

WORLD MISSIONS SMALL GROUP Curriculum



YOUPRINT STUDY GUIDE

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A ten-week video-based study to launch you and your group into a deeper understanding of world mission.



WELCOME TO OUR WORLD MISSIONS SMALL GROUP STUDY

When I meet with pastors across the UK, many of them ask for resources to help commence, expand or refresh the missions experience of their church. So in addition to everything we already offer, we have created this Small Group series to be helpful to a wide range of people as they explore what mission means, not only in the wider world but also in their local community.

God bless you as you journey through these studies each week.
Chris Jones, Elim International Missions Director

How to use...

Each study week has a video that is very much a platform for your group discussion. The video raises the major themes for each week and will help to bring a focus for the week.

There are also STUDY NOTES that should to be printed out for each member of the group. These notes have the content for each week plus space for notes and other key information.

For the leaders there are notes that will help guide you through each week. There are key points to help with discussions as well as completed sections that appear on the STUDY NOTES.

Please feel free to stick as closely to the notes provided as you feel is appropriate for the group. The notes can be used as a launching pad or as a complete guide. The main thing is that you enjoy learning together. For more resources go to:

www.elimmissions.co.uk/smallgroupstudy

Key to symbols...



Play DVD



Read



Written Activity



Key Fact



Practical Activity

Session 1: THE CHRISTIAN AND CULTURE LEADERS NOTES



Play DVD or watch video from www.elimmissions.co.uk/smallgroupstudy
Week 1 THE CHRISTIAN AND CULTURE



Read Acts 17:16-34

It would be very hard to find another passage in the whole of the Bible that clearly defines the life of a Christian than what is seen in the apostle Paul at Athens.



Brainstorm and discuss the many definitions of the name “Christian”.

Mark 16:15 says “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. “

The Greek word for ‘world’ is ‘Kosmos’ and it means the ‘social function’; ‘to all creation’ is not only the unreached people groups of the Kosmos but it is to everyone within that social function that you find yourself in whether that be the family, work or leisure.



List the names of people that are known in each group member’s cosmos.

- **The Christian lives within culture**

- ▼ The Christian identifies with culture

There can be found at least three categories of Christian:

- > **Conformists of culture.** Discuss - these are people who...
- > **Separatists of culture.** Discuss - these are people who...
- > **Identifiers with culture.** Discuss - these are people who...

Acts 17:16-23:

Whilst Paul was waiting for his team to catch him up he walked the streets of Athens, an amazing city of architecture, history and wisdom. Next to Rome it was the most important city in the Empire, the capital of business and yet through the innumerable temples, shrines and altars Athens was highly immoral. The whole Greek pantheon was there, all the gods of Olympus. Paul absorbed as much as he could, he looked at everything. He identified with it.

Paul showed us a model of identifying with the culture that he found himself in to preach the gospel.

▼ The Christian has knowledge of the culture

Paul understood the faiths: Acts 17:24-29 - Paul tackles the Epicureans and the Stoics (whose beliefs still exist in some form today), but he tackled them only because he knew what they believed.

The Epicureans:

A philosophy that believed God is far away and considered happiness, or the avoidance of pain, to be the highest good and advocated that the pursuit of pleasures can be enjoyed in moderation.

The Stoics:

Believed each of us are our own gods and they advocated the calm acceptance of all occurrences as the unavoidable result of the natural order.

The Epicureans and Stoics took Paul to the Areopagus, a highly respected council. To be a member you had to be over 60 years of age and have held a high government office. Paul knew their faith.

Verse 24: The Epicureans believed God is far away and would have agreed with Paul's statement.

Verse 25: The Stoics believed each of us are our own gods and we are connected to one another and would have agreed. Paul was saying "the God I worship is what your doctrines speak of". He could only do this if he knew their faiths. But then the difference is pointed out:

Verse 27: Paul was saying "You are wrong Epicureans, God is not so far away He cannot be found. Stoics, God is not automatically in you, he is still out there to be sought."

Paul understood the history:

Verse 28 & 29: These quotes are not from the Bible. In the first one he quotes from a 6th BC poet Epimenides of Crete. The second is from a 3rd BC Stoic author Aratus of Cilicia. Paul quotes from 2 pagan poets who when writing were not thinking of his God. It is like using a secular film or song to speak of God's love. Paul was culturally relevant.

Choosing the culture that you live in discuss the faiths and the history of it. Can you find links that could be used to direct people towards God? Discuss.

• The Christian message within culture

In Acts 17:24-31 Paul addresses the idol worship within their culture. Idols are not limited to Athens or primitive societies. An idol is a god-substitute. Any person or thing that occupies the place God should occupy is an idol.

What idols do you see in your culture and how do you go about addressing those with the message of the gospel?

Paul did not scold them with a "Turn or Burn" gospel, but in fact he praised them for at least having a spirituality even though he was about to declare it wrong.

