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# ‘WHAT’S MY PART?’

## FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE MISSION OF GOD

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### Six short Bible studies

#### Bible studies

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#### Introduction

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*What’s my part?* is a set of six short Bible studies designed to help you understand mission and to reflect on your part in God’s mission to redeem and restore relationships with all of creation. They are designed to be worked through in a series.

Tearfund believes that Jesus called and commissioned the church to participate in God’s mission to redeem and restore all of creation, seeking his kingdom in all spheres of life through words, deeds and character. As we become one with Christ we are transformed to be more like him and to do the things he did, through the power of the Holy Spirit. In mission, our love, worship and service of God are revealed in all aspects of our lives as we build relationships with other people, engaging with all aspects of their lives, to see whole-life transformation.

The nature of mission has often been debated by the church and our understanding of mission is sometimes described as *integral* or *holistic* mission. You can find a booklet explaining Tearfund’s theology of mission in more detail on the [Theology resources page](#) on Tearfund Learn.

These studies explore the story of the Bible to show the way that God enters the world through Jesus in order to bring us into a restored relationship with him. They will look at the way that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ show us what it looks like to do mission and the way that our relationship with him shapes us for this mission. Finally, these studies will look at what this tells us about the mission of the church and about our participation in mission, as individuals and as Christian organisations. Throughout these Bible studies we will see the importance of spending time with God and how this transforms us so that we become more like Christ. We will also see how becoming more like Christ means we can live more like Christ and helps us to understand the parts he is calling us to play in his mission.

#### Notes for leaders

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Thank you for leading your group through these Bible studies. We recommend using *What’s my part?* with a group of between four to eight people. Each session will last around 30 to 45 minutes,

depending on how much your group talks. The studies are designed to take you on a journey, so we recommend that they are done in order and that people participate in all six studies.

The leader's notes are designed to introduce you to the aims and outcomes of each session, and provide you with some background information to support the questions and discussion. We want you to feel free to move questions around or ask additional questions if you think it will help your group to understand the topic better or to reflect more deeply.

These sessions are designed to introduce people to the idea that God's mission is *holistic*. As you prepare to lead these studies you might find these two resources helpful. You can find both on [Tearfund Learn](#).

- [A short introduction to mission](#)
- [A guide to leading participatory Bible studies](#)

At the end of this booklet you will find some additional resources that you might want to use with your group or share with them at the end of your sessions.

## Outcomes

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By the end of the six sessions your group should understand the following:

- That the Bible tells us the story of God's mission to redeem and restore all of creation and bring the kingdom of heaven into being.
- That this mission was fully revealed to us and carried out by Jesus Christ, who opens the door for restored relationships with God in the way that is most suitable for the people he is with and the places he is in.
- That Jesus shows us what mission is and shapes us for it through our discipleship journey.
- That our love, worship and service of God shape us as people and are reflected in the way we live, bearing witness to our faith and the transformation that comes from a restored relationship with God.
- That the church is the body of Christ and is commissioned to be his witness and make disciples, participating in the mission to reveal God's presence, power and love in the world, and enable the restoration of relationships between God, humanity and creation.
- That it is through our relationship with God in Christ that we learn who he has called us to be and what he has called us to do.
- The importance of making sure we take time to pursue our relationship with God, so that we can discern our calling and the best way of showing his love to others.
- That the way we participate in the mission of God is determined by who we are, where we are and the people we are with.

If you would like to reflect on what your group has learned from working through these studies, we have included some questions that you can ask them to work through before Study 1 and after Study 6. You can find these at the end of the booklet. We would really like to hear what you have learnt and the impact your discussions have had on your groups, so please do [contact us](#).

**Study 1**

**GOD IS WORKING IN OUR WORLD**

In this session we will look at how God reveals himself to people in the world and what this tells us about his mission.

**Read Luke 5:1–11.**

*In this passage we see Jesus come and interrupt Simon’s daily life in order to reveal himself to Simon.*

**Discuss**

- Do you think Simon might have heard about Jesus before?
- How do you think might Simon have felt about Jesus’ interruption of his work? How does he respond to Jesus?
- Why is it important that Jesus borrows Simon’s boat for fishing before he talks to him about becoming a disciple?
- How does Jesus show Simon who he (Jesus) really is?
- What does Simon’s meeting with Jesus tell us about mission?

