



Northwest District Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod
1700 NE Knott Street, Portland, OR 97212
1-888-693-5267 Portland Metro: 503-288-8383
Fax: 503-335-7013 web site: www.nowlcms.org

God's heart is for the lost. Through this study (provided by LCMS World Mission) it is our hope that you will discover God's plan for you in heart to heart ministry that will reach those who are lost and bring them into His eternal love and kingdom.

Week 1, Part 1

The Mystery of God's Heart

The world's religions are human attempts to solve the world's greatest mystery: Does God's heart beat toward me with love or with anger? The Triune God revealed the answer. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God declared, "I love you dearly with a heart eager for your eternal happiness."

This is the Good News that saves. The mystery is solved for those of us who hear and believe it. But what about those still in the dark about God? Is He really serious about loving the billions of non-Christian men, women and children on the planet today? Are we Christians really serious about loving them? Does God want us to be serious?

This week, as we delve into such mysteries, may God make His intentions and plans crystal-clear to us.

Heart Story 1: I Am God's Heart

I am God's heart. Of course, I am not a physical heart pumping blood to a body. God has no body, because He is a spirit. You humans have a poetic habit of locating human emotions in some organ of the body. In Western culture that organ is the heart. Thus, I, God's heart, am the Triune God's love, compassion, mercy, kindness, grace, long suffering, etc. "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

I cannot tell you all about myself in one page. The full story is found in the Bible. Read it often and you will come to know me better and better. Here is a thumbnail sketch, based on three basic questions.

How old am I? God is eternal, and therefore, so am I. He has always been a God of love and mercy. In terms of your human history, I was there at the beginning when out of my goodness the Lord freely gave Adam and Eve life and all His creation to enjoy. I was there when God oversaw the formation of all the nations, languages and tribes of the earth. Even though I am eternal, I do not grow old. As Jeremiah noted, "His compassions never fail. They are new every morning" (Lam. 3:22-23). When believers from every tribe, tongue, people and nation enter the new Jerusalem, the Lord will gather them in His arms and carry them close to me (Rev. 7:9, 17; Is. 40:11).

How deep am I? Perhaps you know what shallow, fickle love is like. That's not me! I keep on loving. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, God kept loving them and their descendants. Even though some people don't love God and give Him the praise He deserves, He still cares for their physical needs (Acts 14:17). Most important, the Lord provided a Savior to rescue them from sin, death and Satan. The surest evidence of my depth is Jesus Christ who humbled Himself to become a man, and then humbled Himself even to death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). At Calvary His physical heart was "turned to wax" (Ps. 22:14) in order to pay the price for everyone's sins. This Good News is the light that must shine into all hearts, so they will be saved (2 Cor. 4:6; Rom. 10:9).

How wide am I? Whenever the door of someone's heart opens to respond to the Gospel, I throb and swell with joy (Luke 15:7,10). My wish is that every individual on the earth have his or her name written into the Lamb's book of

life (1 Tim. 2:4; Rev. 3:5). I am eager to see every ethnic people group become God's holy people (Ps. 47:9; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

I long to see every acre of your planet--now captive under Satan's rule--liberated by believers testifying to the power of the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:10-11; Matt. 16:15-19).

This is my passion. Since by grace in Christ you are indeed a man or woman after God's own heart, may you have His passion for souls.

Week 1, Part 2

Read Matthew 2:1-12

The Mystery the Wise Men Wanted to Solve

"Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him'" (Matt. 2:1b-2).

Why would people endure hundreds of miles of harsh, dangerous travel just to see a baby?

It was a mystery.

Perplexed by the mystery of a new star in the heavens, the Wise Men wanted to understand its significance. Although Matthew does not report the details, apparently the Wise Men discovered clues in the Hebrew Scriptures. The writings of God's prophets contained many promises about a coming Messiah.

These prophecies, like clues in a mystery, led the Magi to conclude that the new star was a celestial birth announcement for the long-awaited Messiah, who is the Real Star. Brought to faith by such promises, the Wise Men from the East set out on the long journey.

A popular game asks, "Where in the world is Carmen San Diego?" When the Wise Men arrived in Jerusalem, they asked, "Where in the world is the one who was born king of the Jews?" Once again, the Scriptures provided the clue in Micah 5:2. The ruler who would shepherd Israel would be born in _____. Eagerly, they left Jerusalem to complete their quest. "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh" (Matt. 2:10-11). Mystery solved!

The Wise Men from distant lands followed a trail of clues: the new star, the prophecies concerning the Messiah, especially Micah 5:2 that foretold His birthplace. Do you think they ever would have solved the mystery without this trail of clues?

Who left that trail of clues? Ultimately, God is the "culprit." Why did He leave the trail of clues? What was His motive? What was in His heart? Hint: See 1 Tim. 2:3-6.

Challenge of the Heart

The Wise Men were most likely from Babylon, which was located in present-day Iraq. Iraq's 22 million people are 95 percent Muslim and only 3 percent Christian. Although Islam honors Christ as a prophet, to most He is a vague, mysterious figure. Pray that the Iraqi Muslims may someday soon learn to worship Jesus, as the Wise Men did.

Prayer: Thank You, for the clues of Your grace that gives life meaning.

Week 1, Part 3

Read Isaiah 60:1-6

The Mystery of God's Heart

"See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and His glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Is. 60:2-3). God's heart--His true nature--is a mystery to everyone on this earth who has not yet trusted in the Gospel. Does His heart beat toward them with love or with anger? They do not know. Although unbelievers may be quite religious, their religion is nothing more than desperate groping in the dark. Their problem--slavery to sin, death and Satan--is beyond their ability to solve.

The solution--the redeeming work of Jesus Christ--still goes unannounced to billions of people. No wonder Isaiah reports, "See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples."

But wait! Doesn't it sound bizarre to say, "See, darkness covers the earth"? When it is pitch dark, how can you see? Well, God enables Christians to see, because He has brought us out of the darkness. His light has already risen upon us: Jesus, the Light of the World. Take a moment to count the brilliant blessings that are yours through Christ.

Hint: Recall one of your favorite Gospel verses.

