



*MISSIO DEI 2017*

*LIFE GROUP CURRICULUM*

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# WEEK 1: MISSIO DEI



## LIFE GROUP LEADER:

What is *Missio Dei*?

- This phrase describes the mission of God, or the sending of God.
- The Latin term has been used in the church since the fourth century.

**Definition:** God’s mission works through the people of God, by word and deed, healing individuals and communities by reconciling them to Jesus and gathering them into local churches to grow in relationship with Him and each other.

## DISCOVERING WHAT GOD IS DOING

If God is working through His people, how do we know what to do? Where do we discover the mission?

1. The Bible
2. The local church and its history around the globe
3. Our cultural context and its needs
4. Our personal experiences hearing from God

## Group Discussion Questions:

1. How do you see God at work today?
2. How do you feel about the idea that God wants to use you personally for his mission?

## READ THIS INDIVIDUALLY FOR 3-5 MINUTES

### The story of God’s mission in the Bible:

The Bible is more than a collection of sayings and stories. It is history, poetry, philosophy, allegory, letters, apocalypse, and prophecy—but all these writings have one grand overarching narrative that encompasses them all. The story that the Bible is telling is God’s mission. He has always been reaching for relationship with mankind.

Let’s take a few moments and review the key points of that story:

1. **God *creates* the world and invites mankind into his WORK.**
  - Adam and Eve are created to be in relationship with God and partner in his work.

*“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 1:15, NIV)*

**2. God's creation, mankind, rejects relationship with God and his WORK.**

- Through Eve's act of disobedience, sin entered the world and is still active today (Genesis 3)
- Mankind loses access to relationship with God and his work

**3. God WORKS to reestablish relationship with mankind through Abraham**

- God establishes a relationship agreement with Abraham and his descendants (a covenant)
- God begins to reveal his plan to reconcile with the world
- God tells Abraham, "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3, NIV)

**4. God miraculously WORKS to establish Israel, a nation designed to reveal God's divinity to the rest of the world.**

- God supernaturally frees Abraham's descendants from Egyptian slavery
- God explains his purpose in freeing Israel:

*Has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him. (Numbers 14:13-20)*

- The nation of Israel is put in ALIGNMENT with God and then receives an ASSIGNMENT to his work.

**5. Israel dishonors their alignment and blows their assignment to WORK with God.**

- Israel begins with God as their head of state and appoint judges to mediate issues
- Israel sets up a monarchy and grows in power and influence
- Kings lead Israel away from God to false gods and evil deeds

> *Mankind frequently works against God, but God continually works to partner with us.*

**God's purposes for the nation Israel revealed in Isaiah's prophecies:**

*"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:  
to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?  
Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-  
When you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?" (Isaiah 58:6-7, NIV)*

*“I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness;  
I will take you by the hand and keep you;  
I will give you as a covenant for the people,  
a light for the nations,  
to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness” (Isaiah 42:6-7).*

- Israel fails to attract other nations to God, instead becoming increasingly evil
- God removes his protection; Israel is conquered and its people sent into exile

**6. God gives mankind a new relationship with him through Jesus.**

We get the benefits of this new relationship agreement (covenant) with God through faith in Jesus as the Son of God and a relationship where we make him the leader of our lives:

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:16-18).*

**7. God reaches toward all people groups, not just Israel, and activates the brand new church into his mission of reconciling all people to himself.**

- God made the gospel available to Gentiles through Peter’s revelation:

*“So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34, ASV).*

**8. God continues to call mankind to himself until the end of time.**

- God is still reaching out with us and through us to all of mankind:

*“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”  
And let the one who hears say, “Come!”  
Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes  
to take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17, NIV).*

- The church collectively and individually has the responsibility to call the thirsty to come to Jesus.
- Jesus gives us a new nature—so that sinners can join in God’s mission.
- Time runs out, but not God’s grace.

We are *aligned* with God, then *assigned* to his work

## **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What do you think about this story of the relationship between God and man? What stands out to you?
2. How would you describe God's mission on earth in our generation?

## **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

### **GOD'S MISSION IN THE GLOBAL CHURCH**

After the Holy Spirit established the church in Acts chapter two, the church endured significant persecution in the early years. Many early church leaders became martyrs, executed for their faith in Jesus. In spite of this, if not because of this potency and conviction in the early church, Christianity spread rapidly for several hundred years, becoming the official religion of the Roman empire in the 4th century AD. Over the next two thousand years the church continued to grow, and that growth has accelerated even more-so over the last hundred years.

God's mission has been advancing and growing across the planet for two thousand years. 2.2 billion people in nations all over the globe today are Christians.

### **GOD'S MISSION HERE AT CITY CHURCH CHICAGO:**

We are part of something much larger than just what we do here at City Church Chicago. The church global is made up of many local churches that serve their communities.

The good news of the gospel is two sided: one side is the gift of relationship with Jesus Christ, and the other side is his healing touch. As Christ's body, we are his representatives on earth, the extension of himself into humanity, to carry his healing into broken communities, broken families, broken bodies, and broken hearts.

