

# CONSIDER YOURSELF *SENT*

A series of three bible studies on mission in John's Gospel



BCMS

**Crosslinks**

GOD'S WORD TO GOD'S WORLD

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## How to use this study guide

This study guide aims to help you understand what Christian mission really is and what the implications of this are for you. It is designed for small group study – such as in a home group – but can equally well be used by an individual to work through on their own. If you do this, we do recommend you discuss your thoughts and conclusions afterwards, not least because many of the implications will involve corporate Christian action.

The material is divided into three separate studies and we suggest you put aside around 60-90 minutes for each session. A group leader should have a copy of this guide and ask the questions to the rest of the group. Group leaders should work through the study themselves first, to become familiar with the material and determine the areas where the group will find discussion most profitable. Leaders may also wish to pursue the suggested further reading beforehand, to pursue a topic at a deeper level and be best prepared to help the rest of the group members.

Lots of flicking through the Bible is involved in each study so do make sure everyone has a copy. Where bible quotes are included in this guide, English Standard Version has been used, but this does not vary greatly from the New International Version.

Contact Crosslinks to request a free copy of either of these resources.

If after completing this study guide you would like to find out more about what the Bible says about what mission is and what partnership in mission looks like, Crosslinks has two other Study Guides that can help you and your church:

- **What in the world is God doing?** - Bible study notes for small groups, looking at the agenda for God's mission as set out by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah - essential background for John's understanding of mission (see John 12:37-41).
- **Partnership in the gospel** - Bible study notes for small groups or individuals, looking at partnership as modelled by the Apostle Paul in his relationship with the Philippian Church.

Contact Crosslinks to request a free copy of either of these resources, or download from [www.crosslinks.org](http://www.crosslinks.org)

## Introduction

John 20:31 tells us why John wrote his Gospel: *“that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*

John presents the mission of Jesus – what he came to do. This includes what Jesus did during his time on earth and what he continues to do from Heaven today. John records that the sent Son himself sends his disciples, and also defines the focus of their mission. As we will see in these three bible studies, both are highly relevant to us today and profoundly affect how we understand our role in God's mission.

## Study 1: The Mission of Jesus

The word 'mission' is derived from the Latin word 'missio', which means 'sent'. To understand the mission of Jesus is therefore to understand what Jesus was 'sent' to earth to do. First though, we will want to know where Jesus came from.

► **Read John 1:1-14 and 13:1-3**

1. What do these verses tell us about where Jesus came from?

Jesus pre-existed – his life didn't begin when he came to earth but, for 33 years, Jesus 'dwelt among us'. Why was Jesus 'sent' to make his dwelling among us?

► **Read John 3:13-21**

2. What are we told about 'the world'?

John tells us that the world hates the light and is condemned by God. It is a description of more than just the physical place, it is the people who live in it. This is the state of the world but, despite that, God sent his Son into this God-hostile place (v16).

3. What does v17 say is not the reason God sent his Son into the world?
4. Why then did God send his Son into the world? v16
5. What is God's motivation for this mission?

“When John tells us that God loves the world (3:16) far from being an endorsement of the world, it is a testimony to the character of God. God’s love is to be admired not because the world is so big but because the world is so bad.”

p.123, The Gospel According To John, D. A. Carson

To understand Jesus’ words in v14 please **read Numbers 21:5–9**

- What was the root cause of the Israelites dying in these verses?
- Who saved them from this death?
- So what does John 3:14 tell us about Jesus’ mission? (see also 8:28 and 12:32-33)

▶ **Read John 1:29-34**

6. What do these verses add about Jesus’ mission?

▶ **Read John 19:16-30**

7. What do these verses tell us about how Jesus achieved his mission?

8. What was “finished” as Jesus died on the cross?

9. How does that encourage us to believe the promise of John 3:16?

**Summary**

Just as God saved the undeserving Israelites in the wilderness, so he sent Jesus to earth to save people who are condemned (3:18) and wicked (3:20). The purpose of Jesus' mission was to take away sin (1:29), by dying on the cross (19:30). God did this because of his love for the world (3:16).

People in the world still do wicked things and need to be rescued, but belief in Jesus can rescue people today.

10. Look up the following verses and summarise what they tell us about what Jesus is doing now:
  - i. 3:13-21
  - ii. 6:35-40
  - iii. 14:3
  - iv. 14:13-14
  
12. Summarise in one sentence what the mission of Jesus is.

**So what?**

- a. Has this changed how you view Jesus? If so, how?
  
- b. Has this changed your opinion of what Jesus came to earth for? If so, how?
  
- c. How will you respond to Jesus now?

**Pray in light of the things you have discussed.**Further reading

The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel,  
Andreas J. Köstenberger, Eerdmans 1998

## Study 2: The Mission of the Disciples

"It is Jesus' mission, not the disciples, that is the central mission presented in John's Gospel. Every other mission is derivative of his: the Baptizer's, the Spirit's, and the disciples. Nevertheless, John makes clear that Jesus' mission, while pre-eminent, was not to stand alone; it was to be continued in the mission of his followers"

p. 141, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*, Andreas J. Köstenberger

In John 20:21, Jesus sent his disciples on a mission: "*As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.*"

But what is the disciples' mission to be? What are they being 'sent' to do?

### ► **Read John 14:12-14**

Here Jesus tells the disciples that their mission will involve 'greater works' than those that he did. Jesus is here talking about the miracles that he performed which are called 'signs' in John's Gospel.

