

Group Bible Studies
Preparing students for international missions



INTERNATIONAL
MISSION BOARD

GO IMPACT

GO IMPACT group Bible studies: Preparing students for international missions

Copyright ©2022 International Mission Board

All rights reserved. No portion of this material may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other — except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

All verses and passages quoted in this material are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), unless otherwise noted.

Editor: George Siler

Table of Contents

Prepare students for the mission.....	1
Assess students prior to the study.....	2
Session 1: Impact of the gospel	4
Session 2: Impact of your witness.....	8
Session 3: Impact of discipleship	12
Session 4: Impact of planting churches	16
Session 5: Impact of the missionary task	21
Session 6: GO IMPACT! Evangelism training.....	26
After the trip: Continuing the impact.....	29

Prepare students for the mission

Welcome!

On behalf of the International Mission Board (IMB) staff and all who work with us to send students to serve on mission projects, welcome to this resource. We hope it will help connect the hearts of your students with the mission of God. We are thankful and excited you have chosen to engage your group in missions and look forward to what God is going to do in and through your students.

This material is primarily intended to help you prepare high school and college students mentally and spiritually for an international mission project. The group sessions can also be used for mission education and training for other occasions, such as in a retreat or a Bible study series. In any case, we hope it leads you, your student ministry, and your church into greater involvement in international and cross-cultural missions. As you prepare, please go beyond the classroom to engage students in local missions. This generation will not respond well to “all practice and no game,” nor should they. The opportunities for you to help them serve cross-culturally at home are abundant.

Lead them to witness

The thing we hear often from missionaries about volunteers is, “Make sure they can share the gospel and testify to a meaningful, worthwhile faith in Christ.” As you will see in this material, evangelizing, discipling, and planting strong churches is central to the work of IMB missionaries.

We offer an evangelism training session in this material, but again, you must supply the encouragement and point out the opportunities your students have right now to evangelize.

Additional resources

We invite you to visit the IMB website and related sites to discover other resources that can help you engage students in the mission.

- IMB student pathways and service opportunities – imb.org/students
- IMB youth trips and resources – imb.org/go-impact
- Missionary prayer requests - imb.org/pray
- People group information - peoplegroups.org
- IMB online courses - imb.pathwright.com/library
- IMB videos (general) - vimeo.com/imbmissions/videos
- IMB videos (students) - vimeo.com/showcase/7391261

Contributors

We adapted material from the IMB’s Foundations magazine (version 2) and a previous IMB youth missions resource, “This Is Why.” We thank writers Rodney Calfee and Amanda Phifer for previous content that has been incorporated into this material. George Siler also provided new content in the sessions.

Assess students prior to the study

It can be very valuable for you as a mission trip leader to gain a clear sense of the spiritual condition of your team members, at least from their own perspective. Consider asking each member to complete this survey, not as part of an application to go and serve, but simply as preparation for the study you will lead. From their answers you may recognize needs and concerns to address. Maintain confidentiality with their responses unless they are willing to volunteer their answers to the group.

A spiritual assessment

Instructions: *Please complete this survey and share it with your group leader. The questions may surprise you by how personal they are. The point of these questions is to get you to think seriously about your own spiritual condition and to give your leader some insight into the spiritual background you bring to this mission trip. There are no right or wrong answers, only honest or insincere ones; you decide how truthful you will be.*

On a scale of 1 to 10, with each statement below, circle the number that best represents what you believe or where you are spiritually.

1. I believe God is real and knowable.------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
2. When God thinks of me, He is: ----- (Disappointed) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Delighted)
3. God is active in my life. ------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
4. The Bible is true and very relevant to my life. ------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
5. I read and study the Bible regularly.------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
6. My prayer life with God can be described as:----- (Non-existent) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Consistent)
7. I believe that both heaven and hell are real.------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
8. I have repented of my sins and am forgiven.------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
9. I believe Jesus is the only way to heaven.------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
10. I know Jesus as my Savior and Lord.------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
11. Church is meaningful and helpful. ------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
12. I am active in serving in and through church. ------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
13. I am able and willing to share my faith with others. -----(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
14. My faith makes a difference in how
I treat and care for others.------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)
15. I make decisions about my future
based on faith in and obedience to God.------(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Agree)

How to use this study

This study provides biblically-focused instruction that relates to evangelism, discipleship, and church planting, particularly as they correspond to international missions. The completion of this study is required for IMB GO IMPACT participants, and the leader is encouraged to involve other students if desired. This study is foundational and represents a first step in missional training. IMB offers next steps in online courses suitable for students. Please visit imb.pathwright.com/library.

Use these six sessions either in a weekend event setting, such as a retreat, or in weekly gatherings as part of the regular schedule of your church. The retreat option can minimize absenteeism, include additional activities, and give the group more opportunity to bond as a team.

This study does not provide culturally-specific information related to your mission trip setting and the people group you will serve. We recommend you correspond with your mission host as well as draw from additional sources to prepare your group for their service. We encourage the addition of cross-cultural training, alongside travel preparation and team building opportunities. Consider also how you can share the vision for your trip with the rest of the church.

Here are some suggestions to supplement this study:

Cross-cultural training

- Research the people group you will serve. Your missionary can help, and peoplegroups.org can be a good source of information.
- You could incorporate a cultural scavenger hunt, a video conference with your missionary host, an introduction to the language, or a culturally specific meal in your team's training. See details of these and more ideas at imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/go-impact-crossing-cultures.pdf.
- A "Neighborhood and the Nations Scavenger Hunt" is available at imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/go-impact-neighborhood-and-nations-scavenger-hunt.pdf.

Prayerwalking

- This is almost always a component of mission trips, yet one of the least practiced ministries here at home. Consider adding an opportunity for your students to visit and saturate a particular locale in your area with prayer. Learn more at imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/go-impact-start-with-prayer.pdf.

Team building

- It is so much better for your mission team and its effectiveness if they have been able to get to know each other well before getting on the plane or bus to go. The Bible study sessions in this material offer some interaction, but you could add an experience of working together in an outreach event of the church, a community service project, or a children's ministry event.

Church support and commissioning

- Lead your team to recruit prayer partners. It's likely that at least some of your team will need to raise funds, and prayer and giving tend to go together. See this resource for help: imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/go-impact-support-raising.pdf.
- Many churches like to commission mission trip teams in a worship service before they go. Consider asking a team member to put together a short video introducing the church to the trip, who will be going, and what you hope to see accomplished.

Session 1: Impact of the gospel

Focal passage: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved.” (Ephesians 2:4-5)¹

Objective: Lead students to recognize and appreciate the gospel as the power of God at work to save and transform people who believe and trust in Him.

Preparation checklist:

1. Provide pens and paper for students to write their definition of the word “gospel.” Be prepared to summarize responses on a chalkboard or dry erase board. Plan to write on the board for other activities in this session as well.
2. Prepare a presentation of “before and after” images, such as houses before and after renovation, celebrities with and without makeup, and cities or historical places changing over time. (If your church has a building, you might get some before and after pictures of its development.)
3. As an option for this session, prepare to show the short Schoolhouse Rock video, “Conjunction Junction,” available on YouTube.
4. For the acrostic activity, prepare slides that outline six parts of the gospel: (1) Who God is and what He is like, (2) The sinfulness of humanity, (3) Who Jesus Christ is, (4) What Jesus accomplished, (5) What is required to be saved, and (6) The results of salvation.
5. You may also want to prepare additional slides of the G.O.S.P.E.L. acrostic presented in this material.

Introduction

Definition: “The gospel is the good news that the only true God, the just and gracious Creator of the universe, has looked upon hopelessly sinful men and women and has sent His Son, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin through His substitutionary death on the cross and to show His power over sin and death in the resurrection from the grave so that all who turn from their sin and themselves and trust in Jesus alone as Savior and Lord will be reconciled to God forever.”²

It may seem basic, but there is no substitute in your mission team members for an authentic personal experience of God’s love and salvation. Take the message of 1 Corinthians 13 very seriously: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” While your group can experience God in new ways and grow in their faith on a mission trip, how can they be an effective witness to others if they are not motivated by their own encounter with Christ?