We carry a piece of God's mission, and at City Church Chicago, our biggest responsibility is to the city of Chicago.

Some of the ways City Church has worked on God's mission in Chicago:

- Thousands have made decisions to follow Jesus in our church services.
- We have developed communities of Life Groups at City Church where hundreds of people connect with others in the body of Christ and learn together how to follow Jesus.
- We have adopted local high schools
- We have given away thousands of backpacks to school children in need.
- Internationals, refugees, immigrants, and transplanted people have found family here at City Church Chicago.
- We have secured a permanent home for our church.

*What's next? On Sunday we heard about the vision of City Church in this next season.*

## Group Discussion Questions:

1. What do you see the global church doing to advance God's mission in the world?
2. What are you most excited about that City Church is planning to do in this next season?

## READ THIS INDIVIDUALLY FOR 3-5 MINUTES

### OUR CULTURAL CONTEXT

#### Western Philosophy vs. *Missio Dei*

The ideas, attitudes, worldviews, rules, and traditions that make up American culture today emerged from concepts that came to prominence in eighteenth century Europe. The philosophies that captivated and shaped the Western world as we know it became known as the Enlightenment.

During that era, popular philosophers like Voltaire began to have so much influence that they tipped the culture in a new direction, toward an idea called "Deism." Deism acknowledges the existence of a divine Creator, who wound up the earth like a clock and set the world into motion, then sat back to watch. Deists believe that God no longer has any interaction with mankind, that he is totally uninvolved and uninvested.

Because the foundations of our culture are rooted in this philosophy, this thinking still influences us today—even as Christians. This worldview, however, is contrary to a Biblical worldview. Even though we were created to partner with God in his work, our cultural conditioning can blind us to God's work in our world.

We are trained from an early age to depend only on ourselves. In fact, we value independence to the point that we often look down on adults who are not fully independent. That same valuing of independence influences the way we view God, and thus, learning to trust him fully and depend on him is a significant part of our journey.

As we grow closer to Jesus, however, our worldview changes to reflect what God says.

*"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you"*

*Romans 12:1-2, MSG).*

As we develop relationship with Christ, we discover something remarkable. God isn't a distant cosmic being, or even exclusively available for the righteous. God has been at work and intimately involved with all of mankind since the beginning of creation. He is still at work today in a plan that has been unfolding for thousands of years, and we call this work *Missio Dei*.

## **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

### **HOW DO I JOIN IN GOD'S MISSION?**

God's mission is not just for missionaries, pastors, or people who work for nonprofits. The mission of God is for everyone.

God reached out to us in his mercy and saved us, not based on anything we had done, and He saved us for a purpose (Ephesians 2:1-9). He has a specific work in mind for each of us to do. God works through us, the church, and His call to us individually is always first to participate in what he is doing through the church.

*“Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence” (Ephesians 1:23, MSG).*

*“For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10, NIV).*

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV).*

God's mission is activated four ways:

- |           |                            |           |                            |
|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b><i>How we think</i></b> | <b>3.</b> | <b><i>How we serve</i></b> |
| <b>2.</b> | <b><i>How we pray</i></b>  | <b>4.</b> | <b><i>How we give</i></b>  |

We will dive into each of these four aspects of God's mission in the coming weeks of this series.

### **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What do you think about the idea that your calling is first to God's mission through the church?
2. How do you see yourself supporting and participating in the vision of City Church?

### **Prayer:**

Each Life Group Member take a turn to pray together. Prayer points:

- Pray that Jesus would reveal himself to people in Chicago, in our nation, and in our world, and that He would bring supernatural change and healing.
- Pray that City Church Chicago would be right in the center of what God is doing, and that the Holy Spirit would connect every heart with the specific assignments that He has for us.
- Pray that each member of this Life Group would find his/her purpose inside God's mission.

### **Resources for further study:**

*Called: The Crisis and Promise of Following Jesus Today* by Mark Labberton

*Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible* by Arthur Glasser

# WEEK 2: THINK HIGHER



## LIFE GROUP LEADER:

### Thinking Differently

Two weeks ago, we talked about *Missio Dei*, and how God has been at work on the earth since the beginning of creation. He is working to reconcile every person to himself and bring healing to our world. Not only that, but he is calling us to join him in that work.

How do we get involved in God's mission here on the earth? It starts by thinking higher.

What God has done and is intending to do is huge, and the scope of that plan can seem impossible. This can feel overwhelming as we juggle busy careers, families, and the demands of living. The thing is, God wants us to live much bigger lives than this little bubble, and for us to join that big mission, we are going to have to start thinking differently.

If my prayer is that God would just meet my family's needs, then my prayers are too small.

According to 2 Peter 1:3, when God calls us to do something, he gives us exactly what we need to get it accomplished. Finding handles to grab onto this work starts with thinking differently—learning to think how God thinks.

This week we are going to hear about the stories of people who joined in God's mission throughout history and saw God do amazing things through their lives. Learning how these people thought about God's work can help shape our own thinking about *Missio Dei*.

