



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

The Mission of God

Bible Reading: John 1:1-2,18; 1 John 1:3; Eph. 1:9-10;2:16-17

The Mission of God

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SUMMARY:

We live in a world of escalating tensions—between nations, political persuasions, racial & ethnic groups. People march for peace & justice; too often it degenerates into destruction & violence. Humanity needs help.

The 'Mission of God' is God's project to rescue humanity & restore his fractured creation. That's why he sent the Son & the Holy Spirit. God's mission involves reconciliation on multiple levels—between humanity & their Creator, between diverse people-groups and (ultimately) between heaven & earth—God's realm & the created sphere. Paul calls God's goal, his "long-range plan [that] everything would be brought together & summed up in Christ, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth." God invites us—the Church—to first experience, & then join, his peace-making mission. Ironically, God's peace-making mission involves war—warfare against the destructive powers of darkness.

The Mission of God

A. Based on who God is—the triune God 'in community'—*perichoresis* (Jn. 1:1-2, 18; 17:24)

- "In the beginning?was the Word,?& the Word was with God, & the Word was God.?2?He was with God...No one has ever seen God. The one & only?Son, who is himself God & is at the Father's?side—he has revealed him." (Jn. 1:1-2, 18)
- "Father...you?loved?me before the world's foundation." (Jn. 17:24)

B. God's mission—to enlarge the circle of divine fellowship (1 Jn. 1:3)

- “The Trinity is, by nature, ‘sending.’ The Father *sends* the Son into the world to save it, & the Father & the Son *send* the Spirit into the world...Now...the Spirit is sending the church”—Tim Keller

C. God’s mission includes the Son’s mission (Jn. 3:16-17) & the Spirit’s mission (Jn. 14:26; 15:26)

- “God so loved the world...He *gave* his one & only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will...have eternal life... God did not *send* his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (Jn. 3:16-17)
- “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will *send* in my name.” (Jn. 14:26)
- “...I will *send* to you...the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father” (Jn. 15:26)

D. The church participates in God’s mission (Jn. 20:21)

- “Jesus told them, ‘...As the Father has *sent* me, I also *send* you’.” (Jn. 20:21)
- “God does not merely send the church...*God already is in mission, and the church must join him.*” —Tim Keller

The Mission of God in Ephesians (Eph. 1:10)

- “*Ephesians [presents] God’s Peace-making Mission & the Church’s Participation in it*”—Michael J. Gorman

A. God’s Peace-making Mission (Eph. 1:10)

- God’s “plan for the fulfillment—to *bring everything together* in Christ...things in heaven &...on earth in him.” (Eph. 1:10)

B. Reconciling Fallen Humanity with God (Eph. 2:17)

- “[Christ] came & proclaimed the good news of *peace* to [those] far away & *peace* to those who were near.” (Eph. 2:17)

C. Reconciling Fractured People-Groups with each other (Eph. 2:14-17)

- “[Christ] is our *peace*, who made both [Jews & Gentiles] one & tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh, he made of no effect the law consisting of...regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in *peace*...He came & proclaimed...*peace* to [those] far away & *peace* to those who were near.” (Eph. 2:14-17)

D. Producing the Church (Eph. 3:10, 21)

- “So God’s multi-faceted wisdom may...be made known through the *church* to...heavenly rulers & authorities” (Eph. 3:10)

E. Reconciling the whole Cosmos—joining together Heaven & Earth (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:19-20)

- “God was pleased...through [Christ] to *reconcile everything to himself*, whether things *on earth or things in heaven*, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (Col. 1:19-20)
- “God’s mission is *to restore creation*, & the church is called to participate in the mission...[by] alerting people to the universal reign of God.” —Tim Keller
- The “Hymn [Col. 1:13-19] suggests more than the mere restoration of creation, but a remaking...[Christ] forges a *previously unthinkable unity between heaven & earth.*” —Edith M. Humphrey

God’s Peace-making Mission involves Warfare (Eph. 6:10-18)

- “Ephesians...[presents] *the triune God’s peace-making mission*...Ironically, this...peace-making mission [is] *expressed*, in part, [as] *divine warfare* and thus our warfare too...” —Michael J. Gorman
- “Put on God’s full armor...& stand...with your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of *peace*.” (Eph. 6:11, 15)
- “*The God of peace will...crush Satan under your feet.*” (Rom. 16:20) “Startling blend of war & peace imagery” - W. Swartley
- “*This war against the demonic puts an end to the previous war against God.*”—John Chrysostom (d. 407 AD)

A. Paul’s readers well aware of ‘spiritual forces of evil’

- “Paul wrote Ephesians to...Gentile *Christians [who] lived in a world where...power...belonged to ‘rulers,’ ‘authorities,’ ‘world rulers,’ & ‘spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places’* (Eph. 6:12; 2:2).”—Frank Thielman

B. Spiritual Warfare (Eph. 6) is *not* an appendix to Ephesians

C. Delivering Humanity from ‘the Strong Man’s grasp’ (Lk. 11:20-22), ‘the ruler of the power of the air’ (Eph. 2:2; Col 1:13)

- “If I drive out demons by God’s finger...then God’s kingdom has come...When a *strong man*...guards his estate, his possessions are secure...When one stronger...overpowers him, he [disarms him &] divides up his plunder.” (Lk. 11:20-22)
- God the Father “rescued us from the domain of darkness & transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col. 1:13)

D. Jesus defeated Satan, the Devil, at the Cross (1 Jn. 3:8; Jn. 12:31-32)

- “The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to *destroy the works of the devil*.” (1 Jn. 3:8 ESV)
- “Now is the judgment of this world. Now *this world’s ruler will be cast out*...If I’m lifted up from the earth...” (Jn. 12:31-2)

E. Abolishing the ‘Ordinances’ Dividing People-Groups, ending hostility (Eph. 2:14)

F. Defeating the ‘Powers’ on the Cross, exalted & seated on God’s throne far above all (Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:20-22)

- “[Christ] disarmed the rulers & authorities & disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in [the cross].” (Col. 2:15)
- God raised Christ “from the dead & seated him at *his right hand in the heavens*—far above every ruler & authority, [&] power...He subjected *everything under his feet* & appointed him as head over everything for the church” (Eph. 1:20-22)

G. The Church armed for warfare against spiritual forces (Eph. 6:10-18)

- “Stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh & blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.” (Eph. 6:11-12)

H. Application: Avoiding Extremes of Denial of– & Preoccupation with–hostile spiritual powers