

**GOD'S  
MISSION  
AND OURS**

The challenge of  
telling the nations

**STUDY RESOURCE**

A series of studies to be used in conjunction with the book *God's Mission and Ours*, edited by Peter T. O'Brien (CMS, 1999)

Prepared by The Revd Rod Morris for the Church Missionary Society – Australia

# Overview

All Bible quotations in these studies are from the New International Version (NIV).

These Bible study activities have been prepared for groups wanting to consider aspects of Christian mission. They are companions to the book *God's Mission and Ours*, published by the Church Missionary Society – Australia.

**It is recommended that group members read the entire book before starting these studies.**

Each study reflects on a different facet of mission by considering a Bible passage relevant to that theme. My hope is that these studies encourage individuals and groups to be active in their support of and engagement in God's worldwide mission.

The studies are designed to take one hour within a two-hour small group meeting accompanied by coffee, fellowship and prayer for each other. They each follow a similar format:

1. Reading the passage aloud as a group.
2. Reflecting on the Bible by doing an activity related to the text as individuals, pairs or subgroups. This step ensures every member of the group has an opportunity to contribute during the discussion.
3. Reporting back to the group.
4. Discussing the issues arising.
5. Praying together.

These studies may be a little different from what you normally do in your Bible study group. But underlying each study is an inductive process that considers what a passage **says**, what it **means**, and what we should **do in response**.

The role of the group leader is to ensure that all members of the group work together to understand and apply the passage to themselves. You will find that working on understanding the passage will generate lots of interesting discussion!

*Rod Morris*

**For more tips on running an effective Bible study, read *Leading Better Bible Studies*, written by Rod and his wife Karen (Aquila Press, 1997).**



# God's Mission and Ours – Study 1

## God's Grand Plan

**Introduction:** The aim of this study is to begin the process of considering *God's Mission and Ours*. It will help the group reflect on God's priorities and purposes in the world and thereby help us put our own purposes and priorities into alignment with God's.

**Step 1:** Read Ephesians 1:1–14. Then ask each member of the group to imagine they have been asked to preach a short sermon on this passage.

Give group members 10 to 15 minutes to read and reread the passage to themselves and then to prepare a short outline of what they might say if they were asked to speak on it.

If people struggle with this task, ask them to think about what they consider to be the key ideas within the passage, and to identify the three or four verses or ideas that convince them of this.

**Step 2:** Have each person in the group share their sermon outline with the others in the group.

**Step 3:** Discussion.

As a group, consider what you would say if you were asked to preach using this passage and were given three points to expand upon:

1. The purpose of mission
2. The product of mission
3. The fulfilment of mission

To summarise at the end of your discussion, have the group identify and agree on the central ideas within the passage then discuss the impact of this passage on our thinking about Christian mission.

### Ephesians 1:1–14

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,  
To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*

*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.*



# God's Mission and Ours – Study 2

## Never Lose Sight of the Big Picture

**Introduction:** The aim of this study is show the overall flow of history in order to identify where we are now, and to begin discussion on what part we have to play in achieving God's purposes. It also seeks to show how God's promises to Abraham are fulfilled in Jesus.

**Step 1:** The following collection of people and events needs to be rearranged in correct chronological order from Creation to New Creation.

To do this give each member of the group a share of the names and events, and then collectively work to order them. (This is best done by writing names and events on individual pieces of paper and asking the group to arrange them on the floor from **Creation to New Creation**).

