

GOD'S MISSION IN ALL THINGS

Bible Studies for Servant Event Groups



LEADER GUIDE

GOD'S MISSION IN ALL THINGS

SUB THEMES: Mission, Witness, Vocation, Evangelism, Service, Baptismal Identity

SYNOPSIS: God is on a mission! That mission is to seek and save the lost and to bring all people into relationship with Him. We all have a part to play. God gives each of us duties 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.

NOTE TO LEADERS: Please supplement your own anecdotes, stories, examples, etc., to fit your own group and/or context. Complete these studies in order, since each one builds on the previous lesson's material.

Lesson 1: What's the Point? God's Mission to the World

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

Lesson 2: Where it All Begins: Receiving God's Power

Students will recognize and understand that God calls us to His mission through our baptismal identity.

Lesson 3: Reaching Jerusalem: Serving God In All Things

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

Lesson 4: 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 serve using their unique talents and abilities.

Lesson 5: Reaching the Ends of the Earth: Global Missions and Citizenship

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



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LESSON 1

What's the point? God's Mission to the World

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

HAVE YOU EVER MISSED THE POINT OF SOMETHING? When I was about 5, I went to Disneyland for the first time. After the trip, my mom asked what my favorite part was, expecting me to say a ride, meeting one of the characters, or any of the other magical moments that we experienced in the happiest place on earth. My response? The banners. Apparently, I really loved the flags depicting Mickey and his friends that decorated the streets of Anaheim outside of the park! I had just had a “magical” experience, but I was focused on something much less important.

When it comes to spiritual matters, we often have an equally short-sighted perspective. Even the disciples who were firsthand witnesses didn't always understand the point of Jesus' mission! In Acts 1:6, they ask again, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus had already told them that His kingdom was not of this world, but they were still waiting for Him to usher in an earthly kingdom, even after the resurrection!

And yet, through the disciples' repeated lack of understanding, Jesus continues his ever-patient teaching and guidance by responding, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). He reminds them of God's authority, and that His mission is not to overthrow the Romans. Despite the disciples' frequent confusion, Jesus goes on to explain their part in His plan to save the world. In verse 8, He says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Even though these disciples have spent years following Jesus and still don't understand His plans, even though they regularly miss the point of His parables, even though some of them still doubt His power after He *rose from the dead*, Jesus still has a part for them in His divine mission!

I find this reassuring, because I relate to the disciples on many levels. My guess is that you do too. I often have my own ideas about how God should be working, instead of trusting God's plan. Fortunately, despite all of the disciples' (and our) shortcomings, Jesus still has an important role for them (and us) to play in His kingdom! They get to be the witnesses who

document and share His message of salvation for generations to come! And we have the opportunity to be a part of this mission as well.

What “banners,” or distractions, steal our focus away from the “magic kingdom,” or God's mission?

How do you see God using you in His mission to witness to the world, bringing His message of salvation to others?

Pray: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son to accomplish the mission that we could not. When we lose sight of that mission, remind us that You are in control and will guide us to the correct path. Amen.

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. Highlight how it is 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.**

Read Luke 19:10 and John 3:17. What was Jesus' actual mission? **Jesus came to reconcile all people to God.**

In Acts 1:8, Jesus “deputizes” his disciples to help Him accomplish His mission. Read John 14:15–17. How are they supported in this task? **Jesus promises to send a Helper; that is, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will dwell in each of us and be with us.**

Read Colossians 1:15–23. Summarize God's mission in 5 steps or words. **Creating, reconciling, reigning, transforming, returning. (These are the same as the 2022 Gathering**

themes if your group participated in that. 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. Look at the map. Why do you think Jesus chose to mention these places?

What do they represent? **Jerusalem is the city where 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 local to far away. They can be viewed as your close relationships, the people of your community, people who are nearby but poorly known, and people far away.**

TOOK

How does knowing that the mission is God's mission affect you? 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 participants understand that they have a part in the mission and are not just on the sidelines.

List where you saw God working today. Which of these have been most impactful to you? This week, pray that God will reveal His mission field to you in His holy Word. **Answers will vary.**

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 recognize Your works of creation, reconciliation, redemption, and transformation as we wait for Your return. Amen.



LESSON 2: Where It All Begins: Receiving God's Power

Matthew 22:1–14

WHILE JESUS IS CLARIFYING HIS MISSION WITH HIS DISCIPLES (as we covered in the last lesson), He deputizes them to be His agents to carry out this mission before He ascends to heaven. But He doesn't leave them empty-handed, expecting them to figure it out on their own! He assures them that they "will receive power" from the Holy Spirit, not because of anything they have done (they just got done demonstrating how they still didn't get the point of Jesus' mission), but entirely as a gift.