***Where has Jesus interrupted you in your life and shown you who he is?***

- When has he entered your life?
- What has he shown you?
- What has he asked you to do?
- How has he used your skills and characteristics?
- How have you responded?
- Do you think you are a part of Jesus’ mission?

**For further reflection**

**Read Luke 8:22–25.**

*In this passage we see that Jesus’ disciples seem to have forgotten that Jesus is the Son of God and that he is a present part of their lives.*

- Why do you think the disciples panicked?
- What did Jesus show them about himself?
- When do you forget that Jesus is with you in your daily life?
- How can you remind yourself and find him more easily?

## For prayer

Thank God that Jesus came to find you and called you to follow him. Thank him that he values you and wants you to be a part of his mission. Ask him to show you what the next step of the journey might be.

## Leader's notes

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By the end of this session the group should understand that God wants to meet people in their ordinary lives, that he can transform lives and that he wants to use the skills and gifts that we already have to reveal himself in the world. You should have discussed what this tells us about the nature of God's mission, thinking about the importance of God taking the first steps to restore our relationship with him, the way he calls the people who seem the most unlikely and undesirable to be his disciples, and the importance of remembering that he is always with us.

### ***How do you think Simon might have felt about Jesus' interruption of his work? How does he respond?***

Focus on Simon's perspective of events – how does this interaction change his life? Simon is a fisherman who would not have expected a rabbi to pay attention to him. He would also have known that he was unlikely to catch any fish at this time of day, so the request would have seemed ridiculous. Encourage the group to imagine how Simon might feel when a rabbi interrupted him at the end of a long, fruitless night of fishing.

### ***Why is it important that Jesus borrows Simon's boat for fishing before he talks to him about becoming a disciple? How does Jesus show Simon who he (Jesus) really is?***

Encourage the group to think about the fact that Jesus engages with Simon in small steps. Jesus starts with a simple request – put the boat out into the water. In doing this, Jesus is able to do his 'job' as a rabbi (and as the Son of God) of speaking to the assembled crowd – by making use of Simon's skills, possessions and place in life. His second request demands more of Simon – it asks Simon to do something that Simon's experience (of a lifetime fishing and from the night before) tells him will be unsuccessful and will make him look foolish. Jesus asks Simon to follow his request and take a risk: 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.' In this way Jesus shows Simon that he is something special – that he is the Son of God – and inspires Simon to follow him.

### ***What does Simon's meeting with Jesus tell us about mission?***

Think about what this tells you about the way God values people, even those who are not obviously famous or successful, and the way that he reaches out to us and seeks to use us as we are and where we are.

### ***Where has Jesus interrupted you in your life and shown you who he is?***

If you are leading a relatively large group, you might want to break into pairs or smaller groups to encourage open conversations and then feed back on key ideas. Encourage the group to reflect on when and in what ways God has entered their lives and made an impact. Ask what in their lives made that possible and what gifts and talents he might have been looking to use. If you are discussing this in pairs, ask people to feed back on any common experiences.

If the group is ready to go deeper, ask them to think about whether they are allowing God to make full use of their talents. Where might he be asking them to think about doing something new or different?

**For further reflection:**

*You can add this section to the session if you have time, or you can encourage people to think about it before your next meeting.*

Encourage the group to think about why the disciples responded as they did in this passage. Did they forget God was with them, or expect him to have a different kind of response? Did they just not know Jesus well enough yet to trust him when they trouble? How can we remind ourselves of the fact that God is with us?

**Study 2**

**GOD INVITES US TO JOIN HIS MISSION**

The last session focused on the way that God reaches out to us and asks us to follow him. In this session we will look at the story we follow him into. We will talk about the story that the Bible tells from Genesis to Revelation and what this has to tell us about the mission of God.

**Read Ephesians 1:3–10.**

**Discuss**

- What do you think the Bible story tells us about God and about mission? How do these verses sum this up?
- What is the narrative of the story?
- What are the key moments in this story?

