

MISSION ESSENTIALS

4 Bible studies to help your small group discover God's character and his purposes for the world

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



What's it all about?

Welcome to Mission Essentials! This set of four Bible studies has been designed to help your church discover God's grand saving plan for his world. In the first study we take a step back and consider the jaw-dropping nature of God's Lordship and glory. We will see that, ultimately, the mission of the church is to proclaim God's glory to the whole world. While God is glorious, he's also loving; in the second study we will be amazed by God's love for the nations which is demonstrated time and again throughout the Bible (and finally in the person of Jesus Christ). In the third and fourth studies we move from considering God's character and turn to think about what this means for us, his followers. The first characteristic of a disciple of Jesus, considered in the third study, is sharing his love with others. In the final study, we will be challenged with Jesus' example of sacrifice and will see that we too need to be ready to sacrifice our all for our Saviour.

We hope that these studies will encourage you and your small group to follow harder after Jesus - and to help you to find your place in God's grand saving plan for the whole world.

Contents

Study 1

Characteristics of God: God's glory among all nations **3**

Study 2

Characteristics of God: God is love (his heart for the nations) **6**

Study 3

Characteristics of a disciple (1): Sharing God's heart **10**

Study 4

Characteristics of a disciple (2): Sacrifice **14**



1. Characteristics of God: God's glory among all nations

God's glory as the ultimate end and purpose of mission

In this study we will focus on God's glory as the ultimate end and purpose of mission, and his glory which is to be known among all nations.

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Getting started: When you hear the word 'glory', what do you instantly think about? Think of some of the ways British culture uses the word 'glory' (think about sports, the arts, and social media spheres).



1. Read Revelation 1:12-17. These verses describe what happened when the apostle John saw the risen Jesus. What do you notice about what Jesus looked like? How did John respond? What do you think John thought and felt at that moment? Even though John was one of Jesus' best friends, he still reacted as he did. Why do you think that was?



I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash round his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.' **(Revelation 1:12-17)**

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2. Read 1 Chronicles 16:25-27 and 1 Timothy 6:15-16. How do these two verses describe God?



For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendour and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his dwelling-place. **(1 Chronicles 16:25-27)**

...which God will bring about in his own time – God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might for ever. Amen. **(1 Timothy 6:15-16)**

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3. Read Psalm 47:7-8 and Psalm 46:10. What do you think the link is between God's glory and the nations and how should God's glory be demonstrated?



For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne. (Psalm 47:7-8)

He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.' (Psalm 46:10)

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4. Read Philippians 2:10-11 and Revelation 7:9-10. What is the final outcome for the world? What happens when the whole world acknowledges Jesus as Lord?



...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10-11)

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' (Revelation 7:9-10)

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Making it real: *The Mwani are a people group of about 110,000 who live on the coast and on many small islands of Northern Mozambique. They follow 'folk' Islam; Islam is a veneer over their traditional beliefs that revolve around fear of the spirit world. There are about seventy followers of Christ spread across a number of small villages and towns. Over the last twenty-five years, God has inspired many churches to send their workers to work with a handful of mission agencies, including AIM, to seek to reach the Mwani with the gospel; but the going has been very tough. The Mwani are an example of a whole people group that do not yet know Jesus (we call them unreached people groups) but one day there will be Mwanis before the great white throne, and they too will declare "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Does your church have work among an unreached people group? Why not pause now and pray for both the Mwani people and your church's work?*

To pray further for the Mwani, go to eu.aimint.org/mwani, where you can also watch a video about them.

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Bringing it home: The Apostle John had an amazing vision of the risen Christ. The splendour of Jesus' glory made him fall at Jesus' feet in awe and surrender. Not many of us have seen a vision of God like John. As a result, we are often tempted to make God 'in our own image'. We project our understanding of our world and ourselves onto God. "I am like this so therefore God is like this." Discuss this idea in your group. Do we do that? What effect does it have on the way we see God and, as a result, how we live out our lives? Try to list some practical things we can do to get a better, God-shaped understanding of our glorious God. Why not keep each other accountable throughout the week for the things you have decided to do?

2. Characteristics of God: God is love (his heart for the nations)

God's purposes in redeeming a people for himself and his desire that none should be lost.

In our last study we focused on God's glory. We finished in Revelation 7, standing in heaven before the throne of the Lamb, surrounded by multitudes from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. It's clear that God's ultimate plan is for all peoples to know him. In this study we will think more about God's purposes through the Bible and his love for humankind.

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Getting started: People show love for one-another in many different ways. Try and list some of those ways. Now, list some of the ways that God demonstrates his love to us (try to list the big things and the small).