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. ABRAHAM              | 26. JOHN THE BAPTIST   |
| 2. ADAM & EVE           | 27. JOSEPH             |
| 3. APOSTLE JOHN         | 28. KING SAUL          |
| 4. ASCENSION            | 29. LAST SUPPER        |
| 5. CAPTIVITY IN BABYLON | 30. MARY               |
| 6. CORNELIUS            | 31. MOSES              |
| 7. COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM | 32. NEW CREATION       |
| 8. COVENANT WITH ABRAM  | 33. NOAH               |
| 9. CREATION             | 34. PASSOVER           |
| 10. CRUCIFIXION         | 35. PAUL               |
| 11. DANIEL              | 36. PENTECOST          |
| 12. DAVID               | 37. PETER              |
| 13. ELIJAH              | 38. PROMISE TO DAVID   |
| 14. EXILE               | 39. PROMISED LAND      |
| 15. EXODUS              | 40. RESURRECTION       |
| 16. EZEKIEL             | 41. RETURN FROM EXILE  |
| 17. FALL                | 42. RUTH               |
| 18. FLOOD               | 43. SAMUEL             |
| 19. GREAT COMMISSION    | 44. SECOND COMING      |
| 20. ISAAC               | 45. SLAVERY IN EGYPT   |
| 21. ISAIAH              | 46. SOLOMON            |
| 22. JACOB               | 47. STEPHEN            |
| 23. JEREMIAH            | 48. TEMPLE ESTABLISHED |
| 24. JESUS' BIRTH        | 49. TEN COMMANDMENTS   |
| 25. JESUS' MINISTRY     | 50. TIMOTHY            |

As you do this, clarify that each member understands the significance of each person or event within the overall story of the Bible. If you are unsure, check the *New Bible Dictionary* or a similar reference book.

**Step 2:** Read Genesis 9:9–17, Genesis 17:4–8, Genesis 46:3–4, Exodus 6:4–8, Deuteronomy 34:4, 2 Samuel 7:12–16, Psalm 89:1–4, Jeremiah 31:31–34, Luke 24:44–49 and Revelation 7:9–17.

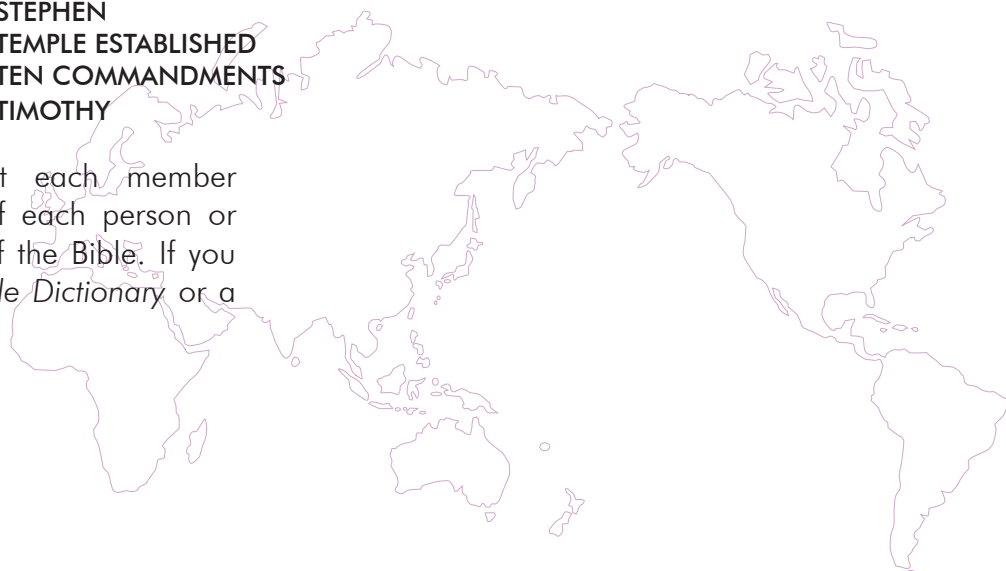
**Step 3:** Discussion.

► What is the major thrust of what God is doing in the world and what does this tell us about his character?

► How does the unfolding of the story of the Bible reveal the fulfilment of God's promise of relationship with his people? In particular, how is God's promise to Abram in Genesis 12 (that "all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you") fulfilled?

► Where are we in the overall scheme of history, and what still needs to be done to achieve God's purposes?

Read 2 Timothy 2:2 and discuss what part missionary activity plays in this process.