He sets out the foundation of the gospel.

1. God is **CREATOR** "The God who made the world and everything in it." v24

2. God is **LIMITLESS** "The Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands." v24

3. God is **SUSTAINER** “He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.” v25
4. God is **IN CONTROL** “He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands” v26
5. God is **FATHER OF ALL** “Reach out for him and find Him” v27 & “We are His offspring” v28-29
6. God is **JUDGE** “He commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world” v30-31



Interesting Fact:

Six centuries earlier, Apollo who inaugurated the court of the Aeropagus had declared in an Aeschylus's play, “when a man dies, and his blood is shed on the ground, there is no resurrection.” On that same spot Paul declares that God unveiled himself by appointing a man to be a judge for the whole world and had certified this by raising him from the dead.

This resurrection has heralded the commencement of God judging the world and of making the world right. Jesus is the one part of the physical universe that has already been set right. Jesus is therefore the one person through whom everything else will also be set right.

Take the links developed previously from the faiths and history of your culture and continue to build thought to how a presentation of the gospel can be brought.

Remember...

Verse 32: Some will sneer, they will laugh. Others want to hear more, they are not sure but want you to tell them more and others will believe.

People like Dionysius who became the first bishop of Athens whose conversion at Athens is mentioned in Acts 17:34 and died a martyr.



Putting it into practice...

Think of three friends or colleagues, they could be people listed earlier or different people, who have either a different or no faith. List 6 bullet points of how you can reach out to them through their culture.

Encourage the group to think about the culture that these people belong to. If they have no faith, then think about their political stance, their feelings towards religion and what has been happening in their society. If they have a different faith then think about what they believe. Can bridges be made to cross the religious divide? Who, how and where do they worship? Is there a way to use culture to share the gospel with these people?

Prayer Direction...

At the end of this session go back and pray over the list of names of group members' Kosmos and also pray that each group member will be an identifier within their culture.

Session 2: REACHING THE OUTCAST: LEADERS NOTES

Start by asking how the group got on with last weeks PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE? Could they think of three people who have either a different faith or no faith at all? What six bullet points did they come up with?



Play DVD or watch video from www.elimmissions.co.uk/smallgroupstudy
Week 2 REACHING THE OUTCAST



Activity: Discuss different types of outcast we see in today's society.

Why are they an outcast? **eg DIRTY, RUDE, MAKE US FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE ETC**

Who says they are an outcast? **eg SOCIETY, THE CHURCH, CONVENTIONS ETC**

Can this group of outcasts be categorized as 'sinners'? Why? **TAKE SOME TIME TO DISCUSS THIS AND ALLOW EVERYONE TO SHARE THEIR POINT OF VIEW.**

Can these outcasts teach us anything? **eg OUR PREJUDICES, PEOPLE TO HELP ETC**



Read Jeremiah 30:17

The term 'outcast' in the Old Testament means **'Thrown Out'**

In the 1st century, Judaism was not a state religion. In fact there were many traditional groups and new emerging sects coming through:

1. **ESSENES**

Concerned with purity, they believed they alone possessed the truth.

2. **PHARISEES**

The most meticulous observers of the Torah law.

3. **SADDUCEES**

No less pious than Pharisees but opponents of them.

4. **REVOLUTIONARIES**

most famous of them was the Zealots who turned religious interpretations into a political agenda against the Roman Empire.

It was into this diverse but very religious society that Jesus was born, educated, worked and did ministry. As he grew up in this society he became aware of groups of people who were increasingly being marginalized, left behind and discarded because no one knew really what to do with them.



Read Luke 7:36-50 : Jesus teaches that:

Outcasts are **PEOPLE**

"Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman?" v44a

- > Jesus forces Simon to look at the woman and see what he sees
- > Simon does not see a person but sees an object
- > Simon has no kind words for this woman v39

Outcasts can become **BETTER LOVERS OF GOD**

v44b: 3 times Jesus says that Simon did not do something yet the woman had.

"I tell you, her sins - and they are many - have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." v47



Interesting Fact:

Hatred between Jews and Samaritans was fierce and long-standing. After the time of Joseph Israel was divided into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom, called Israel, established its capital eventually in Samaria. In 722 BC. Assyria conquered Israel, including Samaria. The foreigners brought with them their pagan idols, which the remaining Jews began to worship alongside the God of Israel, intermarriages also took place. Meanwhile, the southern kingdom of Judah fell to Babylon in 600 BC. Its people, too, were carried off into captivity. But 70 years later, a remnant of 43,000 was permitted to return and rebuild Jerusalem. The people who now inhabited the former northern kingdom - the Samaritans - vigorously opposed the repatriation and tried to undermine the attempt to reestablish the nation. So walls of bitterness were erected on both sides and did nothing but harden for the next 550 years.



Putting it into practice...

