

# mission essentials

4 Bible studies to help you  
discover God's heart for the  
world and our role in his plan.

youth edition - leader's guide



**AFRICA**  
INLAND MISSION

# mission essentials

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# Introduction

Young people have lots of questions. Questions about who they are, how they fit into the world and what life is all about. As a follower of Christ, God's word - the Bible - is the light to our feet, and the foundation to build our lives upon. When it comes to understanding what God thinks about the world and the task he has given us to fulfil, the Bible must have the first and last word.

We hope that *Mission Essentials - Youth Edition* will help your youth group (these sessions are designed for ages 13 - 18) to explore God's word, understand more about God's character and, flowing out of that, what the Lord is calling his children (whether young or old) to do.

Throughout this Leader's Guide there are 'Leader's Notes' with suggestions and extra information to help you lead your youth sessions. There are also sections on the right which will give you further information on questions that might come up in conversation. Please don't feel you must use this information if the session doesn't naturally need it.

## Thoughts on running virtual youth sessions

### Lack of physical games

Doing physical games virtually can be hard. While it's probably good to throw in a game every now and then, we haven't included any physical games in these sessions. If you would like to have some other games here is a list of app games which you could use with your young people:

[eu.aimint.org/virtualgames](http://eu.aimint.org/virtualgames)

*(Please note that we do not recommend 'Evil Apples')*

### Giving Feedback

If you would like to get feedback from your young people there are some free polling apps. You can either use Vevox ([vevox.com/interactive-quiz-app](http://vevox.com/interactive-quiz-app)) or Poll Everywhere ([polleverywhere.com](http://polleverywhere.com)).

### Timing

Another challenge of virtual youth work is that people get distracted quickly. With the reduced level of interaction and more opportunity for young people to look at their phones, we might have to work harder to keep them engaged and interested! Something that can help with this is to keep sessions shorter. You will see that each segment has a suggestion duration time in brackets. This is a suggestion of a guide so that you can keep the session moving along, but feel free to change it for your group's needs.

### Encouraging participation

You might be used to offering small prizes in youth sessions for someone winning a quiz or engaging positively. When working virtually, we need to think of different ways to motivate participation and (healthy) competition. One idea is to start out each session with a short quiz. There are few different ways to organise this, but many schools, universities and youth groups use Kahoot ([kahoot.com](http://kahoot.com)), which is a useful app for running quizzes.



We have provided a different quiz for each session that you may use if you wish to (but feel free to either cut this out, or use your own activity instead):

Session 1: [eu.aimint.org/missionessentials-quiz1](https://eu.aimint.org/missionessentials-quiz1)

Session 2: [eu.aimint.org/missionessentials-quiz2](https://eu.aimint.org/missionessentials-quiz2)

Session 3: [eu.aimint.org/missionessentials-quiz3](https://eu.aimint.org/missionessentials-quiz3)

Session 4: [eu.aimint.org/missionessentials-quiz4](https://eu.aimint.org/missionessentials-quiz4)

You will need to sign up to Kahoot as the ‘teacher’ and ask each of your young people to download Kahoot onto their phone or computer (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/p/kahoot-create/9n4bjnfzcl1>).

While we hope your group will enjoy the quizzes, there is nothing like playing for a prize to spur young people on! Why not buy a small prize that can be sent to the overall ‘quiz champion’ at the end of the four weeks?

Another suggestion could be to have a weekly leader board to keep interest going. Also, it might be good to reward each week’s winner. You know your young people – would they be motivated by having the right to change their Zoom background to show their winning status? (You might need to be careful with this as some computers are not able to support different Zoom backgrounds.) Go to [eu.aimint.org/quizchamp](https://eu.aimint.org/quizchamp) for ‘Quiz Champ’ Zoom backgrounds. You might like to get everyone to download this background at the start of the first session before the quiz. The person that wins the quiz that week gets to change their background to the ‘Quiz Champ’ background - and get all the bragging rights to go with it.

## *Safeguarding and one-to-one support*

Before starting these sessions, it would be wise for you to consult your church’s safeguarding policy in regard to Zoom or online sessions. Many churches stipulate that young people must only participate in a video call in a communal room of the house rather than their bedrooms. While this policy is understandable in terms of protection, it can make having one-to-one conversations difficult. In these studies, we will be dealing with some potentially profound subjects (God’s love, the unreached world, etc.), which might cause some emotional responses. Think through with your leadership how you will support your young people if they need more one-to-one help after the sessions.

# 1. God is love

God is our forgiving Father, graciously calling us, his wandering children, back to himself.