Recommended reading

- *Foundations*, International Mission Board, 2018. Available at imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Foundations-English-v2.pdf.
- *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. Available at bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000.
- *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary*. J. D. Greear, B&H Books: 2018.

¹ All Scripture references are English Standard version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

² International Mission Board, *Foundations*, 2018, p, 47.

Session plan:

1. **Opening prayer** (5 minutes)
 - a. Read Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
 - b. Pray that the Lord would bring clarity and conviction about the gospel to your students through His Word and by His Spirit, to edify them and fuel their endeavors in missions.

2. **Activity: What do you say is the gospel?** (10 minutes)
 - a. Distribute pens and paper and organize your group participants into pairs to take a few minutes to write a definition of the word "gospel" on paper. After, ask each pair to share their definition with the group. Make note of their definitions on a white board or note pad. Accept what is given and offer no corrections at this point.
 - b. As people share, pinpoint common themes in the definitions offered. Then, craft a collective definition and probe for additions or modifications as the group sees fit. Compare it to the definition in the introduction and ask students to identify any differences.

3. **Before and after: Scripture reading and discussion** (10 minutes)
 - a. Lead the group to read Ephesians 2:1-10.
 - b. Say: *One of the great tools in marketing is to show or prove the advantages of using a product or service with "before and after" images.* Provide some examples in a presentation, such as houses before and after renovation, celebrities with and without makeup, and cities or historical places changing over time.
 - c. Lead the group to identify the "before and after" qualities of the believers described in Ephesians 2. Consider listing them in two columns on a dry-erase board or chalkboard.
Before: dead in trespasses (dead toward God); worldly (under the sway of ungodly ways); following the prince of the power of the air (deceived by Satan); disobedient; living in the passions of the flesh (enslaved to wrong desires); children of wrath (subject to God's anger).
After: made fully alive; in fellowship with Christ; raised up with Christ (exalted and honored); blessed abundantly with grace and kindness.

4. **The great conjunction: the importance of "but God..."** (10 minutes)
 - a. Explain: *One of the most powerful words found in all the pages of Scripture is a coordinating conjunction. Its purpose is to act as a connector, giving continuity to two otherwise disconnected thoughts. Three tiny letters form an anchor for the best news ever communicated to humanity: "but." Apart from that small but incredibly weighty word, the gospel would not exist.*
 - b. As an option, show the short Schoolhouse Rock video, "Conjunction Junction," available on YouTube.
 - c. Ask: *What do we learn about God in this great conjunction found in verse 4 and part of verse 5? Can you identify three things about Him? (God is rich in mercy, greatly loves us, and cares for us even when we were dead in our sins.) How does this contrast with what people who do not know Him say about God and what the Bible says about Him?"* Emphasize that the gospel begins with the goodness of God. It is "rooted in the holiness of God and His righteous hatred against sin, and the love of God and His grace and mercy toward undeserving sinners."³
 - d. Say: *In the context of Ephesians 2, what follows the word "but" communicates that we no longer have to exist separate from God, miserable in our sins, deceived by the enemy, and hopeless in our future. God intervened, and another way was made possible through Jesus, which is amazing news for people who are hopelessly dead in sin. "But God" offers a complete turn-around from spiritual death to a new life as an adopted child in the household of the King. God has offered salvation by grace through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. That's the gospel!*

³ Foundations, p. 47.

5. **Testimony trios** (10 minutes)

- a. Ephesians 2 is similar to a template for a personal testimony. Invite students to consider their own experience in light of this passage. What was their life like before they had a real relationship with Christ? How has knowing Christ made a difference?
- b. Group students into trios and ask them to take turns sharing their own “before and after” stories of coming to Christ. When you regather them into the large group, you may wish to invite a few to share their stories with everyone.
- c. Mention that part of sharing the gospel with others involves our own testimony and experience of the gospel.

6. **Outlining the G.O.S.P.E.L.** (15 minutes)

- a. Lead your group to develop their own presentation of the gospel by creating an acrostic using the letters G.O.S.P.E.L. (Distribute more paper if needed.)
Start by sharing the following: *The word gospel actually means “good news.” It summarizes the grand narrative woven throughout Scripture, from creation, through the coming of Jesus and His sacrificial death for humanity, and ultimately to the gathering of the redeemed into God’s presence around the throne as co-heirs of Christ’s kingdom. The really good news for us is that we’ve been invited into God’s life as the recipients of God’s extravagant grace. Not only are we welcomed into God’s family, we are also given the privilege and responsibility of sharing this news and inviting others to receive this gift. Rightly understanding the gospel, therefore, is foundational work for us.*
- b. Return to the groups of threes used earlier. Ask each trio to prepare an acrostic of words or phrases based on G.O.S.P.E.L. that summarizes or outlines the message of the gospel. Explain that they must at least include the concepts below. (Listing them on a slide or board would be helpful.)
 - i. Who God is and what He is like
 - ii. The sinfulness of humanity
 - iii. Who Jesus Christ is
 - iv. What Jesus accomplished
 - v. What is required to be saved
 - vi. The results of salvation
- c. Ask each trio to present their acrostic. Recognize that there are many good ways to summarize the gospel but approach this as a learning exercise where you and the group evaluate responses. Commend teams for what expresses the gospel accurately and don’t be afraid to identify and correct mistaken notions. Summarize and share this outline:
 - i. **G – God’s character**
The gospel is good news about God. Throughout the Bible, God’s perfect character, from which His every action springs, is displayed. God’s character stands in direct contrast with ours. He is holy, and His every action is right and good, but we are unholy and guilty of rebellion toward God. His character is displayed through His love, mercy, and lavish grace toward us.
 - ii. **O – Offense of sin**
The gospel is the solution to our sin problem. We have offended God through our sinful rebellion. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command, they didn’t simply disobey a random rule about which trees they could visit during lunch. They rejected the lordship of an eternally perfect, holy God, for which the only just response is an equally severe, eternal punishment. Sin is willful disobedience, by which we fall short of the perfect character and glory of God, our standard. God’s justice demands a response to our guilt. His wrath is rightly provoked by our rebellion, leaving every sinner bound for eternal separation from God in a very real hell.
 - iii. **S – Sufficiency of Christ**
“Sufficient” means “adequate” or “enough.” Whereas humanity surrendered to our sinful nature and could not live up to the perfect standard of God’s character, Jesus could, and He did. Christ is the gospel’s central character, the hero. Being fully God, He (or Jesus) took upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself

completely with mankind yet without sin, became one of us. Jesus broke into human history, demonstrating the reality of His kingdom and lordship all the while.

iv. P – Personal response

The gospel demands a response. It calls enemies of God to abandon their sinful rebellion and become part of the family of God. It is an invitation to repent and believe, to turn from sin and striving and trust in the finished work of Christ. It offers the opportunity for sinners to accept the gracious gift of salvation, offered without cost, and place full faith in its Giver.

v. E – Eternal urgency

Rebellion is costly, and its results are far-reaching. Eternity literally hangs in the balance. The gospel message is one that painstakingly describes the high cost of salvation paid by Christ in His life and death, and the eternal implications for those who reject His lordship. As ambassadors of Christ's kingdom, we are heralds of urgent news in prayerful hope that all those who hear it will turn to Christ. Christ has won, and He will return to cast out all darkness and crush every revolt. That remains good news for those who claim allegiance to His kingdom, but it is not for those who do not.

vi. L – Life transformation

The gospel promises incredible gifts to those who respond to its call, gifts far greater than worldly possessions. Forgiveness, right standing in relationship to God, and Christ's righteousness in place of our sinful failures – these are just the beginning. Having been raised from death to life, we are transformed into new creatures. We are reconciled to God, adopted into His family, the Church, and given the Holy Spirit as both a Comforter and a down payment on the promised inheritance yet to come. We are kept by God's power in salvation until we are together with Him. Therefore, a right understanding of the gospel produces believers who treasure Christ above all.

7. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

- a. Say: *The glorious gospel of Jesus, who offered Himself freely and completely for us, is the gospel we must declare to others.*
- b. Encourage students to spend time throughout the week studying and meditating on Ephesians 2:1-10. The six aspects of the gospel that make up the acrostic above may be clearly seen within it.
- c. Close with a prayer: *Father, may we understand and believe the gospel that glorifies You alone and counts Christ as our greatest treasure. Amen.*

Session 2: Impact of your witness

Focal passage: “One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us.” (Acts 16:14–15)

Objective: Lead students to understand the God-ordained human and divine partnership in our witness to others (evangelism) and their salvation in Christ (conversion).

Advance preparation checklist

1. Consider this optional additional activity: “Gospel sharing simulation.” It is an active game-type session you can add to your group training, available at imb.org/goimpact/resources. This learning simulation uses a series of tag games to illustrate some of the aspects and challenges of sharing the gospel cross-culturally.
2. Obtain note cards for the “Scrambled definitions” activity. Write out the definitions of evangelism and conversion (see “Overview” below) on the cards, using one card for each word. Keep the two sets of definitions separate, but mix up the cards for each one, making sure they are out of order.
3. Obtain a blindfold and enlist a helper for the “Believe and sit down” activity. The helper will position an empty chair and hold it as you guide a blindfolded person to sit in it.

Overview

Definitions: “Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ.”

“Conversion is the divinely enabled personal response of individuals to the gospel, in which they turn from their sin and themselves (repent) and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord (believe).”⁴

You may do many valuable things on your mission trip to support the strategy and ministry of the missionaries and local believers you will serve, but your witness for Christ will always be the prime reason for going. Isaiah joyfully proclaimed a message that was echoed in the New Testament, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’” (Isaiah 52:7). The gospel is the greatest story ever told. It is powerful and purposeful, and its truths lead people to lay down their own lives in exchange for one that is infinitely better. For that sort of change to occur in an individual, however, the story must first be heard. It must first be told.

Recommended reading

- *Life on Mission: Joining the Everyday Mission of God*, Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe, Moody: 2014.
- *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*, David Platt, Multnomah: 2010.
- “How to Share the Gospel with Post-Everything People,” Caleb Crider, 2016. Available at imb.org/2016/10/26/share-the-gospel-with-post-everything-people.

⁴ *Foundations*, p. 47.

Session plan

1. Opening prayer (5 minutes)

- a. Read Romans 10:13-14: "For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"
- b. Pray that the Lord would enable the students to fully understand their roles as divinely appointed and empowered messengers for Christ.

2. Activity: You have to see it! (5 minutes)

- a. Divide your group into pairs and ask each person to identify a favorite movie or TV show their partner hasn't seen. Let each take a turn seeking to convince the other to watch the show.
- b. After a few minutes, reconvene the group and find out who were the best persuaders. Ask questions like,
 - i. *Did your partner convince you to watch this show/movie? Why?*
 - ii. *What was most convincing: enthusiasm or the content of the show?*
 - iii. *How does this activity relate to our efforts to share the gospel with others?*

3. Activity: Scrambled definitions (10 minutes)

- a. Take out your prepared note cards that, when assembled in order, spell out the definitions of the terms "evangelism" and "conversion." Divide the participants into two groups and assign each group one of the definitions to unscramble. As an option, you can make this a competition to see which group can unscramble theirs first.
- b. Encourage discussion by asking, *What do you think of these definitions? Can you think of other words to explain these terms?*

4. Scripture reading: We witness, God works (10 minutes)

- a. Lead your group to read Acts 16:9-15.
- b. Summarize the passage by saying: *This is a brief story of evangelism and conversion. God sent Paul and his companions to Macedonia to preach the gospel. When they arrived, they looked for the best place to meet people and share, which happened to be at a riverside where women had gathered to pray together. Paul proclaimed the gospel, and God opened Lydia's heart to hear. She and her household repented and believed in the Lord.*
- c. Lead the group to answer and discuss these "this or that" questions:
 - i. Was Paul's choice of location to proclaim the gospel random or guided? (*God sent him a dream to guide him to Macedonia. Paul and his companions chose to go to the leading city. They arrived on the Sabbath and went looking for people who might be gathering for prayer.*)
 - ii. Was Paul's effort to evangelize intentional or accidental? (*Paul was sent by the church and the Holy Spirit to be a missionary. He was on a mission trip!*)
 - iii. Do you think the location of our mission trip is random or guided? (*You can share how your church has chosen or felt led to adopt this trip.*)
 - iv. Was Lydia's response to the gospel positive or negative? How do you know? (*Lydia listened and responded. She and her family were baptized.*)
 - v. Was the Lord active or passive in Lydia's response to the gospel? (*God opened her heart.*)
- d. Say: *We can take away from this story at least two important reminders. First, we must proclaim the gospel. That is our part in the redemptive work of God in the world – to point others simply and lovingly to the God of salvation. Second, we can trust God to do the things we cannot. Conversion is not our responsibility; it is the work of God. Only He can save.*

5. Activity: The key words of conversion (10 minutes)

- a. Display again the index cards with the "conversion" definition on them. This time, remove a key word or phrase, one at a time, and ask the group how the loss changes the definition. (Listen carefully to the group's responses so you can address insufficient understanding through the teaching that follows.) Say: *What makes each of these components essential? How does our understanding of conversion change if we take away...*

- i. *Divinely enabled?*
- ii. *Personal response?*
- iii. *Individuals?*
- iv. *Turn from their sin and themselves (repent)?*
- v. *Trust (believe)?*
- vi. *Jesus as Savior and Lord?*

6. Illustrating the “both/and” of conversion (10 minutes)

- a. Salvation involves both God’s work to change our hearts and our sincere response to repent and believe. Explore the mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the following discussions.
- b. Zombies and the gospel.
 - i. Ask: *What do you think of zombie movies and TV shows? Why do you think they have been so popular?*
 - ii. Read Ephesians 2:1-5 and remind students (from session 1) about the condition of people before they are changed by Christ: dead in their sins.
 - iii. Say: *Zombies may not be the best illustration of this, since they are reanimated dead people and not really alive, but you can get the point! Paul’s words communicate the idea that we were dead, but now we’re alive! As he explained to the church at Corinth, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is what happens when we are “saved,” or what is known in theological terms as conversion. Conversion is a divinely enabled response to the gospel. It is when God breathes life into dry, dead bones so that they may live and know the Lord. Apart from God’s initiative, we cannot experience conversion. In short, dead people cannot bring themselves back to life.*
- c. Believe and sit down.
 - i. Enlist a volunteer to come to the front and put on a blindfold. Place an empty chair somewhere in the room with a person ready to hold the chair steady. Gently lead the volunteer around the room until you get to the chair. (If the person is very trusting, you may wish to guide by words alone.) Position the person so the chair is immediately behind the person. Say: *I am asking you to trust me. Without reaching behind you or backing up, I ask you to simply sit down and trust that I have a chair ready for you. Will you trust me and sit down?* If the person is willing, guide them to sit down safely in the chair.
 - ii. Following the activity, discuss the following:
 - 1. (To the person who was blindfolded) *How hard was it for you to do as I asked? Did you have any doubts? Why or why not? Did I force you to sit in the chair? (No.) Did I make it possible for you to sit in the chair? (Yes.)*
 - 2. (To the group) *What are the similarities between this and conversion? (Though conversion is enabled by God, sinners still bear the responsibility of responding to the gospel.)*

7. Talk: What witness and conversion are *not* (10 minutes)

Share the following points. If you have time, invite discussion for each point by asking, *Why is this so?*

- a. We witness because we intimately understand a story that is worth sharing, and because it is the manner God ordained for the world to learn of His redemptive love. Witnessing involves a clear message. It is not...
 - i. Merely living a life that shows people Jesus, such as being loving, kind, joyful, and generous. That should be common among believers as the Spirit develops His fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23), but this alone does not constitute evangelism.
 - ii. Testifying on our own without any help from God. God has not left us alone to communicate His story. He has sent us His Spirit so that He might empower us to proclaim the gospel. Acts 1:8 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.”
Jesus emphasized that the Spirit would come to enable our witness.

