

# ***Purpose – Filled, Mission – Skilled***

***A Self-Study  
Workbook For Youth***



Developing Skills to Help You Make His Mission Your Purpose

For inquiries regarding editorial content, please contact:

Youth Mission Education  
4200 North Point Parkway  
Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176  
Or call (770)-410-6000

Published by the North American Mission Board, SBC; 4200 North Point Pkwy.; Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176  
A Southern Baptist Convention agency supported by the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®

For general information, call (770) 410-6000, or visit [www.namb.net](http://www.namb.net);  
to order materials, call Customer Service Center, 1 800 448-8032, or fax, (615) 251-5983.

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All inquiries should be addressed to: Editorial and Design Manager, North American Mission Board, SBC; 4200 North Point Pkwy.;  
Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176; or call (770) 410-6292; or fax, (770) 410-6006; or e-mail [permissions@namb.net](mailto:permissions@namb.net).

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*.

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Compiled by Shelley Smith and Alan Huesing

Edited by Shelley Smith

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preface

by  
alan  
huesing

# The Call to Follow Christ

*“Come ...” is Jesus’ simple invitation to us.* Come in faith, just as you are.

Come and see for yourself just how great He is.

“Follow me ...” is Jesus’ *challenge* to believers. Follow His example in every area of life. Follow Him wherever He leads.

“I will make you *fishers of men*” is Jesus’ *promise* to His followers. He changes our focus from ourselves to others as we keep our eyes on Him. Our purpose is to bring others to Him. He gives us the tools and skills to be effective.

It’s simple: If we follow Him, He makes us “fishers of men.” We become *on mission* with God to reconcile the world to Himself. If you want to be an *on mission* Christian, come and follow Him. If you are *not* becoming a fisher of men, then you must not be following Him.

This workbook will help you follow Him to become a *purpose-filled, mission-skilled* fisher of men.

Alan Huesing

Youth Mission Education Strategist, NAMB

***“Come, follow  
me ... and I  
will make you  
fishers of men.”***

***Matthew 4:19, NIV***

by  
George  
Siler

chapter .01

# Introduction: The Challenge to Live *On Mission*

**I was one of those elementary school kids** who quickly learned the meaning of the phrase “out in left field.” At recess or after school when there was a kickball or softball ball game to be played, I was the one who got sent to some remote corner of the playing field. My buddies figured that the best players needed to be closest to the action.

I remember the boring routine of patiently awaiting my chance to do something. It was tough to stay focused. Maybe that is why when Jack (the big guy who could grow a beard and talk deep when the rest of us still sang in boys’ choir) hit a fly ball my way, I was so excited I forgot what to do! My one chance to contribute to the team fell to the ground and rolled between my legs.

It has been a common complaint for many years in churches that most of the work is done by only a few people. All the other members are left “out standing in the field.” Does this analogy fit your experience with church? Have you decided that since you are young or that there are others with more talent or conviction, the best thing for you to do as a Christian is to sit on the pew and watch?

Perhaps your experience as a believer is more like the football team that practices constantly, has weekly team meetings to determine strategy, and even dresses out in full uniform *but never plays a game!* It is possible for a Christian to study the Bible, worship regularly with others and even prepare for service but never actually do anything for God’s kingdom.

In this workbook, you are going to be challenged to become a key player, an active participant in the mission God has given to the church. Be warned! True Christianity is no spectator sport! Anything less than personal, practical and passionate involvement in your relationship with Christ is to live beneath your

*“But you will  
receive power  
when the Holy Spirit  
comes on you;  
and you will be  
my witnesses  
in Jerusalem, and  
in all Judea and  
Samaria, and to the  
ends of the earth.”*

*Acts 1:8, NIV*

# First Things First

- ① Your heart tends to run from God and rebel against Him. The Bible calls this “sin.” Because of sin you are separated from God. Romans 3:23 (NIV) says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- ① Yet God loves you and wants to save you from sin and offer you a new life of hope. John 10:10 (NIV) says, “I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full.”
- ① To give you this gift of salvation, God made a way through His Son, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:8 (NIV) says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Continued ● ● ● ● ●

privilege. The writers of these pages are firmly convinced by the Word of God that every believer should be an *on mission* Christian. As you work through this study, it will be your decision whether you wish to “get in the game or ride the bench.”

Let’s take stock of your situation right now. Evaluate yourself in the following inventory:

1. Have you received Jesus Christ to be the Rescuer (Savior) and Boss (Lord) of your life?  
 Yes  No  
*(Note: If you answer “no” here, please take a moment and read the sidebar “First Things First.”)*
2. How involved are you in personal Bible study?  
Rarely   1   2   3   4   5   Regularly
3. How would you describe your progress in living a godly life?  
Losing ground   1   2   3   4   5   Really growing
4. How often have you shared your testimony for Christ with a lost person?  
Never   1   2   3   4   5   Often
5. How would you describe your prayer life?  
What prayer?   1   2   3   4   5   Praying without ceasing
6. Could you share the plan of salvation with someone in two minutes or less?  
Forget it!   1   2   3   4   5   Bring them on!

How well did you rate? This exercise may be intimidating, but don’t stop here! Whether you are currently a benchwarmer in the spiritual life or a heavy hitter, this workbook can show you how to translate your commitment to Christ into a critical role in God’s kingdom. You will have the opportunity to fulfill your potential as an *on mission* Christian.

## What Is the Mission?

Locate Acts 1:8 in your Bible and read it.

Describe in your own words what is the mission that Christ has committed to His followers. (Write your answer in the space provided on the following page.)



## First Things First

⊙ You receive this gift by faith alone. Ephesians 2:8 (NIV) says, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

⊙ Faith is a decision of your heart demonstrated by the actions of your life. Romans 10:9 (NIV) says, *“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

Continued ●●●●●

Did you notice that this Scripture verse is both a command and a statement of fact? Jesus said that we *should* be and *would* be witnesses for Him everywhere we go. This mission Christ has given is for *all* believers, not just the “professionals,” like pastors and missionaries. It is important to see that Jesus gave a *sequence* to this mission: first comes the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and then comes the witness for Christ.

Can you describe an experience in your life when you tried to do something for God and it did not seem to work?

Is it any wonder that so many Christians think witnessing is a chore or obligation? They took off for their Judea, Samaria or the farthest part of the world without considering what God wanted to do in their lives first. God wants to bless each of us with His Holy Spirit and meet our needs. Then He wants to show us how to be a blessing to others.

### The *On Mission* Christian

As you work through this book, it will be tempting to think that Christians come in two grades: regular and super premium. You may ask, “Why pay the cost for premium if regular will get you to heaven?” Stop reading for a moment and ponder that thought. Why complete this workbook?

If you are saved, what gain is there in making a deeper commitment of yourself to Christ? (Write your answer in the space provided on the following page.)



## First Things First

If you are choosing right now to believe Jesus died for your sins and to receive new life through Him, pray a prayer similar to this to thank Him for your new life:

*“Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died to forgive me of my sins. I now accept Your offer of eternal life. Thank You for forgiving me of all my sin. Thank You for my new life. From this day forward, I will choose to follow You.”*

If you prayed this prayer, share your decision with a Christian friend or pastor.

If you are not already attending church, find one in which you can worship and grow in your faith.

Following Christ’s example, ask to be baptized as a public expression of your faith.

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There are no grades or categories for believers, but there are degrees of maturity and obedience. Hebrews 5:12-14 demonstrates that you can choose to remain a “babe in Christ.” If so, don’t expect it to be an easy way of life. You will miss out on the promises and blessings offered to those who prefer to grow in Christ. Becoming an *on mission* Christian means learning, taking on responsibilities and earning trust for the sake of God’s kingdom so that you can make an eternal difference in this world. Compare it to the efforts you must make to get a driver’s license. The investment of study and practice pays off when you get the privilege to drive!

There is no secret path to supernatural success. The Bible gives us clear and simple guidance about what we can and should become in Christ. Even so, our churches seem to be full of believers who have yet to make any real progress in their spiritual lives. Will you defy that trend and choose to become an *on mission* Christian? Here is a four-step process that can help you understand what is an *on mission* Christian and the direction of this workbook:

An *on mission* Christian is ...

⊙ **spiritually awakened**

to a personal responsibility for the Great Commission of Jesus.

Check out your heart! It’s time to throw out all the selfishness and make enough room to start caring for the needs of a lost world. Al Denson recorded the song “Will You Be the One?” to help young people see the tremendous need for God today and the incredible opportunities they have to minister. *Will you let God fill you with compassion for a lost world and show you how to do something about it?*

⊙ **continually adjusting**

to overcome or remove barriers that keep people from hearing the gospel.

Open up your mind! You need to become humble and teachable if Christ is going to work through you. Sometimes the mission will require you to change your attitudes or try something new. The apostle Paul stated, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22, NIV). The *on mission* Christian eliminates excuses and when necessary takes risks in order to build bridges to others. *Will you overcome your desire to be comfortable and make whatever changes or sacrifices are necessary to share Christ with anyone?*



🎯 **evangelistically active**

in using all of his or her gifts and abilities to serve Christ and lead others to know Christ.

Put on your running shoes! Your Christian faith must become a lifestyle of action and initiative. The *on mission* believer is not content to merely wait for someone to approach him but is constantly on the lookout for “divine appointments” and opportunities to serve and share Christ. *Are you willing to get personally and practically involved in what God is doing in this world?*

🎯 **passionately advocating**

the cause of Christ and helps other believers to learn and get involved in the mission.

Lift up your voice! Once you discover the joy and significance of being *on mission* for Christ, it is time to mobilize others. The needs of the world are too great for you to go it alone. God is too big for you to hoard Him to yourself. The *on mission* Christian is not only passionate for lost souls but also for the multiplication of inspired believers serving God. *Are you ready to celebrate God’s activity and victories through other on mission Christians?*

Let’s see how well you understand this process of becoming an *on mission* Christian. Answer the following to show how the four steps apply to your life and circumstances:

What does it mean for you to be spiritually awakened?

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What kinds of adjustments need to be made in your life to be *on mission*?

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What do you need to be doing to be evangelistically active?

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*“In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”*

*Hebrews 5:12-14, NIV*



*It is possible for a Christian to study the Bible, worship regularly with others and even prepare for service but never actually do anything for God's kingdom.*

How can you serve as a passionate advocate for others to be *on mission*?

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## Missionaries Are Made Not Born

If all this seems overwhelming to you, take heart. The process of becoming an *on mission* Christian is a lifetime project, not an overnight marvel. This workbook will help you take it one step at a time. In the chapters that follow, you have the opportunity to learn specific skills. Some of these may be familiar to you from your previous learning and experience as a Christian. Others, however, will introduce you to a whole new way of thinking.

How well-acquainted are you with the 12 *on mission* skills and understandings listed below? Think of this as a pre-test and check the most appropriate box beside each.

Familiar	New	Skill:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Knows the mission that God has for rescuing the world
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prays for guidance and for the salvation of others
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Targets a group of lost people
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trains to understand the cultures of lost groups
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develops relationships with a wide variety of people
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategizes to reach target groups
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develops strategic partnerships to accomplish the mission
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trains to be effective in serving others
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Implements specific plans to reach others
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Delivers the message of the gospel to others
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disciples new believers
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shares the mission with other Christians

Now, go back and put a check mark beside each skill that is outwardly focused (turning from self to others). Get the picture? Now you are beginning to understand what it means to be a missionary!

A whole chapter in this workbook is devoted to each of these skills. Our purpose in discipleship is to draw closer to God in love and obedience. As we do so, we take on more and more of His heart for people who are separated from Him, living in ignorance or rebellion. Growing in Christ becomes something more than knowing God for our own sake only.

Take a moment to read 2 Corinthians 5:16-20.

Once we have been reconciled (made right) with God, what does God then wish for us to do?

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What a great honor! God doesn't save us to put us on a shelf to sit like a trophy. He commissions us to be *ambassadors*, special representatives of His grace to the rest of mankind. With this great honor comes a responsibility to be as ready and able as we can.

### Where Is the Mission Field?

Have you been on a mission trip or project with your church or youth group? Have you noticed that you view people and places differently when you are *on mission*? Consider a visit to a theme park: You could go with your friends to have a good time, but if you are on an evangelistic youth choir tour and this is one of your places to sing, your perspective changes. Now, sharing the gospel through music with park visitors becomes more important to you than riding the rides.

Going to the mission field is more a state of mind than a trip to a location. It is a matter of availability to God and awareness of others. The opportunity to share Christ with a lost person can come in a journey across the world, but also, for most of us, it can come in a simple walk across the street. Your first mission field, then, is that of yourself—your life. As I have mentioned before, your experience with God must be real if you really wish for Him to use you.

Think of your mission fields as ever-widening concentric circles. From **self**, your focus then broadens out to include your **family**. Sometimes, one of the most difficult challenges for a Christian is to model the Christian life in front of unsaved family members and relatives. If you fail to be *on mission* here, your credibility is at stake. Faithfulness in sharing Christ with those closest to you helps you to be genuine when God gives you the opportunity to witness to the lost in your other mission fields. You will encounter them in your **church**, your **school/workplace** and your **neighborhood**. Your circle of mission fields stretches to include your **association** of Baptist churches, your **state**, your **nation** and finally, your **world**.

## True Christianity

*is no spectator sport!*

*Anything less than*

*personal, practical and*

*passionate involvement*

*in your relationship*

*with Christ is to live*

*beneath your privilege.*

**Becoming an  
on mission  
Christian means  
learning, taking on  
responsibilities and  
earning trust for the  
sake of God's kingdom  
so that you can make  
an eternal  
difference  
in this world.**



The call to be *on mission* involves all of these areas. Your day-to-day routine may give you plenty of opportunities to be a faithful witness in your mission fields close to home. In less routine ways, you will be able to impact your world through your praying, financial giving and participation on mission trips and projects. Someday, God may even lead you to embrace a faraway nation or people group as a missionary, but not as an excuse to disregard your faithful witness close to home.

### Effective Missions Calls for Strategy

My first time to be engaged in a witnessing strategy was like the nightmare of a timid Christian. As a naive 13-year-old, I was sent with a group of youth from my church to a wealthy neighborhood armed only with evangelistic tracts and a goal to knock on as many doors as possible. I had plenty of enthusiasm but very little tact. I had a mission field but little knowledge of what it would take to be effective. After several slammed doors, a confusing encounter with an agnostic, and a number of sympathetic “Are you trying to earn your way to heaven?” looks, I concluded I was a failure as a witness.

Poor strategy and poor preparation can often hurt more than help a witness for Christ. It's true that you don't need a degree in evangelism before you can witness. At the same time, it's best not to neglect the things that will help you better relate to people, present the gospel more effectively and go where the people have not heard.

A strategy may be as simple as writing out your testimony so you can share it clearly with a close friend. It may be as complex as learning a second language

and developing career skills that will help you start churches in another country. The important thing to understand about a strategy is that it should help you be purposeful, specific and resourceful, as well as dependent on God to be *on mission*.

In this workbook, we want to introduce you to *on mission* strategies. For step-by-step plans to help you and your church lead people in a specific mission field to Christian faith and discipleship, check out the North American Mission Board's new *on mission* strategies (e.g., *Campus Missionary*, *My Home Mission*, *Operation Visitor* and *Second Commandment Call*) at [www.studentz.com](http://www.studentz.com). These strategies have had to meet high standards before being promoted as such. They include ways to motivate you to serve, pray, form partnerships, develop practical skills and make appropriate presentations of the gospel in a particular mission field.

## Effective Missions Requires Work

- 1 **On Mission Devotional**—Using the “Four A” process of becoming an *on mission* Christian (i.e., awakened, adjusting, active, and advocating), find additional Scripture passages that relate to each aspect and put together a devotion to share with your youth group or a Christian club at school. Discuss ways that you and your fellow students can help each other become *on mission*.
- 2 **Interview**—Identify someone in your church who has recently been on a mission trip. Conduct an interview asking questions like these:
  - a. Was this your first experience in a mission project?
  - b. What were your expectations before the project?
  - c. What surprises did you encounter during the project?
  - d. What changes have you made in your attitudes and lifestyle since becoming involved in mission projects?
  - e. What skills have you learned or developed in mission projects that you can use at home as well?
- 3 **My Mission Field**—Look over the mission fields described in this chapter. In which field closest to you is there a person you know who is not a believer? If you have not already done so, begin praying for this person and seek an opportunity to share your witness and testimony.

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George Siler is minister of youth and missions at Faith Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tenn. A graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, he served for 12 years in youth ministry at churches in Kentucky and Alabama. He also previously served as associational director for World Changers, a Southern Baptist program offering hands-on mission experiences for youth and adults. He and his wife, Betty, have two sons, Jonathan, 11; and Weston, 14.

***There is no secret path to supernatural success. The Bible gives us clear and simple guidance about what we can and should become in Christ.***

**Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian  
knows the mission.

# Knowing the Mission

*“I have brought  
you glory  
on earth by  
completing  
the work  
you gave me to do.”*

*John 17:4, NIV*

## Imagine you just arrived

at a big game in the college basketball arena downtown. You’ve waited all week for this game; but, just after the opening tip off, you sense something is very wrong. The home team controls the ball, but when they shoot, everyone suddenly realizes—there’s no rim on the backboard! The ball bounces around and is rebounded by the opposing team. They dribble down the court, but there it is again: a backboard with no goal. This game is actually being played with no goals! Both teams shoot well, and people clap because the shots looked like they might have gone in if there had been a rim; but unfortunately, it’s all a guessing game. No one knows. No one scores. And eventually, no one cares.

I realize this sounds ridiculous. Any sport is pointless without a goal. Every football field has an end zone. Every baseball field has a home plate. Every soccer field has a net. And that’s what makes the game so fun. We know what the mission is! But for most Christians in our country, this is what separates sports from real life. Sadly, most people don’t know what their mission is. If they do, they have long forgotten how it applies to their lives. The result is a life with about as much purpose as a basketball game without a goal. It’s activity without accomplishment.

The purpose of this chapter is to connect you to God’s mission for reaching the world. By the end of this chapter you will know how to link your life to God’s purposes for the world!

## God’s Purposes for the World

Let’s begin by seeing what the Bible has to say about God’s purposes for the world. Take a moment and read Psalm 67. This short Psalm contains God’s vision

to make Himself known to the whole world. Did you notice it contains both the TOP LINE and the BOTTOM LINE of the covenant we have with Him? The “top line” is about God blessing us. We love that part! But the “bottom line” is about our response to this blessing. We are to turn around and bless all the other people who are not yet experiencing the “top line.” We often fail to participate in this because we are so consumed with the “top line”—being blessed ourselves! Look at the Psalm again:

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us” (Psalm 67:1, NIV). This is about the TOP LINE—God blesses us.

“That your ways may be known on the earth, your salvation among all nations” (Psalm 67:2, NIV). This is about the BOTTOM LINE—we bless the rest of the world.

“Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us” (Psalm 67:6, NIV). This is about the TOP LINE—God blesses us.

“God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him” (Psalm 67:7, NIV). This is about the BOTTOM LINE—we bless the rest of the world.

As soon as you meet Christ and have been blessed by Him, you become a candidate to participate in the “bottom line.” Once you’re blessed, you are called to bless others!

Read Matthew 4:19. Jesus made this statement to fishermen. What did He mean?

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Read Matthew 28:19. You can tell what is most important to a person by their last words. This verse contains one of Jesus’ final statements. What does it say about God’s priority for our lives?

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Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. Right after Paul has taught us we are “new creatures” in Christ Jesus, he adds that God has given us a ministry to perform. What is this ministry, in your own words?

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***“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, 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, NIV***

***“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”***

***2 Corinthians 5:18-19, NIV***



*Paul's mission lived on  
no matter where he was. ...  
His goal wasn't  
maintenance. ...  
His goal was fulfilling  
the mission God gave  
him till his dying breath.*

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-2. According to this verse, how urgent is our mission to make Christ known to everyone?

Read Romans 10:13-15. It is easy to excuse our laziness and disobedience by saying, "God is big enough to reach the world without us." However, this verse tells us we have an important role to play. What is it?

### **A Case Study: Paul, a Mission-driven Man**

Read Philippians 1:12-18. It is clear that the apostle Paul was writing from a Roman prison. He wasn't free to be out doing what he really wanted to do. He was locked up. He was in chains. He was awaiting a trial that he thought might end his life.

But did you catch his attitude? It is almost like he didn't care where he was! He writes: "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ..."

Paul's mission lived on no matter where he was. He wanted to share Christ with as many people as possible—regardless of the situation he found himself in. He was a mission-driven man. His goal wasn't maintenance—just getting through the day. His goal was fulfilling the mission God gave him till his dying breath. Even in prison he played offense, not defense.

What are some of your "prisons" in life? What distracts you from focusing on the mission?



Why is it so easy to forget our calling to live “on mission”?

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What enabled Paul to stay focused?

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How did Paul’s attitude affect his lifestyle?

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What is one lesson you can learn from Paul in this passage?

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*We are saved from our own selfish, meaningless lives when we **grab hold of a purpose** bigger than ourselves. That’s what God provides for us.*

### **Purpose Saved a Life!**

Years ago the *Associated Press* published a newspaper article from Biloxi, Miss., about a 25-year-old woman who decided to commit suicide one night. Life just wasn’t worth living for her. So she climbed on top of a bridge over the Mississippi River and jumped into the cold water below, to what she thought would be her death.

However, a man stood at a distance watching everything. When he realized what she was doing, he rushed over to where she had jumped and decided he had to rescue her. Without a second thought, he plunged into the river to save her life. It didn’t occur to him until *after* he had jumped that he didn’t know how to swim. In midair, he began to panic—screaming, waving his arms and kicking his feet as he hit the water.

# Think It Over, Write It Down

In one or two sentences, write out what you understand God's mission on earth to be.

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*Continued*

The woman suddenly heard him as he hit with a splash. Forgetting her own despair, she pushed toward the surface of the water, spotted the man and realized he needed *her* help. She swam over to him, pulled him to the shoreline and called the hospital. As fate would have it, both of them ended up in hospital beds next to each other.

The article ended with a great insight. The journalist typed the following conclusion to the article: "That evening, it wasn't the gentleman who saved that woman's life. It was, in fact, a purpose."<sup>1</sup> Get it? For one moment, that depressed woman had a purpose: saving a man's life. There was something to accomplish. Something to live for. A reason to go on.

I believe the same truth works in our lives every day. We are saved from our own selfish, meaningless lives when we grab hold of a purpose bigger than ourselves. That's what God provides for us. His gift to us is not only our salvation but a huge mission that should energize everything we do!

## Uncovering Your Role in God's Mission

Your role in God's mission is not something you "create" but uncover. God has placed it inside of you from the beginning of your life. Before you examine your own identity and experience, take a look at the following list. It represents a set of GUIDELINES for you to make sure your mission statement is God's idea, not merely your idea for your life. Your mission ought to ...

