

# God's mission – our mission?

## Leader's Guide

# To help you lead

This Bible study series can be carried out in a mid-week meeting or in small groups. You may have led small group Bible discussion before or this may be your first time. Here are some helpful tips for approaching the study.

- Firstly, and most importantly, pray. Pray that God would use these studies to encourage, challenge and motivate you and your group members to be more involved in God's mission to His world.
- As a leader it is important that you prepare the study beforehand and encourage your group members to prepare also.
- You do not need to know all the answers. You are there to lead, guide and facilitate the discussion. These studies are rich in Scripture so allow God's Word to do the teaching. However it is vital that you encourage the group to stay on track when going through the studies.

- As most of the studies refer to many different Bible passages it may be helpful for you to print a hand-out so that you and the group members have them to hand at all times as you discuss the different questions. You can use the Bible Gateway website to copy and paste verses and chapters into a Word document. [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)
- Each study is structured in different ways but all the studies contain an introduction and Bible passages to read. Take time to read as many of the Bible passages as possible. Encourage discussion of the questions.
- At the end of each study there is an opportunity for further reflection and practical application. Please encourage the group members to seek God's leading in this and to follow through with tangible action.
- **Go deeper** – This is an optional section in some of the studies. It is there to encourage the group members to spend extra time exploring the topic already discussed in the study. If you find that you have extra time in the discussion and have already completed the study then take time to dig a little deeper into God's Word.
- Most of the studies are very straightforward in terms of content, but some notes are included below on different aspects of each study. These notes are in no way definitive.
- A good book to help you as you explore the different themes of the study is *The Mission of God's People* by Christopher J H Wright.

# God's heart

In this study we will consider God's character and examine how 'mission' flows directly from who He is. It explores God as creator and giver of life. We also see so clearly that God's desire is to be in relationship with humankind. He has reconciliation and restoration in His heart. He longs for us to be in true relationship with Him.

“The mission of God flows directly from the nature of who God is”

J. Andrew Kirk *What is Mission.*

## Genesis 1:26-31: Characteristics of God

- God is our creator and the giver of life. He made humans with a purpose and in His own image. He gave us a special position in the world He had created.
- God is interested in the world He has made. He has a plan, a hierarchy of roles in the world and is pleased with the order He has given. Humans are given great responsibility for managing this according to the plan. God thoughtfully and graciously makes them in His image and blesses them in order to equip them for their task.
- He is a God who blesses and gives to His creation and wills that humanity will be sustained in and by the rest of creation and will manage it in a sustainable way.
- *“If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose”.* Rick Warren *The Purpose Driven Life.*
- God blesses us and sends us into the world.

God is a 'missionary' God. What do we mean by that? God's desire, as seen from the creation account, is to have a personal relationship with us; this flows out of the relationship within the Trinity that we see in Scripture - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's character is about reaching out with love to those who are far away from him. Since sin entered the world, God has brought, and continues to bring, His salvation and redemption to the creation that has been broken by sin and evil. God's desire is to see restoration and healing of His relationship with people of every tribe, nation and language.

This mission is God's mission – Missio Dei. It is driven by His heart to see people of all nations reconciled to Him, knowing, loving and worshipping Him. God's deep love is evident from the creation account in Genesis right through to the vision of worshippers from every tribe, nation, and language bowing before the Lord in adoration in **Revelation 5**.

# God's nations

In study one we examined God's character and saw that He is a missionary God. He loves humankind and desires to be in relationship with us; that is why we do 'mission'. In this study we examine what we mean when we use the word 'mission'.

It may come as a surprise that the word 'mission', as we use it, does not directly occur in the Bible. So where has this word come from? The English word 'mission' comes from the original Latin word *mittere* which means 'to send'. Throughout the Bible and church history God has been and continues to be a 'sending' God. This is linked to the Greek verb *apostello* which does occur in the New Testament many times (**Luke 10:1; Acts 19:22**). Indeed it is this root word *apostello* from which the word 'apostle' comes. These apostles were sent out by Jesus to proclaim the gospel to all nations (**Matthew 28:16-20**).