1. List out the miracles that are called 'signs' in John's gospel?
2. Can you think of anything that the disciples could do that would be greater than Jesus' miracles?

### ► **Read John 20:19-23**

3. What is the great need the disciples are to focus on? 20:23
4. What can the disciples offer in the light of 3:16?

5. Who are the disciples to depend on as they carry out this ministry?  
20:22

### **Go compare**

- ◆ Jesus' miracle in John 9:1-7 with what the Apostle Paul says about the works he is doing in Acts 26: 12-18
  - ◆ Jesus' miracle in John 11:1-44 with what Paul says about the work he has done in Ephesians 2: 1-6
6. In what sense are the Apostle Paul's works greater than Jesus'?

### Further reading

Paul the Missionary, Eckhard J. Schnabel, IVP 2008

▶ **Read John 16:7-15**

7. Why will the disciples need to depend on the work of the Holy Spirit?

▶ **Read John 3:1-5 and 15:26-27**

8. Why else do the disciples need to depend on the work of the Holy Spirit?

### **Summary**

Jesus sends the disciples (20:21) to tell others about the forgiveness he offers, because of his death on the cross. This will open spiritually blind eyes and bring to life spiritually dead people, to which Jesus' physical miracles pointed. The disciples are sent by Jesus for this greater work, but it is the Holy Spirit who will convince people of truth and convict them of their sin (16:8), and it is through the Holy Spirit that they can be born again, and so enter the Kingdom of God.

Further reading

God is three Persons, in perfect unity: Father, Son & Holy Spirit and each is involved in mission. For further study on this see:

Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel (New Studies in Biblical Theology), Andreas J. Köstenberger, IVP 2008

9. How do the following verses show that the disciples' mission is continuing Jesus' mission?
  - i. 4:31-38
  - ii. 14:13-14
  - iii. 15:7-16

The disciples "harvest" a crop they did not sow and are instructed to ask Jesus for his help and "abide in him" in all they do. The disciples' mission is dependent on Jesus, but will likewise see people inheriting eternal life as well as bringing glory to God.

10. Summarise in one sentence what it is that the disciples were commissioned to do.

**So what?**

- a. Has this study changed how you view the Holy Spirit? If so, how?
- b. Has this study changed how you want to relate to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit? If so, how?
- c. In what areas of your life, if any, do you need to be more dependent on the Holy Spirit?

**Pray in light of the things you have discussed.**

## Study 3: The Mission of Believers Today

Just before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed to God his Father. His prayer is recorded in chapter 17 of John's Gospel. Jesus prayed first for himself (1-5), then for the disciples (6-19) and finally for subsequent generations of believers (20-23) – i.e. us!

► **Read John 17: 20 - 23**

1. In his prayer for future believers, what is the single, surprising request Jesus makes? v21
2. What is Jesus' reason for asking this for us? v21
3. From what we looked at in study 1, what does Jesus mean by 'the world' in v21?

► **Read John 10:10-18**

4. What is the goal of Jesus' mission? v10
5. What is the scope of Jesus' mission? v16

We saw in study 2 that Jesus 'sent' the disciples to engage in his mission. In John 17, Jesus asks for unity for believers today so that 'the world' may believe. But how will unity aid Jesus' mission of reaching the world with salvation?

John Stott writes, "In v20 Jesus alludes to two groups... the 'these' (i.e. the Apostles) and 'those' (i.e. subsequent believers). It seems beyond question that the 'all' of v21, whose unity Christ desires, are a combination of 'these' and 'those'... Christ's prayer is that 'all' (both 'these' and 'those') may be one."

p. 82, Christ the Liberator, John R. W. Stott

## Summary

Jesus is praying that all generations of believers may be united with the Apostles of the first century - that we might believe what they believed and proclaim what they proclaimed.

One consequence of this is that the disciples' commission is also our commission i.e. we too are 'sent' to make available the forgiveness of sins, in dependence upon the Spirit. We are the means by which Jesus intends to bring in sheep of other folds (10:16).

6. What would it mean to consider yourself 'sent'?
7. To whom should you go? (where in John can you turn to answer this?)
8. What is your message?
9. On whom should you depend?

The testimony of the disciples combined with the testimony of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to convict others of their need for Christ (15:26-27). The message we proclaim should therefore be the same as the disciples'. Their testimony is recorded in the Gospels – these are the eye-witness accounts of those who were with Jesus 'from the beginning'. People will be convinced of the gospel only when what we say is rooted in what the disciples said. The Holy Spirit will then give an inward testimony to bring conviction that the Bible's outward testimony is true (cf. 16:8-11).

10. In the light of this, what should you pray for?
11. Remembering what God's motive for mission is (3:16), what should our motivation be?

12. Is it any encouragement to think of this mission as “greater works”?
13. In one sentence, what is the mission of believers today (yourself included!)?

**So what?**

- a. Has this study changed how you view your role in Jesus' mission? If so, how?
  - b. Has this changed your opinion of the work that Mission Partners should do? If so, how?
  - c. How can you as an individual be more involved with Jesus' mission:
    - i. Locally
    - ii. Globally
- 
17. How can you as a church be more involved with Jesus' mission:
    - i. Locally
    - ii. Globally

**Pray in light of the things you have discussed.**

*“as the father sent me so I am sending you”* John 20:21



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