*Think about the story that is told if you read the Bible from start to finish – what is God doing?*

Looking at the following passages may help. They show key moments in the story: what do they tell us about God’s mission?

1. Genesis 1
2. Genesis 3:8–19
3. Genesis 17:1–22
4. Isaiah 9:2–7
5. Matthew 28:16–20
6. Romans 8:19–30

**Discuss**

- How does it feel to know that God’s mission is so big? Is it something that scares you or something that releases you from the pressure of doing everything?
- Why do you think it is important that Jesus called Simon and the other disciples personally to join him and participate in God’s mission?
- Do you think Simon fully understood what he was doing?
- How does the fact that Jesus has called *you* to join him encourage you to be a part of the mission of God?
- How does this make a difference to the way you want to live?

Chris Wright suggests that we should *live in* the Bible story rather than *applying* the Bible to our lives. How well prepared do you think you are to live in the Bible story?

*'We are part of a larger story: the first disciples knew what this story was, as they were rooted in it...'*

Wright, C (2010) *The Mission of God's People* (p36)

Jesus' first disciples knew the history and faith of Israel. They knew that their people were called by God and that the Messiah had been promised as one who would come to save them. In the church we don't always know the Bible story as well, because we have not all been brought up attending church or because our church has not always focused on the whole Bible.

- How well rooted in God's story do you think you are? How can you grow deeper roots?
- Think about the fact the Bible promises us that the kingdom of God will come; how does that affect what you want to do with your life?

### For further reflection

We are called to follow Jesus and to participate in God's mission, putting God at the centre of our lives and not ourselves.

- When do you find it hard not to put yourself at the centre of things? Can you think of some ways to remind yourself God is at the heart of the universe?

### For prayer

Thank God that he has always loved us and has always had a plan to restore his relationships with his whole creation, even when humans disobeyed him. Ask him to help you to be aware of your value as a human made in the image of God, no matter how ordinary or unworthy you feel, and to show you the part he wants you to play in his mission.

## Leader's notes

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By the end of this session the group should understand that while God is a part of our lives we are also a part of a much bigger story – the story of God's mission to restore all creation to him, as told in the Bible. Encourage the group to think about the fact there is no way we save or change the world on our own, but we do have a part to play, and we should do it as well as we can.

As this study looks at the whole story of the Bible, there are a number of passages to look at. People may be familiar with much of it. You might want to ask the group to look at these passages in advance, or to read one each and come ready to talk about what each is about. If you have the equipment to show video, you can use this video to introduce the group to the overall narrative of the Bible, as it sums up the story well: '[God's Heart for Mission](#)'.

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## ***What is the narrative of the story and what are the key moments?***

Try to keep this discussion relatively brief – you don't need to spend too long on each step or go into too much depth. It is more important people understand the arc of the story. There are six 'acts' to this story:

1. Creation
2. The Fall, broken relationships between humans, God and creation
3. God makes a covenant with Abraham, the establishment of Israel
4. Promise and salvation of Jesus
5. Church: Great Commission, earliest days
6. Hope in a new creation – ultimate redemption and glory.

We were created to exist in a relationship with God, living in harmony with God, each other, creation and ourselves – but these relationships broke in the Fall. God began to fix things by building relationships, making covenants and promises to humans. Abraham was the first of these, with God calling him and Israel to be a light to the rest of the world, showing everyone what it was like to live with God. God's mission to reach out to humanity culminates in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, redeeming us and restoring us to God. Jesus calls the church to take up Israel's role and share the good news with all the world. We and the church live and wait in hope of Christ's return, the new creation and the full revelation of the kingdom of God.

## ***How does it feel to know that God's mission is so big?***

It is possible being part of such a big story might make people feel insignificant and as if their participation is irrelevant. Encourage the group to reflect on the idea they are one part of a bigger picture, and each of us and our parts is important to God. So it isn't true we don't matter or God doesn't know or care about us – it means we aren't responsible for doing everything ourselves and it frees us up to play our part to the best of our abilities.