1. At the very start of the Bible God was in relationship with humankind through Adam and Eve. Sadly, they rebelled against him and the human story took a calamitous turn. How did God respond? He chose Abram. **Read Genesis 12:2-3.** (God reaffirms his choice of Abram several times, see: Genesis 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14) This is the first time God spoke to Abram. What do you notice? How was God's concern for the whole world revealed in God's call to Abram?



'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.' **(Genesis 12:2-3)**

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2. The story of God's involvement with humankind quickly moves on and focuses upon the people of Israel (Abraham's descendents). Through Moses the Lord delivers them from slavery in Egypt and brings them into the promised land. **Read Exodus 19:4-6 and Isaiah 49:6.** What do you think God was seeking to do through Israel? Did he simply want a holy people that he could relate to? Was he seeking something more?



"You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." **(Exodus 19:4-6)**

...he says: 'It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.'
(Isaiah 49:6)



3. As we read through the Old Testament, time and time again we see God's clear desire that all peoples know his glory and are saved through him. **Read Psalm 64:9, Psalm 86:9 and Isaiah 2:2.** In the Old Testament there are over 50 examples like this. What should our personal response be?



All people will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done. (Psalm 64:9)

All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name. (Psalm 86:9)

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. (Isaiah 2:2)

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4. Read Ezekiel 33:11, Jeremiah 31:3, Luke 19:10, 1 John 4:7-8 and 2 Peter 3:9. What moves the Lord? What do you think is on his heart?



Say to them, "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11)

The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.' (Jeremiah 31:3)

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

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Making it real: *The Arabs of North Africa are a very diverse people with a population of 91 million and very few churches. They are spread across North Africa. The governments of those countries are aggressively against the sharing of the gospel - persecuting any believers in Christ with prison and social exclusion. The Lord loves the Arabs of North Africa with 'an everlasting love' and desires that 'everyone to come to repentance'. Cry out to the Lord for the Arabs of North Africa, that the Lord would have mercy on them, and that they would here the gospel and respond in faith.*



For more prayer information about the Arabs of North Africa go to eu.aimint.org/arabs.



Bringing it home: As you respond to this study, maybe you could discuss a few of these questions together, or think about some of them over the week to come?

- What has struck you from this study? Do you disagree with anything?
- What do you think about the idea that God is a God of love and desires everyone to come to repentance? In what ways does that challenge you?
- If it's true that he desires no-one to perish, then what implications does that have for us as his followers?
- Does this study change the way you think about your neighbours, your co-workers or friends and family who don't know him?
- When we watch the news and hear of events happening around the world, do you have a burden for those people that don't know Jesus? What is a godly response?

For resources to help you think more about God's heart to reach the lost, visit eu.aimint.org.

3. Characteristics of a disciple (1): Sharing God's heart

Sharing God's heart (loving people), desiring and declaring his glory

In the first two studies we have focused upon God's character, exploring how he is glorious and loving. As his followers, we are called to follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21). Who we are must flow out of who God is. In this study we will be focusing upon what it means for us to share God's heart.

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Getting started: In British culture it has become common to talk about 'being passionate' about something. So, companies might be 'passionate about providing quality photocopying' or 'passionate about good food'. What does our culture mean when it says that? Do you think God is passionate about us?



1. Just as God is love, his followers are also called to love. **Read John 15:12, Mark 12:30 and Matthew 5:44.** Who should we love?



My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44)

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2. What does loving each other, our neighbours and our enemies mean? Can you think of any verses that help us understand what God wants us to do? What is included in loving others? Is anything excluded?

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3. In the first two studies we looked at God's glory and his desire to see all peoples come to be in relationship with him. **Read Matthew 28:18-20.** How do you think this fits with God's call to his followers to love those around him? How does loving people fit with Christ's call in Matthew 28:18-20 to go and make disciples of all nations?



Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, 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)



4. Read 2 Timothy 4:2, Romans 1:16 and Romans 10:14-15. In many ways UK culture has become 'post-Christian'. A few decades ago, our culture was generally accepting of the Christian message. That is changing. Living in a multi-cultural society, tolerance is highly valued. With this in mind, does Christ's call to take 'make disciples of all nations' make you feel uncomfortable? Perhaps you might agree with it intellectually but not put it into practice? How important is it to purposefully share the good news with people?



Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. (2 Timothy 4:2)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. (Romans 1:16)

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 anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' (Romans 10:14-15)

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5. We have been thinking particularly about our UK context. We have seen that we are all called to love people, and that this flows out of who God is. With God's concern for all peoples, and his desire that all should come to repentance, what does that mean for the rest of the world? How should we respond to Christ's 'Great Commission' in **Mark 16:15-16**? From this verse, what is the state of those that do not believe?



