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DISCUSSION GUIDE

The LEAST *of* THESE

the Graham Staines Story



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Discussion Guide

THE LEAST OF THESE beautifully illustrates the power of love, hope, and forgiveness to overcome hate. The feature film releases January 31, 2019.

DISCUSSION 1: Following the Great Commission

Following Christ means following Christ's Great Commission, even when there is great cost in doing so.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 28:16-20, 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Movie Clip 1: <https://youtu.be/PyYA9dlrjLo>

DEVOTIONAL:

The film THE LEAST OF THESE tells the story of Graham Staines and his family, who were Australian missionaries in Kendujhar, India. What we find throughout the film is that the Staines Family believed the Great Commission and Great Commandment were more important than their own comfort and were worth any personal risk they might face. Scenes like the one shown in the opening clip are largely foreign to the church in America today. Still, we understand, on some level at least, the difficulty and resistance experienced in carrying out Christ's Great Commission.

We all have opportunities to make known the truth of God's Word, though it's often not easy. To "preach" includes more than standing behind a pulpit to deliver a sermon. In 2 Timothy 4:1-5, Paul pointed out how Timothy was to do this. He was to persist in it "in season and out of season." This phrase may also be translated "whether it's convenient or not." As believers, we need to speak up for the truth of God not only when the situation seems convenient or when we are "on duty," but when it is inconvenient. We must live the faith and be available as witnesses to the truth all the time.

TALK IT OVER:

What is the central command Jesus gives his disciples (Matthew 28:19-20)?

When have you experienced an opportunity to share your faith? Did you take it? Why or why not?

When you think about Jesus' "Great Commission", what holds you back from actively passing on the Good News of Christ?

DISCUSSION 2: Living the Great Commandment

Following Christ means exhibiting Christ's Great Commandment with our lives and the manner in which we love God and others.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 22:34-40, John 15:12-13

Movie Clip 2: <https://youtu.be/qb0IoAbx2kQ>

DEVOTIONAL:

If you watch the movie *THE LEAST OF THESE*, you might think about Graham Staines more as a humanitarian than an evangelist. While he did tell people about Jesus, perhaps Graham's most shocking and costly behavior was in how he ministered to people with leprosy.

In this scene and others, the journalist Manav Banerjee is seen as uncaring and fearful of people with leprosy. Banerjee stands in contrast to the life of Graham Staines. Self-preservation keeps us from carrying out The Great Commission and Great Commandment; love compels us to consider the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of other people above our own.

Our motivation for following the Great Commission is love for God. But it cannot stop there. "The second is like it" is a profound statement that shows the two commands are intrinsically tied together—if we love God, then we will love those whom God loves. Who are Christ's followers to love? There are zero exclusions; we are to love everyone. Jesus added that a believer should love others as themselves. Love for others should equal or exceed concern one has for oneself.

TALK IT OVER:

Why do you think Jesus emphasized loving God with our heart, soul, and mind? How is loving God related to loving others?

In what way do you want to grow in love right now: Toward God? Toward your family? Toward the needy? Toward yourself?

How is love the essential dynamic of the Christian life? How does your relationship with Jesus change once you begin practicing his example of love?

DISCUSSION 3: Displaying True Witness

God-honoring actions make an impact in the lives of others and display true witness.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:13-16

Movie Clip 3: <https://youtu.be/vC2QbGa5FIE>

DEVOTIONAL:

Missionary Graham Staines' spent 35 years of his life following the Great Commission and Great Commandment in India. During those years, he didn't always receive compliments from people—in fact, some were skeptical of his intentions, and others hated him. But one thing was indisputable—Staines' life stood out.

The journalist in the film set out to prove Staines was a fraud. What he found, instead, was a man who had made the world a better place because he expressed selfless love to all people. In Luke 5:13-16, Jesus used two metaphors to describe that kind of person —salt and light.

Salt has many uses. Today we most often use salt to preserve food or add flavor to a dish. Yet in the Old Testament, salt was used as a purifying agent (see Ex. 30:35; Lv. 2:13; 2 Ki. 2:21). As the salt of the earth, Jesus' disciples are to purify a corrupt world through their example of righteous living and their proclamation of the gospel.

Light exists mainly so other things can be seen. Thus the good works of believers shine before men so others receive a blessing. This indicates that Jesus' disciples are to carry salvation to the ends of the earth. A disciple should no more conceal his righteousness or the gospel message than a glowing city should douse its light at night.

TALK IT OVER:

How do you fulfill your calling as “salt” to the people around you? How has your “saltiness” been received by others?

Is the light of your life more like a flickering candle, a steady campfire, or a blazing furnace? How can you add fuel to the fire?

As the salt and light of the world, we can bring truth, joy, and love to those around us. What do people in your life need most right now?

DISCUSSION 4: Offering Countercultural Forgiveness

Praying for our enemies and forgiving them demonstrates true love.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:43-48; 6:12-15

Movie Clip 4: <https://youtu.be/b7RJnDyPvxA>

DEVOTIONAL:

The movie *THE LEAST OF THESE* depicts missionary Gladys Staines waiting for word about the whereabouts of her husband Graham and their two sons. Gladys and her daughter Esther were worried, and rather than assuring her daughter that everything was fine, she said, “Whatever happens, God is in control.”

Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, pray for our persecutors, and be like our Heavenly Father. Obedience to these commands is only possible when we live fully surrendered to Him. When we pray for our enemies and forgive those who hurt us, we demonstrate true love, God’s love, to the watching world.

Matthew 5:43-48 is part of a bigger passage that includes other “*You have heard it said...but I tell you...*” statements. Jesus’ rules and expectations for believers are different than what the world accepts as good and right. That’s because, through the Holy Spirit in us, He gives us the power to do hard things.

As believers, we cannot minimize the grace God gave us when He sacrificed His only Son. Those who truly grasp the extent and effects of His forgiveness at the cross are then obligated to extend forgiveness to others. Forgiving others is not a requirement for salvation; it is evidence that it has taken place. It’s not enough to say you love Jesus. If you don’t show it with your actions toward other people, then the love you claim to have is different than the love He exemplified.

TALK IT OVER:

How does placing your trust in Christ affect your ability to love others—even those who hurt you?

What does Matthew 6:12-15 say to you about the relationship between forgiving and being forgiven?

When you pray “Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors,” what are you really praying?