If the group is struggling with this idea, encourage them to think of a story (a book, a film or even the Bible) with a minor character they would like to know more about. Ask them why they would like to know more and what they imagine the character is like and does outside the original story. Explain that while our parts look small within the big picture (and we need to remember this), God is also interested in and aware of the details of all our lives.

## ***Why do you think it is important Jesus called Simon and the other disciples personally to join him and participate in God's mission?***

Encourage the group to think about how this call shows Simon and the disciples they are valuable to Jesus and that he wants them to be a part of the much bigger mission of God. Ask them if this reassures them about their value and their contribution. You might ask them to think about whether or not Simon Peter understood, at this stage, what story he was stepping into, or whether it only started to make sense to him looking back. Encourage the group to think about whether they realised what they were getting into.

## **For further reflection:**

*You can add this section to the session if you have time and the group is comfortable talking about their own faith with each other, or you can encourage people to think about it before your next meeting.*



**Study 3**

**JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE FOR MISSION**

Having looked at the way in which God reaches out to us and pulls us into his mission, we are now going to look in more depth at what participating in this mission means. In this session we will look at the life of Jesus and what he shows us about the nature of mission.

**Read Luke 4:14–21.**

*Think about the kind of help Jesus claims he has come to bring and what providing this help would look like.*

**Discuss**

- What does this passage tell us about who Jesus is and the nature of his mission?
- What do you think it looks like for Jesus to bring good news to the poor?
- Where else in the gospels have you seen examples of Jesus bringing about these changes to people’s lives?
- How do these examples show Jesus loving them, meeting their needs and seeking to restore their relationship with God?

**Read Leviticus 25:8–13.**

*In Luke, Jesus read from Isaiah 61. Isaiah, in turn, was referring back to Leviticus. This passage in Leviticus is part of a longer chapter in which God gave Israel laws on how to establish their society in order to limit injustice.*

**Discuss**

- What is the year of the Lord's favour?
- When Jesus refers to this passage, what is he saying about his part in God’s story – about his mission?
- Thinking about the Year of Jubilee, what do you think is the good news and what might it mean to bring the good news?

**For further reflection**

- How did Jesus know what to do as part of his mission?
- You might find it helpful to look at Luke 4:1–13 and think about what Jesus was doing before he went to the synagogue to read this passage.

## For prayer

Thank God that he sent Jesus to fulfil his mission to restore his creation and allow us to have a relationship with him. Ask him to show you something of what it means to be sent as Jesus was sent (John 20:21).

## Leader's notes

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By the end of this session the group should understand Jesus' mission was to bring the good news and the good news is that Jesus has made it possible for us and the whole creation to be restored to a full relationship with God. They should understand Jesus' ministry teaches us that sharing the good news means showing God's love with everyone, here and now, in whatever way is most appropriate to meet their needs and the relationship with God offered in this ministry is made possible eternally through his death and resurrection.

### ***What does this passage tell us about who Jesus is and the nature of his mission?***

If you are able, you might find it helpful to show the video: [\*This is integral mission Part 2\*](#)

In it David Westlake (Tearfund's International Director) discusses this passage and explains what Jesus is saying to the people in the synagogue.

### ***What do you think it looks like for Jesus to bring good news to the poor?***

Encourage the group to discuss what the good news is and what 'bringing' the good news looks like. Try to get them to talk about the way Jesus includes all the things he lists in verses 18 and 19 as part of the good news.

### ***Where else in the gospels have you noticed examples of Jesus bringing about these changes to people's lives?***

Encourage the group to bring up examples from Jesus' ministry and talk about how they show Jesus loving people, meeting their needs and seeking to restore their relationship with God. Talk about how Jesus adapts to each situation. Possibilities could include:

- Healings: the woman with bleeding; Jairus's daughter; the paralysed man lowered through the roof.
- Miracles: the feeding of the 5,000; the turning of water into wine.
- Conversations: the woman at the well, Mary and Martha, Zacchaeus, Nicodemus, the rich young man.

### ***What is the Year of Jubilee?***

The Year of Jubilee is the year in which Israel's society was 'reset', when debts were cancelled, slaves released and people were able to return to their families and the land they were given when Israel was set up in the Promised Land. Israel was once again able to be the society the Lord intended it to be. It was a time of celebration and worship.

