



TOPIC:

Mission

Christian FOUNDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Christian FOUNDATIONS

Christian Foundations is a series of studies that helps people discover (and rediscover) the FOUNDATIONS of believing in, living life with and serving Jesus.

Each module is centred around the rhythm of daily self-study and reflection on Scripture and weekly discussion with a Christian mentor (or mentoring group).

The daily rhythm involves:

- A brief introduction to the Scripture reading
- The study of a Scripture passage
- Reflection and journaling on the passage
- A short devotion flowing from the passage
- A prayer to pray aloud
- An action to take in response to what you have learned

The modules can be completed in any number or order depending on your needs, but for someone completing all the modules a **suggested order is:**

1. Identity
2. Spirit
3. Growth
4. Service
5. Mission
6. Perseverance
7. Baptism

INSTRUCTIONS

ORGANISE with a mentor or mentoring group when you will meet and which module you will do together each week.

STUDY daily one of the five Bible studies (Study 1-5), and write any reflections, questions and revelations. It will probably take you about 20 minutes to complete the reading and reflection. (If a daily study proves too difficult, you could decide to spread each module over two weeks.)

MEET weekly (or fortnightly) with your mentor (and other members if in a group). There is a guide for this discussion at the end of each module.

ADVICE

Decide in advance exactly where and when you will spend the time each day reading and reflecting on the Scripture passage and input. With a regular time and place, it is much more likely that you will get the studies done.

Make sure you don't "move on" from each module until you have spoken and debriefed with your mentor or mentoring group about this important foundation of Christian living. Be completely honest with your mentor. If you don't understand something, are having doubts, or forget to do the studies, just tell them. This isn't a test you can get wrong. It is an investment into the rest of your life with God.

Write down your questions and reflections and bring this to your weekly meeting. It would also help to have a look at the discussion questions before you meet with your mentor. Pray that God will use these studies to grow you and release you into a more grace-centred, God-focused and joy-filled life in Christ.

READING 1: THE LIFE OF MISSION

orientate

I (Dan) was drilling a hole in my wall the other day to hang some new shelves, and soon realised that I didn't have a small enough drill bit to fit the screw I would be using. Instead of driving to Bunnings to get the right tool for the job, I shrugged and tried to make-do with a larger drill bit. It didn't go well! I'll spare you the details but needless to say, I now have a huge gaping hole in my laundry wall with nothing hanging on it. It serves as a daily reminder for me: know what needs to be done and do it properly. So what are Christians supposed to be doing? In today's reading, the Apostle Peter (one of Jesus' best mates who spent a lot of time with him) lays out the epic purpose of a Christian and their church. This is the ultimate task for which we have been chosen and brought together with others.

explore

1 Peter 2:9-12

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What is the purpose of God's chosen people?

reflect

Take a moment to consider the first verse (2:9). You are God's trophy. You are his "special possession" that he has gone out of his way to choose and personally make holy and blameless. Like a car enthusiast who polishes his new Porsche daily, or a fashionista who has just found the 'perfect' dress, God loves to sit and gaze upon you in admiration and pride and go "Yesssss!".

But you are not just a trophy to be left on the shelf; protected while you wait for heaven. Peter says your entire life's mission is now to be declarers: part of a team who "declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light". You are called to be a signpost to those around you that says, "God is actually real and astonishingly amazing because he is changing my life."

Like an incredible piano player who doesn't bother to play, if you don't do the very thing you are purposed to do then you will eventually experience frustration and apathy in your Christian journey.

So does this mean that you now need to loudly 'declare' to everyone you meet today about how great God is? Well... Yes it is important to tell people (we'll get to that soon), but have a look at the advice Peter gives in 2:11-12. One of the primary ways in which we can fulfil our mission of declaring God's greatness is to make him great in our own lives, greater than any of the other desires that are waging war for first place in our hearts. You are now a foreigner in your own country because you serve a different king, have a different passion and are on a different mission. Living in God's presence makes you different and this will eventually stand out!

pray

Father, thank you that you have chosen me. I still sometimes find it hard to believe that I am so special to you when I feel so ordinary and broken. Help me to see that my life's ultimate purpose is not to be happy, or successful, or even to have a great family. Give me a passion for the purpose you have now given me - to be a signpost in this world that points people to you. I so much want people to see Jesus in me.

respond

Have a think about one way that your ultimate purpose is different to your friends who don't follow Jesus and write it down in your journal.