Read John 4:1-27 : Jesus teaches that:

- **To reach the outcast...**

- > You have to tread on a deep-seated protocol
 1. The Samaritans **HATED** the Jews and vice versa. v9
 2. A man **WOULD NOT** speak to a woman. v27
 3. Do not mix with **SINNERS**. v17&18

Discuss: How is this teaching of Jesus true in your own experience or of those you love?

In the DVD introduction we hear the story of Arthur Forbes. Do you know of an Arthur Forbes within your community? **How can we better love the outcasts within our society?**

Prayer Direction...

Pray for the Arthurs in your community, church and even family.

If you are unable to identify any outcasts pray that God would open your eyes to those outcasts around you.

Pray for God to give the group ideas of how to practically be the hands and feet to the outcasts within our society and how to best share the practical love of Jesus with them.

Next week...

During this coming week, in your day to day activities: shopping, working, going for a coffee, church etc. Look for an Arthur Forbes. Look for someone who could be an outcast and help them. It could be someone who is struggling to pack their shopping, someone unable to cross the street. However small it may seem, step out this week and help.

Session 3: HOPE FOR THE WORLD LEADERS NOTES

Start by asking how the group got on with last weeks PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE? Were they able to find an outcast that they could help? Ask members of the group to share.



Play DVD or watch video from www.elimmissions.co.uk/smallgroupstudy
Week 3 Hope For The World



Activity: How would you describe the state of your town/city?
What role is the church playing?

.....

.....



Read Ezekiel 47:1-12
Ezekiel's message is our message to a broken world:

- **There is Hope in THE CHURCH**

Because of the THRESHOLD v1

God is always doing something new. He makes all things new. Throughout the world the Church is the threshold offering new life to people of all tribes. There are villages that have little else, but they do have a church. You could visit millions of villages around the world that don't have a school, a clinic, a hospital, a fire department, or a post office. They don't have any businesses. But they do have a church.

What new thing has God done in you or through you?

Because of the ALTAR v1

The altar is the place of sacrifice. There are three important words to describe sacrifice that is at the heart of the church:

1. MARTYRIA Acts 1:8

Meaning 'witnesses' - There are many stories from around the world of Christians giving up their lives for the sake of the Gospel.

READ THIS STORY TO THE GROUP OF A YOUNG BELIEVER FROM IRAN: *It is with a heavy heart that we share that a young believer has died in Iran after he had been severely beaten by a relative who objected to his strong faith in Christ. He leaves behind a wife and two young children. According to Christian friends, he was a courageous believer who demonstrated a wonderful and contagious faith in Jesus. Though it has been unbearably hard, the church is determined to continue serving the Lord. They told the pastor, "We will continue to come to the church meetings. We will stand with you." For the security of his family and other believers, we cannot share more details. Please pray, however, for the wife and children, the house church he leaves behind, and for his example to bring more people to Christ. A church leader in Iran commented, "These days we are seeing many wonderful things happen in Iran. At the same time we are under attack. It is getting intense and we need continued intercession."*

Taken from www.elam.com - a ministry working into Iran

2. KENOSIS Phil 2:5-6

Meaning 'emptied himself' - to dedicate yourself to a cause, to your neighbour, to the world and it costs. Where many may desire the stage and the pulpit, those with kenosis desire the tables and the towels.

Further Reading: John 13:1-16 and John 3:30.

3. NAOS 1 Cor 3:16; 6:23

Meaning 'Holy of Holies'. The pursuit of holiness is not the desire to be a hermit neither is it to have a life of sinless perfection. These things have happened in the past and it has not produced naos.

Holiness is to seek Christ and to gaze on his perfections and live in the light of those.



Interesting Fact:

Most people have no idea how many Christians there are in the world: More than 2 billion people claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. That's one third of the world's population! Malicious leaders have tried to destroy it, hostile groups have persecuted it, and sceptics have scoffed at it. Nevertheless, God's Church is bigger now than ever before in history.

Every day 60,000 new people come to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour? By the end of today, thousands of new churches will be started throughout the world, and that will happen tomorrow and the next day and the next.

- **There is Hope in our MISSION**

It is a mission of fruitfulness – The Gospel is a human story.

Read John 1:14

God has chosen to live in the human story to cause and help it to bear fruit.

Read Joel 2: 21-22, 28-29

The result is fruitfulness; the whole of your life to blossom and to thrive.

This is the request of the majority who wake up every day saying, "I want to be a better person." The gospel is much more than a message of sin, repentance and hell. We must rediscover the good news of the gospel. It is our hope. The gospel addresses human concerns and aspirations.



Putting it into practice...

End this week's study sharing how the gospel lives in the human story of your life and how it has transformed others through you. If you have ever shared the gospel with someone, share your experience. **This week is your chance to bring the gospel into the human story. Why not think of a non-Christian friend, pray for them and pray for opportunities to share the gospel with them.**

Prayer Direction...

