

MISSIONARY HEROES

Introduction

Jesus clearly commands us to mission (Matthew Chapter 28 v. 16-20). Go into all the world is his command and make new disciples. In Luke Chapter 24 v. 47 Jesus indicates that we start at home and move outwards, mission begins at home. We are going to study various characters from Biblical times and later, who all had a mission and what happened when they carried it out faithfully. As we shall see not all were perfect! Just like us! The point is that they answered God's call and were obedient. Don't expect everything to be perfect and go well or be easy, but do it anyway.

- Study 1 Jesus calls us to mission – out of bad comes good. The Church in crisis, persecution, Philip is guided to the Ethiopian official. Evangelism begins at home.
- Study 2 Examples of recent missionaries of different styles: Mother Teresa – The face of Jesus in all, Eric Liddle – Muscular Christianity, David Livingstone – A life dedicated.
- Study 3 John the Baptist – preparation for someone else – the pathfinder – make the way straight. You may not be a visible evangelist but your apparently small actions will pave the way for others. This too is evangelism.
- Study 4 There is room for the reluctant. Jonah – the grumpy evangelist. Feel like you're not good enough? You're right, you're not! But God will use you anyway! Don't believe for a moment that the Bible is full of perfect, shining people who lived a perfect life for God and who didn't make any mistakes. The truth is that God chose to use some of the most dodgy characters imaginable; tax collectors, prostitutes, the arrogant, the uncaring, the cruel, murderers and thieves! There is hope for us yet!
- Study 5 Long-term calling and short-term practice (daily). Are you in for the long haul? Scriptures can be Paul's conversion and the example that God uses anyone, even a one time enemy. Discouraged? Feel that your time is past? Maybe it's the beginning of a new chapter!

MISSIONARY HEROES

Study 1 - Philip



Love

Listen to or sing along to songs of worship.



Live

If you only had 40 hours to live, how would you use it?



Grow

Jesus commands us to mission. It is not a request. All Christians are expected to be involved, whether this means going abroad, somewhere in this country, our neighbourhood, on campus, or to our family, friends and work colleagues. This is probably easier than you think, even though we are not all extroverts or up front people. In fact most of us aren't. Jesus just expects us to do our bit.

Read Acts 8 v. 1-3

The Church is in trouble. Imagine the scene, the early church is new and enthusiastic, great healings are occurring and the church is growing. Then the persecution came. First Paul starts attacking the Christians, and then Stephen is stoned to death.

1. How do you think the members of the early church felt?
2. Have you ever been persecuted for your faith?
3. When do you find it most difficult to stand up for what you believe?

Read Acts 8 v. 26-40.

As he promised in Acts 1 v.8 God has plans to spread the Gospel outside of Jerusalem. In this passage he arranges for Philip to be walking in the desert.

4. Have you ever felt God ask you to do something out of the ordinary?

Historically, Ethiopia has long connections with Judaism and it is known that God was worshipped by some Ethiopians. Visits were made to religious festivals, and on this occasion it was a high ranking Ethiopian official returning from worship in Jerusalem. He has been reading the book of Isaiah and has no one to explain its meaning to him.

5. What do you think it means to be an evangelist?
6. Why was God able to use Philip?
7. Does this story of Philip encourage you or does it make you feel inadequate?

Read 2 Tim 4 v.1-4 and John 20 v.10-18

Timothy and Mary are also evangelists.

8. How do these 3 early church evangelists vary?



Build

Which one of the three do you most associate with?

Which one of the three do you feel God is calling you to be? Philip the evangelist, Timothy the evangelist, or Mary the evangelist?

(Leaders Note: None of them. God is asking you to become XXXX the evangelist. But we can learn from all three of them.)

Prayer

In 3's discuss who you are praying for to become a Christian. What things could you do to draw alongside them? Pray for them in your group.

MISSIONARY HEROES

Study 2 – Well known Christians



Love

Listen to or sing along to songs of worship.



Live

Have there been any influential people in regards to your faith – famous or not?



Build

What about these stories for some more inspiration?

David Livingstone

David Livingstone's story is incredible. He was born in a poor Scottish workhouse in 1813 with little to no prospects. His family couldn't read or write and it was expected that he would continue in this way. But David felt a strong call from God to serve him in missions abroad, which was normally a role reserved for the educated middle classes. David worked hard to learn to read and write and saved money to earn a place in college. He later went to Africa, becoming a pioneer and explorer. His life was filled with illnesses and tragedies, including the death of his wife and children, yet he remained single minded about God's service.

We learn from David's story that no matter what your current situation is, when God has a call on your life, you can achieve it! When God calls, he equips!