## Abram, The Children of Israel and The Nations

The root word of 'bless/blessing' – *barak* occurs five times in **Genesis 12:2-3**. Paul in **Galatians 3:8** calls this "the gospel in advance".

C.J.H. Wright, in his book *The Mission of God's People*, said "The first time we really see God choosing and calling someone – i.e., putting election into action - it is precisely not so that Abraham and his family alone get saved but rather that by being blessed he should become the agent of blessing to others."

Additional passages that can be read to explore God's love for all nations: - **Isaiah 56:6-7, Jeremiah 4:1-2, Habakkuk 3:6, Zephaniah 2:11, Haggai 2:7, Zechariah 9:9-10.**

## Jonah

The city of Nineveh is described in **Genesis 10:11**. It was founded as a great northern city by Nimrod under Babylonian/Assyrian influence.

The story of Jonah is a stark example of God's mercy being extended beyond the Children of Israel. The book of Jonah is familiar to many of us but it is a wonderful example of how God 'sends' His people with the truth to the 'other', to those who are far removed from His love and mercy and indeed whose lives reflect everything that is sinful and evil.

# God's servants

The aim of study three is to explore further the theme of God sending out His people. Throughout the Old Testament God pointed to the promised Messiah, the Saviour. Jesus was sent by the Father into the world. Jesus in turn then sent His disciples out to be His witnesses.

## The Ultimate Sending – Jesus

Messianic prophecies are evident in **1 Chron. 16:23-24; Psalm 96:10; Isaiah 60:3 and 61:1.**

*"The Old Testament is replete with promises and expectations that God would one day be worshipped by people from all nations of the world. These promises form the explicit foundation of the New Testament missionary vision."*

(John Piper *Let the Nations be glad*)

## Jesus sent out the first disciples

Before Jesus ascended to heaven He gave clear commands to His disciples. Jesus commissioned His followers to go and make disciples of all nations, to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. It is so important to note that when Jesus gave these directives to His disciples, He did so within a certain context and with specific support.

- All authority had been given to Jesus.
- Jesus promised to be with His disciples as they carried out His call, until the very end of the age.
- Jesus appeared to His followers after His resurrection; it was a calling based on the power of God being supreme over all, even death.
- The disciples were to go out in His name.
- They were eye-witnesses sharing their first-hand experiences.
- Jesus promised the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit upon them.
- The peace of Christ remains with His disciples, even up to now.
- As Jesus was sent, so He sent His disciples

God sends out His people by the power of His Holy Spirit to proclaim His message of love, grace and forgiveness through the life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, by both word and deed (**Luke 4:19 and Isaiah 61:1,2**). God is building His Kingdom across the nations for His glory. Jesus' Great Commission was not simply for those first disciples; He continues to send us out as His followers today. Jesus does not call us to personal therapy but to mission-focused living for Him.

# God's world

In our previous study we saw that, following the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the disciples began to share the good news of Jesus.

The Acts of the Apostles paints an incredible picture of how God's mission began to spread out from Jerusalem. It was a clear fulfilment of the covenant that God had made with Abraham (**Acts 3:25**) to bless all nations. This study will allow us to see how God's mission began to spread out more and more into the nations.

## Being sent

*"A 'sender' is someone who is committed to enabling others to go out in mission. Acts 13 and 14 remind us that even Paul and Barnabas needed to have a church full of senders behind them: people to recognise God's call; to encourage them in their first tentative missionary steps; to commission them; to support and pray for them while they were away; and to listen to and follow them up once they'd returned."*

(Do It Well Toolkit – PCI: Booklet 2, 'Developing a Sending Congregation' p.4).