You see Jesus clearly. He reveals the mystery of God's heart. His heart beats with love and compassion, not only for you, but also for street children in Latin America, for mothers searching for kindling in drought-ridden Africa, for poor opium farmers in Pakistan and for Pacific Rim business executives who travel regularly to our country. How well does my heart, renewed by Christ, beat for such people? (2 Cor. 5:15-17)

Challenge of the Heart: Take this quick mission vision exam.

1. How many friends/relatives can I name that do not know Christ? (write down their names, not just a total number)
2. How often do I pray for the salvation of the deaf, blind, imprisoned, poor and others who are different from me?
3. How often do I reflect on the fact that Hindus, Muslims, animists, atheists, etc., are in the dark without the light of Christ?
4. How many of my friends are non-Christians from an ethnic group or religion other than mine? ____
Could there be more?

Prayer:

Open my eyes, Lord, so that I may see the lost as You see them.

Week 1, Part 4

Read Isaiah 60:1-6

Mystery of Our Ability to Shine

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. . . . Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Is. 60:1,3).

Already illuminated by the grace of Jesus Christ, we long to see the Gospel dawn on billions of men, women and children who are still in the darkness. In Isaiah 60 the Lord reveals that His heart will remain a mystery to them until their existence is brightened by the 10,000 watt beacon of Christ's sacrificial death for their sins. No wonder He said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). But Jesus does not shine alone. In Isaiah 60 God commands you and me, "Arise, shine" so that nations will come to the light. Isn't this another mystery? Even though we're neither fireflies nor electric eels, somehow we are to light the darkness. How in the world do we shine?

While visiting a remote village, a missionary doctor found a woman who desperately needed emergency surgery. Her son gathered candles and oil lamps from neighbors, but still the missionary hesitated, not trusting the accuracy of his scalpel in the dim light. Undaunted, the son borrowed every mirror in the village, multiplying the candle power so that the doctor could perform a successful surgery. Mirrors are not a source of light. They merely reflect light. The Lord is the source of Gospel light to the nations. And God calls you and me to be His mirrors, reflecting His glory to others. This explains why Jesus, the Light of the World, can say, "You are the light of the world. . . . let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:14,16).

Here's another way to look at it. Olympic torchbearers run cross country, passing on a flame that symbolizes humankind's flickering hope for worldwide peace and compassion. Similarly, God appointed you and me to reflect Christ's light toward those still in thick darkness. The Gospel is a torch of pure, sure hope that God's heart beats for the nations with mercy and compassion.

Challenge of the Heart

1. Sing "This Little Gospel Light of Mine" (it's not just for children). "Hide it under a bushel? No!"
2. What bushels does God need to remove?
3. "I'm gonna let it shine!" Who sees my light?
4. "All around the neighborhood!" What neighbors and friends could you get to know better and share with?
5. How can this include people on/from other continents?

Prayer:

Jesus, may I reflect Your light far and wide, near and far.

Week 1, Part 5

Read Isaiah 60:1-6

Mystery of the Sons and Daughters

"All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth of the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come" (Is. 60:4-5).

The Lord promised the Jews then and us today that "your heart will throb and swell with joy."
What can cause such exuberance?

The cause of joy for the Jews was the return from years of exile in Babylonia. Their home was restored. This joyous event in Israel's salvation history is a prophetic symbol of Jesus Christ and His New Israel, the Church. By the Gospel we have been set free from our bondage to sin, death and Satan.

One specific cause of our joy is mentioned in Is. 60:4, "Your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm." To the Jews returning from exile, this pointed to the reuniting of families.

But to us today, do we have sons and daughters who "come from afar"? Who in the world might they be? This is the strangest mystery we have encountered this week. The context explains. Isaiah 60:2-3 speaks about the many people of the earth who are still in darkness, and about nations and rulers that will come to our light. Apparently, our sons and our daughters who "come from afar" are foreigners who respond in faith to the light of the Gospel.

Imagine, God thinks we should accept foreigners who are Christians as family, as our own flesh and blood. Doesn't God know that blood is thicker than water? Could He really expect us to see people as kith and kin when they have such strange languages, customs, foods, social relationships, values and everything else? To feel related to people, we need common experiences, common cultures, and common surnames. What do we have in common with people from Thailand, Guatemala or Cote d'Ivoire? What could God possibly be thinking by telling us to welcome them as sons and daughters?

Challenge of the Heart

Don't rush on to the next section. Ponder the mystery of the sons and daughters throughout the day.

1. Spend time looking at photos of your family and of people from distant lands (perhaps in a "National Geographic" or an encyclopedia). Does your heart throb with joy when you look at family? Why?
2. What does your heart feel when you look at the foreigners?

Prayer: Father, show me in Your Word what You mean by family.

Week 1, Part 6

Read Ephesians 3:2-12
The Mystery of the Gentiles

"In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my [St. Paul's] insight into the mystery of Christ. . . . This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:4,6).

Paul the Missionary solves the mystery of the sons and daughters by explaining God's mystery concerning the Gentiles. The Greek word for "mystery" means something hidden or obscure until God reveals it to us.

Read the text above again slowly. Identify the three things shared by members of God's family from every corner of the globe:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Believers from all nations are "heirs together with Israel." Co-heirs share a common ancestor. Ours is Abraham, who was promised, "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3). What do heirs have in common?

Christians from all nations are "members together of one body," the body of Christ. Think of what is shared in common by the parts of a human body. What does the body of Christ in every land have in common?

Finally, you are "sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." What promises do you have in common with believers from Egypt, Ecuador and India?

You have so much in common. When yet another child joins Christ's family of faith, may your heart throb and swell with joy.

Challenge of the Heart

1. Spend time once again looking at family photos and pictures of people from distant lands. Knowing the mystery of togetherness in Christ, look at our sons and daughters from afar. What does your heart feel toward them today?

Prayer:
Father, make room in my heart for Your whole family.

Week 1, Part 7

Small Group Discussion: Seeking God's Heart Together

Build on what you learned this week by joining fellow believers to discuss the following questions.

1. In the opening piece "I Am God's Heart," what did you read that you already knew and expected? What surprises did you encounter?
2. Review the texts and Challenges of the Heart that you considered this week. What did you learn this week that you would like to share with your group?
3. Describe a time in your religious experience when your heart overflowed with joy. What specifically caused joy?
4. In your experience of personal witnessing as a Christian in the mission of your congregation, has your heart ever throbbed and swelled with joy? Describe the experience.
5. This week we uncovered several mysteries about God's mission heart. In your group, identify any other mission mysteries, questions and concerns you have. Jot them down here.
6. How will your group discover the answers to your mission mysteries?