The parable we read in Matthew 22 is often called The Parable of the Wedding Banquet or Feast, but I prefer The Parable of the Wedding Garment. While it is an interesting parable that has some twists that might not compute with our modern wedding traditions, I see many parallels with modern professional sporting events.

I don't know anyone who would invite random strangers to fill seats at their wedding, but there are multiple sites that work to fill empty seats at sporting events or concerts for cheap or free, to ensure that there is a sufficient crowd at these events.

This service is useful for struggling teams that have a hard time filling the stadium. Often teams that are succeeding want a packed house as well. Teams give away a few free tickets to have a stadium full of fans cheering for them rather than have empty seats because the price of admission is too expensive.

That helps me understand the invitation situation at this wedding.

The king wants a packed house for his son's wedding, and invites all sorts of people to make the event a large spectacle. However, this does not address the peculiar mention of wedding clothes. Who would expect a random stranger suddenly invited to a royal wedding to have the proper attire for such a fancy event on hand? I don't find many people walking around the streets in tuxedos, so why is the king so offended when this guest does not have wedding clothes?

I think the sports fan analogy can shed some light on this too. Another strategy teams use to draw a crowd and create a culture is the free playoff shirt. The Golden State Warriors gave out We Believe shirts during their 2007 playoff upset of the Dallas Mavericks. Ever since 2007, the Golden State Warriors place matching playoff t-shirts on every seat in the stadium for every playoff home game to create an atmosphere and a

home-court advantage. Many teams use this strategy. The Toronto Raptors even single out fans who don't wear the shirt on the Jumbotron. The crowd incessantly boos the fan until he puts on the shirt!

Now imagine a team was attempting to fill seats in the stadium to provide a true homecourt advantage. They offer free tickets to anyone who will cheer on their team, and a playoff tee is provided to these fans as well. But one recipient of this free ticket and free shirt refuses to put it on. He is shown on the Jumbotron, and the crowd encourages him to put on the shirt and support their home team. However, once on the Jumbotron, this "fan" unzips his jacket to reveal a jersey of the opposing team! Not only is he scorning the free shirt that the team had given him, but he is actively rooting for the enemy!

I imagine this is how it was taken when the wedding guest did not have wedding clothes on. Many believe that at that time, a king would provide wedding clothes to guests in a situation like this, knowing that strangers from the street would not be prepared with their own. The guest not wearing the wedding clothes would be implying that he thought that his own clothes were good enough. He rejected the clothes provided to him, like the basketball fan rejecting the provided spirit shirt. All this talk of clothing might have reminded the audience of Isaiah 61:10, which says:

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.

God has given us wedding clothes of salvation, with the playoff t-shirt of righteousness! We have been given these garments as a gift, and invited to an event because God loves us and wants us there. Showing up without this clothing is the equivalent of saying "God, thanks for giving us righteousness, but I think my own works will do the trick." This is not only a rejection of the free gift that God has given us. It shows that we are actually rooting for the other team! Just like a fan who receives a free ticket and a free shirt to root for the home team, we have been given the free gift of the garments of salvation and the robe of Christ's righteousness. Let's wear these free gifts proudly as we show others whose team we are on.

What does the “wedding garment” represent in the parable? How do we receive this garment? **The wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ. We receive it as a gift in our baptism.**

HOOK

What is the best gift you have ever received? What made it so great? **Answers may vary. Share a gift that you have received.**

When you hear the word “power” what immediately comes to mind? How would you define it? **Answers may vary. Some common answers may include political power, superpowers, magical powers, etc.**

BOOK

Reread Acts 1:8. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (emphasis added). These are the final words Jesus leaves with His disciples before He is taken up into heaven! What kind of “power” is Jesus referring to here? Political? Superpowers? How do you think the disciples heard this? How do you think they interpreted this “power” that Jesus promised? **Answers may vary. This can be a rhetorical question that students sit on as we flesh out what it means in the rest of the study.**

Jesus had talked about power with His disciples before. Read Matthew 17:14–20 and Luke 17:6. While He does not use the word “power” specifically, He mentions some powerful things in both of these passages; things that could sound like superpowers to us. What “powers” does Jesus mention in these two passages? **Jesus references telling mountains to move and telling a mulberry tree to uproot itself and plant itself in the sea!**

How does Jesus say these things are possible? **Both times, Jesus says the disciples could do these things if they had faith the size of a mustard seed.**