**Suggested session duration: 1 hour 15 minutes**

*Learning objective:* To help your young people get a greater understanding of what God's love is (what the Bible says versus what popular culture says).

## Getting started

Start with the [Kahoot quiz 1](#). In the last four questions of this quiz we are guessing who sang lines from popular love songs; which leads into the next activity. (15 minutes)

## Activity

Discuss what popular culture says about love. Start the discussion by sharing some popular love songs. Some examples (or pick ones you know your group likes):

- Grenade by Bruno Mars
- Baby by Justin Bieber
- Love Story by Taylor Swift

Ask questions such as: Where does love come from? Why do people love? In these songs is love earned or deserved?

### Leader's notes

Depending on your group, you might like to play a bit of each song before showing the lyrics. You can look up the lyrics online and share them with the group on your screen.

## Diving in

**Luke 15:11-27** (40 minutes)

Either watch the five minute animation of the Prodigal Son ([eu.aimint.org/prodigalson](http://eu.aimint.org/prodigalson)) or share **Luke 15:11-27** on your screen. Encourage different people to take it in turns to read a few verses.

*Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.*

*Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.*

## Jesus & parables

Jesus often taught by using parables. A parable is a made up, earthly story with a spiritual meaning. It's important for us to recognise that when Jesus used parables he was telling stories from every day, down to earth situations to point to profound spiritual truths. As such we shouldn't be so concerned about taking meaning from all of the details of the story but should have our ears tuned to the deeper spiritual meaning that the overall story conveys.

But why didn't Jesus just speak plainly? The truth was that the people that were listening to him ranged from his disciples that accepted all that he said as completely true through to the Pharisees and leaders of Israel who were looking for reasons to kill him. In a parable he could teach truth to those that were hungry and accepting of it and at the same time challenge those that were against him who had hard hearts.

*When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.*

*But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*

*The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

*But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.*

*Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'*  
(Luke 15:11-27)

### Leader's notes

Ask these questions and encourage each young person to be involved in the discussion. You might want to start by explaining that a parable is a made up story that Jesus told in order to teach something about God or about following him.

1. What do we mean by the word inheritance? Have you, or anyone you know, ever received an inheritance? What do you think the father from our passage felt when his son asks for his inheritance while he is still alive?
2. The son squandered his wealth. What did he do with his inheritance? Why do you think he did it? What might the son be feeling? What do you think his relationship is like with his dad?

### Leader's notes

The goal is to help the young people get inside the story, to feel the feelings of the son and father. The son turned his back on his dad's way of living and being and despised his dad.

3. Things got bad and the son ended up starving. Has anyone ever missed a meal – or two? What's it like when you do? What do you feel and what do you think about? The son finally remembered that at home his father's servants always had food. What do you think the son thinks when he remembers his dad now? What does he feel? Have you ever had a bust up with your parents? On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being impossible, 10 being easy) how do you find going back to sort things out with your parents?

## Understanding Inheritance

The father from the parable was relatively well off. The son's inheritance would have included land, animals, slaves, and other personal property.

In Bible times, agricultural land was scarce and family farms were not large. Farmers never lived on their farm land because you wouldn't want to waste good farm land by building on it. People lived in small, villages and went out to work on their farms. These villages were made up of family members and close relatives and everyone knew each other well.

When the son asked for his share of the inheritance and obtained it, he split the family farm, turned it into cash, and got out of the village as quickly as possible. Jewish custom meant he risked being disowned by the community. His return would not have been welcome. The prodigal knows when he leaves that his only way back is to return with all his inheritance money intact or he will face huge public shame and be completely cut off from his family and his past.

## Leader's notes

We want to help the young people understand the reality of the divide between the son and the father; it was real and enormous. It was no easy thing for the son to turn around and return to the father.

4. The son 'got up and went to his father' (v. 20). What would you be feeling as you trudged along towards your father's house? What reaction would you expect from your father?

## Leader's notes

Most of Jesus' listeners would have expected the father to have been dismissive of the son and to have treated him as a slave. Because of the way the son had treated his father, the father would have felt extreme shame in the local society. The only way for him to have walked with his head up high was to mistreat the son, to treat him as the lowest slave – or even kill him. But he didn't!

5. How did the father actually respond? Why did the father respond in this way?

## Leader's notes

Verse 20 says the father was constantly watching for his son. He hadn't forgotten him, and was filled with compassion. He demonstrates his love and forgiveness by running to his son. In Middle Eastern society it wouldn't have been acceptable for an elder to run. The father didn't care what others might think, he hugs and kisses him. He accepts him back into his family as a son – not a slave!

6. In the Bible, when Jesus taught using stories and parables they always have a deeper meaning. In this story when he speaks of the son and father, who does he actually mean?

