

QUESTIONING MISSION

4 Bible studies to help your
small group grapple with tough
questions about mission

LEADER'S GUIDE



AFRICA
INLAND MISSION

What's it all about?

Welcome to *Questioning Mission!* This set of four Bible studies has been designed to help your church grapple with some of the common - but difficult - questions people have about world mission.

In the first study we think about the eternal fate of people that have not heard about Jesus. We see that our understanding of this issue affects how we see God and the whole world. In the second study we will look around us at our changing neighbourhoods and think about the nature of mission. With so much need around us in the UK, why send gospel workers abroad? Don't we need gospel workers here in Britain? In the third study we grapple with the interplay between practically sharing the love of Christ through our actions and sharing the good news with words. Finally, in the fourth study we will think about God's will for our lives. We dive into God's Word and explore how both God's leading and the abundant life he offers come when we give up everything to follow Christ and 'seek first his kingdom'.

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 plan of salvation for the whole world.



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1. The destiny of the lost

...and what the Bible teaches about those who have not heard the gospel.

What we think about the destiny of the lost can affect what we think about God – particularly if we listen to what our culture says. We might wonder if God really is good, is he really faithful and true. Isn't it unfair of God to send innocent people to hell when they've never had the chance to hear the gospel? In this study we will dive into God's Word to discover what it says about God's character, the nature of sin, humankind and hell.



Getting started: Imagine a desert island with swaying palm trees, beautiful white beaches, blue skies and turquoise seas - a pristine 'paradise' untouched by 21st century civilisation. The desert island is inhabited by a people that know nothing of the outside world; they have their own language, customs and history as well as their own gods, beliefs and religious traditions. Due to their seclusion the local people have never heard about Jesus. Yes, they have their own beliefs, but they have never had the chance to hear that the Creator of the whole world has made a way for all humankind to be saved and know him personally. Discuss these questions with your group:

- Is it right for outsiders to visit this secluded island to share with them about Jesus?
- What are some of the objections that people might have to this?
- What do you think the Bible has to say about it?

LEADER'S NOTES: Were there strong or different opinions? Within the church there are a number of different ideas about hell and the destiny of the lost. While this study represents a traditional, biblical understanding of hell, sin and salvation, there might be people in your group that have come to a different understanding. Where possible try to encourage everyone to set aside their own ideas and focus on what God's Word says. We need to model a gracious and listening attitude in these discussions.



1. Read Genesis 3:1-7, Romans 5:12 and Romans 1:21-23. In order to get a biblical understanding of the destiny of the lost we actually need to start with our understanding of 'sin'.

- What was going on in the garden between God and Adam and Eve? How would you define sin from Genesis 3?
- Was it just Adam and Eve that now had a problem? What affect did this have on humankind?



World religions

The thing is, it's not just a few secluded people on a desert island that have not heard about Jesus. The reality is that the greatest concentration of people who have never heard the good news are to be found among people of other religions; Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus. The spiritual state of these peoples is no different to everyone else on the planet – if they don't trust in Jesus they too are lost.

People following other world religions:

Muslims: 1.8 billion

Hindus: 1.1 billion

Buddhists: 0.5 billion

Folk/Traditional religions: 0.4 billion

David Platt goes into more depth on this topic at eu.aimint.org/davidplatt.



Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. **(Genesis 3:1-7)**

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. **(Romans 5:12)**

For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. **(Romans 1:21-23)**

LEADER'S NOTES: Sin is essentially turning our backs on God and rebelling (Deuteronomy 9:7, 1 John 3:4, Joshua 1:18). Previously, Satan rebelled against God (see Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:13-17) and in the Garden of Eden encouraged humankind to do the same thing. The tragic result for all humankind was that we whom God had created as 'good' became sinful. Ever since the fall, when we sin, we are doing what comes naturally to us - our sinful actions flow out of our sinful state. We all are sinful (Psalm 14:3 and Mark 7:20).



2. Read Romans 6:23 and James 1:15. What does the Bible say is the result of this sin in our lives?



For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. **(Romans 6:23)**

Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. **(James 1:15)**

LEADER'S NOTES: Sadly, the way our culture understands sin is increasingly diverging from a godly, biblical understanding (read **Romans 1:21-32**). In 21st century Britain 'happiness' is seen as very important - so long as other people aren't too hurt by each individuals journey to happiness, few would consider that 'sinful'. Actually, God wants more for us than happiness and has set out a road map to lead full and contented lives. Sin is rebellion to that road map, to God and his ways, as revealed in God's Word, and God utterly hates it.