# God's Mission and Ours – Study 3

## How the Nations Will Be Blessed!

**Introduction:** The aim of this study is for people to see God's faithfulness to his covenant and God's desire for relationship with his people. It also begins to introduce the idea that God's covenant promises are fulfilled in the man Jesus Christ.

**Setting the scene:** If necessary for your group, provide an introduction to this passage by explaining the ministry of the Prophet Isaiah, the Exile, and the challenge this presented to Israel's understanding of God as a covenant-keeping God.

**Step 1:** Investigate the text.

Read Isaiah 55:1–56:8 aloud in the group and then allow time (10 to 15 minutes) for individuals to reread the passage, looking for the answers to these questions:

- What is God offering?
- Who is God offering it to?
- How is it to be received?
- What motivates God in offering it?
- What does God require from those who receive it?
- What guarantees are there that God will actually do as he says?
- What consequences flow from what God will do?

**Step 2:** Answer these questions by having people share their reflections with the others in the group.

**Step 3:** Discussion.

After sharing individual reflections, discuss as a whole group:

- What is the big idea of this passage?
- What things in the passage convince you about this?

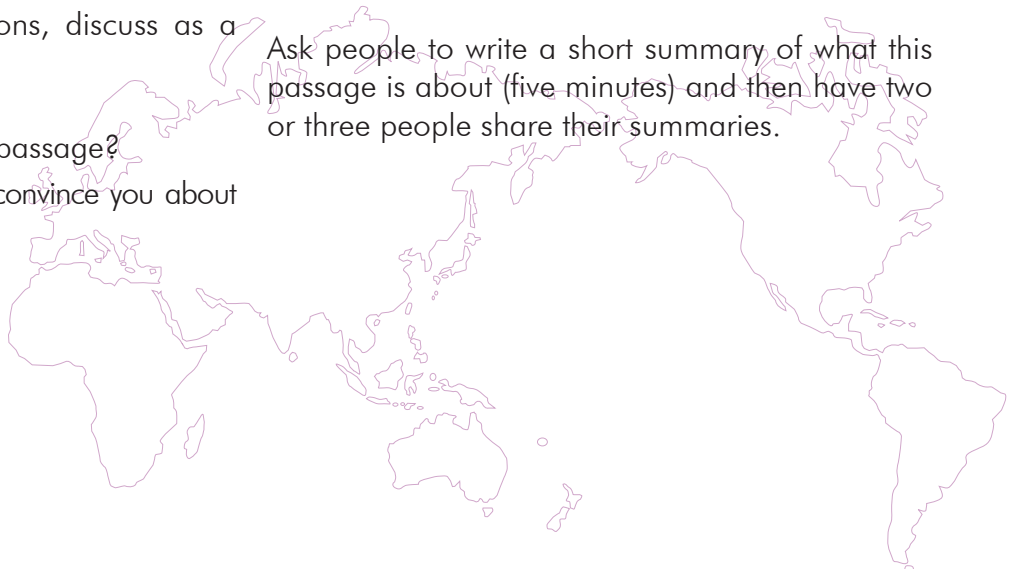
This passage is directly quoted or alluded to in various New Testament passages, including:

- John 7:37 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." (Isaiah 55:1)*
- John 10:16 *I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (Isaiah 55:8)*
- Acts 13:34 *The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: "I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David." (Isaiah 55:3)*
- Revelation 21:6 *He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. (Isaiah 55:1)*
- Revelation 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (Isaiah 55:1)*

As a group, discuss how Jesus fulfils what God has promised in this passage.

Discuss what part you think Christian believers today have to play in fulfilling what God has promised in this passage.

Ask people to write a short summary of what this passage is about (five minutes) and then have two or three people share their summaries.



# God's Mission and Ours – Study 4

## Introducing Jesus

**Introduction:** The aim of this study is to examine how Jesus is introduced in Luke's Gospel, and to consider how he fulfils God's covenant promises in the Old Testament.

**Step 1:** Read Luke 4:14–44 aloud in the group.

In Luke 4:21 Jesus makes the controversial claim that he is fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah. Ask each member of the group to imagine they have been sent as an investigative journalist to determine whether Jesus' claim is true and he really is the promised Messiah.