He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.' (Mark 16:15-16)

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Making it real: *The Acacia* people of Chad are a large Muslim people group of over six hundred thousand people living along the shore of Lake Chad. They are the traders and business people of Chad and have very few churches among them. Acacia parents send very few of their children to secular French-speaking schools, preferring to send them to Muslim Madrasas. It's a very arid, inhospitable region with very few gospel workers among them.*



The Acacia people stand condemned unless they hear and respond to the gospel. To pray, visit: eu.aimint.org/acacia.

**Name of the people group has been changed for security reasons.*

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Bringing it home: How have you been challenged by today's study? Do you agree with the idea that our modern British culture is ashamed of the gospel? What does that mean for us? Are we embarrassed by the gospel? What do you think about the

suggestion that as followers of Christ we must join God in his concern that all the peoples of the world come to repentance?

If you are up for a challenge, write down the names of three friends, neighbours or work-colleagues. Now, commit to sharing something of your relationship with God with each of the people you have written down.

For resources to help your church think more about God's heart to reach the lost, visit eu.aimint.org.

4. Characteristics of a disciple (2): Sacrifice

Sacrifice as a vital characteristic of following Christ

In the past three studies we have looked at God's glory, his love and how our love for those around us and for the world flows out of that. We saw in 1 Peter 2:21 that as Christ's followers, we need to follow in his steps. In this study we will consider one of Christ's key teachings: sacrifice.

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Getting started: Have you recently heard of any stories on social media, T.V. or news of real-life examples of people sacrificing themselves for someone else? How was it portrayed in the media? How did it make you feel?



1. Read 2 Philipians 2:6-8 and Mark 10:45. How did the Son of God, the author of life behave here on earth? What marked him out? What mindset are we called to have?



...who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross! (Philipians 2:6-8)

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

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2. Read Matthew 16:24-25. What does it mean to deny ourselves? What does our culture highly value? What temptations do we face in our everyday lives that are opposite to denying ourselves and taking up our crosses?



Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.' (Matthew 16:24-25)

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3. Read Matthew 16:26. What does this mean? How might we be aiming to 'gain the whole world' in our lives? How might we forfeit our souls?



What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Matthew 16:26)



4. Read Matthew 16:27. Do we really believe that the Son of Man will return? If we truly believe that, how will it change the way we live life? What does this verse say about rewards? On what basis will we be rewarded?



For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.
(Matthew 16:27)

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5. Read Matthew 28:18-20 and Romans 15:20. What can we learn from these verses? What has God called us to do?



Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, 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)**

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.
(Romans 15:20)

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Making it real: *The Karimojong live in Karamoja, northeast Uganda. In the past they have been marginalised and ignored; until recently, they were defined by high levels of internal conflict and cattle raiding, leading to them being widely feared. The Karimojong is one of the poorest and most under-developed peoples in Uganda; they are also spiritually in desperate need to hear of the Father's love. Even though many might identify as Christian, the reality is that there are few indigenous followers of Christ. Pray that the Karimojong would turn to Christ and rather than raiding for cattle would become fishers of men. Please pray! God is working among the Karimojong in exciting ways; pray the Lord brings his healing and light to the Karimojong.*



For more information to help you to pray for the Karimojong people, visit: eu.aimint.org/pray/karimojong.

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Bringing it home: What has struck you from today's study? If you are comfortable, share one thing that they feel challenged by.

God's Word challenges us not just to read the Word, but to obey it (**Matthew 7:24-27**). Discuss different ways that you can respond (there are a few suggestions below).

Three ways to make a difference:

1. Matthew 9:37-38 says, "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*" Our Father wants us to be involved in seeing every tongue, people and tribe come into his Kingdom. Use prayafrica.org, joshuaproject.net or eu.aimint.org/pray to

get inspired to pray. Ask the Lord to show you which unreached people group he wants you to pray for. Commit to pray for them each day or once a week. Why not invite your church or small group to regularly pray for an unreached people group, too. Your prayers will make a difference!

2. Sending workers into the harvest field takes financial resources. Could you consider giving to enable someone else to take the good news to those that have never heard it? You can sign up to give at eu.aimint.org/give.

3. The Lord Jesus is calling his church around the world to take the good news to those that have never heard. Is he calling you? If you are exploring this, why not speak to the leadership of your church? The Lord might be calling you, but he wants to send you through your local church. Once you have spoken to your church leaders, AIM has Mission Advisors who would love to chat with you and your church to help you continue on in your journey. Go to eu.aimint.org/go for more information. A great way to understand God's heart for the lost is to go and visit and pray. Perhaps your church would like to organise a vision and prayer trip to go and see God working in unreached people groups? If you would like to chat to an AIM Mission Advisor to find out more, then please contact Debbie at stc.eu@aimint.org.

For resources to help your church think more about God's heart to reach the lost, visit eu.aimint.org.