## Leader's notes

Jesus is illustrating a deep truth that God is our father and we are his children. When Jesus talks about the son walking out on the father and taking his money and despising him – he's painting a vivid picture of the fact that we also live with a broken relationship with our heavenly Father. Relationally we are far away.

7. Read **1 John 4:9-10**: *"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."* Thinking about this passage, and about Jesus' parable of the forgiving father, what is he trying to help us understand about how our Heavenly Father is with us?

## Leader's notes

God's love for the son and his love for us is not earned; it is not dependent upon us being good or attaining some level of holiness. There is never a time when we are beyond his love – there is nothing that can separate us from his love. His love has no limits. God doesn't love us in order to gain something in return. He loves us because he loves us and that will never change. His love for us is costly – it cost him his one and only son, Jesus Christ. He loves us sacrificially and unselfishly. We don't have to do anything to earn his love but must simply accept it. It's a free gift by faith.

8. What difference to your life does it make knowing that God loves you? Think back to the activity we did about love songs towards the start; how does God's love compare with the popular understanding of love? Do people struggle to accept his love? If so, why?

## Leader's notes

Question eight should flow into the next part of the session. It's really important to give your young people time to 'do business with God' personally.

## Going Deeper

(7 minutes)

Select a piece of worship or instrumental music that will help your group think about the Bible passages they've just been looking at. Leave the Bible passages on the screen and ask the group to think about the passage and the discussion for the duration of the song. They might want to close their eyes. What is God saying to them? What does God want them to do?

## Leader's notes

This section is hugely important. Having a time for each person to consider what God is saying to them, individually, is very important. Please don't feel pressure to rush this time. It's probably wise to say something along those lines when you are introducing this activity so that your young people take it seriously.

## Looking Around

(8 minutes)

Today we looked at a story Jesus told about a son who walked away from his father and away from God. The amazing truth of God's love is that God is always waiting for us to return. But there are whole groups of people in the world – with their own language and culture – who have never had the chance to hear about God's amazing love.

Watch this video about one people group that is unreached with God's love - [eu.aimint.org/north-arabs-video](https://eu.aimint.org/north-arabs-video).

If your church is already praying for an unreached people group, why not spend some time praying for them. If not, spend some time praying for the North African Arabs.

### Leader's notes

For more prayer information go to [eu.aimint.org/northafrica](https://eu.aimint.org/northafrica).

## Finishing Up

You might like to finish off the session with a prayer or a worship song of your choice that people can sing along to. Or you might like to play some games or activities to get the young people moving around. (5 minutes)

### Leader's notes

Considering God's love in comparison to the widely held cultural understanding of love is an enormously important issue. It's very possible that some of your group will have felt quite challenged and emotional by the image of a father always waiting for them, never rejecting them and loving them unconditionally. You might like to offer the opportunity to chat in a break out room (so long as there is more than one leader in the break out room).

## North African Arabs

The Arabs of North Africa are a very diverse people with a population of 91 million and very few churches. They are spread right across North Africa. The vast majority of the North African Arabs are Muslim and have been since Islamic forces swept across North Africa from Arabia in the seventh century. It's poignant to remember that before the seventh century the church in those countries was particularly strong! The governments of those countries are aggressively against the sharing of the gospel - persecuting any believers in Christ with prison and social exclusion. But the Lord loves the Arabs of North Africa with 'an everlasting love', desires that 'everyone to come to repentance' and is steadily building his church!

## 2. God's glory among the nations

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

**Suggested session duration: 1 hour 17 minutes**

*Learning objectives:*

- To understand that God's glory is central to God's character
- To understand that God's glory demands that all peoples bow the knee to the Lord.

### Leader's notes

What is God's glory? John Piper defines God's glory as 'the going public of his infinite worth...the radiance of his holiness.' If you'd like a better understanding of God's glory, watch this short video: [eu.aimint.org/johnpiper-glory](http://eu.aimint.org/johnpiper-glory).

### Preparation

For this session each young person will need access to some scrap drawing paper and some felt tips or colouring pens. If you are doing this session together you can provide those but if you are doing it virtually you will need to ask each young person to come to the session with some drawing materials before the session starts.

### Getting started

Start with the [Kahoot quiz 2](#). (10 minutes)

### Leader's notes

You could start by going over the leader board before starting the quiz, and reminding everyone that the winner of the quiz gets to use the Quiz Champ Zoom background and that the overall winner across the four weeks will be given the Quiz Champ grand prize.

