

CONNECT GROUP TEACHING / DISCUSSION NOTES

Series - **GET INTO THE GAME**

Pt 1 - **THE GAME PLAN**



God's game plan is to bring lost people back to Him!

The goal of the team is to change the world, to help people everywhere find their way back to God. That's the game plan.

Great teams often become great after inspiring locker room talks that their coaches give them right before the big game. The coach will get all the players together and talk to them about how important today's game is.

The coach may remind the team what they are here to do and how they need to play their hearts out. *"Leave everything out on the field,"* the coach might say. Or *"hold nothing back in order to win."*

Opener: Have each Group Member to share a memory of a coach or teacher that inspired them as a child.

Jesus had a "locker-room" talk with His first followers. After years of training and preparing them, Jesus is getting ready to physically leave the earth. The big game is about to start for those first followers: from now on they will be His team, His people, His body on the earth.

These are Jesus' very last words to His team:

Acts 1:8 "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth."

At this time Jesus had spent only three years with His followers. I imagine that throughout these three years the followers spent some time discussing among themselves who this Jesus really was.

They had seen Him perform miracles and had heard one of their own (Peter) confess that Jesus was indeed the son of God. And if that wasn't enough to convince them, they recently saw Him crucified and come back to life.

And now He is telling them to go and tell the world about Him, to bear witness of all that they had seen and heard, to basically spread the word to the whole world that He is the son of God.

- 1. Share a time when someone asked you to do something that felt completely overwhelming or impossible.**

2. Do you jump right in on huge tasks, or do you tend to hold back, afraid of failure?

Acts 8:1 “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.”

Notice that Jesus first had his “locker room” talk with his followers in Acts chapter 1. Here we read in Acts chapter 8 that the church in Jerusalem faced persecution and so the followers scattered to other areas like Judea and Samaria.

These are just the places that Jesus told them to go during His final conversation with them.

Although Jesus challenged the followers to be witnesses in other parts of the region, it wasn't until persecution forced the issue, that the followers really left the comfort of their home.

This story is our story. We have a tremendous tendency and propensity to stay. We're kind of the opposite of dogs. It's a big challenge to teach a dog to “stay”. Dogs are animals of movement. They like to move and go after things that move, including their owners. So it's not easy to teach a dog to stay.

But we're the opposite of dogs: staying is what we naturally do. We like to stay and have a nice church for ourselves. Stay here and let whoever wants to join us come to us and then they can stay with us. We like to stay comfortable and stay where we are, stay fixated on ourselves and lose sight of the passion of the words of the locker room talk that Jesus gave right before the big game began.

So, it's almost like God is saying through circumstances, “Ok, how about a little persecution to get you out the door?”

3. In what areas of your life do you find yourself defending the status quo and wishing things could just stay the same?

Matthew 28:16-20 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Did you know?

“In surveys recently conducted among large national samples of unchurched people, we learned that most of them have never been invited to a church by a Christian. Likewise, most unchurched respondents said that they have never been told by a Christian what it means to believe in Jesus Christ and never been invited to embrace Jesus as their Lord and Savior”

George Barna, Growing True Disciples

4. How do you feel like Jesus' words in *Matthew 28:19* are relevant to you?

5. What keeps you from “leaving it all on the field” when it comes to the game plan of helping people find their way back to God? What part of this mission freaks you out?

6. What role do you think the Holy Spirit was supposed to play in Jesus’ first followers’ ability to carry out the challenge in *Acts 1:8*?

7. What role do you see the Holy Spirit playing in your ability to fulfill the game plan?

8. What can you start doing or stop doing to be more effective in the game?

Challenge

Matthew 5:15-17 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."