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2, NIV)*

## THINK HIGHER...

### In Our Doing:

*"Let God have your life; He can do more with it than you can." - D.L. Moody*

## READ INDEPENDENTLY

D.L. Moody lost his father at the age of four. He dropped out of school before fifth grade. His life did not look like it would amount to much. At seventeen, through a conversation with his Sunday School teacher, D.L. gave his life to Jesus. From that moment forward, nothing was the same. When Moody gave his life to Jesus, God took it and shaped it into something remarkable.

In addition to establishing churches, ministries, and a Bible college in Chicago, D.L. Moody followed God across the globe, preaching the gospel. He saw over one million people respond to the message of Jesus.

Lives were changed and transformed because one man was willing to let God use him to do more with his life than he could do on his own.

We can't be or do all that God intends until we give him all of our lives—completely, every part. We need him, and He needs us to let go of control before he can lead us. He takes our weaknesses and the things that we feel like disqualify us, and transforms them into strengths and badges of honor.

## **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

> *God is so much bigger than me, and his plans are so much bigger than my plans.*

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Corinthians 12:9)*

## **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean to give your life to God?
2. In what ways have you found yourself doing life on your own and not trusting God with your future?
3. What are some ways that we can actively give God our lives to see Him do more?

## **In Our Serving:**

*"Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words." - Francis of Assisi*

## **READ INDEPENDENTLY**

Francis of Assisi was born into a wealthy and noble family in the twelfth century, A.D. He was loved and spoiled by his family, popular, and had an easy life. As a young man, he joined the military, seeking glory, but instead found himself a prisoner of war. During his year in prison, he became quite ill. At this low point in his life, he reached out to Jesus and something inside him began to change. After his release, he didn't have the heart to jump back into his old life of privilege and comfort. He found that he was no longer able to ignore the impoverished and hurting people around him. As Francis learned more about Jesus, he felt compelled to follow Christ's example of caring for the poor and sick. He gave away his wealth and lived the rest of his life sharing Christ's love with the world through serving the poor. Francis' influence continues today; he inspires many to care for the poor, including Pope Francis, who is named after him.

God is calling us to live bigger, broader lives. To the average observer, it would probably have seemed like Francis was living a smaller, harder life, but Francis had found a place of joy and purpose. Francis' transformation made an impact far beyond his lifetime.

When we give our lives to Christ, he slowly but surely transforms our thinking until we begin to understand the depth of God's love for others. We don't have to preach at people to share Jesus; we just need to show them his love by serving them.

## **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

> *Don't just reach up when God is asking you to reach out.*

*Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as one who serves. - Jesus (Luke 22:24, ESV)*

### **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. How can you follow Christ's example in serving?
2. What opportunities do you see to serve at City Church and in Chicago?

### **In Our Loving:**

*"May God break my heart so completely that the whole world falls in." - Mother Teresa*

## **READ INDEPENDENTLY**

Mother Teresa is widely regarded as one of the most selfless, loving, people this world has ever seen. Her tireless effort to love the most impoverished of India has served as a timeless beacon of light pointing to Jesus. She challenges us to think higher about how we love this world. It's easy to ignore the invisible people and be drawn to the names up in lights, but God sees and loves everyone.

The greatest commandment in Scripture is to love God and to love people. We cannot do one without the other. In the same way, we cannot pick and choose which of our "neighbors" we will love. Let's pray with Mother Teresa that God would break our hearts with the things that break His.

## **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

> *God loves everyone. Do I?*

*"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:36-40)*

### **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. How does your relationship with God impact the way you love people?
2. When you read Matthew 22:36-40, who comes to mind when you think of your "neighbor"?

### **In Our Praying:**

*"Pray as though everything depended on God; work as though everything depended on you." - Augustine*

## READ INDEPENDENTLY

Augustine was born in 354 AD in the Roman Province of Numidia in North Africa to ordinary African parents with a troubled marriage. He committed himself to his education and searched for truth in many different religions and philosophies. At age 31, he had a powerful conversion experience where he encountered Jesus, and that moment changed his life forever. Augustine pastored the church in Hippo and wrote early Christian books that are still influential in the church and in the world today. This ordinary man learned that depending on Jesus produces extraordinary results.

Augustine understood the divine/human partnership. We do everything that we can do, and God does what only He can do; that union is *Missio Dei*. If we try to alleviate human suffering through human efforts and intelligence, the results are limited at best. When we recognize our dependence and ask Jesus to get involved, He does unusual miracles. Suddenly five thousand people get fed out of five loaves and two fish. He is just waiting for us to ask for his help and intervention.

