

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

SUMMARY

Drawing from 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, this Message explores what it means to be fully claimed by the love of Christ and sent into the world as missionaries of His presence. Bruce Downes argues that genuine transformation through an encounter with Jesus cannot leave any area of life untouched. Just as marriage establishes a binding claim between two people, the love of Christ establishes a claim over the believer that reshapes identity, ambition, and purpose. The Message distinguishes between three dimensions of God's presence: the objective reality that God is always present, the believer's growing awareness of that presence, and the calling to live from that presence as a source. Ultimately, the community is challenged to move beyond simply receiving spiritual nourishment and to embrace their identity as sent people, whether their mission field is their home, their workplace, or another country entirely.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- God's presence is not created by worship, good preaching, or the right atmosphere -- it is already there. Our role is to become aware of it and help others become aware of it.
- The love of Christ establishes a claim on the believer's life. Accepting that claim means certain things are no longer entirely our own -- our ambitions, priorities, and decisions are shaped by Him.
- There are three distinct realities about the presence of God: God is present, we become aware of His presence, and we learn to live from that presence.
- Every Christian is a missionary. The mission field may be a home, a workplace, a friendship group, or another country, but all are equally valid expressions of the same calling.
- When one member of the body of Christ goes, the whole body goes. The mission of those who go and the mission of those who remain are not competing. They are different expressions of the same work of God.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, in which Paul describes the love of Christ as a compelling force that urges him on, grounded in the conviction that Christ died for all so that believers would no longer live for themselves but for Him
- Acts 13:1-3, in which the Holy Spirit calls the church at Antioch to set apart Barnabas and Saul and send them out for the work to which they have been called
- John 15:4, in which Jesus calls His disciples to abide in Him as a branch remains in the vine
- Acts 17, in which Paul tells the people of Athens that in God they live and move and have their being

STORIES:

- Bruce Downes recounts his early years leading large youth conventions, where he mistakenly believed that powerful encounters with God's presence were the result of the atmosphere and quality of the events he and his team created, only to later

understand that all they were doing was making people aware of a presence that was already there

- Bruce Downes describes travelling for over a decade conducting parish missions, initially attributing the fruit of those missions, including people returning to the sacraments after decades and couples reconciling, to the quality of his own speaking, before recognising that the work was entirely God's
- Bruce Downes references the upcoming wedding of a couple named Anthony and Christina in New Jersey as an illustration of how the free exchange of vows establishes a binding claim and requires ongoing, active re-choosing throughout the life of the relationship
- Bruce Downes recounts how a couple named Paolo and Sandy challenged him approximately two years prior, which he identifies as a turning point that renewed his sense of mission and led to the broader expansion of the community's work
- Bruce Downes describes a recent youth camp held by the community, using it as an illustration of the principle that when one member of the body of Christ goes, the whole community goes, even if others are not physically present

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SMALL GROUP GUIDE

This guide is designed to help your small group dive deeper into the message.

OPENING PRAYER

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to God's transforming work. Pray the **IMPACTERS** Community Prayer .

OVERVIEW

This Message explores what it means to be claimed by the love of Christ and sent as missionaries of His presence. Bruce Downes draws on the apostle Paul's conviction that Christ's love establishes a claim on every believer's life, reshaping priorities, ambitions, and sense of purpose. Being a missionary is not reserved for clergy or those who travel to distant places. It is the calling of every Christian, in every context, at every stage of life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening

1. When you first heard the phrase "missionary of His presence," what came to mind? Did it feel like something that applied to you personally, or more to someone else? Why?
2. Bruce Downes describes being called an "enthusiast" as an insult. Have you ever had your faith described in a way that was meant to diminish it? How did you respond?

Going Deeper

3. Bruce Downes says that Paul came to understand that the love of Jesus had established a claim on him, that he no longer had full freedom over his own life. How does that sit with you? Does the idea of being claimed feel liberating, uncomfortable, or both?
4. Three realities about the presence of God were outlined:
 - God is present
 - We become aware of His presence
 - We learn to live from that presence
5. Which of these three do you find most natural in your own life? Which is the greatest challenge for you?
6. Bruce Downes reflects honestly on discovering, even after many years of following God, that there are still areas of his life not fully surrendered. Can you relate to that? What does ongoing surrender look like in your experience?
7. Bruce Downes distinguishes between loving Jesus and allowing His love to determine what your life is for. In your own words, what is the difference? Where do you see yourself on that spectrum?
8. In Acts 13:1-3, Barnabas and Saul are set apart and sent while the community is worshipping and fasting. What does it suggest about the connection between prayer, community, and being sent? How does your own prayer life connect to your sense of calling?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Bruce Downes says the mission field for many people is simply their home and that this is sufficient. Do you believe that? Is there any part of you that dismisses the ordinary places of your life as not quite a real mission?
2. Pope Francis is quoted as saying that every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus. How would you describe your own encounter with that love? And how has it, or how could it, shape the way you live toward others?
3. Bruce Downes challenges the idea of simply supporting the work of others rather than seeing oneself as sent. Have you ever caught yourself using that kind of language, "I just want to support what you're doing"? What would it look like to shift from a support mindset to a sent mindset?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again:

Awareness Practice Once each day this week, pause and remind yourself that God is already present in the room, the conversation, or the moment you are in. You do not need to create His presence, simply acknowledge it. Notice what changes in how you engage with people around you.

Identifying Your Mission Field Write down the three or four places or relationships where you spend the most time. Pray over each one and ask God: "Are you sending me here? What does it look like to carry your presence into this place?"

Examining the Claim Reflect honestly on one area of your life where you have not yet allowed the love of Christ to fully shape your priorities or decisions. Bring it before God in prayer this week, not with guilt, but with openness.

Thinking as a Body The next time someone in your community or church is doing something you are not physically part of, serving, going somewhere, leading something, consciously choose to pray for them and remind yourself: when they go, we go. Practice thinking of their mission as your mission.

Starting a Conversation Identify one person in your life who does not yet know the presence of God. You do not need to preach to them. Simply ask God to make you aware of His presence when you are with them, and trust Him to work through your presence in theirs.

CLOSING PRAYER

Spend a few minutes in silence before closing in prayer. Invite group members to sit with this question: "*Lord, where are you sending me, and what does it mean for me to carry your presence there?*"

Close by praying together, asking the Holy Spirit to make each person aware of the claim of Christ on their life, and to give them the courage to live from that presence in the week ahead.