Have you heard these passages before? If so, how have you heard people talk about “mustard seed faith” or similar phrases? **Answers may vary. Top sites that appear when Googling “faith like a mustard seed” talk about how we can accomplish great things if we just have a little faith, so we should have a little faith. Many also conflate these passages with the Parable of the Mustard Seed in Matthew 13, in which Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed because it starts small and grows into a large tree. These references to mustard seeds are often combined in peoples’ minds. The conclusion may be that even a small faith can grow to do mighty things, so just have faith.**

Show a picture of a mustard seed (or bring one in! If you don’t have any in your spice rack, see if you have some spicy brown mustard with full seeds in it.

There is likely one in your church fridge that has been sitting there for who knows how long!) Compare them to other seeds students are familiar with. Why do you think Jesus uses the mustard seed to describe faith? **In the Matthew 13 parable of the mustard seed, Jesus says that the mustard seed is the smallest of all the seeds (used in local farming at the time).**

Context is so important (in these and all passages)! At the beginning of the Matthew passage, we see why Jesus brings up faith like a mustard seed. The disciples are embarrassed that they could not cast out the demon themselves, and they privately ask Jesus about it later. This is the question Jesus is responding to when He says the famously taken-out-of-context phrase, “if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt. 17:20b). Does it sound like the disciples have great power here? Why were the disciples lacking the power to cast out the demon according to verses 17 and 20? **No! Jesus is saying that if the disciples had the smallest amount of faith (like that of a mustard seed) they could move mountains, but they don’t even have that much. In verse 17 He refers to them as a “faithless and twisted generation.” In verse 20, He says they could not cast out the demon because they have “little faith.” If they had faith the size of the smallest seed, they could do many miraculous things, but they don’t even have faith the size of a mustard seed.**

Luke 17 paints a similar picture of the disciples. Jesus has just finished telling the disciples that they need to forgive their brother or sister, even if that person sins against them seven times in the same day! The disciples, realizing how difficult this task is, respond with verse 5: “Increase our faith!” Again, Jesus responds to this by saying, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you” (Luke 17:6). What similarities do you see between these two passages in which Jesus refers to “faith like a grain of mustard seed”?

In both passages, Jesus is saying that the disciples’ faith doesn’t even measure up to the size of a mustard seed, the smallest seed in the garden.

LOOK

How do these two passages recontextualize what Jesus is saying about the disciples’ faith? What does this say about our faith today? **Jesus isn’t telling His disciples, “Just have more faith and you will have superpowers.” He is actually pointing out how small their faith is, saying that it doesn’t even measure up to the smallest seed in the garden. If they had more faith, they would be able to do these miraculous things, but they cannot.**

I find these passages convicting. I have never moved a mountain or a mulberry tree by speaking to it, or done anything else “superhuman” like this. If Jesus says that the disciples were “faithless” and had “little faith” even though

they were right there witnessing His miracles, my faith must be small as well. My prayer echoes the disciples in Luke 17:5: "Increase our faith!"

If our faith is like that of the disciples, what are we to do? I think that often, the temptation is to turn in on ourselves and think, "How do I increase my faith?" or, "What do I need to do to increase my faith?" Humans want to solve problems, and we want to solve them ourselves. Luckily, Jesus answers this question in Acts 1:8, saying: "but you will receive power." Paul articulates this clearly in Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." Rapper Flame puts it this way in his song "Ordo Salutis" (if you haven't heard it, check it out on Spotify!):

"Faith is a gift
I've been baptized
I meet Him at the altar in the bread and the wine
It's more than a sign
That's why it's emphasized
That since Christ died
Only faith justifies"

As Flame mentions, we receive the gift of faith in baptism when God marks us as His own. This is why Lutherans baptize babies while many other groups do not! We believe Scripture when it says that we contribute nothing to our salvation, and that we receive faith as a gift. Anyone can receive that gift, even babies!

TOOK

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:57, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"! If we treat faith like something we have to do right to please God, we will always fall short. But we have been given this faith as a gift! Much like the Parable of the Wedding Garment in the devotion, we are like the sports fan who has been given a free ticket and the spirit shirt to wear along with it. We receive the power of the Holy Spirit as a gift from God, not because of anything we have done. And what exactly is that power? What does Paul have to say about it in Romans 1:16? **Paul says that the power of God is the Gospel, the Good News, God's Word given to us in the Bible.**

How does knowing that this power is a gift impact how we use that power? **We can have confidence that this power is effective because it does not come from within ourselves. When we feel underqualified or out of our league, we can be confident in the power of the Holy Spirit, knowing that it is God's omnipotent power, not our fallible power, that we rely on.**

CLOSING PRAYER



LESSON 3: Reaching Jerusalem: Serving God In All Things

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–13).

