

MISSION

February 2017



Everyday people on mission!

Bible Studies



Mission

Everyday people on mission.

Overview

Over the next few weeks we are seeking to go on a journey together as a community of faith to discover how we can become more effective as God's people - to be His salt and light – bearers of good news in this world. In many ways mission is simply loving people and telling them about Jesus. Yet for some reason we have made it way too complicated. The purpose of this series is to encourage you to think that being on mission is doable, attainable, possible and yes even life giving and enjoyable. God has created you in such a way and placed you where you live to reach people that only you can reach. We want to release and empower you for that mission. It will be epic!



Everyday people on mission will look at:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| Our motivation: | The heart of an everyday missionary |
| Our prayer and worship: | The spirituality of an everyday missionary |
| Our Living and Loving: | The life of an everyday missionary |
| Our speaking: | The message of an everyday missionary |
| Our risk taking: | The courage of an everyday missionary |

Suggestions for a great study



Come prepared and expectant.

Prepared: Listen to the talk, read over the passage and study.

Expectant: Expect to meet and hear from God.

Begin and finish each session in prayer. Be willing to join in the discussion. The leader's role is not to lecture but to invite discussion around God's word.

Stick to the passage and the topic. Try and base your answers on the passage of scripture.

Be sensitive to other members of the group. Value their opinions, listen attentively and speak affirming – even if they have views different from yours.

Be careful not to dominate discussions. By all means participate, but allow others to have equal time.

If you are leading you will need to adapt and make this material your own. So planning and preparing is probably a good idea 😊. The material is just a spring board for your own creativity. You have the freedom to just use some or all of the questions but make the study your own.

Privately

Speak and pray to God privately during the week, chew, think, contemplate, journal... If we are going to become more effective in mission then it means we probably need to change the way we are living. That means you and me. If nothing has changed in your life after five weeks it is a fair chance that you haven't been listening to God. James says that we are fools if we study God's word but are not changed by it. So take the time and the risk to go on a journey of change with Him.

Share with a friend what God is teaching you.

Our Motivation

The heart of an everyday Missionary

Thinking Back...

What, from the talk, did you find helpful, insightful, new or challenging? How has this part of God's word impacted your life?

Our Motivation: Philippians 2:1-18. What our world needs most from us is for us to be transformed into the likeness of Christ - people who are humble, willing to serve, sacrifice, lay down their lives for others so that we "can be shining stars who hold out the word of life." We don't necessarily need new programs as much as we need to become new people.

1. In this passage what is Paul calling us to be unified about? V 1-2
2. What do you think is the message of Verse 3? How would you describe humility?
3. Describe the difference between a humble person and a person full of pride. Have you ever met a truly selfless person? What impact did they have upon your life?
4. Looking at our passage, it is a passage of descent. Jesus descends into greatness and provides a model for us in humility and service of others. If our attitude should be that of Christ Jesus (verse 5), what is the example of Jesus (verses 6-11)?
5. How do these words motivate and inspire you to live a selfless life for others?
6. In our world Christians are often characterized as being harsh, arrogant, and elitist. How does this hamper the mission of Christ? Try and give examples.
7. Verse 14 speaks about Christians "grumbling and complaining" Again how does this hamper the mission of Christ. How can we protect ourselves against this?
8. How does living a life of humility help us in sharing Jesus with others (v15)? Christianity in some ways sounds offensive in our current culture because we speak about the exclusivity of Jesus. How does being humble help us in communicating this message that Jesus is the only way to God?

9. This passage talks of not just speaking the good news but of being the good news. Christianity is caught as much as it is taught. In other words our role is not just to speak of grace but to be grace to others. What would it mean for you to be good news to others? How are you being good news to others?

Discuss C.S. Lewis' observation on humility

C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* makes a brilliant observation about humility at the very end of his chapter on pride. If we were to meet a truly humble person, Lewis says, we would never come away from meeting them thinking they were humble. They would not be always telling us they were a nobody (because a person who keeps saying they are a nobody is actually a self-obsessed person). The thing we would remember from meeting a truly gospel-humble person is how much they seemed to be totally interested in us. **Because the essence of Christian-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less.**

Humility is a byproduct of belief in the gospel of Christ. In the gospel, we have a confidence not based on our performance but on the love of God in Christ (Rom. 3:22-24). This frees us from having to always be looking at ourselves. Our sin was so great. Nothing less than the death of Jesus could save us. He *had* to die for us. But his love for us was so great, Jesus was *glad* to die for us.