### 1. Begin with God's priorities.

Your mission doesn't begin with your agenda but with God's purposes on earth. He wants to reach the world with the gospel. His purpose can be summed up in two statements: The Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Every Christian's life mission should be to fulfill God's mission. Your purpose is to love God with all of your heart, soul and mind, and to love others as you love yourself (*Matthew 22:37-39*). Your purpose should involve more than increasing the profits of some corporation—it should communicate Christ to your world. It begins with God, not you.

*God, what are you doing in the world, and how can I link my life to what You are already doing? How can I participate in Your top priorities?*

### 2. Revolve around your identity.

Next, your role in God's mission should reflect your own personality, gifts, passions, burdens, etc. It will be unique from other people because you are a unique part of the body of Christ. Your role should not be a copy of Billy Graham's or your friend in the youth group. You need to become aware of the role you play in your church. What abilities do you bring to the table?

*God, what piece of the puzzle will I play as I attempt to provide a picture of Jesus to the world? What is my area of specialty?*

**3. Include other people.**

If your mission is going to reflect God’s heart, it must include other people. No one’s mission should be accomplished in isolation. You cannot do it alone. We are called to be part of a “body” (1 Corinthians 12:14-20). What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others lives on. You may know someone who likes to be alone and feels his or her purpose is to work in seclusion. That’s just not how God works. If you are looking for your God-given mission, it will always include serving others.

*God, who am I reaching with Your message of salvation? Who can serve alongside of me, as they pursue Your mission in their lives?*

**4. Contain life-changing convictions.**

Only when you have something worth dying for do you really have something worth living for. It has been said: “It is nothing to die. It is an awful thing to have never lived.” Your friend may feel his purpose is to skateboard for the rest of his life. That may be a lifetime hobby for him, but it certainly doesn’t contain any divine life-changing convictions. What are the things you would die for? With what cause in God’s kingdom do you most identify? Which one matches your heart? How important is it for you to be on mission with God? Are you willing to make the necessary adjustments? Remember: Jesus died on a cross for His convictions and mission. In fact, His death on the cross fulfilled His mission to the world. We all need to give our lives to a cause that we would gladly die for.

*God, what are my values and convictions that match Your heart? What priorities in my life overlap with Yours? What would I die for?*

**5. Have eternal value.**

Finally, if you are pursuing God’s mission, it will affect eternity in some way. You won’t be simply moving things around on earth. Others will make it to heaven because of your work. For example, social justice and feeding the poor are wonderful causes. But if all we do is help others have a better life here and they still end up in hell, how have we really helped them? Feeding the poor may be the platform for our ministry, but we must share the gospel with people. Eternity should be changed by what we do.

*God, how does my mission help to make disciples of all nations? How am I sharing Christ with others as I fulfill my mission? How will heaven be different by the work that I do?*

**Discovering Your Role in God’s Mission**

Now for the big exercise of this chapter. The following list of five items represents the issues you must think through as you consider your own mission. I encourage you to respond to each question, then attempt to write out a mission statement for your life.



**Think It Over, Write It Down**

In one or two sentences, write out what your role in God’s mission might be. Be as specific as possible.

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*Continued*



# Think It Over, Write It Down

What are you doing to fulfill your role right now? To whom are you accountable?

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## 1. Natural Talents and Spiritual Gifts

What abilities do you possess? What are you naturally good at, such as organizing or planning, working with your hands, artwork, athletics? What do you do well? What God-given gifts do you possess since becoming a Christian? Have you explored ministry opportunities and discovered your “motivational” (central) gift in Romans 12:6-8?

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## 2. Results and Fruit

When you participate in activities, what produces the most? What do you do that really bears fruit or brings results? Are you noticeably better at certain activities? For example, some might say the most productive way they participate in “the mission” is to organize events. Others could say it is doing graphics. Some might say it is promoting a project. Others could say it is encouraging others to be a part of the youth group. How about you?

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## 3. Fulfillment and Satisfaction

What do you deeply enjoy doing? Do you ever serve others or do something and feel like that was what you were built to do? What activity is personally satisfying to you?

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#### 4. Affirmation and Recognition

What do other people who know you well say about you? Does anyone compliment you on things you've done? What do mature believers confirm about your gifts and calling?

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#### 5. Circumstances and Opportunities

Finally, what is in front of you right now as an opportunity? God's mission for you will likely start with a simple step right under your nose. Are you seizing your opportunities?

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### One Final Word ...

Just over 100 years ago, a man by the name of Alfred woke up one morning, sat down for breakfast and read the morning paper. He was shocked by what he read. His own name appeared in the obituary column. Someone had made a mistake and thought he had died.

His obituary read: "Alfred Nobel. Swedish chemist. The inventor of dynamite, he died a wealthy man having enabled mankind to destroy more swiftly and efficiently." This caused him to become very uncomfortable. Was this how he would be remembered? His wealth and the creation of dynamite? He decided to make some changes. He started a fund that would reward people




### *Your role in God's mission*

*is not something you*

*"create" but **UNCOVER.***

*God has placed it inside of  
you from the beginning  
of your life.*





*Your mission doesn't begin with your agenda but with **God's purposes** on earth. He wants to reach the world with the gospel. ... Every Christian's **life mission** should be to fulfill God's mission.*



annually who fostered peace instead of destruction. He put most of his money in this fund. You've heard of this man. Mr. Nobel started the Nobel Peace Prize.

Toward the end of his life, he was quoted as saying: "I believe everyone deserves a chance to change their obituary in mid-life."<sup>2</sup>

Do you understand what this chapter will allow you to do? Change your obituary. Go for it!

## Personal Checkup

Are you ready to fulfill God's mission for your life? Are you excited about participating in this mission to reach the world? In order to do this, you must know God and yourself very well. Continue to study the Bible and explore opportunities for ministry that lie in front of you to learn new things about yourself.

How do you measure up to this *on mission* checklist?

- I have a growing relationship with God.
- I have discovered my talents and gifts and know what I do well.
- I understand clearly what God's mission for the world is.
- I know people who model a "mission-driven" life and inspire me.
- I can see opportunities to participate in "the mission" in front of me.
- I have a desire to obey God that is stronger than my fear.
- I love to see people begin a relationship with Christ, and I pray for those who don't know Him personally.
- I get excited about sharing Christ and playing a part in someone finding Him.
- I can identify verses in the Bible that clearly speak of God's mission for the world.
- I hunger to see the world know the Lord.

## Your Next Steps

- 1** Read the story of Jonah in the book of *Jonah*. He knew the mission but ran from it. Can you think of a time when you ran from God's mission for you?

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**2** Later, Jonah obeyed, with a little help from a fish. When have you obeyed God's mission for you and what did it take for you to do so?

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**3** Compare the lives of the following biblical characters. Some of them knew and acted on God's mission for them and some did not. Note which ones did which.

- |             |               |                     |
|-------------|---------------|---------------------|
| a. Samson   | d. Paul       | g. King Saul        |
| b. Nehemiah | e. Pilate     | h. Peter            |
| c. Jonah    | f. King David | i. John the Baptist |

**4** Interview one person who you believe lives on mission. How did they begin to live this way? What steps and sacrifices did they make?

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Tim Elmore is vice president of Leadership Development, EQUIP, a not-for-profit organization founded by Dr. John C. Maxwell, Atlanta, Ga. He has authored several books including *Mentoring: How to Invest Your Life in Others* and *Soul Provider*. He is a popular lecturer at seminars and retreats on the topic of effective spiritual leadership. He and his wife, Pam, have two children, Bethany and Jonathan. For more information about the ministry of EQUIP, visit [www.equiporg.org](http://www.equiporg.org).

<sup>1</sup> Og Mandino, *University of Success* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1982), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Doug Murren and Barb Shurin, *Is It Real When It Doesn't Work?: When Formula Christianity Fails You* (Nashville: Nelson, 1990).

## Do!



- ☉ Discover your role in God's mission.
- ☉ Utilize your gifts and talents.
- ☉ Grow closer to God.
- ☉ Lead others to be reconciled to God.
- ☉ Affect eternity.

## Don't!



- ☉ Work in isolation.
- ☉ Try to fill someone else's role.
- ☉ Live for yourself.
- ☉ Run from God's mission.
- ☉ Forget your mission.

**Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian  
prays.

# A House of Prayer

*"These I will bring to  
my holy mountain and  
give them joy  
in my house of prayer.  
Their burnt offerings  
and sacrifices will be  
accepted on my altar;  
for my house will  
be called a house  
of prayer  
for all nations."*

*Isaiah 56:7, NIV*

## Have you ever been out to eat with your friends

and someone begins the "thumbs up" prayer game? The idea is that the last person to stick up his thumbs has to pray before the meal, implying that person is the "loser" and it is a burden to pray. Seeing this as a teaching moment, I usually say something like, "I consider it a privilege to talk with our Heavenly Father. I will be glad to lead us in prayer and thank Him for our food!" (Remember to smile if you choose to say this to your friends or you will come away looking like a Pharisee!) The truth is: Prayer is a holy privilege, not an uncomfortable obligation.

Prayer is like talking with someone you love. For example, I love to talk with my wife. I want to know her thoughts and I want her to know mine. I feel like I can say anything—no matter how deep or how trivial—without the fear of being judged or ignored. This kind of communication reaffirms our love for each other and frees us to fulfill our mission. My mission as a conference speaker demands a lot of traveling and time away, but I have a great cell phone contract free of roaming and long distance charges. I may be in a different state each week, but we call each other *at least* three times throughout the day—sometimes about office matters and sometimes just to talk. Around 10 o'clock each evening, we have an unofficial "phone date." I anticipate our time together and will excuse myself from groups to have this time alone with my wife to talk about our day.

The anticipation of a conversation between you and your Creator draws you to the place recommended by Jesus—a place free of distractions and pretense—inside your room where meaningless recitations are exposed and honest communication is practiced. You spend this time praying out of gratitude and longing, not out of ritual, obligation or guilt. Communication is a normal part of a healthy



relationship. Longing to talk with the one you love, to spend time alone with them, wanting to know their thoughts and feeling free to reveal yours—these things are at the heart of prayer.

How many times does Jesus use the phrase “when you pray” in Matthew 6:5-8?

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What is He assuming by saying “when you pray”?

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## Building a House of Prayer

Prayer is the first step in the mission process, and I believe it is the most important. Every other step is dependent upon it. For instance, we cannot truly know His mission without communicating with Him. Then, as we spend time with Him, His guidance becomes clear and we discover who He wants us to “target.” Prayer gives us confidence to step outside our comfort zone and show compassion for the people we are seeking to reach. It ignites the transformation process—we begin to think like Him, understanding people by seeing them through His eyes. Everything we do will bear His mark because it will be a product of a deep, meaningful relationship with God. Our mission will have an eternal impact when it is born and nurtured in a house of prayer.

Some people never pray unless something bad happens. What does that say about their relationship with God?

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It is crucial for an *on mission* Christian to move beyond what most of us were taught about prayer when we were younger. “Saying our prayers” before bed and “saying the blessing” before a meal had a purpose when we were children, but prayer is much more than a verbal ritual to christen an event or “bless” the food.

One day in Jerusalem, Jesus encountered people in the temple area who were taking advantage of others and making a mockery of the sacrificial system

*Our mission will have  
an **eternal impact**  
when it is born and nurtured  
in a house of prayer.*

*Prayer is a **holy**  
**privilege**, not an  
**uncomfortable obligation.***

# Food for Thought



⦿ **Are you comfortable praying in public (i.e., leading the prayer before a meal, praying aloud in your church or Bible study group, leading in prayer at an organized event, etc.)?**

⦿ **Are you comfortable praying in private?**

(Note: Having difficulty praying in public is not a problem. Public praying will take care of itself as you mature in Christ.

However, difficulty praying in private is a serious spiritual problem. Left uncorrected, it will have a negative affect on your life and mission!)

(Matthew 21:12-13). Jesus said to them, "It is written ... 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'" Part of what He quoted was from Isaiah 56:6-7 which adds the phrase "for all nations." This *house of prayer* is not a social club where we admire the trophies of those whose prayers were the longest or the most eloquent. It is a launching pad for ministry. It connects us with God and partners us with people of all nations.

A big part of communicating with God involves learning how to listen. I have never heard God audibly speak, but His "voice" has at times been crystal clear.

How do we know some of the obvious "yes" or "no" answers to our prayers?

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True or False: God may say "yes" to something in our prayers, even though He has already said "no" to the same thing in His Word.

True  False

Prayer is not about twisting God's arm and forcing Him to do your will. It is more about getting in step with what He is already doing and seeing things from His perspective. Test your discernment and ability to get in step with God in the following scenarios:

Julie is very much in love with Jason. She has been praying that Jason would accept Christ, but he seems very opposed to the idea. Julie and Jason have been dating for six months and their feelings for each other have become very serious. Julie is praying about whether or not Jason is "the one" for her. She is seeking God's blessing on their relationship but doesn't seem to have clear direction.

What do you think God's answer for Julie might be and why?

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Mark is an exceptional singer and musician, but his testimony has been compromised several times because it is so important for him to be accepted by

his friends. He is afraid to share his faith and knows very little about God's Word beyond John 3:16.

Mark has made contact with some influential producers in Christian music who are urging him to pursue a contemporary Christian music career. He is praying about this opportunity and telling everyone he is sure God is leading him into this ministry.

What could God really be saying and what could Mark be missing?

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Ashley is 16. Her relationship with her mom and dad is so bad she looks for any opportunity to get out of the house. She can't remember the last time she had a real conversation with her parents.

Ashley has been praying desperately about her dating life. Nothing seems to be working out for her socially, even with her girlfriends. She feels like God isn't even listening, much less answering her prayers.

What could God be trying to say to her?

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Describe a time in your life when you felt the need to pray desperately. (What were the circumstances that brought you to this point? How did you feel as you prayed?)

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(Additional space provided on following page.)



## Do!

- ☉ Be authentic.
- ☉ Make private praying a priority.
- ☉ Learn to listen to God.
- ☉ Pray for guidance and power.
- ☉ Pray for specific lost people.
- ☉ Pray always.



## Don't!

- ☉ Use meaningless and repetitive phrases.
- ☉ Limit yourself to public praying.
- ☉ Make prayer a religious ritual.
- ☉ Pray only in emergencies.
- ☉ Pray in opposition to God's Word.
- ☉ Use prayer for personal attention.

“But when you pray,  
**go into your room,**  
close the door and pray  
to your Father, who is  
unseen. Then your Father,  
who sees what is done  
in secret will reward you.”

**Matthew 6:6, NIV**

**Prayer is not about twisting  
God’s arm and forcing Him  
to do your will. It is more  
about **getting in step**  
with what He is already  
doing and seeing things  
from **His perspective.****

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## God Is in the House: Developing a Lifestyle of Prayer

### 1. Go to Your Room

The times you pray in public—around a flagpole, an organized “prayer walk,” a prayer meeting, before a meal—should be in addition to the times you pray in private. Public praying should never be a substitute for time alone with God inside your room. (What would you think about a guy who loves to stand in the spotlight before thousands and eloquently proclaim his undying love for his girlfriend, but he rarely communicates his thoughts and feelings to her in private?) Praying in public is certainly appropriate, but Jesus taught the best way to engage with God in prayer is to go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret. By the way, your “room” doesn’t have to actually be your room!

List names of the people praying and their private places in the following Scripture passages:

Matthew 14:23 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 22:39-46 \_\_\_\_\_

Daniel 6:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 10:9-20 \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Seek God With All Your Heart

I was a freshman at the University of Alabama and one of my favorite bands was coming to do a concert. Certain this event would quickly be sold out, my roommate and I camped out the night before tickets went on sale. It was January and it was cold. Sometime after midnight, it began to rain. Soaked and shivering, we stayed in line until the ticket office opened and gladly paid a ridiculous price for some of the best seats in the house.

The “best seats” in the house of prayer are reserved for anyone who has a passion for God. He has put Himself in a position to be found. All we have to do is pay attention. A lot of things compete for our attention, so some sacrifices will need to be made.

When we seek God with all our heart (*Jeremiah 29:11-13*) we discover His mission and learn to pray passionately for people who don't know Christ personally. Desperate praying activates our love for God and others. The benefits of knowing God far outweigh any of the sacrifices.

What adjustments or sacrifices need to be made in your life if you are to seek God with all your heart?

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What is the difference in seeking God's will and seeking God?

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### 3. Be Real

People guilty of “babbling like pagans” usually are not aware they are doing it. It is easy to fall into the trap of using empty phrases in our prayers. Part of the process in learning to pray is to listen to others pray. A common mistake is to mimic what they are saying without processing the meaning behind it.

Suppose you said to a friend, “Hello, Steve! It's great to see you. I really enjoyed watching you play football the other day and I like the way you play soccer, too!” I am sure Steve would appreciate this encouragement from you. Then, on the very next day, you see him again and say, “Hello, Steve! It's great to see you. I really enjoyed watching you play football the other day and I like the way you play soccer, too!” The next time you see him, you say the same thing. The day after that and the day after that, you say the exact same thing. Pretty soon the words sound meaningless and pretentious.

Don't recite your prayers to God—be authentic! He isn't counting the number of words in your prayers and He isn't critiquing the eloquence of your speech.

“ ***For I know the plans I have for you,*** declares the Lord, ***plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and you will find me when you seek me with all your heart.*** ”

***Jeremiah 29:11-13, NIV***

*“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for **your Father knows what you need** before you ask Him.”*

*Matthew 6:7-8, NIV*



*“I tell you the truth, anyone who has **faith** in me will do what I have been doing. ... And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the **Son may bring glory** to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”*

*John 14:12-14, NIV*

Since “your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:8), why should we bother to pray?

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In the following spaces, make a list of frequently used phrases in prayers that can become repetitive and meaningless.

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According to Psalm 51:17, what are the most important things to God?

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#### 4. Pray in the Name of Jesus

Imagine a very special list. The name of Jesus is written across the top followed by the names of all those who have been saved by His grace. Anxiously, you scan the list for your name and there it is! You know it is there not because of anything you did. It was all because of Him—your Redeemer—the One whose name is written across the top in His own blood!

Because your name is on the list, you have the right to call on God. Regardless of the circumstances—no matter how good or how bad you have been—God promises He will listen. You are not praying in your name, you are praying in the name of Jesus. It is from this position in Christ that we operate. We cannot earn His favor because He has freely given it to us. We do our mission from a position of grace.

Jesus promised He would do whatever we ask in His name. This means we will not ask anything that would contradict His character or undermine His will. Right praying enables an *on mission* Christian to continually adjust to the will of God and the character of Jesus.

In John 14:12, to what kind of person does Jesus make the promise He will do whatever they ask?

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For what purpose does Jesus say He will “do whatever you ask” in John 14:13?

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## Personal Checkup

- I have set aside a time and place for daily personal prayer.
- I am praying for God’s guidance and power in my mission.
- My prayers are more honest and less repetitious.
- I am praying for who God wants me to “target.”
- I am praying for specific people who don’t know Christ personally.
- I am asking God to help me understand the people He wants me to reach.
- I am asking God to change things about me that hinder sharing the gospel.
- I am becoming more confident in leading others in prayer.
- I am discipling a new believer in the skill of prayer.
- I am sharing with other Christians the things I am learning through prayer.

### Right praying

*enables an on mission Christian to continually adjust to the will of God and the character of Jesus.*



**When we seek God  
with all our heart**

**(Jeremiah 29:11-13)**

**we discover His mission  
and learn to pray  
passionately for  
people who don't know**

**Christ personally. Desperate  
praying activates our love  
for God and others.**

## Prayer Activities and Projects

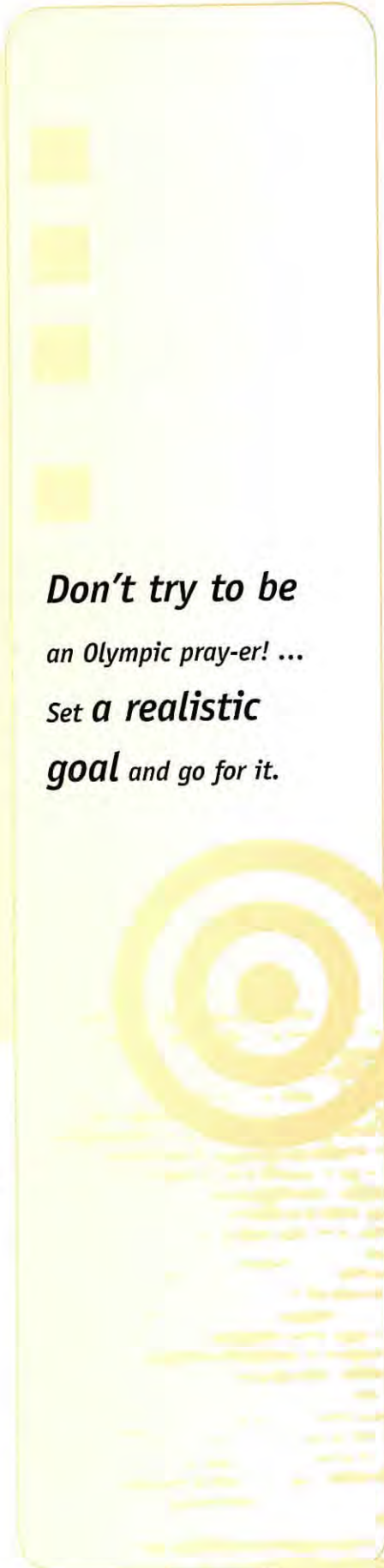
- 1** *Find a place. Set a time.* The discipline of a specific place and time will help you make prayer a priority and part of your lifestyle. Don't try to be an Olympic pray-er! (Your friends may be impressed by your getting up at 4:00 a.m. to pray, but God isn't!) Set a realistic goal and go for it. Remember, your purpose is to engage with God—not to make it through the week without missing a day.
- 2** *Design a daily and weekly prayer calendar.* Create seven columns on a page labeled with the days of the week. List those persons you want to pray for each day under each column and those you want to pray for once or twice a week accordingly. Highlight the names of those who are lost.
- 3** *Customize your calendar and use it as a reminder.* Refer to your calendar to remind you to pray as well as to write an encouraging note, send an e-mail, make a call, send a card, etc. The purpose of this calendar is to prompt you to connect with God and to stay in contact with specific people.
- 4** *Keep a journal.* Write down specific things you are praying about and record your thoughts, things about you that need to change (attitudes and behaviors which may hinder sharing the gospel), the names of people you need to "target," the relationships and partnerships you need to develop, and the strategies God reveals for you to penetrate target groups. Keep a record of answered prayers, the progress being made with new believers you are discipling, and the lost people you are trying to reach.
- 5** *Find a prayer partner.* In addition to the time you pray in private, seek a prayer partnership with someone who shares your mission. Set a specific time you can pray together for your common mission field. This could also be someone you can trust as an accountability partner, someone with whom it is safe to share struggles and personal requests.
- 6** *Partner with a new believer.* In addition to developing a prayer partnership with someone who shares your mission, you may also partner with a new believer whom you are discipling to teach him or her how to build the priority of prayer in his/her life. (With new believers, you would be their mentor, but they would not be your confidant. Use wisdom in choosing the things you reveal in your prayer partnerships!)



