

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE WEEK OF: SEPT. 7, 2008

THE ANCIENT CALL

REV. STEVE SCHIBSTED

WEEK 1 OF THE SERIES

“The Ancient Call”

Acts 1:1-9

¹In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ² until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴ While staying¹ with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with¹ the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the Lord say, "Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?" I answered, "I will go! Send me."

Notes

This week begins a series of messages entitled The Ancient Call. In this series we will explore God's call in all of our lives to be his ambassadors, his witnesses in the world. One of the most amazing things about God is that he uses ordinary men and women to accomplish his work in the world.

Questions For Further Reflection and Small Group Discussion

1. In Acts 1:8, Jesus gives his disciples their marching orders. What are they? What is *The Ancient Call*?
2. Steve described a witness in a number of ways: (1) A person who tells what he has seen and heard, what she has experienced. (2) A sign pointing the way to God's love, justice and mercy. Jesus says that we are all his witnesses. How do you feel about being a witness?
3. Jesus describes spread of the kingdom as being like a rock thrown into a pond causing ripples to spread outward in ever increasing concentric circles. It begins in Jerusalem, moves outward to Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth. What are our modern day equivalents of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth? In particular, what is your Jerusalem?
4. Steve said "Christians begin to experience the deep joy of the Christian life and grow in their discipleship when they begin to help others grow in their discipleship." In other words, we really begin to grow in our own walk with Christ when we help another person grow in their walk with Christ. Have you ever had the experience of being used by God to help another person discover new life in Christ? Have you ever helped another person grow in their faith? What effect did this have on your own faith?
5. What is the great promise that Jesus gives us in verse 8? What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Do we do ministry on our own power?
6. Steve said that a big part of being used by God is to have the same attitude as Isaiah---"I will go, send me!" Have you ever asked God to use you in your Jerusalem? Do you have the same attitude as Isaiah?
7. Pray and ask God to help you to be open to God using you to do his work this week.

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE WEEK OF: SEPT. 14, 2008

SERIES: THE ANCIENT CALL

STEVE SCHIBSTED

WEEK 2 OF THE SERIES

“The First Step is Always the Hardest”

Joshua 1:1-9

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, ² "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. ⁵ No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. ⁹ I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Notes

When God uses us, he often asks us to do something for which we feel inadequate. Doubts, fears, low self-esteem, comparison to others—these are often things we struggle with when we are faced with a new challenge. Regardless, God wants to use us and wants to help us to overcome anything that prevents us from being used by him. In our story today, we see how God gave Joshua some guidelines to help him feel confident about fulfilling the task to which God called him.

Questions for Further Reflection and Small Group Discussion

1. Moses was the towering figure in the Old Testament. The last verse of Deuteronomy says, *“For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did.”* Joshua was called by God to succeed Moses. What emotions might be stirring in Joshua as he takes over the leadership of the Israelites?
2. What promises does God give to Joshua in this passage?
3. What commands does God give to Joshua in verses 6-9?
4. What can create doubt in us as we anticipate being used by God? How can these doubts prevent us from being used by God to accomplish his work?
5. God's definition of success is different from the world's definition of success. Read Psalm 1. How does this Psalm define success?
6. How can meditating on the word of God help us as we set out to accomplish God's work?
7. It's interesting that the Israelites had to step into the river before God would stop the water. Why do you suppose God didn't stop the water first and then have the Israelites begin crossing the Jordan River?
8. How would you explain to a non-believer what it means to trust in God instead of trusting in oneself?
9. What are you doubting that God can do in your life? Are you confident that God can use you to accomplish his work in the world? What first step of obedience do you need to take in your walk with Jesus Christ?