God continued to send out Paul, specifically to reach out to the Gentiles, those outside the Jewish faith and culture (**Acts 13:46-47 and Romans 10:12-15**). The Philippian church is a good example of Paul's church planting amongst the Gentiles.

## What then is our response? Does God still send?

How is your congregation involved in what God is doing both here at home and overseas?

Paul was sent out to share God's message of love and grace in Jesus Christ with those who were different from him. As we saw in the story of Jonah, sometimes we can be reluctant to go to those whom we consider to be different or indeed even an enemy. However, God calls us to reach out to all with His love. Encourage the group to reflect on those they may find difficult to share God's love with in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and even to the ends of the earth.

We have explored so far in this study series that God, the missionary God, chooses to send His people. This work, this sending out is God's Mission - Missio Dei. At the beginning of creation it was God's mission to draw humankind back to Himself. God's mission saw Jesus, His Son, being sent to this earth to pay the price for humankind's rebellion and we are sent out as followers of Jesus to partner with God in His on-going mission.

# God's command

As God continues to send us out as His Church, what is it we, as 21st century disciples of Jesus, are sent to do?

In this study we get the opportunity to observe how Jesus 'made disciples'. He spent three years sharing His life with the 12 disciples, culminating with Him telling them to go and do as they had seen Him do. Jesus loved those that He met and ministered to; He cared for them with compassion and grace. He also challenged sinful behaviour and sought God's glory and Kingdom in all that He did. Jesus displayed the gospel in so many different ways – teaching, healing, preaching, sharing food and conversation together, miracles and worshipping together.

Again and again we see that Jesus knew clearly why He had been sent by the Father. He came to raise up a group of followers, disciples who could then go on and disciple others. He did this by investing deeply in the lives of His twelve disciples. That is why the great commission in **Matthew 28:18-20** is so important as we think about our role in mission today.

## Go.... make disciples

Jesus was clear about the fact that He wanted His disciples to make other disciples. Jesus did not tell them to simply make 'converts', Jesus wanted to see people truly following Him, obeying all of His teaching and living for Him completely. We as the Church today are still called to play our role in building His Kingdom by making disciples.

In **2 Timothy 2:2** Pauls encourages Timothy to pass on to other believers what he has learned from him. *"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."*

How are you as a leader seeking to pass on what you are learning about Jesus to others (perhaps those in your group) and to those who are not yet believers?



# God's witnesses

The objective of this final study is to work out how we can all be more involved in what God is doing across His world. The study focuses mainly on exploring different avenues of practical application of what we have been learning.

It is imperative that all group members are challenged and encouraged to seek God's leading in how they will put into practice what they have learned in the previous studies.

## 1. Learn about God's global mission

List ways in which you as a group/congregation/individual can learn more about God's heart for the world and what He is doing in global mission right now.

- Spend time examining what the Bible says about God's heart for the nations. God desires people from every nation, tribe and tongue to know, love and follow Him. We have explored this in our previous studies but there are many other examples in both the Old and New Testaments.
- Learn about what is happening all around the world, both the good and the bad. Use this information so that you can better pray and support Christians in these places.
- Learn more about PCI's involvement in global mission from **[www.presbyterianireland.org/Resources/Mission/Overseas-Mission](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/Resources/Mission/Overseas-Mission)** On the website there are many wonderful resources available to help you and your congregation to connect with PCI missionaries and partners overseas. Perhaps invite a PCI missionary or mission overseas representative to speak at your church.
- Follow PCI Mission Overseas on Twitter @pciOverseas for regular updates on missionaries, news and events.
- Subscribe to a mission organisation's magazine that you support and pray for. This learning will inspire you to be more involved in what God is doing across the world and will help you to pray more meaningfully for global mission.
- Attend Mission events and meetings where you can hear first-hand how God is moving across the world. For example – the annual Bangor Worldwide Missionary Convention.  
**[www.worldwidemission.org](http://www.worldwidemission.org)**



## 2. Pray about global mission

How are you/your congregation praying for mission/missionaries at present? How could you deepen and develop this prayer?