READING 2: THE HEART OF MISSION

orientate

You might hear many different words when it comes to our mission: evangelism, discipleship, witnessing, outreach, sharing the gospel, being a missionary. It can get a little confusing as these words can have different meanings for different people. But there was a famous moment recorded by the disciple Matthew when Jesus gave clear instructions about our mission just before he physically left this earth. It helps clear everything up. This call by Jesus is often described as, "The Great Commission." It was like a graduation ceremony talk - summarising all that he had been training his followers to do over the previous 3 years and then sending them out to do it. I love how honestly it starts by saying that some followers still had their doubts about the risen Jesus even though he was standing there right in front of them. Check it out...

explore

Matthew 28:16-20

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What does a disciple of Jesus look like? How can we "make disciples"?

reflect

There are some issues in the Bible that are not completely clear, but our mission is not one of them. Jesus plainly states in this commissioning speech that even though it is ultimately his authority and continuing presence that will make it happen, we have a major job to do in making disciples as we go about our daily lives. So what exactly is a disciple? Back in Jesus' day the Jewish people had a master-apprentice type setup where Rabbis would enlist groups of 'disciples' who would follow them around, model their life after theirs, and try to put the Rabbis' teachings into practice in their own lives.

Your job is to become Jesus' disciple yourself and to make more disciples, seeing them baptised into God's family and helping them learn to listen to Jesus and live his radically beautiful new way of life themselves. Notice that here we are not called to just convert people to get them into heaven, or recruit people to grow our church, or even to help people change our society to be godlier.

All of these things are great and are an important part of it, but the long-term goal is more people saved and following Jesus by putting his upside-down loving ways into action.

Making and growing disciples is not our only job as God's people. The Bible also calls us to look after God's creation, create healthy cultures, defend the poor and oppressed, do great work, and love our enemies. But making disciples is perhaps our most important mission and will contribute to these other mandates as more people truly follow Jesus.

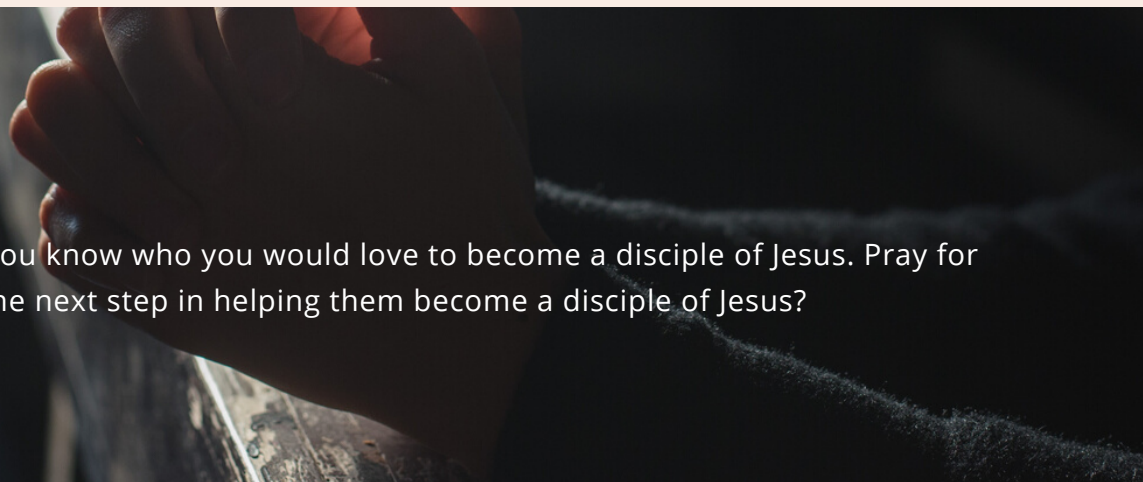
The scope of this mission might sound exciting to you, or maybe it sounds daunting. How on earth can we do something like this? We'll talk about where to start in the next reading, but the good news is that Jesus promises to go with ordinary people like us. He has been doing this for two thousand years, so he has a good track record. The call is to become a disciple of Jesus yourself and bring others with you.

pray

Lord, I am your disciple. I am your apprentice. I will do what you want. Because you want me to make more disciples like me, then I will give it my best shot, even though I don't always know what I'm doing. Please help me to be an influence for you.

respond

Think about someone you know who you would love to become a disciple of Jesus. Pray for them. What would be the next step in helping them become a disciple of Jesus?