- b. Conversion is a two-fold process. For sinners who have heard the gospel call to be saved, they must repent and believe.
 - i. Repentance is more than being sorry and asking forgiveness for sin, though that is involved. It is also turning away from sin and self and moving toward God. It marks a turn from a life lived in rebellion towards God to one lived in obedience.
 - ii. Belief is more than simply agreeing that God is who He says He is. Biblical belief is placing one’s faith in Christ as both Savior and Lord. It requires trusting Him for salvation and entrusting one’s whole life to Jesus.

8. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

- a. *Say: Lydia and her whole family were impacted by hearing the gospel from Paul and responding as enabled by the Spirit. They were the first Christians in Europe. Lydia hosted a church in her home, and the church in Philippi became beloved by Paul and one of the most supportive of his ministry. As we seek to make an impact with our lives and on this mission trip, let us do so as faithful witnesses who partner with the Holy Spirit to see people changed by the gospel.*
- b. *Close with a prayer: Father, draw people to Yourself through us. May we be passionate witnesses for Your glory among all people, everywhere. Amen.*

Session 3: Impact of discipleship

Focal passages: “So that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:7)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-21)

Objective: Lead students to recognize that true discipleship is a matter of transformation that involves both their effort and God’s help.

Advance preparation checklist

1. Prepare a slide with these definitions:
 - a. A fan is “an enthusiastic admirer who watches and enjoys.”
 - b. A follower is “is a fully committed devotee who submits and obeys.”
2. Prepare to show this video for this session: “Why many Christians are deceived” ([youtube.com/watch?v=4xG_4LuyLZE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xG_4LuyLZE)).
3. Prepare slides of these statements to be evaluated by the group:
 - a. Leading people to Jesus is more important than discipling them.
 - b. It is more important to disciple than to evangelize.
 - c. It is our job to lead people to Jesus; it is the Holy Spirit’s job to disciple them.
 - d. People who regularly attend church can be considered disciplined.
 - e. We need God’s help to effectively disciple others.

Overview

Definitions: “Disciples are followers of Jesus. They have turned from their sin and trusted in Jesus as their Savior. They have died to themselves and surrendered their lives to Him as Lord. Christ now lives in them, transforming everything about them from the inside out. There are several marks of this transformation. The first, a transformed heart, occurs when a disciple places initial faith in Jesus. The rest are found in increasing measure as a disciple grows through faith in Jesus as a member of His body, the church.”⁵

“Disciple-making is the Christ-commanded, Spirit empowered duty of every disciple of Jesus to evangelize unbelievers, baptize believers, teach them the Word of Christ, and train them to obey Christ as members of His church who make disciples on mission to all nations.”⁶

Being a disciple of Jesus is not defined by a single moment of commitment; it is a lifelong transformative work of all that we are into the likeness of Christ, including His character and purposeful work in God’s mission. Jesus’ command for us to abide in Him is inseparable from His call to love others and be fruitful in His kingdom.

Recommended reading

- *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*. Kyle Idleman. Zondervan, 2016.

⁵ *Foundations*, p. 55.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 58.

Session plan

1. Opening prayer (5 minutes)

- a. Read Matthew 28:19-21.
- b. Pray that God would help your students grow in their own love and obedience to Christ even as they prepare to help others become disciples of Christ.

2. Discussion: Fans or followers? (10 minutes)

- a. Share with the group this version of the Chicken and Pig tale:
Chicken says, "Hey Pig, I was thinking we should open a restaurant!"
Pig replies, "Hmmm, maybe. What would we call it?"
Chicken responds, "How about 'ham-n-eggs'?"
Pig thinks for a moment and says, "Hmmm. I'd be committed, but you'd only be involved."
- b. Present these definitions:
 - i. A fan is "an enthusiastic admirer who watches and enjoys."
 - ii. A follower is "a fully committed devotee who submits and obeys."Using the above definitions, ask the group to suggest the differences between fans and followers in these examples: a well-known video game, a pro sports team, and a tv show or movie.
- c. Now lead them to describe differences between fans and followers of Jesus. (You may want to list the differences on a board.)
- d. Share this quote from Kyle Idleman: "*Fans don't mind him doing a little touch-up work, but Jesus wants complete renovation. Fans come to Jesus thinking tune-up, but Jesus is thinking overhaul. Fans think a little makeup is fine, but Jesus is thinking makeover. Fans think a little decorating is required, but Jesus wants a complete remodel. Fans want Jesus to inspire them, but Jesus wants to interfere with their lives.*"⁷

3. Video: Deceptive faith (10 minutes)

It is painful to admit that not everyone who claims to be a Christian is truly a disciple of Jesus.

- a. Show this short video clip to the group: "Why many Christians are deceived" at [youtube.com/watch?v=4xG4LuyLZE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xG4LuyLZE). The video makes this key point: "People who profess to be Christians but whose lives look just like the rest of the world are deceived."
- b. Discuss these questions:
 - i. What does it mean for people to look different when they follow Jesus?
 - ii. What should change? How does change occur?
 - iii. Are there changes (fruit) that you can point to in your life?

4. Scripture and discussion: A moment or lifetime? (20 minutes)

- a. Share: *We learned in the previous session about conversion, which is the beginning point in the new life of a believer. It is when someone is empowered by God to hear and believe the gospel, turn away from sin, and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. We rightfully celebrate salvation from sin and death, but sometimes we minimize or even eliminate salvation to the lordship of Christ. In so doing, we emphasize a momentary experience and miss the point of a lifelong journey in which we follow His lead. Jesus as Savior cannot be separated from Jesus as Lord and King. When Jesus called His disciples to Himself, He did not mention a moment or a decision or a specific prayer to pray. He said simply, "Follow Me." That was the moment – the encounter with Christ – that marked a turning point and a whole new direction in life. They set down fishing nets and tax books and literally followed Jesus.*
- b. Lead the group to read 1 Peter 1:1-9.
- c. Share: *Once again, we see a partnership between us and God, a joint effort in discipleship. God does "the heavy lifting," but we still have a part to play.* Ask the group to identify in this passage the things God does for us and the things that are left for us to do. (Make two lists on a board.)

⁷ Idleman, Kyle. *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*. Zondervan, 2016, p. 24-25.

- i. **God's part:** sanctified us by His Spirit; planned ahead for us to be obedient; cleansed us by the blood of Christ; caused us to be born again; gives us hope through the resurrection of Jesus; provided us an inheritance in heaven, protected us by the power of God for salvation.
 - ii. **Our part:** we rejoice in what we have received; we persevere through trials and tests of our faith; we love Jesus even though we have not seen Him; we believe and trust in Him; we obtain through faith the salvation of our souls.
 - d. Discuss these questions:
 - i. What in this passage comforts you as disciple? Challenges you? (*We can rest assured that God has been and will be at work to accomplish His great purposes for us. We should also recognize that we have a responsibility to persevere through difficulty and grow in our love for Christ.*)
 - ii. What do we mean when we say that discipleship is not just a moment of conversion but a journey together with God?
 - iii. Why should we expect trials and tests of our faith? What are the results? (*As followers of Christ, we will experience some of the opposition He faced. God permits our faith to be tested so it can be proved to be valid and worthwhile.*)

