

## Week 4: What a Mission

### Introduction:

This series has been designed to help us focus on what it means to be a disciple of Christ for ourselves, and then on how to disciple others. This week, we discover through scripture what it looks like for those who are rooted in the gospel, empowered by the Holy Spirit and growing in community, to be on mission for God.

Being on mission means that we, as redeemed people, are mandated to bring about restoration in our surroundings.

### 1. The People Of God Are Blessed By God So That They Might Be A Blessing To Others

- Read Genesis 12:1-3

God chose and called Abraham and his descendants after him (the nation of Israel) for a purpose. God established them and set them apart to be a blessing to the surrounding nations, as well as to be a tangible witness to what the one and only true God was like.

- ❖ Q: What do you think it meant that Abraham and his descendants were to be a blessing to the surrounding nations? (Consider that the nation of Israel was set apart by God and called to holy living, which included placing a high value on life and morality, justice and rest, as well as caring for the poor and oppressed, and regular worship of one God).

### 2. Religious Practice That Celebrates Blessing But Doesn't Extend It Grieves God

- Read Isaiah 1:10-17, Ezekiel 16:49-50, Micah 6:6-8, Matthew 23:23-25

From time to time, Israel kept their covenant with God and lived out their appointed mission faithfully, but unfortunately this was seldom the case. They frequently fell back into their own ways and desires, mimicking the surrounding nations in the way they lived. To remind them of their call and purpose, and to warn them of the consequences of continuing in their rebellion, God raised up different prophets. The prophet Isaiah compared Israel's hearts and actions to those of the evil surrounding nations. Years later, God raised up the prophet Ezekiel to warn the Israelites because they had become arrogant, overfed and unconcerned – in summary, they lived for themselves and their own contentment, without any concern for others. This sounds a lot like many of us in the church today.

God has called us to walk humbly with him, and to let that play out in the blessing and flourishing of others. When Jesus arrived on earth, very little had changed regarding the way his people lived. Even the religious leaders had no real heart for the mission of God - instead it was all about them, their comfort, control and religion.

- ❖ Q: What was God's purpose in raising up prophets in Israel?
- ❖ Q: What is so shocking about God's warning in Ezekiel 16:49-50?
- ❖ Q: What do you think it means in our context to be arrogant, overfed and unconcerned?
- ❖ Q: Consider the Christians you know well. In observing their lives, would the non-believers in their world see a witness to Christ that stands out from the culture? Are they having an impact on the poor, the exploited and the oppressed around them, or are they prejudiced, arrogant, overfed and unconcerned (apart from the odd sense of guilt and a R5 coin at the traffic light from time to time)?
- ❖ Q: How can we make sure that we do not fall into the same trap that the religious leaders of Jesus' day fell into, by not being sold out to the mission of God?

## 3. The Call To Be a Peculiar, Blessed People Who Exist for the Blessing of Others Extends To Us Today

- Read 1 Peter 2:9-12

In this passage God calls his people (the church) to a life that will bring blessing to others and, in so doing, draw them to God. Our lives should be so different that we stand out in culture – known for our service and love of others. None of us is doing this perfectly, but we all can humbly respond to the Holy Spirit's conviction, and be encouraged to change by making small steps that stack up over time, if we keep committed to them.

- Honestly assess – do our lives make sense in light of the great grace that God has given to us? Are we living as a witness and blessing to the people around us?

Consider your own life and ask yourself what non-believers would observe:

- ❖ Q: Would they see you going out of your way to help people, when it's inconvenient and costly? Would they see you care for the poor and needy in your life? Does your life speak of love, care and concern, as a witness to Christ's love for us?

Consider a few examples that may apply in our particular context:

- ✦ Do we engage with those in our workplace who are paid a small wage, and have no way of getting themselves or their families out of poverty? Do we take time to get to know about their families and needs? Do we help them and care for them in ways that count, and truly bless them when they need it?
  - ✦ Do we know of the living conditions and difficulties, as well as dreams and ambitions, of our domestic workers, gardeners or complex security guards? Have we thought about what would it cost us to invest in hearing their stories, as well as caring for and helping them, purely because God has given us so much, and without our needing a return on the investment?
  - ✦ Do we know who the single moms are in our church community, and how we might help serve them in their struggles and needs? (Do we even know what their struggles and need are – have we concerned ourselves with the plight of those who do not have complete families?)
  - ✦ Do we have a high regard and attitude of service, help and care towards the elderly in our church community: those who are lonely, ill, struggling and in need of time and company?
- Start small – we need to be careful of reacting emotionally to this message, wanting to change everything all at once. That is novelty that quickly fades and often causes more guilt, and that does not foster true change. True change is a decision of the heart and the will that is actionable and sustainable. So we can start with one thing that God has impressed upon us to do, that we can be consistent and faithful with, in response to his grace in our lives.
  - Join something that is already happening – Galatians 6:9-10  
You don't have to reinvent the wheel and try and start something new. There are opportunities to get involved at BBC, for instance with Justice: Mercy, where you can give of your time, energy and resources in helping the poor and the vulnerable, drawing them closer to God. We can give in other ways too, by serving as volunteers in any of our church ministries, where your time, commitment, energy and focus can be poured in to serving the congregation. God calls us to serve one another in our church community too.
  - Ask God for help  
Living a self-sacrificial life for the blessing of others is totally counter-intuitive, and we need the empowering of the Holy Spirit in order to do it, so we should ask him for help.
- ❖ Q: Why should we start small rather than attempting to change everything at once?
  - ❖ Q: Why is it good idea join something that is already happening, rather than trying to achieve something great on your own? Have you ever done this before, and what was your experience?