### LIFE GROUP LEADER:

- > *I refuse to be an unbelieving believer.*

*And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith. - Jesus  
(Matthew 21:22, ESV)*

### Group Discussion Question:

1. What big prayers are you praying that only God can answer?

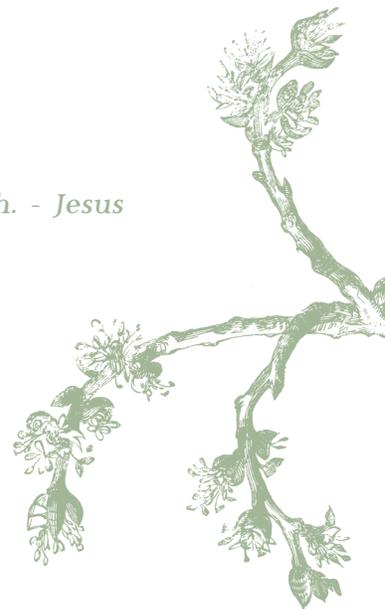
### In Our Giving:

*"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." - Jim Elliot*

## READ INDEPENDENTLY

Jim and Elisabeth Elliot were an American couple that graduated from Wheaton College. In the early 1950s, they felt called to be missionaries and moved to Ecuador to work with an indigenous people group, the Huaorani, a violent and dangerous tribe. Shortly after beginning their evangelistic work, Jim was killed by a group of Huaorani warriors. Elisabeth and her young daughter went back to the tribe that had killed her husband and continued the work of sharing Jesus. Many of the tribe developed relationships with Jesus as a result of the Elliots' work in *Missio Dei*.

Jim Elliot's quote articulates a similar idea to what Jesus says in Matthew chapter sixteen. Sometimes God calls us to give up things that provide temporary comfort in order to gain eternal rewards. We are not all called to give our lives as martyrs, but we are called to give beyond what is comfortable or convenient. What does sacrifice look like for you?



## LIFE GROUP LEADER:

> *God so loved the world that he gave his life. What am I doing to follow that example?*

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. (Matthew 16:24-27, NIV)*

### Group Discussion Question:

1. What do you sense God asking you to give to advance his mission?

### In Our Following:

***"We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God." -Dietrich Bonhoeffer***

## READ INDEPENDENTLY

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor and theologian who opposed the rise of Hitler and his influence in the church in 1940s Germany. He led an underground seminary, teaching the truth of God, hoping to persuade Germans to resist Hitler's moral deception. Bonhoeffer later signed up for the German secret service and used the position to help free Jews from Nazi oppression. His plan was discovered, and he was imprisoned for two years and eventually killed.

Following God's call can be difficult. Most of us don't have to make the kind of life and death decisions Bonhoeffer had to about following Jesus on a daily basis, but making space for obedience in our lives can certainly be challenging and inconvenient. Our selfish desires are continually in conflict with his Spirit, and we feel that tension when we walk in God's will. The apostle Paul wrote about this in Galatians 5.

*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

When the Holy Spirit prompts you, it can seem disruptive to your plans, ideas, and motives. It may require you to stop what you are doing or change direction. The Bible shows us that God blesses us when we listen to the Holy Spirit and allow him to interrupt us.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5)*

## **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

### **Group Discussion Question:**

1. What would it look like to create margins in your day to allow God to interrupt your plans?

## **In Our Mission:**

*"If a man hasn't discovered something he will die for, he isn't fit to live." - Martin Luther King Jr.*

## **READ INDEPENDENTLY**

Martin Luther King Jr. was voice of love, peace and reconciliation in an era of painful racism and segregation in the United States. The clash of ideas was volatile and violent, but he peacefully led protesters in civil disobedience against the systemic hatred endured by black Americans. Dr. King not only believed in his message, but he died for the truth that he was called to bring to America. This kind of passion changed the world on a wide and immediately visible scale.

God has called us all to live out his mission. We can know with utmost certainty that what we are living for is worth the cost. We need a revelation of the love of Jesus that's so big it reorients our lives around eternal things. As Martin Luther King Jr. challenged us, we need to find a purpose in God's mission that is so significant to us that we would die for it. This kind of purpose and calling will direct our lives.

## **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

- > *It's not about you; it's about a cause.*

*Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13-14)*

### **Group Discussion Question:**

1. How does Martin Luther King, Jr.'s challenge cause you to think differently about *Missio Dei*?

### **Prayer Points:**

- Pray for God's passion to fill your heart about things that are important to Him
- Pray for God's thoughts.
- Pray that God gives you clarity about your specific Kingdom assignment.



## WEEK 3: PRAY BIGGER

### READ THIS INDIVIDUALLY FOR 3-5 MINUTES

***Bold prayers honor God, and God honors bold prayers. -Mark Batterson, Circle Maker***

People prayed big, audacious prayers throughout the Bible. Those prayers were recorded for a reason; they revealed how great, how big, and how awesome and powerful God is to answer them! Joshua asked God to make the sun stand still; Moses asked for the sea to part, and the early church prayed for Paul to be freed from prison. There are countless bold prayers in the Bible that God answered with miracles. These big prayers were vital to seeing the mission of God fulfilled in their time. Today, big prayers are still the doorway to seeing Missio Dei unfold.

Big prayers come from a place of revelation about who God is. Can you imagine Joshua pleading with God to make the sun stand still so he could defeat the enemy (Joshua 10)? Joshua's revelation of God allowed him to pray big. Joshua believed that the One who spoke the blazing sun into existence would also have the power to suspend it in the sky. Making the sun stand still was only impossible for Joshua. However, for God, Creator of Earth and Sun, it was easy.

