness the risen Christ and receive the peace He brings.*

**OVERCOMING DOUBTS**  
*Thomas' doubts are satisfied when he sees and touches the risen Jesus.*

**FOLLOW ME**  
*Jesus' forgiveness and the call of every Christian.*

## JESUS OFFERS HIS PEACE

It had been a devastating weekend for Jesus' disciples. The One they expected to restore the kingdom to Israel had been crucified (Acts 1:6). But on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene announced to them that she had seen Jesus (John 20:18). We pick up with the story as the disciples huddled together in fear.

**19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." (John 20:19)**

Jesus' disciples locked the doors because they feared that the Jewish leaders might try to get rid of them too. However, neither the grave clothes nor the locked door was an obstacle to Jesus. He simply appeared in their midst.

John's account of this astounding appearance focuses on three statements Jesus made to His disciples. The first was a greeting that recalled Jesus' promise to give them a peace that would overcome their troubled hearts and their fear (John 14:27; 16:33).

What an encouragement for Jesus' followers who are sent into the world on His mission. Through faith in the King who was raised so that we may be right with God, we now have peace with God (Rom. 4:25-5:1). God no longer counts our sins against us. Even in a troubled world where we face suffering and death, God's peace guards our hearts against fear and anxiety.

- **How does the peace of God guard our hearts against fear and anxiety? When have you experienced God's peace even though you were facing the troubles of the world? (p. 54, PSG)**

## JESUS SENDS OUT HIS DISCIPLES

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The announcement of peace was only the beginning of Jesus' message when He appeared to His disciples. With the next statement, He was ready to send them on a mission.

**20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." (John 20:20-21)**

Here we have the second statement Jesus made to His disciples. Jesus prepared His disciples for this statement in two ways. First, He showed them His hands and side. The scars on His hands and side were marks of His suffering and His victory. He had overcome death, which was exactly why His disciples were overjoyed when they saw Him.

Second, Jesus repeated His greeting of peace. With this, He offered them this a stunning commission: Just as Jesus was sent by God, Jesus would also send His disciples out into the world. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus frequently referred to Himself as One sent by God. In alignment with that sending, He sends His followers.

We speak of this "sending" as a mission because the Latin word for *send* is *mission*. But what exactly is this mission of God?

Each Gospel includes a commission from the risen King to His disciples, and Matthew's account that concisely summarizes the mission: make disciples everywhere (28:19). That is still our mission today. We are to multiply our numbers, leading people to faith in Jesus Christ and then teaching them to obey His commands (Matt. 28:19-20).

Jesus' words here echo His prayer the night before His death. Jesus prayed a number of things for His disciples, but He also declared that He would send them just as He had been sent (John 17:18). Jesus invites us to participate in the same mission in which He participated. His Father sent Him, and He asks us to go on mission with Him, sending us with His peace, commanding us to love others and speak the truth with grace.

Pastor Timothy Keller offers this helpful reminder: "God never calls you in to bless you without also sending you out to be a blessing (Gen 12:1-3; cf. 1 Pet 2:9). So a Christian is not a spiritual consumer, coming in to get his or her emotional needs met and then going home. A missional church, then, is one that trains and encourages its people to be in mission as individuals and as a body."<sup>1</sup> Whether through being a student, band member, athlete, or whatever jobs you may have throughout your life, you are called to live on mission to make disciples.

- **How does Jesus' victory over sin and death and His promise of peace encourage you as you live on mission?** (p. 55, PSG)

## JESUS GIVES HIS SPIRIT

The mission Jesus gave to His followers is not doable without help. The night before Jesus was crucified, He promised that the Father would send the Holy Spirit to guide and help them on their mission (John 14:15-17,25-26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15). With His third statement after the resurrection, Jesus made good on that promise.

**22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” (John 20:22-23)**

At first, the timing seems confusing. It appears that Jesus gave His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of His resurrection. Yet, about forty days after His resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). This gift came on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection, enabling the disciples to carry out the mission they had been given (Acts 2:1-47).

The key to understanding verse 23 is the detail that Jesus “breathed on them.” This is most likely some sort of symbolic action. D. A. Carson suggests that the exhaling and command to receive the Spirit “are best understood as a kind of acted parable pointing forward to the full endowment still to come (though in the past for John’s readers).”<sup>2</sup>

### GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

This was not the first time the Gospel of John mentioned Jesus referring to an event in the near future as if it had already arrived. Jesus announced that the time had come for Him to be glorified, yet His crucifixion was still a few days away (John 12:23). It did not take place as Jesus spoke. Similarly, we understand the command about receiving the Holy Spirit to refer to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church on the Day of Pentecost.