Who most demonstrated a humble, grace filled life to you in your journey to faith? In what ways did they impact your life? How did you see the life of Jesus in them?

Getting practical

Paul finishes by using the language of running a race and of pouring his life out for others. Is this true of how you are living? What is the next step of faith for you?

To become more like Jesus, to become more humble, more willing to serve – what is one thing you could do or one area of your life you could change?

Our Prayer and Worship

The Spirituality of an everyday Missionary

Mission really is about our love and worship of God (Exodus 33) and seeking to invite the nations to join with us in worshipping Him (Psalm 96). We tend to talk boldly about the things that bring us the greatest joy. Our job, a wedding, a child's birth, a holiday or something new. So it shouldn't surprise us that boldness in witnessing should follow a personal, intimate, joyful encounter with the living God

Thinking Back...

What, from the talk, did you find helpful, insightful, new or challenging? How has this part of God's word impacted your life?

Our heart: Exodus 33

People are used to thinking about prayer as a means to get their personal needs met. However, we should understand prayer as a means to praise and adore God, to know him, to come into his presence and be changed by him so that we can be sent out as agents of change in this world.

Read Exodus 33:7-23. What strikes you from this passage?

Jack Miller states that Exodus 33 is a prayer...

- Of examination and removing of idols (they took off their ornaments) - ceasing to be stiff necked.
- Of expectation and anticipation - that they might experience the glory of God
- Of prevailing corporate prayer - it involves the whole community and everyone is fully engaged.
- Of describing an earnest, intimate and passionate encounter with God – “God spoke to Moses face to face as a friend.”
- That the world might see the glory of God through his people (Exodus 33:16) Moses asks that God's presence would be obvious to all: “What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?” (Exodus 33:16). This is a prayer that the world be awed and amazed by a show of God's power and radiance amongst his people.

Super practical. Does this describe our worship both individually and corporately? Worship that includes repentance, prayer of expectation and encounter with God, prevailing consistent prayer, and prayer for the world? If not, why not and how can we change?

Whether it is meeting with God personally, or in a life group, or at church, how can we develop more open, expectant and responsive hearts towards God?

In Psalm 35:9 David says, "...my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation". But in Ps. 51:12 David pleaded, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation..." Which best describes where you are *experientially* right now with the Lord? Why? How can you keep your spiritual fervor for the Lord?

The Scottish catechism says a person's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. But we shall then know these are the same thing. To fully enjoy is to glorify — in commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy him. — C.S. Lewis

Our heart for the nations: Psalm 96

Read Psalm 96 and write down 3 reasons we need to share the good news of Christ to others.

1. We live in a world of many faiths & many gods. It sounds arrogant to claim that there is just one God and that all the peoples of the world should know and worship this God. How does Psalm 96 respond to this challenge?
2. How would you respond to a friend who claimed that it "doesn't matter what you believe in as long as you believe in it sincerely". In essence all religions are the same.
3. When you are promoting the gospel to others, what are the main benefits you think it will bring people?
4. In a secular culture like Australia and world of many faiths and religions, what fears do you have in promoting Jesus with others? How can you overcome these fears?

Getting practical

As a community we are called to both love Jesus and invite others to come and worship and follow him too. In Acts 2:40-47 we have a beautiful description of the early church in worship. Christians not only worshipped God but non-believers were attracted to their worship and people were coming to faith daily. Tim Keller points out that their worship was marked by five characteristics;

Five "vital signs" of a Spirit-filled community.

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| A. Ministry of learning in the truth. | (1st sign: Theological depth) |
| B. Ministry of loving in the fellowship. | (2nd sign: Intimate relationships) |
| C. Ministry of worship in the Spirit. | (3rd sign: Joyous worship) |
| D. Ministry of witness through words. | (4th sign: Relentless evangelism) |
| E. Ministry of service through deeds. | (5th sign: Sacrificial service) |

How can we better manifest these signs within our church?