Give people 10 to 15 minutes to reread the passage individually and identify the elements they would include in their report, looking especially for evidence that supports or denies Jesus' claim.

**Step 2:** Have each person in the group share their findings with the others in the group.

### Luke 4:14–44

*Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.*

*When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*

*And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three*

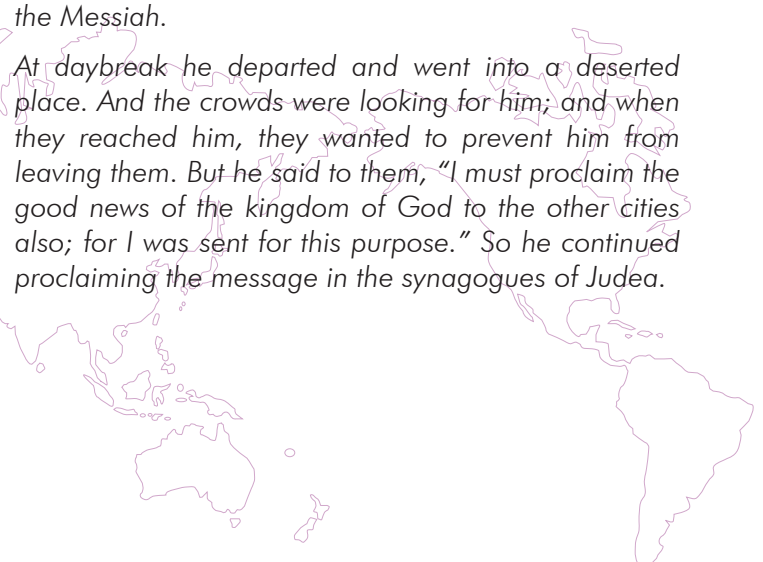
*years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.*

*He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the sabbath. They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority. In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm. They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, "What kind of utterance is this? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!" And a report about him began to reach every place in the region.*

*After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.*

*As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. Demons also came out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.*

*At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them. But he said to them, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.*



# God's Mission and Ours – Study 5

## To All the Nations

**Introduction:** The aim of this study is to see how a focus on 'all nations' is integral to the ministry of Jesus and the subsequent life of the early Church.

**Setting the scene:** Luke concludes his Gospel narrative with Jesus addressing his disciples: *He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things"* (Luke 24:46–48).

This is highly reminiscent of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20, where Jesus again addresses his disciples: *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'"* (Matthew 28:18–20).

It is clear within these passages that Jesus sees the gospel message of repentance and forgiveness as being for 'all nations'. Our difficulty, however, is that the gospel writers rarely use this phrase in the accounts of Jesus' ministry. The aim of this study is to see how a focus on 'all nations' is integral to the ministry of Jesus and the subsequent life of the early Church.

**Step 1:** Depending on the number of people, divide the group into subgroups of two or three people that can focus on a passage from Luke's Gospel or the Acts of the Apostles, or into two groups looking at the passages from either Luke or Acts.

Allocate 20 to 25 minutes for groups to examine their passages. Groups are to look at how the passage supports the idea that salvation is for 'all nations'. They should keep note of verse references and summarise key ideas as they complete this task (see the table below).

**Step 2:** Starting with the first small group, collect each group's findings until all groups have reported back. It is helpful to write down each group's findings on a large piece of paper so that the whole group can see the overall picture being developed.

**Step 3:** Discussion.

As a whole group, discuss whether the idea that salvation is for 'all nations' is supported within Luke's writings and then discuss how this focus on salvation as being for 'all nations' should have an impact on our behaviour as Christians today.

Passage	Evidence to show that Jesus came 'to all the nations'
Luke 2	
Luke 10	
Luke 15	
Acts 2	
Acts 8	
Acts 10:1–11:18	

# God's Mission and Ours – Study 6

## The Challenge of Proclamation

**Introduction:** The aim of this study is ensure that people clearly understand the content of the gospel message and the importance of sharing the good news about Jesus.

