

LESSON ONE: BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

INTRODUCTION

While we were still sinners, God sought us out and restored us to a relationship with Him. He calls us to Himself so that He can bless us, and He does so for a purpose. He blesses us so that we in turn can bless others.

GENESIS 12:1 - 9

Abram (later Abraham) serves as a typical missionary. God calls him out from his culture and comfort zone into a world of faith and dependence on God. God promises to bless him, but He has a specific purpose for this blessing which will affect all nations. **Read Genesis 12:1 - 9.**

1. What command does the Lord give Abram (12:1)?
Leave his country, people and father's household to go to the land God will show. This is equivalent to leaving our security, comfort, and guaranteed future for something unseen or unknown.
2. What promises accompany this command (12:1-3)?
Land, descendants (great nation), blessings, and protection.
3. How would you explain the term 'blessing' to someone unfamiliar with Biblical language?
Whatever is good that is from God (material prosperity, favour with people, peace, relationship with God, wisdom, etc.). Blessings from God 'has no added sorrow.'
4. Why does God bless us (12:3)?
God blesses us so that we might bless others.
5. How would you feel if God asked you to leave all your security and do something unknown even after He has given you His promises?
Open for discussion and jot down all 'feelings'. Summarize by emphasizing that as believers we do not go by feelings, but walk by faith.
6. It seems that God's challenge on Abram automatically included Sarai, his wife (12:5). How does God's challenge on someone affect their closest relations – spouse, family, and friends?
Though our faith is very personal, there is a need to share when our decisions or actions affect others (especially families).
7. What characterizes Abram's response to God's command and promise (12:6-9)?
***Faith** (he didn't know where he was going physically and he had not yet received the promise, yet he knew he was going God's way) and **obedience** (he did what God told him to do).*

SUMMARY & CHALLENGE

In the end, God truly blessed Abraham and fulfilled His promises beyond Abraham's expectations. Through him the nation of Israel was birthed. Obedience to God to bless others is the key!

8. How has God blessed you (consider your family, resources, giftings, relationships and career)?
Allow members time to think. Everyone should be encouraged and guided to 'see' at least one blessing from God.
9. What practical steps can you take so that God can bless others through you?
Witnessing, praying, giving, etc. We have the Holy Spirit to enable us. As we take action, the Holy Spirit will use our actions.

Purpose

To show that God commands us to bless others as He blesses us.

Prompt

Ask which portions of the Bible tells us about missions. If missions is God's heart for the world, shouldn't it be mentioned more than just in the Great Commission or Acts 1:8?

Then, begin your lesson.

Ministry

Reflect on what are your greatest fears about the future and exchange them for God's promises.

Pray for God to use you in greater measure as He did with Abraham, to bless other nations.

LESSON TWO: AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

Many of us would not think of ourselves being qualified to be an ambassador. Like the Corinthians, who were not of the upper class of society, we need to change our mindsets and recognize that we are ambassadors for Christ. God could have communicated His love to the world through any means, but He chooses to do His work through us. We are His methods. We serve as ambassadors communicating the message of reconciliation through Jesus Christ to the world. Man is God's method.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11 - 21

Each one to take a minute to share – “Who served as “Christ’s ambassador” to you, telling you the good news while you were unsaved?”

In 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, Paul exemplifies the motive and method for carrying Christ’s message to the world. Break into groups of 3 and then answer the following questions in your group.

1. What were Paul’s motives for ministry (5:11, 14, 18)?
Fear (great respect and submission) of the Lord (v.11); Christ’s love for all (v.14); and God giving men the ministry of reconciliation (v.18).
2. In specific ways, how might a person’s life look like when they “no longer live for themselves but for Christ” (5:15)?
Ask members to consider the following areas: family relationship, treatment of others, work, financial decisions, and future. Living for Christ includes seeking God for direction and decisions, doing things that will please Him, putting Him as priority in all things and daily thankfulness to the Lord.
3. What does it mean to NOT regard others “from a worldly point of view” (5:16)?
Don’t evaluate people based on their work, merits, looks, financial or intellectual standing, race, culture, etc. Regard that from God’s point of view – created and loved by God.
4. What do you understand from the word ‘reconciliation’?
A broken relationship that needs to be mended together again through forgiveness.
5. What is the relation between having been reconciled by God and given the ministry of reconciliation (reaching out to others for Christ) (5:18-20)?
Reaching out to others for Christ is a response of us having first been reconciled to God. Missions is not to gain God’s love or favor, it is a direct response to what God has done for us and our desire for others to experience the same blessings.