Perspectives on God's World

One of the cutest antics of a toddler is when she stands on her toes, raises her hands as high as possible, and declares, "I am soooo big!" The smaller the child, the funnier the innocent boast sounds.

Small children constantly juggle with the concepts of big and small. Television's "Sesame Street" has a hundred little teaching clips on the topic. Not until we are older do we learn that sometimes a thing can be both big and small at the same time, depending on to what we are comparing it.

As God's children, we need to learn this lesson too. The size of God's plan to save people from all nations depends on perspective. We tend to view world evangelization as a gigantic task. From God's perspective, anything less is too small a thing for the magnificent Savior He provided for all humankind. Similarly, we tend to see ourselves as we should, as redeemed people of God, living stones in His church, and faithful members of a local congregation with a responsibility to reach out to our unchurched neighbors and friends. Yet God would also have us remember the unreached neighbors outside our neighborhood--in our country and around the world. We see ourselves as ill-equipped. God sees us as well-equipped. Often we are satisfied that God has saved us. The Lord sees many other individuals in need of His mercy.

It is all a matter of perspective. As we consider God's mission for us, whose perspective should we trust, ours or God's? Surely, we need to learn to see the world from the Lord's perspective!

Heart Story 2: I Am Merl and Kara's Heart

I am Merl and Kara's heart. When they first met, I came into existence. As their love developed, so did I. Their wedding day was my birthday. During their newlywed year, I grew as the Holy Spirit increased Merl and Kara's eagerness to share Christ with others. When they joined their congregation's evangelism committee, I skipped a beat.

Even so, I was still somewhat undeveloped, because I had only a passing interest in evangelism beyond my own kind of people. Whenever Merl and Kara heard about God's global mission, I sensed a vague longing to get involved, but usually they just avoided the subject, because it made me feel small and ineffective. Pastor Bauer gave me a boost when he proposed to the Evangelism Committee that the church help resettle a refugee family. Actually, it was the third time pastor had broached the subject. Each time, the committee, including Merl and Kara, rejected the proposal out of hand, claiming, "Our church is too small for such a big project." On his third attempt pastor said, "You assume that we can't resettle a family, but do you know that to be a fact? I challenge you to prove that we don't have the resources to pull it off. Between now and our next meeting, read these Lutheran Immigration Refugee Service materials that explain the whole process. If you can prove it's impossible, I promise I'll never bring the subject up again." Cautiously, Merl and Kara read the booklets; slowly I felt myself expanding with hope and anticipation. By the next meeting, the Lord had persuaded the entire committee that with His help refugee resettlement was "Mission: Possible." Robust! That's how I felt as the Vang family arrived and we introduced them to our country. With their appreciation, humility and hospitality, the Vangs won everyone's hearts, including me. Every visit to their home invigorated me like a brisk jog around the lake. Robust!

After several months, the Vangs asked to study the Bible. Pastor brought Merl and Kara along for the studies, and later, under his supervision, he delegated the witnessing to the saving power of the Gospel of Christ to them. What a challenge! Giving a simple straightforward message of Law and Gospel, sin and grace in Christ to followers of Buddhism was like pumping iron. I thought I would break, but the strain was worth it.

As a result of the exertion, my muscles bulged. My joy in Christ's Gospel increased as I saw my new friends steadily come to know, trust and love Him too. I used to avoid God's mission, because it made me feel small. Since then I have learned something by heart: I am small, but God is great. And what great things He has accomplished. Just last Sunday morning I was lifted up when all the Vangs were baptized, including baby Grace, born in the United States and reborn into the Kingdom. Like the bush in which God appeared to Moses, I am burning brightly without being consumed, burning for the lost.

Week 2, Part 2

Read Isaiah 49:1-6

A Question of Perspective

"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Is. 49:6). How large is the task Christ gave to His Church? Look at the following texts and jot down how big the assignment is.

1. Mark 16:

2. Acts 1:8

Circle the words that describe how large this task appears to you:

Awesome	Overwhelming	Immense	Reachable	Too Much
Feasible	Mission Impossible	Frustrating	Accomplishable	Frightening

Now consider the words God the Father speaks to Jesus Christ in Is. 49:6. His first objective concerns the Jews, that the tribes of Jacob might be restored, that some of Israel might be brought back. This occurs whenever a Jewish person is led to faith in Jesus the Messiah. What Christian outreach to Jews is being done at your church?

Have you ever experienced the joy of seeing a Jewish person realize that Jesus is the Messiah?

As glorious as the miracle of a Jewish conversion is, God declares, "It is too small a thing for you. . . . I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Our God is a dreamer, the biggest of dreamers. His purposes know no limit. His love knows no bounds.

Challenge of the Heart

Ask God to help you wrap your heart around this amazing dilemma.

1. Why do I tend to see the task of world evangelization as too big?

2. Why does God consider the challenge of offering salvation to all the world just the right size for His Son and His Church?

Prayer: Father, give me Your perspective. Make my heart like Yours.

Week 2, Part 3

Read Isaiah 49:5-6 and John 1:29-31

"The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33).

Jesus made God's mission possible by taking away the sin of the world. He has what it takes! Through Baptism, God provides you and me what it takes to live a life of mission love and action!

God has called every Christian, not only professional missionaries, to be involved in His mission. Look at the following promises through the eyes of God's global perspective. Record what you find regarding your baptism and God's mission.

1. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 . . ." (Matt. 28:18-19).

Baptism's connection to God's mission:

Equipment provided in baptism:

2. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39).

Baptism's connection to God's mission:

Equipment provided in baptism:

3. "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28).

Baptism's connection to God's mission:

Equipment provided in baptism:

Challenge of the Heart

1. How has God called me to participate in His mission?

2. How has God equipped me for the challenge?

Prayer: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I praise You for calling me through Baptism to be part of your global, growing family of faith.

Week 2, Part 5

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9
Your Church Has What It Takes!