- 7 *Declare a “prayer initiative” and develop a prayer journal for your youth group.* Most group prayer requests are about physical needs—people who are sick, finding a job, passing a test, etc.—and hardly any are about spiritual things. With the help of your friends, declare an initiative to add spiritual objectives to your prayers: discovering your mission as individuals and as a group, reaching specific lost people, discipling new believers, changing things about your group that hinder sharing the gospel, etc. Have someone keep a journal of things your group is praying about and the results of your prayers.
- 8 *Plan a special prayer event to enable your group to cooperate with other believers who are purposefully sharing the gospel with targeted groups in your area.* Work together to make this event an act of brokenness and contrition with a focus on God, not a spotlight on who shows up to pray. Don’t schedule a speaker or a band. Instead, have different people facilitate prayers for specific needs in your community and city. This event could be the culmination of an organized community service weekend.
- 9 *Commit to a technology fast.* Dealing with distractions is necessary in communicating with God. About the third or fourth day of a youth camp, you begin to hear clearly from God—not because He lives at youth camp—because choices have been made to remove many audio and visual distractions. Commit to your own “technology fast” for a certain period of time. Choose something to do without, like your CD player, television or movies. The goal for the fast is to seek the heart of God, not to “make it” through the fast.

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Tierce Green is a singer, songwriter and worship leader as well as a popular conference speaker for youth, adult and churchwide events. His goal is to lead people into a healthy pattern of spiritual growth and daily devotion to God. Tierce Green Ministries is located in Fort Worth, Texas. For more information, visit [www.tiercegreen.com](http://www.tiercegreen.com).



***Don't try to be  
an Olympic pray-er! ...  
Set a realistic  
goal and go for it.***

**Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian  
targets a group.

# Sharpening Your Focus

Your parents have invited  
some people over to your home to eat dinner

and spend the evening. They are new to the area and have never been to your home before. Naturally, your parents want to make a good impression, so the entire family is strongly “encouraged” to clean up the house.

Your parents take one look inside your bedroom and declare it a disaster area. CDs are scattered across your dresser, floor, carpet and bed. You have printed off some great pictures and music liner notes from the Internet, and they are arranged artfully on every surface in the room. You had a few friends over last week, and the empty food wrappers and soda cans are still there to prove what a great host you were. You have a wide assortment of shirts, pants and socks left out in the open to make your selection in the mornings easier.

Are you beginning to get the picture? Your room is a wreck! How will you ever get it in shape in time for company? One strategy would be to run from corner to corner, picking up a CD, searching for its case, placing it on the shelf while grabbing a few pairs of dirty socks and tossing them in the laundry hamper to clear a space on the shelf, then running back over to your dresser and picking up an empty chip bag, and so on and so forth. You COULD choose this strategy, but it might take you all day to even clear a path and dig out your furniture! A better strategy would be to tackle one task at a time: put your clothes away, put away the CDs, pick up the food trash, and so on and so forth. This strategy allows you to focus on one area at a time, see your results more clearly, and get the job done faster and more efficiently.

Apply this same strategy to your evangelistic efforts. It can be overwhelming to think about all of the people in your world who need to hear the good news of

*“I tell you that in  
the same way there is  
more rejoicing in heaven  
over **one sinner**  
who repents than over  
ninety-nine righteous  
persons who do not  
need to repent.”*

*Luke 15:7, NIV*

the gospel. Where would you begin? You might decide to plant a few seeds with someone in your math class, smile and try to develop a relationship with the cashier at the gas station, pray for the coach of your soccer team, and invite your neighbor to a youth event. These are all “good” things to do, but you might find yourself frustrated at your lack of results. To make an impact on any one of these people, you need to invest more time than an occasional “drive by” effort. This session will provide you with the tools you need to develop a mission strategy that is more likely to produce a positive outcome.

## The Need for a Target

It is true that all people need a right relationship with God. It is also true that you will not be able to personally reach all of the people who need a right relationship with God. That is why it is important for you to begin to identify a target. If you are going to have the kind of influence for Christ that you desire, you will need to spend time attempting to understand each person you hope to win to Christ, praying for them specifically, identifying their particular needs, developing effective strategies for helping to meet those needs, and implementing specific plans to reach them with the gospel. This means that you will be most effective as an *on mission* Christian if you target a specific person or group of people and concentrate your evangelistic efforts on them.

You may have a desire to personally impact hundreds of people for Christ, but in your enthusiasm, you may fail to *effectively* concentrate efforts on any one person. Luke 15:7 reminds us that there is great rejoicing in heaven when even one sinner repents and comes to Christ.

It may help to think of this target group principle in terms of a can of paint. If you have several rooms to paint and only one can, would it be better to paint one room entirely or to paint one wall in each room? I think the answer is obvious! Or perhaps you think you can dilute the paint with water and cover all of the rooms. What will the walls look like if they are covered with watered-down paint? You will probably have to paint them again with a second coat.

Can you identify personal ways in which you have “diluted the can of paint” in your evangelistic efforts? What are they, and what have been the results?

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*You will be most effective as an on mission Christian if you target a specific person or group of people and concentrate your evangelistic efforts on them.*

What reasons might keep someone from identifying a target group for their mission efforts?

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## Back to the Bible

The idea of selecting a target group is not a new, cutting-edge mission strategy. The Bible includes many examples of individuals who focused their mission efforts on a specific target group.

*"The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: 'Go to the great city of Ninevah and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.'"*

*Jonah 1:1-2, NIV*

Read each of the following Scripture passages to identify the *on mission* person(s) and the target person or group:

Jonah 1:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

John 1:40-41 \_\_\_\_\_

John 1:44-46 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 19:1-10 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 10:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 8:26-39 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 21:37-22:21 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 16:6-10 \_\_\_\_\_

What motivated each of the *on mission* persons to select their targets?

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How might you apply this same principle to your life and mission efforts?

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*"You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last"* (John 15:16, NIV). These words of Jesus illustrate His calling on our lives. He has chosen us for His work, chosen us for spiritual service. Don't allow yourself to be frightened or confused by the last part of this verse (i.e., bearing "fruit that will last"). Christ did choose us and He does expect our efforts to produce lasting results, but those results are not dependent upon our own personal abilities. This is made very clear in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. They were divided in their loyalties between Paul and Apollos, because both of them had spent time among them as spiritual leaders. Read Paul's response to the people in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9.

Who did he say was responsible for the spiritual growth in the lives of the Corinthian believers?

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What were the roles of Paul and Apollos?

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How did their roles differ?

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How were their roles similar?

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## Identifying Your Target

God will direct you to your target group, just as He directed Philip and Paul and all of the other great biblical examples, but there are some very practical things you can do to help you understand God's directions and discern His voice.

## Your Circle

The first place you should consider when attempting to identify your personal *on mission* target group is your circle of influence. These are people

*"You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."*

*John 15:16, NIV*

*"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."*

*1 Corinthians 3:9, NIV*



***The first place  
you should consider  
when attempting to  
identify your personal  
on mission target group  
is your circle of influence.***

with whom you naturally relate on a regular basis. Because you already have a relationship with them, you have some level of influence with them. Think about these relationships in terms of a circle, with yourself on the inside. In the “target” below, write your name in the centermost circle. Then, working your way outward, write the names of your immediate family members inside the next ring. In the next ring, write the names of your closest friends. Then, continuing outward, write the names of relatives you come in contact with on a regular or semi-regular basis in the next ring. Finally, in the outmost ring, write the names of your casual school or work friends. Ta dah! This diagram or “target” represents your own personal circle of influence, a good place to begin searching for a target group.



Look back over the names you have written in each circle. Are there people in any of the categories who do not know Christ as their personal Savior? Write those names here.

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Next to each name, write needs that you know this person has or unique characteristics about this person which help you understand who each person is and what he or she cares about in life. Begin praying specifically for each of these names, asking God to teach you how to show them His love. Also pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

You might be thinking, “You make it sound like these people are automatically my target group just because I know them!” Why is it logical to consider these “circle” people as your target?

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Remember, when you already know people, you can pray specifically that God will give you an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

## Beyond the Circle

God often calls us beyond our comfort zones. Think about Jeremiah the prophet, whom God chose as a prophet to Judah. Read about his experience in Jeremiah 1:4-10.

When did God decide to use Jeremiah as a prophet?

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Why did Jeremiah object to God’s plans when God spoke to him?

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What was God’s reassurance to Jeremiah?

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*“The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. ... You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,’ declares the Lord.”*  
*Jeremiah 1:5-8, NIV*



## ***Don't be afraid***

*to go outside your closest circle of friends and relatives to identify your target group.*

## ***God has given you***

*talents and abilities that will enable you to reach people you never thought you could.*

God's reassurance to Jeremiah is also for you. Don't be afraid to go outside your closest circle of friends and relatives to identify your target group. God has given you talents and abilities that will enable you to reach people you never thought you could. You might be afraid to reach out beyond your comfortable circle, but remember: God will be with you. He will help you to expand your circles to include all kinds of people. And He will bring the results. Your job is simply to act faithfully.

To help you identify a possible target audience, think about the things you enjoy doing, the groups to which you belong, and the natural gifts and abilities you have. These can serve as clues. Complete the following chart.

### **My Groups**

*(e.g., sports teams, music groups, clubs, community organizations)*

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### **My Abilities, Hobbies and Interests**

*(e.g., skateboarding, singing, soccer, Web site building)*

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Use a separate sheet of paper if you run out of room. Next to each group and ability, hobby or interest, write a brief description of the type of person or target group that you might be able to reach because of this activity. For example: If you



play the tuba, the school band might become your natural target group. You could make it a priority to find out which band members are Christians and which band members need to know about God's love. Instead of focusing on the entire school at one time, you could concentrate your efforts on this small group.

As you think about your daily routine and the people you come into contact with regularly, who do you think God would want you to target right now? Over the next week, spend time in prayer. Ask God to show you where you should direct your mission efforts at this time in your life. Then, answer the following questions.

What is God saying to you? Who are the people God is leading you to target?

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What is your response to God?

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## Personal Checkup

- I know without a doubt that God has called me to be *on mission* for Him.
- I continuously ask God to show me people to target for Him.
- I have identified family members and friends who need to know Christ in a personal way.
- I am seeking ways for God to use me as a positive witness to my friends and family members.
- I know who my target group is and I make efforts to show love to them daily.
- I have identified my personal strengths and abilities and attempt to use them in witnessing.
- I am more focused in my mission efforts than I have been in the past.
- I constantly look for opportunities to influence my target group for Christ.
- I am witnessing positive spiritual changes in the lives of my target group.
- I ask God for His reassurance when I feel inadequate to serve Him.

## Do!

- Ask God to reveal your target.
- Become aware of those around you.
- Make an inventory of your interests.
- Consider the needs of your "circle" people.
- Identify a target and take action.
- Trust God to bring the results.

## Don't!

- Become paralyzed by uncertainty.
- Ignore those closest to you.
- Overlook those outside your target group.
- Stretch yourself too thin.
- Rely on your own wisdom.
- Forget the source of power.

## Sharpening Exercises

- 1 Draw a map of your neighborhood. Include the homes (or apartments) of at least 12 family units that live closest to you. Write the name of each person who lives in these homes. (Note: You may have to do some research to become better acquainted with your neighbors.) Pray that God will lead you to discover which of your neighbors are not Christians and need you to share Christ with them.
- 2 Make an appointment with your church youth minister, Sunday School teacher or pastor. Visit with them about students involved in your youth group who have never received Christ as their Savior. Determine which of these should be in your target group.
- 3 Ask your parents and other close relatives to help you construct a family tree, listing as many of your living relatives as possible. Investigate to find out which of these relatives are not yet Christians. Pray for guidance to know which of these should be in your target group for sharing the gospel.
- 4 Do you have an address book or a list of contacts stored in your computer? Take time to sort through your list(s), marking each contact as either a believer or not. Ask God to lead you to select from among those who are not believers the ones He wants you to add to your target group.
- 5 Make a prayer journal that includes the names of the specific people you are focusing on to lead to Christ. Arrange your journal to list specific prayer concerns for each person, steps you take to bring them to Christ, and God's activity as you observe it in their lives.

Over the next week, spend time in prayer. Ask God to show you where you should direct your mission efforts at this time in your life.

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Karen Jones received her Ph.D. in Youth Ministry from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. She has served as a minister to youth for more than 15 years and is currently an assistant professor of Educational Ministries at Huntington College in Huntington, Ind.

by  
allan  
thompson

chapter .05

# What Makes That “Other” Group an “Other Group”?

## **Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian  
trains cross-culturally.

## A current training course for evangelism

is *Share Jesus Without Fear*. In it an evangelist named Bill Fay teaches a person to ask five questions of the target person as discussion openers. If he or she indicates interest, five Scripture passages are shared, all without arguing. If the person is still interested, five more questions are asked that bring the person to the point of making a decision for Christ.

In a culture where one’s opinion is valued and sought, this approach to presenting the gospel works very well. But in a culture where people are taught to keep their opinions private and unspoken, the approach meets with limited success. Is it the gospel or the approach that is less effective in such a culture? One of the first five questions in *Share Jesus Without Fear* is as follows: “If what you believe were not true, would you want to know it?”<sup>1</sup> What if your target group thinks that truth is relative or that there were many ways to achieve immortality, gain access to heaven or find God?

Remember that a culture is the distinctives of a way a group of people lives and thinks. A group does not have to be a separate race or nationality to have a distinctive “culture.” Each age level, social grouping, economic class, even interest group has its own culture. To bring a person or a group to the place where they wish to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior requires an *on mission* Christian to learn something of the culture of his or her target group. Only then can he or she find ways to make the gospel message understandable and help new Christians in the target group best reach their own group for Christ.

*“Greater love has  
no one than this,  
that he lay  
down his life  
for his friends.”*

*John 15:13, NIV*

**“By taking the time to learn the language, customs and history (altogether, their culture) of our target group, we hope our gospel will be seen as one needed by all men, not just some American brand of Christianity.”**

**—The Thompsons**

## Making a Fit

For six years my wife and I served as missionaries for the International Mission Board (IMB) in Germany before health problems drove my family back to the States. Like most missionaries, some of my deepest memories were formed in our first year of language school. I discovered there is more than language learning that must occur before you are ready to share the gospel in an effective and understandable manner. Please read this firsthand account carefully. Later, we will apply these experiences.

### PAGE IN A MISSIONARY DIARY

Are we frustrated! We want to witness, but we can't even order bread in the local bakery without using gestures. Because our language skills are infantile, everything—from menus in restaurants, to where to find items in the hardware store—is a big mystery to us. The only thread of sanity is the other missionary family, the Jenkins, who have also been assigned to German language work.

So often we are unable to sleep. The new words and experiences of the day dance in our heads throughout the night. We want to communicate better. And now that we have learned the words and grammar well enough to communicate basic messages, we're starting to make decisions about our daily routines. Will we dress like our neighbors? Shop at the same markets as our neighbors? Buy and prepare the same foods as they do? Agree with their politics? Adopt their attitudes toward war, peace, economics, religion, virtues?

This was during the '80s, when the Cold War was real, Pershing missiles had just been deployed on European soil and the Berlin Wall was a hated symbol of division.

After a year of language school and learning the North German customs, we transferred to Trier on the Mosel (Moselle) River near Luxembourg. The Jenkins moved to Regensburg on the Donau (Danube) River in Bayern (Bavaria). We then spent a year apart in our respective towns about five hours from each other.

It's amazing how different we've become! We are in the same country, but now our clothing and even our main food specialties are different. And the dialects we've acquired are sometimes so strong that we as Americans can't understand each other's German! The regions in Germany are very distinct. After discussing it, we feel we've made great progress, because we are gradually sharing our faith with our target groups. We are acquiring their vernacular (local vocabulary), their mannerisms, the key phrases that give us the "right" to make our gospel heard. By taking the time to learn the language, customs and history (altogether, their culture) of our target group, we hope our gospel will be seen as one needed by all men, not just some American brand of Christianity."—Allan and Jana Thompson

## Who's the Misfit?

Cultures are not just different racial, language and nationality groups. They can be groups built on a common heritage (chronological), a common passion (bikers), common core values (some athletes that put winning above all else), or even a common goal (environmental groups).

What term best describes your "culture," the group of friends and family to which you belong?

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What are some of the other "cultures" or groups at your school, in your neighborhood, at your church or even among your relatives?

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Which of these "cultures" or groups do you "fit" in when you try? Which target group in your school/neighborhood/town are you trying to reach?

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What skills do you need to develop to reach this target group? (Choose from language, clothing, values, prized possessions, goals, music or 1001 other characteristics.)

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Consider how well Jesus understood and related to various groups of people. Read the following passages and write one or two words to describe the group or culture He is talking to:

Matthew 4:1-11; 8:28-32 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 4:18-22 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 4:23-25; 8:14-15; Mark 10:46-52 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 8:5-13 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 8:16; 9:32-33; Luke 8:26-39 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 10; 14:22-36; 16:21-28 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 12:1-16; 15:1-14; 22:15-22, 34-46; Luke 14:1-6; John 3:1-21 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 19:13-15 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 19:16-26 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 22:23-33 \_\_\_\_\_

## Do!



- ☺ Observe people.
- ☺ Go out of your way to be with people of other "cultures."
- ☺ Celebrate cultural differences.
- ☺ Pray for others outside your group.
- ☺ Listen with non-judgmental ears.
- ☺ Get to know people's backgrounds.
- ☺ Read back issues of *National Geographic*.
- ☺ Read old issues of *The Commission* magazine, published by the International Mission Board, SBC.\*
- ☺ Listen to music you wouldn't personally buy CDs for.
- ☺ Watch a TV show popular with your target group.

Continued

\* For subscription services and back orders of *The Commission* magazine, contact the IMB's Resource Center at 1 800 866-3621; fax (804) 254-8980 or e-mail [resource.center@imb.org](mailto:resource.center@imb.org).



# Don't!

- ⊗ Get stuck in a rut.
- ⊗ Limit your friendships to people like yourself.
- ⊗ Be afraid of people who are different.
- ⊗ Label people.
- ⊗ Read just one kind of magazine.
- ⊗ Make quick judgments about people.
- ⊗ Insist everyone conform to your culture.
- ⊗ Love only those who love you.
- ⊗ Make fun of other people's clothing.
- ⊗ Mock the accents and verbal mistakes of foreign born students.



Luke 5:12-14; Matthew 8:2-4 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 5:27-32; 19:1-10; Matthew 9:9-13 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 8:43-48; 10:38-42 \_\_\_\_\_

John 4:4-26 \_\_\_\_\_

John 18:33-38; 19:7-12 \_\_\_\_\_

Notice that all but one or two of these groups of people were of the same race (Jewish), spoke the same language (Aramaic), and lived in the same country (Israel). However, they each clearly had their own distinctive culture.

Now, beside each of the culture groups above, write the name of a modern equivalent in your world (for example, lepers = people with AIDS). Notice that several are the same. Then, circle the groups that you feel you understand and relate well with.

Paul spoke at least two major languages and several dialects. (Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 and Acts 21:37-22:2.) We as missionaries learned a dialect after studying standard German at language school. Speaking the "heart language" of the people you want to reach is important. Test your skills at expressing truth in the "language" of several different "culture" groups.

How would you make John 14:6 (NIV), "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,*" understandable to a 6-year-old?

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\_\_\_\_\_

To an athlete? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

To a senior citizen? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

To a newly arrived immigrant? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

To a person on welfare? \_\_\_\_\_

To a very wealthy person? \_\_\_\_\_

### **GROW Into It!**

The three main “skills” that help a person to understand the culture of another group are appreciation, observation and listening. Let’s take a look at these skills.

*Appreciation*—A wise seminary professor once said, “Every man is my superior in at least one way.” That approach to life says you can learn something new from every person and every culture. The skill of appreciation looks for things in the selected culture that show creativity, beauty, strength, innovation, love of nature and unlimited other qualities you may find desirable.

Identify two groups you have a hard time relating to (e.g., senior adults, wealthy people). What is one thing that you appreciate about these groups?

*Observation*—We often say that first impressions are lasting impressions. While this may be true in one’s own culture, it is often misleading when trying to interpret what’s happening in another person’s culture. Therefore it is important that you not form hasty conclusions about why people do certain things in another culture. You may not understand the language, the signals they are giving, the historical meanings behind their behaviors, or what will be accomplished by the behavior.

Describe a time in your life when you misinterpreted someone’s actions and it resulted in a misunderstanding?

“As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, ‘May I say something to you?’ ‘Do you speak Greek?’ he replied. ‘Aren’t you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?’ Paul answered, ‘I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. **Please let me speak to the people.**’ ... When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic (a Hebrew dialect), ‘Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.’ When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic (Hebrew dialect), they became very quiet.”  
Acts 21:37-22:2, NIV

“About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God**, and other prisoners

were listening to them.

Suddenly there was a violent earthquake. ... At once all

the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came

loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison

doors open, he drew his

sword and was about to kill himself because he thought

the prisoners had escaped.

But Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all

here!’ The jailer ... brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs,

what must I do to be saved?’ They replied,

‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.’ ”

Acts 16:25-31, NIV

*Listening*—The better a person is at listening to others, the more patient he becomes, the slower he is to judge and the more credibility he receives when it is his turn to share something (like the gospel).

What are several techniques you can use to help you listen more productively (e.g., establish eye contact)?

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All three of the skills listed above have their origin in our relationship to God. We must first learn to appreciate that God is different than us. He thinks differently, acts differently and holds different values. We cannot see God in His totality; we can only observe the results of His words or actions. And because His ideas and plans are perfect and ours are not, prayer should consist more of our listening to God instead of God listening to us.

Paul, the master missionary, became quite adept at all three skills. Luke’s account of Paul’s mission work in the book of Acts illustrates how he and his partners used these skills to understand and relate well to many different groups throughout their journeys. Consider just a few of these groups and how Paul ministered to them: a slave girl (Acts 16:16-21), prisoners and their guard (Acts 16:22-40), and Greek scholars (Acts 17:16-34).

Read about Paul and Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:16-40). When the slave girl was harassing them, they could have responded by lashing out at her instead of confronting the demon within her. Or, they could have just ignored her shouting.

Which one (or more) of the three cross-cultural skills did Paul use to help him realize what was really happening?

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Why do you think the other prisoners did not escape from the Philippian jail when the earthquake opened the doors and broke the chains?

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In the dark jail how did Paul know that the Philippian jailer would harm himself?