5. Small groups: The Great Commission and disciple-making (15 minutes)

- a. Lead the group to read Matthew 28:18-20.
- b. Say: *The Great Commission includes elements of deliberateness, diligence, and empowerment. Let's explore these three concepts in the text and see how they help us to understand the responsibility we have been given to make disciples of Jesus.*
- c. Divide your participants into three groups, assign each group one of these words, and give them these tasks to complete:
 - i. Define the word: Research a good definition online. The following definitions can help you as the leader guide or review their work:
 1. Deliberateness — characterized by careful consideration; done with full consciousness of the nature and effects; intentionality.
 2. Diligence — earnest and persistent application to an undertaking; steady effort; devoted work to accomplish an undertaking.
 3. Empowerment — the granting of the power, right, or authority to perform various acts or duties.
 - ii. Answer the question: Where do you see your concept in the Great Commission? In other words, what does it mean to be deliberate — diligent — empowered in our disciple-making?
 - iii. Lead groups to share their results with the others.
 - iv. Ask participants to critique these statements based on what they have learned about disciple-making. It may be most helpful to display these:
 1. Leading people to Jesus is more important than discipling them. (*Jesus commands us to teach and train new believers. We are not finished just because they have professed faith in Jesus.*)
 2. It is more important to disciple than to evangelize. (*Both tasks are essential and go together. Jesus commanded us to make disciples, not simply be disciples.*)
 3. It is our job to lead people to Jesus; it is the Holy Spirit's job to disciple them. (*We are to be engaged in both processes. The Holy Spirit helps us, but He requires our involvement.*)
 4. People who regularly attend church are disciplined. (*Discipleship is more than attending church and even knowing all the facts about Jesus. It is about obedience.*)
 5. We need God's help to effectively disciple others. (*Yes, we do. Only God can transform a person's heart, mind, and desires. Prayer should be a critical part of our discipleship.*)

6. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

- a. Say: *An essential part of being a disciple of Jesus is that we seek to make other disciples. We share the story of Jesus to unbelievers, baptize new believers, teach them the Word of Christ, and train them to obey it. We bring them in as members of Christ's church and send them out as ambassadors of His kingdom on mission to all the nations. Our mission trip is to be one of many opportunities you and I use to obey the Great Commission.*
- b. Close by praying for participants to grow in their own obedience to Christ even as they seek to make disciples of others.

Session 4: Impact of planting churches

Focal passage: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” (2 Peter 2:9-12)

Objective: Lead students to understand the importance of church in the believer's life and God's mission, and therefore, the priority of planting new churches.

Advance preparation checklist

1. Choose topics for the “Story Time” activity and write them on strips of paper and fold the strips.
2. For the “Discussion: What is a church?” plan to use a whiteboard or poster to write down collective definitions and answers. Also, prepare a presentation listing the twelve characteristics of a healthy church.
3. Optional: Obtain two large sheets of paper and two sets of colored markers for the activity, “Senders and receivers.”

Overview

Definition: “A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.”⁸

God has ordained that our spiritual maturity is to happen in community. “Although a number of different settings can contribute to a believer's spiritual growth, the full measure of biblical discipleship happens in a local church.”⁹ The mission of Christ is meant to involve the whole of Jesus' Church. Churches (God's people together) are God's plan to communicate the gospel among all nations. “The best way to spread the gospel is through multiplying churches.”¹⁰

Recommended reading

- *Church Planting by the Book*. E. Elbert Smith. CLC Publications, 2015.

Session plan

1. **Opening prayer** (5 minutes)
 - a. Read Ephesians 2:19-22.
 - b. Pray that students would understand the importance of the church for spiritual maturity, biblical community, and mission.
2. **Activity: Group story making** (15 minutes)
 - a. Choose several topics or subjects from which your group will construct stories. Use your imagination; some subjects to stir your thinking are sports, food, vacation, school, music, and history. Write these topics on small strips of paper and fold them.
 - b. With the group sitting in a circle, lead them to start telling a story, going around the circle with each person contributing one phrase at a time. Begin with one person who chooses one of the strips, identifies the topic, and provides the first phrase. Each consecutive person should add their contribution as quickly as possible, helping to construct sentences, and finally, a story.

⁸ *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. www.bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000.

⁹ *Foundations*, p. 37.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 90.

Here is an example based on the topic of music: "Jonathan organized a band / of tuba players / from Russia / who could tap dance / as they played / "Sweet Home Alabama." / They rode motorcycles / across America / and ate at Waffle House / until their tubas got greasy."

- c. Try this with several topics, with a different person choosing one of the strips to identify the topic. It may take a round or two for the group to get a little creativity going. Allow a little time for each story to develop. At some point, choose no topic at the beginning and just let someone start with a word or phrase.
- d. Follow the activity with this discussion:
 - i. Which story made the most sense? Why?
 - ii. Could any of us have created these stories alone?
 - iii. Was it easier to join in the story when you knew the topic or when you did not?
 - iv. Do you feel that you shaped the direction of any of the stories?
- e. Share: *As human beings, we are designed to be part of a story bigger than ourselves. This often shows in the ways we search for meaning and purpose, join with groups and causes, and want to make an impact with our lives. If you are part of a biblical church, you are not only in a local congregation, but also something much greater. The Church is part of the story of God, and in that story, God is crafting the church so it will reflect His glory among all the peoples of the world.*
- f. Share: *Why were the early Christians so driven to world missions? Certainly, they knew that Christ had commanded them. Certainly, the world needed the gospel, but missiologist Christopher Wright is convinced that it is also because "they knew the story they were in. And they knew the story because they knew the Scriptures. They were Jews. They knew the story so far, and they understood that the story had just reached a decisive moment in Jesus of Nazareth, and they know what the rest of the story demanded."¹¹ Do you know what story you are in? Do you know where the story is going and what part you can play in it? The church is where you find the answers and the place to join in what God is doing in the world."*

3. Scripture and talk: The church selected, sent, and certified (15 minutes)

- a. Ask someone to read 1 Peter 2:9-12 aloud.
- b. Share: *The Apostle Peter's first letter was written to believers scattered across Asia Minor in churches that had likely sprung up in the aftermath of persecution. He addressed the letter to the "elect exiles of the dispersion...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1-2). A part of Peter's reason for writing them was to encourage them in their unique status as the people of God, representing Christ to the world, and overcoming hostility to their faith. There is much in Peter's letter that can challenge and encourage us as a church, but let me focus on three things:*
 - i. The church is the select people of God.
Peter's audience was not a new people; they had joined an ancient people – God's people. Peter employed Old Testament language to encourage the young churches. He called them "chosen," the same word used of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:6. He labeled them a "priesthood" and a "holy nation," also descriptors of Israel. Down through the generations God had been calling people out of the darkness into the light. Peter recognized that God was continuing His work and developing a people who would invite the nations to worship Him. Yes, the believers to whom He wrote were like exiles and strangers living far from home, but they were not alone. They were now part of greater family as well as a purpose much bigger and better than their past.
The same is true of us as the Church. We join a long line of saints who have been selected, saved, and set apart by God for Himself. This makes us unique in the world, not because of what we have done, but because God in His mercy and love simply chose us. Our story is now interwoven with the Church.

¹¹ Wright, Christopher J. H., *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Zondervan. 2010, p. 36.

- ii. The church is the sent people of God.
Peter also encouraged the churches to recognize that God was using the persecution that had dispersed them far and wide to send them out as His representatives to the world. Rather than worry about their exile, they should welcome their new role as a royal priesthood who “proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you.”
It has often been a temptation for God’s people to see the church as existing just for them, a “holy huddle” where they get blessed and escape from the world. We must see otherwise that God has given the church a mission. In better terms, “God has a church for His mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission.”¹²
- iii. The church is the certified people of God.
Peter had much to say to the churches about the persecution they faced. Again, rather than view mistreatment as regrettable, he understood it to be a tool God was using to validate His people’s faith. Previously in the chapter Peter quoted from Isaiah and the psalmist to remind the churches that Christ also suffered but was vindicated “in the sight of God chosen and precious.” He was “the stone that the builders rejected who has become the cornerstone” and the foundation for our salvation.
It is hard to judge the worth of something until it has been tried and tested. Down through history, the church has had many of its best moments in the midst of persecution. Opposition to the church should not surprise us, but actually lead us to rejoice that God is granting us the opportunity to be tested and proven true.

4. Discussion: What is a church? (20 minutes)

- a. Ask: *What are some mistaken notions about the church? In other words, what are some unbiblical ways to think about the church?*
 Lead the group to make a list and briefly discuss why each is incorrect. Draw from this list as needed:
 - i. The church is a building.
 - ii. The church is an event.
 - iii. Church is where we get our needs met.
 - iv. Church is only one day a week.
 - v. Church is a place for perfect people.
 - vi. Church is optional.
 - vii. Church ministry is only for a select few.¹³
- b. Now lead the group to define what makes a church a true church. Ask: *What are the essential components and activities of a church? What makes it a church?* Encourage students to help you make a list and require them to give some sort of biblical and practical reasoning for their answers. (Point out that they are not focusing on the universal Church as a whole here, but on individual churches.)