### ***When Jesus refers to this passage, what is he saying about his part in God's story – about his mission?***

Remind the group the last study talked about the story of the Bible, which goes from the creation to

the coming of the new creation, and encourage them to think about how Jesus is a part of making the new creation possible. Jesus is saying he is the 'solution' to Israel's inability to keep up their side of the Exodus covenant and to be a 'jubilee society'. The good news he brings restores the kind of relationship with God that means we can be part of building a just society – making it good news for us now, as well as for when we die.

**For further reflection:**

*You can add this section to the session if you have time and the group is comfortable talking about their own faith with each other, or you can encourage people to think about it before your next meeting.*

***How did Jesus know what to do as part of his mission?***

Ask the group why it is important this scene comes immediately after the writer's description of Jesus' time in the desert (Luke 4:1–13). Encourage the group to think about how Jesus continually sought to spend time with God. He still had to act and make decisions in the world, but his ability to do so was rooted in his relationship with God. We'll look at this more in the next session, as we think about finding our part in God's story.

## Study 4

# THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

In the last session we looked at the example Jesus set us in his mission and prayed that God would show us what it means to be sent, as Jesus was sent to us. In this session we will think about the way in which we discern our part of the mission of God. As we do this, we will focus on the importance of being a disciple. We will talk about our individual callings in a later session.

**Read and discuss Mark 1:16–20.**

- What are the disciples' first steps towards joining Jesus' story?
- What happens next?
- Where in the Bible have you seen this kind of process before?

**Read and discuss John 14:5–14.**

- What does Jesus think the disciples should have learnt about his identity during the time they have been with him?

In Acts 17:28 the Bible tells us that Christians' lives are rooted in Jesus Christ: *'For in him we live and move and have our being.'* (Acts 17:28<sup>1</sup>)

- What does it mean to be 'in Christ'?
- Why do you think it is important to us as we prepare to participate in mission?

### Discuss

*Think about someone you spend a lot of time with. What kind of things do you learn from them and what do they inspire you to do?*

- What about your relationship with Jesus? Is this a feature of that relationship?
- How does your relationship with God help you to deal with the situations you find yourself in and connect with the people you meet?
- How do you think you could deepen your relationship with God?
- Think back over the last two studies: what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus and to do the things that Jesus has been doing, as he says in John 14?

<sup>1</sup> See also Philippians 2:1–2: *'If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.'*

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- What does this tell us about *mission*?

### For further reflection

In Ephesians 4:1–5 Paul writes: *'I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.'*

- Does your life reflect your relationship with God in the way that Paul describes?
- How is your relationship with God preparing you for mission?

### For prayer

Thank God he has sent Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to make it possible for you to have a relationship with him. Make a commitment to continue to spend time with him in prayer, worship and Bible study, and ask him to reveal to you his calling for your life.

## Leader's notes

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By the end of this session the group should understand that the starting point of our participation in mission is our worship of and relationship with God. This affects our whole lives. They should realise we need to respond to Jesus' call, spend time with him and follow him out into the world. Our prayer, our time with God and our filling with the Spirit shape us, helping us to become more like Christ. This naturally leads to action as God's love inspires us with his love for others. This should be a fairly broad discussion, as the next two studies will look at the mission of the church and our own callings.

### ***What are the disciples' first steps towards joining Jesus' story?***

Remind the group that the disciples first have to hear Jesus wants them (as discussed in Study 1) and then they have to make a choice to follow him and spend time with him during his ministry. Encourage the group to share their experiences of taking this step.

### ***What happens next?***

Ask the group to think about what Jesus and the disciples do in the gospels. Remind them that the disciples spend three years alongside Jesus during his ministry, before his death and resurrection, and before they receive the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Encourage them to draw on their own knowledge of the gospel to describe the 'discipleship training programme' and the ways in which Jesus prepared his disciples to be a part of his story.

Encourage the group to think about the other relationships God makes in the Bible – asking people to respond to him and then giving them the time to get to know him and his plan for them. Suggest they think about Abraham, Moses and some of the prophets.

