

CHANGE THE WORLD

Be. Go. Do. Sermon Starter

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WEEK 1: “MAY I PRESENT...”

SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: *Romans 12:1-2, NRSV*

1-2 “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Focus:

In some circles, young women receive formal introduction to society at "debutante balls" or "cotillion balls." (The male equivalent is a "beautillion ball.") At these formal debuts, each debutante and escort enter to these words of introduction, "Ladies and gentlemen, may I present..." The debutante's introduction to society is a rite of passage indicating that she has reached the age of maturity. As you can imagine, each debutante is expected to exhibit nothing less than her best behavior.

How many times, in your adult life, has a trusted person asked you to be on your best behavior? In today's passage, the apostle Paul urges brothers and sisters in Christ to present themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. That, Paul says, is an act of worship. Implied is ongoing spiritual transformation. The following paraphrase reveals the daily discipline needed for such worship, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold." (Romans 12:2, The New Testament in Modern English, J. B. Phillips)

Each day, we have an opportunity to present ourselves as Christ-followers, holy and acceptable to God. Need motivation? Imagine being in situations, doing, and going to places that cause God to announce to the world, "Ladies and gentlemen, may I present _____ in whom I am well pleased."

Be.

The process of ongoing transformation is a constant challenge and benefit of being Christian. The first step toward daily spiritual formation comes when we choose to spend time with God and God's Word. Why not make a regular appointment with God by setting an alarm on your cell phone or computer or posting a "Meeting with God" reminder on your refrigerator.

- If you need help choosing scripture to read, start with those listed in the weekly Revised Common Lectionary ([link](#))
- Find and follow a Bible reading plan ([Common English Bible 90 day reading plan](#))

- Ask a trusted friend to ask, “How are you and God doing?” from time to time. This can help you consistently spend time with God.

Go.

This week, a UMTV video (included in multimedia bundle) focuses on visitation.

Young Butterflies Cheer Elderly

1. Who are the people in your church or community who would benefit most from a kind visit?
2. How might children, youth and others cheer older adults in your church and community?
3. What do you hear God urging you to do, be or change after viewing the video, **Young Butterflies Cheer Elderly**?

Do.

Paul’s admonition to present ourselves as living sacrifices pertains to the corporate church as well as individuals. The church exists to make Christian disciples who will transform the world. Use the following exercise to determine how actively your church is involved with disciple making. List the various activities and ministries your church offers. After each item on the list, put one of the following codes:

- **AMD -- Actively Makes Disciples.** These are activities specifically designed to reach people for Christ and form disciples.
- **MDS -- Makes Disciples Secondarily.** Example: Contributing financially to a local charity that helps the homeless.
- **FOB -- For Our Benefit.** Example: Sunday school teacher recognition dinner.
- **TPB -- To Pay Bills.** Example: rummage sale.

Tally the numbers of activities and ministries that appear in the four categories. If most fall in the FOB or TPB categories, decide what other activities and ministries your church should add to disciple others directly.

From the first question in the “Go” section above, create a plan to visit the identified people personally, mail a card or letter, or make a phone call.

CONSIDER:

1. Time is a precious commodity to most of us. How much time might you be willing to sacrifice each month to visit someone in your family, church or community?
2. Are there young people whom you and others could teach how to extend God’s love to others through singing, prayer and fellowship?
3. What benefits would your church gain from creating an intergenerational visitation ministry?

WEEK 2: “BE THE CHANGE YOU SEEK”

SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: *Acts 9:10-19a, NRSV*

10-19a “Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” He answered, “Here I am, Lord.” The Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.”

Focus:

Some fear change; some embrace it; others step on it gingerly to see if it will hold their weight. Change is an inevitable part of the Christian journey. To follow Christ requires change, conversion, transformation—just ask Saul. Christianity is not a religion of loners; people surrendered to God journey together helping each other to take the necessary steps to change, to become like Christ.

In today’s passage, God demonstrates the power of change through two people; Ananias and Saul. Sermons regularly feature details of Saul’s dramatic change; namely his conversion and call to ministry. But Ananias underwent a major change as well. He changed his thinking about Saul. He dared to believe God had truly transformed the old Saul who sought to kill him into the new Saul whom God chose to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. By the time Ananias greeted Saul, he called him “brother”—a clear indication of Ananias’ attitude change.

Each day, as followers of Christ, we have the potential to serve as change agents of God. Who knows whom God needs us to befriend today. Transform the world. Be the change you seek.

Be.

How often have you thought or said, “Somebody needs to do something about that...”? Invite yourself to be the “somebody” about which you thought or spoke. Think of someone you strongly dislike. Write that person’s name. For the next three weeks, commit to pray for that person to experience God’s grace and love. After three weeks, note any changes in the person or yourself.

Go.

This week, the UMTV video (available in multimedia bundle) **Chinese Church Helps Ugandan School** focuses on one person's response to God's call to serve beyond her comfort zone. Think of a need in your community or local church that someone should help. Be the "somebody" who rolls up your sleeve to help at least once—for an hour, or for a day. Choose to go somewhere you normally would not go and offer your help. For example, volunteer to read to toddlers or those whose eyesight is failing. Organize a few people to clean, paint or repair the house of someone struggling to make ends meet. Some churches may choose to "adopt" a block and help clean it, property by property. Contact a United Methodist Volunteers in Mission coordinator ([link](#)) and participate in a short-term mission experience.

Do.

While you are praying for the person named in the "Be" section above, ask God to direct you to share an act of God's grace and love with people to whom you might not pay attention otherwise. The act of love and grace should be something concrete, from a simple "thank you" to a kind deed you normally would not volunteer to do. At the end of the three weeks, reflect on any personal changes you experienced and discuss those changes with a trusted friend.