Our Living and Loving

The life of an everyday Missionary

The way you live and love matters! When a devastating plague swept across the ancient world in the third century, Christians were the only ones who cared for the sick, which they did at the risk of contracting the plague themselves. Meanwhile, pagans were throwing infected members of their own families into the streets even before they died, in order to protect themselves from the disease. Many historians point to the fact that it was the good deeds of the early Christians that transformed the empire.

Thinking Back...

What from the talk did you find helpful, insightful, new or challenging? How has this part of God's word impacted your life?

"It appears from the Gospels and the Book of Acts that there wasn't any real differentiation between 'pastors', 'missionaries', and everyone else. Those first followers believed they were all called to a more radical whole-life faith in which reaching out to others was central. The overarching mission statement for all followers of Jesus was what missiologist David Bosch calls, "the language of love that was on their lips and in their lives." from *"Living on Purpose by Christine & Tom Sine"*

A friends of sinners... Luke 19:1-10

1. How is the mission of Jesus summed up in this story?
2. How should Jesus' attitude of mixing with sinners shape our own response to non-believers around us?
3. Discuss practical ways in which Christians can avoid a Christian enclave, and become more involved in real relationships with people who are not yet believers.
4. Share with the group the feelings you have about evangelism and any cringe factor in your own life.

Read this poem from Henry Lawson – "The Christ of the Never"

Lawson was a well-known Atheist. He had a distinct dislike for the church (like many Australians) and yet at one point he came across a Christian that he admired and respected. What was it about this follower of Jesus that Lawson admired and how can this shape our role in mission?

*With eyes that seem shrunken to pierce
To the awful horizons of land,
Through the haze of hot days, and the fierce
White heat-waves that flow on the sand;
Through the Never Land westward and nor'ward,
Bronzed, bearded and gaunt on the track,
Quiet-voiced and hard-knuckled, rides forward
The Christ of the Outer Outback.*

*For the cause that will ne'er be relinquished
Spite of all the great cynics on earth –
In the ranks of the bush undistinguished
By manner or dress – if by birth –
God's preacher, of churches unheeded –
God's vineyard, though barren the sod –
Plain spokesman where spokesman is needed –
Rough link 'twixt the bushman and God.*

*He works where the hearts of all nations
Are withered in flame from the sky,
Where the sinners work out their salvations
In a hell-upon-earth ere they die.
In the camp or the lonely hut lying
In a waste that seems out of God's sight,
He's the doctor – the mate of the dying
Through the smothering heat of the night.*

*By his work in the hells of the shearers,
Where the drinking is ghastly and grim,
Where the roughest and worst of his hearers
Have listened bareheaded to him.
By his paths through the parched desolation
Hot rides and the terrible tramps;
By the hunger, the thirst, the privation
Of his work in the furthestmost camps;*

*By his worth in the light that shall search men
And prove – ay! and justify each –
I place him in front of all churchmen
Who feel not, who know not – but preach.*

Ministers for Christ... 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6 2 Corinthians 4:6-7

Christianity is essentially a lay movement. But one would not think so while visiting the average church. Often the impression we get is that ministry is for the theologically trained, the proficient. With the professionalism of ministry in our society, many of us question our ability to minister. Like Paul, we ask, "Who is equal to such a task?" (2:16). In this chapter Paul tells us why all believers are competent for ministry in Christ.

1. How do you feel about being told that becoming a Christian means becoming a minister? Talk about any fears you may have about being a minister.
2. What do you think Paul means in saying we are "the smell of death" to some and "the fragrance of life" to others (2:15-16)? How does this affect your approach to evangelism?

3. How does the thought that Christianity spreads like a fragrance challenge your understanding of mission?
4. Paul uses the image of treasure in jars of clay (2 Corinthians 4:6-7). How is this comforting and challenging at the same time?

Salt and Light... Matthew 5:13-16

Salt

I love the pictures Jesus paints for his followers. But the concept of being salt and light is almost lost on us in the modern world. In the ancient world, on the other hand, salt was absolutely necessary for survival. With hot temperatures and no refrigeration, salt was used to keep meat and food from spoiling, to kill bacteria, and slow the process of rotting. Salt was the preservative that held the inevitable decomposition at bay. Before antibiotics, it was also used to stop deadly infection from setting in a wound. And of course, we all know that salt draws out a food's flavor.