"For in him [Christ] you have been enriched in every way" (1 Cor. 1:5). In America we worship bigness. We assume that whatever is large and numerous must be superior to things that are small. Have you ever watched the opening ceremony of the Olympics when all the teams parade into the stadium? Some nations have hundreds of athletes and coaches. Other nations are able to send only a handful of Olympians. How easy (and foolish) it is to assume that the larger teams are superior, for there may very well be a gold medal winner marching all alone underneath his or her nation's flag.

The task of sharing the Good News with every person on earth is large. Sometimes our church seems so small, but we won't feel so overwhelmed if we take into account the divine resources God gives us.

Identify the resources mentioned in each verse below. Prayerfully consider how they can be used to help you and your church to be effective in mission outreach.

1. "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ--their Lord and ours" (v. 2).

What resources are mentioned?

How can they be put to use?

2. "I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way--in all your speaking and in all your knowledge" (vv. 4-5).

What resources are mentioned?

How can they be put to use?

3. "You do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed" (v. 7).

What resources are mentioned?

How can they be put to use?

Challenge of the Heart

Keep your eyes open all week for other resources God makes available to your church to accomplish His mission. What might happen if they were regularly listed in the church treasurer's report?

Prayer: Jesus, thanks for Your riches. Help us to shower them abroad.

Week 2, Part 6

Read John 1:35-41
One Heart at a Time

"The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah (that is, the Christ)'" (John 1:41).

Sometimes a task looks so big that we are reluctant to begin. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. How does the church make disciples of all nations? One heart at a time.

In our text, the Good News of Jesus is passed from John the Baptist to Andrew and then to Simon Peter. One heart at a time.

From God's perspective, every conversion of a lost sinner is a miracle accomplished against humanly impossible odds. From our perspective, however, are all witnessing situations equally challenging?

Do you have any proof that the Good News of Jesus Christ can and does cross barriers like culture and language? Yes! It crossed from culture to culture and from heart to heart, until it got to you.

A basketball team capable of winning a gold medal must keep passing the ball from player to player. Some passes are simple and safe. Other passes are difficult and risky.

Consider how faith has been passed from person to person at your church. Enter the names of folks who have witnessed and the people whom the Holy Spirit has brought to faith. Then reflect on the experience you encountered.

Witness(es):

New believer(s):

Reflection on experience encountered (What were the challenges, what were the joys?)

Now let's picture some other situations. Let's say Cindy and Jim are missionaries in Latin America. Witnesses: Cindy and Jim/ New believer: Rosalia

What challenges do you suppose confronted Cindy and Jim in their witness to Rosalia?

Bill and Karen live in the United States and have established a friendship with a Middle Eastern student at the local university. Witnesses: Bill and Karen/New Believer: Muhammad

How about Bill and Karen in their witness to Muhammad? What challenges may have confronted them?

Challenge of the Heart

Select one "heart" to pray for daily: (write their name)

Who can you ask to help you share the love of Christ with the one person you selected?

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, that someone took the time to reach my heart.

Week 2, Part 7

Small Group Discussion
Seeking God's Perspective Together

Build on what you learned this week by joining fellow believers to discuss the following questions.

1. If possible, watch the brief video "Salifu's Harvest," available from LCMS World Mission. What does this striking film teach you about baptism and God's mission?

2. In the opening story, "I Am Merl and Karen's Heart," what insights did you gain regarding how the Holy Spirit helps missionaries acquire God's perspective of the world and its needs?

3. Review the texts and the Challenges of the Heart you considered this week. What insights would you like to share with the folks in your group?

4. Has your perspective of God's global mission changed this week? How?
5. If you played a one-person-sized role in God's global mission, what might that role include?
6. If your church played a one-church-sized role in God's global mission, what might that role include?

Week 3, Part 1

Jesus Teaches Us How to Fish for Hearts

Stephen Neill, a missionary to India, once noted that mission work is so difficult that it's a wonder anyone has ever attempted it. [* Stephen Neill, Call to Mission (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p.24.]

If it is so difficult, how will we ever learn to do it? Two keys to learning are motivation and a mentor.

1. Motivation. Without motivation, no one learns much of anything. They may be able to mouth the right words, but the heart is not engaged. One purpose of this booklet is to motivate you, to give you a heart to be involved in God's mission.

Jesus is the best motivator. As we are moved by His love for us, our hearts take on new challenges to love others (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Knowing our sins are forgiven and eternal life is ours, the joy and gratitude in our hearts overflows into concern for those who have never heard the greatest story ever told: the Good News of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

2. Mentor. A mentor is more than a teacher. Not just an expert, a mentor is a friend who is concerned about your personal development. A mentor is a trusted guide, counselor and encourager. A mentor doesn't just tell you what to do. He or she models the attitudes, skills and behaviors that you want to learn.

Jesus is the best mentor. He promised to be His disciples' mentor when He said, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). Learning anything is easier with a caring mentor. Let's see what He will teach us this week about living out God's mission in our daily lives.

Heart Story 3: I Am Li Wang's Heart

[This is a true story about a citizen of the People's Republic of China. His name has been changed to protect him from government reprisals.]

I am Li Wang's heart.

For 20 years I was filled with pride in the nation of China and its culture. Li's government proclaimed that atheistic communism was the finest political system in the world and that all other systems are evil. This message filled me with hope.

In 1989, I and many Chinese hearts longed for expanded freedoms. Although Li lived far from Beijing, he watched the Tiananmen Square demonstrations on TV through CNN. Li and his neighbors boldly called for the triumph of truth and justice. However, when the communist government brutally suppressed the protests, everyone, even Li, hid like a turtle in a shell. Overnight I was drained of all hope. Two years later, Li went to study for an advanced degree at a university in the United States. How lonely I felt in America. Desperate for some Chinese companionship, Li decided to meet with a group of Chinese students who gathered at a local church. Before long, they invited Li to study the Bible.

As Li read that book, God began to change me. I wasn't surprised at Jesus' teaching that evil dwells in the heart of everyone. Since Tiananmen Square, I knew that was true.

But I was shocked when Jesus claimed He was the Savior. Terms like savior and salvation were not part of communist vocabulary. Li hardly knew what these words meant, but when he read them I was somehow aroused to want to learn more. For months Li wrestled with this message of hope.

In addition to the Word of God, I was touched by Robert and Sharla, parents of Joan, a severely disabled girl. They painstakingly served her out of joy, not out of duty. Other church members displayed their loving hearts as they helped Robert and Sharla care for Joan.