Big prayers are answered when we walk with God. Joshua was walking in obedience to God's will. Before Joshua asked the sun to stand still, God had already spoken to Joshua, "Do not be afraid... I have given them into your hand." Joshua was with God and in agreement with His plan.

Big prayers start with discerning what God wants. God is not your genie in a bottle, waiting to answer your wish. Getting what we want is not the goal. Our prayers should glorify God by asking with expectancy for what He has promised, for miracles, and the purpose He has for us. Those who seek God and His will are rewarded and will see that nothing is impossible with God.

### LIFE GROUP LEADER:

***Praying bigger means praying in alignment with God's assignment.***

*Missio Dei* is about praying bigger.

But to do this, we first need our prayers to align with God's assignment for us.

*And how bold and free we then become in his presence, freely asking according to his will, sure that he's listening. And if we're confident that he's listening, we know that what we've asked for is as good as ours. (1 John 5:14-15, MSG)*

### Called to Pray Big

As we play a part in Missio Dei, we discover we are included in something much greater than ourselves. As we partner with Him in His plan, we will find ourselves in situations that are impossible for us. When we face the impossible, we have the opportunity to ask God to do the impossible. Our thoughts and prayers need to shift from what we can accomplish to what God can accomplish.

- Luke 1:37 “For with God nothing will be impossible.”
- Hebrew 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

There are things God will only do in response to your prayer. He reserves expressions of His power for answers to bold prayers in alignment with his will. If we do not pray, we will not see those expressions of His power revealed.

- James 4:2 “You do not have because you do not ask God.”

### **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. How do you feel in situations where you must rely completely on God to meet your needs?
2. Does anyone have a story of an “only God” situation--when you needed a miracle, and He was faithful?

## **READ INDIVIDUALLY FOR 2 MINUTES**

### **Pray for the Lost**

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people... This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (Romans 2:1,3-4)*

God gave his only son for us—we know that he is passionate about saving people. His desire is to see all people come to the knowledge of the truth. Praying for those who do not yet know God is a way to come into agreement with Him.

The Great Commission is found in Matthew 28:19-20.

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

God’s mission includes all nations. It includes your country, your city, your workplace and your industry. We are called to pray for the people we encounter in our everyday lives. God has placed you in their path on purpose. You may be the only Christian given the opportunity to pray for them. Align your prayers with God by praying for the lost.

### **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. How do you think praying for the lost will affect the way you go about your day?
2. Have you ever thought about who prayed for you and your salvation? Please share if so.

### **Group Activity:**

- Individually take 5 minutes and pray for those who are lost in your family, workplace, school, etc. As you pray, write down the names of the people God puts on your heart.
- As a group, pray over the names written down
- Ask God to open their eyes to see the truth.
- Ask God that each person receives the gift of salvation.

### **READ INDIVIDUALLY 1-2 MINUTES**

#### **Pray the Word of God.**

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God, but we activate our faith by speaking the Word of God.

When you hear God's Word, the potential of faith is born. It is your responsibility, however, to activate that faith. When you speak God's Word, you are activating the power to apply God's Word to your life. This is why it is so important to speak God's truth and promises over our lives. If life and death are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21), we want to speak life-giving truth from God's Word into all circumstances.

As Christ followers, we are all called to do good works as part of God's mission. Much of what we are asked to do will require us to have faith--faith to believe for the impossible, faith to be generous when we barely have enough to get by, faith to move forward when our feelings tell us to quit, faith to believe God is working all things for our good. Prayer will help you activate your faith so that you can take hold of what you cannot see. It will help you rise above your circumstance, failures, and lies from the enemy.

### **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

The Bible is full of God's promises for us. It is up to us to declare, take hold of, and eventually walk in those promises

#### **Group Resource:**

Let's speak these faith declarations over ourselves and our group. I encourage you to post these faith declarations around your home and speak them over your life daily. Let's not forget the amazing promises God has for us!

#### **Twelve Audacious Faith Confessions - Steven Furtick, *Sun Stand Still***

1. I am fully forgiven and free from all shame and condemnation.  
*Romans 8:1-2; Ephesians 1:7-8; 1 John 1:9*
2. I act in audacious faith to change the world in my generation.  
*Joshua 10:12-14; John 14:12*
3. I have no fear or anxiety; I trust in the Lord with all my heart.  
*Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7*
4. I am able to fulfill the calling God has placed on my life.  
*Exodus 3:9-12; Psalm 57:2; Colossians 1:24-29*