One difficulty with verse 23 is the impression that Jesus’ followers have some kind of free rein or complete freedom to forgive sins. However, we must remember that this is tied to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The focus is on the pronouncement of forgiveness or the announcement that forgiveness has not been granted.

## TIMELINE

**AS YOU GO...**  
*Fulfilling the Great Commission wherever we are in life.*

**THE ASCENSION**  
*Jesus promises to send His Spirit.*

*\*Bonus Session*  
**SONG OF THANKSGIVING**  
*Being grateful for God’s salvation leads to public proclamation.*

Think of it this way: When you go on a mission, you have the authority to say to someone, “Your sins are forgiven if you repent and believe in Jesus.” Likewise, you can and must inform people that they remain in their sins if they do not repent and believe the good news. This resembles a salesperson at a retail store saying, “You will receive 20 percent off of today’s purchase if you open a charge account with us.” The salesperson says this on behalf of the store, not on their own authority.

## 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

### God in Three Persons (p. 56, PSG)

*While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Cor. 8:4-6), it also affirms that God exists as three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each person of the Trinity is fully divine—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Phil. 2), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—and each person is distinct from the others (Matt. 11:27; John 10:30; 14:16). This perfect unity within the three persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to abandon orthodox Christianity.*

## CHRIST CONNECTION

The Bible portrays God the Father sending His Son, God the Son sending His people to the world, and the Father and Son sending the Spirit to empower us for mission. As Christians, we are a sent people who are being formed in the image of our Sending God and our suffering Savior.

# YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

## GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why is it important for people to experience the peace that only God can bring?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why is it important to remember that, as Christ's ambassadors, we are on a mission of offering peace?** *We often don't see the task of being on mission as offering peace. Instead, we often think of it as trying to get people saved and in a right relationship with God. However, one aspect of salvation, or its fruit, is peace with God—something every person on earth desperately needs.*
- **What are some steps a believer can take in order to live as a disciple who is sent on God's mission by Jesus?** *For starters, a disciple can begin to see that living on mission doesn't necessarily mean leaving one's home for the foreign mission field—though for some it might! However, it does mean that believers purposely live out the gospel in every area of our lives, sharing and showing others the love of God in Christ.*
- **What adjustments might your church consider making to be more focused on God's mission?** *Answers will vary.*

### HIS STORY

*God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.*

### YOUR STORY

*Where your story meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



## HEAD

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The gift of the Spirit is linked closely with forgiveness for sins. Forgiveness is a great blessing of the gospel that the Spirit empowers us to proclaim. But what exactly is the forgiveness of sins? It is God's act of blotting out our sins and not counting our trespasses against us (Acts 3:19). The basis for this forgiveness is Jesus' shed blood and sacrifice on the cross. Jesus' death makes it possible for God to satisfy His love and the demands of His justice.

- **What roles does the Spirit play in the life of a Christian?** *Answers may include: conviction (John 16:8-11), calling (Eph. 4:4), regeneration (John 3:3-8), indwelling (John 14:17; Rom. 5:5), assurance (Rom. 8:16), and so on.*
- **If the Spirit is vital to the life of a believer, what are some ways we can express more of our dependence upon Him?** *One way would be to ask the Spirit to open your eyes and heart every time you sit down to read the Bible, given that understanding and illumination come from Him.*



## HEART

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The peace Jesus promised to His disciples is rooted in the Old Testament and comes from the Hebrew term *shalom*. It means much more than the absence of conflict. Instead, it refers to a condition of prosperity, welfare, completeness, and wholeness. In essence, it is a state of everything being right, just as God intended it to be. It is a peace that the world is incapable of giving—one only that can be given by God Himself.

- **Share about a specific time when you felt overwhelmed with the peace of Christ.** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does knowing God's peace strengthen your faith in Him?** *Answers will vary.*



## HANDS

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It's always worth reminding each other that we, as Christians, are a sent people who are being formed in the image of our sending God and our suffering Savior. This information should lead us to represent Jesus in His mission—as we go to the people in our schools, communities, and all other networks of relationships—to proclaim the gospel of peace.

- **Why do you think Christians don't see themselves as being ambassadors for Christ in this world?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some common distractions in life that may cause us to neglect our mission? How can we overcome these distractions?** *Answers will vary.*

## ► ADDITIONAL INFO

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### SOURCES

1. Timothy J. Keller, *Serving a Movement: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).
2. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 655.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to [lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17](http://lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17))**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

**[GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)**

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

**[MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**