

LifeGroups 2.1—Compelled by Love

Introduction

- [Slide #1] Last week we talked about how the mission Jesus launched is different than "church." Most people think that if they are a part of a church, if they attend some building on Sunday morning then, by default, they are also on the mission Jesus started. And that is not necessarily the case. How have we let it get to this? How have we made it possible to grow up in the church, to live your whole life as part of this thing called church, and personally come nowhere close to being on the mission Jesus launched?
- See I believe every follower of Jesus, deep down, longs to be on that mission; to see the life of Christ reproduced in their life, to see God powerfully use them like he did Jesus. For too long the way Christians have done church, church as a place, church as an event, church for the trained professional, has placed the mission of Jesus too high on the cookie shelf for the average Christian. Let's take Jesus' mission off the cookie shelf.
- LifeGroups 2.0 is about the collision of worlds. What would happen if "church" and the mission Jesus launched more naturally came together? What if the way we lived out this thing called "the church" made it easier for every single one of Jesus' followers to be engaged in Jesus' mission? What if the mission Jesus launched was accessible to you, right now, right where you live, right where you work? What if we, what if you could break out of the bubble called church to be on Jesus' mission?
- Do you remember the 1998 [Jim Carrey](#) movie *The Truman Show*? The movie is about a man named Truman Burbank who was born into a reality TV show. Truman's life, from birth to adulthood, is filmed by thousands of hidden cameras, 24 hours a day, then broadcast live around the world. His hometown of Seahaven isn't a city but a movie set built under a giant dome. The townspeople, his wife and family are actors. And the show's producer, the bad guy in the story, is a type of antichrist intent on manipulating and deceiving and controlling every aspect of Truman's life. Truman grows up totally deceived, oblivious to life outside of this carefully constructed bubble.
- Around the time of his thirtieth birthday things change. Truman discovers the truth about his life and plans his escape. The emotional pique of the movie is Truman, on this boat, in this storm, sailing toward the false horizon of his world. And as the boat reaches the edge of the dome, this set wall painted like the sky, the bow of the boat tears through to the world outside. For the first time in his life Truman glimpses life beyond his bubble. He then sees a flight of stairs leading to a door marked "Exit" and heads for it. As he reaches for the door handle, and freedom, the show's producer, through a loudspeaker on the set, speaks directly to Truman cautioning him not to leave. It's a battle of wills. Truman listens, pauses, thinks and then says to the TV audience he now knows is watching, "In case I don't see you again...good afternoon, good evening, and good night." He bows, opens the door, and steps into the real world.

- Truman's life, pre-escape, is the experience of most followers of Jesus. Bubble-bound. Author [Ed Stetzer](#) says it like this. "It seems we work very hard to insulate ourselves from the very world Jesus says we should be focused on. It seems we have created, without malicious design, a Christian bubble--an evangelical subculture--where Christians live surrounded only by other Christians, and as a result, there are few among the lost whom we get to know intimately. Christian experts tell us how to raise our kids, how to handle our finances, what music to buy, what movies to see, and which books to read. The bubble is complete." And then he adds this. "But God is on a mission outside the bubble."¹
- We live the life of Truman if we live the Christian life apart from Jesus' mission. Us on the inside, cloistered, with God on a mission outside the bubble of church. I am absolutely convinced one of Satan's tactics is to keep Christians stuck in the bubble of church thinking that's all there is to the Christian life.

Transition

LifeGroups 2.0 is about the way out of the bubble. [Slide #2]

Big Idea

- **And the way out of the bubble is love**
- I believe God is already at work; he is passionately pursuing his mission to seek and to save the lost outside of the bubble called church. This mission began when God, compelled by love, God left his own bubble, if you will, he sent his Son. He modeled for us the way out of the bubble. And the way out is love. God is a missionary God and the mission Jesus launched is happening, right this very minute, outside of the place we call church.
- What drove God out of his bubble and into our world? Love. And it's love that must drive us out of our bubble to those God is already reaching. LifeGroups 2.0 is about us, like Truman, opening the door to life outside the bubble, outside the safety of church. LifeGroups 2.0 is about us becoming so compelled by love, that like God, we risk leaving the bubble to join God on the mission he's already on; the mission Jesus started. The way out of the bubble is love. What if you could break out of the bubble called church to be on Jesus' mission?

