



## **Sent by God: His People on His Mission**

### **LESSON 1: Mission and Vision**

#### **Missio Dei**

These Latin words mean “God’s mission”. Mission comes from a root which means “to send”. God’s mission is re-creation—to renew and restore all things. God sent his Son to provide salvation and reconciliation through his death and resurrection. God sent his Spirit to seal, sanctify, and empower God’s people in communities of believers. Now God sends his people forth. We are called by God, we are commissioned by God, we are sent by God into his world as ambassadors of hope. All of this is in view in the title of this series: “**Sent by God: His People on His Mission**”. This church has a big view of God and an equally big view of what God wants us to be. Our mission is summarized in the marching orders God gives his people. Our mission ultimately flows from the vision we believe God has given us.

#### **Defining Our Vision**

Over five years ago, we sought to understand God’s vision for this church. We spent time in Bible classes studying the vision God gave his church in the first century. The church leaders met over several months to evaluate current activities and dream new dreams. From that time of study and prayer came the vision statement we use today: “Seeking, Sharing, Shining the Light.” Because the original vision statement was inwardly focused, the concept has at times been adapted to reflect the heart of this church for evangelism and missions: “*Lighting the Way to Jesus*”. While these words have helped shape us as a church, we begin 2009 with an intense desire to renew our commitment to God’s mission. This suggests a need to redefine our vision so we can better articulate our mission and develop appropriate strategies and goals. These ideas obviously reflect

the culture in which we live, but they are rooted also in Scripture.

#### **The Bible and Vision**

Throughout the Bible, God provided visions—extraordinary experiences—which allowed his people to see spiritual realities beyond our normal sensory perceptions. In the Old Testament, Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, Daniel and Ezekiel are among those who God empowered as visionaries for his people. In the New Testament, Peter declared on the Day of Pentecost the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy and the pouring out of God’s Spirit. The early church accepted this mission from God and spread the gospel to the Gentiles, accompanied by visions. The Bible ends with John’s vision of heaven and the triumph of the Lamb and his saints over the forces of evil.

Throughout the Bible, when God provides visions, they serve to build up and advance his people: to warn, guide, reveal, instruct, encourage, and bless. The vision developed five years ago did not come as an ecstatic revelation, but it also serves to build up and advance God’s people as he sends us into the world as servants of *Missio Dei*.

#### **What Does God Send Us Forth to Do?**

While it may seem a bit backward, we can begin to define a new vision for this church by asking how we understand our mission. What does God send us forth to do? When you leave the building, how do you understand the task and challenges of living the Christian life? What does God expect of you as his child, involved in his mission? That is the subject of this first lesson.

### Identifying the Mission of This Church

*[Take a few moments to complete the following exercise before beginning the discussion.]*

Following are some possible answers to the question posed in the previous paragraph. You may add items you believe summarize the mission of the church. You may cross out items you believe are repetitive. When your list is complete, rate the items remaining. Prioritize these from 1 to 3 with "1" being most important, etc. You should use each number (1 to 3) approximately the same number of times.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Serve
- \_\_\_\_\_ Grow
- \_\_\_\_\_ Worship
- \_\_\_\_\_ Connect
- \_\_\_\_\_ Share
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fellowship
- \_\_\_\_\_ Proclaim
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teach
- \_\_\_\_\_ Baptize
- \_\_\_\_\_ Nurture Faith
- \_\_\_\_\_ Touch
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evangelize
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be Disciples
- \_\_\_\_\_ Imitate Jesus
- \_\_\_\_\_ Care
- \_\_\_\_\_ Love
- \_\_\_\_\_ Respond to Human Needs
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions

What items did you add to the list?

Does your final list reflect essential items, so that the absence of an item would keep the church from being the church?

As you consider the items you gave top priority, what consistent values can you identify?

Try as a class to determine the top three to five items that define the primary mission of this church.

How might these items be reflected in a vision statement?

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### For Additional Discussion and Thought

How can this church reveal God's glory to this city?

How important is the Holy Spirit in the life of this church (scale of 1-5)?

Can the church exist without the Holy Spirit?

Can you live the Christian life without the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?

How does the Holy Spirit empower this church?

How important is God in the life of this church?

How important is the will of God in this church?

How important is the mission or purpose of God in this church?

How well does this church demonstrate selfless love?

When have you experienced selfless love in this church?

When have you loved selflessly?

How have you shown people in the world the selfless love of Christ?

Why/when is it hard to love people with Jesus' love?

Where have you seen God involved in our church?

What do you believe is God's vision for this church? (when God looks into our future, what does he see, what would he like to see?)

What do you believe are our strengths as a congregation contemplating God's vision for us?

What do you believe are our weaknesses?

What unique opportunities are before us right now?

What are the greatest threats we face as a church having conversations about our future and God's mission?

### Notes

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