

Why Participate in God's Mission?

By Keith E. Eitel

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Ephesians 1:3-6. God selected you specifically "before the foundation of the world." Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How does this passage enlarge your appreciation of God's love for you?

Assignment Two

Read Ephesians 1:7-10. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Are God's mercy and grace limited to you only?

Assignment Three

Read Ephesians 1:11-14. Because you believed, God "sealed you by His Holy Spirit." Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What does this mean regarding your purpose in life?

Scripture to Memorize

"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."
Acts 1:8

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit - by the end of this session, disciples will make a commitment to participate in God's redemptive plan for the ages.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

William worked in a shoe mender's shop in the 1790s. He read the New Testament and also read accounts of Captain Cook's travels. He discovered that the Great Commission said to go to all peoples. At the same time, he discovered that clusters of faraway peoples were just becoming known to the British. The implications of these two discoveries collided in young William's mind and heart. He became certain that possessing the good news of eternal life in Christ came with the responsibility to tell all peoples. In a sermon, William rallied his generation and future generations by declaring:

"Expect great things from God! Attempt great things for God!"

God used William Carey, shoe mender and bi-vocational pastor, to change the world by his simple biblical obedience. How can God change our world through your profoundly simple yes to His mission? Begin praying with that vision and purpose today!

Why Participate in God's Mission?

Read Ephesians 1:3-14 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Paul wrote verses 3-14 as a single sentence in the original Koine-Greek dialect of the first century. This means he emphasized that the theological ideas in this sentence are so interrelated that they form a single unit of thought. In English, we break the verses into several sentences, but this does not change the fact that the original sentence explains a single truth; namely, that God blesses us in many ways.

Verse 13: believed. Believers are chosen, redeemed, and sealed by God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Experiencing the depth of God's grace should move our hearts radically to engage the lost and prioritize the gospel as the central focus of our lives. If heaven and hell are real, then everyone alive today will spend eternity in one place or the other. Trusting Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the only way to a relationship with God. Joining Him in telling the good news is what matters most for all time and eternity.

What Does It Mean That God Chose Us in Christ?

Studying the Passage

Verse 4. chose. The Greek term, in common use when Paul wrote these words, expressed that God "chose" or selected us from among other choices. The selected ones are set apart as His personal possessions and for His purposes. **before the foundation of the world.** God is self-existent, eternal and is not handicapped by sequential time, yet He intervenes at will in His own created order - even our individual lives.

Verse 5. predestined. God stands outside the bubble of created time. He predestined,

or organized the days of our lives, to fulfill His redemptive purposes in actual time. Those who are believers are blessed because God selects us for Himself and His purposes. This profound truth gives meaning to the life of anyone who believes.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on how much it means that God selected them personally.

Discussion Question

Describe what your life was like before you believed the gospel of salvation.

On Your Own

Think of people who need to know the life-changing gospel that leads to salvation and to His meaning and purpose in life. In the space below, list people you will pray for and talk to.

What Does It Mean to Be Redeemed by Christ?

Studying the Passage

Verse 7. redemption . . . forgiveness. Lying, stealing or many other types of sins separate us from God's love and purposes. We are lost in our own willful acts of sin. We are locked in its grip. The blood of Christ offers us redemption and forgiveness for all our sins - past, present and future. Christ willingly gave His sinless life for our sin-filled lives and redeemed us from the lifelock of sin. Spiritually clean, we are set apart for His purposes. **grace.** God was not required to bless us, but He chose to do so by His grace and mercy toward us.

Verse 9. the mystery of His will. A mystery is not necessarily something that cannot be understood. Paul here means it is a truth God reveals, explains and makes understandable to willing listeners.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on whether he thinks God's redemptive act of grace is limited only to that person individually.

Discussion Question

What is the significance of the plural personal pronouns such as "we" or "us" that Paul uses in verses 7-9?

On Your Own

In the space below, write at least one way you will join God in His plan for those still needing to know and understand “the mystery of His will.”

What Does It Mean to Be Sealed by the Holy Spirit?

Studying the Passage

Verse 13. when you heard. Paul used the phrase to mean hearing with effect, impact and desired outcome. **the gospel of your salvation.** The thing being effectively heard or understood is the gospel. Effective listening results in belief, faith and trust in that gospel. **were sealed.** New believers are sealed in Christ. A seal is a mark of authentication, a proof of truth. God’s seal on us is His Holy Spirit.

Verse 14. pledge. The Holy Spirit is also God’s pledge or proof of promise for all of the blessings He pours out on believers. The pledge guarantees that God will fulfill His eternal purposes.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on their renewed sense of purpose in life.

Discussion Question

As God’s selected possession, how should we exhibit “the praise of His glory”? (See Ephesians 1:14).

On Your Own

In the space below, tell how you will specifically change something in your life to reflect God’s purposes for all to know the gospel of salvation, which is *the* mission of God.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share that with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue, I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Consider these questions:

- When your great-grandchildren look at your life and legacy, what will be the overall life lesson you leave them? Will they see a life lived for selfish ends or a life lived fully for the eternal well-being of others?
- How will you approach your life, full of blessings from God but also given freely to others?
- Do you plan to set your face toward spiritual growth and fruitfulness in the one life you have to live?

Sin separates people from God's love and purposes. Millions are lost in their own willful acts of sin. They are locked in its grip. The blood of Christ offers redemption and forgiveness for all sin - past, present, and future. Christ willingly gave His sinless life for sin-filled lives and to redeem people from the grip of sin.

Spiritually clean, new believers are set apart for His purposes. God was not required to bless the lost, but He chose to do so because of His grace and mercy.

Believers are chosen, redeemed and sealed by God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Experiencing the depth of God's grace should move our hearts radically to engage the lost and prioritize the gospel as the central focus of our lives. If heaven and hell are real, then everyone alive today will spend eternity in one place or the other.

Consider borrowing words from William Carey. In your regular devotional times, declare:

“Expect great things from God! Attempt great things for God!”

Follow-Up Question

How important is it to you to join Christ in reconciling the lost to Him in the power of the Holy Spirit?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.