HAVE A LOT OF HOBBIES. Many of these involve working with my hands and tinkering in some fashion. In all of these, it is important to have the right tool for the job. Some might say that is a requirement, but I would disagree. There are a lot of tools you could use to tighten a bolt (a crescent wrench, a socket, pliers, impact driver, etc) but depending on the situation, some tools are more effective than others. Each of them is unique and shines in different scenarios, while still accomplishing the same task. A crescent wrench is ideal if you do not know the diameter of the bolt head. A socket and ratchet would be best to get into a space that does not have much clearance. Pliers might not be the best tool for tightening bolts, but they can get the job done if you lack other options. An impact driver is perfect for removing bolts that are rusted in place or covered in layers of dried paint. It takes a whole toolbox full of different tools to be prepared for any job.

We have all been given a task (a mission, if you will) to spread the Word of God to others. Just like the task of tightening bolts, the situation can dictate the best approach. Many would consider sharing God's Word to be the job of a pastor, but how would a person who refuses to step into a church on a Sunday morning ever hear a sermon? Someone who is fluent in Spanish is more suited to being a missionary to a Spanish speaker than someone who is fluent in Japanese. A person who has been homeless might understand hunger or the need for shelter and community more than the average person.

Just because a certain tool is not right for a given task does not mean that it is broken or useless! A hammer should not be discarded because it fails to cleanly cut a piece of wood in half. Each tool brings different value to the toolkit and is suited to accomplish particular tasks. The same is true for us as members of God's family. We all have different strengths and abilities that serve the same purpose of glorifying our God. Just because you do not have the gift of preaching does not mean you can't tell others about Christ. Even if you are not good at teaching, you can still share your experience with others! God uses each of us to accomplish His mission. He gives us all different gifts to accomplish that mission in different ways to minister to different people. What an encouragement to know that God can use each of us in a unique way; a way that no one else can fill!

We call this idea vocation (see the study on vocation for a more in-depth look at the idea). God gives us all different vocations that we can use to spread His love to unique groups of people.

What is one thing you are good at that others might not be good at?

How can you be God's light to the world while using that gift?

Pray: God, I thank you for making me with unique talents that only I have. Please help me to recognize places in my life where I can use my gifts to serve Your people every day. Amen.

HOOK

Find Jerusalem on a map. Jerusalem was where Jesus did much of his ministry and where the events of Holy Week took place. To whom would the apostles witness in Jerusalem?

Jerusalem was familiar to the disciples, and they were equipped to provide eyewitness accounts of the events of Jesus' life. The people there would have been inclined to listen to them, since they were also Jews and had a similar worldview.

BOOK

Read Acts 18:1–4. Who were Priscilla 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 Priscilla involved in the mission of the early church? **They taught and encouraged the church leaders, and made sure Apollos had a true and accurate message.**

Read Romans 16:3–5. How were Priscilla 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.**

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, helping**

What gifts has God given you? These could be gifts mentioned in these passages, spiritual gifts, or something you are just plain good at! **Answers will vary.**

Who is your “Jerusalem”? With whom do you interact regularly at home? How has God uniquely gifted you to reach people whom others might not be able to? **Answers will vary.**

TOOK

God worked through the tentmakers Priscilla 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.**

How have you seen God working through members of your group on this trip? Share what strengths you see in each of your team members. **Answers will vary. Discuss how you can all use those gifts in your home communities and congregations.**

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 4: Reaching Judea and Samaria: Local Missions and Community Service

Luke 10:25–37

SO FAR WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT GOD'S MISSION and how we can be a part of that with the unique gifts and talents He has given us as we go about our daily lives. Sometimes, though, God calls us to step out of our daily routine to serve others whom we might not normally encounter. We all know we are supposed to serve our neighbor, but sometimes we need a reminder of who that is.

Jesus was a Jew, and Scripture tells us that He preached to the Jewish people and served them in many other ways. But numerous times, we read about Samaritans and the interactions Jesus had with the people of Samaria. Samaritans were considered outsiders, and many of their beliefs and traditions departed from Jewish beliefs. They were not accepted by the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders, because the Pharisees did not believe they were worshipping correctly. The Jews and Samaritans had a long and contentious history, and the two groups hated each other.

