



LEADER'S NOTES

God is on a mission! That mission is to seek and save the lost and to bring all into relationship with Him. We all have a part to play in this mission. God calls each of us to play a role in His mission. Using Acts 1:8 this study will outline the mission of the Holy Spirit to bring Jesus to Jerusalem (our everyday life), Judea and Samaria (our community around us), and the ends of the earth (globally) through each of us.

This study is designed to help highlight the section of the 40 End Goals of Youth Ministry about "Acts of Service and Mission." It can be helpful to look through those statements in advance of leaving the study.

Leader's Notes:

- There are times when the author uses their own stories or anecdotes. Please supplement your own anecdotes, stories, examples, etc. to fit your own group and/or context.
- Complete these studies in order as each one builds on the previous lesson's material.
- There are notes in orange in every study. These are meant to help give insight and direction to the leader.

Themes: Mission, Witness, Vocation, Evangelism, Service

Lesson 1: The Power of the Holy Spirit: God's Mission to the World

Students will be able to identify and articulate God's central mission and its parts.

Lesson 2: Reaching Jerusalem: Serving God In All Things

Students will identify how they can be a witness and serve in their daily lives.

Lesson 3: Reaching Judea and Samaria: Local Missions and Community Service

Students will identify specific areas in their community to which God may be calling them to service using their unique talents and abilities.

Lesson 4: Reaching the Ends of the Earth: Global Missions and Citizenship

Students will explore ways they can impact the world at large most effectively.

LESSON 1: THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: GOD'S MISSION TO THE WORLD

Hook

- Have you ever done the wrong assignment before?

Maybe you were assigned the even numbered questions and you did the odd numbers or just did the wrong lesson.

- How did that go for you?

Answers may vary. Leaders should have a story prepared in case other youth do not. Highlight how hard to succeed if you do not know what the goal or mission is.

- What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "mission"?

Book

Read Acts 1:1-11.

- What did the disciples think Jesus' mission was?
They thought he would restore the earthly kingdom of Israel.
- How did Jesus correct them?
- While the disciples had seen Jesus after His death, what promise do the men in white robes give the disciples?

Read Luke 19:10 and John 3:17.

- What was Jesus' actual mission?
Jesus came to reconcile all people to God so that they can have salvation through Him alone.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus "deputizes" his disciples to help him accomplish his mission. Jesus promises to give them a helper in sharing the Gospel. Read John 14:15-17.

- How are they supported in this task?
Jesus promises to send a Helper, that is the Holy Spirit. Through our Baptism, the Holy Spirit will dwell in each of us and be with us.

Read Colossians 1:15-23. We can summarize God's mission in 5 steps or words: Creating, reconciling, reigning, transforming, returning. Boiling everything down to five words may seem too simple but doing this allows us to remember all the critical parts of what God is doing in and through His people over time. Go through each of these words with your teens and discuss what each one means as a part of the Gospel story.

- God is the creator of all things and becomes a creature Himself, entering into His own creation.
- Christ reconciles all things to himself through His death and resurrection.
- Christ (risen, ascended, complete, sovereign) reigns over all authorities inside and outside the church.
- Christ transforms the lives of all His people in His image.

- Christ promises to return to restore all things and make His reign explicit for all to see.

Leader Notes:

These are from the 2022 LCMS Gathering theme that focuses on this text. The words and bullet points come from the theological paper. To find more, you can read the paper in its entirety on the Gathering website. If your group participated, this is a great time to connect back to God's mission in all things.

Look

God's mission for the disciples was to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. If you can, highlight a map that shows exactly where these places are.

- Why do you think Jesus chose to mention these places? What do they represent?

Jerusalem is the city where much of Jesus did much of his ministry. It was in the region of Judea. Samaria was the neighboring region and the "ends of the earth" are self-explanatory. These places represent expanding rings from very local to far away. They can be view as your closest relationships, the people of your community, people who are seen as "other," and people far away.