Eric Liddell

Eric Liddell competed in the 1924 Olympics and he famously refused to run the 100 yards race as it was on a Sunday. His "head back, face to the sky" running technique was unconventional and criticised by many. But somehow, he was fast! He was quoted as saying, "God made me fast and when I run I feel his pleasure."

Eric refused to run the 100 yards race. He realised his speed was a gift from God and was an extension of his worship – he couldn't run without God's pleasure. He was entered into the 400 yard race instead, in which he was considered to have no chance as it was 4 times longer than he was used to! But God gave him the speed for the 400 yard race too!

Eric became a superstar but he remained unassuming in his attitude and character. After competing in the Olympics he travelled to China to be a missionary in poor conditions for the rest of his life. He gave up fame and glamour for the service of God and others.

Our lesson from Eric is that we should always use the gifts that God has given us and feel his pleasure!

Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa said she saw the face of Jesus in others, and particularly the needy. Her life was totally committed. She came from a middle class background in Albania, and could have had a comfortable, trouble free life; instead she chose God's service. One day when she was walking along a street in India she found an old lady who was in a waste bin outside her house. Her family, who no longer wanted her, had put her there; she was ill and had become a burden. She was expected to die with no inconvenience to her family inside the house.

When Mother Teresa saw her her heart was filled with love and compassion and helped her. The lady died a short time later, but she did so with some dignity and knowing that someone loved and cared for her. In that old ladies face, Mother Teresa saw the face of Jesus.

Think about how you can reach others and touch their lives in a way that may bring them closer to God. What gifts can you use?



Grow

Read Matthew 25 v. 31-40.

1. How does hearing about these people and their stories make you feel? Do they inspire you or make you feel inadequate? Or maybe even both?!
2. Do you think that being involved in mission is just about preaching and teaching?
3. What other things can be offered to God?
4. What types of people does God want to serve him?
5. Does it seem too hard to dedicate your life to Christ like these people did? Do v.37-40 make you change your mind?

Prayer

Thank God for all the people that inspire us and encourage us in our faith. Ask for God to reveal to us the gifts that we have and what we can do with them.

MISSIONARY HEROES

Study 3 – John the Baptist



Love

Listen to or a sing along to songs of worship.



Live

Are you more of an introvert or an extrovert?



Grow

During the latter part of World War II, the British Bomber command ran nightly raid into Germany. What is not so commonly known is that preceding each wave was a force of bomber known as the “Pathfinders”. Their job was to drop flares to enable the main force to bomb to correct target.

This may seem like an easy task but, in fact, it was the hardest and most unsung. The importance of identifying the correct target was critical to the success of the mission, the whole force behind depended on them. Secondly, it was quite often the most dangerous as they were often the first to know the strength of the enemies guns and, being alone, they were often easy targets. For many crews, it cost them everything.

In a similar way, John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus to begin his ministry, and in the end it cost John his life too – he gave everything! Lots of things don’t just happen by themselves. For every service, mission or special event, there are many dedicated people who work hard behind the scenes. They are as much missionaries as those in the limelight.

In mission societies, there are more backroom staff than frontline workers. The same is true of every church! The church needs pathfinders and backroom staff to function!

Read Matthew 3 v. 1-12.

1. Think back to the first study we did about what a missionary is. Perhaps at the time you said that it was someone who preached or talked about Jesus in another country. Do you think that now?
2. Name some positions in the church which we may consider as “pathfinder” or “backroom”? Are they important jobs?
3. Think about some of the people who do these kinds of jobs? Do they have special talents?



Build

Think about what talents you have. Are you an up-front kind of person, a pathfinder or backroom? You may not be a visible evangelist but your apparently small actions may pave a way for others – this too is evangelism!

In Mathew 9 v. 37-38, Jesus tells us to ask God to send labourers into the harvest fields. We can all pray – we can all be part of this kind of evangelism! Do your prayers include this?

Prayer

Share with each other people that we would love to know God and pray for them together. Pray that we would be shown our talents and the ways God can best use us for His Kingdom.

MISSIONARY HEROES

Study 4 – Paul



Love

Listen to or sing along to songs of worship.



Live

Are you a stubborn person or easily persuaded? Share some stories of when this attitude has got you into a sticky situation!



Build

Were you or do you know anyone who was an unlikely convert to Christianity? Who is that person in your life that you almost don't believe could ever change their mind?

The great Christian writer C.S. Lewis describes his conversion as *the* most reluctant convert. He was dragged kicking and fighting into the Kingdom. He had battled for many years with doubts, and prided himself that he was a logical person and that there was no way there could be a God.