Why is sin so bad to God?

The idea of hell can be a hard one to wrap our heads around. For many people hell seems incompatible with the truth that God is love. A good starting point is to remind ourselves how truly evil sin is. Psalm 5:4-5 says: 'For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong.' God is so utterly pure, holy and righteous. Throughout the Bible whenever someone encounters God they often fall flat on their faces, like Isaiah. He sees God in all his holiness. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips..." (Isaiah 6:5).

In response, God gives his all for us. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).



The point of the law...

God's law was given to Moses in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers; the ten commandments are the most well known examples. However, with the law containing over 600 commands, it might be seen as a bit 'heavy'. How is it possible to agree with the Psalmist when says, "for I delight in your commands because I love them" (Psalm 119:47)?

But when we see God's law as God intended, we can start to love it. It was never meant to be a way to salvation (Romans 8:3). Instead God gave humans the law to show us our sin (Romans 7:1). God's law is good because it shows us how much we need God!



3. Read John 3:18, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 and Revelation 14:10-11.

Where is humanity continuing to sail towards, unless they 'jump ship'? The Bible uses lots of picture language to describe the destination. How does it describe hell?



Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:18)

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might...

(2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

They, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name. (Revelation 14:10-11)

LEADER'S NOTES: It might be helpful to read through the first few chapters of Romans as a whole. What is Paul's overall argument? Is he really saying that God will simply judge us on our deeds – that if we do some good ones we might be saved? The full force of Paul's argument is that no one is without excuse, including those who don't have the law, because all of us have rejected God. We are all under sin and will be judged by the righteous judge. If we desire a relationship with God and salvation from hell, that can only be found in Jesus.



4. John 3:16 is probably the most famous verse in the Bible. **Read verses 16-17.** Was it really necessary for Jesus to die? Are there any other ways that humankind might be saved? Do we really believe that there are no other ways for someone to become friends with God?



For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)

LEADER'S NOTES: Drilling down into our deepest thinking about this issue is vital. Central to the gospel is the truth that we are all in need of a saviour. Unless we accept that we all stand under eternal judgement and, without Jesus, are all going to hell, we will not understand why the perfect, precious sacrifice of God's own son was necessary.



Annihilation vs. eternal suffering

If you want to look deeper at what the Bible says about hell, you can read 'The question of annihilation vs. eternal suffering' at eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission.



5. If we think back to our desert island again, some people will argue that as ‘God is love’ and wants ‘none to perish’, he will save the islanders who are good – even though they don’t know the name of Jesus. (That understanding is called inclusivism). What does the Bible say about that? **Compare Romans 1:18-20 and Romans 2:6-8 with Romans 3:22-25.**



The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

(Romans 1:18-20)

*God ‘will repay each person according to what they have done.’ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. **(Romans 2:6-8)***

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.

(Romans 3:22-25)



6. What will happen to those who have never heard the name of Jesus? What verses should we build our overall understanding upon? **(John 3:16, Romans 3:22, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, Ephesians 2:8, Romans 6:23, and Romans 10:9)**

LEADER’S NOTE: While the Bible might give a few hints about these people, nowhere does it explicitly say what will happen to them. In the context of knowing that God is a gracious, loving God we must always keep in view the way to life that God has clearly shown us.



Making it real: *The unreached Indian Ocean Island people live on numerous islands scattered across the Indian Ocean. Their culture has been influenced by Africa, Asia, and the Islamic merchants, who for almost one thousand years brought tradeable goods and Islam. Island life can be quite different to life on the mainland - living on an island means that there is little chance to move in search of economic opportunities and almost everyone knows everyone else. One result of this is that if an Islander chooses to follow Jesus, the whole community will know about it very quickly and tough opposition will inevitably rise. Pray that the few Island people who follow Jesus would know very deeply God’s grace and love. Pray that they would have the courage they need to stand for Christ and pray that they would, in turn, share their hope with their families and communities.*



Is Christ the only way?