Took

- How does knowing you are a part of God's mission through your Baptism affect you?
- What part of knowing that mission might seem scary or intimidating?
- How does knowing your gift of faith, your words, and how God's mission comes about is the work of the Holy Spirit, not just sinful you, help give you confidence?
- Does it motivate you to be a part of it or does it inspire an attitude of "that's not my problem"? Discuss with your group.

Answers will vary. Help them understand that they get to play a part in the mission and not just sit on the sidelines. Also remind them that even when God's mission seems like too much, it doesn't depend on them, but on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Go back to the way we think about God creating, reconciling, reigning, transforming, returning. List where you saw God doing these through the Holy Spirit this week. Or how have these promises been important to you this week? Which of these have been most impactful to you?

This week pray that God will show you ways the Holy Spirit can use you in His mission field.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for never giving up on us, and making it your mission to draw us all closer to you. Help us to see your hand in all things as we interact with those around us. Help us to see the world as your mission field and to be mindful of your works of creation, reconciliation, redemption, and transformation as we wait for your return. Amen.

LESSON TWO: REACHING JERUSALEM: SERVING GOD IN ALL THINGS

Hook

Find Jerusalem on a map. If you have Lutheran Study Bibles, there is a color map that includes Jerusalem in the front as well as a map of the city during 30ad near Matthew 21.

If you have time, let students do some internet sleuthing about Jerusalem today and talk about what they would want to go see if they were to visit there.

- What would be exciting to see?
- How would they feel about traveling to a place so far away?

While Jerusalem seems far away for us, it was a place familiar to Jesus and his disciples. Jerusalem was where Jesus did much of his ministry and where the events of Holy Week took place. Who would the apostles witness to in Jerusalem?

Jerusalem would have been familiar to the disciples and they would have been equipped to provide eye-witness accounts of the events of Jesus life. The people there would have been inclined to listen to them as they were also Jews and had a similar worldview.

Book

Read Acts 18:1-4.

- Who were Pricilla and Aquila? What was their profession?
They were tentmakers who supported Paul in his missionary journeys and were leaders in the local congregation.

Read Acts 18:24-26.

- According to these two passages in Acts 18, how were Aquila and Pricilla involved in the mission of the early church?
They taught and encouraged the church leaders and made sure Apollos had an accurate message to spread with his enthusiasm. They helped to make sure that what people were teaching about Jesus was true.
- How confident do you feel about what you know about what God is and what God has done for us? What are some ways you can be sure you are speaking the truth of the Gospel?
This is a great place to encourage young people to spend time reading the Bible and other books that help them understand their faith. You can also encourage them to talk to trusted adults, like their pastor, other church workers, elders, etc.
- How would you feel about talking to a friend about something they said about Jesus that was wrong? Why is that important, even if we might be scared to do so?
Sometimes it is the people who are closest to you that are the hardest to talk about matters of faith. That doesn't mean we can avoid those tough conversations, but we can work to have them with warmth, challenge, and grace.

Read Romans 16:3-5. How were Pricilla and Aquila uniquely gifted to be a part of God's mission?

They risked their lives to save Paul and the Gentile churches and used their financial gifts to host a church in their home.

Pricilla and Aquilla were people who worked to help share the good news of Jesus with others, especially with those nearby. They gathered people together in their home. They made sure to teach the truth and ensure that others heard it as well. They supported Paul who would go on to travel to share the Gospel.

Look

Read Romans 12:3-8.

- What connection does Paul make between the human body and the Body of Christ?
Both the Body of Christ and the human body have many parts with different functions. Each member is equipped for a specific purpose for which it was created.
- God gives everyone different gifts, talents, and abilities. What are some that Paul mentions in Romans?
Prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, generosity, zeal, mercy
- What are other spiritual gifts you have heard elsewhere in Scripture?
Wisdom, faith, healing, miracles, tongues, administration, helps
- What gifts has God given you? These could be gifts mentioned in these passages, spiritual gifts, or something you are just plain good at! If it helps, you can help teens to think about this by having them identify
 - Things given by God that come to you naturally, qualities you received from God when He formed you.
 - Skills that you have learned to do well over time. These can be topics you know a lot about or things like music, art or sports.
 - Passions for people or areas where you have a deep interest or heart in sharing Jesus and sharing His love.
Answers will vary.
- Who is your "Jerusalem?" Who do you interact with regularly that God has uniquely gifted you to reach that others might not be able to? It might be helpful to make a list of people they see day to day.
Answers will vary.