Pray for each other, sharing the gospel can be a daunting task. We can feel belittled, insecure, threatened and foolish. Pray that God would give everyone in the group the boldness to share the gospel with a friend in the coming weeks.

Next week... go out into the streets of your local community. Take photos of areas that have been neglected. If you are able take photos of people who are in need of God. You may feel able to draw a picture to represent your community or cut out an article from a local newspaper. Get these photos printed, pictures drawn and articles cut out ready for next week.

Session 4: OUR COMMUNITY LEADERS NOTES

This week is a slight break from the group discussions that have been taking place and there are no study notes to print out for the group.

The aim of this week is to create time and space for people to be able to pray over areas of their community that they feel need God.



Ask the members of the group to explain why they took the photos or cut out the articles they did and why they feel that this area or group of people need God. How did they feel when taking the photo or reading the article? What have they been thinking since taking the photo?

This is a great opportunity to see people's passion. What one person sees in society another person will miss. Passions can be very unique so there are no wrong answers as to what photos should have been taken or the pictures that might have been drawn.

Once each member has had time to explain their reasons for taking the photos or drawing the pictures that they did then take some time to stick all the photos on to the large board or sheet of paper.

Things you will need... this week is a practical week so you will need:

- Large board or sheet of paper to stick the photos/drawings/articles to.
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Paper and pens

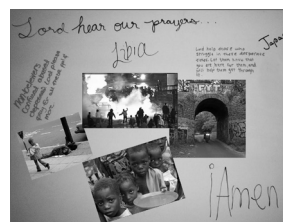
Once all the photo/drawings/articles have been stuck down take some time to allow the group to sit and look at the pictures. Ask the group to pray and see if they feel God say anything.

Encourage the group to write down their prayers and any words that they feel God may be saying. You could do this in silence or play a worship CD, songs such as 'The Heart of Worship' Matt Redman, 'Living For Your Glory' Tim Hughes, 'I Will Follow' Chris Tomlin, are songs that work well.

Once you feel enough time has been given to this you could ask the group to stick their prayers alongside the pictures and then open it up for people to pray as they feel led.

Please feel free to adapt this week as you feel is appropriate for your group. Be creative.

Some example boards:



Be as creative as you can with your boards. Use a white board, post it notes, photos, drawings etc

Once your board is complete please do send us a photo so we can show other groups how it could be done. You can send it to us at: Elim International Missions, Elim International Centre, De Walden Road, West Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 4DF or email us: missions@elimhq.net

Session 5: PASSION FOR THE HARVEST LEADERS NOTES



Activity: Discuss how you are getting on with praying for a non-Christian friend. Be honest and remember none of us are perfect.



Play DVD or watch video from www.elimmissions.co.uk/smallgroupstudy
Week 5 Passion for the Harvest



Read Ezekiel 37: 1-14 - Maybe get a member of the group to read the scripture.
What did Ezekiel see in the valley?

Discuss the participation Ezekiel played in partnership with God in this vision.

We are living in one of the most exciting periods in God's salvation history. Patrick Johnstone, author of Operation World, states, *"We are living in the time of the largest ingathering of people into the Kingdom of God that the world has ever seen."*

Read the following facts to the group and discuss how they make the group feel: surprised, excited, frustrated, why?

During the 20th century, the world population has multiplied 3.7 times. In Europe, Christians have not kept pace with the population, growing only 1.5 times. However, in Asia, there are 15 times more Christians than 100 years ago, and in Africa, there are 38 times more Christians.

New believers are being added to the Church:

20,000 per day in Africa

15,000 per day in India 10,000 per day in Latin America

100+ million in China since 1950

Christianity is growing by 115,000 people per day worldwide. It is estimated that each week, over 5,600 new churches are being planted around the world.

Discuss: Have you seen a harvest time in your lifetime, in your town or city? Give examples.

Challenges from the Harvest

- The Gospel for every person

96% of the world's population has Scriptures in their language.

However, to complete the remaining 4% will require possibly as many as 3,000 new translations.

90% of the world's population has access to Christian radio broadcasts in their own language.

There have been over **SIX BILLION** viewings of the Jesus film and it is available in languages spoken by over **90%** of the world's population.

70% of the world's population has heard the gospel in some form. **30%** has had virtually no exposure to the gospel message.

There is a SPIRITUAL challenge: More Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in the previous 19 centuries combined.

There is a PEOPLE challenge: The remaining people groups and individuals tend to be in remote locations, have great language and cultural barriers, practice religious fundamentalism, and are the most resistant to the Gospel.

There is a POLITICAL challenge: The countries with the most least-reached tend to be closed to Christianity.

Discuss what challenges you face from your own harvest? Indifference/Apathy, Marginalisation etc.

Get a different member in your group to read each of these historical examples of passion for the harvest.