Li kept asking, "Why hadn't they done the logical thing and aborted this child? Why are they doing the loving thing?" The only possible answer was that they had a source of hope and a source of love which Li did not. They had a Savior. This Good News turned me to God and filled me with hope.

Today Li faces a new challenge of the heart: studying to become a pastor. Concerned for all his friends in China who are as filled with pride as he once was, he is attending seminary in order to better witness to them and establish churches in the land he loves.

I am Li Wang's thankful heart. I was once filled with lies about God. But Jesus has filled me with truth and joy. By the Holy Spirit's power, I am now overflowing, passing on the message of the Savior.

Week 3, Part 2

Read Matthew 4:18-23
Serious Fun

"'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men'" (Matt. 4:19). "I will make you fishers of men." Perhaps we take these familiar words for granted. So let's look at "soul angling" from two new angles.

1. Do I see fishing as a diversion or as serious business?

Fishing has been called the world's greatest excuse for doing nothing. This is certainly so for those who angle for sport and relaxation. Could it be that some of us don't take Jesus' statement very seriously, because we see fishing as a mere diversion?

Jesus surely meant serious business when He called His first disciples. For people in the fishing industry--like Peter, Andrew, James and John--fish were their source of livelihood--no fins, no finances!

To the Savior who called them, and who calls us, nothing is more precious than the hearts of unsaved men and women--so precious that Jesus gave His lifeblood for them--so precious that He calls us to fish for them with the saving Word of God. Fishing for hearts is the world's most serious reason for being alive, and yet it still can be great fun, as our next point reveals.

2. Do I see fishing as easy to learn or complicated?

Only a few of us are great anglers. Many of us recall struggling to get a squirmy worm onto a hook, and then losing that worm to a sly fish. Many of us are all thumbs at unraveling a fishing line that snarled itself into a bird's nest. Most of us feel as uncomfortable amid fishing tackle and gadgets as we do walking into a computer store without a "Geek to English Dictionary."

But what if a friendly, patient expert volunteered to teach you step by step. In the phrase, "I will make you fishers of men," the most important word is "I."

Your dear Savior is speaking. He isn't commanding. He's promising, "I will make you a fisher of hearts. You really will learn. I'll never laugh at you, never criticize. I'll encourage you when you think the big one got away. I'll always give you another chance. I'll keep coming with you on each evangelism-fishing adventure. What fun we'll have together!"

Challenge of the Heart

1. Before today's reading, did you see the words "I will make you fishers of men" as an order or as a promise?
2. What difference does it make to you?

Prayer: Jesus, what do You want to teach me about heart fishing today?

Week 3, Part 3

Read Isaiah 9:1-2 and Matthew 4:12-17
Being Where the Fish Are

"In the future He [the Lord] will honor Galilee of the Gentiles . . . the people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light had dawned" (Is. 9:1b-2).

According to real estate agents the top three criteria for selecting a house are location, location and location.

At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus moved from Nazareth. It would have seemed logical for Him to relocate to Jerusalem, the capital city and center of Jewish orthodoxy, far removed from the corrupting influence of neighboring pagan countries. But Jesus selected the town of Capernaum in the province of Galilee--out in the sticks.

Thinking in mission terms, this location placed Him near Gentiles who held to many beliefs and practices contrary to the truth God had revealed to the Jews.

Why did Jesus choose this location? Jesus, who promised "I will make you fishers of men," here teaches us by example. Rather than isolating Himself from unbelievers and "undesirables," He chose to be their neighbor.

Do we tend to make contact with non-Christians, especially those from other lands and religions? Take a couple minutes to consider the network of people you have selected.

1. Start by writing the names of people in each category with whom you have strong ties.

MY PERSONAL NETWORK

[Adapted from the Aurora, Ill., Case Study materials of Dr. C.D. McConnell.]

<u>Family</u>	<u>Friends</u>	<u>Fellow workers</u>	<u>Church members</u>	<u>Neighbors</u>	<u>Relations</u>
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2. Place a question mark next to each one who is a believing Christian.

How many are believers? _____

How many are not? _____

3. How many are from an ethnic group different than yours? _____

Challenge of the Heart

The purpose of today's exercise is not to make you move your home, but to move you to ask: Lord, am I living in too narrow a circle? How can I broaden my contacts with people of other races and beliefs?

Prayer: Jesus, lead me into the adventure of loving new people.

Week 3, Part 4

Read Isaiah 8:19-9:7

The Old Fishin' Hole Ain't What it Used to Be

"When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritualists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. . . . For to us a child is born, to us a son is given" (Is. 8:19; 9:6).

In the verses just before Is. 9:1-4, we see God's concern for people who consult mediums and spiritualists. It sounds as though the Lord is talking to people today who are dabbling in the so-called New Age, which is really a mixture of old Hinduism and old spiritualism reheated like leftovers in the microwave of pop culture. Most of us grew up assuming that mission work had to do with speaking the Good News to people of distant lands and different languages. But in recent decades, many fellow North Americans have drifted far from Christian influences. As a result, you are likely to have neighbors and co-workers who look like you and speak the same language you do, but their world views are nothing like yours.

What is a world view? A world view is the lenses through which a person looks at everything. It is the answers we have constructed to questions like: Who am I? Why do I exist? What is right and wrong?

Christians have their world view-lenses crafted by God's Word and Sacraments. The world view-lenses of our non-Christian neighbors are crafted by TV talk shows, popular movies, secular rock videos and textbooks based on the myth of evolution. Their lenses leave them in the dark.

Our neighbors need the Good News of Is. 9:6: "It's a boy! And His name is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" [rough translation]. This Child is now grown up, lifted up on the cross, raised up from the dead, and moved up to the Father's right hand. He is the light that must dawn on those living in our land of the shadow of death.

Challenge of the Heart

Without moving an inch, you have entered a semi-pagan mission field. As one of Christ's ambassadors to North America, how can you acquire the essential missionary skills listed below?

Speak their lingo:

Become familiar with their culture:

Understand their world view:

Prayer: Jesus, help me reach the fish You placed in my local pond.

Week 3, Part 5

Read Isaiah 6:1-6

The Old Fishin' Hole Goes International

"You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy" (Is. 9:3a).
God has been stocking our old fishin' hole with new, exotic fish.