### **What does Jesus think the disciples should have learnt about him?**

Encourage the group to discuss the way Jesus reminds Philip they have not just learnt about his identity as the Son of God and the Messiah, but what this identity means for the way he has lived his life and the things he has done. Get them to think about his character, behaviour and values, as well as particular activities.

### **What does it mean to be 'in Christ'?**

When we respond to Jesus' offer of salvation, we become a part of the body of Christ. In the church we celebrate this in baptism. Every time we take communion we come together as the united body of Christ, held together by Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for us.

*'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.'* (John 6:56–57)

In worship, liturgy, prayer and reflection, by loving God, living in and following Christ through the power and with the guidance of the Spirit, we grow more like Jesus. We become better able to discern *how* we can best live in ways that are consistent with the story that we find in the Bible in the places in which we are. This is where we learn to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God.

### **Think about someone you spend a lot of time with. What kind of things do you learn from them?**

Ask the group about their role models – their character, their values, their behaviour. What they might do or say in any given situation. How they do their job. Encourage the group to be honest about what they are inspired to emulate, in terms of character and action.

In relating the story of the calling of the disciples, the gospels tell us our new relationship with Jesus isn't just about spending time with him and having him as a part of our lives. Jesus has things for us to do once we enter his story – and he teaches us to be more like him so we can do this. Ask the group to think about what it means to 'do the things Jesus has done'.

### **For further reflection:**

Encourage the group to be open about how their relationship with God has changed their lives, including their character, values, behaviour and activities. Suggest they think about how knowing and trusting in God makes it possible to cope with all the things they face. Ask them to think and talk about the importance of spending time with God and the impact this should have on their lives.

**Study 5****THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

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So far we have talked about the mission of God and the way we begin to participate in it by developing a relationship with God and following the example of Jesus. In this session we will talk about how the church was created to continue Jesus' mission in the world and given the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide it and give it the power to do this work. We will also consider the different gifts given to the church, in preparation for the final session when we will think about the way we find our particular callings and parts of the mission.

**Read and discuss Acts 1:3–11 and 2:1–8.**

- What is the mission Jesus gives his disciples before he leaves earth?
- Why is it important they receive the Holy Spirit?

**Discuss the early chapters of Acts.**

- What does the early church look like? What kind of a community is it?
- What does it say and what does it do?
- How is it carrying out the mission that Jesus showed his disciples?

**Read and discuss Romans 12:1–8.**

- What does this passage tell us about what the church should look like to the outside world?
- Do you think everyone in the church should be the same or do the same thing? Why?
- Why is the picture of the body helpful here?
- How does this understanding of the church as a loving community of people with different gifts and roles inform how we think about mission?

**For further reflection**

- What is the difference between unity and uniformity?
- Paul uses the image of the body to explain this difference. What other illustrations could you use to describe it?

## For prayer

Thank God for the creation of the church and for the way he has called it and given it the power to continue his mission. Ask him to give you his Spirit and his love for others as you live in this community and witness to the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Pray for the ability to appreciate and celebrate all the diversity we see in the church.

## Leader's notes

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By the end of this session the group should understand the church was created to be the body of Christ on earth. Its role is to continue his mission to show people the love of God and let them know it is possible to enter a relationship with him. The group should understand this includes explaining what Jesus did, including the importance of the cross, and showing what it looks like to have a relationship with God and allowing it to transform lives. It would be helpful if the group re-reads the early chapters of Acts before the session.

### ***What is the mission Jesus gives his disciples before he leaves earth?***

In the last two studies we have looked at what it means to carry out the mission of God and at the way we grow as disciples in order to be able to be part of this mission. Encourage the group to talk about how these things affect our understanding of what it means to be a Christian and to do mission.

- What is the aim of our mission?
- What do our lives tell people about what it means to be a disciple?
- How is the way that we are doing mission helping other people to be disciples?

Help the group understand that being a witness does not just involve telling people about Jesus, it also involves showing them how our relationships with him have changed our lives and preparing them for the same kind of discipleship.

We have chosen to use the opening of Acts to talk about the mission of the church in this study. If it helps the group, you might want to look at Matthew 28:16–20 (The Great Commission) and ask them to think about what it means to be sent to 'make disciples of all the world'.