John Wesley: *"Let us all be of one business. We live only for this, to save our own souls and the souls of those who hear us."* God used John Wesley to bring revival and transform thousands.

Discuss how this quote from John Wesley challenges your own passion?

John Knox: When John Knox's wife pleaded with him to get some sleep, he answered, *"How can I sleep when my land is not saved?"* He would often pray all night in agonizing tones, *"Lord, give me Scotland or I die!"* God shook Scotland. God gave him Scotland.

Discuss how these quotes from John Knox challenge your own passion?

George Whitfield: Whitfield prayed, *"O Lord, give me souls or take my soul."* It is said his face shone like the face of Moses when he sobbed that prayer.

Discuss how this quote from George Whitfield challenges your own passion?

William Booth: The King of England asked Booth what the ruling force of his life was. Booth replied, *"Sir, some men's passion is for gold, other men's passion is for fame, but my passion is for souls. On to Calvary! On to death for the world! Let us not refuse the smiters! No halting! No rest! On suffering, sorrowing, weeping, dying for God and men, till the hosts of hell fly from this last defence and we march on over a burning world into everlasting glory!"*

Discuss how these quote from William Booth challenges your own passion?



Putting it into practice...

This week is your chance to take a bold step by speaking to the person you have been praying for about Jesus. You may get the opportunity to ask them if they would like you to pray for a situation in their life, you may get the chance to share how Jesus has done something in your life. However small it may seem, be bold and step out.

Prayer Direction...

Pray for each other, sharing the gospel can be a daunting task. We can feel belittled, insecure, threatened and foolish. Pray that God would give everyone in the group the boldness to share the gospel with a friend in the coming weeks.

Session 6: THE POWER IN MISSION LEADERS NOTES

Start this week by telling your story about how you have stepped out this past week by sharing the gospel. Do not feel you have to embellish your story, be honest, the difficulties, your feelings, responses etc.



Play DVD or watch video from www.elimissions.co.uk/smallgroupstudy
Week 6 The Power in Mission



Read Acts 2:42-47

Discuss: What do we understand of what happens when a church receives God's power?

What will we devote ourselves to? v42

- The power in mission is expressed through **DEVOTION**

What does this look like: To learn all we can, not just about the Bible but how the Bible can relate to a changing world. To live in fellowship, not only in a house group, but in the community with people of different persuasion. To receive the broken body of Jesus and to demonstrate the broken humanity of Christ to a world that is already broken by sin. To ask, not for ourselves but for those in need of a Saviour, to take on their burdens.

On the DVD you heard about one of the most well-known martyrdoms in the history of China, that of John and Betty Stam in December 1934. A few weeks before John was martyred he wrote to his father and included the poem found below (Ask a member of the group to read the poem out loud):

Afraid? Of what? To feel the spirit's glad release? To pass from pain to perfect peace? The strife and strain of life to cease? Afraid – of that?

Afraid? Of what? Afraid to see the Saviour's face? To hear His welcome, and to trace the glory gleam from wounds of grace? Afraid? – of that? Afraid? Of what? A flash – a crash – a pierced heart; Darkness – light – O heaven's art! A wound of his counterpart! Afraid? – of that?

Afraid? Of what? To do by death what life could not – Baptise with blood a stony plot, Till souls shall blossom from the spot? Afraid? – of that?
John Stam 1934

What message does the poem bring to you as you hear it through the filter of the word 'devotion'?

What wonder will we be filled with? v43

- The power in mission is expressed through **WONDER**

We are in danger of losing so much wonder that was commonplace for our ancestors. We have a need to understand everything. We must understand God. We reduce Him to a mathematical problem to be solved.

Discuss a time when you can think of anything that brought the wonder of God to you?

The wonder found in the Stams story is this. Many young men and women offered to replace the Stams. One leader said "I personally know of hundreds of volunteers of all ages who gave their lives to the Lord for missionary service because of their death" A co-worker wrote to Betty's parents "A life which had the longest span of years might not have been able to do 100th of the work for Christ which they have done in a day."

- The power in mission is expressed through **COMMUNITY v45**

It is not just the community of those who attend church but those who are yet to do so.

Discuss these three bullet points:

- Inviting the neighbour for coffee will become as important as inviting them to church.
- “Where brothers live together in unity there the Lord commands a blessing” Psalm 33 becomes a verse important not just for the church but for the workplace.
- We embrace the ‘incarnation’ as never before. Community means we will leave our comfort zones, our glory and get burdened and involved with the problems of the world.

This is best illustrated in that when she was 14 years, Helen, the daughter of the Stams was asked if she hated the Chinese people for all they had done to her parents. She immediately responded, “*Oh, I think they are just wonderful. I love them.*”

What will we give to and whom? v45

- The power in mission is expressed through **GIVING**

When the power of God comes upon the church then Christians will get serious about:

The tithe.