Twenty years ago, Chad, a missionary to Latin America, read a book about Islam. Recognizing that Islam is a major obstacle to God's mission goals, Chad wished he could do something about Islam, but very few Muslims lived in the country where he served. So Chad simply promised, "Lord, if you ever send me to a Muslim country, I will be glad to study Islam and learn to witness to Muslims."

Years later, Chad returned to the United States. Life went on as normal until one day he heard a startling statistic: Due to many immigrants and some American converts, today the United States has more Muslims than either Missouri Synod Lutherans or United Methodists.

"Lord," Chad said, "I live in a Muslim country without even realizing it! I guess it is time to keep my promise."

Historically, the arrival of each new wave of immigrants to our shores is greeted by ambivalent reactions. Why do some folks respond to today's immigrants with complaints and bigotry?

Massive immigration has not taken God by surprise; it is His wise plan. Just as the Lord promised to enlarge the Jewish nation, so He is enlarging our nation today. He is internationalizing our fishin' hole. Isaiah stresses that this should cause us great joy, not consternation.

Think about it. What blessings and opportunities are available to Christians who welcome new immigrants with Christlike love and witness?

Challenge of the Heart

To keep his promise, our friend Chad decided to devote one hour per week to get to know Muslims. Prayerfully consider what kind of small, attainable promise you could make as God's ambassador to immigrants.

1. Person I could serve:

2. Things I could do:

3. Time I can invest:

Prayer: Father, help me to rejoice, not complain, about the new hearts You have brought nearby for us to love as You have loved us.

Week 3, Part 6

Read 1 Cor. 1:10-17

Some Would Rather Fight than Fish

"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Cor. 1:10).

Richard Hook drew a marvelous picture of Jesus and His fishing buddy disciples. All of them are grinning as they carry nets and oars, rejoicing in the camaraderie and challenge of fishing.

After describing a fishing trip that turned sour due to endless rain, writer Max Lucado concludes: When anglers don't fish, they fight. Rather than casting lines into the water, they cast stones at each other. [*Max Lucado, In the Eye of the Storm (Dallas: Word, 1991), 55-57.]

The church in Corinth faced this problem. They had divided into four factions all so busy pointing fingers at each other that they had little time or energy remaining to point unbelievers to the Savior.

Churches today face this problem. For 20 years, a congregation in the Southwest had talked about reaching out with the Gospel to their growing Hispanic neighborhood, but they rarely ventured beyond mere talk.

Then a new pastor and a couple dozen members, motivated by concern for lost hearts, eagerly encouraged several bold actions. For a while, progress was made. But then the party of "We Like Things Just the Way They Are" raised its voice, and progress skidded to a halt.

Jesus said that when a new soul is brought into the kingdom, there is partying in heaven. Tragically, when a church is split into parties for and against mission work, there are fewer new believers to party about.

Challenge of the Heart

Here are some tough questions about your church.

1. What attitudes, if any, might keep my congregation from engaging in multi-ethnic ministry in our area?
2. What divisions, if any, in my church might limit the mission vision and activity of my church?
3. How could our divisions be repaired? Who could help promote peace? Hint: Consult Matt. 18:15-20.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to stop fighting and enjoy fishing for hearts – together.

Week 3, Part 7

Small Group Discussion
Learning Together from Jesus

In addition to reviewing the week's materials, consider these:

1. Loosen things up with laughter. Obtain a copy of "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish" by Dr. Seuss. Have someone read it to the group and share the bizarre illustrations. Then reflect: What does the story have to do with Jesus' promise, "I will make you fishers of men."?

2. What kinds of people has the Lord placed in your local fishing hole? Use the list below for starters. Remember, there doesn't need to be 10,000 people in a category to merit your attention. One is enough.

International college students	High school exchange students	International business travelers
Recent immigrants	Ethnic groups	New Agers
Agnostics/atheists	Migrant farmers	Pro-choice advocates
Refugees	Radical feminists	Pornography merchants
Visiting athletes/coaches	Street gangs	Tourists from overseas
Pregnant teens	Physically challenged	After School kids

3. More than 90 percent of the ethnic minorities in the United States live in urban areas. Therefore, to do cross-cultural ministry often means doing urban ministry. What obstacles does this pose for suburban and rural Christians?

How might the obstacles be overcome?

4. Some early missionaries were intrepid pioneers, but not all of us are so fearless. What difference would it make if you could learn to do local cross-cultural work with a small team of supportive believers?

5. Suppose that 10 members of your church want to do a particular kind of local mission outreach. Must they receive majority approval at a voters meeting before they can proceed? Or are they free to simply go ahead and do what they believe is God's will?

6. As a group, identify someone who doesn't know Christ. Then design an innovative way to show that you care and that God cares about him or her.

7. To learn more about local multi-cultural ministry, study as a group "Harvest Waiting," by Donald Moorman (see Resource List).

Week 4, Part 1

Hearts Turned Toward the Lost

God turns the world right side up through people whose hearts He has turned inside out. Believe it or not, this really does make sense. In Acts 17:6, opponents of the Gospel refer to missionaries Paul and Silas as "these that have turned the world upside down" (KJV). To God's opponents, Christian mission work seems like turning the world upside down. But from God's perspective, the world is already topsy turvy due to human sin and rebellion. God's mission turns the world right side up again, as the Good News of Jesus Christ turns hearts back to the Lord. God's Holy Spirit daily works wonders in the hearts of believers, growing fruit such as kindness, goodness and faithfulness (Gal. 5:22-23). Unfortunately, sometimes Christians allow these fruits turn a bit sour by using them only for themselves or for a select group of people. When our hearts are directed only toward our own local concerns, the Spirit works to turn our hearts inside out, toward the needs of the lost world. Christians participating in God's mission are confronted by many challenges: different languages, cultures, beliefs. These challenges lie outside us. The Bible texts we will consider this week describe challenges that reside within us, namely, the qualities exhibited by the person who is dedicated to God's mission. These are the greatest challenges of the heart. Knowing that we could lose heart at this point, our Savior assures us with promise after promise.

As we rejoice together in the promises, we also will be encouraged to face the challenges together with other believers.

Heart Story 4: I Am a Mission Team's Heart

I am a mission team's heart. I'm a different kind of heart, the combined mission concern of Christians in a congregation who have been equipped by their pastor and teamed with him to touch the world together. I was born nine years ago during a conversation at church.