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A missionary with less cross-cultural skills would not have had the understanding to be useful to anyone in this difficult situation in Philippi. As guests on a mission in a foreign culture, Paul and Silas carefully observed how the slave girl was being exploited, appreciated their unique opportunity to minister to fellow prisoners through praise and worship, and listened to the command given to the jailer when they were transferred to the city jail (v. 23).

Now read Paul's "stopover" in Athens (Acts 17:16-34).

What had Paul observed about the Athenians? (v. 23)

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What did Paul express appreciation about when he spoke at the meeting of the Areopagus? (v. 22) \_\_\_\_\_

What had he listened carefully to? (v. 28) \_\_\_\_\_

Paul was able to deliver an undiluted gospel message to the heathen but highly educated Athenian elite on their own turf and in their own terms. In a matter of days he was effective in gaining a platform, an audience, and a following in a truly pagan culture. Paul was truly mission-skilled!

We can learn so much about how to cross cultural barriers by reading and thinking about Paul's experiences in the Near East (Acts 13), in Europe (Acts 16 and 18), before government officials (Acts 24), with the Romans (Acts 28), and so on.

Are you careful to observe and truly listen to people from "other" groups?

Yes  No

Are you too eager to persuade them to adopt your viewpoint and values?

Yes  No

Do you have and show a genuine interest in understanding others and learning their "culture"?

Yes  No

*"Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: 'Men of Athens! I see that in every way **you are very religious.***

*For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: **TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.** Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to **proclaim to you!**"*

*Acts 17:22-23, NIV*

*“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 all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:26-28, NIV*

Which of the three skills needed to understand the cultures of target groups (i.e., appreciation, observation or listening) is your strongest?

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Which one is your weakest? \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Checkup

Use the following checklist during your daily quiet time to note your progress or need of it in training cross-culturally. When you can honestly answer “yes” to the statement, place a check mark in the appropriate space.

- I have selected a target group of people who are different from me to reach for Christ.
- I have begun to pray for this group.
- I have listened to music typical of the group.
- I have attended social or athletic functions where many of this group attend or participate.
- I have learned words or phrases that are unique or typical to this group’s vocabulary.
- I can identify core values that this group holds.
- I can make distinctions between my own group and the group I am attempting to reach.
- I believe that every person needs Jesus as Lord regardless of race, social standing or country of origin.
- I have a friend who is a member of my target group.
- I know at least one Christian from among my target group.

## Breaking in a Comfortable Fit

Following are starting points to improve your appreciation, observation and listening skills. Make notes about what you have already learned regarding each group and what you would like to do in the future.

- 1** Choose one of the following AGE GROUPS to focus on: a) newborns and toddlers—help in church nursery or preschool; baby-sit for neighbors’ babies; b) preschool children—help lead children’s church or Mission Friends; c) elementary age children—help lead RAs, be a

counselor at summer camp, watch them play at recess; d) junior high/senior high—attend a school function of theirs like a basketball game; e) college/young singles—attend a school or athletic club function, observe them interacting in the student center; f) middle-aged adults—observe them conversing at a restaurant or your church’s Wednesday evening meal; g) older adults—go to a senior adult recreation center and listen to the topics of conversations.

- 2 Choose one ETHNIC GROUP represented at your school or in your community. Eat lunch with them. Go to an event where they are in the majority. Go home with them. Listen to their music, listen to two or more of that ethnic group talking and/or interview them to discover their core values. Observe body language.
- 3 Apply the same activities to one of the following SOCIAL GROUPS: a) athletes; b) computer geeks; c) band or choir members; d) alternative crowd; e) those living in multi-housing. (This could be repeated with groups according to economics, politics, language, geographical location, etc.)
- 4 Study a foreign language, then use it to communicate.
- 5 Have a person from the target group change places with you for 12-24 hours in each other’s family.
- 6 If you have access to the Internet and e-mail/chat rooms, find someone who is as different from you as possible and converse about some common subject. Print out the conversation for later study.
- 7 With permission from both parents and your group leaders, watch and discuss a movie such as *Dances With Wolves* or *The Mission* with others in your youth group, Challengers or Acteens group. Learn how the main character of the movie acquired the skill of training cross-culturally.

Allan Thompson is in his 12th year as the director of the Baptist Student Ministry at East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas. Before that, he and his family served the International Mission Board as missionaries in what was then West Germany. He has served the Lord in youth and student ministry for 26 years and is the proud husband of Jana and proud father of Joel and Ryan.

<sup>1</sup> William Fay and Ralph Hodge, *Share Jesus Without Fear* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997), p. 29.

*To bring a person or a group to the place where they wish to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior requires an on mission Christian to learn something of the culture of his or her target group. Only then can he or she find ways to make the gospel message understandable.*

**Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian develops relationships.

# Making Friends Forever

## In your quest to become

a mission-skilled Christian, you know your mission and purpose. You've been praying for guidance and power. You have focused your *on mission* attention and efforts on a specific "target" group of people who need to know Christ. Now, as your Great Commission to "go into all the world and make disciples" is ringing in your ears, answer these two questions:

1. How will you approach and penetrate your lost world?
2. Whose *on mission* example are you going to follow?

Well, the second question ought to be the easiest one in the book. If you are going to follow someone else's example, it had better be Jesus'. After all, He's the only One who could ever say, "Follow Me (my example) and I will make you fishers of men," much less, "All power in heaven and earth is given to Me" or "I will be with you always." (See Matthew 4:19 and 28:18,20.)

So, what was Jesus' approach? Did He *talk* the world to salvation? Although He was a tremendous teacher and known as the rabbi who had the right answer to every question, He didn't lecture or preach His world to God. Did He *work* them into His kingdom? He did mighty miracles and helped lots of people, but few, if any, became reconciled to God because of His miraculous social ministry. Then, how *did* He win the world and establish His kingdom? The answer is so simple and provides an example that any one of us can follow. Jesus shared salvation, forgiveness, the kingdom of God, Himself ... with His *friends*. His ministry was building friendships with all kinds of people—some along His path and some that He had to seek out. Jesus saw His target group as friends to be won rather than enemies to be conquered. The four Gospels are full of examples.

***"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."***

***John 15:13, NIV***

## Jesus: A Really Friendly Guy

Jesus experienced friendships on the same levels as we do. Read John 1:35-42. In verse 35, we meet John the Baptist and two of his friends: Andrew and John, the author of this Gospel. John the Baptist introduced his friends to Jesus and they immediately began to follow Him.

How did Jesus respond to Andrew and John? (vv. 38-39)

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Whatever they talked about as Jesus spent time with His new friends, Andrew became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.

How did Andrew respond to this discovery? (vv. 41-42)

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When Simon, Andrew's brother, came and met Jesus for himself, Simon and Jesus immediately became friends.

What did Jesus give Simon? (v. 42) \_\_\_\_\_

Now read Luke 5:1-11. Jesus had been a carpenter and was now an itinerant preacher. His new friends were fishermen. Jesus not only invited His friends to His house, He also went to where they worked and lived. As Jesus was preaching along the seashore, He met Simon and his business partners, James and John, again.

What did they all do together after Jesus had finished preaching?

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How many responded to Jesus' preaching by committing to discipleship?

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How many became disciples in response to Jesus' fishing? \_\_\_\_\_

*"When (Jesus) had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down your nets for the catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say SO, I will let down the nets.' When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ... When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' ... Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' "*

*Luke 5:4-10, NIV*

Jesus met all kinds of people and made friends with many who were very different from Himself. In fact, some of His friends were the rejects and outcasts of society. Read Luke 19:1-10.

*"As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. **'Follow me,'** he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ... For **I have not come to** call the righteous, but sinners.' "*

*Matthew 9:9-13, NIV*

Who was this man who wanted to see Jesus and what was he like?

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Zacchaeus was rejected by his own people, the Jews, because he worked for the oppressive Roman government as a tax collector. They considered him to be a traitor and a thief. (Nobody likes the man from the IRS.)

How did Jesus begin a friendship with this man who nobody else would befriend?

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Why did Jesus risk being Zacchaeus' only friend and why did He speak up for His new friend?

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What effect did Jesus' friendship have on Zacchaeus?

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Jesus met another tax collector. Read Matthew 9:9-13.

Who was this man and how did he respond to Jesus?

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Matthew threw a dinner party to introduce Jesus to his other friends.

Who were Matthew's friends?

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As a new believer, Matthew had lots of friends who were just like him before he met Jesus.

Why did Jesus attend a party with a crowd of rejects and outcasts? (vv. 12-13)

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Jesus was careful to widen His circle of friends to include those who needed the Good News. He took the initiative and made the first move or He let friends introduce Him to new friends. He often took some big risks in initiating relationships. Read about another one in John 4:4-42.

Where did this encounter occur?

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Describe the woman.

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What barriers did Jesus overcome to begin a relationship with this woman?

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*Jesus saw His target group as **friends to be won** rather than enemies to be conquered.*

*Jesus was careful to widen His **circle of friends** to include those who needed the Good News.*



*"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."*  
*John 15:15, NIV*

What risks did Jesus take to develop a friendship with her?

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What was the result of this new friendship?

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Jesus went miles off the beaten path to meet this woman. He crossed racial, cultural, language, social and religious barriers just to talk with her. He looked beyond her past and her small talk and revealed Himself to her, challenging her to know Him and be His friend forever. Then He took the time to meet and get to know her whole town of friends and enemies.

### **A Ministry Through Friends**

It is amazing that Jesus never wrote a book or traveled extensively. He lived less than 35 years. He never spoke on radio, television or any other tele-media. He owned hardly anything and founded no corporation. All He did was pour His short, focused life into His friends. It was His friends, like Matthew, who were so transformed by their relationship with Him that they could write the books and take His message and share His love (and friendship) throughout the world. Jesus accomplished His mission in and through His friends.

Read Acts 4:13. How did the enemies of the church explain the transformation and effective power of Peter and John?

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Read Mark 3:31-35. How important did Jesus say His friends were to Him?

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Why did Jesus call His disciples "friends"? \_\_\_\_\_

### **A Ministry to Friends**

If we are to be mission-skilled Christians, we must have a growing ability to develop friendships with a widening variety of people. We must become more like Jesus in our relationships with people. Consider the following example:



David, a member of the high school Challengers group at my church, has developed a good friendship with a guy at school named Joey. Their friendship put David in a great position to share Christ's love when the going got tough in Joey's life. Not long ago, David asked him how things were going. Joey just shrugged. Sensing that something wasn't right, David pressed deeper until Joey told him that he had learned the night before that his parents were divorcing.

Because these guys had already established a friendship, Joey knew that he could trust David to accept him despite his problems. He had a friend who cared. At David's invitation, Joey began to attend a youth Bible study that has supported him and helped him cope during this painful time of his life.

How many more hurting people are in our schools, communities, and even our families who do not have a friendship with a Christian who cares? We must be the friends who introduce friends to the best Friend.

List people who are not Christians who know they can trust you to be their friend when the going gets tough.

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## Five Principles of Friendship

Consider the following principles of friendships and how they apply to your life:

*No. 1:* When Christians seek to tell others about Jesus, the gospel flows best through personal relationships of understanding, concern, trust and love.


From the passages you read earlier, which persons responded to Jesus because of Jesus' understanding, concern and love?

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If you said all of them, you're right! When you have someone you can count on, then you are more open to what they say, even if they witness to you about Jesus. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

However ...



*If we are to be mission-skilled Christians, we must have a growing ability to develop friendships with a widening variety of people. We must become more like Jesus in our relationships with people.*



## A Word of Warning

As an *on mission*

Christian, you want to find and develop friendships with people who don't know Jesus as their Savior. However, be careful that your friends don't influence you while you are trying to influence them. We tend to become like our friends. A friendship that pulls you away from Jesus or your church will likely lead you into trouble. Paul warned, *"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character' " (1 Corinthians 15:33, NIV).*

When you befriend lost people, either you must be the leader or you must be strong enough to stand alone. If they start calling the shots in your life and begin pulling you away from a godly lifestyle, back off of the relationship! Concentrate on growing your faith and Christlike character. God will give you other opportunities when you are spiritually prepared and ready for them.

No. 2: People tend to make friends with people like themselves. Test this principle yourself. In the columns below, write the names of your three best friends. Then, discover the similarities between you and your friends by putting a check mark under each characteristic that you have in common with them.

Friends	Age	Race	Religious Affiliation	Interests	School	Background
1.						
2.						
3.						

You'll learn that effort is required to make friends with people who are different from yourself. Sometimes you must overcome barriers that people and culture put in the way. At other times, you must overcome barriers you may have unknowingly put in the way. Becoming friends with persons who are different from yourself allows you to learn about life from an entirely different perspective. It can also lead to many new people learning about Jesus.

No. 3: The longer a person is a Christian, the fewer close relationships he tends to have with non-Christians. As you become more and more involved in the lives of other Christians, you'll likely begin to draw away from non-Christian friends. That's not entirely bad. As a young Christian, having firm Christian friends can help you grow in Christ and resist temptations. Your Christian friends probably understand what makes you "tick" because their lives have been rearranged by their encounters with Jesus just as yours has. Your very best friends should likely be Christians. Talk to someone who became a Christian as an adult. Ask them to compare their friends before and after their conversion. Did they shift toward more Christian friends?

So ...

No. 4: *On mission* Christians must make a studied effort to develop relationships with a variety of people. Study your routines and patterns. You may have to go out of your way to widen your circle of friends. Jesus did. You can talk to Christians who are different from you to learn how to reach others like them. You must intentionally cultivate friendships with non-Christians around you. Paul was a master at making friends with people who were different.

Look up the following verses and state how the person or persons Paul met were different from him.

Acts 14:8-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 16:1-3 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 16:11-15 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 16:25-34 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 18:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

And finally ...

No. 5: Friendship most often develops through shared time and shared interests. You can't build a relationship without shared time and shared interests. Invite new friends to visit or join you in activities. (Remember when Jesus took Andrew and John to where He lived?) Or, you can involve yourself in someone's interests. (Remember Jesus with Zacchaeus?) You must remain open to new interests and be flexible with your time. You must be willing to go out of your way to experience life on someone else's terms and from their point of view.

How then do *on mission* Christians make friends? Look closely at the way Jesus developed friends with the woman at the well, Zacchaeus, Andrew, John, Simon, Matthew and others.

Think about each person you have read about in this chapter, then summarize how Jesus made friends.

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Think about how you became a Christian. How did friendships and other relationships figure into your story?

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***You must be willing to go out of your way to experience life on someone else's terms and from their point of view.***

# Friendship Guidelines

## Do!

- ☺ Take it slow.
- ☺ Include a wide variety of people.
- ☺ Share your old friends with new friends.
- ☺ Be a good listener.
- ☺ Look for value in each person.
- ☺ Help a friend reach his or her potential.
- ☺ Share your time.
- ☺ Encourage friends to do their best and be their best.

## Don't!

- ☹ Be jealous.
- ☹ Rush friendships.
- ☹ Try to control others.
- ☹ Take advantage of others.
- ☹ Resist the Holy Spirit's prompting to talk about your faith.
- ☹ Put up a false front.
- ☹ Give up because a friendship is developing slowly.
- ☹ Lose focus of your best friend—Jesus!

Friendships provide the best pathway to share the Good News for a variety of reasons. It follows the New Testament pattern that we see Jesus using. Friendships also meet needs. Sharing Jesus through friendships demonstrates that the church is people who care. It shows that individuals are important. It helps both the Christian friend and the non-Christian friend to grow spiritually. And, friendships hold you accountable to practice what you preach. Bottom line: Friends don't let friends die and go to hell.

## Some Steps for Building Friendships

*Step One:* Take inventory of your friendships. What is the depth and scope of your friendships? Are your relationships only on the surface? Can you make commitments and be loyal to friends? Do you minister to your friends? Is the Lord at the center of your relationships? Do you see opportunities to develop friendships as divine encounters that God can use?

*Step Two:* Consider who else needs to be your friend. Look around your world. Do you see people in your neighborhood who are in need of friends? Evaluate your classmates. Who can use your friendship and ministry? Who in your club or on your team needs a friend? Select one or two of those people and determine to cultivate a friendship with them.

*Step Three:* Adjust your routines and your focus or purpose. Take a different route to your locker at school. Sit by someone you don't already know in your school cafeteria. Take part in some new activities. Volunteer for group assignments in class so that you have the opportunity to work with people you don't usually interact with. Join a new club. Whatever you do, remember your purpose: to widen your circle of friendships and the people to whom you minister.

*Step Four:* Earn the trust of the person with whom you want to develop a relationship. Friendships grow in trust like trees grow in fertile, well-watered soil. Be a person who keeps your word. Say what you mean with love and mean what you say. Live in a way that people will trust you. Dependable, trustworthy people are never without friends.

*Step Five:* Show your care. The old saying, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care," holds true! Caring for people earns you the right to be heard. They will listen to what you have to say if they really believe you care about them. Caring is the first step in ministry and witnessing.

*Step Six:* Be "real." You have to let your guard down and be "real" if you want someone to be real with you. The best way to get to know someone is to spend time with him or her and just listen. When sharing about your life is appropriate, do so. People often build walls around themselves to protect themselves from hurt. Relationships must overcome those walls. You can remove the walls by first taking down the stones that form barriers around yourself.

## Personal Checkup

When it comes to developing friendships, the key is being a friend. Are you ready to be a friend who puts the needs of others first because Jesus put your need for salvation above His own needs? Are you being the friend Jesus wants you to be? Evaluate your progress using the checklist below.

- I view opportunities to meet new peoples as divine encounters sent from God.
- I am seeking to meet needs of new friends in Jesus' name.
- My friends can tell that I am a Christian by the life that I live.
- I take opportunities to talk about my faith with my friends.
- I am growing in my ability to make friends with people different from myself.
- I have a current plan to develop a friendship with someone new.
- I regularly evaluate my friendships for ministry and witnessing opportunities.
- I have recently adjusted my routine and have become more flexible so that I can meet new people.
- I am striving to be a dependable, trustworthy friend.
- Through my words and actions, I am earning the right to be heard with my friends.

*Are you ready to be a friend who puts **the needs of others first** because Jesus put your need for salvation above His own needs?*

## Strengthening the Skill

Here are some suggested activities to help you gain or strengthen this skill.

- 1** Identify someone at school who needs a friend. Choose someone who is different from you, e.g., someone who doesn't share your same values, who is of another ethnic or social group, or who is different in age from you. For the next 12 weeks, plan an action that you can do each week to develop a friendship with the person. Start slow and simple. First, speak to the person. Next, consider asking a question that could lead to a conversation. After several weeks, examine what progress your friendship has made. Have you had time to talk about the Lord with this new friend?
- 2** Repeat the same activity as above, but this time intentionally select a distant relative (i.e., one with whom you are not in close contact). Choose a relative who is not a Christian or is unchurched. As you cultivate this relationship, watch for times to share your faith.

***“Love is patient,  
love is kind. It does not  
envy, it does not boast,  
it is not proud. It is not  
rude, it is not self-seeking,  
it is not easily angered,  
it keeps no record of wrongs.  
Love does not  
delight in evil but rejoices  
with the truth. It always  
protects, always trusts,  
always hopes, always  
perseveres. Love never fails.”***

***1 Corinthians 13:4-8, NIV***

- 3** Survey your neighborhood. Do you know of any needs your neighbors might have? Maybe an elderly neighbor could use some help in the yard. Maybe a young mother or couple could use a babysitter. Maybe a newcomer could use a welcome to your community. Is there a neighbor with whom you can develop a relationship that will allow you the opportunity to minister and witness? Look for ways to serve others and grow relationships through your actions.
- 4** You may think you know everyone at church, but look a little closer. There may be lots of people who could benefit from your friendship. Consider helping with your church's homebound ministry or being the greeter in your Sunday School department or class. Be on the lookout for visitors. Introduce yourself and help them fill out visitor information. Photocopy the information and follow up with phone calls, a visit or a written note. Invite the visitors to sit with you during church and introduce them to your friends between services. Ask a staff member for other suggestions that would allow you to develop relationships.
- 5** Dig into God's Word. Use your concordance to look up all the references to friends and friendships. What principles do you discover? Investigate Jesus' relationships more. Look up the following names in a Bible dictionary: Mary Magdalene, Legion, Andrew, John, and the family consisting of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Afterward, look up the Scripture references you find and read the Bible accounts of their encounters with Jesus. Do the same thing with Paul's friends: Timothy, John Mark, Barnabas, Silas and Luke. Make a list of the ideas and principles about relationships and missions that you discover. Share the list with your youth Bible study group.
- 6** Read 1 Corinthians 13. Make a list of the characteristics of God's love. Think about the ways you show love to your friends. How do you measure up? Pick three qualities you want to strengthen in your relationships. Work on practicing those characteristics for a month, then check to see how you're doing. And remember: *“A friend loves at all times” (Proverbs 17:17, NIV).*

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Walter H. Norvell is the dean of the Weekend College at Dallas Baptist University, in Dallas, Texas. He attends Wedgwood Baptist Church where he works with Challengers. He has worked with youth as a youth minister or volunteer youth worker for over 25 years. He and his wife, Mary, have two sons, Jonathan, 20; and David, 17.

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# Planning for Success

## In Colombia, South America,

a missionary wanted to start a new youth group in one of the local Baptist churches. He started with five youth who had a vision, and they began to develop a strategy to reach the youth in Cali for Christ. These five formed a team of leaders, and it was determined that each leader would be in charge of a group of people. Though no groups existed yet, they planned for success (Each leader hoped to work with 10 people.) The leaders were to act as “pastors” of the youth in their small group, praying for them, visiting when they were ill and leading small group discussion during the weekly Bible studies.

Within six months, the group averaged 50 students in Bible study and each leader had 10 students in his or her group. Other leaders were added, and what began as a simple vision became a vibrant, exciting youth group with 10 leaders. What made the difference? They planned for success, knowing that they served a great God who would bring people to their ministry.

This is what developing a strategy can do for the *on mission* Christian. Having an organized plan is essential in reaching people for Christ. Planning focuses our desires and abilities toward a singular goal. Without a plan, we wander aimlessly. And although there is much to be said for spontaneity, having a goal actually enables us to be spontaneous while knowing that we are still moving in the right direction. The Good Samaritan is the story about a man who stopped to help someone in need when no one else would; it's not a story about a person who stopped because he had nothing else to do. It's a story about someone who placed people above material success in his life strategy. He decided that above all else, people were his priority, and he made that decision long before he met the person who needed his help.

### **Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian strategizes.

***“I have become  
all things to  
all men so that  
by all possible means***

***I might save some.”***

***1 Corinthians 9:23, NIV***



*Having an organized plan  
is **essential** in reaching  
people for Christ. ...*

*Without a plan, we  
**wander** aimlessly.*



## The Apostle Paul's Plan

In 1 Corinthians 9:20-23, the apostle Paul outlined his strategy for reaching his world for Christ. Paul was a true *on mission* Christian. He planned every move that he made. He worked with different cultures and different language groups as he carried out his many missionary journeys to the known world of that time. In this passage, Paul shared his strategy for success in his mission.