### Diving in

(45 minutes)

1. When you hear the word 'glory' what picture jumps into your mind? Is anyone able to explain what the word 'glory' means?
2. Distribute coloured pens and paper. Prepare the group to do a brief drawing, using different colours, of the thoughts or feelings that come into their minds as the group leader reads **Revelation 1:12-17**. Explain to the group that they can draw anything they want – there are no 'right' or 'wrong' drawings. The aim of this exercise is to help your group to connect emotionally to the vivid picture that John paints for us. Encourage the group not to get worried about specific details or drawing something perfectly – they should focus on the colours and feelings. You might find it helpful to

put the verses on a Powerpoint slide so people can read along with you. Read the passage once, then after a pause, read it a second time to give them time to get different colours and finish what they are drawing.

*"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)

## Leader's notes

Make it very clear at the start of the activity that it's not a drawing competition but that the purpose is to see what pictures, images, and feelings the passage brings to our minds. Some people might feel very reticent to draw anything. Encourage them to try but also say that's it's fine if they don't draw anything. It might help to invite one of the leaders to be one of the first to show their drawing. Part of the aim of introducing Revelation 1:12-17 in this way is to help the group to see that John was using pictorial language. It also helps the group to really engage with what John is saying. At the end, allow some time for feedback, encourage people to share their drawings and explain a little bit what they have drawn and why - if they are comfortable doing so.

3. Divide the group into smaller groups of threes or fours (if you are doing this session virtually go into break out rooms. The number of leaders you have in each group will depend upon your church's policies and how many leaders you have available). Read the passage one more time. Using the paper and pens, encourage them to write down their answers to these simple questions:

- What strikes you about this passage? What did you feel as you heard it?
- What do we learn about what God is like from the picture John draws?
- The passage tells us that John's reaction was to 'fall at his feet as though dead'. Why do you think he reacted like this? How would you react if you saw God in all his power and glory?

**Feedback time:** Get everyone back together and encourage each group to share their answers so everyone can hear.

## Leader's notes

There are some key points that the group should recognise from John's depiction of Jesus.

1. John used picture language to try to describe the indescribable! We shouldn't take this passage literally.
2. However, with phrases like 'blazing fire', 'bronze glowing in a furnace', 'voice like the sound of rushing waters and 'face like the sun' we can graphically see that God is so much bigger, more powerful and more amazing than we can imagine.

## 🔍 'Son of man'

Throughout Ezekiel the phrase 'son of man' is used 93 times and means 'human being'. In Daniel 7:13-14, the phrase 'son of man' is used to describe the Messiah who is given 'dominion and glory and a kingdom'. When Jesus spoke about himself as the 'son of man' in the New Testament, he was making connections to both of these uses. He wanted to clearly identify as a human, whilst at the same time underlining his divine origin.

## 🔍 Apocalyptic writing

The word 'apocalyptic' comes from the Greek word 'apokalypsis' which means 'a revelation'. It's a type of Jewish and Christian literature that was most commonly used a few hundred years before and after Christ and concerns the imminent end of the present age and the final coming of God's kingdom. When reading apocalyptic literature, like Revelation, it's important to remember that it was written to inspire strong emotions in the reader and that it was written for the original audience - so they would have understood the vivid symbolism. Encourage your group not to get caught up in the exact meanings of everything. You could point them to a good Bible commentary to understand the meaning of the symbols, but then allow the emotion of the writing to speak to them.

4. On a white board (or on your screen if it's virtual) write down these two references: **Philippians 2:10-11** and **Revelation 7:9-10**. Ask one young person to read out loud Philippians 2:10-11:

*"...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."*

and another to read Revelation 7:9-10:

*"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.'"*

Ask the group to consider these questions and to write their answers on the virtual white board.

1. What happens when the whole world acknowledges Jesus as Lord?
2. Who will be there?
3. What will they be doing? What will they be feeling?

### Leader's notes

Many young people will never have thought about God's glory, power and amazing-ness. The next step is to help them to understand that there is an enormous battle for the hearts of every person and people group in the whole world (not just where they live!). One day all nations, peoples and languages will acknowledge him, whether willingly or not.

### Looking Around

(5 minutes)

Psalm 67:3 says: "May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you." God wants his glory to be known among all peoples, yet even in the twenty-first century not everyone has had the chance to hear. Show your group the video about the Mwani found at [eu.aimint.org/mwani](http://eu.aimint.org/mwani).

### Leader's notes

We have established that God is so much more glorious than we can imagine and we know that one day all peoples, tribes, and nations will bow before him. In this section we want to bring home the reality that there are many people groups in the world that have never had the chance to hear about our loving saviour. This might be a new concept for some in your group.

