

# Discipleship Moment

**Text: Acts 19:11-20**

We heard something amazing on Sunday: that God becomes the thing he wants to save. We heard it in Acts chapter 19, when God used extra-ordinary (the original language can be translated as “off the mark”) miracles to show his power to the Ephesians. And we saw that all throughout the Scriptures God speaks to his people in a way that makes sense to them. Then we received an invitation: Get Close to those who you want to save. God has given us a great gift; he became like us to save us. We are free to do the same. We are free from the punishment of sin, we are free from the consequences of failure, we are free from others who judge us and look down on us. So what if we mess up? So what if we are called a hypocrite? So what if we don’t always get it right? The people around us have no hold over us, those who don’t like us have no power over us, the people who talk negatively about us have no power over us. We are saved, redeemed, our life is in Christ, not in the opinion of the people around us, and our life isn’t in our sins, either. Our life is hidden in Christ. We are free. What a great Gospel message. We serve a powerful and loving God who chooses to serve us, rather than condemn us.

I grew up in a well-educated, very progressive, thoughtful community. This community is situated in Northeast corner of Kansas. Lawrence, KS has this great mix of progressive and conservative tendencies. On the one hand, there are the yuppie, well-to-do folks who work in administrative functions in the local businesses or at the college. But, on the other hand, there are folks who work in manufacturing, construction, or own business that seem like they would fit better in a small town, rather than a mid-sized, college city. I lived in both these worlds growing up. Much of my family is blue-collar good-ol’ boys or work in the Agriculture industry, but many of my friends were from middle-class college backgrounds. I was involved in music and art in middle and high school, but also spent time in the shop, taking welding and engine repair classes. I worked every Summer in college at a grain elevator in central Kansas for the wheat harvest, but read theology and Biblical studies books in the evenings after work.

I remember, while in college, feeling a distinct call to serve as pastor to a particular group of people. I ended up calling these folks the “hicks, homies, and hombres.” I remember having a conversation with my manager at the grain elevator one Summer. Grossly overweight and covered with tattoos, he was talking about how he doesn’t like church because people dress nice and pretend to have perfect lives. I told him I wanted to pastor a church of people like him, “low-lifes, nobodies” a trucker had walked up during our conversation, “what about rednecks like me?” he asked, and I said, “I want all of ya’ll, the scum of the earth!” Later, in college, I complained and moaned at our professors who insisted we learn how to interview well and be “professional”. We had to wear ties and slacks and go to mock interviews. I told my professor, “I will never work at a church that requires me to wear a tie.” And, when I applied to my first church (a rural Wisconsin congregation), I wore a flannel shirt, blue jeans, and work boots when I met the congregation and preached. I got the job, and immediately told my professor that it worked. I wore flannels, blue jeans, and work boots almost every Sunday while pastoring that church.

Hicks, homies, and hombres are my people. I have two post-it notes on my computer to remind me of what’s important in my ministry: one says, “Did Christ have to die for you to say this?” I look at this while I’m preparing a sermon. The other says, “hicks, homies, and hombres” to remind me who I’m preaching to. In fact, when I interviewed here at New Life, I told the search committee exactly this: I focus on Christ crucified and I serve the hicks, homies, and hombres. You have probably seen this ministry emphasis in my demeanor and preaching.

You, reader, have a background, you have a sub-culture that you are a part of. You have experience in certain work and with certain people. God probably is not calling you to evangelize and share the good news with people outside of your sub-culture. He might, but more likely he has placed you into whatever family and work you are in, in order to redeem that culture, family, and work. God uses the language of the people to speak to them. If you are a business person who drives a Volvo or Audi, and you work in sales or consulting, God wants you to redeem that culture for his glory. Do that work for the glory of God. Love your neighbor through your work and through your culture. If you are a redneck who drives a barely running Ford truck (what Ford vehicle isn't barely running, am I right?) or works in a machine shop, do that work to the glory of God. Love your redneck neighbors. If you are a good-ol’ boy who sells farm implements, do that to the glory of God. Love your good-ol’ boy neighbors. If you are a soccer mom who loves essential oils and Starbucks drinks, do that to the glory of God. Love your soccer mom neighbors.

When we gather together for worship, God draws his diverse people together. If you look around on Sunday you see people from all walks of life and we can love, serve, encourage, and challenge one another. This is what is so amazing about Jesus, he gives new life and redeems cultures from within them. You do not need to dress well to follow Jesus. You don’ have to like a particular style of music or a particular style of decoration to follow Jesus. God uses what makes sense to his people to reach them. Hicks can be hicks to the glory of God. Bikers can be bikers to the glory of God. Businessmen and women and be businesses men and women to the glory of God.

Be free. And join God as he builds his Kingdom in your culture, work, and family.

## Going Deeper

*Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once.*

1. Why do you think God uses what makes sense to people to speak to them (for example, using extra-ordinary miracles to reach the people in Ephesus)? What does this tell us about God?
2. How is this different than what you have heard or experienced before? Do you think churches embrace this truth well? Where have you seen this happen or not happen?
3. What is your background? What kind of culture or sub-culture do you come from? Who are the people that you work with or interact with on a regular basis?
4. What do you think God wants to do in your family, work, and sub-culture? What are the good things that can honor God in your culture and family? What are the things that are problematic in your culture and family?
5. Pray and ask God for wisdom to redeem your family, work, and culture. Begin to make a list of the good and bad things in your sub-culture, family, or work. What does it look like for God to redeem your work, family, and culture?