To read a further discussion about inclusivism, you can read ‘Is trusting in Christ in this life the only way?’ at eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission.



What is ‘Unreached’?

For more information about what we mean when we use the term ‘unreached’, visit eu.aimint.org/unreached.



Bringing it home: Let's return back to our tropical island and it's inhabitants who have never had the chance to hear about Jesus. From what we have read from God's Word...

- What have we learnt (or been reaffirmed in our understanding) about the character and person of God?
- What messages do we often hear in Britain about sharing about our faith? Have you ever been told never to discuss religion and politics? Is this idea contrary to the Bible? Should we actually change the way we think, speak or act?
- What is your reaction to knowing about about the 3 billion people around the world who have no churches, very few Christians among them and only 3% of the world missionary force?

LEADER'S NOTES: So will God condemn the tropical islander who has never heard the name of Christ? The sad truth is that *nobody* is innocent (Romans 3:21). The only guaranteed way to God for any of us is along the path he has revealed to us – Jesus Christ. As your group discusses these issues it's helpful to keep in mind that God's agenda is very counter-cultural. So, we can't expect to go with the flow of society around us and then be surprised that we have moved a long way from a foundation in Christ. We must determine, with God's help, to stand on Christ alone! Let's not forget that we have been saved by God's grace, at the priceless cost of God's only son.

For further reading and resources on the topics discussed in this study visit: eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission.

Saint Anselm once said we should give thanks for whatever of the Christian faith we can understand with our minds, but when we come to something we don't understand, we should "*bow our heads in reverent submission.*" Ortland, 2015

2. Why go overseas?

Taking the gospel locally and globally

The UK is now a multicultural, varied place, and, despite our heritage, 'post-Christian'; the number of followers of Christ seems at an all-time low. The rest of the world has changed too; the centre of gravity of the global church is no longer in Europe or North America but is in the southern hemisphere. Today we will start by considering God's view of foreigners or aliens, then we will think about whether there is still a place for the British/Western church to send gospel workers abroad.

The number of people living in the UK who had been born elsewhere in 2019 was 9.5 million, up from 5 million in 2004 - *Migration Observatory*



Getting started: Ask your group to share examples of how your community, neighbourhood, or area has changed over the past twenty years. Do you agree that British society and culture has changed? In what ways?



1. Over the last eighty years the UK has seen a huge influx of non-British nationals come to the UK. **Read Acts 17:26.** According to Acts 17:26 who is in charge of moving peoples around the world?



From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. (Acts 17:26)

LEADER'S NOTES: When we see so many people coming to the UK from abroad we might be tempted to think that our culture and way of life is under threat. Acts 17:26 helps us to see that God is in charge. His plan for the world is bigger than our little islands – and bigger than our own comfort. Help your group to dwell on the fact that God is the maker of all nations who has appointed times and boundaries. It means we can rest and trust in God with our culture, and our hopes and dreams.



2. The Bible is full of commands on how we should treat the alien/stranger/foreigner among us. **Read Deuteronomy 10:17-19.** Who is responsible for caring for the stranger? How should we treat the stranger among us?



For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

As you answer questions 2-4, consider reading Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, Jesus' summary of the law in Matthew 22:37-40, or Philipians 2:1-11.

LEADER'S NOTES: Deuteronomy is full of commands of how to treat foreigners living in Israel: Deuteronomy 10:17-19, Deuteronomy 24:17-18, Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and Deuteronomy 24:21-22. Colossians 4:5 says be wise towards outsiders. If we think about the wider category of 'the poor', the Bible says a lot: Leviticus 25:35-36 says "Help the poor among you" and Proverbs 14:21 says to "Be kind to the needy".



3. The millions of refugees, international students and economic migrants that are now in the UK often come from countries that have few Christians. What opportunity does this represent? **Read Deuteronomy 31:12.** What do you think God would want us to do?



Assemble the people - men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns - so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. (Deuteronomy 31:12)

LEADER'S NOTES: The huge number of non-British 'foreigners' represent an amazing opportunity for the British church to show God's love to people that probably have never heard of Jesus. Encourage the group to recognise the opportunity that God is giving us.



4. Think about your community. What different nationalities are represented? Does your church already have work with refugees, migrants or international students? If it doesn't what might the Lord be calling you, your small group or church to do?