5. I am fully resourced to do everything God has called me to do.  
*Deuteronomy 8:18; Luke 6:38; Philippians 4:13*
6. I have no insecurity because I see myself the way God sees me.  
*Genesis 1:26–27; Psalm 139:13–16; Ephesians 5:25–27*
7. I am a faithful spouse/future-spouse and a godly parent/future-parent. Our family is blessed.  
*Deuteronomy 6:6–9; Ephesians 5:22–25; Colossians 3:18–19; 1 Peter 3:1–7*
8. I am restored and made whole in Christ—physically, mentally, and emotionally.  
*Psalm 103:1–5; Matthew 8:16–17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:24*
9. I am increasing in influence and favor for the Kingdom of God.  
*Genesis 45:4–8; 1 Samuel 2:26; Acts 2:37–47*
10. I am enabled to walk in the sacrificial love of Christ.  
*2 Thessalonians 2:16–17; 1 John 3:16; 4:9–12*
11. I have access to the wisdom of God in every decision I make.  
*2 Chronicles 1:7–12; Proverbs 2:6; Ecclesiastes 2:26; James 1:5*
12. I am protected from all harm and evil in Jesus' name.  
*Genesis 50:20; Psalm 3:1–3; 2 Thessalonians 3:2–3*

## **Five Strategic Prayers**

### **Prayer for Faith**

Lord, please help us with our unbelief. As we step into this Missio Dei season, give us faith to believe for things that only you can do. We pray that your Word would be activated in us, and that we would be doers of your Word, not hearers only.

### **Prayer for the Lost**

Lord, we ask that you would touch the hearts of the lost. Give them eyes to see and ears to hear the truth. Help them to receive your good news of salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness of sins as we share the Word with them.

### **Prayer for Boldness in Sharing Christ**

Lord, give us a heart for those who don't know you. Help us to step out in boldness to share the Gospel with the people you've placed in our lives. Help us to include them on our faith journey. Remove our fears and doubts and help us to show humility and vulnerability so that others may see you.

### **Prayer to do God's Will**

Lord, we ask for more of you and less of us. Please bring clarity to the purpose you have for each one of us everyday and specifically in this Missio Dei season. Help us to be steadfast no matter what life brings and to recognize that you are constantly speaking to us.

### **Prayer for Resources**

Lord, your Word declares that you are a provider. Shape our hearts and attitudes so we are ready to receive the resources you have prepared for us. We believe that you will not only meet our needs but exceed them in this season so we can participate in the mission you have set before us.

### **Additional Resources:**

*The Circle Maker: Praying Circles Around Your Biggest Dreams and Greatest Fears* by Mark Batterson  
*Sun Stand Still: What Happens When You Dare to Ask God for the Impossible* by Steven Furtick

# WEEK 4: GIVE GREATER



## READ THIS INDIVIDUALLY FOR 3-5 MIN

### The Mission of Giving

People give for many reasons. We give for personal fulfillment, because we believe in something, or because someone is in need. In 2015, Americans gave over 358 Billion dollars to charities.

One-time gifts are easier than consistent giving. If we don't have a strong reason for giving that is deeply rooted in our hearts, we rally around a cause in the moment, but may struggle to make giving a lifestyle. As Christians, we have three reasons to make giving a part of our lifestyle:

1. To Honor God
2. To readjust our mindsets about money
3. To step into the mission of God

### GIVING TO HONOR GOD

We give because God first gave to us. We give because we want to honor Jesus for all that He has done in our lives. Giving our finances is itself an act of worship. Since we earn money in exchange for our time and work, our finances become a representation of our lives' work. When we give what we've earned to God, we actually give him the time and effort that it took to earn that wage or salary—a portion of our lives. Giving is an expression of our love and respect.

*Give to the LORD the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his presence. Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor. (1 Chronicles 16:29, NLT)*

### GIVING TO READJUST OUR MINDSET ABOUT MONEY

*"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matthew 6:24)*

When we don't trust God with our finances, we are choosing to place our faith in money and not in God. When we rely on money, we can start to believe we don't need God.

*"Mammon (money) promises us those things that only God can give—security, significance, identity, independence, power, and freedom. Mammon tells us it can insulate us from life's problems and that money is the answer to every situation." - Pastor Jimmy Evans.*

Our security, hope, and peace can either come from God or from our finances.

## GIVING TO STEP INTO GOD'S MISSION

When we give, it places us within the mission of God. What we give helps to build His house. Our financial support creates opportunities for church services, outreaches, resources and ministry. When we give we align ourselves with God's mission to build his Church. When we build His house, He promises to build our house and release blessing into our lives. We see it all through scriptures:

*The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller. The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped. (Proverbs 11)*

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (Luke 6)*

*“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. “Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the LORD of hosts. “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 3:10-12)*

God doesn't bless us so that we can live luxurious and comfortable consumer lives. He blesses us so that we can continue to bless others. That blessing enables us to do what God is calling us to do.

### LIFE GROUP LEADER:

Placing God first in our lives: Faith-filled giving

- Giving is more than just money; it is about putting God first in our lives.
- This act is more than just giving; it is a faith statement that declares, “I will give God my first and trust his promises.”

*The world of the generous gets larger and larger;  
the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller.  
The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed;  
those who help others are helped. (Proverbs 11:24-25)*

Do we want to have a larger world or a smaller one? If our mission is to see people come to know Jesus, how does greater giving impact that mission?

According to Malachi 3:10-12, what does the act of giving release in our lives?