Chip, a rescue team paramedic, said, "I'm amazed how often we run into Mexican people in my job. The dispatcher always calls on me to interpret, just because I had two years of high school Spanish."

Sharon, a secretary in the county offices, responded, "I saw some stats the other day. Ten years ago there were only 40 Hispanic households in the county. Today there are 1,500."

"Tell me about it," said Ralph. "My real estate firm is always showing homes to Latino families. Many of them used to be migrant workers, but now they are settling down."

Then Chip posed the question that started me beating, "What can we do to share Christ with them?"

Before long I was racing with constant activity: teaching English as a second language; learning how to cook real Mexican food; teens from church working summer jobs in the fields right alongside Hispanics; friendships blossoming; learning Spanish; Good News being shared; new births in Christ; small groups in homes studying "La Biblia"; Spanish worship services; Ramon, one of the Hispanic members, studying in the church's theological education program, to teach his people.

How I grew in strength during those three years. But that was only the beginning. Sharon proposed that the group expand into resettling refugees. In response to this new challenge, Jose and Felicidad joined the small mission team, making me a multi-cultural heart.

Marvelous new experiences flowed through me: finding housing for the refugees; procuring jobs; teaching American ways; learning their ways which, upon reflection, often made good sense; teaching English as a foreign language; hearing tragic tales of suffering and loss in their homeland, and then opportunity in this land; struggling to share Christ in a meaningful manner with Buddhists, Muslims and practitioners of voodoo.

During this time I became a divided heart. The opportunities grew so large that the mission team split into two and then four teams. Dividing doesn't break a mission team's heart. It only made me the proud parent of more mission teams. Have a cigar!

I nearly burst with joy a few years later when I became an overseas heart. Chip, the paramedic, was the first one to go on a short-term mission experience. He couldn't stop talking about Nigeria! Others followed his example, stretching me to many ends of the earth.

Today I'm bursting with joy, because in worship this morning Chip is being commissioned as a full-time missionary to Thailand. Now part of me is overseas permanently, and part of me is here supporting him. Thank You, Lord for making me so resilient!

Week 4, Part 2

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Someone Worth Boasting About

"Christ Jesus . . . has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord'" (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

Boast, brag, crow, show off. Whatever you call it, when we were children our elders instructed us to refrain from it. Yet here is Paul the missionary telling Christians to boast. How? The boasting you are to refrain from is blowing your own horn, patting yourself on the back, flattering yourself, glorifying yourself. Obviously, such actions are self-centered. In contrast, Paul calls you to boast in the Lord, to blow horns for Him, to glorify Him. This is a different thing entirely. Boiled down to its essence, our mission activity is simply boasting about God to people who do not realize His worth. How worthy is He? Christ is so mighty that His seeming "weakness" on the cross puts our dinky strength to shame. The Lord is so wise that His so-called "foolishness" of forgiving sinners puts human wisdom to shame.

Boasting in the Lord is nothing less than witnessing to others about His goodness. For example, an older Christian enjoys telling unbelievers: "There is no limit to God's love and personal caring. I have never been able to exaggerate anything good about Him. No one who has trusted Him has trusted Him too much."

Challenge of the Heart

Practice boasting in the Lord. In 1 Cor. 1:30, four terms describe Christ. Consider what each term tells you about His worth. For each one compose a brief "boast" suitable for sharing with others. May God open doors for you to share your boasts of His goodness.

1. Jesus is wisdom from God
2. Jesus is our righteousness
3. Jesus is our holiness
4. Jesus is our redemption

Prayer: Lord, help me boast about You aloud so others will hear.

Week 4, Part 3

Read Micah 6:1-8

The Way to Draw People to a Living Faith

"With what shall I come before the LORD? . . . He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:6,8).

To many Christians God's mission is nothing more than an envelope. Place some cash or a check in it, and your mission obligation is done. God's mission is not a matter of the wallet, but a matter of the heart.

Charles, a newly arrived missionary, worried how he, born and raised in wealthy suburbs, would ever relate to the poor slum dwellers he was beginning to serve. Stateside, a Christian named Dorothy wondered how to become friends with some sari-clad Hindu women in her community.

The solution to the concerns of both these Christians is found in Micah 6:8. With the help of the Holy Spirit, Charles and Dorothy acted justly, loved mercy and walked humbly with their God as they mingled with the people. After a period of such honest interaction, the people accepted Charles and Dorothy as caring friends.

Jesus modeled the lifestyle Micah describes. The Lord acted justly, living a holy life in our place. The Savior loved mercy, extending God's pardon to every category of sinner. Christ walked humbly with His God all the way to the cross, where He earned our redemption. What a Savior! What an example!

Bartolome de las Casas, a 16th century missionary to Latin America, called Christ's lifestyle of justice, mercy and humility "the only way to draw people to a living faith." Las Casas' conclusion proved itself correct for Charles and Dorothy, whose lives demonstrated the Gospel they professed. May it hold true for you as well.

Challenge of the Heart

Take a moment to consider how each of these qualities could enhance your personal witnessing and your mission involvement.

1. Act justly

2. Love mercy

3. Walk humbly with God

Praise God for ways He has already strengthened you with any of these qualities. Ask Him to strengthen areas of weakness. Write down the weaknesses so that you can be encouraged as God answers your prayers for change.

Prayer: As Your love has drawn me to You, may Your love working through me draw still others to You.

Week 4, Part 4

Read Matthew 5:1-9

Care of Self, Care of Others

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

The human heart is a servant of the entire body, relentlessly pumping blood to every cell in the body. Thus the heart and circulatory system illustrate what the Church is to be doing: circulating the saving Gospel of Christ to every person on earth. But does the heart ever serve itself?

Yes, it does. In fact, an amazing 20 percent of the blood the heart pumps goes to the tissues of the heart itself. Think about that. One organ the size of your fist receives one-fifth of your blood. The heart works so hard and so relentlessly that it needs such tender loving care.

The example of the heart reveals that Christians need God's tender loving care. A heart that delivers all its lifeblood elsewhere would not survive long. A church that spends itself entirely for others would wear itself out.

That's why the Father provides us His tender loving care. That's why Christ satisfies us with His righteousness won for us on the cross. That's why the Holy Spirit feeds us through the Word in worship and Bible study settings.