LEADER'S NOTES: It's as we ask God to open our eyes that we start to see the opportunities God has brought to our own doorstep. The hardest thing can be knowing how to start. There are a number of wonderful books and courses that your small group could think about reading or watching. Why not have a look at Friendship First (friendshipfirst.org) which will give your group the tools to build friendships with Muslims. Some other good resources are *Crossing Cultures with Jesus* by Katie Rawson and *Across the Street and Around the World* by Jeanie Marie.



5. Now let's turn to the words that Jesus spoke just before he ascended to be with God. **Read Matthew 28:18-20.** Go through these verses and make a note of those words that are in any way connected to geography or movement. Who was Jesus speaking to? What did he want them to do and where did he want them to go? What do these verses have to say to us, 2000 years on?



Some useful definitions

Refugee: Someone forced to flee their country due to persecution, war or violence.

Migrant: Someone who has moved to a country voluntarily for economic, political or cultural reasons (the UNHCR states that migrants should be considered as refugees during times of war and humanitarian crisis).

Asylum Seeker: Someone asking permission to be given the legal status of a refugee.



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, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. **(Matthew 28:18-20)**

LEADER'S NOTES: Putting Jesus' 'Great Commission' into context is helpful. His disciples had just witnessed his brutal execution and, against all hope, his miraculous resurrection. Now they realised that their friend is actually God incarnate. Jesus tells them to take the good news of salvation and forgiveness of sins and go into all the world, spreading the good news to all peoples. Help your group to think deeply about what this means.



6. It was two thousand years ago that Jesus commanded his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples of all peoples. What about now? Is the job done in the rest of the world; should we now focus on the UK? Take a look at eu.aimint.org/unreached for information and statistics about unreached people groups. Do these statistics change the way you think about the need for the gospel outside the UK?



Bringing it home: The reality is that while the number of church attendees in the UK has decreased over the last eighty years, the UK still has many churches, full-time church workers and access to the gospel. As you can see from the statistics, there are many peoples around the world with almost no access to the gospel (called unreached people groups). While our churches engage with the lost around us, should we not also consider those people around the world that have never had the opportunity to hear about Jesus?

Ask the group what they think; do we need to do anything?

LEADER'S NOTES: While the UK and the world has undoubtedly changed, it hasn't altered the clear command Jesus gave to his followers to go. The fact remains that 3 billion people live in unreached people groups with very few churches, Christians or gospel workers. When we examine the disparity between the UK and many other nations, how can we not recognise that there is a need for people to go too?



Making it real: *The Neem* (we have changed the name of this people group for security reasons) people of Chad are a sizeable people group scattered across many small, rural villages. Like much of Chad, where the Neem people live is very hot and dry for most of the year. A short rainy season enables them to grow millet, peanuts and*



The Great Commission

Matthew 28 is a well known verse, being known as the 'Great Commission'. However, there are plenty of other passages in the Bible that show God's heart for the whole world. Why not check out Matthew 24:14, Acts 1:8 or Psalm 67?



Looking at the Greek...

For a discussion on the translation of the Greek and whether it should be translated as 'go' or 'going', and what that might mean for the way we understand the Great Commission, read "Go' or 'Going'... Does it matter?" at eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission.

sesame seeds. Any land not cultivated supplies grass (fresh, and then later, dry) to feed their animals. Most Neem people live off small scale agriculture and subsistence animal husbandry. The Neem people have been Muslims for many centuries but they are deeply steeped in traditional beliefs with a fear of spirits and sorcerers. Women in rural areas often know little of Islam, leading to a syncretistic religion. They seem to have little hope of, or desire for, change, nor any belief that it is possible. There are very few Neem believers in Christ. God has started to bring gospel workers among the Neem in the last few years - pray that he would send more, that he would work among the Neem people and that many churches would be planted in that area.

If your group would like more information on praying, giving or going to unreached peoples go to eu.aimint.org, joshuaproject.net or globalconnections.org.uk/mission-issues/publications/sphere/cape-town-commitment

For further reading and resources on the topics discussed in this study visit: eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission.