¹²Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*. IVP Academic, 2006, p. 62.

¹³ This list is drawn from Bridges, Brad, “10 Misconceptions About the Church,” June 23, 2015, www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-misconceptions-church-brad-bridges.

- c. Share: *Christ-followers are called to join God and one another to carry out the unique, biblically identifiable activities of a church. Let's compare our list with what the International Mission Board has identified as characteristics of a healthy church.* Display the list below of twelve characteristics and, as time permits, invite individual students to choose a characteristic and try to explain why it is essential to a healthy church. Turn to the Scriptures as needed to help students understand their biblical basis. (For a summary of the descriptions, please see the *Foundations* magazine from the International Mission Board.)
- i. Biblical evangelism
 - ii. Biblical discipleship
 - iii. Biblical membership
 - iv. Biblical leadership
 - v. Biblical preaching and teaching
 - vi. Biblical ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper
 - vii. Biblical worship
 - viii. Biblical fellowship
 - ix. Biblical prayer
 - x. Biblical accountability and discipline
 - xi. Biblical giving
 - xii. Biblical mission¹⁴
- d. Share: *Scripture is quite clear that we need one another to rightly carry out Christ's mission. We also need one another to encourage and spur spiritual growth in a world that encourages the opposite. We need fellowship, accountability, and a common focus. In His wisdom, God ordained the avenue through which all those things would occur. He instituted His glorious Church, which organizes into diverse, local expressions of community and mission.*

5. Optional activity: Senders and receivers (15 minutes)

- a. Explain: *In missions, local churches are at both ends of the equation: the senders as well as the outcome. On the front end, a local church sends out her people for the sake of the mission into both local and global contexts. Those who are sent seek to make disciples among unreached peoples and places and then gather them together in groups to become local churches. These churches become the local expressions of biblical community and are then to send their own out on mission. This is why we plant churches – churches plant churches that plant churches.*
- b. Divide participants into two equal-sized groups. Give each group a piece of paper and a set of colored markers. (Be sure to give the same colors to each team.) Assign one group as Team 1 and the other as Team 2. Ask Team 1 to confer and decide on a simple diagram or picture to draw on their paper. Instruct that every person on the team must contribute, and every color must be used, though they do not have to be used equally.
- c. Send a messenger from Team 1 to carry the drawing to Team 2. The person cannot show the picture to anyone on Team 2, but is to pick one person from the team, take them aside, and describe the drawing as best they can. The person chosen from Team 2 then is to return to the team, describe the drawing and lead them to draw the picture as best they can. At any point, the Team 2 receiver can return to the Team 1 messenger to ask questions and get more description if desired, but the Team 1 messenger cannot talk to the whole group.

¹⁴ *Foundations*, pp. 61-64.

- d. When finished, compare the two drawings. Debrief the activity by asking the group to discuss how this is like how the church functions on mission. Some points to seek in the discussion are:
 - i. The local church (Team 1) has a common goal in missions (the drawing).
 - ii. People with different gifts/talents (colors) should be involved in the mission in various ways.
 - iii. The church collectively sends someone to communicate their message (the picture) with others.
 - iv. Someone must receive the message and help in sharing it with others.
 - v. Others join in and a new local church with different people, talents, and involvement is born.
 - vi. The church is needed on both ends, and the cycle continues.

6. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Close with prayer: *Like the early churches to which Peter wrote, may You teach us first, Father, who we are, and then lead us to proclaim Your excellencies among the nations. Teach and enable Your churches to conform to the biblical image of community and mission for which they were created for Your glory. Amen.*

Session 5: Impact of the missionary task

Focal passage: “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Objective: Introduce students to the missionary task and lead them to recognize its application in a specific ministry setting.

Advance preparation checklist

1. Prepare to show the video, “Gospel on the Move,” available at <https://vimeo.com/355947475>.
2. Download and prepare to display a graphic of the missionary task (available at imb.org/image/missionary-task-graphic).
3. Make copies of the handout, “The Missionary Task,” for your participants.
4. If desired, prepare to share more specific details of the ministry your group will be doing on your mission trip.

Overview

Definition: “In light of the full testimony of Scripture, we believe that the core missionary task has six components: entry, evangelism, disciple-making, healthy church formation, leadership development, and strategically planned exit. Because prayer is central to our strategy, it is not a separate component of the task, but rather is an essential element in every part. Prayer must permeate every aspect of the missionary task.”¹⁵

God's mission is broader than these six components, but these components are guiding principles for the work of missionary teams. They are applied and practiced in different ways throughout the world, but whatever the ministry, the aim is to develop new disciples and churches to carry on the work after we're gone.

There are different ways for your group to plug into mission work overseas — community outreach, English clubs, children's camps, Scripture distribution, and so much more. All of it goes toward the goal of making disciples and planting churches. It's all part of the missionary task.

Session plan

1. Opening prayer (5 minutes)

- a. Read to the group the focal passage: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.
- b. Pray that God will equip your group members to be able to cross cultures effectively, come as humble learners, and join in the work that God is doing among the people with whom you will be working.

2. Video: Gospel on the move (10 minutes)

- a. Show the video “Gospel on the Move,” about reaching East Asia's nomadic herdsman with the gospel. Find it at <https://vimeo.com/355947475>.
- b. Briefly discuss:
 - i. What was most interesting to you in this video?
 - ii. What are some things that make it difficult to reach these people with the gospel?
 - iii. If you could join the missionary team shown here, what would you want to do to help in the work?

3. Talk: Introducing the missionary task (15 minutes)

¹⁵ *Foundations*, p. 75.

- a. Share: *In our previous session, we talked about the characteristics of churches and what they are to do. In this session we will explore what missionaries are to do. Let's make another list together. Name some things you expect in a missionary's job description. What are missionaries to do?*
Lead the group to quickly identify as many tasks as they can.
- b. Say: *It may be fairly easy for us to identify some missionary responsibilities, but there are many factors that can make it complicated and even confusing to spell out what we are to do in missions:*
 - i. *There are different kinds of missionaries and mission teams — full-time missionaries, students, professionals, retirees, national believers, short-term, and more.*
 - ii. *There are many different settings for missions — remote places like the Steppes of Asia; sprawling, urban centers in South America; countless islands across Indonesia; deserts in North Africa; ultra-modern cities in East Asia; etc.*
 - iii. *There are amazingly different cultures, levels of receptivity to outsiders, languages, and customs.*

What can bring this all together so that we can fulfill the mission effectively, regardless of where we go and with whom we work? "The missionary task" is our roadmap and is what can guide our mission efforts.
- c. Display a graphic (available at imb.org/image/missionary-task-graphic) and provide a handout of the missionary task (see below). Briefly identify the six components. One way to do this is for you to read aloud the initial description of each task and ask others to read the quotes that follow.

4. Discussion: Applying the missionary task (25 minutes)

- a. Prepare to show the "Gospel on the Move" video again. This time divide your team into small groups or individuals and assign one of the six components of the missionary task to each.
- b. Ask each group or individual to watch the video with their assigned component in mind, ready to address these questions:
 - i. In what ways did you see this component being fulfilled in this mission setting?
 - ii. If you did not see evidence of your component in this setting, how might it be done?
 - iii. How might others, such as an individual volunteer or team, come alongside and help the missionaries with this component?
- c. Show the video and give the small groups time to consider their answers. When ready, call on each to respond.
- d. For the large group, also discuss these questions:
 - i. Which of the six components excites you most?
 - ii. Which of the six components challenges or confuses you most?
 - iii. What is the difference between the general principles of the missionary task and the tactics and strategies of the missionary? (*The missionary task doesn't spell out the specific methods of the missionary but serves as a foundation and parameters on which strategies and tactics can be built.*)
- e. Option: This would be a good time to discuss some of the details of the ministry plan for your trip. Seek to connect what your team will be doing with elements of the missionary task. Help the group to see how they will fit into the larger work of the missionary team you will be serving.