**Step 1:** Ask each person to reflect on a time when they were able to share the Christian message with another person. What were the main things that they included as they spoke?

Have each person share their reflections with others in the group.

From these accounts, make a list of the key ideas that were included when explaining the gospel to another person. (It is best if this is done on a large sheet of butcher's paper so that the group can refer to this list later.)

**Step 2:** Read each of the following gospel summaries and make a list of the key ideas that these New Testament writers included. This can easily be done in the following table, which can be completed by the group as a whole, or by subgroups that then report back.

**Step 3:** Discussion.

Compare your initial list with the one produced from these gospel summaries and consider whether what we emphasise agrees with what the New Testament writers wrote. Note especially the ideas that are repeated across the lists!

Consider Romans 10:13–17. Discuss why you think God chooses to use us and our words in the process of bringing people into relationship with him.

“Preach the Gospel always. If necessary use words.” What do you think of this comment attributed to St Francis of Assisi (1182–1226)?

Consider the specific content of the gospel message: what are the implications for Christian mission?

Acts 2:22–39	Acts 17:22–31	Romans 3:21–26	1 Corinthians 15:1–8	Ephesians 2:1–10	Colossians 1:21–23



# God's Mission and Ours – Study 7

## No Other Name: The Challenge of Christ's Uniqueness

**Introduction:** The aim of this study is to consider the Christian claims of Jesus' uniqueness, and to consider its impact within mission.

**Setting the scene:** In the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, the Apostle Peter makes some bold claims about Jesus. He states:

*"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 2:36*

*"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12*

*"The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead – whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel." Acts 5:30–31*

These are audacious claims, especially when we consider how many world faiths do not acknowledge Jesus as having either a unique role in salvation or a unique place in creation. Is the uniqueness of Jesus in salvation and creation a genuine Christian doctrine found throughout scripture? Or are these quotes from Peter's sermons simply enthusiastic overstatement?

**Step 1:** Allocate the following passages to individuals or pairs and have each person consider how their passage supports the claim that Jesus is unique.

Matthew 11:25–30

Luke 10:21–24

John 1:1–18

John 5:16–27

Philippians 2:5–11

Colossians 1:15–20

Hebrews 1:1–12

Revelation 5:1–14

**Step 2:** Each person reads their passage aloud to the group and then comments on how it supports the claim that Jesus is unique.

**Step 3:** Discussion.

1. Do the passages we have studied establish the uniqueness of Jesus in salvation and creation?

2. What grounds do we have for claiming that Jesus is unique and that he is the only saviour who can bring men and women into a relationship with God?

3. How should we respond to the claim some people make today that God reveals aspects of himself through all faiths and that each faith leads eventually to God?

4. Christians claim that Jesus is the only way to God, but this claim seems arrogant to people from other faiths and meaningless to those who believe that truth is subjective. What approach should Christians adopt as we seek to present the uniqueness of Jesus to people like this?



# God's Mission and Ours – Study 8

## For the Good of All: The Challenge of Caring

**Introduction:** The aim of this study is help people see how Christian mission involves both the proclamation of Christ's glory and the demonstration of his love.

**Step 1:** Divide the group into 4 subgroups (ideally two or three people each) and have each group consider one of these passages:

Luke 10:25–37

Matthew 25:31–46

James 2:8–26

Romans 12:1–21

Each group should look at their passage and consider these questions:

- What is the central idea in this passage?
- What impact does this idea have on our understanding of Christian mission and the sort of activities we should support and engage in?

Allow 15 to 20 minutes for each group to consider their passage and prepare a response to the question.

**Step 2:** When each subgroup has finished their discussion, have each read their passage aloud to the whole group and then present their conclusions.

**Step 3:** Discussion

After each group has made their presentations, summarise the findings and apply them to determine what sort of activities we should support and engage in.