- Blessing: “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows”
- Protection: “Then I will rebuke the devourer for you”
- Favor: “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land”

## Group Discussion Questions:

1. How do you see giving as a part of God's overall mission?
2. How do we keep our motives right when it comes to giving?

## READ THIS INDIVIDUALLY FOR 3-5 MIN

### GIVING IN GRACE

*A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. (Leviticus 27:30 (NIV))*

Tithing, which means a tenth or ten percent, was part of the Old Testament law. Prior to that Law, both Abraham (Gen 14:19-20) and Jacob (Gen 28:20-22) spoke of giving a tenth of their blessings. The Old Testament says that the act of giving is a spiritual law.

Because tithing was part of Old Testament law, we can observe the tithe in obedience to the Law. However, both Romans 6:14, and Galatians 5:18 state that we are not under the law. Christ defeated sin, death and the grave. His sacrifice covers us, so our relationship with God is no longer dependent on our obedience to the law, but rather through our acceptance of God's grace. So does the old law of tithing still apply?

Jesus said He came "not to destroy the law but to fulfill the law...unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17,20). The Law didn't go away; it just lost its power to give us access to God. We are already in and already forgiven. The Law is like training wheels for righteousness—a starting point.

Under the Law, an acceptable gift was ten percent. Giving under grace is so much more than that. We give out of the life and freedom we have found in Christ. Grace doesn't remove the Law; it just changes the reasons why.

Sin and the Law work the same way. Paul gives us clarity:

Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living. (Romans 6:15-18)

Because of grace we strive to not only live a holy life by the law, but to live in freedom beyond the law under the blessings of grace. Grace-filled giving goes beyond simply obeying a law and embraces the joyous life of giving back to the one who gave so much to us.

## LIFE GROUP LEADER:

Giving based on Law or Life:

- Tithe means a tenth or ten percent, this was an Old Testament Law.
- Tithing is more than just a "law."
- Law: the system of rules that a particular country or community recognizes as regulating the actions of its members and may enforce by the imposition of penalties.
- Grace: the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessing

As we look at these definitions we can see that giving based on law would likely be to avoid the ramifications of not giving. Giving under grace, on the other hand, is an act of worship to the One who blessed us first.

More differences between law-based and grace-based giving:

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."  
(Matthew 23:23)*

- Jesus is not saying to stop tithing. He is saying that if we treat tithing as a religious duty while neglecting other aspects of His mission, we have missed the big picture of what God asks from our lives. It is both/and.
- The religious leaders felt like giving was a holy act in and of itself, a way to earn righteousness before God.
- Giving under grace is giving out of the abundance and freedom we find in Jesus. Because of His grace, we no longer live in condemnation under the law, but instead give freely as an act of worship.

### Group Discussion Questions:

1. How does giving feel when it's a requirement? Have you ever felt like giving is a Christian law?
2. How does the concept of grace-filled giving change your perception and feelings about tithing?

## READ THIS INDIVIDUALLY FOR 3-5 MIN

### GIVING IN FAITH

*The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God. (Exodus 23:19)*

Deciding to step into a lifestyle of grace-filled giving can be difficult. For the first few times we give consistently, it will probably be hard to part with the ten percent or whichever amount the Lord has placed

on our hearts. We may desire to give, but let the month pass by, and now the amount we wanted to give isn't available. The money was needed for bills, unexpected expenses, outings, groceries, etc. Even with our best intentions, we end up giving what is left of our finances after all our needs have been met.

What if instead of giving what is left, we make a decision to give to God first, before life happens and our money is needed in other areas? Setting our giving before other financial obligations is a step of faith. We thank God for his provision and trust that Jesus will provide as we give in faith.

Exodus 23:19 is about giving the first fruits. That means God was asking Israel to give him the first part of the harvest that they reaped. In Exodus 13, God required firstborn humans and animals to be set apart for the Lord.

We see this pattern throughout Scripture. Abraham offered his firstborn son, Isaac, on the altar to the Lord. The Israelites were called to give all of the possessions they took from Jericho to the Lord, because this was the first city they conquered. In the greatest sacrifice ever made, God sacrificed his firstborn and only Son Jesus. This sacrifice was, in essence, God's tithe.

Giving first requires us to place our trust in Jesus to sustain all of our needs, instead of placing our trust in a full paycheck. Romans 11:16 it explains what happens when we give to God first. *"For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches"*. By giving first, we are redeeming the rest. Instead of trusting in an unredeemed one hundred percent to meet our needs, we are trusting in a redeemed ninety percent to do the same.

## **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

We talk about living in faith, but do we give in Faith?

- What does it mean to give in faith?
- What does it look like to place our confidence in Him, even when we do not understand it all?
- Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1

Are we giving our best or just giving out of our "rest"?

- Is it Faith when we wait till we know we have enough before we give?
- If we did the same with the time we give to our loved ones, how would that affect our relationships?
- When we set aside our giving first, the rest is blessed.