### Going Deeper

(12 minutes)

Encourage feedback from the group by considering these questions:

### The Mwani

The Mwani are a people group of about 110,000 who live on the coast and the 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 tough. The Mwani are an example of a people group who do not yet know Jesus (we call them 'unreached') but one day there will be Mwanis before God's throne, who know salvation through Jesus.

1. What do the group members think about this video?
2. How does this video fit into what we heard from Philippians 2:10-11 and Revelation 7:9-10?

### *Leader's notes*

Allow the conversation to go where it leads, but when the time is right bring the group back to the reality that there are many people, both friends at school/college, neighbours, as well as whole people groups around the world that have never heard about God's glory, and that, through his love, he has made a way for them all to be his forgiven children.

Spend some time praying for the Mwani, that they would hear the gospel and turn to Christ.



### *Finishing Up*

*(5 minutes)*

Suggest group members take a few moments of quiet to write on the back of their pictures from earlier in the session the ways they feel challenged by today's session.

When everyone has finished, lead the group in prayer.

### *Leader's notes*

We have purposefully not suggested any ways for group members to respond practically to this session. At this stage we want to build the group's understanding of who God is (based on the Bible) and how his call on our lives flows from that. In future sessions we will go into more detail about what this means for our lives. At this point, the goal is to get the group to think through who God is and to start to consider that this will need to have implications for the way they live.

# 3. Sharing God's heart

*Loving others by action and loving others by sharing the good news.*

**Suggested session duration: 1 hour 20 minutes**

*Learning objectives:*

- To understand that loving others in action and by sharing the good news is central to being a true disciple of Jesus.
- Understanding that there are whole unreached people groups (UPGs) in the world that have never had the chance to hear the good news.

## Getting started

Start with the [Kahoot quiz 3](#). (10 minutes - this session is a bit longer, so you may want to treat this quiz as optional, depending on your group.)

### *Leader's notes*

You could start by going over the leader board before starting the quiz, and reminding everyone that the winner of the quiz gets to use the Quiz Champ Zoom background and that the overall winner across the four weeks will be given the Quiz Champ grand prize.

## Activity

**'What do you love the most?'** - a refresher on the fact that love is one of God's characteristics. (10 minutes)

- Divide the group up into two teams. Each team will take it in turn to answer. Each time it is a team's turn, they must nominate one person to 'sit out'. That person can't participate in the discussion but will need access to a pen and paper.
- For each question, a different choice of four things/actions/ideas comes up on the screen. The team has to decide together what they think the person sitting out 'loves the most' (for example they must choose between bacon, grapefruit, bran flakes or scrambled eggs. You can find some suggestions for questions at [eu.aimint.org/game-questions](http://eu.aimint.org/game-questions)).
- The person who is sitting out must write down their answer on a scrap of paper and keep it secret. When the team has given their final answer, the person who 'sat out' can reveal the answer they wrote on their piece of paper.
- For every question the team guesses correctly, they get one point. For every question they guess incorrectly, they lose a point. The winner is the team with the most points!

## Leader's notes

Once you have finished playing this game say something about how we all love some things and hate others. Ask the group if anyone can remember what we studied from the first session? Help everyone to remember that we looked at the parable of the forgiving father and that God's love for us is so unlike the way love is understood in our culture. The next part of our session we will look at God's word and see that as 'God is love' we, his followers, must also love those around us – not just our friends.



## Diving in

(40 minutes)

1. **1 John 4:8** says that 'God is love'. Read **Mark 12:30** and **Matthew 5:44**. Who should we love?

*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)

- Think of people in your life that are easy to love. Who are they?
- Now, think of people that you know who are really hard to love. Who are they?
- Is Jesus really saying that we should love the hard people too?

## Leader's notes

Push your group to really consider what God's word is saying. Help them to see that God is calling his followers to not just love their friends and family but to love even those people we don't like and who are our enemies.

2. Read **John 15:12**.

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

- How did Jesus love the disciples and others? Can you remember some examples of what Jesus did or said that were loving?
- In this verse Jesus tells us to copy him. What do you feel about that? Is it possible? Who will help us?

3. Clearly, the way we live with the people around us – our friends, family, neighbours and the people we don't get on with – is very important to God. There is also another really important way that we must love people. Normally, the last words that someone says before they die are really important. **Matthew 28:18-20** are Jesus' last words before he ascended to heaven:

*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*



## Lovey-dovey?

We are talking a lot about love in this study. It might be helpful to be aware that some of your group, maybe more so the boys, might find this a difficult topic to discuss, especially in front of their friends. But the Bible shows that true love is costly, gritty and down to earth. While our culture often portrays love/romance as a feminine concern, the Bible makes it clear that love is something that is at the centre of God's heart – the way he shows his love is anything but 'gentle' or 'mild'. In giving his only Son, he gave his very heart in a life and death struggle for the whole world. We must demonstrate the same gritty substance to our young people. A big part of that is helping our young men (and women) to see that the Christian life is not plain sailing boredom-filled-suburbia, but a rollercoaster ride where our Master has a life or death mission for his followers to throw themselves into, one that requires them to give everything they are.