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE WEEK OF: SEPT. 21, 2008

SERIES: THE ANCIENT CALL

JIM COONS

WEEK 3 OF THE SERIES

“Go and Do Likewise”

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ¹ "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" ²⁷ He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." ²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, ¹ gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Notes

This familiar passage is quickly misunderstood. Be careful how you read it! Jesus has a tendency to surprise his listeners, and this passage is no exception. The question that the lawyer asks is a question that many of us ask: "Who is my neighbor?" But instead of answering the question directly, Jesus turns the question back on the lawyer...and back on us. Look for the surprise in this parable, and may that surprise help you to answer the *Ancient Call* as we seek to Grow Out as a church this fall.

Questions for Further Reflection and Small Group Discussion

1. Describe the best neighbor you have had. What made that person so great?
2. What is the key to living according to Jesus in verse 28? What must the lawyer do?
3. How does Jesus answer the lawyer's question in verse 29? Who is the neighbor according to Jesus?
4. Compare and contrast the three passers-by. What does the Samaritan do that the priest and Levite fail to do? (Hint: refer back to verses 27-28.)
5. Write a definition of a neighbor based on this passage.
6. What is the *Ancient Call* that is issued in this passage?
7. How can this passage inform how you live your day-to-day life?
8. Who do you find it difficult to be "neighborly" to? How does this passage help you? How does it challenge you in this regard?
9. What is one truth that you will carry with you from this passage into the coming week?

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE WEEK OF: SEPT. 28, 2008

SERIES: THE ANCIENT CALL

STEVE SCHIBSTED

WEEK 4 OF THE SERIES

“Doing Mission As A Team”

Luke 5:17-26 (NIV)

¹⁷ One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. ¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. ²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." ²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. ²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Notes

In this wonderful, winsome story from the Gospel of Luke, we once again see God using ordinary people to do extraordinary things. An important thing to remember as we read this story is that people who were paralyzed or sick in this time were regarded as outcasts. The theology of the time said that such people had done something wrong and God was angry with them, punishing them for their sin.

Questions for Further Reflection and Small Group Discussion

1. What do you think was the motivation of the men who brought the paralytic to Jesus?
2. If you had been the paralytic when your friends decided to take you up on the roof, remove the tiles, and lower you into the room, how would you have felt?
3. What obstacles did these men overcome to get their friend to Jesus?
4. In his message, Steve defined mission as "love in action." What characteristics of love do we see in this passage? Hint---refer to Steve's message!
5. The friends brought their friend for healing, so why did Jesus raise the issue of forgiveness?
6. What was more miraculous, healing the man or forgiving his sins?
7. Does God still use ordinary people to trigger miracles? Have you ever been used by God to bring healing, forgiveness or new life in Christ to another person? If so, share your experience with your small group.
8. Does your small group have a mission? Why or why not? If not, let me suggest that you consider serving together in some way. Perhaps have a discussion about some possible mission opportunities.

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE WEEK OF: OCT. 5, 2008

SERIES: THE ANCIENT CALL

STEVE SCHIBSTED

WEEK 5 OF THE SERIES

“Who Holds The Title?”

I Chronicles 29:1-20 (The Message)

¹⁻⁴ Then David the king addressed the congregation: “My son Solomon was singled out and chosen by God to do this. But he’s young and untested and the work is huge – this is not just a place for people to meet each other, but a house for God to meet us. I’ve done my best to get everything together for building this house for my God, all the materials necessary: gold, silver, bronze, iron, lumber. Precious and varicolored stones, and building stones – vast stockpiles. Furthermore, because my heart is in this, in addition to and beyond what I have gathered, I’m turning over my personal fortune of gold and silver for making this place of worship for my God: 3,000 talents (about 113 tons) of gold – all from Ophir, the best – and 7,000 talents (about 214 tons) of silver for covering the walls of the buildings, and for the gold and silver work by craftsmen and artisans.

⁵ “And now, how about you? Who among you is ready and willing to join in the giving?”

⁶⁻⁸ Ready and willing, the heads of families, leaders of the tribes of Israel, commanders and captains in the army, stewards of the king’s affairs, stepped forward and gave willingly. They gave 5,000 talents (188 tons) and 10,000 darics (185 pounds) of gold, 10,000 talents of silver (377 tons), 18,000 talents of bronze (679 tons) and 100,000 talents (3,775 tons) of iron. Anyone who had precious jewels put them in the treasury for the building of The Temple of God in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite.