CONSIDER:

1. In the UMTV video (included in multimedia bundle), **Chinese Church Helps Ugandan School**, what motivated Aeri Lee to move beyond her comfort zone?
2. How did Aeri overcome her initial sense of inadequacy to offer help to the orphans in Uganda? Discuss times when you either overcame or gave in to a personal sense of inadequacy. What helped or might have helped you overcome your sense of inadequacy?
3. How did Aeri's local church help her?
4. What role does personal relationship play in influencing how your local church responds to need in your community or in another country? What relationship is crying for your assistance today? How will you respond?

WEEK 3: "SHORTEN THE DISTANCE"

SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: Acts 16:6-10, NRSV

6-10 "They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them."

FOCUS:

Thanks to technology, we can sit in the comfort of our living room as we watch events taking place half a world away: from starvation in Darfur and civil war in the Middle East to natural disasters across the world. What the reporter's voice sometimes muffles is the agonizing cry of suffering people who hope someone will stop *watching* from a distance and help.

In the Acts 16 passage, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia pleading, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After seeing the vision, Scripture says, Paul and his companions "immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called [them] to proclaim the good news..." They came to help, believing God compelled them.

After watching a news report of a tragic event overseas, I wrote these words:

Lord, shorten the distance between my heart and another's calamity.

Remind me that I truly am part of a global village dear to God.

Compel me to groan with all of creation, awaiting God's ultimate redemption and restoration.

Move me from satisfied spectator

drowsy from the complacent presumption

that God will ultimately right all wrongs

and restore all that has been corrupted.

Move me to [be an] avid participator in God's great plan of redemption [who asks]

What can I do to help?

How can I serve?

Whom shall I comfort?

Who is willing to pray, "God shorten the distance" today?

Be.

Paul and his companions were convinced God called them to help the people of Macedonia. How does God speak to you? In dreams and visions, through people, through Scripture, through circumstances?

How do you determine whether you actually hear from God? If you are unsure, who could help you to develop your spiritual discernment?

Christianity functions through relationships. How might you or your local church get personally involved in helping people who live far away?

What Macedonian cry do you hear today? How could you respond?

Go.

This week the UMTV video (included in multimedia bundle) **Renesting After Home Loss** focuses on helping the homeless. What Macedonia cry do you hear in your local community? How could your local church respond? Could your congregation assist ministry efforts started by other churches?

Do.

The United Methodist Church and affiliates of various denominational agencies and commissions offer many opportunities to help others. Below are several examples. Contact one of the ministries below to get involved:

- [GBGM Primetimers](#)
- [GBGM Nomads](#)
- [UMCOR JFON \(Justice for our Neighbors\)](#)
- [UMCOR Justice for our Neighbors](#)
- [Just Peace](#)

The General Commission on United Methodist Men focuses on Hunger Relief through these affiliates:

- [Stop Hunger Now](#)
- [Society of St. Andrew \(endhunger.org\)](#)

CONSIDER:

1. What skills did the volunteers need to do the ministry shown in the UMTV video **Renesting After Home Loss**?
2. What skills and expertise exist among the members of your local church? How could members use them to serve others in ministry?
3. Not every church has enough people to start new ministries. Could your congregation assist neighboring local churches with existing ministries?

4. Could your local church collaborate with other people or social agencies in your community? What might such a partnership involve?
5. Consider the [Holy Boldness Model](#) as an example of community partnership.

WEEK 4: "GO AND COME!"

SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: *Matthew 28:16-20*

16-20 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

FOCUS:

After reading The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), a pastor boldly stated, "The church is a **go-structure** not a **come-structure**." Was he right? Listen to the conversations in your local church. How often do you hear people say, "How can we get more young people to 'come' to our church?" or "How many people do you think will 'come' to our pancake breakfast?" It makes you wonder what happened to the "go" portion of the Great Commission.

Jesus used the words **go** and **come** pointedly in conversations. "Go, first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:24b) "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor...then come, follow me." (Matthew 19:21b) In each of these instances, Jesus first instructed people to **go** and do something before coming.

Jesus invited hurting people to **come** to him, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) However, he also commanded his followers to **go** into the world to make disciples of all nations.

Go and come!—three words that speak to the dynamic lifestyle of people on the move.

Go and come!—words that should describe the ministry flow of the local church.

Go and come!—what do these words mean for your church?

Be.

What if the expression of your Christian faith first prioritized **going**? Would anything change? Where would your local church direct ministry? Where would you go? What would challenge you? How might you overcome hesitance you experience? Discuss your responses with leaders in your local church.

Go.

This week the UMTV video (included in the multimedia bundle) **Teens Opposing Poverty** focuses on teens making a difference in the lives of persons who are incarcerated. In Matthew 25, Jesus blessed the people who

took time to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, care for the sick and visit those in prison. The United States is fertile ground for prison ministry as it has the highest documented number of incarcerated persons in the world. Christians believe in redemption. What opportunities exist in your community to provide ministry to those in prison?

Do.

As a spiritual exercise, go somewhere you have never been before and offer the love of Christ. Here are some ideas: Volunteer to help at a homeless shelter, hunger relief organization or women's shelter. Conduct a prayer walk around the neighborhood immediately surrounding your church facility: note what you see, pay attention to people and places in need of Christ's love, and determine to do one thing to address a need you observed.

CONSIDER:

1. What prison ministries exist in your local area?
2. Did you know that Disciple Bible studies have been conducted in prisons? Click [here](#) to learn more.
3. What problems do newly released former prisoners face when trying to re-enter society?
4. What service might your local church provide to help former prisoners successfully reenter society?