What is a strategy?

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## All Things ...

Paul said that he had become all things to all people. This means that he identified with who people were. He tried to understand them. He was sensitive to their needs and desires. When he went to a Jewish synagogue, he acted like a Jewish man. He was careful to behave in such a manner that would not offend their religious and cultural traditions. When he went to the forum in Greece, he was a philosopher and engaged in their favorite pastime, debate. He first gained a basic acceptance with people so that they would listen to what he had to say.

Different people see you in different roles or even different personalities. Your teachers may see you as a student, a budding scientist, a tutor or a troublemaker. Others may see you as an athlete, a musician, a "brain" or a bully.

List three dominant "things" you are to many people.

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## To All Men ...

As a citizen of Rome, Paul could go anywhere he wanted. Roman citizenship had its privileges. Much like our U.S. citizenship, Paul's citizenship opened doors for him to enter into many of the places he traveled. Paul had friends on every social, racial and economic level. He was a friend of servants in Ceasar's household. He knew Roman soldiers, governmental officials, slaves and slave owners alike.



Paul loved everyone, just as his Master had. Before God miraculously saved him, Paul had been known by many as a killer of Christians. Yet after his conversion, he became known as the apostle to the Gentiles (i.e., everyone who was not a Jew). Although Paul was a Jew, he reached out in love to everyone without prejudice.

For the Jews of Paul's day, even talking to Gentiles was not acceptable, much less building relationships and sharing the gospel. Many Christian Jews believed that Gentiles must first become Jews before receiving Christ. In other words, they thought the world should first become culturally like them before they could share the gospel with them. But Paul was the missionary. He crossed boundaries in order to "become all things to all men."

Name five groups within your reach who are different from you and in need of the gospel.

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### By All Means ...

Paul worked as a tent maker so that he could make a living in a way that would allow him the freedom to travel. Certainly he could go from place to place and sell his tents in the open markets of the cities. This put him in busy commercial centers where he could begin relationships with people from across the known world. Many of the cities where Paul ministered were centers of commerce. Paul's skill provided an avenue that allowed him to meet people for Christ. He chose a trade that allowed him to travel to people who needed to hear his message.

What are three skills and/or interests you have that could become avenues for taking you to people who need to know Christ?

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*Paul's skill provided an avenue that allowed him to meet people for Christ. He chose a trade that allowed him to travel to people who needed to hear his message.*



**It is a given that not all people will believe the good news of Christ. But it is also inevitable that many will believe. We need only be consistent in our planning and in our doing.**

How we get to our mission field is very important. What we do once we're there is also very important. Paul figured out a way to travel, meet people, share the gospel and make a living in the process. Now *that* is good planning! Many times we form relationships when we work with others. For most of you, school is your day job. You rub shoulders with hundreds of students every day. You share school and school activities. Your campus is a ready-made mission field. And did you know that more people come to Jesus Christ during their school years than any other time? Your campus is a mission field that is ready to be harvested for the Lord!

The most capable missionary to be sent into the schools as a witness is a Christian student. You are the right person in the right place at the right time to be *on mission* with God. You have the access and the "means" available to win many of your classmates to the Lord.

### Save Some ...

Paul was not convinced that all people would embrace the gospel. In fact he knew that many would not. He had seen crowds get angry, he had been put in prison at times, but he was optimistic that a consistent strategy of being "all things to all men" would pay off with new souls for the kingdom of God. It is a given that not all people will believe the good news of Christ. But it is also inevitable that many will believe. We need only be consistent in our planning and in our doing.

Do you have a strategy for sharing Christ with others?

- Yes
- No

If you do, perhaps your plan can be strengthened to help you be more effective. If you don't have a plan, now is a good time to develop one. The question to ask yourself is: *What is the best way for me to get close enough to the people who need to know Christ long enough to build strong relationships to effectively share Christ with them?*

If you have a personal mission strategy, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does my plan focus on a target group?
- Does my plan involve prayer?
- Does my plan involve making new friends?
- Does my plan take into account the gifts and abilities that God has given me?
- Does my plan involve partnering with other Christians?

The place to begin is to decide whom you want to reach. This is called your target group. In Chapter 3, you identified your target group(s). These are the people whom you have the greatest opportunity to influence for Christ. God has placed you where you are for a reason, to be a blessing to those around you. Consider that God has placed you where you are to be His ambassador to those with whom you study, work or play on a daily basis.

Think about the target group that God has given you. What are their needs? Are they lonely? Do they need friends? Do they need help to be successful at school? Do they go to church? Jesus said that He came to minister to the ones who know they need help, not to the ones who think that they are OK. He said this because those who are willing to admit that they have needs are looking for someone to help them change their lives. Jesus referred to these people as the “fields ripe for the harvest” (*John 4:35*). They are ready to hear the gospel.


Now that you have determined who makes up your target group, you need to ask yourself what resources you have to reach them. Abilities are natural. We are born with them. We do not have to develop an ability. Some abilities include having a kind nature, a listening ear, a compassionate heart, a cheerful disposition and a good sense of humor. Talents, however, are “developed abilities.” A person with a steady hand might choose to develop that ability in a number of different ways—as a surgeon, a graphic designer, a painter, an architect, or an electrical repairman, for example. A talent is developed when we take a simple ability and apply it to a skill.

Identifying personal interests and desires is also critical to developing your plan for reaching others. What games or sports do you like to play? What hobbies do you have? What do you like to do in your spare time? What do you do to relax? Whatever it is, others in your target group will most likely like to do it too. You could do whatever you enjoy together. Allow your common interests to help you start a friendship and win the opportunity to share Christ with your new friends.

At a college in Texas, a girl named Jessica attended a Tuesday night Bible study offered by a local church. At first she came by herself. Soon, the leader of the study noticed that each Tuesday night she brought new girls with her from the campus.

When the opportunity presented itself, the leader asked Jessica how she was able to bring so many visitors with her to the studies. She replied, “I just found out that all of the girls on the 2nd floor of the dorm like to play different sports that I play, so I’ve been inviting them to play with me. After we’ve played a few times, I invite them to come with me to Bible study.”

Jessica had learned the key: An *on mission* Christian strategizes. He or she develops a plan for leading others to Christ. Jessica used sports as her primary resource in her strategy to lead others to Christ. See how easy this is? It’s natural to invite others to join us in doing things that we enjoy. Now let’s do some real planning together. Answer the questions on the following page.



***“Do you not say,  
‘Four months more  
and then the harvest’?  
I tell you, open your  
eyes and look at the  
fields! They are ripe  
for harvest.”***

***John 4:35, NIV***

## Do!

- ☉ Invite people to join you in activities you enjoy.
- ☉ Find ways to use your abilities and talents to help reach people.
- ☉ Invite friends to Bible study activities.
- ☉ Plan ways to communicate the gospel effectively.
- ☉ Plan a time to share with friends how to become a Christian.
- ☉ Use a book or pamphlet to help you explain the gospel in more detail.
- ☉ Be the one who controls the activity you participate in together.

## Don't!

- ☉ Force yourself to use a strategy that is unnatural.
- ☉ Compare yourself with other Christians.
- ☉ Let others involve you in ungodly activities.
- ☉ Be possessive or exclusive with your friendships.
- ☉ Forget to pray.
- ☉ Forget your mission.
- ☉ Develop "lone-ranger" strategies.

Who are the people in need of Christ that I see each day?

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What are their physical needs?

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Do they need friends? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they need help to be successful at school? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they go to church? \_\_\_\_\_

What resources and friends (partners) do I have to help me reach my target group?

---

What are some of my natural abilities?

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What are some of the talents I have developed?

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What games or sports do I like to play?

---

What hobbies do I have?

---

What do I like to do during my spare time?

---

What do I do to relax?

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Now, think about ways that you can combine your resources with the needs or interests of those you've identified to develop "redemptive relationships." (A redemptive relationship is a friendship with a non-Christian that offers you the opportunity to introduce that person to your greatest friend, Jesus.) Your plan may be as simple as inviting someone to play tennis with you or to go with you to play paintball. It may outline different activities to do with each person in your target group. Your plan may look like this:

*Matt*—Ask him to join me and my friends this Saturday for a game of flag football, and keep asking until he comes.

*Jim*—Invite him to play chess during our lunch break each Wednesday at school.

*Nathan*—Teach him to golf since he said that he wanted to go out for golf next semester.

*Chad*—Get together and learn some praise choruses on guitar. Ask him to help me lead them in Bible study group on campus.

A good strategy will not only involve doing; it will also involve being. Living a consistent Christian lifestyle in front of others is a top priority in our strategy. We can influence people negatively when we are inconsistent. Live your life in such a way that others would want the same joy and peace and fulfillment that you have. Your life should show others that you are a disciple of Christ (*John 15:8*). This means that a part of a good strategy is to draw closer to Christ. Developing the Christian disciplines of Bible study, Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, obedience and others, should be a strong part of your life plan. Once your relationship with Christ is all that it should be and you know that you are living in the power of the Holy Spirit, you can be yourself around others and know that you will also be honoring Christ with the things that you say and do.

*"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

*John 15:8, NIV*

## Personal Checkup

- I know my abilities and interests.
- I am developing my talents to use to reach people for Christ.
- I am growing closer to God.
- I have chosen my target group.
- I know the interests of my target group.
- I know the needs of my target group.
- I am praying for my target group.
- I have made a plan for spending time with my target group.
- I have followed through on my plan.
- I am using my plan to share Christ with my target group.



***“Trust in the Lord  
with all your heart  
and lean not on  
your own understanding;  
in all your ways  
acknowledge him,  
and he will make  
your paths straight.”***

***Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV***

## Develop Your Strategy

Take time now to plan your strategy for leading others to Christ. Work out your strategy based on the following outline:

- 1 Consider your answers to the questions in the previous section about your abilities, talents and interests.
- 2 List the names of people in your target group. Look for things you have in common with them, interests or activities you could invite them to join you in doing, or ways you might help them.
- 3 Write out the actions that you need to take to become closer to Jesus Christ and to live a more consistent Christian life.
- 4 Establish goals and set time limits for reaching them (e.g., to talk with 10 students about Christ this semester).
- 5 Organize for your strategy. Obtain a notebook, binder or file folders to use as a journal to chart your prayers and progress.
- 6 Commit your plan to God. Admit that without Him you can do nothing (*Proverbs 3:5-6*).

## Activities and Projects

### At School ...

- 1 Start an on-campus Bible study. Enlist a teacher to be your sponsor and to allow you to use his/her classroom for the study. For possible resources, check out the North American Mission Board's Web site, [www.namb.net](http://www.namb.net), or NAMB's student Web site, [www.studentz.com](http://www.studentz.com).
- 2 Offer to be the team chaplain. This means that you would pray with the football, basketball or volleyball team before they go out to play, if the coach will permit.
- 3 Begin a prayer ministry to your friends at school. Take their prayer requests and pray for them. Check back with them from time to time.

to find out how they are doing and to see if they have additional prayer requests. Rejoice with them as God answers prayer.

- 4 Ask each person in your target group for his or her address and phone number. Send an invitation to each person inviting him or her to a home or small group Bible study where you know they will feel comfortable.
- 5 Meet with students one-on-one at lunch for a short Bible study or to read a passage of Scripture and pray together.
- 6 Ask permission of each person in your target group to add their address to your youth ministry's permanent mailing list. This way they will hear about all of the activities that your youth group is doing together.

### **In Your Neighborhood ...**

- 1 Start a Bible study for all of the kids in your neighborhood. Distribute invitations, introduce yourself to the parents, etc.
- 2 Deliver household items (e.g., light bulbs, trash bags, batteries for smoke alarms) to residents in your neighborhood.
- 3 Take Christmas cards to each of the homes in your neighborhood and wish the residents a Merry Christmas.
- 4 Begin a prayer ministry for your neighbors. Go door-to-door and ask your neighbors if they have any prayer needs that they would like to share with you.

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Brad Price is art director of Price Graphic Design, a graphic design firm that produces promotional materials for local churches, Christian institutions and conventions. He is an instructor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and produces "YouthArt," a national art service for youth ministers. Brad has also served as a youth minister, church planter and missionary. He and his wife, Suzie, have two sons, Matthew and Nathan, who are both involved in music performance ministry.

***A good strategy will not only involve doing; it will also involve being. Living a consistent Christian lifestyle in front of others is a top priority in our strategy.***

chapter .08

by  
gary b. jennings  
and  
alan huesing

**Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian  
develops strategic  
partnerships.

# Partnerships That Work

## As an *on mission* Christian

you must link your life and efforts with a variety of people who are passionately pursuing God to form a network of partners who will share Christ around the world. These partners in the mission are models and mentors, senders and supporters, payers and “pray-ers,” starters and finishers, and many others of the millions of “body” parts of Christ—all working together to fulfill the Great Commission. We are each incomplete without Christ, and we are incomplete in our mission without each other. In a sense, even the Trinity works together as a divine partnership to carry out the mission of salvation. We must follow Christ’s example.

*“I always pray with  
joy because of your  
partnership in  
the gospel from the  
first day until now.”*

*Philippians 1:4-5, NIV*

Name five of Jesus’ partners in His mission on earth.

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What are some ways they helped Him?

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Name three of Paul's partners.

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Did Paul prefer to have partners or to go it alone? \_\_\_\_\_

## Models Who Inspire

Jesus said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15, NIV). Christians who will change the world begin by seeking out and following the kind of examples that bring honor and glory to their Lord. Paul, in Philippians 3:17 and in 1 Corinthians 11:1 told the followers of his ministry to pattern their lives after his as he followed Jesus' example.

You may be surrounded by great examples of effective, godly *on mission* Christians who inspire you to live out and share the gospel. If so, you are blessed to have partners who are helping to launch you into a purpose-filled life. But, then again, you may not. If you don't *know* people who faithfully model an *on mission* lifestyle, you still have a bird's-eye view of hundreds of God's men and women who will serve as models for you. Your view is through the Bible, the account of the lives of God's men and women from His point of view. It shows the unedited, raw version of glorious victories—and miserable defeats. God has preserved each story for thousands of years just so you can read them and apply them to your own situation. The people in these stories can be your partners!

Hebrews 11 reminds us of the hundreds of people who have lived before us who serve as our examples. Read it and see if they don't inspire you. Then, in Hebrews 12:1, Paul reminds us that we are surrounded by a "cloud of witnesses" who are watching us run *our* race and cheering us on.

Name at least one living person who is an *on mission* role model for you.

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How does he/she inspire you?

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Who in the Bible serves as a model with whom you can easily relate and why?

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*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."*

*Hebrews 12:1, NIV*

*Each of us can benefit from the advice and instruction of godly men and women who help us see life and our opportunities from an eternal perspective.*

## A Mentor

Partnerships are more than just friendships; partnerships have purpose. Mission partnerships make a difference in the lives of people who need Christ. And partnerships demand a willingness to learn from others whom you trust. In your Christian walk, you must find a mentor who will not only provide you with a good example, but will also give you good advice. Solomon, a king with the gift of wisdom, wrote:

*"Listen to advice and accept instruction and in the end you will be wise"*  
(Proverbs 19:20, NIV).

*"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed"*  
(Proverbs 15:22, NIV).

Each of us can benefit from the advice and instruction of godly men and women who help us see life and our opportunities from an eternal perspective. A mentor is a faithful follower of Jesus Christ who is willing to coach and walk alongside another believer. A mentor can help you see changes that need to be made in your life. They can often help you determine where God is leading. They can point out gifts and talents that God has given you and suggest ways and places that you can invest yourself. Mentors can warn you of pitfalls likely to be hidden ahead in your path. You can benefit from the experience of a mentor.

Think of a few mentors in the Bible. Moses mentored Joshua. Eli mentored Samuel. Samuel tried to mentor Saul. Elijah was Elisha's mentor. Paul mentored Timothy and dozens of others. What about you? How can you find a good mentor? They only come from God. If you realize that you need a partner who can give you wise guidance, pray and ask God. Then watch for the one (or more) He supplies. A mentor may be closer than you think.

Name two people who have served as mentors to you.

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List several ways they have helped you.

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Who are other potential mentors?

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What would you like to learn from a mentor that would help you to be *on mission*?

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What is the best way to show appreciation for the contribution of a mentor in your life?

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## Accountability Partners

Another strong partnership in the life of an *on mission* Christian is an accountability team. For a great biblical example of some teen-age guys who formed an accountability team, check out Daniel 1-3. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were in a unique situation as prisoners of war (POWs). The enemy (Satan, through the Babylonians) was trying to systematically brainwash these Jewish guys, totally eliminating from their minds any reference, remembrance or practice of their faith. They resolved to continue studying and applying the Scriptures together even though they didn't have a written copy. Together, they successfully negotiated with the officers to avoid imperial laws that would force them to break God's Law. They studied diligently at school and helped each other rise to the top of their class. They prayed regularly each day and when they faced life-threatening circumstances. They stood firmly for God even when that meant they would be sentenced to a scorching death. And when they were tested by fire, the Son of God stood with them as a member and the Leader of their team!

These four guys shared the rewards of every individual or group success. And by the end of the day, even the king acknowledged and praised their God. He decreed that all people in the empire must respect their God because He had been able to save them. The team had accomplished their mission to glorify their God among the nations.

List at least five ways that an accountability team can help each other stay *on mission*.

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***Partnerships are more than just friendships; partnerships have purpose.***

***Prayer is the most important ministry of any church. Without prayer-powering your mission work, your efforts are simply ... your efforts.***

Do you have a team of accountability partners?  Yes  No

For what specific areas of your Christian life do you need to be held accountable?

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Who are (or could be) your accountability partners?

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## Prayer Partners

The greatest help that anyone can give you as you share the gospel with people is to pray. Prayer is the most important ministry of any church. Without prayer-powering your mission work, your efforts are simply ... *your* efforts. If you want to be *on mission* with God, it's better to have five friends praying than to have five super-talented co-workers, five trucks full of supplies, or \$5 million in your budget.

Your prayer partners need to know about your mission. They need to know your target group and the needs of the group. They need to be informed about your strategy and your progress. And having a prayer partner is a mutual experience—to *have* a partner is to *be* a partner.

It's a great thing to know that a true "prayer warrior" is interceding for you every day. You experience the reality of James 5:16 (NIV) which says, "*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*" The godly mother of a friend of mine had been in a coma for over a month. In the hospital my friend and I were talking about how she had prayed for him every day of his life—even for months before he was born. She had always kept a list of her concerns for him beside her bed and checked them off as God worked out each situation and delivered each blessing. In this great crisis of his (and her) life, my friend told me that it was even more difficult to know that his mother was not praying. He felt the most dependable resource of support in his life was shut off when most needed. It occurred to me at that moment that just because she was unconscious and unable to use her mind and body to physically speak to us, maybe we shouldn't assume that, after a lifelong habit of talking to God, her spirit was not continuing to talk with Him. With that thought, my friend's whole attitude changed and his confidence soared. What a difference having an active prayer partner makes!

Prayer partnering requires discipline. Set a time and place to pray and to share. You can pray together with other partners and prayer groups—even if you are not physically together—by establishing a time to pray together wherever you are. For example, you may decide with your accountability team to pray for each other every day at noon and 10 o'clock at night.

Who is always our prayer partner? (*Romans 8:27,34*) \_\_\_\_\_

Who else are faithful prayer partners who pray for your mission?

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\_\_\_\_\_

How does your accountability team or other group pray for each other?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who could you ask to be your prayer partners?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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*"Then I heard the voice  
of the Lord saying,  
'Whom shall I send?  
And who will go for us?'  
And I said, 'Here am I.  
Send me!' "*

*Isaiah 6:8, NIV*

## Partners Who Send and Support

In Acts 13:1-3, Luke describes how the church at Antioch ordained ("set apart") Saul (Paul) and Barnabas to be missionaries. They prayed for them and sent them off on their mission to carry the gospel to Cyprus and into Asia Minor. Missionaries, or *on mission* Christians, do not commission themselves to their task. We are called into the mission by God, often in the place and activity of worship (*Acts 13:2, Isaiah 6*). We are sent and supported by our partners and fellow believers, the church (*Acts 13:3*).

We must develop partnerships if we are to go to the "ends of the earth" and make disciples. We must send and support each other to the places where God has called us to share the gospel.

Our church was preparing to send a group of 13 teen-agers and adults to China to minister and share the gospel. Libby, an eighth-grader, was one of the

youngest members of the team. She was really concerned about the large amount of money that had to be raised for the trip. Each team member sent out several letters to church members, relatives and other friends asking them to consider being a member of the support team. We encouraged the students to send letters primarily to those who would get their feelings hurt if they were *not* invited to participate. Libby delivered a letter to one of her Christian teachers at school. At lunch, another teacher came to Libby and asked where *her* letter was. The teacher had already begun to write out a check and wanted to know if the Sunday School classes at her church could give support in the form of finances, prayer and equipment. Libby was even more surprised when, in less than two days, people from everywhere had responded with over \$1,300. She couldn't understand why people were so interested and generous.

The truth is that people know and will "buy into" a good investment when they see one. Libby was growing in her faith, and she wasn't keeping it to herself, either. She was serving in several ministries, bringing lost friends to church, and had started a Bible study group and evangelistic events at school. People who are in the habit of being *on mission* at home will be *on mission* in China.

*"How, then, can they **call** on the one they have not believed in? And how can they **believe** in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they **hear** without someone preaching to them? And how can they **preach** unless they are sent?"*

*Romans 10:14-15a, NIV*

Who are three students in your church youth group you would send and sacrificially support as missionaries? Why?

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Who are some of the people you would invite to be partners on your mission support team?

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Who has your church commissioned and sent out most recently?

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## One Sows, Another Reaps

Different Christians have different physical and spiritual gifts as well as different assigned tasks in the mission. The mission is accomplished in multiple phases. Relationships must be built. Target groups must be served and ministered to. The gospel must be lived and preached. New believers must be baptized and disciplined. Churches must be planted. And new believers must be called out to live *on mission* to share Christ with others.

*On mission* Christians need each other just like an orchestra, athletic team or drama troupe. The piccolo player is just as needed as the tuba player; the quarterback as necessary as the guard; and the sound technician as essential as the principal actor. Paul compares the church to a human body in 1 Corinthians 12. No part is more important than the others are. The church is the body of Christ.

Partnering in a church is never more important than when the church is reaching out to the world with the message of reconciliation to God. Some partners plow the “field” to prepare the “soil” of human hearts. Others plant the seed of God’s Word. Some water to nourish and help unbelievers understand and consider the gospel. Still others reap the harvest of new believers.

Which of the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 and 27-31 are needed or useful in the mission?

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What spiritual gift(s) do you have? (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

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In what parts of the “mission process” of plowing, planting, watering, weeding and reaping are you most experienced and helpful?

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What skills do you have that are useful in the mission?