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)

- What has Jesus commanded us to do?
- What does 'make disciples' mean?

### Leader's notes

What is a disciple? Jesus made it clear in Matthew **7:24-27**, the parable of the wise and foolish builders, not just to agree with Jesus' words with our mouths, but to put Jesus' words into practice. A disciple is someone who has accepted Christ as their Saviour and their Lord. Help your group to understand that part of being a disciple of Jesus is to obey his command to go into all the world and make disciples.



### What is a disciple?

*"Every Christian should be helping unbelievers become believers by showing them Christ. That is making a disciple. And every Christian should be helping other believers grow to more and more maturity. That is making a disciple."*

John Piper

4. Think back to our two previous sessions and what we learnt about God's love and God's glory. What has God's character got to do with why Jesus commanded his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples?

### Leader's notes

This is quite an important part of the session. Help steer the conversation to cover the fact that because 'God is love' (1 John 4:8) he desires 'that none should perish' (2 Peter 3:9). Throughout the whole Bible God always wanted Israel to be a blessing to the whole world. He wanted Israel to stand as a beacon to the world to show those who were far from him that he loved them and wanted to be their friends. God's character has not changed – he always wanted to save people and Jesus has made that possible. People need to hear the good news in order to be saved.

5. Matthew 28 has become known as the 'Great Commission'. To whom did Jesus give the command to go and make disciples? What did Jesus tell them to teach? Does that mean anything for us?

### Leader's notes

You might need to explain what the word 'commission' means: an instruction, command, or role given to a person or group. The aim of this question is to help your group understand that Jesus' command to his disciples was to go and teach everything he had told them, and that each new disciple must also go and make disciples of the whole world. Jesus' Great Commission was not just for the special few two thousand years ago, but is for all of us.

6. Read **Romans 10:14-15**.

*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)

Do you feel the temptation to not 'rock the boat' with your friends? Do you sometimes feel that the gospel is less like 'good news' and more like 'bad news'? What does Romans have to say about that? On what basis will our friends be saved?

## Going Deeper

(5 minutes)

It's been two thousand years since Jesus Christ gave his command for all of us to 'make disciples of all nations'. Many of us live in places where there are lots of churches and plenty of Christians. After all this time, do you think the Great Commission has been fulfilled? Let's see if you know the answers to these questions:

Mini quiz: You have to choose 'A' or 'B':

1. How many people in the world live without a chance to hear the gospel? A=1/2 billion, **B= 3 billion**
2. Take a guess at how many missionaries there are in the world. A= 75,000, **B=400,000**
3. What percentage of those missionaries go to places that don't yet have churches? A= 52%, **B=3%**
4. What percentage of all Christian giving goes to help the 3 billion people that have never had the chance to hear the gospel? A=5%, **B=1%**

Do those statistics suggest that the Great Commission has been fulfilled? Do these numbers shock you?

## Looking Around

(10 minutes)

Does your church already have work among an unreached people group? If so, give some more information to the group about your church's work and have a time of prayer. If your church isn't yet praying for an unreached people group, you can pray for the Acacia people of Chad.

You can find a video on the Acacia people at [eu.aimint.org/acacia-video](http://eu.aimint.org/acacia-video).

After watching the video, spend some time praying for the Acacia people.

## Finishing Up

(5 minutes)

Encourage the group to find a pen and paper and give them two minutes to write down:

- One thing that has really struck them from today's session
- One thing they want to talk to God about

Encourage a time of contemplation and prayer based on what each person has written down. Close the meeting or move onto a time of games.

### *Leader's notes*

You know your group. Either encourage people to spend a few minutes thinking and praying by themselves (and play some music whilst they do this) or have a group prayer time. Sometimes when

## What is a UPG?

An Unreached People Group (UPG) is an ethnic group – a people that have their own language and culture - with no indigenous community of believing Christians. The fact that the people group have their own language and culture means that the gospel can't jump those barriers unless someone purposefully takes it to them. A UPG is classed as reached when there are enough believers within the people group so that they are able to effectively take the gospel to the rest of their own people. At that point the church is healthy and reproducing.