Took

- God worked through the tentmakers Pricilla and Aquila to spread the message of the early church. How is God using you and your unique gifts, talents, and abilities to accomplish His mission where you are?
Answers will vary.

If you have not done so before, take a spiritual gifts inventory to see how God has gifted you. You can also use secular tools such as Strengthsfinder to help teens identify strengths that, while not spiritual in nature, can be used by the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel.

- What are ways you can use your gifts in your context?
Answers will vary. Take the gifts they share and brainstorm together ways they can use those gifts in your local congregation. If something doesn't immediately jump out, help them find something this week and circle back next time!

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us all unique gifts and talents. Please make it clear how You want us to use those gifts to spread the good news of your love to others we encounter in our daily lives. Thank you for using us to accomplish your mission. Amen.

LESSON THREE: REACHING JUDEA AND SAMARIA: LOCAL MISSIONS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Hook

Take a look at the map and locate Judea and Samaria.

- What do you notice about Judea and Samaria just from looking at the map?
They are regions next to each other.

We learned about Jerusalem in the last study and focused on serving others through our daily vocation, or those immediately around us. While Jerusalem is the city in which Jesus completed much of his mission, Judea is the region where Jerusalem is located.

Often times, Jesus branched out from the main city and was preaching and teaching in other areas in Judea. Similarly, God calls us to step out of our every-day lives to bring the Gospel to those nearby.

Samaria is a bit different. Samaria and the Samaritans have a long history that parallels that of the Israelites in the Old Testament. We could spend a long time talking about their history (and it is very interesting if you have time!) but what is most important to know is that they were Israelites who ended up mingling with other people groups north of Jerusalem. The mixed many Jewish believes and traditions with those of the people they married, which made for a muddled, blended view of God's word. Culturally, they were also different from the Israelites and the Jewish leaders of Jesus' time. Because of this, most Jews did not associate with them and even hated them because of their different views.

Book

Read John 4:1-26.

- Why was the woman hesitant to give Jesus water?
- What does this show about Jesus' request?
She is a Samaritan and Jesus is a Jew. Usually people from these groups would not interact. Jesus does not see her as a Samaritan but rather as a child of God.
- Who's well was this? What did the Samaritan woman know about the well? Why is that significant?
It was Jacob's well. She knew that Jacob provided for his family from this well. As a Samaritan, she had a similar historical background to the Jews even though they worshipped differently and did not get along. They "spoke the same language."

Read verses 21-24 again.

- Who was salvation from originally? What kind of worshipers does the Father seek?
Salvation came from the Jews. The Father seeks people who worship in the Spirit and in truth. God wants everyone to know that Jesus is the Messiah, sent to save us from our sins and to have the Holy Spirit working in and through us.
- What does it mean to worship in Spirit and in truth?

He seeks those who worship not in one particular place, but in sincerely and worship the true triune God.

Look

- Based on what you read, what was the relationship between the Jewish people and Samaritans? How did the Jews often treat them?
Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. They often looked down on them and would not associate with them because they believed they had false beliefs about how to worship.
- What was different about Jesus and his treatment of the Samaritan woman?
Jesus went against cultural norms and asked the Samaritan woman for water.
- Who in your community is often treated as a "Samaritan" or "other"? Who might be on the margins? Is it members of a certain social class? Race? People group? Political party?
Answers will vary.
- Where do we often fall short in how we care for those on the edges of our community? What kinds of judgements might keep us from sharing Jesus with them?
Answers will vary.
- What are ways that you can follow Jesus example and welcome "Samaritans" into God's family?
Answers will vary. Guide the group to discuss how they can individual reach out to marginalized groups in your area or how they can support ministries that do.

Took

- Where has God equipped you to serve in your local community?
- How can God use you to accomplish His mission in your community around you?
Answers will vary.

If you have time, this may be an opportunity for you to do a small service project for those in your community. This could include creating bags that could be handed out for those who are homeless or creating care packages for shut ins.