Transition

This morning I want to take you on a tour of God's journey beyond the bubble from the gospel of John.

Organizational Sentence

- **The gospel of John is the story of God's mission told in three stages**
- More than any other book in the New Testament, the gospel of John is about Jesus' mission. It's a mission that starts with God the Father, launched by Jesus on this earth, and ends with us now. And if we can see from Scripture how love motivated God, Father, Son and Spirit, to live beyond the bubble then maybe we can get unstuck; beyond this idea that church is all there is. Just maybe we, like God, can be

¹ Stetzer, *Compelled by Love*, p. 33

compelled by love, to reach beyond the bubble.

Transition

The **first stage** of the mission is God the Father deciding to send the Son. [Slide #3] **Jesus sent by love.**

Main Points

- The mission Jesus launched didn't actually begin with Jesus. Jesus led the public launch of this mission. But the mission itself originated with God the Father. The reason Jesus had a mission at all was because he was sent by the Father. **John 3:16-17**, right? *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.* The Father sends Jesus on a mission of love. Love is what compelled God to send Jesus beyond the bubble of heaven to us.
- If you were to summarize the entire gospel of John in four words it'd be these four: Jesus sent by love. In John, the picture we have of Jesus is the "sent one." He is the living revealer of the Father. More than anything else right now I need you to see that Jesus had a mission not because he was some radical, love and peace, fight the power hippie anarchist. He had a mission because he was sent by love.
- This is going to be a bit tedious but I want you to see how Jesus himself perceived his own mission. We've got **John 3:17**, the Father sending his son to save the world, which we already read. Open your bible and turn to **John 3:34**. What does Jesus say about his mission—the reason he came from the Father? **John 3:34**. *"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.* He does what he does because he was sent.
- What about **John 5:23**? *He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.* Look at the next verse, **John 5:24**. *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned."*
- Look at **John 5:30**. *By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.*
- **John 5:36**? *For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.*
- Continuing in **5:37**. *And the father who sent me has himself testified concerning me.* Look at **John 5:38**. *Nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.* Up through chapter 5, what, do you think, is the overarching principle governing Jesus' mission on this earth? The fact that he's sent. He's a man under orders, sent by God to love people into the Kingdom. Jesus leaves the bubble, being true God of true God, humbling himself by taking on flesh, he comes to us because he was sent by love. And if we are to leave our bubble it will only happen when we see ourselves as sent ones like Jesus.
- We're not done yet. We're just getting started. This "sent one" theme is so strong in John I want to move you by the sheer volume of references. I want you to see how

strongly this idea of being sent by love drove the mission Jesus launched. Look next at **John 6:29** *Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."*

- **John 6:38** *For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.*
- **John 6:39** *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.*
- **John 6:44** *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day"*
- **John 6:57** *Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.*
- **John 7:16** *Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me"*
- **John 7:28** *Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true.*
- **John 7:29** *but I know him because I am from him and he sent me."*
- **John 7:33** *Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me.*
- **John 8:16** *But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me.*
- **John 8:18** *I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me."*
- **John 8:26** *"I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world."*
- **John 8:29** *The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."*
- **John 8:42** *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me"*
- **John 9:4** *As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me.*
- **John 10:36** *what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world?*
- **John 11:42** *I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."*
- **John 12:44** *Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.*
- **John 12:45** *When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.*
- **John 12:49** *For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me*

commanded me what to say and how to say it.

- **John 13:20** *I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."*
- **John 14:24** *He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*
- **John 15:21** *They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me*
- **John 16:5** *"Now I am going to him who sent me,*
- **John 17:3** *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*
- **John 17:8** *For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.*
- **John 17:18** *As you sent me into the world*
- **John 17:21** *May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me*
- **John 17:23** *I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*
- **John 17:25** *"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.*
- I ask you, was not Jesus a man on a mission? What compelled Jesus to do what he did, to live the way he did, to say what he had to say to a people who were totally unlike him, different than him, beneath him? What compelled him to live beyond the bubble? He was sent by God. He was sent to love.
- I want to suggest to you that if you think this thing called church, which is different than the mission Jesus launched, is all there is to the Christian life then you don't understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Church is not enough. We have to, you have to break out of the bubble of church. That can only happen when you begin to realize that, like Jesus, you too are sent by love to carry on Jesus' mission.
- Jesus said in **Luke 19:10** *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."* He is sent by love. He is compelled by love. He is on a mission and it is your mission. And it is different than church.