There are 6,741 UPGs in the world!

praying over Zoom all together, quieter members can find it harder to engage in this way. Encourage the group that it's important for them to 'do business' with God personally, and that God is speaking to each of us. Be aware of what the Holy Spirit is doing and don't rush this part - in many ways it's the most important!

# 4. The cost of following Jesus

*Sacrifice as a vital characteristic of following Christ.*

**Suggested session duration: 1 hour 16 minutes**

*Learning objectives:*

- To understand what sacrifice is.
- To understand that following Jesus means denying ourselves.
- That Jesus is worth the sacrifice.



## Getting started

Start with the [Kahoot quiz 4](#). (20 minutes)

### Leader's notes

You could start by going over the leader board before starting the quiz, and reminding everyone that the winner of the quiz gets to use the Quiz Champ Zoom background and that the overall winner across the four weeks will be given the Quiz Champ grand prize.



## Activity

Watch this LEGO video which tells the true story of five missionaries to Ecuador (Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, and Roger Yourderian), who gave their lives attempting to take the gospel to the violent Waodani tribe: [eu.aimint.org/jimelliot](http://eu.aimint.org/jimelliot).

While they themselves never got a chance to tell the Waodani about Jesus, the testimony of their death inspired millions. Later the men's wives went back to the people who murdered their husbands and shared the gospel with them.

After watching it ask these questions to spur debate:

- What happened in the film? Why did those five men try to make friends with the Woadani people? Why do you think the Woadani people killed them?
- The five men were armed, so why did they not defend themselves? What do you think those missionaries were feeling as they were about to be killed?
- What do you think about them, were they crazy or clearheaded? (Nate Saint said to his son, 'We are ready for heaven son, they are not').

### Leader's notes

The aim is to try to get your group thinking about a real example of someone giving up their own life for the good of others. We are often amazed by stories of people willing to sacrifice their lives.



## Diving in

(40 minutes)

### 1. Read **Galatians 1:3-5**.

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. (Galatians 1:3-5)*

What does it mean when it says '...the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins'? What did Jesus do? Why did he do it?

### Leader's notes

These questions might seem a bit basic but the aim is to encourage the group to remind themselves what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us. If you think your group would find it helpful, read out to them the info in the supplementary grey text box on crucifixion.

2. What do you think makes up a successful life? Do you know any people in your life that you would say are successful? What makes them successful? Can you name some famous people that have done well? Why do we look up to them?

### Leader's notes

Try to help the group to take a step back and think about the values of our culture; it's one of the hardest things to do! So often the world values achievement, beauty, wealth and material possessions. Do we do that? Why?

### 3. Read **Matthew 16:24-25**.

*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)

- What does Jesus mean when he says we have to deny ourselves? Is Jesus suggesting we should never have nice things in our lives?
- Jesus knew that he would die on the cross. Why did he tell his followers that they should also take up their crosses and follow him? Does it mean Jesus wants us all to die- is that what Jesus is saying? Instead, is Jesus saying that to follow him we have to be one hundred percent for him, in every area of life? What does that look like?
- Being one hundred percent for Jesus is pretty hard! Read 1 John 4:19. Why would someone follow Jesus like that?



## Crucifixion

Public execution in Roman society was reserved for run-away slaves, prisoners of war, common criminals and army deserters. Roman citizens generally would never have been executed. In crucifixion a person was hung from a cross-pole resulting in all their weight resting on their chest - a very painful experience, especially as it could take two or three days to die. The point of the prolonged, terrible death was to serve as a graphic warning: 'if you do what this person did, you will die a terrible death!' For Rome, crucifixion was more than a means of execution, it was a tool to be used to maintain the civil order - clearly aimed at slaves and non-citizens. When Jesus said 'deny yourselves and take up your cross' it was no empty, throw-away comment. Jesus clearly knew that he would die by crucifixion (Matt 16:21) and he was well aware that his listeners already knew the terrible pain and suffering caused by crucifixion; crucifixion of slaves and non-Romans was a common occurrence. What's amazing is that the symbol of the cross has become so widely accepted as a cultural icon in the twenty-first century; it has lost its shocking reality.

## Leader's notes

We are now getting to the heart of the study. We have looked at Jesus' example and now Matthew 16:24-25 turns the spotlight on ourselves. Help the group to really get to grips with what this verse means for each of us, individually and together. Help them to understand that taking up our cross means focusing upon Jesus, understanding that he is our light and life – he is the most important thing. This will mean that out of a heart full of gratitude and love we gladly choose to put God and others ahead of ourselves. Taking up our cross is not something we do out of fear or guilt but out of love. Because he first loved us, we can love him. It will mean us saying no to ourselves and preferring others. It will mean sacrifice.