SUMMARY & CHALLENGE

God has given us the wonderful privilege of being His ambassadors to communicate His message of reconciliation as we have been first reconciled to Him.

6. What do you see as your role and responsibility as an “ambassador for Christ?”
 - i) *An ambassador must have a very positive lifestyle – our lives must be right before God.*
 - ii) *An ambassador is given authority – recognize God’s authority over you to do His work.*
 - iii) *An ambassador goes to a foreign culture – take initiative in reaching out to others of different culture.*
 - iv) *An ambassador speaks on behalf of the king – know God’s message and be confident in speaking it. We can have boldness and empowerment through the Holy Spirit.*

Purpose

To demonstrate that we serve as Christ’s ambassadors of reconciliation to the world.

Prompt

What is an ambassador? An ambassador represents the country he/she is a citizen of and serves to build good ties with another country by staying there.

Then, begin your lesson.

Ministry

In this world, to be an ambassador depends on your skills, but an ambassador for Christ depends on the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in a specific area that needs to be changed.

Missions Emphasis is on 30th June – 2nd July.

Encourage your members to not only come for the meetings but come desiring and expecting God to use them in a greater measure for His glory. Pray also for your members to fulfill January – June Faith Promises.

LESSON THREE: EYES ON THE PRIZE

INTRODUCTION

It's tough to follow Jesus, and if we take the good news to the world, it'll get tougher still. How can we find stamina to keep on going and not quit? This was the exact issue facing the people whom the book of Hebrews was addressed to.

HEBREWS 11:1 – 12:3

The readers of Hebrews were discouraged. Persecution and hardship caused many of them to consider abandoning their faith or just sit at the sidelines (be inactive). To encourage their endurance, Hebrews presents a list of great Old Testament saints who went before them and concludes with Jesus, all toward the goal of helping them stay in the race. **Read Hebrews 11:1 – 8, 13 – 26, 32 – 40; 12:1 – 3** (get each member to read 3 or 4 verses).

1. According to Hebrews 11:1, what is the Biblical definition of faith? What does this mean?
Key words are 'sure' and 'certain' of what we hope for and do not see. It is based on relationship. How much we belief / trust in someone depends on how well we know the person. Faith is not blind or wishful thinking.
2. In this chapter, who is your favorite character? How or why do you relate to him or her?
You as the facilitator may want to share first to get the ball rolling.
3. Based on what you know about some of these characters (Abraham, Moses, David, Samson), does God use only perfect or 'very spiritual' people?
No. He desires to use each of us. Note however that this does not mean we will remain as we are. God transformed these people to be like Christ. He will also change us.
4. What long-term vision did these people of faith share, including Jesus (11:6, 10, 13–16, 25-26; 12:2)?
God is a rewarder, not just of the present but of the eternal. And it is the eternal rewards which are of 'greater value'.
5. How does this vision inspire you?
A long-term vision makes us willing to presently sacrifice and endure hardship in doing God's will. It is like studying hard to obtain a good future, investing in your marriage to have a good family, paying EPF and insurance to have a good retirement. How much more the eternal rewards of God should compel us to press on in faith and endurance to reach out to others.

SUMMARY & CHALLENGE

Taking the good news to the world can be tough. It can mean stepping out of our comfort to share the Gospel, setting aside time to intercede for our outreaches and missionaries, committed to our Faith Promise, and even going to the mission field ourselves.