3. Faith and love

Not too many years ago in the UK our society called itself Christian. In reality, not everyone was a Christian but the general culture gave lip service to, and generally abided by, Christian ideals. Now, things are very different! In this study we will look at the Bible and think about how God wants us to be in our local communities as well as how we should relate with the wider world beyond our shores.

LEADER'S NOTES: The subject of today's study is really important - the balance between faith through grace in Christ alone and living lives of love. As Christians we can be tempted to major on one side or the other but the aim of this study is to help us understand how to hold the two together and get a greater awareness and understanding of God's heart for the whole world. It might be helpful to say something to your group by way of introduction and encourage them to speak to each other in a spirit of gentleness and grace.



Getting started: When it comes to your interactions and relationships with your friends, families and colleagues, would you find it easier to explain the gospel to them or to do something that will help them out practically? What do you feel comfortable doing, if either? What do you feel uncomfortable doing and why?

LEADER'S NOTES: Before asking the group, it's interesting for you as leader to consider what people might choose. How does this compare to the groups answers? In a church Bible study context some people might feel one answer or the other is the 'correct' answer. Try to put people at their ease and keep it light hearted so that they answer freely. Encourage people to unpack why they answered the way they did; the point of this exercise is to get people thinking about how their faith in Christ interacts with their culture.



1. Read Mark 12:30-31 and James 1:27. What strikes you about these verses? How does God want us to relate to the people around us? How does our culture respond to Christians loving those around them?



Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.

(Mark 12:30-31)

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. **(James 1:27)**

LEADER'S NOTES: Philippians 2:3-8 makes it very clear that as Christians we must have the same attitude as Jesus. He gave himself up for us even when we didn't deserve it. We are called to do the same for the people around us. Be careful to help your group understand that we can't do this in our own strength – we must rely totally on God's help (John 15).



2. Read John 3:16-17 and Romans 10:8-10. What is the way to life and salvation that God has given to us? How do we take hold of this gift? How does what James says in the James 1:22-27 fit with the message of salvation by grace?



For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **(John 3:16-17)**

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. **(Romans 10:8-10)**

LEADER'S NOTES: It's important for the group to keep in mind the truth that all peoples are lost and going to eternal punishment unless they turn and trust in Jesus. Romans 10 makes it very clear that people must knowingly trust in Jesus. Help your group think how our society responds to that truth.



3. Compare the answers your group gave to the previous two questions. Is there a conflict between the way our culture responds to Christians showing love through acts of service and Christians showing love through sharing the gospel? In our lives, are we inclined to favour one over the other? Is there a godly balance between the two?

LEADER'S NOTES: This question is trying to help group members think more about the conflict between our society's readiness to accept good deeds and its antagonism to Christians sharing the gospel. Be aware that some people might come down on the side of never sharing Christ because it antagonises people while others might be very quick to speak the gospel without building relationships and loving those around them. Encourage your group to think how to balance the two. If your group gets stuck, think how Jesus



The magnitude of the job

- 2 billion people have never heard about Jesus.
- Over 40% of the world's people groups have no indigenous community of believing Christians able to share Jesus with their own people.
- Half of the people that have no church (3,000 people groups) have no missionaries reaching out to them. They will never hear about Jesus unless someone goes to them.

did it (John 3 – Jesus teaches Nicodemus, John 4 – woman at the well, John 5 – Jesus heals the man at the well). Following Christ means that we must be ready to put him first ahead of what our culture values. Help your group to think about their own lives and whether they are more interested in being friends with their culture or friends with Christ.



4. Thinking about our culture:

- Is it fair to say that our society would prefer Christians to stick to 'living lives of love' but forget about sharing the gospel with others? What responses have you received from your neighbours, colleagues and friends when you have attempted to share the gospel? Would you be able to share with the group some examples, either positive or negative?
- Taking it a step further, what might some of the people around us think of the Bible and its message that all Christians should take the good news to the whole world – to unreached people groups in other countries?

LEADER'S NOTES: By sharing their stories, your group members will gain a greater sense of togetherness and mutual support from the body of Christ. Take sufficient time to help your group to talk about their experiences. Some people might feel scarred by past experiences. Pray for sensitivity from the Holy Spirit to help you and your small group minister to them.