You might like to pause here and get each group member to reflect and think about their own lives. What does denying themselves mean for them? If you want to encourage them to each share a thought, depending upon your group, please do that now.

### 4. Read Matthew 16:26.

*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)*

- What does the word forfeit mean?
- How does someone forfeit their soul?
- What is someone's soul?
- Are we aiming to 'gain the whole world' in our lives?

## Leader's notes

These verses of Jesus' are tough. We might be tempted to give a glib answer or push on to the next question, but try to resist that urge and help the group to go deep into this question.

What might 'gaining the whole world' look like? Point the group to think about how Jesus obeyed God and gave up his own life so that we all might live. He is our role model to follow. What are some of the big decisions that we might make and how might they result in 'gaining the whole world'? How might we aim to 'gain the whole world' in our career or relationship choices, or in how we use our time and money?

### 5. Read **Matthew 28:18-20** and **Romans 15:20**.

*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)

## Definitions

**Definition of forfeit:** to lose the right to do or have something because you have broken a rule.

**Definition of soul:** the spiritual part of a person that continues to exist after their body has died, or the part of a person that is not physical and experiences deep feelings and emotions.

Can you imagine owning the whole world? Alexander the Great was king of Macedon (part of Greece) in the fourth century BC and he did just that. He was a very gifted general – so much so that he was able to conquer almost all of the known world by the age of 33! Hans Gruber, the villain in *Die Hard* says of Alexander: "When Alexander saw the breadth of his domain, he wept for there were no more worlds to conquer." Alexander found that even when he owned the whole world it was still not enough.

- Jesus has given his followers clear commands about taking the good news into all the world. How do the verses above from Matthew 28 and Romans 15 fit into taking up our cross and following Jesus?
- What are we aiming for with our lives? How do our aims compare to what God wants for us? What do we need to change so that we are following him and not just our own human desires and interests?

## Looking Around

(8 minutes)

Sometimes it seems hard to think about people 'out there' who don't know Jesus. They can seem too far away, too disconnected from us for us to get our minds around. However, as we read more about them and pray for them we start understanding God's heart. Watch this video about the Karimojong, a people that have very few churches and desperately need to hear the good news of Jesus - [eu.aimint.org/karimojong-video](https://eu.aimint.org/karimojong-video).

After the video, spend some time praying for the Karimojong (or your own church's work among unreached people groups). For more information to help you to pray for the Karimojong people, visit: [eu.aimint.org/karimojong](https://eu.aimint.org/karimojong).

## Finishing Up

(8 minutes)

Round the discussion off by asking the group what has struck them from today's study. If people are comfortable, ask them to share what they feel challenged by.

God's Word challenges us not just to read what it says, but to obey it (Matthew 7:24-27). Ask the group to discuss different ways that they can respond (there are a few suggestions below).

### Three ways to respond:

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 different people group come into his kingdom. Why not use [prayafrica.org](https://prayafrica.org), [joshuaproject.net](https://joshuaproject.net) or [eu.aimint.org/pray](https://eu.aimint.org/pray) with your group to inspire them to pray? You could pick a people group together and then commit to regularly praying for them. Your prayers will make a difference!
2. Sending workers into the harvest field takes financial resources. It would be great if you could start your young people thinking about giving to mission as well as to your church. Maybe as a youth group you could talk about activities you could do together to raise funds?
3. Jesus is calling his church around the world to take the good news to those that have never heard. He could well be calling someone in your youth group. Why not encourage those who are exploring their calling to have a deeper conversation with you and other church leaders? You could explore [eu.aimint.org/go](https://eu.aimint.org/go) with them for more information. A great way though 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 organise a group visit, why not chat to an AIM Mission Advisor to find out more? Contact Debbie at [stc.eu@aimint.org](mailto:stc.eu@aimint.org).

## The Karimojong

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 are one of the poorest and most underdeveloped 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. God is working among the Karimojong in exciting ways; pray the Lord brings his healing and light to the Karimojong.

## *Leader's notes*

Please don't feel you need to suggest everything from the list above, choose ones that may be appropriate for your group. However, giving your young people the opportunity to respond through prayer, giving and considering going to work with unreached people groups is really important. Sacrifice is not sacrifice unless it costs us something! While all your young people might not be led by the Lord to 'go', we hope that all will be moved to pray. Suggesting your young people give financially needs to be done with wisdom, and it may be worth talking this through with your church leadership. Please also note that we are unable to send individuals under the age of 18 on short term mission trips.

**For resources to help your church think more about God's heart to reach the lost, visit [eu.aimint.org](http://eu.aimint.org).**