In the end, as his autobiography *Surprised by Joy* states, "In 1929, I gave in, and admitted that God was God...perhaps the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England!" Despite this, God used him greatly. His many Christian essays and writing still encourage many today and his children's books are still very well renowned, 40 years after his death.

Saul was the chief instigator of the persecution of the early church. In his zeal for his religion, he was convinced that he was doing God's will by stamping out this new heresy of the followers of Jesus Christ. So it must have been a bit of a shock when he was blown off his horse by a bright light on the way to more persecution in Damascus. And then to find out that the voice he heard was Jesus Christ himself! How could he refuse?! Sometimes you end up on a course because you seem to have little choice!

Saul obeyed, changed his name to Paul and became a servant of the man who he had tried to stamp out. He described himself as the least of the apostles, but 2000 years later and it is his writings that play a major part in the Church's teachings.

How are you called? Are you inspired? Guided? Or dragged kicking and unwilling?! Are you doubtful, nervous and fearful? There is a place for us all in God's Kingdom. Don't be discouraged, God can use us despite ourselves, the only thing he wants us to do is to let him use us.

With our bad attitudes, it is a miracle that God should be interested in us at all, but again, it is a miracle that God gave up his son so we could be rescued from our misery and sin. With this

great love for us in mind how can we be reluctant any longer? Our enemy wants us to feel inadequate, angry, doubtful, hesitant and not take any action. He wants us to be ineffective.

Think and pray for those people in our lives who are like Saul – the most unlikely converts.



Grow

Read Acts 9 v. 1-19.

1. What do you think that people who knew Saul thought of his conversion? Did they believe it? Would you?
2. How did Ananias react when God told him to go and see Saul (v. 13-14)
3. What would you have done if you were Ananias? Can you blame him?
4. Has something happened in your life that has changed you? For the better or for the worse?
5. Have there been any incidents in your life which should have changed you but didn't? Do you regret it? Do you still have the chance?

Prayer

Thank God that he loves us all, even when we are disobedient and ignore him. Pray for the people in our lives that need miraculous conversions like Saul and C.S. Lewis.

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Study 5 – Future Workers



Live

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?



Love

Listen to or sing along to songs of worship.



Grow

Hopefully during the last few weeks you have been considering your place in mission. Feel like you're not good enough? You're right – you're not! But God will use you anyway! Don't believe for a moment that the Bible is full of perfect shining examples of people who lived a perfect life for God and who didn't make any mistakes. The truth is that God chose to use some of the most dodgy characters imaginable – tax collectors, prostitutes, the arrogant, the uncaring, the cruel, murderers and thieves! There is hope for us yet!

Or maybe you feel your best days are over? Do you feel that God is finished with you? There was a missionary who returned home to retirement from the mission field after 40 years of faithful and difficult service in God's work abroad. His wife had died and he was returning home lonely. As he got off the boat, there was no one to welcome him and he felt even lonelier. He thought, "Well, this is how it ends. After years of trust and hard work, God is finished with me and now I'm alone." Then he felt God speak to him, as he had so often done in his life. He felt God say, "This is not the end. I have not finished with you yet – this is just the beginning of the next chapter." The man began a useful ministry at home for the rest of his life, blessing many people in the process.

Read 1 Corinthians 9 v. 24-27 and Hebrews 12 v. 1-2.

1. The scripture states that it is worth running the race to win the prize. As we've seen, Eric Liddell ran the race and felt God's pleasure. Do you think it is worth it?
2. After this study series, do you think God is just looking for successful, talented people to serve him?
3. Do you feel inadequate or unable to do anything worthwhile?
4. What are your gifts? What talents could you use in his service?
5. Can you identify a gift in each other? And how that person could use it? Share ideas.



Build

Even if you are inactive, you can pray – the Christian's greatest aid! This is the hidden power behind the church and its leaders and workers. Without prayer, nothing would happen – it is absolutely vital! If you are a prayer warrior, do not underestimate your influence.

Is mission worth it? Or is it too much hassle?

After this study series, has your view of mission and service changed? In what ways? Do you feel you can do it? Or what can you do for God?

We may feel that we are doing God a favour by being involved in mission but we are the ones that will be served, blessed and developed. God can use you better if you are humble and rely on him, instead of on your own talents and strengths.

Prayer

Pray and ask God to help us in our willingness to run the race for him. Pray that God would use us and the gifts he has given us for his service.

Let's also pray for missionaries from St James. From our church in 2016 we had

- Chris and Liz in Spain
- Jarod and Bexi in Croatia
- Cherry in China
- James teaching Church leaders in Kuala Lumpur
- The Connect team working with international students