5. Read John 15:19.

- Recognising that our society is becoming increasingly antagonistic to those that trust in Jesus and to the message of the gospel, why is it so important that we do respond to Christ's call in Matthew 28 to go and make disciples of all the world? What does that mean for us?
- While God clearly calls Christians to love those around us, how do we respond to the desperate need around the world in a loving, strategic way that does not neglect Christ's command to make disciples? What might be a good balance between giving to Christian organisations that prioritise helping people physically and those that prioritise sharing the gospel and planting churches?



If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. (John 15:19)

LEADER'S NOTES: It is an important step for Christians to recognise that we belong to another kingdom and have another king – King Jesus. His command to us to follow him, through difficulties and suffering, is clear – despite what



How to help well

The book *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert is a really good place to start thinking through how to help vulnerable people practically without harming their self-respect and creating dependency.

the culture says around us. In this final question widen the scope of the group's vision to think about the wider world and its enormous need. The central question here is how do we engage with the wider world in a loving way that doesn't neglect the gospel? Again, there might be a range of views in the group – some might favour helping people outside of your home country physically, while others focus on the environment, while others focus on sharing the gospel. Encourage people to be gracious, and as the group's leader, keep pointing people back to Jesus and God's world.



6. Has your church thought through how it engages with mission? Does your church have guidelines in place to help strategically balance the need to take the gospel to all the world and love those in need? What do you think those guidelines should look like? If your church doesn't have guidelines, could your group think about what they should look like?



Making it real: *The Fulani of the Sahel are a former nomadic people group that live throughout the Sahel, from Sudan in the east, to Senegal in the west. They number over 40 million. The Fulani are overwhelmingly Muslim, however their traditional pre-Islamic rituals and beliefs are still followed today and are only vaguely linked with Islam. They are shepherds and farmers whose diet is largely based on millet. They are an animistic people group who embraced Islam in addition to their traditional beliefs. Most people practise a moderate form of Islam but some people have studied in Qur'anic schools. Increasingly the neighbouring Hausa people and their Muslim teachers are seeking to enforce Islamic beliefs. Pray for more gospel workers to go to the Fulani, and for those who are currently working among the Fulani. Pray that they would show Christ's courage, patience and love for the Fulani. Pray that the Lord would build his church.*



Bringing it home: What has stuck out from today's study? Has anything surprised you? After thinking about these verses and your group's discussions have you come to any conclusions?

Go back to the opening group discussion. Would you answer the same way now?

Spend some time responding to God in prayer.

For further reading and resources on the topics discussed in this study visit: eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission.

4. The question of calling



Getting started: When you think of guidance and working out where God is leading you, do either of these resonate with you?

- Does it feel like everything is a bit shaky and uncertain, one misstep and you will fall ‘out of God’s will’, a bit like you’re on a tightrope?
- Does it feel that your future is a wide open space – you have so many options that you don’t know which to choose? Like looking for a path in the desert?

LEADER’S NOTES: Ask the group to share any thoughts they have on what God’s guidance means for them. Encourage the group to share their views on guidance and ‘God’s will’.



1. Read Daniel 4:35 and Proverbs 16:33. Try to sum up these verses with one sentence. Who is in charge? What do you feel as a result?



He does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’ (Daniel 4:35)

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. (Proverbs 16:33)

LEADER’S NOTES: It’s always a good to start with the fact that God is totally in charge – he is our Lord God Almighty! God’s sovereign will means that God knows everything and is governing everything (Ephesians 1:11). There are no surprises for him. For examples of how God orchestrates even small details see Matthew 10:29, Proverbs 16:33 and Proverbs 21:1.



2. In the Bible we also read examples of God’s will of command. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Isaiah 58:6-7 and Mark 16:15-16. From these verses it’s clear that God wants us to do certain things, to live in a certain way. Can we sum up how God wants us to live? What verses can you think of that supports what you are saying?



This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality. (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?



God’s Will vs. Free Will

Ephesians 1:11 says ‘... according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...’ It’s pretty clear that God is completely in charge. The very nature of God is that he is all-powerful. But then, if God ordains everything then how is it possible for anyone to be responsible for their own sin?

The Apostle Paul was aware of this question: ‘One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?”’ (Romans 9:19). In response, Paul says in verse 20 ‘But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, “Why did you make me like this?”’