READING 3: MY STORY IN MISSION

orientate

How do we actually go about telling people about Jesus and making more disciples? There are actually lots of different methods that have worked: inviting people to Christian events, doorknocking, giving out brochures, reading the Bible together, enrolling in Alpha, praying for people, introducing people to your Christian friends. We probably shouldn't get too tied up with finding the best one because God uses them all. However, there is one simple method that we see working very effectively in the Bible time and time again. This is a method that every Christian can put into practice. Jesus summarises it in Mark 5:19 when he tells a man he had just healed, "go home and tell your family about what God has done for you." Sharing with your family and friends and neighbours what God has done in your life is one of the best ways to begin mission. Let's see today how the Apostle Paul does it when asked to share his story with some Roman officials who had put him in jail.

explore

Acts 26:4-18

4 "The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. 5 They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. 6 And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. 7 This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. 8 Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

9 "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

12 "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. 14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What do you think is the most important statement in his story?

reflect

Recent research has shown that average Australians who don't follow Jesus are not all that impressed with celebrity Christians or strong arguments for Christianity. But they are very impacted by seeing people live out their faith and hearing genuine stories and testimonies from people they trust and respect (Source: McCrindle Research, 2017).

Much of the New Testament, especially the Gospels about Jesus, consists of those who encountered Jesus and had their lives changed by him sharing their story - what they had actually "seen and heard" (1 John 1:3). In this passage today, Paul gives his own story in three parts:

1. What his life was like before Jesus.
2. How he met Jesus.
3. How Jesus changed (and was changing) his life.

That's not a bad way to start. Try using these categories for your own story. It is important to remember that everyone's story is different.

Some sound very dramatic like Paul's. Other stories may not sound very exciting but are no less important and credible. My (Dan) own story of growing up in a very Christian family has no crazy 'turning point' moment. But I can still see the remnants in me of a life without Christ, and can still genuinely share with those in my life how God has saved me and given me an incredible peace and security that I never had. I can say that each day walking with him brings me deep joy even when things are going badly. It is not the greatness of your story that people are interested in, it is the reality of it.

pray

Father, thank you for forgiving me, for rescuing me from the path I was on, and for giving me a new life, hope and joy in you. Help me to continue to appreciate my faith story. Give me confidence to share my story and show me who to share my story with. Please give me the courage to try with someone who trusts me.

respond

Write down your own story using the three headings: Before Christ. Meeting Christ. With Christ. Share it when you meet together this week.



READING 4: THE COST OF MISSION

orientate

I vividly remember in one of my high school assemblies an outspoken Christian senior asking all the Christians in the school to stand up. I'm pleased to say that I did stand up (maybe on the third call), but sad to admit that my face was burning in embarrassment as many of my friends were laughing at me. Christians are the most persecuted group of people on earth (Source: The Guardian, 2019) and for many Christians around the world the decision to follow Jesus means being cut off from family, employment, and even facing prison and death. Being a Christian in a democratic nation such as Australia eliminates most of this type of extreme persecution, but it doesn't mean that there is no cost. Jesus says that following him costs your entire life (Matthew 16:25). How come? In our reading today, Paul explains why he has given up his rights and freedom to become a Jesus follower and missionary.

explore

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What does being a 'slave to everyone' actually mean? What does it look like in practice?

reflect

Paul certainly meant what he says here about giving up his rights to an easy life in order to see people meet Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 11, he gives a list of all the dreadful things that happened to him due to his effort to share the Jesus story with everyone he could. He faced shipwreck, torture, prison, stoning... That's just the start. It is quite the list.

You probably won't find yourself being tortured for sharing your story about what Jesus has done in your life or for inviting someone to church, but you may very well find it difficult or embarrassing. There is a guarantee about Christian mission: some way or another, it will be costly. It will cost you time, reputation, money and even relationships. I (Dan) remember telling someone at my work in a media company that I was a Christian. They said to me, "How could you be so brainwashed?" They never treated me with quite the same respect again.