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*“The saying, ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits.”*

*John 4:37-38, NIV*

*“... as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ...*

*For we are **God’s fellow workers.**”*

*1 Corinthians 3:5-9, NIV*

## Strategic Alliances

A strategic alliance is a partnership among two or more different groups that enables each group to achieve some strategic objective. The different groups join forces and resources for the mission but do not become a single team or group. Each group fulfills its part of the agreement. Strategic alliances usually open doors to opportunities and resources that would not otherwise be available.

An example of a strategic alliance was when two churches and a school began to partner together to reach teen-age guys involved in gangs in a particular city. One of the two churches was located in that city and wanted to reach the young men for Christ. The school was also in the city and had been a target of severe vandalism by the gangs. The school administration had a desire to eliminate the gang activity in the area. The other church, located in another state, had a youth group with many athletes, particularly basketball players, who wanted to be *on mission* with God using their skills to do sports clinics as a strategy to share the gospel. They just didn't know how or where to do it.

The church in the city proposed a strategy to their two potential partners. If they could use the school gym and restrooms on weekends, they would conduct all-night basketball tournaments for the kids in the community. The group from the out-of-town church agreed to come play and referee the games, and then eat and sleep in the local church during the day on Saturdays.

The strategy and the alliance were both successful. Over the course of a summer, young men involved in the gangs came to play basketball at the school. The Christians from both churches built relationships with each other and with the kids that came to play. They shared Christ through their relationships and through testimonies between games and at halftime. Kids responded in faith, and the local church followed up with discipleship classes and more activities.

**Strategic alliances usually open doors to opportunities and resources that would not otherwise be available.**

What are some strategic alliances in which you and your church have been involved?

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What are some needs and some target groups that should be approached by partnerships in your community?

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What do you and your church have to offer to a partnership with other Christians or to secular groups?

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## Partnerships Are Fellowship

What do Christians gain from partnering with others in their mission? We learn from each other, validate each other, support each other to do and be far more than we could alone, and our effectiveness is multiplied in the mission of sharing the gospel. But partnerships also provide us with a joy, a fulfillment and fellowship that only comes from working together. Paul describes this fellowship of believers in his letter to his Philippian partners:

*“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, NIV).*

Describe a friendship of yours that has grown or been strengthened by working together.

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What kind of work with other people gives you joy?

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What fellow believer would you like to grow closer to?

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How can you partner with that person to be *on mission* sharing your faith with others?

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## Do!



- ☞ Invite people to be your partners.
- ☞ Support other missionaries.
- ☞ Keep your commitments to pray for others.
- ☞ Offer your skills.
- ☞ Communicate often with partners.
- ☞ Express your appreciation to mentors and other fellow workers.

## Don't!



- ☞ Be a “lone-ranger” Christian.
- ☞ Be afraid to ask for help.
- ☞ Forget your friends and partners.
- ☞ Be inconsistent in meeting with your partners.
- ☞ Pass up an opportunity to learn from other Christians.
- ☞ Miss the joy of working with others.

“But in fact God has arranged **the parts in the body**, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be ... so that there should be **no division in the body**, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ... Now **you are the body of Christ**, and each one of you is a part of it.”

1 Corinthians 12:18,25 and 27, NIV

## Personal Checkup

- I have identified biblical and contemporary *on mission* role models to follow.
- I have a mission mentor to learn from.
- I am a mentor to a younger Christian.
- I am an active member of an accountability team that holds me to my mission commitments.
- I have prayer partners who I keep informed of needs and progress.
- I am a faithful prayer partner.
- I am supporting other *on mission* Christians financially and in other ways.
- I am becoming a good investment for others who want to support *on mission* enterprises.
- I am a partner in the plowing, planting, watering, weeding and reaping mission process.
- I am forming strategic partnerships to share the gospel.

## Partnering Projects

- 1 Do a Bible search to identify an *on mission* role model whose experiences, talents and attitudes you can really relate to.
- 2 Ask an older Christian whom you respect to mentor you. Work with your mentor in an ongoing ministry in your church.
- 3 Serve as a mentor for a younger Christian by inviting him/her to join you in a mission effort.
- 4 Join or form an accountability group.
- 5 Enlist prayer warriors to pray for you and your mission to reach your target group. Keep them informed of your strategy, needs and progress. Remember that to *have* a prayer partner is to *be* a prayer partner.
- 6 Research the missionaries whom your church supports. Select one or more to personally support financially, prayerfully and through personal communication.

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Gary Jennings and Alan Huesing partnered together to author this chapter. Gary and Alan currently serve together at the North American Mission Board, SBC. Gary works with others to evangelize college students on campuses in the United States and Canada. Alan develops ways for teen-agers to share their faith in every arena of life.

by  
alan  
huesing

chapter .09

# Sharpen Your Tools

## Several years ago I heard

the testimony of a missionary telling how he had decided to become a medical doctor. His parents were serving as missionaries in a southeast Asian country when he was a boy. One day when he and his father were travelling, they came upon a man who was dying of a heart attack. The man desperately needed help, but no one in the crowd knew what to do. The boy's father, also unable to help the man medically, began to talk to him in his own language about his relationship with God. The man gasped out in pain, "Don't tell me about your God. Help me! I'm dying!" The man died in the missionary's arms. His last words, begging for help, haunted the boy. That day, he decided to gain the knowledge and training necessary to help people with their physical needs so that then he could meaningfully and effectively meet their spiritual needs.

As *on mission* Christians, we must also train to serve and meet the needs of others. To minister to people is to help, to care for and to serve them. It's an attitude and a way of life that should mark the lives of *all* Christians. While all *on mission* Christians should certainly be servants who minister to the needs of others, including members of their target groups, ministry is not our mission. To equate doing good to other people with fulfilling our mission is to not understand our mission or the mission of God. While serving others is a characteristic of the new nature of a believer and follower of Christ, it is not *the* indicator that a person is a Christian, much less an *on mission* Christian. Ministry to others is a goal of many false religions. It's the goal of good governments and other secular service organizations, such as Red Cross and others. So, ministry to others is not the way of salvation or the *goal* of our salvation. Meeting the needs of other people is a Christian discipline that may or may not be associated with being *on mission*.

### **Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian  
trains to serve.

*"I remind you to  
fan into flame  
the gift of God,  
which is in you."*

*2 Timothy 1:6, NIV*



*If we are to be Christlike,  
we cannot neglect  
**compassionate  
ministry to needy  
people.***



How does a person become a Christian? (*Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 10:9-10*)

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What is the goal or purpose of salvation? (*John 17:3*)

---

Why does a Christian do “good works”? (*Ephesians 2:10*)

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## Why Serve?

So, why did Jesus perform miracles to alleviate human suffering? Why should we serve others, including the target groups we are sent to reach for the kingdom? Consider these six reasons why *on mission* Christians train to serve others.

### 1. To Meet Human Needs

Jesus met the needs of people in response to their demonstrated faith and trust in Him. Like a father responds to the needs and cries of his children, Jesus responds out of concern and compassion for His creation. People everywhere are hurting and in need. God has placed in our hearts His spirit of compassion. Although we don't have the resources or ability to minister to every need of every person, we can do some things. And with training, we can do more.

What human needs stir your heart to want to help?

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### 2. To Follow Jesus' Example

Jesus spent much of His time ministering to people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, touched the untouchables, comforted the grief stricken, defended the powerless, exorcised the possessed, taught the confused, raised the dead, calmed the frantic, and gave rest to the weary. If we are to be Christlike, we cannot neglect compassionate ministry to needy people.

What does it mean to you to be “like Christ”?

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### 3. To Obey Jesus’ Commands and Expectations

Jesus clearly expected His disciples to give to the needy (*Matthew 6:3*). James instructed believers to look after orphans and widows (*James 1:27*). Jesus expects us to meet the needs of people around us. Read His words in *Matthew 25:31-46*.

What six human needs did Jesus specify that He expects us to meet in the lives of other people? (*vv. 35-36*)

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### 4. To Honor and Glorify God

Peter and John healed the crippled beggar outside the temple (*Acts 3:1-10*) in Jesus’ name. That means they did it in Jesus’ power and to His credit. When we respond to the needs of people, we should minister in Jesus’ name, motivated by His love and a desire to bring Him glory. When we “let our light shine,” our service to people should reflect God’s nature of love. It should show Who we belong to. Our service is not to make us, our church or denomination, or even Christianity look good. We need to carefully consider now and again the motivation and the result of our good works.

What should be the result of our good works? (*Matthew 5:14-16*)

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### 5. To Make Our Faith Tangible By Putting It Into Action

A faith that does not move us to action is dead. *James 2:14-17* questions the value and doubts the saving power of faith that does not produce good deeds such as meeting physical needs.

*“I tell you the truth,  
no servant is greater  
than his master, nor is  
a messenger greater  
than the one who sent  
him. Now that you know  
these things, you **will be  
blessed** if you do them.”*

*John 13:16-17, NIV*



*“In the same way,  
**let your light  
shine before men,**  
that they may **see** your  
good deeds and **praise**  
your Father in heaven.”*

*Matthew 5:16, NIV*

What does James 2:14-17 say is valid evidence of our faith in God?

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## 6. To Pave the Way for Sharing the Gospel

What does service to mankind have to do with our mission of reconciliation? Jesus' miracles of healing and other ministry validated that He was the Son of God. We similarly gain credibility as messengers of the gospel when we meet human needs. For many target groups, *on mission* Christians "earn the right to be heard" only when they faithfully minister to the needs of their world.

The gospel effects the restoration of the whole man. Jesus healed the demoniac physically, emotionally, socially, mentally *and* spiritually (Luke 8:26-39). Ministering to human needs is often like preparing the soil before planting (Luke 8:4-15). We often need to help people before we share with them about our God.

Jesus' acts of ministry served as illustrations and occasions to explain to the crowds spiritual truths about salvation. Sometimes we must create an opportunity to speak the gospel. Our dedicated service to lost people often builds the best platform for us to verbally share the gospel. When the crippled beggar was healed in the crowded temple area, Peter used the opportunity to glorify God and to teach all the onlookers about the risen Savior (Acts 2:11-26). Service is one of the best ways to penetrate our target groups to build relationships and to create a forum for sharing the gospel. In this sense, ministry has an eternal value.

***"So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them."***

***Mark 2:2-3, NIV***

What act of ministry by four friends resulted in the salvation of the paralyzed man in Mark 2:1-12?

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Why did Jesus save the man? (v. 5) \_\_\_\_\_

Why did Jesus heal him? (v. 10) \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Great Physician

At least 11 times the Gospels record that Jesus gave specific instructions to those He served not to tell anyone about Him. Read about one of those times in Luke 5:12-16.

The poor, wretched man in the story, hopelessly covered with leprosy, came

to Jesus, fell on his face in the dirt, and begged for mercy and healing. Jesus' heart of compassion was moved beyond the oozing nauseousness and contagion of the man's condition; and He willingly, personally and purposely *touched* him and made him *clean*. In verse 14, Jesus ordered him not to tell anyone. But, the man could not contain the good news of his restoration and soon huge crowds flocked to see Jesus. Instead of capitalizing on His popularity and fame, Jesus withdrew and entered into solitary consultation with His Father.

To better understand what was happening in Jesus' ministry, go back to Luke 4:31-37. In the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus had healed a man possessed by a demon. When the demon began to shout that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus commanded it to be silent and then cast the demon out of the man. The crowd was shocked and amazed.

Immediately following the demon episode in the synagogue, Jesus went home with Peter, whose mother-in-law was sick with a high fever. At the family's request, Jesus healed her. By sundown Peter's house was completely overrun by people with all kinds of needs and by others who just wanted to watch the show. By morning Jesus was looking for a place to hide. More and more crowds of people converged on Him. They tried to keep Him from leaving their town, so He would continue serving them and be available to take care of all their physical problems.

How did Jesus answer their demands to stay with them? (v. 43)

---

Throughout Jesus' ministry, sick and desperate people sought Him out and begged Him for help. There were few doctors for the masses and little medicine or medical understanding. The Mosaic law focused on prevention of disease rather than healing. As word got out that Jesus could heal the sick and cast out demons, people carried their sick and dying loved ones and friends to Him and begged for His help. Crowds of people surrounded Him so much that He and His disciples didn't even have time to eat. As the Son of God, Jesus responded in compassion and love. But He refused to be pulled from His primary mission.

Throughout Jesus' short ministry, there was a tension between two constant and compelling demands. On the one hand, Jesus was pulled both by people in dire circumstances begging for mercy and by self-serving men who wanted to make Him a king, to meet the physical needs of His people. On the other hand, He was compelled to complete the mission the Father had sent Him to fulfill: to preach the gospel of the kingdom and die for the sin of the world.

Jesus could have healed all the blind people and all the lepers in Palestine, but He didn't. That wasn't His mission. He could have fed all the hungry people, but He only fed two crowds.

***“While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered in leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, ‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’***

***Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean.’ ”***

***Luke 5:12-13, NIV***



**As we serve others and share the gospel, we must maintain a balance between meeting physical and spiritual needs. ... We must be careful to remember that our mission is His mission: to reconcile the world to Himself.**



Later, one of the crowds returned looking for more free food. Read John 6:23-66. Jesus made it clear that He would not give them more physical food. He was on His mission (to seek and save the lost) and was only willing to offer *Himself* as the Living Bread to meet the hunger of their souls.

What was their response to His offer? (v. 66) \_\_\_\_\_

What does Jesus' example and experience mean for *on mission* Christians? As we serve others and share the gospel, we must maintain a balance between meeting physical and spiritual needs in our ministry. We must be careful to remember that our mission is His mission: to reconcile the world to Himself.

Are you personally more likely to neglect ministering to people's physical needs or to neglect meeting their spiritual need by sharing Christ?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Me, a Miracle Worker?

You may be wondering now if this chapter is about learning the mission skill of healing, exorcising demons, exponentially multiplying fish and bread, and other assorted miracles. That's not exactly what we had in mind when we said that *on mission* Christians train to serve. It's probably best to start by taking an inventory of the skills, abilities and interests that you have now and then consider how God may want to use you to serve people in ways that will open doors for witness. As you sharpen the tools and skills that God has given you, you will find that He does use His people in some pretty miraculous ways.

First, let's see what tools God has put in your hand.

Put a check beside each of the interests and skills below that pertain to you: (More are listed on the following page!)

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sewing         | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching English | <input type="checkbox"/> Acting          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto mechanics | <input type="checkbox"/> First aid        | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baby sitting   | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifeguard        | <input type="checkbox"/> Raising animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crafts         | <input type="checkbox"/> Camping          | <input type="checkbox"/> Languages       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking        | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading games    | <input type="checkbox"/> Math            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible study    | <input type="checkbox"/> Chopping wood    | <input type="checkbox"/> Science         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Landscaping    | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading worship  | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephoning     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching music   | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography     |



- |   |  |                                     |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing          | <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning        | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Floral arranging | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction    | <input type="checkbox"/> _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computers        | <input type="checkbox"/> Clowning        | <input type="checkbox"/> _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Puppetry         | <input type="checkbox"/> Public speaking | <input type="checkbox"/> _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching sports  | <input type="checkbox"/> Art             | <input type="checkbox"/> _____      |

Which of these are your three greatest interests or abilities?

\_\_\_\_\_

Think about how each of these three can be used as tools to work with others in sharing Christ. For some skills or interests, such as leading worship or Bible study, it's easy to see how God can use them in His mission. For others, like chopping wood or telephoning, it might be a *little* more indirect. Just think about whose needs you may be able to meet, how you can use a common interest to build relationships, or how an activity can provide a platform for sharing the Good News.

Examples:

**Leading Bible Study:**

- ⊙ Teach a Sunday School class at church.
- ⊙ Start a Bible study group in my neighborhood or at school.
- ⊙ Write Bible studies for friends or family.
- ⊙ Lead a Bible study to help start a new church.

**Chopping Wood:**

- ⊙ Help neighbors and others clean up by removing brush and cutting down trees.
- ⊙ Provide firewood for people who need it.
- ⊙ Teach young guys how to chop wood.
- ⊙ Buy some extra equipment and form a partnership with a friend who is not yet a Christian.
- ⊙ Earn money to support missionaries.

**Telephoning:**

- ⊙ Call all members of my Sunday School class regularly.
- ⊙ Telemarket a new church start.
- ⊙ Call and visit with shut-in church members and prospects.
- ⊙ Call all the kids in a subdivision to publicize a Backyard Bible Club.

*God has placed in our hearts His spirit of compassion. Although we don't have the resources or ability to minister to every need of every person, we can do some things. And with training, we can do more.*

Notice that you could complete all these activities and still not be *on mission*. An activity is not a mission project just because we call it that. You must intentionally and prayerfully use any tool to share Christ effectively with people who don't know Him. List ways you can use your three greatest interests as *on mission* tools.

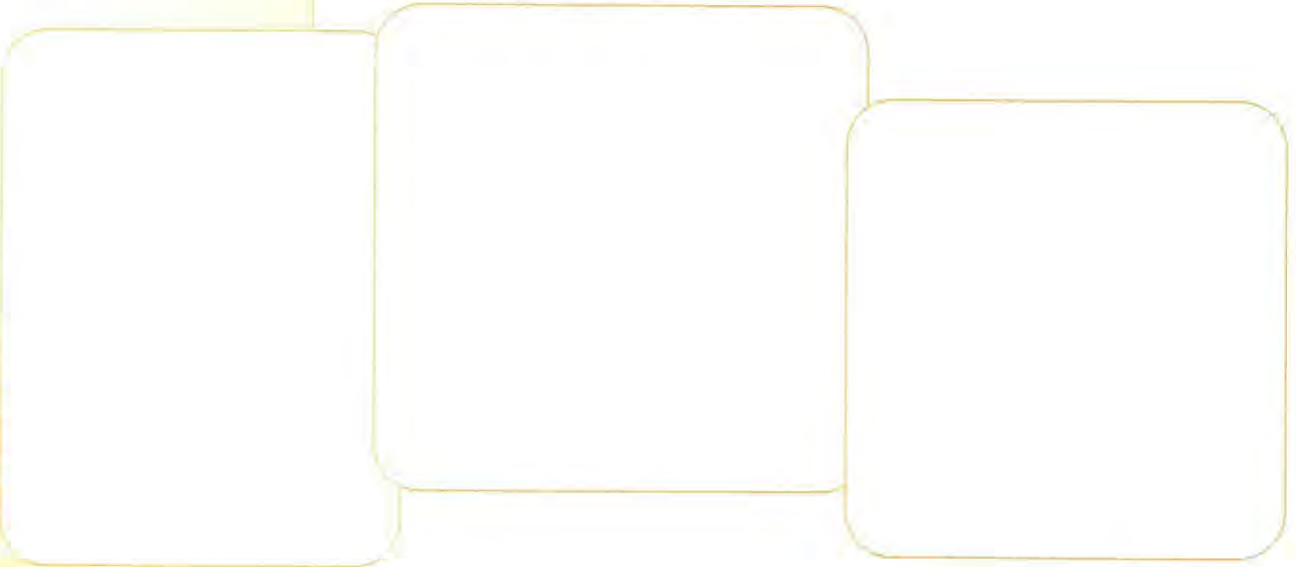
**Service** is one of the  
best ways to penetrate  
our target groups to  
**build relationships**  
and to create a forum  
for sharing the gospel.  
In this sense, ministry has  
an **eternal value.**

Tools are ineffective until they are sharpened and used correctly. How sharp are your ministry tools? What can you do to improve your skills? Paul wrote to Timothy, "I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you" (2 Timothy 1:6, NIV). How do you plan to fan your flame? Maybe you need to take some lessons, read some books, get a license, join a club or team, or just put in a lot of practice and then get out there and use it. Make a plan to sharpen your three tools. A sample plan might look like this:

**Puppetry:**

- ⊙ Go to a puppet clinic.
- ⊙ Watch lots of professional puppet shows.
- ⊙ Read some puppet books.
- ⊙ Learn to sew and make puppets.
- ⊙ Practice in front of a mirror and/or videotape your practice.
- ⊙ Get a partner.
- ⊙ Join the state puppetry guild.
- ⊙ Use puppets each week in children's worship and each month at the library.

Your plans to sharpen your three tools include:



Now, you need to look for the opportunities to utilize your mission gifts and tools. How, when and where can you apply your skills? As Peter and John went to pray at the temple one day (Acts 3), they recognized an opportunity to share when a beggar asked for money. Their opportunity turned into a sermon, then a revival, and then a revolution. Phillip recognized his opportunity as an Ethiopian drove by and stopped to ask a question (Acts 8). The opportunity became a baptism, the first Christian missionary to Africa, and the beginning of the evangelization of a continent.

Just remember, your mission is to deliver the message of reconciliation by all means to people who need new life in Christ.

## Personal Checkup

- I pray daily that God will continue to develop and use all that I am and all that I have in His mission.
- I have identified my gifts, abilities and interests.
- I am reading and seeking the advice of experts in developing my gifts.
- I invest my time and money into developing ministry tools.
- I practice regularly to sharpen my tools.
- I use my God-given talents to serve Him and others rather than to advance my self-interests.
- I am using my tools to share Christ.
- I am using my tools to support and help other *on mission* Christians.
- I look for opportunities and ways to serve others.
- I enjoy serving others.

## Ways to Sharpen Your Tools

- 1** Enroll in a course that will help you develop your skill or understanding.
- 2** Finish a certification to make you qualified to use your skill.
- 3** Collect and use books, equipment, friends and experiences to guide and support you as you sharpen your ministry tools.
- 4** Join (or start) a club, team, troupe, ministry group or guild that develops and uses your talent.
- 5** Volunteer your services to your church, school, neighbors, library, hospital, family or elsewhere.
- 6** Participate in mission trips and projects that will utilize your ministry gifts. Check out opportunities provided by your Baptist association, state convention, the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board.

Alan Huesing is youth mission education strategist and national Challengers director at the North American Mission Board, SBC. He served for several years in the Philippines, Taiwan and China, as well as on staff at East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas. His favorite ministry tools are puppets, teaching math and coaching soccer.

## Do!

- ☉ Learn from others.
- ☉ Practice.
- ☉ Be creative.
- ☉ Look for opportunities to serve.
- ☉ Take time to help others.
- ☉ Care about others.
- ☉ Excellent work.
- ☉ Develop your gifts.

## Don't!

- ☉ Neglect your gifts.
- ☉ Be mediocre in quality or effort.
- ☉ Live for yourself.
- ☉ Overlook needs or opportunities.
- ☉ Avoid hard work.
- ☉ Underestimate how God can use you.
- ☉ Refuse to serve.
- ☉ Stop growing.

**Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian  
implements plans.

# Get in the Game!

## Let me tell you a true story

about a guy named ... well, let's call him "Mike." He was an extremely talented soccer player at our high school. Mike could do things with a soccer ball that the rest of us could only dream about. Even when he was just a freshman, it seemed like whichever side Mike was on in inter-squad scrimmage games was the side that always came out on top. He could anticipate what was about to happen in the game and nearly always be in the right place at the right time. It seemed like he had eyes in the back of his head that kept him aware of everything, everywhere. And could he rip a shot into the net! Mike had it all: speed, ball skills and "touch," endurance, strength and a great "feel" for the game.