John Piper says, ‘It is not essential in this life that we explain the way God’s sovereignty and our responsibility fit together’. Isaiah 55:8-9 sums it up well, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (Isaiah 58:6-7)

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)

LEADER'S NOTES: Some people think that God's will is like a tightrope. Actually, the term 'will of God' is not used like that in the Bible and God has made it very clear how he wants us to live. For examples that show how we should live go to Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:29-31, Thessalonians 5:18, 1 John 5:3, and Ephesians 5:1-21.



3. Read Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:5-6 and Romans 12:2. What do these verses teach us?



Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Psalm 119:105)

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

LEADER'S NOTES: It's as we allow God's Word to fill our us that our minds will be renewed and we will be transformed. The Holy Spirit works within us to transform us – as our lives are submitted to him, he makes our paths clear before us. We don't need to worry about where we are going because our Good Shepherd is directing us.



4. It's really encouraging to know that as we seek to follow him he is directing our footsteps **(John 10:27-28)**. However, what should we do if we have an inkling that God is moving us on into something new? What does God's word say about that? **Read Psalm 37:4, Proverbs 11:14. Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 2:21-22.** Are there any principles we should follow as we try to discern what God has for us?



Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers. (Proverbs 11:14)



The renewing of your mind

The way of Christ is not a list of dos and don'ts. Jesus Christ said that he came to give us abundant life (John 10:10). Instead, through the power of God, the Holy Spirit transforms us so that we love to do what we ought to do. We can't do it ourselves; we are dependent upon God's work in our hearts and minds (Titus 3:5). At the same time, as we spend time in God's Word, we join the Holy Spirit in his work of changing our worldly mindset into a Jesus focused mindset.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **(Matthew 6:33)**

Those who cleanse themselves from the latter ('common use'- from verse 20) will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. **(2 Timothy 2:21-22)**

LEADER'S NOTES: We need to strive to keep clear of sin (2 Timothy 2:21) and seek the things that God values (Matthew 6:33). As we seek the advice of wise people around us (Proverbs 11:14) and pray, God will often put desires on our hearts (Psalm 37:4) that fit with his heart. So if we have a burning desire to share Christ with those that have never heard – and our church leadership also agree – we can be confident that the Lord is directing our steps. Our challenge as Christians is to walk by faith and not by sight.



Making it real: *The Didinga people live in the Didinga hills of South Sudan, in the valleys, on the plateaus and slopes, and on the adjacent plains of the region. They are primarily focused on raising cattle but they also farm, with the area having sufficient rainfall to grow two crops per year. They live in homesteads based on their clan, in round houses with cone-shaped roofs. They make a lot of music and various crafts. Although there is a Didinga chief, decisions are made by the community, and younger people have the right to question the elder. The Didinga people are animistic; worship and fear of their ancestors forms a large part of their belief and religious practice. The majority of the Didinga people can't read or write.*



There is an AIM church planting team among the Didinga people which is involved in language learning, Bible storying, discovery Bible studies, and children and young people's ministries. Pray that God would grow his church among the Didinga people, so that new Didinga Christians are able to spread the gospel throughout their own people.



Bringing it home: Has anything struck you from this study? Have you come to any conclusions about following God and discerning his will?

Think back to the image of a tightrope walker and the desert. We have read quite a few verses in this session; have any of those verses changed your thinking? If you were to describe what it looks like to follow God, how would you describe it?

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How does God speak to us?

Firstly, and primarily, God has revealed himself, and how we should live our lives, through his Word (John 1:14 and Psalm 119:105). When we read God's Word the Holy Spirit challenges us, encourages us and shows us how to live. His Word is the measuring stick against which we check any decision. Does that decision fit well with what we know about God and what pleases him?

Secondly, the Holy Spirit speaks to us through prayer and living our lives 'with him'. John 15 encourages us to stay 'connected into the vine'. As we attune our hearts and minds to our Saviour and learn to live a life of trust in him (John 10:27) his Spirit speaks to us and direct us as our minds are transformed and we become more like Jesus.

Thirdly, God speaks through our brothers and sisters in Christ as they encourage and give us council (Proverbs 19:20, Eph 4:11-13).

Fourthly, we hear his voice through creation (Psalm 19:1-6).

Fifthly, God can speak to us through dreams and visions (Acts 2:17).