This is the context in which Jesus tells the parable of the “Good Samaritan.” This parable is one of the most well-known in the Bible. Laws and hospitals even draw their name from it. Jesus points out that the Samaritan who helped the beaten man was a neighbor to him, unlike the religious leaders who were so caught up in ceremonial cleanliness that they would not help a brother in need.

The priest and the Levite were set apart to do God's work in the temple. They fulfilled a special role given to the descendants of the tribe of Levi to work in the temple, the place where God promised to dwell. Over the centuries, more and more ceremonial laws were put in place to ensure that God and the temple were treated properly and with respect. Many of these laws ensured that people did not approach the temple in an unclean state.

However, in this parable, the priest and the Levite were so concerned with their “cleanliness” that they did not want to be bothered to help the beaten man. It would have taken time and effort to cleanse themselves after coming in contact with him. But the Samaritan—the person who should have no business helping a Jew because they hated each other so much—was the person who was a neighbor to the man.

And notice how the Samaritan serves him! Does he just stop and pray for the man? Does he throw him some coins and tell him that he hopes he feels better? No. He got down in the trench with him and pulled him out, bandaged his wounds, and made sure he was taken care of. This is just like Jesus. When Jesus saw our dire situation of sin, he didn't just sit up in heaven and send miracles or angels to us. He came down to this messy world and got his hands dirty—healing the sick, caring for the poor, and ultimately dying a painful, humiliating death—all so we could have life with him in heaven.

How do you define being a neighbor?

Who is your neighbor?

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.

Jesus often branched out from the main city to preach and teach in other areas in Judea. Similarly, God calls us to step out of our everyday 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. They mixed Jewish beliefs 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.**

Whose 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 for originally? What kind of worshipers does the Father seek? What does it mean to worship in Spirit and in truth? **Salvation came from the Jews. The Father seeks people who worship in the Spirit and in truth. He seeks those who worship sincerely and worship the true 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 of the Samaritans' 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"? Is it members of a certain social class? Race? People group? Political party? **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 individually reach out to marginalized groups in your area, or how they can support ministries that do.**

TOOK

How has God equipped you to serve on this trip? How can God use you to accomplish His mission in this community? How can you use those gifts to serve your community at home? **Answers will vary.**

CLOSING PRAYER

God, we thank You for sending Your Son to save us when we were down in the trenches of sin. Help us to step outside of our comfort zone to serve those in our communities whom You have called us to serve. Amen.



LESSON 5: To The Ends of the Earth: Serving Globally

Matthew 28:16–20

IF YOU HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING ALONG WITH THIS SERIES, you know that we have been talking about how God calls us each to be a part of His mission in our daily lives, and to step out to help others in need. Hopefully, you have been able to explore some ways God is calling you to serve in your daily life. A fancy term for this is incarnational ministry. This refers to Christ's incarnation, which is our belief that Christ came down from heaven to dwell with us bodily—to experience life as we do, to become one of us—so that He could take our place on the cross.

Practitioners of incarnational ministry try to model ministry after Christ's life, mainly by becoming a member of the community they are serving. Paul explains this well in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23: “Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” Like Jesus, Paul became like the people he came to witness to, to relate to them and “speak their language.”

For some, this means literally going to “the ends of the earth” and moving to another country or continent, immersing themselves in another culture to be the hands and feet of Jesus there. For others, it means getting to know their geographic neighbors and members of their community to share Christ there.

Even if God has not called you to serve internationally, you can still support those whom He has called. This could be through a short-term trip designed to support a long-term missionary's work in their community, or through prayer and financial support.

No matter how God has called you to be a part of His mission, consider ways in which you can use “all possible means” to connect with people around you to help connect them to Christ.

HOOK

While God does not call all to international service, He does call many! Are you working with long-term missionaries? Ask them to share how they discerned God's call to serve if you are able.

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 them and teaching them.**

By whose authority are we called to make disciples? Whose mission is this? Are we alone in this mission? **We go by Jesus' authority. It is His mission, and He will be with us through it all.**

LOOK

Read 1 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 he related to them. He met them where they were and spoke to them using a “language” they would understand.**

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 Philippi support Paul? **The church paid for his expenses and made sure he was well-supplied on his mission.**

TOOK

In your group, discuss ways you can continue to support this mission after you return home. Are there specific ways you can pray for them? Are there other ways to support from afar?

Close by praying for the ministry happening in your place of service.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, I thank you for calling me into your mission. Help me to use the gifts You have given me to serve others in my everyday life, in my community, and around the world. Be with those who have left their homes to serve others abroad. Amen.



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