Transition

I need you to see something else. In stage #2 the mission moves from Father sending son to the Son sending the Spirit. [Slide #4] Stage two is **the Spirit sent to help us love.**

- The Father never intended for Jesus' to carry out this mission alone. As if we all sit around and with our polite little golf claps cheer Jesus on. "You're doing good Jesus. You da man. We like watching from here. Go Jesus." The mission conceived by the Father and initiated by the Son is passed on to us. And it's a risky mission—it's risky leaving the bubble. Doing so cost Jesus his life. Jesus knows that in order for his

followers to do what he did will require supernatural help—the Spirit of Christ with his followers—the second person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit to make leaving the bubble a reality.

- In John, not only is Jesus sent. The Holy Spirit is sent. Sent by both the Father and the Son to help us love like Jesus loved. Four times John talks about the sending of the Spirit. **John 14:26** *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*
- **John 15:26** *"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.*
- **John 16:7** *But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.*
- And lastly, **John 20:22** *And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*
- Jesus doesn't send the Spirit so that his followers might have spiritual warm fuzzies. Jesus didn't send the Spirit so we'd sit around in "church" marveling at an ecstatic experience of the Spirit. Honestly, I get a little weary listening to discontented people who are always searching, roving from place to place for an experience of the Spirit—bopping from one church to the next in search of signs and wonders. Listen to me. The Spirit is given to Jesus' followers for the express purpose of carrying out the mission Jesus launched. You wanna experience the power of the Holy Spirit? Be on mission with Jesus. Break out of the bubble of church to be a part of what God, the missionary God, is already doing and you'll see the power of the Holy Spirit. **The Spirit is sent to help us love.**

Transition

Let's get to [stage #3](#). The Father conceives the mission. Compelled by love he sends the son. Jesus launches the mission and sends the Spirit. Together the Spirit and the Son send the church, you and me. [Stage #3](#). [[Slide #5](#)] **The follower of Jesus is sent to love like Jesus did.**

- Thirty some odd times this morning we've read in John about Jesus being sent. Sent. Sent. Sent. Compelled by love Jesus is sent. And then we get to **John 17:18** and Jesus says this to his disciples *As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.* And **John 20:21**. *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*
- Jesus never envisioned the church stuck in some building isolated from the world like the way he found his followers in the upper room after the resurrection. Jesus never envisioned the evangelical bubble sub-culture we've created. Jesus never envisioned church as a place, as an event, left to a few trained professionals. The mission Jesus launched is for everyone. Take it off the top shelf. The mission Jesus launched is for you. To be a follower of Christ is to be sent by love, compelled by love, into the world, outside of the bubble of church, empowered by the Spirit, just like Jesus. And there is nothing optional about this. This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus;

sent by love to love like Jesus. Sitting in a chair in some building on Sunday morning, singing some songs, doesn't make you a follower of Jesus—a lover of people. All it means is that you love sitting in a chair and singing.

- My prayer, my desire is to see every one of you significantly engaged in the mission Jesus launched. LifeGroups are the way we are going to send ourselves as the church—as the people of God. LifeGroups 2.0 is about us getting serious about breaking out of the bubble called church to be sent. It's about us loving people different than us. Do you have to be part of a LifeGroup in order to be a follower of Jesus? No. Are you welcome here if you're not part of a LifeGroup. Absolutely yes. But you may find it easier to actually do what Jesus asks his followers to do as part of a small witnessing community than doing the whole Lone Ranger thing.

Conclusion

- I was wracking my brain this week trying to come up with a symbolic way for you to remember this idea of leaving the bubble of church to be sent by love. And I thought of handing out, like at a wedding or something, little bottles of bubbles and asking you to blow a bubble and imagine whatever it is that's holding you back from being on Jesus' mission, and then having you pop that bubble. Kind of stupid. Instead I thought I'd just remind you to love people. Love them because the Father's already loving them. God is on a mission outside the bubble. And he's sending you, in the name of Christ, and in the power of his Spirit, to be living revealers, like Jesus. The way out of the bubble is love.
- Instead I want to close this morning with words from Jesus himself when he was criticized for leaving the bubble. **Luke 15:1-7** *Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." 3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.* Let's pray.