



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

God's Mission Changes Everything

Bible Reading: Eph. 1:3-14

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"The shift to understanding...[it's] *God's mission* & not ours...*changes everything*" —L. Edge, G. Morgan

Don't Dumb Down; Let's Dive Deep

A. What's wrong with the Church?

- "What ails the church...is...our poor theology...[There's] a failure to be intoxicated with the triune God." —Ross Hastings
- The Mission of God "makes *theology, not strategy, the first task* of [the] church...This theological priority has turned the church's attention more fully to God as triune." —Mark Love?
- "Church leaders have turned to business & management perspectives...Organizational theories...often without critical... analysis...This...contribut[ed to]...the loss by many local churches...of their unique calling & mission." —Paul Dietterich

B. Deep or Shallow?

- "The W. church has alarming symptoms...[Some] think we've gotten too deep...*It's not that the evangelical church is too deep, but that it's far too shallow*... Deep?discipleship is about giving people more Bible, not less; more?theology, not less; more spiritual disciplines, not less; more gospel, not less; more Christ, not less." —J. T. English
- "*I sense a renewed hunger for?theology*...Emerging generations are *starving for?depth?*in our teaching?& preaching?&? will not settle for?shallow?answers...[Let's] make preaching [God-centered] rather than [man-centered]...In many cases... we've made ourselves, rather than God, the focus of our preaching." —D. Kimball?
- "We need a deeper vision...When our plans embody God's vision, & the new depth brings about the changes God intends, then we're swimming in the right direction." —C. Clark & K. Powell

God's Mission for God's Glory

A. Trinity in Eternity

- "*Perichoresis* is the circulation of divine life within the Trinity in mutuality & fellowship, openness..." —M. Dreier
- Church Fathers "described the nature of the Trinity using the image of dance or *perichoresis*. This... suggests moving around, making room, relating to one another without losing, or taking, identity... mutuality or reciprocity." —D. Wesley

B. God's Mission begins in God's own Being

1. God is a Missionary God; Mission is God's Nature

- "Mission... derive[s] from the very nature of God." —David Bosch "God has a mission & God *is* missionary." —S. Holmes
- "*God is by nature 'reaching out'* to what is not God... God the Father sent God the Son... The Father &... Son sent... the Holy Spirit... This movement... [is] the mission of God... Mission is who God is. It is what God does..." —Michael D. Langford

2. Enlarging the Triune Fellowship

- "The Son's primary mission is to communicate himself... to others & so *enlarge the circle of triune fellowship*... The Father sends the Son... [&] the Spirit... The *purpose of the 2 missions... is communion & community: a sharing in... the very life of God*. The overarching plan... is 'to gather everything together in Christ' (Eph. 1:10)." —Kevin J. Vanhoozer

3. Invited into the 'Dance of the Trinity' (Rev. 22:17)

- "On the cross the 'dancing circle' of self-giving & mutually-indwelling divine persons... stops for a brief moment & a fissure appears so that sinful?humanity can join in." —Miroslav Volf
- "The?Spirit?& the?bride?say, 'Come!' Let anyone who hears, say, 'Come!'" (Rev. 22:17)

C. The Church joins God's Mission

- "*God already is in mission, & the church must join him.*" —Tim Keller

D. God's Mission in Ephesians

- "According to Paul, *God is on a mission* to liberate humanity—&... the entire cosmos—from... Sin & Death... through the... death & resurrection of His Son... so that a newly-created humanity... [can] praise God... For Paul the church is a living [exposition] of the gospel... *The church... lives the story, tells the story... as it participates in the life of God.*" —M. Gorman

The Goal is God's Glory (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; 3:21)

A. "There is one mission shared by each person of the Trinity *to glorify the triune God*... The church was redeemed for this purpose, & the church's mission is to participate in this God-glorifying mission." —Keith Whitfield

B. "**To the Praise of God's Glory**" (Ps. 19:1; 96:7-8; Is. 6:3; Hab. 2:14; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14)

- Two keys: [1.] "Paul's distinctive phrase... '*in Christ*.' [2.] Equally significant is *the God-centeredness of the whole passage*, marked... by the repeated... '*to the praise of his glory*' (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14)." —James Dunn

C. "**To him [God] be glory in the church**" (Eph. 3:21)

- "*To him [God] be glory in the church* & in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever & ever. Amen." (Eph. 3:21)
- "Eph. 3:21... is the only place in the NT that mentions the *glory of God 'in the church'*." —Tim Gombis
- "[God's] church exists for the glory of God... *The church is... made in His image, sent on His mission, to be His glory.*" —Milfred Minatrea

Man-Centered or God-Centered?

A. There's "a... danger... in a church [being man-centered] rather than [God-centered]—centered on people rather than God." —John Harbison

The Trinity isn't Selfish or Self-centered

God's Church on God's Mission in God's Way for God's Glory (Rev. 21:23)

- God's mission "remains an action of God's own...life. He has *not simply handed this over to...the Christian community...* [It's] *not some...missionary carte blanche where everything is permitted for the sake of...church growth.*"— John Flett
- "The city [Jerusalem] does not need the sun or moon to shine on it, because the *glory of God* illuminates it." (Rev. 21:23)?
- "God's mission...[is] fulfilled in Jesus' return & in a city...*filled with the presence & glory of God.*" —Rick Richardson
- **SUMMARY:**
 - Commentators say Christianity in North America is too shallow; it's 'a mile wide, but only an inch deep.' They prescribe a deeper engagement with the Trinity—God the Father, the Son & Holy Spirit. Current COVID restrictions afford us a golden opportunity for a deeper dive. Today's topic, '*God's Mission Changes Everything*,' points the way. God's mission begins in God's own being in eternity; God is 'missionary' by nature—reaching out to enlarge the community of the Trinity. Ephesians 1 tells how God's mission reached us to change our identity & destiny. Now we are God's people, the church, invited into God's mission, issuing in the praise of God's glory. Exalting, adoring anything or anyone else disappoints; glorifying God fulfills.
- **QUESTIONS:**
 - Was there ever a time in your Christian life when you felt God calling you to go deeper? How did you respond?
 - In the past 6 months of COVID pandemic how has your Christian life changed? Any new experiences, leadings?
 - In your own personal history as a Christian, how has the Trinity (triune God) been taught & discussed?
 - In your own history, what (if anything) has motivated you to think (or investigate) about the Trinity?
 - In the terms—"God's mission," "mission of God," what do you understand by "*mission*"? What words would you suggest as substitutes for "mission"?
 - Traditionally many Christians said 'mission' starts in Mt. 28:19—"Go & make disciples..." What difference does it make to say, "God's Mission begins in the triune God's own being in eternity"?
 - Where do you see God's mission in Eph. 1:3-14? How do you relate the whole passage to God's mission?
 - 2 scholars wrote: "The shift to understanding...[it's] *God's mission* & not ours...*changes everything.*" That's a major claim; what might they mean? What item springs to your mind that's changed by seeing "it's *God's mission...not ours*"?
 - Eph. 1:3-14 says God's actions are for the "*praise to his glory.*" The Bible says we shouldn't be self-centered; Jesus said "I don't seek my own glory" (Jn. 8:50). How then could God "seek His own glory"? Is God "selfish"/"self-centered"?
 - The NT says "*To [God] be glory in the church*" (Eph. 3:21); what would that look like? How can the church glorify God?