⁹ And the people were full of a sense of celebration – all that giving! And all given willingly, freely! King David was exuberant.

¹⁰⁻¹³ David blessed God in full view of the entire congregation:
Blessed are you, God of Israel, our father
from of old and forever.
To you, O God, belong the greatness and the might,
the glory, the victory, the majesty, the splendor;
Yes! Everything in heaven, everything on earth;
the kingdom all yours! You’ve raised yourself high over all.
Riches and glory come from you,
you’re ruler over all;
You hold strength and power in the palm of your hand
to build up and strengthen all.
And here we are, O God, our God, giving thanks to you,
praising your splendid Name.

¹⁴⁻¹⁹ “But me—who am I, and who are these my people, that we should presume to be giving something to you? Everything comes from you; all we’re doing is giving back what we’ve been given from your generous hand. As far as you’re concerned, we’re homeless, shiftless wanderers like our ancestors, our lives mere shadows, hardly anything to us. God, our God, all these materials—these piles of stuff for building a house of worship for you, honoring your Holy Name—it all came from you! It was all yours in the first place! I know, dear God, that you care nothing for the surface—you want us, our true selves—and so I have given from the heart, honestly and happily. And now see all these people doing the same, giving freely, willingly—what a joy! O God, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, keep this generous spirit alive forever in these people always, keep their hearts set firmly in you. And give my son Solomon an uncluttered and focused heart so that he can obey what you command, live by your directions and counsel, and carry through with building The Temple for which I have provided.”

²⁰ David then addressed the congregation: "Bless God, your God!" And they did it, blessed God, the God of their ancestors, and worshiped reverently in the presence of God and the king.

Notes

King David is nearing the end of his life. The nation of Israel is very prosperous at this time in its history. The treasury is full, the stock market is hitting all-time highs, the economy is booming. In the midst of all this prosperity, David has become aware of the fact that he has a beautiful palace (chapter 17) and God has a "tent." Until this point, God's "house" has been a tent (tabernacle) that has surrounded the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark contains manna (a reminder of God's faithfulness to the people as they wandered in the wilderness) and the Ten Commandments. The ark and the tabernacle represented the presence of God. So, David decides to build God a house but God tells him (chapter 22) that he cannot oversee the building of the temple because he was a warrior. Instead, David's son, Solomon, will build the temple. However, because of his generosity and heart for God, David decides to raise the money (a capital campaign) for the temple even though he will not oversee the building of it. In an outpouring of generosity, the leaders and people respond through the giving of their own money so the temple can be built.

In verses 1-10, David discusses all he has done to gather the resources to build the temple. In Verses 10 -20, David gives a great statement on the idea of stewardship. The ideas expressed by David are great guidelines for us as we dedicate our newly renovated facility to God.

Questions for Further Reflection and Small Group Discussion

1. What is the purpose of building the temple? (verses 1-5)
2. In addition to giving from the nation's resources, what did David do to ensure that the building of the temple would become a reality? What motivated him to give in this way? (verses 1-5)
3. David challenged the leaders and the people to give toward the building of the temple. What was their response? (verses 6-8)
4. What was the spirit of their giving? (verse 6)
5. What are some the key ideas that David expresses in verses 10-13?
6. The primary idea of the biblical view of stewardship is expressed in verses 14-19. What is this key idea of stewardship?
7. How does this idea of God owning everything relate to us as we dedicate our church facility to God? As the title of the sermon asks, "Who holds the title to our church facility?" In what ways will God's ownership influence how we utilize our facility?
8. In his message, Steve told the parable of the lifesaving station. What happened to the original mission of the lifesaving station? Is it easy for a church to lose sight of the purpose of a facility? In what ways is it easy to lose sight? What is the purpose of our facility? In what ways can we use our beautiful facility to honor God? To reach out in mission? Is our building just for us? Or for others?
9. Close in prayer, thanking God for the wonderful building he has given us and asking him to guide us as we consider how to use our facility to further the kingdom of God.