- It is a mark of **OBEDIENCE.**
- It leads to **BLESSING.**
- It makes me spiritually **HEALTHY.**
- It shows God I am **TRUSTING HIM.**
- It helps me to be aware of all my **FINANCES.**
- It has brought me closer to **GOD.**

The offerings.

This is money that is from your 90% and/or money that comes to you.

Brainstorm tithe and offerings. How important are they to you?

The story of the Stams is the story of a couple who did not withhold from God in any way.

1932: “*Shall we beat a retreat, and turn back from our high calling in Christ Jesus, or dare we advance at God’s command in the face of the impossible? Let us remind ourselves that the Great Commission was never qualified by clauses calling for advance only if funds were plentiful and no hardship or self-denial was involved.*”
Betty would write, “*I want something really worthwhile to live for. Like most young people, I want to invest this one life of mine as wisely as possible, in the place that yields richest profits to the world and to me...I know very well that I can never realize the richest, most satisfying life Christ meant for me, if I am not giving my life unselfishly for others.*”



Putting it into practice...

Continue this week speaking to the person you have been praying for about Jesus. Maybe this week is your chance to express the power in mission by creating community. Invite your friend to your house for a meal, go out for a coffee...

Prayer Direction... Pray for people around the world today that face persecution and even death, like the Stams, for their faith. In 2010 an estimated 100 million Christians faced persecution (Open Doors UK), particularly in North Korea, Iran and Saudi Arabia. A recent study, cited by the Vatican, reported that 75 out of every 100 people killed due to religious hatred are Christian.

Session 7: JOURNEYS OF LIFE LEADERS NOTES



Activity: Discuss how you are getting on with sharing Jesus with your non-Christian friend.



Play DVD or watch video from www.elimmissions.co.uk/smallgroupstudy
Week 7 Journeys Of Life



Read Acts 20:1-12

Our journey involves:

RELATIONSHIPS with people

- Be an **ENCOURAGER** (v1,2 & 12)

The word is *paraklesis* having a range of meanings from appealing through exhortation to comforting and consoling.

Discuss how you have been an encourager and write down some ways we can be better at encouraging people eg Pointing out the positive in people, releasing people to do things etc:

.....
.....

- Be a **UNITER**

It was whilst Paul was in Greece, in fact Corinth (v3), that he wrote his letter to the Romans. In this letter Paul seeks prayers for his special work, that of collecting money from the Greek churches to give to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. For Paul this special work symbolized that there is one united family of God made up of Greek and Jew in Christ.

“Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.” Romans 15: 25-27

Their testimony was that they had been uniting people of different background and persuasions in Christ.

- People **ALONGSIDE US** (v4-5)

Paul did not work alone. He was a team player and a builder of teams. The benefit of team for Paul was:

- a) Protection for **HIMSELF**

He had a large amount of money that had been collected from many places to take to Jerusalem. Having people around him kept him accountable for the safe arrival of that money.

- b) Protection for **THE WORK**

Having several people around him caused a protection for the money from those who would want to cause trouble.

c) Protection for **THE FUTURE**

A good way to test whether we have the future in mind is to ask the question, 'Would the work continue when we are taken out of the situation?'

Discuss some examples of how these 3 areas have been of benefit in your own life.

Our journey involves:

RESPONDING to situations

- **THREATS** (v3) For Paul, we are not told the nature of the plot but can rightly assume it is not only to harm him but also to take the money.

- **DECISIONS** : Some decisions are **PAINFUL** : During the period of v1-2 Paul decided to write a letter to Corinth which according to 2 Corinthians 2:4 *"I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears."*

Some decisions are a **CHANGE OF MIND** : Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. (see 2 Cor 2:12-13)

- **SURPRISES** (v7) The story of a young man, Eutychus depicting the meaning of his name - Lucky!

Take some time to share times when you have been through threatening or surprising situations, or times when you have had important decisions to make.

What has separated our life from the rest is that the journey of our life since we met Christ has focused on his resurrection.

- The resurrection is **EVERYTHING** (v6 -7)

Paul was probably preaching about the resurrection given the season just like churches do today (Passover - Easter). This passage is speaking loud and clear from beginning to the end of resurrection. Eutychus was dead, the doctor Luke verifies this. His resurrection was the church's reminder that Jesus was indeed the resurrection and the life. **It is how our own journey of faith can be described: for resurrection is everything to us too, it is our confirmation and hope.**

- Resurrection calls us to **EMBRACE DISASTER** (v10)

Paul pauses his sermon and did what Elijah did (1 Kings 17:19) and what Elisha also did (2 Kings 4: 32-33).



Read Psalm 18:16

- Resurrection means we don't **QUIT** (v10)

Paul's declaration is a reminder that even though something appears over and finished, only God is the announcer of such things.

Prayer Direction...