6. How can you apply the command to "fix your eyes on Jesus" in the week ahead?
See things from God's perspective rather than what just what we see (e.g. difficult situations at work may be an opportunity to shine forth Christ-like integrity, financial constraints makes us to depend on God even more, etc) 2 Corinthians 1:10-16 tells us that we need the Holy Spirit in order to understand God and see things from His perspective. Daily let your mind be clothed with the Spirit.

Purpose

To show that we're a part of a long legacy of God's people who made a dramatic impact through their faith, eternal perspective and endurance.

Prompt

Commitment precedes success. Without commitment, we drop out of the race. A 100m sprinter only needs 9 seconds to win the race. But it can take 4 years of preparation for that 9 seconds.

Then, begin your lesson.

Ministry

Pray for our missionary Pooshani in Sudan to effectively declare God's glory, keeping her eyes on the prize.

Pray for the **Missions Emphasis** speaker Rev. Benny Ferguson and also for ourselves to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

LESSON FOUR: DIVERSITY IN HEAVEN

INTRODUCTION

Senior Pastor preached a powerful message on heaven in our Easter Sunrise Service. He said that heaven is not our goal but our home. What does this home look like? Contrary to the kind of homes we have here, where it is private and for ourselves only, our heavenly home is meant for “a great multitude that no one (can) count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” (Rev.7:9).

REVELATION 7: 9 - 14

The book of Revelation gives us the clearest vision of heaven, even though it is filled with symbols. Though there are many interpretations to the book, one thing is clear – that is God’s final victory over evil in human history; and a testimony to this is the glorious heavenly worship that John (the author) describes. **Read Revelation 7:9-14.**

1. Describe the crowd that John sees.
A multinational, multicultural congregation stands together, too great to number. White robe symbolizes holiness (set apart for God). Palm branches signify the celebration after a victorious return from battle.
2. Why does John emphasize that people from every nation, tribe, people and language are present?
It is God’s heart for the world, “not desiring any to perish but all to come into repentance” (2 Pet.3:9). In Biblical language, ‘nation’ is not a political entity but refers to an ethnic unit, race, tribe, or people group. E.g. The Senoi’s (a certain group of orang asli) would be called a ‘nation’ in Biblical terms, though they are a part of Malaysia.
3. What would it have felt like to be a part of this crowd?
Encourage members to let their imagination go. You may draw parallels from our Evangelistic presentations where large crowds are present. This would only be a tiny fraction of what it would be like in heaven.
4. Who is the Lamb? Why is this term used?
The Lamb is Jesus Christ. The term is used here because it is through His sacrifice that this heavenly worship can take place. It is through His blood that we are made clean before God (v.13). It reminds us that His death was not just for us, but for the whole world to which we have the responsibility of making known this message.
5. How does this passage encourage you to endure whatever tribulations and hardships you might be facing, especially while being involved in missions?
 - i) *The final victory is ours. We are the ones rejoicing in heaven, not the devil nor the world.*
 - ii) *What we do in missions (pray, give & go) is not in vain as Revelation guarantees the fruits.*

SUMMARY & CHALLENGE

Through the LG lessons for May and July, we have come to know from God’s Word that God’s heart is for the world and that we are His instruments. This final lesson affirms to us it is not merely a wishful hope or ambitious goal to see souls saved but a reality that will surely come to pass. The question is what are we doing?

- i) *Affirm those who have committed to be a Faith Promise partner.*
- ii) *Encourage those who have not signed up, to sign up. You would have received Faith Promise cards for your Life Group by 23 June 2006.*

Purpose

To see the culmination of God’s mission in a global, cross cultural worship service. Through Abraham and his children of faith, all the nations have indeed been blessed by the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Prompt

Ask your members to share a testimony of how they have been blessed in the Missions Emphasis.

Ministry

In pairs, share with one another what has impacted you in the last 4 lessons on Missions: God’s Heart for the World. **Pray for anointing of the Holy Spirit to continually empower and use us.**