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE WEEK OF: OCT. 12, 2008

SERIES: THE ANCIENT CALL

GREG COOTSONA

WEEK 6 OF THE SERIES

“Seeking Chico’s Best”

Jeremiah 29:1-14

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ²This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem. ³The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

It said: ⁴Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

⁸For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, ⁹for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord. ¹⁰For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon’s seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. ¹²Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. ¹³When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, ¹⁴I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Notes

This is a scene happening in what of the most desperate hours of Israel’s history: The dreaded, horrendously powerful nation of Babylon is beginning to conquer other nations and Israel is in its sights. The date is around 595 BC, and most of the leaders have already been taken hostage and moved from Jerusalem and to Babylon (**verse 2**). It less than ten years, the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed, the great Temple that Solomon built razed, and the king in the line of David, removed from his throne. It is a time of exile in which Jeremiah receives a word of the Lord to seek the best for Babylon (**verse 7**). The word is actually the rich Hebrew word, *shalom*: In city’s peace/wholeness/welfare or its best, we will find our best. How do we understand the *seventy years* of **verse 10**? It makes the most sense as the time between the destruction of Jerusalem and the first Temple of Solomon in 586 BC and the second Temple with Zerubbabel in 515 BC. (This latter one, with a little remodeling by Herod the Great in the 1st century BC, was what Christ pointed to in the Gospels.) Note that **verse 13** is very similar to Deuteronomy 4:29—it’s an exciting promise of God that we can find God when we search. (Compare Matthew 7:7-12.) All right, time for reflection and discussion....

Questions for Further Reflection and Small Group Discussion

1. What do the words “peace” and “hope” mean to you? Where do you find those in life? Do you find peace and hope often?
2. The Jews were in exile in the foreign land of Babylon, living literally in the city of their enemies. Do you find yourself “away from home”? Have you experienced times of exile? How? What was it like for you?
3. To the surprise of the Jews who were in this foreign city and who desperately longed to return home, Jeremiah tells them to plant themselves and to seek the *shalom*, or what’s best, for their enemy’s city? How would you react to that word? What did it mean “to plant vineyards” and “build houses” for them?
4. What does it mean for you and for our church to seek what’s best, for Chico? How are you doing that already? What new action might God be calling you?

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE WEEK OF: OCT. 18, 2008

SERIES: THE ANCIENT CALL

GAYLORD ENNS/ JIM COONS

WEEK 7 OF THE SERIES - LOVE CHICO SUNDAY

“Unity”

John 17:1-11 ^{NRSV}

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. ⁶ "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸ for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Notes: These words spoken by Jesus are part of what is called “The Final Discourse”, those final words Jesus spoke just prior to his betrayal, arrest, conviction, and crucifixion. As you can imagine, Jesus minced no words. The things he said, promised, and prayed were in many ways summarizing his teaching for the past 3 years, but also looking forward to the start of the church and God’s will for it. Here, Jesus is praying to God asking for unity in those who believe in him.

Questions for Further Reflection and Small Group Discussion

1. What were your impressions of Love Chico Sunday?
2. How did Love Chico reflect unity in the Body of Christ?
3. What have your experiences been with unity among churches? What good examples can you offer? What “not so good” examples can you offer?
4. What is the setting for this passage from John 17? Who is the intended audience?
5. How does Jesus define “eternal life” in this passage? How does this lend to the theme of unity in the body of Christ?
6. According to this passage, what had Jesus given to the disciples?
7. What is Jesus’ prayer for his followers in this passage?
8. What is the origin of the unity in the Body of Christ according to this passage in John 17? Why does this matter?
9. What would be the benefits of unity among churches in Chico?
10. How could this prayer of Jesus apply to the unity of churches in Chico?