### ***Why is it important to receive the Holy Spirit?***

The Holy Spirit enables us to have a relationship with God despite the fact that Jesus has left earth. It gives us the guidance and power we need to participate in the mission of God. Encourage the group to connect this to the times we see Jesus taking time to pray during his ministry.

### ***Look at the early chapters of Acts. What does the early church look like? What does it do?***

Ask the group to think about the nature of the church community (Acts 4:32–37) as well as the miracles the disciples carry out. Encourage them to think about what the early church has to tell people about the possibility of a relationship with God, and how it can show the world the



transformation and joy that come when we enter into this relationship and allow God to make a difference to our lives.

***What does this passage tell us about how the church should look to the outside world?***

Focus on Romans 12:2. Encourage the group to reflect on what it means to be transformed so you are not shaped simply by your own culture and society, but by God and the culture of God's kingdom. Ask them to suggest what this might look like for your church and in your society.

***How does this understanding of the church as a loving community of people with different gifts and roles inform how we think about mission?***

Get the group to think about the idea that different people having different gifts means they have different roles in the mission of the church. This will be the focus of the final study.

*If the group is ready to go deeper, here are some additional questions.*

- In your experience of church, where do you feel the body of Christ is not fulfilling the whole mission of God?
- How could you encourage your church to welcome a more holistic, integrated approach to mission?

**For further reflection:**

There is a difference between unity (which occurs when a group of people come together for a common reason) and uniformity (which occurs when everybody is expected to be the same kind of person and do the same kind of thing). Encourage the group to think about this difference and discuss where they see the church pressuring people to be uniform rather than united and what causes this. You could ask them to reflect on whether they tend to expect other people in the church to be just like them – it is easier to do this than we think.

**Study 6**

**OUR PARTS OF THE MISSION**

In the final session we will think about how we participate in the mission of God practically and how our different characters, passions and gifts can be used by God in many different ways, if we allow him to guide us. This session should help us to look at our individual participation in mission. If we are a part of a Christian organisation it will also help us to reflect on the way our organisation is a part of the mission of God.

**Read and discuss Mark 3:13–14.**

- Why do you think it is important Jesus called a group of people to be his disciples?
- What are the characteristics of a group? What does it bring to a mission that an individual on their own cannot?

**Read and discuss Galatians 2:6–10.**

*In this passage we see the church in Jerusalem sending Peter and Paul to be Jesus’ witnesses in different places.*

- Why was Peter called to preach to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles?
- What keeps them united?

**Discuss**

*In Study 4 we talked about the importance of our discipleship for learning what mission looks like from the Bible and for letting God shape us as people for his mission. In this study we are thinking about the way we express our discipleship in our lives, including the choices we make about the things we do.*

- What are you passionate about?
- What are your gifts and talents?

**How could you use these things to participate in the mission of God?**

- How is God already making use of your gifts and talents?
- How might he want to in future – what might he be encouraging you towards?

## For further reflection

- Do you think that different groups or organisations also have different parts to play in the mission of God?

## For prayer

Thank God that he has given everyone a part to play in his mission and that he has made us with the gifts, talents and passions to play our parts. Ask him to continue to reveal the plans he has for you within his mission.

## Leader's notes

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By the end of this session the group should understand everyone in the church is called to be a part of the mission of God and is given different gifts, skills and opportunities in order to fulfil their part. If you are leading this study for a group of people who work for a Christian organisation, you can use this study to think about the part your organisation has in the mission of God.

The group should also understand there is no 'one way' of following Jesus. The steps we take and the things we do are those we discern, based on where we are, what the situation is and our knowledge of who Jesus is and what he came to do. This applies to all areas of our lives.

### ***Why do you think it is important Jesus called a group of people?***

Encourage the group to think about the different people Jesus called: Simon Peter, James and John, who were all fisherman; Andrew, who was a fisherman but had spent time with John the Baptist; Simon the Zealot; Matthew (or Levi) the tax collector; and so on. Although each of the disciples had different gifts and skills – and indeed may well not have got along very well – Jesus didn't call them to use their gifts and skills in isolation, they were called to use them together, to fulfil the Great Commission.