This week pray for the non-Christian friend you have been reaching out to over these last few weeks. Pray that God would continue to draw them to himself and continue to use you effectively.

Session 8: UNDERSTANDING ISLAM LEADERS NOTES

Ask each member of the group to present what they have discovered about the categories that were given out last week. It could be good at the start of this session to explain that not everyone is an expert on Islam. Discussions such as this can become heated and often become less than helpful. Encourage the group to listen to each others opinion and if they feel angry, confused or surprised by something then to share those feelings and open it up for further discussion.

Here is some basic information on each of the categories:

- **Jesus:** Muslims respect and revere Jesus, and await his Second Coming. They consider him one of the greatest of God's messengers to mankind. A Muslim never refers to him simply as 'Jesus', but always adds the phrase 'upon him be peace'. The Qu'ran confirms his virgin birth (a chapter of the Qu'ran is entitled 'Mary'), and Mary is considered the purest woman in all creation. However they reject Christ's deity and Sonship, and deny that Christ was crucified and rose again, they claim that someone else was crucified in his place. At the last minute God took Jesus up into heaven. They think that it may have been Judas that was crucified. Many Muslims hold a misconception that we believe God had sexual intercourse with Mary and Jesus was the physical result. For Christians Christ is God's final revelation but for the Muslim, the final revelation was added when the Qur'an was given to Muhammad

- **Muhammad:** At the age of 40, while engaged in a meditative retreat, Muslims believe Muhammad received his first revelation from God through the Angel Gabriel. This revelation, which continued for twenty-three years, is known as the Qu'ran. Muhammad is the most precious person to them so if we are asked our views we must treat him with respect. But we are to be honest. We can state that he is not our prophet, but that we respect him as a religious person who called idolatrous people back to God and said many positive things about our Lord Jesus and for this he earns our respect.

- **The Qu'ran:** Muslims believe the Qu'ran is a record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad. It was memorized by Muhammad and then dictated to his Companions, and written down by scribes, who cross-checked it during his lifetime. Not one word of its 114 chapters, Suras, has been changed over the centuries, so that the Qu'ran is in every detail the unique text which was revealed to Muhammad fourteen centuries ago.

Now Muslims often believe that the Bible has been corrupted. Our response should not be one of how dare they say such a thing, and instead of battling over this issue with them, respond by getting them to agree which they will, that God is all powerful and so is powerful enough to protect his own word, there is no way that he would allow His word to be changed. Our response to the Qur'an is that although we do not believe exactly what they believe about it, it does say some beautiful things about Jesus, which we can appreciate.

• The Five Pillars:

SHAHADAH. This Pillar is believing and saying the words. "There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah".

SALAH. This Pillar is praying five times a day. There are set prayers which Muslims should say, and all Muslims should face Mecca in Arabia when praying, and should pray on a prayer mat. People should wash before they pray. There are fixed movements, which include kneeling with the forehead placed on the ground in front. This expresses the servant status of the human being in relation to Allah.

ZAKAH. Each year, Muslims are supposed to give a fixed proportion of their savings for endeavours such as helping the poor. In this way, they believe that their wealth is "made pure"

SAWM. Refraining from food and drink during the month of Ramadan during daylight hours.

HAJJ. This is making a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in your life, if it can be afforded.

- **God:** The important question is not whether Muslims and Christians believe in the 'same God' but what they understand his character to be. We understand God's nature by looking into the face of Jesus, who revealed God to humanity. His primary attribute is love, we can call him father, He responds to our repentance. Islam stresses God's transcendence. He is so 'other' he cannot be adequately described in human language, neither can he enter into the experiences of humanity, so he cannot suffer. Many Muslims think that we believe in three gods. They view the trinity as blasphemy, because there is only one God.



Play DVD or watch video from www.elimmissions.co.uk/smallgroupstudy
Week 8 Understanding Islam

Take notes from the interview with Mohammad Yusuf Muqit. Can you see any bridges that could be built with Muslims from what he says? Is there anything that he says that confuses/angers/surprises you? Use additional note sheets if you need more space.

If you don't know the answers to questions that are raised be honest and say that you will do your best to find out the answer.

Session 9: LOCAL CHURCH STRATEGY LEADERS NOTES



Play DVD or watch video from www.elimmissions.co.uk/smallgroupstudy
Week 9 Local Church Strategy



Read Acts 1:8

Using Acts 1:8 discuss where your Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the world are.

Jerusalem: My Community, Village or Town. A place with the same culture, same language

Judea: Province / District / Region / County

Samaria: Country. Places with a different culture but the same language

The Ends of the World: Places with different cultures and different languages

Discuss the following as a group to help create a starting point for a strategy for missions.