The coaches knew they had a gold mine in Mike. They trained him to play several different positions so they could maximize his value for the team in any situation. By Mike's sophomore year, a couple of college scouts and a coach from the Olympic Development Program started showing up occasionally at our practices. They had their eyes on Mike. Few high school players showed so much promise and potential so early.

So, what happened to Mike? Did he become the all-time leading scorer, MVP of the state champs four years in a row, and member of the first string All-State Team? Did he go on to become an All-American at a Division 1 NCAA college, and then play for the USA National Team at the World Cup? Well, not *exactly*. In fact, the only contribution Mike made to our team was in practice. He never shot a goal or made one of his brilliant passes or even wore our school uniform—in a game!

It's difficult to remember all that kept Mike off the field and out of the game. Let's see ... he was late and missed the bus to one game. For another, he was sick. Then there was a "disagreement" or something with one of the coaches

*"See to it that you  
complete the  
work you have  
received in the Lord."*

*Colossians 4:17, NIV*

that benched him for another game. After that, he had a serious knee injury that put him on crutches, his leg in a cast, and his afternoons in rehab for the rest of the season.

His sophomore year, however, started off brighter than ever. He was brilliant during off-season training. But when the soccer season rolled around, Mike was ineligible for interscholastic sports because of failing grades in English class. By the time his English grades were up, his math scores had slipped and he was still ineligible. Other, less talented players on our team learned to play Mike's position(s), and the team made adjustments necessary to produce winning seasons—without Mike. By his junior year, he had drifted off into other things without ever having played a single conference game with the team.

So, what does Mike's story have to do with being a purpose-filled, mission-skilled Christian? Everything! Talent, potential, training and practice, a great "game plan," even knowledge of God's will and access to His power are not enough to make you an effective *on mission* Christian. You have to get in the game!

So, what keeps Christians from getting in or staying in the game? Let's look at six situations that keep members of God's team off the "mission fields" and out of the action.

### Situation No. 1: Too Much Practice

It's possible for a Christian to spend years growing in knowledge and personal spiritual holiness without ever getting *on* with the mission. We can study and memorize the gospel message and learn all kinds of evangelism methods without ever *using* them. We can become informed about the needs of the world, learn how missionaries meet those needs, and even support those on the "field" by praying and giving money to advance God's mission without ever personally getting involved in sharing the gospel with lost people.

Sometimes after a mission study, a sermon series on witnessing or a project that meets the physical needs of people, we feel that we've completed a "mission emphasis" and it's time for us to move on to another topic. Or, as you work through the study and activities in this book, it's possible to spend weeks praying about your mission, identifying your target group, building friendships with lost people, developing partnerships with other Christians, and strategizing without ever "breaking the huddle" and putting your plans into action. Our problem: Sometimes we like *practice* more than the game.

What daily or weekly time have you set aside to study, prepare, "huddle" and/or "practice" the Christian life?

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***Talent, potential, training and practice, a great "game plan," even knowledge of God's will and access to His power are **not** enough to make you an effective on mission Christian. You have to **get in** the game!***

*It's possible for a Christian to spend years **growing in knowledge** and personal spiritual holiness without ever **getting on with the mission.***

What time have you set aside to put your mission plans into action?

\_\_\_\_\_

Label the following activities either "PT" (practice time), "GT" (on mission "game" time) or "OT" (other).

- \_\_\_\_\_ Going to church with my family
- \_\_\_\_\_ Going to youth choir practice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Having my daily "quiet time" alone with God
- \_\_\_\_\_ Playing basketball at the church gym
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reading my Bible
- \_\_\_\_\_ Going on a mission trip to repair a hospital
- \_\_\_\_\_ Taking a course about "How to Share Your Faith"
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attending a worship service
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attending a Bible study
- \_\_\_\_\_ Explaining to my friend how to receive Christ

How could you transform the PT or OT activities into GT activities?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Since you began this workbook study, what percentage of your mission involvement has been spent in "practice"? \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage has been actual "game time"? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you need to make an adjustment between practice time and game time? Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Situation No. 2: Changing the Coach's Game Plan

Have you ever been on a team where some of the players didn't understand or didn't like the coach's game plan? It happens. Sometimes players throw out the game plan and instructions and decide to play it their own way. A great coach with a great plan will pull a player who is intentionally not playing according to the game plan off the field to have a little talk on the sideline.

Read Jonah 1:1-3, Matthew 26:1-4, 1 Samuel 15:1-23 and Genesis 3:1-8. Name three "players" on God's team who "threw out" His plan—opting instead to play the game according to their own plans—and got sidelined because of it.

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One of God's more uncooperative missionaries was Jonah. God gave him a play to run, but Jonah chose to run in the opposite direction. It didn't take long for Jonah to find himself pulled off the field with an appointment to meet with the "Head Coach" in the stinkiest locker room ever. After a three-day conference, God sent Jonah back in the game with the same route to run. This time, though, he "obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh" (*Jonah 3:3, NIV*). Compare this with how Jesus followed the game plan when it got really rough.

Read Mark 14:32-36. When Jesus faced the most difficult assignment of all time, what was His prayer request?

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What was Jesus' attitude when God did not answer His prayer as He would have preferred?

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Jesus stayed in the game until it was "finished" by following His Father's plan and, in doing so, He scored the final victory for us all.

*"They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.' Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.' "*

*Mark 14:32-36, NIV*

## Situation No. 3: Poor Follow Through

“What do you think?”

There was a man who had two sons. He **went to the first** and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ ‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father **went to the other** son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. **Which of the two** did what his father wanted?”

Matthew 21:28-32, NIV

Read Matthew 21:28-32. What does the vineyard in the story represent?

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What work was Jesus really talking about? \_\_\_\_\_

By comparing the two brothers, what point did Jesus make about being on mission with God?

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Read Luke 9:57-62 to find out what Jesus said to three men who wanted to follow Him.

What do followers of Jesus *do*? (v. 60)

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What did Jesus mean by “puts his hand to the plow”? (v. 62)

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What did He mean by “looks back” in the same verse?

---

The apostle Paul was one of the most active men in God’s mission. For him it was a lifestyle. Once he had “seen the Light” on the road to Damascus and God had changed him from the inside out, he never looked back. And Paul was part of a team. He partnered with dozens of others in the mission of sharing the Good News with the world. But some of his partners turned back. Read 2 Timothy 1:15 and 4:10,16.

Why did Demas turn back? \_\_\_\_\_



When we decide to follow Jesus, it's not a decision of the head. It's a decision of the feet. And we don't leave the field during a time out or even at halftime. There's no turning back.

## Situation No. 4: Use It or Lose It

Read Jesus' story recorded in Matthew 25:14-30. What did the "man in charge" give to each of his servants? (Look carefully at verse 14.)

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What pleased and what infuriated "the man" about his servants' actions?

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What kept the last servant from "getting in the game"? (v. 25)

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What will happen to even the most "talented" Christians who fail to actively invest all they are and have in God's mission?


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This story implies that although different Christians have different "talents," all talents are gifts from God and we are expected to get going and use them in His mission. We are *all* expected to effectively reproduce what He has given us for His glory. We must not procrastinate or fail to act because of fear of failure. We will be held accountable. If we fail to act, God will use another more faithful servant to accomplish His Will, but we will be taken out of the game.


## Situation No. 5: Coach, I Lost My Schedule

God's men and women have always been assigned personal and group tasks in His mission. "In the fullness of time" is a biblical phrase that indicates that God has a game plan and we need to be on time and on schedule with Him. Getting off His schedule can be disastrous.

Remember how King David got into so much trouble with Bathsheba? How could David, the team captain, have made such a terrible mistake? Read 2 Samuel 11:1.



*When we decide to follow Jesus, it's not a decision of the head. **It's a decision of the feet.** And we don't leave the field during a time out or even at halftime. **There's no turning back.***



What time was it? \_\_\_\_\_

Where was the “team”? \_\_\_\_\_

Where was David? \_\_\_\_\_

Where was the king supposed to be? \_\_\_\_\_

What can you and I expect to happen to our personal lives (and the team) if we choose not to show up on our mission field when it’s time for the game to start?

\_\_\_\_\_

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only **one** gets the **prize**? Run in such a way as to **get the prize**.”

*1 Corinthians 9:24, NIV*

## Situation No. 6: The Injured or Ineligible List

Sadly, we read about many men and women in the Bible who allowed themselves to be sidelined from action because they became ineligible to be used by God. Saul, Samson, Cain, Judas, Pilate, Caiaphas, and the “rich young ruler” are just a few of those who chose to go their own way rather than follow the call of God on their lives and be obediently active in His service. They disqualified themselves from the joy of working with God.

Paul loved to share the gospel. Being *on mission* with God and His people was Paul’s joy and passion. He wrote about being on God’s team in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. He was terrified at the thought of becoming disqualified from being a messenger of the gospel, of becoming a sidelined player.

What did he do to “keep in shape”? (*1 Corinthians 9:27*)

\_\_\_\_\_

What young team member did Paul welcome back to “active status” after a time of being disqualified? (*2 Timothy 4:11*)

\_\_\_\_\_

Why had he been ineligible for mission service? (*Acts 15:36-38*)

\_\_\_\_\_

## Sitting on the Bench

As a coach, it has always been interesting to me to observe the different attitudes players have toward “sitting on the bench.” We all know that a team had better not show up at a game without substitute players. Injuries happen. Fatigue sets in. A variety of skills are needed for different game situations and strategies. Although players understand that sometimes sitting on the bench is a “part of the game,” each player reacts differently when it’s his turn to “ride the pine.”

Some players can’t force themselves to sit down. They *have* to be involved in the game, pacing the sidelines, yelling encouragement to teammates. I like their attitude.

Others get angry about being sidelined. Precious game time is wasting and they’ve got to get out “in it.” I understand how they feel.

Some players on the bench wait patiently, learning all they can by watching the veteran players, knowing their time will come. And their time *will* come.

But then, in rare instances, there are players who are *comfortable* sitting on the bench—for most or even the entire game. They are content to sit and watch. But they never look for a sign from the coach. They are willing to accept the benefits of team membership without taking on the responsibilities involved in implementing the game plan. They don’t understand that the game is to be played, and won or lost—not just planned and discussed. These players need either a change of attitude or a change of uniform and seating. (Spectators buy tickets and sit in the grandstands.)

In the same way, our Coach expects us to get on the field or get off the team! Our mission is to seek out the lost and win them to Him. Are you out in the harvest fields or still on the bench?

## Personal Checkup

- I am a “doer” of the Word as well as a “hearer.”
- I maintain “eligibility” to be an active and credible player in God’s mission in my world.
- I “put feet” to my prayer for lost people.
- I “show up” for church youth activities that carry out God’s mission to share the gospel.
- I follow through on plans to share Christ.
- I complete the activities of this workbook and other Christian studies.
- I maintain a proper balance between preparation and implementation of plans to accomplish the mission.
- I am watching for and creating opportunities to get in the game, to share with people on my target list.
- I know what God wants me to do as I enter my game (mission) field each day.
- I surrender to and implement God’s will for my life.

## Do!



- ☉ Make practical plans.
- ☉ Follow through on plans.
- ☉ Encourage your teammates to put feet to plans.
- ☉ Only one thing at a time.
- ☉ Stay eligible.

## Don’t!



- ☉ Be a “hearer only” of the Word.
- ☉ Procrastinate.
- ☉ Be afraid.
- ☉ Get comfortable “on the bench.”
- ☉ Look back or quit.



***Our Coach expects us to get on the field or get off the team! Our mission is to seek out the lost and win them to Him.***



## Into Action

- 1** Look back over the plans you have formulated in the first nine chapters of this study. Have your plans moved you to action? Have you implemented them all? Begin a daily journal or diary to track your intentional *on mission* activity. Write a *maximum* of 50 words each day. Include conversations, projects, prayer times, everything you consider to be *on mission* with God.
- 2** Obtain a copy of your church calendar for this month. Mark the activities that are designed to share Christ with people who don't know Him (i.e., "Game Time" for your church). Arrange your schedule to "get in the game."
- 3** Consider a specific organized group in your church (e.g., Bible study group, choir, Acteens, Challengers) of which you are a member. Talk with one or more leaders of the group about the balance between study, fellowship, meeting, planning or other "practice time" compared to outreach, witness, mission or other "game time" in the group's activities. Pray together that God will help you as a group to establish and/or maintain a proper balance between preparation for and implementation of plans related to fulfilling the Great Commission.
- 4** Read the story about Jonathan and his armor-bearer in 1 Samuel 13:23 and 14:1-23. In this story the Israelites were hopelessly outnumbered and very outgunned. Instead of sitting around waiting to be annihilated, Jonathan got up, grabbed his weapon, took a friend, made a plan and *did* something. The rest is history. Follow his example today by selecting an individual or group on your target or prayer list, determine what you will do to share the Good News with them and go do it.
- 5** Right now, pick up the phone and call or write a letter or e-mail message to a friend who is not a Christian. Encourage him to give his life to Christ today.

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Alan Huesing was for many years a soccer coach at Marshall High School and East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas. After serving for several years in the Philippines, Taiwan and China, he now works as youth mission education strategist and national Challengers director at the North American Mission Board, SBC.

by  
Steven  
James

## chapter .11

# There Is No Plan B

**There's an old legend** that when Jesus returned to heaven, Gabriel the angel met Him and said, "Nice job, J.C.! You did it! You lived the perfect life and died for the sins of the world! Awesome!"

"Thanks!" said Jesus smiling.

"I have one question, though. ..."

"Yes?"

"Well ... what happens now? How are people around the world gonna hear about what You've done?"

"That's the cool part," said Jesus. "You see, I left behind a few of My friends. And they'll tell their friends, and they'll tell their friends, and they'll tell others until the whole world has heard the Good News! Then, I'll welcome all My followers home forever!"

Gabriel stared at Jesus. "Um ... listen, I don't mean to question you or anything, but what if they don't? I mean, what if they don't think the news is important enough to share? Or maybe they just forget? What then? People aren't always that reliable, you know. What's Plan B?"

After a long pause, Jesus answered, "There is no Plan B. They have to share the message. I'm counting on them."

While the story may not be true, the point of it is: God is depending on us to get His word to the world. Every person matters to God. He did all He could to rescue us, now He asks us to share that crucial message with others. Not only does God ask us to share the message, He depends on it!

### **Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian delivers the message.

*"And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore **Christ's ambassadors,** as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you ... **Be reconciled to God.**"*

*2 Corinthians 5:19-20, NIV*



*God is depending on us to get His word to the world. Every person matters to God. He did all He could to rescue us, now He asks us to share that crucial message with others.*

What three things do you think people are afraid of when it comes to delivering the message of Christ?

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What types of excuses have you heard for not sharing the gospel?

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What is one excuse you've used? \_\_\_\_\_

Are we responsible for getting people saved or just sharing the message with them?

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What's the difference?

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## Understanding the Gospel

Right before going up into heaven, Jesus made it clear that spreading the gospel and helping new believers grow in their faith is the primary task of believers. It's *our mission* to be *on mission*.

Read Romans 10:14. Who is God depending on to share His message?

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Read Philemon 6. What happens when we actively share our faith?

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Preaching the gospel is at the heart of the mission process. If we don't share the message, unbelievers won't hear about Christ and won't believe in Him (*Romans 10:14*). And if we're not active in sharing our faith, we won't fully know the blessings of following Christ (*Philemon 6*).

But what exactly is "the gospel" and how do you explain it to someone?

The gospel is the message of God's personal love, our personal sin, and the only solution available—trusting in Jesus and receiving forgiveness. There are two parts to the message: law and grace. God's law says that our human situation is hopeless because of sin. We can't flatter, bribe or work our way into heaven. Because God is perfect and holy, He must punish sin. Because of our sin, we are sentenced to die.

It'd be hopeless if the message stopped there, but because of grace, it doesn't! God loved us so much that Jesus accepted the sentence as our substitute. Being God, He was perfect. Being human, He could suffer for us and take our place. His death satisfied God's judgment, and now we can stand forgiven before God. If we trust in Jesus alone, we will receive all the blessings He has earned for us. However, if we reject Him, we're left to pay the debt ourselves, and we'll be separated from God forever.

***"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"***

***Romans 10:14-15, NIV***



***"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."***

***Philemon 6, NIV***

**God's law tells us:**

God is holy and punishes sin.

We are sinners and therefore deserve eternal death and separation from God.

We are guilty in God's sight because of sin.

**God's undeserved grace tells us:**

God is loving and found a way to forgive sin.

Jesus suffered our sentence for us. We are offered eternal life and intimacy with God.

We are declared not guilty when we trust in Christ alone.

When we die, we will each depend on someone's life to get us into heaven. Either we'll trust in ourselves and our own "good deeds" (that's hopeless) or rely on the life of Christ. Faith is the only way to receive the benefits of what Christ has done. Do you believe in Christ as your Rescuer? If not, would you like to accept God's gift of life?

Think about it this way. If you were on a boat and you knew it was sinking, you'd be interested in hearing about the location of the life raft. On the other hand, if you didn't think it was sinking, you wouldn't care if there was a life raft or not. When people know they're doomed because of sin, they need *and want* to hear about the hope offered in the gospel—there is a life raft! But if they think they're safe earning heaven on their own, they need to hear the harsh news about



*The gospel is the message of God's personal love, our personal sin, and the only solution available—trusting in Jesus and receiving forgiveness.*



sin—the boat is sinking! Some people need to hear the boat is sinking; others are ready to hear about the life raft.

Think of one person you know who is not a Christian. Which part of the gospel are they most in need of hearing—law or grace?

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How can you tell?

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Look at the box explaining law and grace. Pick out some of the key words you would want to include in a presentation of the gospel. List five key words or concepts here.

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Which concept would be hardest for an unbeliever to understand?

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Write how you would explain that concept here.

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### **Personal PrepPRAYERation**

If you were taking an algebra exam, you'd spend time studying because the results of not knowing the material could be disastrous—you might bomb the test, get kicked off a sports team, or even fail the class.

You need to spend time studying and learning the gospel as well. The results of not knowing and understanding the message God has entrusted you to share could cause someone else to be confused, defensive or doubtful of Christ's claims.



Following are a few key Bible verses that you can use to explain the different aspects of the gospel message:

- ☉ **The love of God:** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV).
- ☉ **The results of unbelief:** “Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (John 3:18, NIV).
- ☉ **The gift of life:** “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23, NIV).
- ☉ **The reason Jesus had to die:** “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Peter 3:18a, NIV).
- ☉ **The importance of faith:** “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV).
- ☉ **The result of faith:** “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1, NIV).


The news is the same for all people—there is only one gospel. But there are lots of ways to share it! In the Bible, we see many ways of presenting the gospel.

- ☉ Paul used philosophy, logic and the story of his conversion.
- ☉ The woman at the well simply told what Jesus had done for her.
- ☉ John the Baptist preached repentance.
- ☉ King David sang songs.
- ☉ Luke wrote Jesus’ biography.
- ☉ Peter confronted people with sin.
- ☉ Apollos reasoned from history and Scripture.
- ☉ Jesus told stories, performed miracles and forgave sins.

The secret is telling people what they need to know in a way they can understand and relate. A specific gospel presentation may or may not be appropriate for a specific target group. So think about the person(s) you will be speaking to and try to say things in ways they’ll understand.

The story of how you came to trust in Christ is called your testimony, and it can be a powerful and effective witnessing tool. When sharing your testimony, tell what your life was like before you came to know Jesus, how you became a Christian, and what difference that has made in your life. Remember to still refer to Scripture! You’re not just sharing some kind of personal religious encounter. The person you’re talking with needs to know that Jesus is the ultimate answer for EVERYONE’S spiritual hunger and loneliness—including his.

Take your thumb and press it down on the table or chair next to you. That pattern of swirls and curves that makes up your fingerprint is unique in all the world. No one else who has ever been born has the exact same fingerprint as you,



***The news is the same for all people—there is only one gospel. But there are lots of ways to share it!***



***No one else who has ever been born has the exact same fingerprint as you, or the exact same mixture of interests, gifts and talents that God gave you. So no one else will present the gospel exactly like you.***

or the exact same mixture of interests, gifts and talents that God gave you. So no one else will present the gospel exactly like you.

Some people share the gospel best over a cup of cappuccino at a coffee-house. Others are most comfortable on stage as actors or musicians. Some write poems. Others play soccer. Still others teach or preach or counsel. For me, it's getting teens to laugh and to think by sharing talks packed with comedy, drama and unusual stories. That's how I share the gospel best. That's my fingerprint. What's yours?

What are your gifts and interests?

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How can you use them to deliver the message of the gospel?

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Read Acts 8:30-31, 34-35. What three things did Philip do that you can also do?

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Sometimes distractions come along while we're presenting the gospel. How would you handle distractions? Think of three positive things you could say that would keep your presentation on track.

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## My Testimony

Write out your own testimony or gospel presentation. Be sure to include:

- ☉ A question, story or comment to bridge the conversation into your gospel presentation.
- ☉ The good news of God's love and forgiveness.
- ☉ The bad news of sin and judgment.
- ☉ At least one Scripture verse.
- ☉ An opportunity for the person to receive Christ as Savior and Lord.

Spend a few minutes reading your presentation aloud. How does it sound? What changes do you need to make? Evaluate how clearly and effectively it presents the message of Christ.

Don't be intimidated because you don't know all the answers. You know the cure for the most fatal disease of all time! To put off sharing Christ until you know more is like discovering the cure for cancer and walking through a cancer ward without stopping to help people because you're on your way to the library to study!

Pray for opportunities orchestrated by God, and then rely on and be open to the Spirit's leading. Learn to listen and respond to people, being open to opportunities to share the gospel. However, try not to have an agenda. Show genuine compassion and understanding. And remember not to argue! Rather, with understanding and patience, present the truth, relevancy and attractiveness of Christianity. Then trust in the Holy Spirit speaking to people's hearts to do the rest!

## Personal Checkup

- I understand and can explain the difference between law and grace.
- I have developed a clear gospel presentation I am comfortable sharing.
- I have prayed for the right words to say, confidence, opportunity, sensitivity and discernment.
- I have set up a time to share the gospel with someone I care about.
- I can explain the message of Christ in words that others easily understand.
- I trust that God will use me, even though I am not perfect and I'm sometimes afraid.
- I have memorized several key Scripture verses and can answer simple questions about them.
- I emphasize God's grace rather than my rebellion when I share my personal testimony.
- I care more about the person I am speaking to than "getting through" my presentation.
- I regularly share the gospel with those who do not yet know Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

***Don't be  
intimidated***

***because you don't know  
all the answers. You  
know the cure for  
the most fatal disease  
of all time!***

## Do!



- ☉ Memorize Scripture.
- ☉ Pray for patience.
- ☉ Pray for opportunities.
- ☉ Listen when sharing the gospel.
- ☉ Speak with gentleness and respect.
- ☉ Clearly explain both law and grace.
- ☉ Practice your presentation.
- ☉ Be open to God's leading.
- ☉ Trust God to change hearts.
- ☉ Follow up.

