

SESSION FOUR

Mission

As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.
—Jesus in John 17:18

Our mission flows from and participates in the mission of God.
—Christopher J.H. Wright

INTRODUCTION

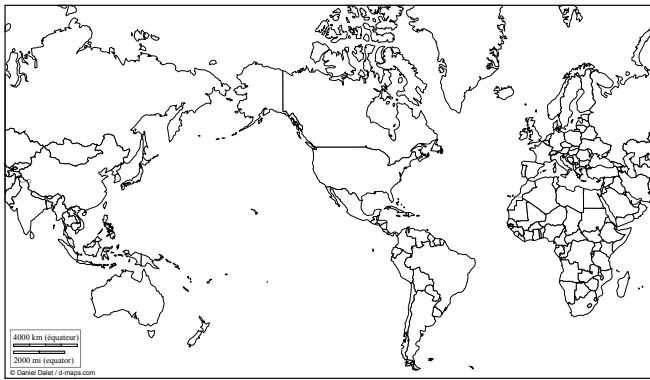
Rick Warren, in his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, rightly stated, “You were made for mission.” The question that everyone asks is, “What is my mission?” Unfortunately, we have at times attempted to answer this question with two basic misunderstandings. First, we have answered without understanding God’s overall mission. Second, we have answered with a “self-centered” focus.

Regarding the first misunderstanding, it is clear from scripture what God’s mission is all about. From beginning to end, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, God is working to draw people to Himself. Scripture calls this reconciliation, which is God’s removal of opposition and the restoration of fellowship between God and mankind. This effort led to Jesus’ saving work on the Cross whereby Jesus took on all sin and became the way of reconciliation. God wants all of His own to experience this act of redemption and He has kindly allowed His people to participate in this effort.

The second misunderstanding has created equal confusion as well. It is not unusual for Christians to stop short of embracing the mission because we believe that a relationship with Christ is focused on ourselves and not on God and His mission.

Our mindset in the west is all too individualistic and we tend to not always think about others around us or around the world. Don’t believe me? Look at the map

and notice where the United States is located. Right in the center! Ironically, in order to do that, one has to divide Europe and Asia in half. Pastor David Platt addresses this very thing: “Somewhere along the way we had missed what is radical about our faith and replaced it with what is comfortable. We were settling for a Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves.”



Christopher J.H. Wright provides a helpful definition of mission when he writes, “Fundamentally, our mission (if it is biblically informed and validated) means our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation”—(*The Mission of God*). We glorify God when we obediently participate in His mission.

We see this theme of God’s mission in Jesus’ final command to His followers to “make disciples” (Matt 28:19). Fellowship seriously embraces this idea as we seek to establish and equip the Body of Christ to be trained and released to live for Christ. Fellowship’s mission statement, “to produce and release spiritual leaders who know and express the authentic Christ to Northwest Arkansas and the world” is nothing less than a restatement of The Great Commission found in Matthew 28.

Why is it important for an organization to know their mission and purpose? What about an individual?

Dallas Willard said, “The gospel means that this universe is a perfectly safe place for you to be.” What does that statement mean to you? How does it relate to the mission of the church?

Read Matthew 28:18-20 and answer the questions that follow:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹ 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,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

1. What are some examples of people being given authority today?
2. What claim does Jesus make in verse 18? Why is this significant to us?

3. Of the four things we are commanded to do in verse 19, what observations can you make regarding their meaning?
4. What is the promise that Jesus makes in verse 20? Why is this significant to us?

John 17 contains Jesus' priestly prayer for His disciples as He readies to depart and leave them behind. **Read John 17:13-21** and answer the questions that follow:

But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

1. In verses 14-16, how does Jesus describe the disciples' relationship with the world? What does this mean in practical terms?

2. What does Jesus now in turn do with His disciples? For what purpose?

3. What does Jesus say He does for His disciples? Why does He say He does these things?

At Fellowship, we believe that each follower of Jesus is called to be a spiritual leader. Spiritual leadership can be described in the simple terms REACH, REPRODUCE, and RELEASE. We refer to this as R3 Leadership. The whole idea of "reach" is evangelism, whereby we "reach" others for Christ. Wherever we go, whomever we encounter, we seek to intentionally proclaim and demonstrate Jesus for the purpose of bringing them to a saving encounter with Jesus, the Redeemer. (For further study on the Gospel, review 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.)

Review Acts 1:8 together:

"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."

What is Jesus commanding us to do? To what are we commanded to be “witnesses”? What is significant about the geographical references given?

Just as Jesus had modeled discipleship with His twelve men, Paul demonstrated how to disciple someone with the young man, Timothy.

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2:

"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

1. In this passage, how many generations of disciples are referenced by Paul? Why is this significant?
2. What is Paul's charge to Timothy? What is the charge to the "faithful man"?

The final element of spiritual leadership is the idea of being “released”—to engage in a Holy Spirit empowered ministry of discipleship. The specifics of your ministry are based on multiple factors in your life. Your passions, location, spheres of influence, job, and spiritual giftedness all factor into how you participate in God’s mission through The Great Commission.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21:

'All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation';¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

1. Why is it significant that we are called to be ambassadors? How does this relate to God's mission?
2. How can small groups fit into this idea of Great Commission ministry?
3. Who does God invite to be a part of the Great Commission? Why is this important?

- Pray for insight regarding how you can be part of God's mission. Seek guidance from a trusted or more mature Christian. Your Discover Fellowship leader is happy to help you find the answers to these questions. Members of Fellowship accept the challenge to play their part in fulfilling God's mission. This is reflected in the Membership Covenant point on "Ministry."

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Ministry:

To discover and utilize personal spiritual gifts in order to influence and serve others within the church, the community, and the world.—(Eph 4:11-12)