5. Praying over the missionary task (15 minutes)

- a. Explain: *Because prayer is central to the missionary task, it is not a separate component, but rather it is an essential element in every part. Prayer must permeate every aspect of the missionary task.*
- b. Either as a large group or using the same small groups and assignments as before, lead your participants to pray over each component of the missionary task as it relates to your trip. Here are some suggested requests:
 - i. Entry
 - 1. To encounter and connect with lost people
 - 2. To be able to cross cultures effectively and build relationships
 - 3. To make new discoveries about the people group or place that will help the missionaries in their work

- ii. Evangelism
 - 1. To be able to have gospel conversations
 - 2. To help the missionary team develop many contacts with whom they can follow up
 - 3. To see persons from this people group and place come to Christ
- iii. Discipleship
 - 1. To meet new believers and help them grow in their faith
 - 2. To be a good example to local believers
- iv. Church formation
 - 1. To see a local church get started and/or reach new people and grow
 - 2. To partner well with local believers and encourage them in their ministry
 - 3. For missions to be given wisdom and discernment in setting up a church in this setting
- v. Leadership training
 - 1. To see godly leaders be raised up and trained well in this setting
 - 2. For local church leaders to overcome temptation and be strong in character and witness
- vi. Exit to partnership
 - 1. To see a local church and it's leaders become ready to engage in mission
 - 2. To see missionaries sent out from this people group

Closing prayer

Acknowledge that you and your group can do nothing of eternal value apart from the presence and power of Christ. Ask God to mold and shape the group as they prepare to go. Pray for them to faithfully abide in Christ.

THE MISSIONARY TASK (handout)

1. ENTRY

In order to carry out the missionary task, we must have access to people who need to hear the gospel. This includes researching the people, gaining access to the people, establishing an appropriate identity among the people, and developing the skills to communicate with the people through language competency and cultural awareness.

“A people without the gospel is tragic but far worse is when no one is even looking for them in order to share the gospel. To carry out the missionary task, we must first have access to people who need to hear the gospel. We must find them. We must get to them. We must communicate with them.”¹⁶

2. EVANGELISM

The missionary task involves telling the gospel to non-believers with urgency, sowing broadly, contextualizing it to make it clear, and tying it to discipleship while trusting the Holy Spirit to change hearts.

“While IMB missionaries approach the task of evangelism with intentionality, planning, and accountability, we also rely on the Holy Spirit to empower our witness. Without His work, proclamation accomplishes nothing. Prayer and deep reliance on the Spirit are, therefore, built into all of our evangelistic strategies and activities.”

3. DISCIPLESHIP

The missionary task doesn’t stop at evangelism but includes leading believers to be Christ-followers and members of the body of Christ whose heart, mind, affections, will, relationships, and purpose are transformed.

“Since every area of life...then, is to be ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9), we pray, teach, and lead toward that end, trusting the Holy Spirit to create what is by nature completely foreign to fallen people — a genuine hunger and thirst for righteousness and progressive growth in godly character (Titus 2:11–14).”

4. HEALTHY CHURCH FORMATION

The missionary task includes planting new churches and strengthening existing churches to be sustainable congregations marked by the characteristics of a healthy church. The local church should be the automatic, natural home of a healthy disciple of Jesus.

“The best way to make disciples is through planting healthy churches that multiply. And for other elements of the missionary task to proliferate — evangelism and discipleship — a healthy community of faith is required. In other words, the church provides staying power.”

5. LEADERSHIP TRAINING

It is essential to the missionary task to equip faithful, biblically qualified church leaders who model the character of Christ, know the Bible and sound doctrine, teach biblical doctrine while refuting false doctrine, and lead their family and the church well.

“Leadership development has proven to be a pivotal element in the survival of new churches. Churches simply need faithful, well-trained pastors in order to thrive and advance Great Commission work.”

¹⁶ This and other quotes in this section are from a series of articles on the missionary task by D. Ray Davis found at <https://www.imb.org/2018/10/16/missionary-task-entry>.

6. EXIT TO PARTNERSHIP

Our goal is to complete the missionary task in each people group or place and then to exit, with the new churches from that place or people as our partners in the ongoing task of global evangelism.

“An IMB missionary team’s goal is to carry out the missionary task among each people or place and then hand off the job of leading the churches to those national leaders they have trained. Ultimately, we want new churches from a given people or place to become our partners in advancing the Great Commission globally.... From the very beginning of our work, our aim is to work ourselves out of a job.”

Session 6: GO IMPACT! Evangelism training

Objective: Lead students to become ready and comfortable to engage in spiritual conversations and present the gospel.

Advance preparation

1. Read through this session plan and consult with your missionary host to decide which evangelism method to use to train your team. Your host may prefer for your group to use a different approach than the ones presented here, so plan your session accordingly.
2. For the 3 Circles method, download free videos and order other resources you may wish to use from the North American Mission Board as well as other websites.
3. For the Creation to Christ method, download the video and outline from either IMB or Greater Europe Mission.
4. Either as part of this session or subsequent to it, plan an opportunity for the team to engage in outreach. See the suggestions in “Go and do” to help you lead your participants beyond classroom training to field experience.

Overview

Thus far, this study has focused on the underpinnings for mission – the biblical concepts that guide us to reach people for Christ, disciple new believers, and start churches that are equipped to join in the mission themselves. In this session, the attention turns from foundational truths to practical tools for learning and practicing a method of evangelism that would serve well in the setting of your mission trip.

Evangelism is a very personal exercise for both the one sharing and the one receiving the good news. There is no exclusive correct method to witness as both context and culture lead us to consider what is the best way to communicate the gospel where people are. This session briefly presents the 3 Circles method and Creation to Christ. You will need to decide which to use to train your group. In addition, we encourage you to lead your team to further develop and share their testimonies of faith in Christ.

1. 3 Circles

a. Overview:

This tool can be used by your team in almost any setting and involves a simple drawing of three circles which represent (1) God's design, (2) brokenness, and (3) the gospel.

- i. The presentation begins with a **first circle** that symbolizes the world as God intended it, full of beauty and goodness where everything and everyone fit together in harmony and worked perfectly. God made each of us with a purpose, to worship and walk with Him.
- ii. The **second circle** depicts when we realize life is not working and falls far short of what we hoped. We have ignored God and His original design for our lives and selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. Brokenness leads to a place of realizing a need for something greater.
- iii. The **third circle** signifies a remedy, the good news that we need. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's design. Jesus came to rescue us, to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God.
- iv. The presentation continues with an explanation of how a person can receive this good news by repenting and turning to Jesus in faith. It also calls for a response by the hearer.

b. Resources:

The North American Mission Board offers these and other items at namb.net/evangelism/3circles to train your team in the 3 Circles method.

