



ELIMMISSIONS

SMALL GROUP LEADERS NOTES: Mission and the Story of God – week 3

The story is building, and momentum is gaining as God's sovereign purpose unfolds. We have discussed God's intention and the implications of creation for understanding mission. Last week, we explored the consequences of human rebellion against God's rule and discovered how God was intent on rescuing His creation. This week we are going to unpack Act 3 – Promise. Not humanity's promise to God that they would never again do anything against Him - we all know how that plays out, don't we? No, we are going to be captivated by God's promise to humanity to get us out of this mess. It is full of surprises; with unexpected, unlikely, ordinary and flawed 'heroes,' who all point to the only One who could execute God's plan to fulfil his promise perfectly!

This week, I'd like you to focus on the promise made to Abraham and how this informs our understanding of what Jesus accomplished in his life, death and resurrection. How is the promise being fulfilled? How can you connect the promise to the work of mission today, considering who Jesus is and what he has already done?

RECAP: Last week we looked at Act 2 of the Story of God – The Fall – what were some of the things that have stuck with you since then about this part of the story **and how has it impacted your life this week?** How is God's story being to think about the way you understand and engage in mission?

THIS WEEK: Read Act 3 – Promise, and the dialogue with the 4 questions that we have been using: WHO IS GOD, WHAT HAS GOD DONE, WHO ARE WE, HOW DO WE GET TO LIVE?

PROMISE (SHARE OUT THE READING OF THIS STORY):

God did not just leave the nations to be confused and without hope forever, but He called one man, Abraham, and made a covenant with him. The covenant stated that God would bless Abraham and multiply his offspring so that his offspring would be a blessing to all nations. Abraham's family would be the means by which God would cure the world.

After many years of waiting, Abraham had a child named Isaac. In one of the most dramatic scenes in the Bible, Abraham was instructed by God to sacrifice Isaac, the child of promise. At the last moment, God provided a ram for the sacrifice instead. The ram was substituted for Isaac, and the promise continued.

Isaac multiplied into a great nation called Israel. As generations passed, Israel became enslaved to the Egyptians, the strongest nation in the world. They were beaten, abused, mistreated, and hopeless. They cried out in misery to God, and God heard their cries for help. He rescued them by His mighty hand, using a man named Moses. This exodus from Egypt was

the great act of God that Israel would always look back on to remember, “God is our Saviour and will keep His covenant with us!”

Soon after they were rescued from slavery, God spoke to Moses on a mountaintop and told him the commandments they were to live by. However, just like Adam and Eve, the people of Israel didn't always obey these commandments. Since God always does what is good, right, and perfect, He could not overlook their sins, and the ultimate punishment for sin was death. A life must be given to pay for each person's disobedience. However, God loved His people, so He provided a way for them to substitute the life of an innocent animal in place of their own. This pattern of an innocent life of a lamb being substituted for sin would continue long into the future.

You might think after being rescued out of slavery; Israel would be the people who would finally forsake their rebellion against God. That wasn't the case. As they journeyed to the land God had promised them, they began grumbling against God. They even wished they could go back to their slavery in Egypt. At one point, they took all their gold jewellery, melted it down, and made a golden calf to be their god. Even their rebellion could not thwart God; though, He was still on His mission to restore and redeem His creation.

Finally, after forty years, God raised up a man named Joshua to lead Israel out of the wilderness and into the beautiful land God had promised to them. God had rescued them out of slavery and into the safety of their own land.

You might think now that Israel was safe in their land, they would break the legacy of rebellion against God. Rather than worshipping the true God, they quickly fell into a devastating cycle of rebellion against God. During the next centuries, they would fall further and further away from the God who had rescued and delivered them.

But God was still on His mission.

Even though God had shown Himself to be a good King, the people cried out for a human king; so God gave them kings. One such king was David. David ruled well and brought the nation together. As David was about to die, God made a covenant with David that one of his sons would reign over God's people forever.

David's sons did not follow after their father, and they certainly did not follow God. They turned to the many gods of other nations and led the people away from God. Because of their rebellion, God brought other nations to conquer and exile Israel from their land. All seemed lost. But God was still on mission.

In the midst of the exile, God spoke through prophets. He gave them a great promise that He would one day come and rescue His people. He would send a mighty, yet humble, Servant to redeem them.

So God's people were left, waiting, longing, and hoping for the day when God would rescue them.

RETELL THE STORY: Retell the story as a group, see if you can retell the events of this story in the order they happened.

DIALOGUE:

This is a dialogue, not a quiz or a monologue. This is not asking one person all the questions to get their answers - Use the 4 questions to help lead your discussions and stay within this part of the story, and seek to relate this to your life and your experiences:

Observe: WHO IS GOD?

Reflect: WHAT HAS GOD DONE?

Discuss: WHO ARE WE?

Act: HOW DO WE GET TO LIVE?

To help your discussion on the above questions there are some discussion starters below:

1. What was Abraham's relationship with God like? What does this reveal about the nature of discipleship and mission?
2. What does the promise between Abraham and God tell us about what God is like?
3. In what other place in the story have we seen that the life (and blood) of an innocent animal was given for the sake of covering another person's sin? What is the connection between worship and mission and how might this inform our practice as a worshipping community?
4. Do you think God would remove His covenant if they did not obey Him?
5. What, to you, are the most striking characteristics of the history of the Israelites?
6. Have people think of all the attributes of God they've seen in the Story so far. Write each one out as people name them. In light of who God is, how might this shape how you live this coming week?

RESPONSE: Reread the story this week and as you do share with each other via your chat how this story is impacting your life this week – who God is, what God has done, who we are and how we get to live.