Jesus is telling his followers that their job, their very identity, is to be salt — to give flavor to their world and keep it healthy, slowing the process of infection and rot by sustaining life. Followers of Christ, therefore, are in part those influences that keep our communities on course, who keep our societies from running into destruction.

Light

Jesus then tells his followers that they are the light of the world. These are big words, and in the original Greek language they are spoken with emphasis — *you are the light of the world!* Imagine ancient times before electricity: for roughly half of each day you are trapped in darkness. There are no street lamps or light bulbs to reveal what might be hiding in the shadows, and the only relief comes from the far-off dawn. If there was a light — a candle or an oil lamp — it must be placed prominently to lighten the widest possible area, or it becomes worthless. For followers of Christ therefore, our privilege and responsibility is to shine our light atop a stand and not under a basket; to illuminate the whole area.

1. With Jesus' words in mind, think for a moment about the individuals you have seen acting as salt and light in your communities. What are some things they have said or done that made a difference, big or small?
2. How can we as a church better become the salt and light in our neighborhood? How can our good deeds promote the gospel?

Getting practical

Christianity can become one big guilt trip! Just a long line of things that you need to do and mission is just another one of those things. But what would it mean for you just to become more missional where you are, with what you are already doing. At work, home, sport, your street, interests... Instead of becoming busier how could you become more intentional? A friend of sinners, the aroma of Christ, salt and light – how can you become more like this?

Our Speaking

The message of an everyday Missionary

“When you get to heaven God won’t ask you why you weren’t more like Billy Graham. He may ask you why you weren’t more like you. Get in touch with who you are... be yourself and let God use you.” Rick Warren.

Romans 10...

13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Thinking Back...

What, from the talk, did you find helpful, insightful, new or challenging? How has this part of God’s word impacted your life?

Prayer and speaking - Colossians 4:2-6

Read Colossians 4:2-6. What immediately stands out to you? Does anything in this passage particularly confuse you, encourage you or convict you?

1. Paul is in prison, and yet his request is for the Colossian believers to pray that he has more opportunities to share the Gospel and for God’s help that he would make the most of those opportunities by speaking the message clearly! How does Paul’s example inspire you to be more content in your current circumstances and more committed to Christ’s mission?
2. How does the idea of praying for opportunities to share the gospel help with your understanding of evangelism?
3. Why do we need to be wise in the way we act towards outsiders? What is the wise way to act towards outsiders? What are the opportunities that Paul is referring to?
4. Bryan Stone writes that the most biblical and effective way to reach our world is through ‘saints who have taken up the way of the cross and in whose lives the gospel is visible, palpable and true.’ How is the gospel visible, palpable and true in your life as it is seen through the eyes of your non-Christian friends, family and co-workers? What areas or ways might you need to be **bolder**?
5. ‘Grace’ in verse 6 has the double meaning of God’s grace and human graciousness. Can you think of any examples where you have seen Christians speak ungraciously to non-believers about Christian things? What was the result?

6. How have you seen 'salty' comments used well to steer a conversation to Christ (either personally or witnessed in others)? How can we practice this without it being contrived or making others feel as if we are forcing the conversation to faith?

The apt reply – 1 Peter 3:13-16...

1. What does Peter say is the responsibility for all Christians from this passage?
2. Consider how frequently you find yourself mentioning things such as faith, God, prayer, church... in daily conversation? How often do you engage with non-believers in faith related matters?
3. What holds you back – what are your fears?

Role Play...

As a group think of one or two difficult questions that can come into a conversation with non-believers (eg. the problem of suffering and a loving God, homosexuality, hypocrisy of Christians...) How would you respond to these question?

The role of an evangelist...

The bible calls all followers of Jesus to be witnesses but it also states that there is a specific gift of an evangelist (Eph 4:11). John Dickson states: Evangelists have an important role to play in 'promoting the gospel' within the local church. Local churches should be identifying, encouraging and be releasing such people into ministry. Such people are marked by:

- A keen desire to tell the gospel to others
- Good relational skills
- Maturity in Christ
- Clearly able to explain the gospel in everyday language

Write down if you think you are an evangelist and give reasons why or why not. (If you think you have a gift in evangelism please let us know – we would love to get alongside of you, to train, equip and empower you for ministry).