- **Culture:** Where does global missions fit into your church? Global missions must flow out of the values and vision of your church. What are they? Where do prejudices lay in your church and community?
- **Who is here:** Who are the International people? Who have contacts globally? Who are the travellers in your church? Who has already experienced cross-culture? Who have stories to tell?
- **What are the passions within the church?:** identify the gifts, skills and hobbies. Which continents are people leaning more towards in their interests?
- **Services:** Preach missions as the normal. Be informative and educational. Respond to disasters with prayer. Be a gatherer of news. Tell good stories from the persecuted church.
- **Publicity: Fund-raisers, what kind?** Improve the notice board, posters etc. Keep it updated. Use mobiles, emails, podcasts etc. Food and Fasting events. Every few years pick a big project. Sell global mission to the world outside church. Be Creative.
- **Raise missionaries to be more global and commission them:** Send short-term teams: young and old. If the church has a full time missionary, then support her/them with excellence.
- **Raise missionaries to be more global, yet keeping them in the church:** Fair-trade see: www.elimmissions.co.uk/gifts4life / Freedom Project see: www.elimmissions.co.uk/freedomproject. Can you think of others?
- **Personal, Poor and the Persecuted:** The personal must have some relevance to the church. The question of why are we feeding goats in Africa is a good one. The poor keeps the church connected to the biblical mandate and aware of their own wealth. The persecuted because they are our family and because of the positive influence they have on the church regarding faith and hope.

Encourage the group that this is just the start. Maybe embark on a wider conversation with church leadership as you feel appropriate. Read the closing paragraphs on the Study Guide.

Session 10: GLOBAL SUPPER LEADERS NOTES

First and foremost, well done. You have completed the course.

The main point of this final session is to enjoy some fellowship and food.

You could also try to start up or continue discussions that you have had as a group over the previous sessions.

If you feel it appropriate you could read out the following section from a book by Helen Berhane, a gospel singer who was imprisoned in a shipping container in the East African state of Eritrea and brutally tortured for her faith.

She and many other Christians who had been rounded up by the authorities were locked in the airless, unsanitary steel container, and left to bake in the desert by day and freeze by night.

In the book she describes the atmosphere inside the container:

A single candle flickers, its flame barely illuminating the darkness. They never burn for more than two hours after the container door is locked: there is not enough oxygen to keep the flame alive any longer. It will go out soon.

Despite the proximity of so many people, it is freezing cold. Condensation drips from the roof and slides down my cheek, and when it moistens my lips I taste rust. The air is thick with a dirty metallic tang, the ever-present stench of the bucket in the corner, and the smell of close-packed, unwashed bodies.

I peer around, trying to work out where she is, the woman whose mind is gone. There, by the small window hacked roughly into the side of the container.

I stiffen. Sometimes she blocks the opening by stuffing her blanket into it, cutting off our limited supply of fresh air. Other nights she shouts and wails, rocking the container so that none of us can sleep. She is worse now there are more of us; nineteen in a space that can only sleep eighteen. Tonight she is quiet, and it makes me uneasy.

But I am so tired, and so I force my body to relax against the hard floor. Abruptly the candle snuffs out, I close my eyes, and think of my daughter. Please Lord, keep her safe. The floor creaks. Someone must be getting up and stumbling across the sleepers to the toilet bucket. I try to shut the noise out.

Suddenly, without warning, hands close on my neck like a vice. My eyes fly open, but it is too dark to see. Then there is a guttural snarl, and I know that it is her, the madwoman, her fingers tight on my throat. I push myself up but I have no breath to scream, and I am not strong enough to shake her off. So I do the only thing I can do: I bang my free hand on the wall of the container and kick out.

All around us prisoners are waking up. One tries to pull her away from me, but now she has one hand on my throat and the other knotted in my hair, yanking it away from my scalp. I gulp down a breath and manage a scream. The other prisoners start to shout too, and bang the sides of the container.

There are shouts now coming from outside, and the sound of hurrying feet, the noise of the bolts sliding back and the pop as air rushes into the container and then the doors are flung open.

My eyes burn as torchlight sears across my face, and then a guard is yanking her away from me and beating her about the head and body with his baton. I fall onto all fours, gasping in air. The guards pull her out of the container, and slam the door again.

Sometimes I cannot believe that this is my life: these four metal walls, all of us corralled like cattle, the pain, the hunger, the fear. All because of my belief in a God who is risen, who charges me to share my faith with those who do not yet know him, and who I am forbidden to worship.

I think back to a question I have been asked many times over my months in prison: 'Is your faith worth this, Helen?'

And as I take a deep breath of the sour air, as my scalp stings, the mad woman rants outside, and the guards continue on their rounds, I whisper the answer 'Yes'.

Prayer Direction...

Pray for the group as a whole. Pray that everything they have learnt over the past weeks would cause the group to not just continue with life as it was but be stirred to find their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria or end of the earth and go, taking the good news of Jesus Christ with them.

Well done for sticking the course. Now may God use us powerfully and effectively to reach the nations for the sake of His Kingdom.

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