### ***Why was Peter called to preach to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles?***

Peter, Paul and the other apostles discerned God had called Peter and Paul to follow him in different areas. Peter was a fisherman from Galilee, born and bred in Jewish communities, and he learnt from Jesus how to share the gospel in this context. Paul was much more cosmopolitan and highly educated than Peter. He was a Roman citizen from a large trading centre and a Pharisee – a man who had already travelled widely before he was called. So he was more practised and confident at dealing with people in lots of different contexts. Each man was called to the arena for which he was best suited by nature and upbringing, gifts and skills.

### ***What are your gifts and talents?***

Remember to think about the spiritual gifts listed in Romans as well as other gifts, talents and skills. Here are a couple of suggestions if the group is struggling to identify their gifts:

- Get them to think about any jobs or roles they have in the church or in their family and ask them what skills these use.

- If they have done any skills or development tests (such as StrengthsFinder or Belbin Team Roles) the results might help them reflect on their gifts.
- Write everyone's name on a piece of paper and put them in bag. Give everyone one name (not their own), ask them to write down the gifts they see in that person and then return the piece of paper to that individual.

If you are able to show a video, you could watch '[Why are we in South Africa?](#)'. It features Soul Action South Africa and is an example of people working out what God is calling them to do. It shows the way God uses skills that Phil and Rachel already have in the work he calls them to do in Durban.

Encourage the group to understand that no one person has to do everything, but that we need to be rooted in the example of Jesus and in the story of the Bible, so he can shape us to carry out our part of the mission.

**For further reflection:**

*You can either discuss this question at the end of the study or ask the group to think about it throughout the study.*

***Do different groups or organisations also have different parts to play in the mission of God?***

Christian organisations are also distinct parts of the global church and have particular roles to play in God's mission. No one organisation has to do everything the church is called to do as the body of Christ. This is one of the reasons why organisations work in partnerships and alliances and with the church. Encourage the group to discuss both the role of your organisation and their parts as employees of the organisation in the mission of God.

## Thanks...

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... for leading your group through these Bible studies. We hope they have encouraged fruitful discussion and the group's understanding of integral mission has been deepened.

### **Some additional material**

These are some additional resources you might like to use together or recommend to your group. They aim to help people who are seeking to keep God at the centre of their lives.

Keeping Christ at the centre:

- [A podcast](#) by David Westlake
- [A video](#) by David Westlake
- Three blog posts by David Westlake
  - [Part 1](#)
  - [Part 2](#)
  - [Part 3](#)

[Encourage Spiritual Passion](#), a video by IMPACT UK.

More material about integral mission including a definition, theology paper and short briefing booklet are available on [Tearfund Learn](#).

## What have we learnt?

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We recommend printing these questions and asking the group to circle the response that applies to them before Study 1. Keep hold of them and ask them to re-do their response at the end of the Study 6, to see how they have developed.

### ***Before the course***

1. How well do you understand the nature of mission?

- I have a clear understanding of what mission is and what it looks like in practice.
- I understand the concept of mission but not how it looks in practice.
- I have some understanding of mission.
- I do not understand what mission is.

2. Have you heard of the concept of 'integral' or 'holistic' mission?

- Yes
- No

*If the answer is yes, how would you define it?*

3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

*'Jesus deeply cared about justice and we are called us to do the same.'*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly

4. How would you define Christian mission?

- Preaching and persuading people to become Christians
- Meeting people's physical needs
- Meeting people's economic needs
- Meeting people's spiritual needs
- Meeting people's social needs
- All of the above

## What have we learnt?

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### *After the course*

1. At this point in time, how well do you understand mission?

- I have a clear understanding of what mission is and what it looks like in practice.
- I understand the concept of mission but not how it looks in practice.
- I have some understanding of mission.
- I do not understand what mission is.

2. Do you understand why Tearfund's understanding of mission is sometimes described as 'holistic' or 'integral' mission?

- Yes
- No

3. What did you learn and what have you been reminded of during these Bible studies?

4. Do you feel confident in explaining the nature of mission to other people?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

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