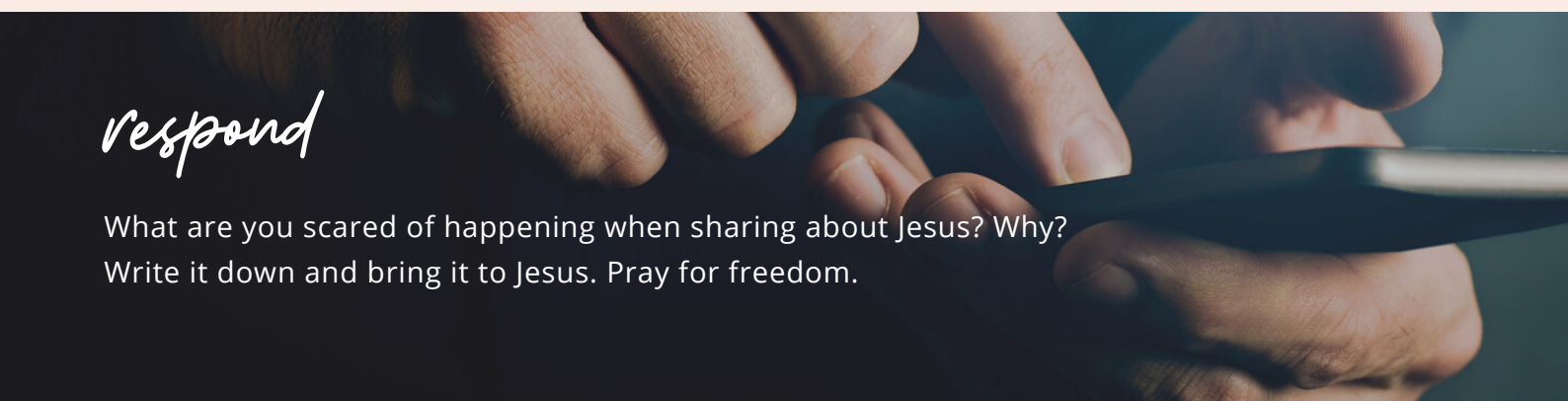
So why do it? Paul gives his answer: "So that I might save some." Christians don't see mission as a dreaded obligation or annoying side-task. They are driven by a passionate love for those around them. We have a desire to see people saved from a life without God into an abundant life with him. The mission of disciple-making is the call to do whatever is necessary, whenever it is necessary, to help people follow Jesus. Thankfully, there is another guarantee that Paul gives in this paragraph: bearing the cost of God's mission means sharing in incredible blessings (1 Cor 9:23). I can assure you that there is nothing better than seeing someone you love come to trust Jesus.

pray

Lord I know that sharing my faith is going to be costly at some point. Help me to be ready when the moment comes. Please place in me a driving passion to see my friends and family (and others I encounter) meet you. I will do whatever you want. Lead me on and show me what to do and say.

respond

What are you scared of happening when sharing about Jesus? Why? Write it down and bring it to Jesus. Pray for freedom.



READING 5: THE BEGINNINGS OF MISSION

orientate

For many Christians, the idea of being on a mission to make disciples sounds not just strange and challenging, but incredibly difficult. How do you do it? Where do you start? Do you pick up a Bible and go to the house across the street? Do you try to steer your conversations to God-type things and hope something sticks? Do you tell your friends that God loves them? While there is always a cost as we saw yesterday, the beginnings of disciple-making is actually much simpler and easier than you think. As you read the Scripture today, note how Jesus starts his mission with a small band of followers. Notice how comfortable it is for him because he starts with people who already seem to like him and want to be around him.

explore

John 1:35-46

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What does Jesus do to convert his first disciples to his cause?

reflect

In this passage, we see two ways to begin to effectively influence and mission for God:

1. Start with people who already like you.

Jesus' first disciples were already following his cousin John. They knew about Jesus and wanted to hang out with him for the day. This was before he shared the message with them. Have a think for a second. Who in your life likes you, listens to you, trusts you, serves you or wants to hang out with you? Maybe God has already put in your life those who are ready to hear about what Jesus has done for you. Often, the first step in someone giving their life to Jesus is having a trusted friend who is a Christian.