- Think of new and creative ways you can be praying for mission organisations and missionaries you are connected to. Pray specific Scripture verses for missionaries – **Ephesians 6: 19-20; Colossians 4: 3-4; 2 Thessalonians 3: 2-3.**
- Perhaps you could have prayer triplets or quads that meet-up outside meetings to pray for specific people or projects.
- Do you subscribe to PCI Mission Overseas Prayerline? Receive this prayer resource each week. More details available at **[www.presbyterianireland.org/prayer](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/prayer)**
- You could have a special prayer night with prayer stations that take you around different countries of the world. Operation World by Jason Mandryk and Patrick Johnstone could be used to resource this. Prayer videos can also be downloaded from the Operation World website.  
**[www.operationworld.org/prayer-videos](http://www.operationworld.org/prayer-videos)**
- Fast and pray together as a group.
- Have a prayer wall or prayer map where you meet.
- Be creative!

## 3. Get up and go

If your congregation does think about sending individuals or a short term mission team overseas, remember to get a copy of PCI's Do It Well Mission Toolkit **[www.presbyterianireland.org/Resources/Mission/Overseas-Mission](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/Resources/Mission/Overseas-Mission)**

The toolkit is made up of a set of easy-to-read booklets offering helpful advice and practical tips to those who are responsible for 'sending', as well as those who will be 'going' on short-term mission teams overseas.

Each year Presbyterian Mission Overseas provides training for individuals and teams going on mission overseas. Check out the website for information about training events.

## 4. Serve as senders

Neal Pirolo's book *Serving as Senders* has a wealth of ideas for how to serve your missionaries as senders.

## 5. Welcome the world

How do we love those from other cultures that God has placed across our paths? As an individual or congregation how could this be done even better in your community?

- Staff at PCI's International Meeting Point in Belfast may be able to offer some information/advice about reaching out to internationals. They can be contacted through the Council for Mission in Ireland, Mission Department at PCI Assembly Buildings on 028 9032 2284 or from the Republic of Ireland on 048 9032 2284.
- Mission Agencies Partnership (MAP) occasionally run training workshops aimed at supporting outreach to internationals. Check out the MAP website for information about any upcoming events. [www.mapmission.org](http://www.mapmission.org)
- EMBRACE is a group of Christians working together to promote a positive response to people seeking asylum, refugees, migrant workers and minority ethnic people in Northern Ireland. EMBRACE seeks to equip the Church to fulfil its call to welcome the stranger, by providing information, training, resource materials and channels for practical help. Call the EMBRACE office on 028 9066 3145 and check out their website [www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org) for more information.

## 6. Mobilise other Christians.

### “Mobilisers stir other Christians to active concerns for reaching the World.”

Phil Parshall quoted in Claude Hickman – Live Life on Purpose (2003)

*“The Mobilizers are the strategic motivators. These are the ones who are sounding the alarm. Wouldn't it be more effective to go and wake 100 sleeping fireman to come and put out the blazing building than to just stand there alone throwing your buckets of water on it? These are the ones that yearn to be on the field, but have stayed behind to rally the troops. They form mission committees at their churches. They get people praying and giving and going. They organize short and long-term mission teams. They get books and materials into the Christian's hands. They are sometimes called “pests” or “fanatics” behind their backs! Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Missions, says the highest priority within the Body of Christ right now is for more mobilizers. More men and women in every church, every town, every campus who will help open people's eyes to what God is doing around the world and helping people plug into their role. A good definition for mobilization is: ‘Deploying an army of laborers to the front lines where they are ordering their lives around the Great Commission’.”*

Steve Shadrach - Goer, Sender, Mobilizer, and Welcomer.  
From [www.thetravelingteam.org/articles/goer-sender-mobilizer-and-welcomer](http://www.thetravelingteam.org/articles/goer-sender-mobilizer-and-welcomer)



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