Can you think of someone in our community who you think has the gift of evangelism? How can we release, value and encourage such people in their ministry?

How can people with the gift of evangelism and the rest of us who are called to be witnesses work together better in mission?

Getting practical

If someone were to ask you: "What is the gospel?" How would you reply?

If someone were to ask you: "How do you become a Christian?" What would your reply be?

Our Risk taking

The Courage of an everyday Missionary

Not only church history, but modern research has shown that the vast majority of persons come to faith through the witness of a friend, relative, or associate — not through massive programs or campaigns. At the end of Matthew’s Gospel we see Jesus giving his disciples, and that includes us, the great commission.

Matthew 28: *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Then in **Acts 1:8** before the ascension of Jesus he says this, *“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.”*

On witnessing the resurrection and receiving the Holy Spirit the disciples move from being afraid, timid and fearful to being bold, confident and courageous ambassadors for Jesus. All of whom would lose their lives for the sake of the good news. In the book of Acts we see the gospel going viral through the faithful and passionate lives of the early Christians. Within three hundred years the Roman Empire would be turned upside down with the revolution of the gospel. As I think about the call of mission on my own life I recognize that fear and an aversion to risk taking is probably one of the key things that holds me back in being more effective in my witness to Christ. What is true of me can also be true of our church. This study is about helping us to move both individually and as a community from fear to risk, from timidity to boldness.

A Joyful boldness - an example read John 1:35-42

1. Why was Andrew *joyful*?
2. How did Andrew demonstrate his joy and *boldness*?
3. What resources do we have that Andrew didn’t have that should foster joyful boldness in our witness to others?
4. How do we allow ourselves to be robbed of joyfulness or boldness?

Boldness comes from a place of authentic joy and passion for Jesus.

How do the following verses give us spiritual confidence in who we are in Christ?

Heb. 4:16 and 10:19 - 22;

Eph. 3:12

1 John 4:13-19

Boldness comes from the Holy Spirit.

Christ's last words before His ascension assured believers that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came, that would result in their being bold witnesses of His death and resurrection (Acts 1:8). Pentecost was fifty days after Christ was resurrected and just 10 days after His ascension. It is here, in Acts 2:1-37, that we see Jesus' promises about the Holy Spirit fulfilled. On that day all the Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit – Peter boldly spoke about Jesus and three thousand people were baptized that day.

Read Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40. What does this story teach us about the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

Okay in case you missed it – the Holy Spirit – God - was already at work in the Ethiopian's life. So the role of the Holy Spirit is to help unbelievers see the beauty of Christ and place their faith in Him and to help believers become more like Jesus. How does the idea of God already being at work in your friends, family and colleagues help you with your role in evangelism?

Where do you see God at work amongst your friends and in our community?

Boldness comes from a confidence in the Gospel. Read Romans 1:16 and 1 Corinthians 1:22-24. How do these verses give us confidence in proclaiming the gospel?

Boldness comes from practice.

Most things in life we are not very good at the first time we do it. Public speaking, driving a car, learning a new sport or musical instrument. Yet the more we do these things the more competent and confident we become. The same is true about talking to people about Jesus. What small step can you make to practice boldness.

Boldness comes knowing God has entrusted you with a job read 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Paul here talks about the ministry of reconciliation which God has given to all Christians. I guess as we finish our study in local mission the question is – are we going to live up to what God has called us to be.

Discuss with the group how God has spoken, challenged and encouraged you. Share the next step for you in your missional walk with Jesus.

Praying together as a church...

Throughout the Old and New Testaments and church history, every spiritual awakening was founded on corporate, prevailing, intensive, kingdom-centered prayer. We cannot create spiritual renewal by ourselves, but we can “prepare the altar” and ask God to send his Holy Spirit to change our hearts, our churches, and our communities.

On Thursday 30 March we will be having a corporate time of prayer 7:30pm.

In many ways this should be the high point of our life in ministry for the first term. Please make every effort to come, seek and pray for our world.