2. Invite them to 'come and see' Jesus.

Andrew and Phillip both had the advantage of being able to grab their brother and friend to actually see Jesus in the flesh. Of course, we can't do that today. Or can we? Jesus' body on earth is now the church, so even though we can't introduce our friends and family to Jesus personally, we can introduce them to the body of people who have been adopted by God and who are trying to follow his teachings. Mission is very hard alone, and as we see in this passage a very natural thing to do once you've found something wonderful is to invite someone close to see it too.

Time and time again, new Christians in our church have invited their friends to spend time with our church family and to hear about our Jesus. New Christians are often the best missionaries. Invite friends in your circle along to a service, to a small group, to an Alpha Course or even just to a barbecue with your church people, and they will meet Jesus.

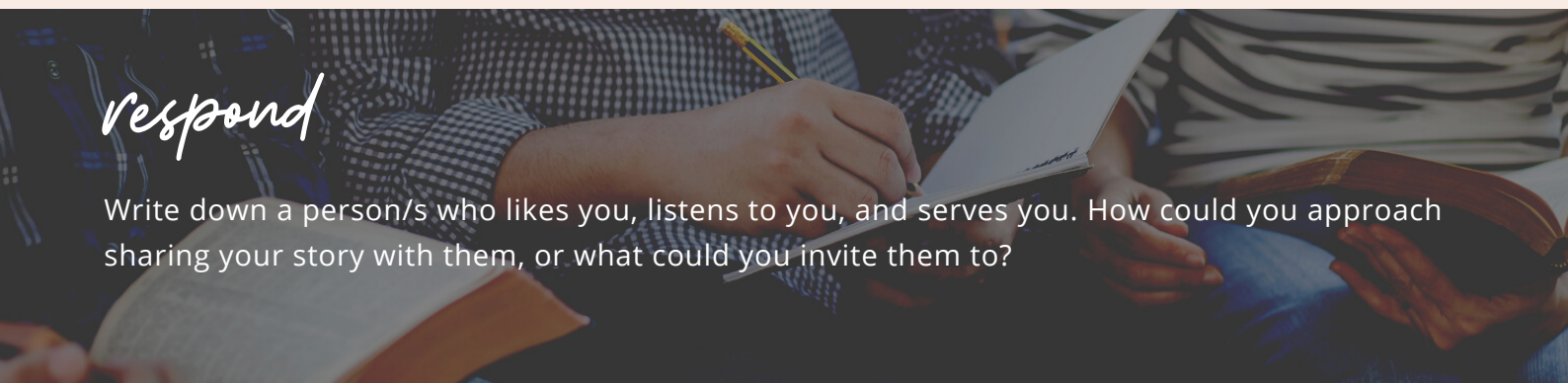
Of course, finding people who like you, sharing your story with them, and inviting them to a gathering of God's people isn't enough. At some stage they must hear the specific good news and make a response to Jesus' invitation to believe, be forgiven and "follow me." But that may take longer than you think. To get started think, "Who has God already sent into my life right now and what can I invite them to?" It might be easier to start mission than you think.

pray

Father show me who you have already prepared in advance for me to love, share my story with and invite to see Jesus. I'm excited to be used by you God. Please give me courage and joy as I fulfil your mission for me.

respond

Write down a person/s who likes you, listens to you, and serves you. How could you approach sharing your story with them, or what could you invite them to?



Discussion QUESTIONS

Use these questions to discuss with a mentor or group what God has shown you in this study

Reading 1: The Life of Mission (1 Peter 2:9-12)

1. Any reflections or questions on Reading 1? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
2. Do you think your non-Christian friends notice anything different about you? Why or why not?

Reading 2: The Heart of Mission (Matthew 28:16-20)

3. Any reflections or questions on Reading 2? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
4. What does a disciple of Jesus look like? How can we “make disciples”?

Reading 3: My Story in Mission (Acts 26:4-23)

5. Any reflections or questions on Reading 3? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
6. Share your own story of how God has changed your life as you would share it with a friend.

Reading 4: The Cost of Mission (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

7. Any reflections or questions on Reading 4? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
8. Has living for Jesus and sharing your faith been costly for you? How?

Reading 5: The Beginnings of Mission (John 1:35-46)

9. Any reflections or questions on Reading 5? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
10. Who is a not-yet Christian that likes you and may be interested in finding out more about Jesus?
11. If someone asked you, “What is a Christian?” How would you respond? Have you had a chance to share this with anyone yet?
12. How are you going spiritually and personally? What other things would you like to talk about?