## **Group Discussion Question:**

1. How does exercising your faith in your finances feel differently than faith in other areas of life?

## **Additional Resources:**

*The Blessed Life* by Robert Morris, and *The Blessed Life* online devotions <http://blessedlife.gatewaydevotions.com/>  
*How to Be Rich: It's Not What You Have. It's What You Do With What You Have* by Andy Stanley

# WEEK 5: SERVE STRONGER



## READ INDIVIDUALLY 3-5 MINUTES

**We are called to do good works.**

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10)*

This verse shows us that not only did God give us the gift of salvation through faith, but he has also prepared, in advance, good works for us to do. He has ordained these good works so that we might walk in them. Just as we cannot boast in the gift of salvation, we also cannot boast in good works. These works are not by our own power, but by God’s power working through us. God has prepared these works for those walking in Christ. Walking in His grace, love, joy, peace, mercy, forgiveness, and obedience to His Word extends the blessing that comes with these specially assigned works.

These works go beyond attending church on Sundays. God has prepared works for us at our jobs, on the streets, in the markets, at home with our family, at school, at the park, in recreational activities, and just about anywhere there are people. This is because God has a heart for people, especially the lost (Luke 19:10). Does it ever seem like you are the only Christian at your job? God may orchestrate an opportunity for you to share the Gospel with a co-worker. However, before He does that, He may give you the opportunity to serve that same person. For some, a ride home, or a few extra dollars in your pocket to buy them a coffee; for others, the Holy Spirit may prompt you to simply pray for that person.

Consider what Francis of Assisi said: “At all times preach the Gospel and if necessary use words.” The good works God has prepared for you have an eternal impact. God is placing people in your life who do not know him. Serving the people in our world opens doors of opportunity to share the eternal, life-giving message of Jesus Christ. Even if you are not the one to lead someone in the prayer of salvation, you can be assured that God is using your service to have an eternal impact on that person. In fact, there is no particular work or service, that one does that is greater than any other. Each of us is given a unique role in the body of Christ, as we all share in God’s service.

*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building. (1 Corinthians 3:6-9)*

No one can boast of their work or think of their work as more important because God is the only one who makes things grow. In church service, one will teach while another sets up chairs. One leads worship while another prays. One serves coffee while another helps people find seats. When one person attending church service experiences salvation, each role has contributed to that person’s salvation. However, only God can receive the Glory for the transformation that has taken place in that person’s life. It is His spirit that draws them and His love that changes them.

## A HEART TO SERVE

*Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred.  
(Proverbs 15:16)*

*If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.  
(1 Corinthians 13:3-7)*

God is pouring His love over all people. We are called to take hold of this love and walk in it. God enables each of us to love in different measures. Whatever God asks you to do, he asks that you do it in love. It is so important to remember love when serving the mission of God. God so loved the world that He gave his only son (John 3:16). When we see God's love in what He did for us, we experience an overflow of love and a heart to serve others. God's Word says we are, "more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Giving our lives to God's calling will surely bring blessing to us and to others.

### **Group Discussion Questions:**

***"Simple acts of kindness towards others will bring change to a person's life, and bring glory to God."***  
**- Dino Rizzo, Associate Pastor at Church of the Highlands**

1. What has God put on your heart to do?
2. Where has He placed in front of you in this season?
3. How would you describe your attitude toward serving?
4. What are some steps you can take to identify the needs in your community?

### **Prayer Points:**

- Ask God to open our eyes to the needs around us and give us hearts to serve.
- Ask that He would help us to see people the way He sees them.

Lord, your Word says you have prepared good works for us to do. Please help us to see the works you have assigned to us, and to see you and your Son glorified.

*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. (1 Thessalonians 3:12)*

## **LIFE GROUP LEADER:**

We are called to serve in our local church. Serving in our local church is the starting point to serving the mission of God. We learn how to serve our world by first learning to serve in the church. Church is the training ground for serving. We learn the right spirit and attitude, and then apply what we learned about serving in our world. Church is where we find the relationships God has strategically planned for us. God draws the lost and hurting of this world to himself through the Church. It is a place where people accept the gift of salvation. It is where God casts his specific vision for the people of our community.

### **At City Church Chicago our vision is to:**

- **Love** people to new life in Christ
- **Live** planted in God's house
- **Lead** Change in our World

Serving on one of our GO-TEAMS is one way to begin serving the mission of God. City Church Go-Teams help create atmospheres where Jesus is presenced and lives are changed and transformed. We believe that serving opens doors that no man can shut--in your life and in the lives of those we are serving.

As a Life Group, we want to pick up God's mission to serve our city. City Church has chosen several serving projects to adopt for the summer. As a Life Group, let's choose one of these projects and sign up together to serve Chicago.

### **Group Discussion Question:**

1. How do I sign-up for a Go-Team? In order to join a Go-Team you will first need to complete Growth Track. You can sign up for Growth Track at the Connect counter in the lobby and join in at any point during the series. Growth Track is a 4-week series, and in the final class, Growth Track 401, you will hear about all the Go-Teams that City Church has and will be given an opportunity to sign up for a team.
2. Which service project do we want to get involved with?

### **Prayer Points:**

- Ask God to lead you to a team where you can serve.
- Ask God to lead you as a Life Group into greater levels of service in our community and in our world.

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