## Don't!



- ☉ Use "churchy" or flowery language.
- ☉ Be afraid.
- ☉ Argue Scripture or get angry.
- ☉ Get off track or distracted.
- ☉ Beat around the bush.
- ☉ Manipulate the person into a decision.
- ☉ Make Christianity sound easy or rosy.
- ☉ Emphasize how bad you were.
- ☉ Criticize a group or denomination.
- ☉ Sound "canned."

## Developing Your Witness

Some of the ways you can grow in your ability and confidence in sharing the gospel message are listed below!

- 1 Listen to several different gospel presentations at church, on the radio, on video or at special events in your community. Evaluate their effectiveness. Notice what works and what doesn't work. Take notes and gather ideas. Collect and learn new ways of sharing the gospel. Make a file of illustrations or stories that work especially well with your target group.
- 2 Think of different ways to naturally bridge conversations or discussions to Christ. Plan how you could transition smoothly to a gospel presentation from a discussion about the following topics: church, suicide, loneliness, moving to a new house, violence, school shootings, colleges, jobs, divorce, self image, being cool, music or movies.
- 3 Make a list of promises God has made to believers. Think of all the specific advantages of being a Christian. It's unlikely people will be interested in Christianity if they think they're better off without it, so identify 10 practical, positive benefits of knowing Christ that you can share with others.
- 4 Memorize one verse of Scripture each week for one year.
- 5 Practice delivering the message to other believers and allow them to help coach you and give you suggestions on how complete or effective your message is. Time yourself to see how long it takes you to give your testimony or gospel presentation. Try to keep it short (3-5 minutes) and to the point.

Pray that God will allow you to see the Great Commission unfold. Then, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading and watch for opportunities to share the gospel every day!

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A full-time Christian writer and youth communicator, Steven James (a.k.a. the Story Guy) speaks about 250 times each year at youth events, camps, retreats and churches around the country. His goal is to creatively communicate the gospel with youth and children through a ministry of speaking, writing, comedy and drama.

by  
leola  
flore

chapter .12

# Gone Fishing: The Art of Discipling

## Mission Skill:

An *on mission* Christian  
disciples new believers.

If the story that appears in Luke 5:1-11  
had run in "The Galilee Times," it might have gone something like this:

## The Galilee Times EXTRA!!!

### Ironic Moment of the Week: Carpenter Teaches Fishermen to Fish

Simon, James and John, co-owners of Fresh Fine Fish, Inc., were taken by surprise early this week when Jesus, an area carpenter and renowned storyteller, asked to borrow one of their boats. According to eyewitness accounts, a crowd had gathered to hear Him speak while the fishermen washed their nets. So Simon agreed to row Him a few yards into Lake Gennesaret where the boat could be used as a platform.

After Jesus taught the crowd, He told Simon to row into deep water for a good catch. "We've worked hard all night and haven't caught enough for a tuna sandwich," said Simon, "but if you say so, we'll give it another try."

At that point so many fish swam into the nets, the nets began to break, so Simon and his men signaled for help. Another crew came alongside to assist, and both boats were soon full and began to sink.

Simon, shocked by the surprise catch of the day, turned to Jesus and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

Jesus replied, "Don't be afraid. From now on you're going to catch men."

No one was able to explain how the Carpenter helped bring in such an impressive haul of fish, but Simon, James and John pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed Him. The question remains: Who's going to clean up that mess on the beach? When a spokesman from the GEPA (Galilean Environmental Protection Agency) was notified, he replied, "Eewwww. No comment."

**"Come, follow  
me," Jesus said,  
"and I will make you  
fishers of  
men."**

**Matthew 4:19, NIV**

# Supplying Fish Food (The Word of God)

**QUESTION:** Before you teach somebody to ride a bike, what do you need to do?

**ANSWER:** Learn to ride it yourself.

For a new believer to grow and mature in the faith, he or she needs to pray, study the Bible, and learn the importance of worship and obedience. Is there ever a point at which we as believers don't have any more to learn? Not while we're still breathing!

That's why it's a good idea to be a part of an accountability group. That's a group of people who agree to check up on each other, to make sure each member of the group is following the guidelines that everyone agreed upon. A Christian accountability group might look like this: You and four or five Christian friends agree that you want to know how to disciple a new believer. The group chooses an introductory Bible study, preferably one that can be completed in six to eight sessions. You set aside an afternoon or evening every week and take turns leading the

*Continued*

## WANTED: A Career in Fish Processing

Imagine it's Career Day at your school. The good news: No math homework. The bad news: By the end of sixth period, you're supposed to have some idea of what you're going to be doing the rest of your life.

More bad news: Faced with way too many choices, you're confused and can't make up your mind. More good news: If you're a Christian, Jesus left clear instructions regarding what you're supposed to do: *process fish*.

Well, *that* sure clears everything up, doesn't it?

Just in case you're still foggy regarding that well-known career mandate, it may be a good time to explore the concept of *discipling*. After Simon Peter and the others followed Jesus, He spent the next three years teaching them how to fish for men and helping them to grow in their relationship with Him. For Simon Peter, there were ups and downs, but Jesus never gave up on His disciple. We should follow His example when teaching and encouraging others. It's not enough to catch fish *or* new believers; you need to know what to do with them once they're in the net.

Before He took God's express elevator to heaven after the resurrection, Jesus told those same fishermen to "*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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*" (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV). Their obedience resulted in the spread of the gospel and the establishment of the church.

To disciple someone in the Christian faith is to lead them into deeper spiritual growth. The Bible doesn't leave us stranded on the beach when it comes to discipling new Christians. In fact, there are specific instructions regarding habits we should help them develop. Name at least four basic things a new believer needs to know how to do, and explain why.

1. A new believer needs to: \_\_\_\_\_

Because: \_\_\_\_\_

2. A new believer needs to: \_\_\_\_\_

Because: \_\_\_\_\_

3. A new believer needs to: \_\_\_\_\_

Because: \_\_\_\_\_

4. A new believer needs to: \_\_\_\_\_

Because: \_\_\_\_\_

There are a number of skills and disciplines that will benefit new believers, and as we grow in our own knowledge and understanding of Scripture, we'll be able to identify more and more of them. Initially, however, consider how you would lead a new Christian into a deeper understanding of the importance of the following:

- ⊙ Bible Study
- ⊙ Prayer
- ⊙ Worship
- ⊙ Obedience

Let's look at each one of these areas.

## Bible study

Paul, who was a mentor to the young pastor Timothy, was firm in his insistence that Timothy treasure the Scriptures. Do you ever wonder if it occurred to Paul that he was *writing* Scripture, and that we would be eavesdropping on his correspondence 2,000 years later? When God inspired Paul and the other biblical authors to write down His message for us, He was laying out a road map for us to follow on our journey through life. A new Christian needs to be introduced to that road map, and as a spiritual mentor, you serve as AAA. Read 1 Timothy 4:13 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. (As time allows, read John 17 and note how Jesus prays for Himself, His disciples and new believers.)

What role should Scripture play in the life of a new believer?

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## Prayer

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, and we may need to guide a new believer in that area as well. Not everyone has grown up in a "church" atmosphere or may feel comfortable talking to God aloud. Is it *necessary* for a new believer to participate in group prayer? What does the Bible say about prayer? Read Luke 11:1, Romans 12:12, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

Why is it important for a new believer to learn to pray?

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discussion. That way everyone will have the opportunity to be in charge at least one time.

As leader, it's your responsibility not only to work through the chapter ahead of time, but also to come up with extra discussion questions and try to anticipate questions that a new believer might have. The rest of the group approaches the study as if they were new Christians. That way, each member of the group experiences what it's like to disciple "new" believers.

After each session, you give one another feedback. Did you use "churchy" language that a new believer might find unfamiliar? Did you get sidetracked on social or political issues instead of focusing on God's Word? Did you show how to apply the Scriptures in a practical way? In other words, would a new believer walk out of the study with a better understanding of what it means to live like a Christian? If the answer is yes, then you're better prepared to lead a new believer into a deeper relationship with the Lord.





# Discipling New Believers

## Do!

- ☞ Seek God's wisdom.
- ☞ Pray for the new believer.
- ☞ Remember you're an example.
- ☞ Read your Bible.
- ☞ Enjoy your time together.
- ☞ Start with a simple study.
- ☞ Follow up on questions.
- ☞ Schedule regular meeting times.

## Don't!



- ☞ Procrastinate. Get started!
- ☞ Preach. Instead, study together.
- ☞ Be impatient. Growth takes time.
- ☞ Be afraid. God is with you.
- ☞ Work alone. Get a prayer partner.
- ☞ Stop growing. Lead by example.
- ☞ Give up. Sooner or later, fish bite.

## Worship

New Christians—and “aged” Christians too—sometimes need to be reminded that a worship service isn't about “getting,” as in “I ‘got’ a lot out of the sermon today.” A worship service is about *giving*. When we sing songs of praise, when we offer thanks, when we focus on the Bible lesson and learn more about the God whom we serve, we are *giving* to Him. And He *likes* those gifts from His children! Read James 5:13 and Hebrews 12:28.

How should new believers worship?

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## Obedience

In the previous chapter of this workbook, you learned about sharing the gospel. In the following chapter, you'll learn more about sharing with other Christians as a mission advocate and mentor. At every stage of the new Christian's development, it's crucial that he or she understand the importance of obedience to God's Word. Read John 14:15, 23-24; John 15:10, 1 John 2:3 and Acts 2:28.

What is a new believer to do?

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As we help others to grow in their faith, we find that we grow as well. As Christians, we are both disciples and disciplers, learning from those who are further along the path and teaching those who follow after. Discipling a new Christian is a great privilege and a tremendous responsibility. The fact that you are studying this workbook is evidence of your commitment to obedience. Expect opposition, because spiritual warfare is a reality. But expect joy, delight and blessing as well, because you've enlisted on the right side!

It's clear that Jesus intended us to lead new believers into a deeper relationship with Him and to a life of obedience and spiritual growth. What would you expect the results to be in your own life as you seek to disciple a new believer? If you have experienced new insights or changes as a result of discipling someone, what are they?



In light of Matthew 13:1-9, 20-21, what may be some consequences of failing to disciple a new believer?

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### Taking Care of the Guppies (New Believers)

Ever feel overshadowed by the accomplishments of one of your cousins? John the Baptist could relate. But instead of running down the “Why me?” list (i.e., “Why can’t I walk on water?” ... “Why can’t I turn water into wine?” ... “Why can’t I raise the dead?”), John delighted in directing his own followers to his cousin Jesus.

Read the designated Scripture passages regarding John the Baptist and his disciples, and fill in the blanks in the following questions.

In Matthew 3:6, John baptized people who \_\_\_\_\_.

In Luke 3:7-18, John describes Jesus as \_\_\_\_\_.

In John 1:26-37, John calls Jesus by the following names: \_\_\_\_\_

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In John 3:27-30, John said what about himself, and about Jesus?

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What do these Scriptures tell us about John’s role and how he responded?

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*It’s not enough to catch*

*fish or new believers;*

*you need to know **what**  
**to do with them***

*once they’re in the net.*



***“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”***

*1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV*

*“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ ”*

*John 21:15, NIV*

To teach someone to follow Jesus, you must be certain *you* are following Jesus. Take a few minutes to quietly evaluate your relationship with the Lord. Then complete the following sentence:

I would describe my walk with God as

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## Personal Checkup

Are you ready to disciple a new believer? That’s a little like asking a first-time skydiver if he’s ready to jump ... as you’re pushing him out the door of the plane!

We never know when God will place a new believer in our lives, so we need to be ready with basic instructions and materials. First and foremost, we need to be alive spiritually—growing in our own relationship with God and willing to stretch our faith as we reach out to someone who may require a great deal of our time. How do you measure up in this discipler checklist?

- I have a healthy and growing relationship with the Lord.
- I feel comfortable talking to God and do so often.
- I read my Bible regularly and I’m involved in Bible study.
- As far as it is within my power, my relationships with others are healthy.
- I have no unconfessed sin in my life.
- I have asked God to make me sensitive to the spiritual needs of others, and I’m available to help meet those needs.
- Even though I’m intimidated by the responsibility of discipling someone, I’m excited about the prospect of helping a brother or sister in Christ grow in his or her faith.
- I’m familiar with several simple Bible studies and feel ready to lead a new believer through them.
- I’m willing to commit myself to this vital ministry.
- I have offered to be a mentor to a new or young believer.


## Preparing to Be a Discipler

Here are a few other ideas to help you prepare for your role as a discipler:


- ① Visit a Christian bookstore or Web site and check out the discipleship materials. Josh McDowell and Tim Elmore have produced excellent books. *The Survival Kit for Youth—A Practical Guide to Spiritual Growth*, by Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr.; and the *One Minute Bible*, by Lawrence Kimbrough, are also good sources.
- ① Let your youth pastor know you'd be interested in a series on the subject of discipling. Much may be learned about discipling from studying the lives of John the Baptist, the apostle Paul and Jesus Himself. Hint: If you *really* want to learn about discipling, volunteer to lead some aspect of the series.
- ① If you have a friend who's a new Christian, or one who expresses an interest in knowing more about the Bible or growing closer to God, invite him or her to join you in a one-on-one study. Choose a basic workbook and follow through until you've completed it together.
- ① Seek God's wisdom as you make yourself available to disciple others.

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Leola Floren is a professional writer and columnist with wide experience in writing youth ministry aids, articles and curricula. She is currently contributing editor of *With* magazine. In addition to writing, she also directs drama and plays violin at Highland Park Baptist Church in Southfield, Mich.



***As Christians, we are both disciples and disciplers, learning from those who are further along the path and teaching those who follow after.***



**Mission Skill:**

An *on mission* Christian  
shares with  
other Christians.

# Christianity Is a Team Sport

*“That the body of Christ  
may be built up until  
we all reach unity  
in the faith ...  
and become mature,  
attaining to ... the  
fullness of Christ.”  
Ephesians 4:12-13, NIV*

There are some sports that  
rely on

the skill and coordination of one person, like golf, tennis, skateboarding, boxing, wrestling and others. In these sports, the athlete must develop and hone his/her personal talents. But think of the sports that are team sports, like baseball, basketball, football, soccer, volleyball and so many others. In these sports, mature athletes must work together for a common goal, not a personal one. The team plans, practices and executes as a unit. Individual and specialty skills are used to achieve team goals!

Now think about a tournament or league of teams, all playing and enjoying the same sport together. For any one player to experience and enjoy the benefits of playing the game, there must be other teams, in addition to his, to make up a league or conference and fill out the game schedule.

This is a picture of Christianity. Every believer has a spiritual gift for ministry. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.) But only when we work together can the goals of Christianity be realized. Each church may be autonomous, but only as we join together are kingdom goals achieved throughout the world. We are all one body in Christ, yet each of us has a different but crucial role to play in the health and functioning of the whole body.

What is the mission (or goal) of Christianity? \_\_\_\_\_

Why can't one Christian alone fulfill the goal of Christianity?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why can't one church alone fulfill the Great Commission?

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As believers, we have been spiritually awakened to God's wonderful salvation in Jesus. We know Him. We love Him. We want to serve Him. We want others to know Him also! We have looked within our own lives to find barriers to the gospel. We have changed our thinking from "What's in it for me?" to "What is God's will for my life?" We have become active in evangelistic efforts and discipleship. God has motivated us to become channels of gospel truth and blessing to our friends, family and neighbors! Life is so exciting. Christianity is so wonderful. How can it get better than this?

Well, I am glad you asked! There is one more crucial step in the Christian life. All of the above steps are like individual sports. You are training, going, doing and it's great. But now that you have experienced the exhilaration of *on mission* Christianity and you look back at your friends and your church, are they excited? Are they fulfilled? Are they involved? The last crucial step toward maturity is advocacy of the *on mission* lifestyle to others.

What are you doing to fulfill the Great Commission?

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What gifts are you developing for service? \_\_\_\_\_

How are you working with other Christians to accomplish kingdom goals?

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Are you praying for others to become involved and catch the vision?

Yes  No

Would you be willing to personally be a player-coach?

Yes  No

Just think—Jesus was the greatest man who ever lived. He loved and healed and taught people. But there were so many people, even in Palestine! How could He speak to all of them? Jesus developed a plan to spread His message. Do you know His plan?

***“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”***

***1 Corinthians 12:7-11, NIV***

“Jesus went through all  
 the towns and villages,  
**teaching** in their  
 synagogues, **preaching**  
 the good news of the  
 kingdom and **healing**  
 every disease and sickness.  
 When he saw the crowds,  
 he had compassion on them,  
 because they were harassed  
 and helpless, like sheep  
 without a shepherd. Then  
 he said to his disciples,  
 ‘The harvest is plentiful  
 but the workers are few.  
 Ask the Lord of the harvest,  
 therefore, to **send out**  
**workers** into his  
 harvest field.”

Matthew 9:35-38, NIV

Read Matthew 9:35-38. What was Jesus’ strategy in these verses?

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Read Matthew 10:1, 5-15. What was Jesus’ strategy at this time in His ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Luke 10:1-16. What was Jesus’ strategy for advancing His kingdom?

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Not only did Jesus have a strategy to reach all people with the gospel, but the apostle Paul did also. He started churches in the large cities across the Mediterranean world of his day. From these central churches, the believers were to take the gospel to the surrounding areas. Guess what? This is what God wants from all of us! It is not enough that we go and share and disciple new believers ourselves. Just as Jesus involved others and Paul involved others, so must we.

Notice the list of helpers that Paul greets in Romans 16. Paul was writing to a church that he had never visited and yet he said hello to 27 people who helped him in ministry. Paul must have gotten everyone involved! Paul encouraged so many believers to be *on mission* spreading the gospel! Should we not do the same?

How can you involve others as *on mission* Christians and pass on to them the principles and strategies that you are learning? First, make a list of people that you should target to advocate your mission. List people you know who are ...

⊙ growing believers. \_\_\_\_\_

⊙ active believers. \_\_\_\_\_

⊙ believers who understand or are beginning to understand the Great Commission. \_\_\_\_\_

Your church is probably the best place to find these people! Look at your youth group, possibly those who are younger than you, who look up to you. Look for those who show interest in the things of God. Also think about family members, people at school, others in your neighborhood. After you identify those you should encourage to be mobilized, what do you do next?

1. Begin to pray for the Lord to awaken a desire in these people's hearts.
2. Pray for the Lord to show you the believers who will be available to Him.
3. Search for ways to be involved and to involve others in missions, evangelism, discipleship, worship and service.
4. Share with your church and particularly with these people your testimony of how God is working in you and through you to accomplish His mission.
5. Invite people on your list to partner with you in prayer and other ways suggested in Chapter 8, "Partnerships That Work."
6. As you model the *on mission* lifestyle, others will notice and begin to look to you for leadership. Be ready with options. Make a calendar that notes dates your church will be involved in mission projects and trips, evangelism, revivals, training sessions, prayer groups, youth camps, Vacation Bible School, etc. Provide copies of your calendar of mission opportunities to people on your list.

Believe me, life as a mission advocate is exciting! You are an *on mission* team member. You are an active player in the worldwide, eternal mission of God!

## Personal Checkup

- I am committed to fulfilling the Great Commission to make disciples for Christ.
- I have identified those I should encourage to be *on mission*.
- I am a living example of an *on mission* Christian.
- I am praying for my fellow Christians.
- I am encouraging other Christians to be *on mission* now.
- I am studying biblical models and examples of *on mission* Christians.
- I am an advocate for mission involvement to church leaders.
- I am familiar with mission resources and opportunities to be mobilized.
- I am supplying information about mission opportunities to others in my church.
- I am willing to be a leader in mobilizing members of my church to the mission.

## Do!



- ☉ Lead by example.
- ☉ Encourage others.
- ☉ Supply information.
- ☉ Pray for your church.
- ☉ Practice what you preach.
- ☉ Empower others.
- ☉ Share your experiences.
- ☉ Expect the best of others.

## Don't!



- ☉ Assume someone else will take the lead.
- ☉ Go it alone. It's a team sport.
- ☉ Forget to pray for more workers in the harvest.
- ☉ Nag. Just encourage.
- ☉ Brag. Remember Who is your strength.
- ☉ Be discouraged. Growth may be slow.
- ☉ Quit. You will reap in due time.



**Life as a mission advocate is exciting!**  
**You are an on mission team member. You are an active player in the worldwide, eternal mission of God!**



## More Plans for Mission Advocates

- 1 For information related to *On Mission Youth Strategies*, check out [www.studentz.com/strategies](http://www.studentz.com/strategies). These are plans for your church youth ministry to use to mobilize teen-agers to be *on mission* with God in their families (*My Home Mission*); their church (*Operation Visitor*); their neighborhoods (*Second Commandment Call*); and their schools (*Campus Missionary*). Talk and pray with your youth minister about how your church can implement these plans.
- 2 Use a map of Paul's journeys and list the cities in which he started churches. Then read Acts 13-28 to learn how he planted churches and engaged new and old believers as partners in the mission.
- 3 Read Romans 16. Learn about Paul's partners in his mission. List the Jews, the Gentiles, the men and the women. You may ask, "How can I tell who is who?" Look up the names in a concordance, Bible dictionary or Bible encyclopedia. Another good source is F. F. Bruce's volume on Romans in the *Tyndale Commentary* set. (Your pastor will probably let you borrow his copy.)
- 4 Expand your mission calendar (described above). Call your local Baptist associational office and your state Baptist convention office to ask them to put you on their mailing list for mission and ministry opportunities. Use the following Web sites to gather information about mission organizations, resources, opportunities and events:
  - ☉ North American Mission Board      [www.namb.net](http://www.namb.net)
  - ☉ International Mission Board      [www.studentz.com](http://www.studentz.com)
  - ☉ International Mission Board      [www.imb.org](http://www.imb.org)
  - ☉ Woman's Missionary Union      [www.wmu.com](http://www.wmu.com)
 Gather information about Challengers, Acteens, RAs and GAs, as well as the national, regional and state mission efforts publicized or linked on these Internet sites. Select some of these to add to your mission calendar and/or a church youth newsletter. It will amaze you how God is opening the door to missions for you and others now!

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Bob Utley has been advocating the mission for 13 years as a professor at East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas. His area of academic specialization is hermeneutics, and he has written eight study guide commentaries on the New Testament, available at [www.biblelessonsintl.com](http://www.biblelessonsintl.com). As an *on mission* Christian, he uses his gifts and talents to serve Christ, and he passionately advocates the cause of Christ by leading students on evangelistic mission trips every year through his university.