You may also use some of the resources available in this article about developing empathy online. There are several digital interactive pieces that can help youth to consider the specific needs of those on the outskirts of their community.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father you call us to love those who are different than us. We are sorry for the times we judged without knowing and didn't love others as ourselves. Help us with your spirit to see them with your eyes and to take opportunities to love them as you do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

LESSON FOUR: THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Hook

While God does not call all to international service, he does call many! Spend some time exploring how LCMS missionaries are serving at www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/international-mission/missionaries. You can have groups look at each region and share the people and their various roles in that place. Check out a couple profiles to see the variety of ways God has called them to serve!

If you have time, you can write a letter of encouragement to these missionaries. If you are currently supporting a missionary, perhaps reach out and see if there is a way for them to connect via Zoom or other video chat with your youth.

Book

Read Matthew 28:18-20. This is often referred to as The Great Commission in which Jesus instructs his disciples to make disciples of all nations.

- What two parts go into "making disciples"?
Baptizing and Teaching
- By whose authority were they called to make disciples? Whose mission is this?
We go by Jesus' authority because it is God's mission.
- Are we alone in this mission?
Jesus promises to be with them as they go.

Taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth seems like an overwhelming task. How on earth are the disciples supposed to do that? We have to remember that we share God's love because He first loved us, and we go with His Spirit to guide us.

While the Great Commission comes at the very end of Matthew, Jesus talks about His mission as early in His ministry on earth as well. Read Matthew 5:13-16

- What things does Jesus compare His people to? Why?
Salt, Light, City on a Hill, Lamp. In each of these comparisons Jesus reminded us that we are to go out with the good news of Jesus without hiding it so that others can believe in Him.
- Everywhere we go, close and far away, we can shine God's light and share the salt of the Gospel. What might make you want to hide these things?
- Why do we love others in Jesus' name and help teach them about Jesus?
We do all these things not for our own glory or to make ourselves feel good. It is to give glory to God in heaven.

Look

Read I Corinthians 9:19-23.

- What strategies does Paul use on his missionary journeys?

Paul became all things to all people so that he could win some for Christ. He got to know them and understand them and related to them. He met them where they were and spoke to them using a "language" they would understand.

- Have you ever traveled to another culture or country? How did that make you feel? Help youth to identify times when they felt like they were not sure what the right thing was to do culturally. If you have one, it would be good for a leader to share their story here.
- When we go outside of our own communities, we have additional challenges when sharing the Gospel. How can this passage help inform how we go into places that might be different than we know with the love of Christ?
The Gospel doesn't change from place to place, but we can meet people where they are at with the love of Jesus.
- What obstacles might you face in sharing the Gospel with those from a culture that is different than you?
Communication differences, different religious beliefs about the Bible, differences in practice and social cues
- Did Paul do this perfectly? Can we?
Nope! There were times when he sinned and fell short and so will we. God will work despite us and through us still to move His mission forward.

God doesn't just call us to share the good news of Jesus with those who are like us. Instead, we are called to be God's hands and feet to everyone near and far. But God doesn't ask us to go alone. We couldn't do anything like this without God giving us His helper, the Holy Spirit. We are going to fail some, but we know that we have Jesus' forgiveness and chance after chance to try again with the Spirit's help.

While Paul was uniquely called and gifted to be a traveling missionary, not all of us are. Read Philippians 4:14-19.

- How did the Christians in Phillippi support Paul?
The church paid for his expenses and made sure he was well supplied on his mission.

Took

Discuss in your group ways you can support a missionary. Find out if your church sponsors any missionaries and how they are partnering with them to engage in God's mission abroad. If your church does not have any missionaries that they are partnered with, spend some more time on the LCMS Missionaries site and see if God is calling you to come alongside one of the missionaries there.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we know you call us to go out far and wide with the good news of Jesus. God with us so that we might be able to share the Gospel not just with the people near us but to the ends of the earth. Forgive our missteps and mistakes as we go. Give us your Spirit to give us the words to speak that all may know you. In Jesus' name. Amen.