- i. “A Life Changed by 3 Circles” video – A testimony of a young man led to Christ through 3 Circles.
 - ii. “The 3 Circles Presentation” video – An example of the gospel portion of the method by Jimmy Scroggins.
 - iii. 3 Circles Evangelism kit – Includes a trainer guide and a trainee guide for small group discussion, a pack of Living on Mission gospel tracts, and a flash drive loaded with an overview for the leader, sermon resources, and videos.
 - iv. 3 Circles app – A free download that assists a person in using the method in sharing the gospel.
 - c. Recommended teaching plan:
 - i. Show one of the above videos to introduce 3 Circles.
 - ii. Stage a 3 Circles presentation/role play between two people who have practiced in advance. If preferred, you could also obtain and show a video version. A variety of these are available on YouTube.
 - iii. Using a slide of the 3 Circles diagram (or drawing it on a board), walk through the presentation. You may wish to lead the group to identify Bible verses they can use with each part of the presentation.
 - iv. Provide writing materials and pair off participants to take turns practicing the presentation with each other.
 - v. Bring back the role players to present again, but this time pause them at different times and ask the group, *What comes next?*

2. Creation to Christ

- a. Overview:

Missionaries often employ stories to share the gospel, since many cultures are more open to hearing stories rather than simply propositional truths. Creation to Christ typically employs twelve brief stories that encompass the grand biblical narrative. Here is an overview:

 - i. The Most High God – Who is God and what is He like?
 - ii. Creation – How did everything begin and why?
 - iii. God and man together – What was it like in the beginning?
 - iv. Sin and separation – What went wrong with humanity?
 - v. Commandments – How did God show us what is right and wrong?
 - vi. Sacrifices – How did God provide a way for people to repent?
 - vii. God sends Jesus – Who is Jesus and why did He come?
 - viii. Jesus, God’s Son – How did Jesus live and prove He was God’s Son?
 - ix. Jesus, the perfect sacrifice – What did Jesus do for us?
 - x. Resurrection – What happened after Jesus died?
 - xi. Repentance – How are we to respond to what Jesus has done?
 - xii. Kingdom – What are Jesus’ followers to do until He returns?
- b. Resources:
 - i. Creation to Christ video – Twelve students present the stories in six minutes. IMB offers this at vimeo.com/623668261.
 - ii. Creation to Christ outline with images and verses – Available at imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/go-impact-creation-to-christ.pdf.
 - iii. C2C Story App – Greater Europe Mission offers this and its own version of the stories at c2cstory.com.
- c. Recommended teaching plan:
 - i. Show the IMB video of students presenting the Creation to Christ stories.
 - ii. Make and distribute copies of the Creation to Christ outline to your participants. Also provide materials such as colored markers and paper. Lead your participants as pairs or in small groups to design an image for each of the stories that helps communicate the main points. These may be drawings that participants create, photos they stage and shoot, or

images they collect from the internet. It is likely that your students can use their phones and apps to create their own complete presentation.

- iii. When the pairs or groups are finished, let each present and explain their images. This can also serve as an opportunity for participants to repeat all the stories.
- iv. Have the participants practice sharing the Creation to Christ stories with each other as an evangelism presentation.

3. Go and do

- a. Classroom training in evangelism is a good start, but nothing can take the place of real-world experience. Orchestrate at least one or more opportunities for your participants to pursue gospel conversations with people. Be aware that in some situations it is best to use a smaller group, or to spread your group out so that each individual is more likely to get an opportunity to share.
- b. Equip your participants with conversation starters. Give them specific ways to bridge into a spiritual discussion. Consider questions like:
 - i. What's the best thing going on in your life right now?
 - ii. What's been the thing you lean on when life gets hard?
 - iii. Do you go to church?
 - iv. What role would you say faith plays in your life?
 - v. How could I pray for you?
- c. Remember that prayer is essential in evangelism. Set aside time as a team to pray together and ask for divine appointments, discernment of needs, and boldness in sharing. Prayerwalk an area in advance of an event. When possible, seek to pray with unbelievers.
- d. Ideas for opportunities:
 - i. **Partner with a new church.** Most church planters already have strategies for community outreach and welcome a team to come and serve for a day or a weekend.
 - ii. **Volunteer with your church sports programs.** Many churches reach out to families through leagues and clinics in basketball, soccer, and cheerleading. Lead your team to be the ones who share testimonies at practices and halftimes, help with concessions, and follow up with prospective families.
 - iii. **Find local mercy ministries in your area and volunteer.** Look especially for those that would give opportunity and permission to engage people in conversations and prayer.
 - iv. **Host a neighborhood cookout.** Partner with a church family who could offer their yard. Share music, play games, or plan other fun activities to get to know the neighbors and seek gospel conversations.
 - v. **Secure a booth at a popular craft show or farmers market.** Enlist your team to offer a free service such as face painting for children, a coffee station, henna art for women (hennastories.org), or just a comfortable place to relax from shopping. Lead the team to start conversations, connect with people, and seek a chance to share.
 - vi. **Conduct a simple spiritual survey.** Choose a neighborhood (if not prohibited), a busy park, public areas of a college campus, a beach, or wherever people are available. Surveys can often lead to opportunities to share Christ. Cru offers good advice on creating and conducting such a survey (cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/share-the-gospel/outreach-strategies/7-steps-spiritual-surveys.html).

After the trip: Continuing the impact

Understand the need to process

“An unexamined life is not worth living.” While this is perhaps strongly put, an echo of it applies here: “An unexamined mission trip is not worth having.”

You and your team will have spent months praying, support-raising, training, and now a week or longer on the field serving. The Lord will have taught and challenged and used you in ways you did not expect. Now is the time to process so the lessons will stick and to give God further opportunity to transform your students in all the ways He intended. Expect that this trip can lead to greater things in the lives of your students. Don't be quick to move on to what is next on your schedule and miss the opportunity.

Develop a short-term follow-up strategy

A good short-term strategy includes the following:

1. **Plan a brief time to process while still on the field.** Gather as a team to share highlights, lows, questions, and the first inklings of what the Lord is teaching each person. Be sure to allow time to encourage each person on the team, individually and publicly. Encourage students to write down what they think the Lord is teaching them while there.
2. **Recommend a set of devotions for students to complete.** Leverage the spiritual sensitivity gained on the trip to help students begin or solidify this spiritual discipline. “Pray around the World” is an 11-day [Bible reading plan and devotional from IMB](#) available on the YouVersion Bible app.
3. **Plan a debriefing session soon after you return home.** Commit a debriefing session to the calendar long before the trip even happens. Celebrate what was accomplished on the trip and discuss the re-adjustment to everyday life here. Encourage each other to share what they have learned as a result of the trip. Here are some good things for students to discuss in small groups:
 - a. Now that I am back home, I feel ...
 - b. I now find it easy to ...
 - c. I now find it hard to ...
 - d. My family says I ...
 - e. My friends think I am ...
 - f. This trip has taught me...
 - g. Our church or student group needs to...
 - h. My next step in following Christ is...
4. **Prepare a report to your church or student ministry.** If your church is like many that gather corporately only once or twice a week, recognize that time together in worship is precious. A good mission trip report will need to be brief and well done.
 - a. Consider creating a video that is more than just photos from the trip, but also well-edited interviews and voice-overs, answers to prayers, statistics (if appropriate), and thank you messages to supporters.
 - b. Help team members prepare testimonies about the trip to share in small groups. These testimonies could include such things as: what they learned, a story of a gospel encounter, an experience of seeing the spiritual need, a humorous experience, or a sobering experience.

Develop a long-term strategy for follow-up

A good longer-term strategy takes in the idea of greater missions engagement, not only for your project's participants but other students and the church family as well. Consider the following:

1. **Incorporate missions consistently into your teaching and worship.** Choose curriculum, missions emphases, and other efforts to educate about God's heart for the nations, the complete biblical narrative of redemption, what God is doing in the world, and pathways to service.
2. **Explore partnership with your missionary host.** Hopefully your trip will not stand as a “one-off” but fit into an overall lifestyle of missions. This can certainly include more trips in the future, but consider these other ideas as well:

1. Think also about sending individuals for longer periods of time. (IMB can help with these kinds of opportunities.) You can also encourage students to look for ways and opportunities to return in study abroad programs, internships, and trips sponsored by others.
 2. Seek to host your missionaries for a day or weekend when they are stateside.
 3. Lead the team to maintain relationships with national believers and contacts through social media.
 4. Organize a prayer meeting each quarter for your missionary team and people group. If possible, include them in a video call and get the latest prayer requests.
3. **Engage in local mission opportunities with internationals in your vicinity.** Continue the missionary mindset you embraced overseas right here at home. If your team distributed water and prayerwalked overseas, do that at home, too. If you conducted relationship evangelism efforts on an overseas campus, why not try that at home? Get involved with an ethnic church plant.
 4. **Lead students to leverage their education to prepare missionally.** This could include taking language classes, pursuing cross-cultural studies, learning about world religions, and considering college majors and career paths that can lead to jobs overseas.
 5. **Encourage students to consider additional missions opportunities.** The IMB offers summer, semester, gap year, and two-year pathways for students and young adults. See imb.org/students for more information.