Just as the heart provides itself with the resources to serve the whole body, so through our baptism our Savior provides us with the His own qualities, so that we have the wherewithal to love others near and far.

Take a moment to reflect on some of the Christlike qualities mentioned in the Beatitudes. How could each one prove useful in serving the nations and speaking to them about the Gospel of Christ?

Christlike quality Use in serving and witnessing

Poor in spirit _____

Mourning _____

Meekness (humility) _____

Longing for righteousness _____

Mercifulness _____

Purity of heart _____

Peacemaking _____

Challenge of the Heart

In light of God's tender loving care of His church, how much should my church care for its own needs? How much for the needs of the unsaved both near and far?

What is the proper balance?

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for caring for me so that I can care for others.

Week 4, Part 5

Read Matthew 5:1-12

God's Mission Is a Laughing Matter

"Blessed. . . . Blessed. . . . Blessed. . . . Blessed. . . . Blessed. . . . Blessed. . . . Blessed. . . . Blessed. . . . Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5:2-12).

Jesus is so honest. And He calls us to be honestly happy. With candor, He admits that being His people in mission calls for poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness and hungering. Pure-hearted, merciful peacemakers will know persecution, insults and accusations.

Now be honest with yourself. What is holding your heart back from being more involved in mission challenges? What are your fears and apprehensions? What objects and privileges are you clinging to so tightly that you find it hard to serve the world?

Jesus calls us to be honestly happy, in spite of outside opposition and inner fears. The Greek word for "blessed" also means "happy."

Read the Bible quote at the top of this page again. Like a church bell pealing Easter joy, your Savior repeatedly promises that a lifestyle centered in God's mission will bring you invaluable blessings that really endure.

Below are listed the blessings of Matt. 5:3-12. Jot responses to the questions.

How happy does it make you? For how long?

Blessing	How happy	For How long
• The kingdom of heaven	_____	_____
• God's comfort	_____	_____
• Inheritance of the earth	_____	_____
• Filled with righteousness	_____	_____
• Shown God's mercy	_____	_____
• Seeing God	_____	_____
• Called a child of God	_____	_____
• Great reward in heaven	_____	_____

Challenge of the Heart - Take this assignment seriously.

1. Recall a time when you served or witnessed to an unbeliever. Regardless of how it turned out, smile and chuckle about it in thanks to God for that chance to display His loving heart.

2. Now, picture an upcoming opportunity to serve or witness to someone. Anticipate the blessing. Smile, cheer and even laugh aloud regarding what God will do for that person through you.

Prayer: Lord, help me exchange little blessings for Your greatest blessings.

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Week 4, Part 6

Read Matthew 5:1-12
Teamwork!

"When He saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them" (Matt. 5:1-2).

Is God's world mission an individual sport or a team sport? The many events in which Olympic athletes compete can be categorized as either individual sports or team sports. For instance, a marathon runner must complete all 26.3 miles of the course alone. Meanwhile, victory in volleyball calls for the coordinated choreography of six teammates on the court.

So, is your participation in God's global mission an individual sport or a team sport? To answer, take the following multiple choice quiz.

Which translation is more accurate?

1. In John 20:21 Jesus said (select one):

- a. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you alone.
- b. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you all.

2. In Acts 1:8 Jesus promised (select one):

- a. Only you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes . . . and you will be my sole witness . . . to the ends of the earth.
- b. You all will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes . . . and together you all will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth.

3. In Eph. 6:11 Paul advises (select one):

- a. Put on the full armor of God so that you all by yourself can take your little stand against the devil's schemes.
- b. Put on the full armor of God so that all of you can take your united stand against the devil's schemes.

In every case, the correct answer is "b," because all the verses are stated in "you" plural, not "you" singular. Clearly mission is a team event.

Challenge of the Heart

If you are not already in a small group of Christians who are united by their concern for the lost, approach your pastor for guidance in forming such a team.

1. What do I gain by uniting my mission heart with others?

2. What can I contribute to a "mission team"?

3. With whom should I team?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, bless all the small groups in Your global mission team, the Church. Guide our efforts until the task is completed.

Week 4, Part 7

Small Group Discussion Hearts United in Mission

1. What issues from this week's material do you want to discuss with your discussion group?
2. Do small group mission teams already exist at my church? What new ones could be formed? Which one could I participate in?
3. To participate in certain aspects of God's mission, one must have special training and a call or certification (pastor, teacher, physician). To participate in any part of God's mission, one must draw on emotional, physical, financial and time reserves. Picturing these reserves as a bank accounts, describe your current assets in each account with terms such as prosperous, in the black, breaking even, needy or broke.

Emotional

Physical

Financial

Time

Which reserves seem to be well supplied? Which are running low? For advice on how to replenish your supply in any of these areas, consult Richard Swenson's book "Margin" (see the Resource List).

4. A small group mission team cannot deal with all the world's needs. It should focus on just a few areas. Which of the following areas appeal to you? How could your pastor or director of Christian education help you prepare for such an outreach? Who might join you in doing a one-mission-group sized role in these areas?

_____ A specific country

_____ An un-evangelized people group

_____ Evangelism

_____ Children's ministries

_____ Adult lay education

_____ Media ministry

_____ Medical ministries

_____ Bible translation

_____ Printing and literature distribution

_____ Support of missionaries

_____ Support of national workers

_____ Refugee resettlement

_____ Ministry to international students

_____ Local ethnic outreach

_____ Relief and development

_____ Justice and freedom from oppression

_____ Short-term mission trips (one week to one year)

Other: _____

Other: _____

5. Below are listed some of the key activities of Senders. Which of them appeal most to you? Who would enjoy one of the other activities?

a. Motivate and recruit missionaries _____

- b. Train and prepare missionaries _____
- c. Pray for missionaries _____
- d. Communicate with and for missionaries _____
- e. Financially support mission work _____
- f. Care for furloughing missionaries _____
- g. Encourage missionaries and their families _____
- h. Help returning missionaries re-adjust to home _____

Resources for Growth in God's Mission

LCMS World Mission produces the Mission Education Handbook, short mission videos which describe the work in many fields and many other items. Your church office may have a catalog of materials.

To order resources, call 1-888-930-4438, send an e-mail to mission.orders@lcms.org, or write to LCMS, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.