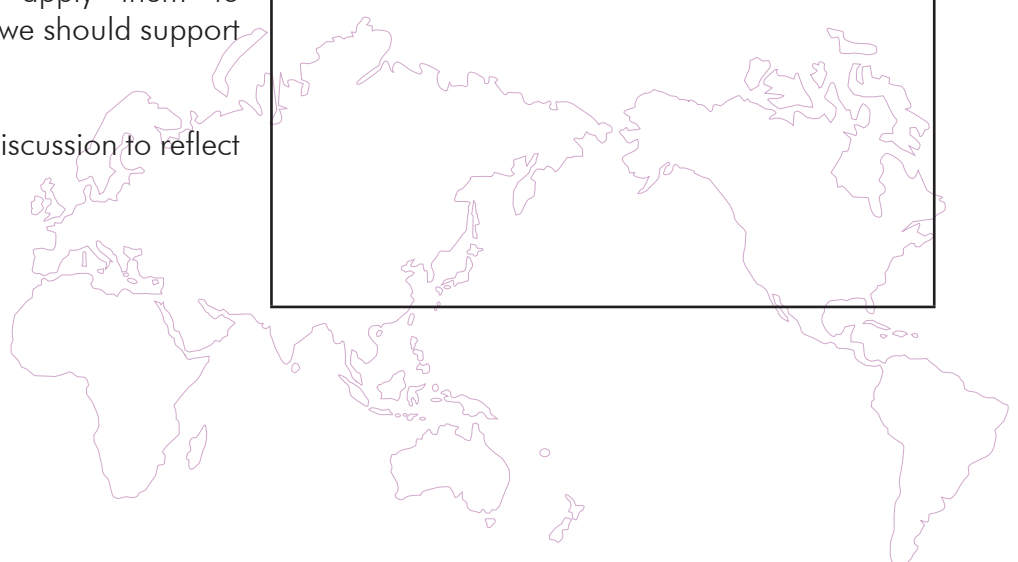
The aim is for the whole group discussion to reflect on all four passages.

**Luke 10:25–37**

**Matthew 25:31–46**

**James 2:8–26**

**Romans 12:1–21**



# God's Mission and Ours – Study 9

## Partners in the Gospel: The Challenge of My Involvement

**Introduction:** The aim of this study is explore the nature of 'partnership in the gospel' so that we will challenge each other to greater engagement in mission activity.

**Setting the scene:** The apostle Paul writes to the Philippians: *"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now"* (Philippians 1:3–5).

**Step 1:** What can we determine about the character of this partnership between Paul and the Philippians?

Divide into pairs or subgroups to examine Paul's letter to the Philippians and allocate each pair or subgroup a passage to consider:

Philippians 1  
Philippians 2  
Philippians 3  
Philippians 4

Each subgroup should read their passage and then look for indications of what 'partnership in the gospel' looks like within each passage.

**Step 2:** Have each subgroup report what they noted, and answer these questions from their passage:

What is 'partnership in the gospel'?

How is 'partnership in the gospel' expressed?

**Step 3:** Discussion.

Which, if any, of these characteristics should we seek to apply to ourselves as Christians today? What might their application look like for us?

CMS often uses the phrase "Pray, Care, Give, Go" to describe various forms of partnership in God's mission. How do we determine which form our partnership in the gospel should take?

What practical steps can you take to become 'partners in the gospel', and be better informed about and more involved in what God is doing in the world today?

You may like to consider mission on your local horizon, your national horizon and the international horizon, along with the combination of proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus and demonstrating his love.



Please contact your local CMS branch for further information.

These resources have been put together for the Church Missionary Society – Australia (CMS).

As a fellowship of Christian people, CMS exists to glorify God through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world. Our vision is to see God's Church growing in all the world as lives and communities are transformed by Christ.

CMS is passionate about educating and assisting churches and individuals as they engage with God in his worldwide mission through prayer, caring, giving and raising up people to go.

For more resources for your church, Bible study group or kids' and youth programs, or just to find out more about CMS and mission, go to

[www.cms.org.au](http://www.cms.org.au)

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