



Mission

YOUR PART IN GOD'S PLAN FOR THE NATIONS

by Alan Purser

*To Luke, Katie, Jacob, Reuben and Sam
Psalm 67:1-2*

Mission

The Good Book Guide to Mission

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CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Why study <i>Mission</i>?	5
1. It's God's mission Isaiah 66:18-24	7
2. A rich man made poor? Luke 19:1-10	13
3. Not why Jesus came John 3:1-21	19
4. The unfinished task Acts 1:1-11	25
5. The Great Commission according to Peter Acts 10:1 – 11:18	31
6. The importance of being smelly 2 Corinthians 2:12-17	37
7. What on earth is God doing? 2 Peter 3:1-13	43
Leader's Guide	49

Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance on questions**, and sometimes ☒ additional “follow-up” questions.
- ⋮ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. ☒ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with His concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

Why study mission?

Mission is the heartbeat of the Bible. From the time of Adam and Eve's rebellion until the promised new heaven and new earth, God is on a mission: to call rebellious people into a reconciled relationship with him.

God's plan to bring salvation to the ends of the earth was spelled out by his prophets in the Old Testament and proclaimed by his apostles in the New Testament.

At the centre of this mission plan is God's anointed Saviour King, the Lord Jesus Christ: it is Jesus who makes atonement for sin and who brings in the kingdom of God.

These seven studies chart the unfolding of God's plan for mission in the Scriptures. To select just seven passages that capture the Bible's teaching on mission necessitates difficult choices, with the omission of some passages that might appear rather more obvious candidates for inclusion! However, taken together, these studies provide an introduction to a biblical theology of mission. As such, they are a window into the mind and heart of God, enabling us to sense his loving concern for those who have rebelled against him, to appreciate his gracious gift in the person of Christ and to understand how his mission continues in today's world.

These studies are also an invitation for believers to share his passion for the lost and to align our priorities with his, until Christ returns. God is doing something tremendously exciting in our world, and he invites us to be part of it. As you study the topic of mission through the Bible, you'll be spurred on to engage in mission in your local area; and you'll be better equipped to support and pray for the work of mission in other cities and countries.

As you begin these studies, pray that they would awaken in you a fresh grasp of God's mission, and a renewed engagement in his plan for the nations.

1

Isaiah 66:18-24

IT'S GOD'S MISSION



talkabout

1. Imagine you are part of the planning team for a mission to Mars. You've been charged with explaining the plan to the media. What would you want to communicate? What questions would you anticipate being asked?



investigate

The Old Testament prophets were insiders on God's mission plan, and spoke clearly about it. Writing 800 years before Christ, Isaiah was God's spokesman to the nation of Judah, pronouncing judgment on his people's sin, but also declaring good news of a coming Saviour whose righteous rule will last for ever. These twin themes (judgment and salvation) run throughout the book and find their fulfilment in the person of God's chosen servant, who will "bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). Isaiah's prophecy finishes with a majestic vision of God's agenda for mission.

Read Isaiah 66:18-21

2. What precisely is the mission for which the time has arrived (v 18, see also the end of v 19)?

DICTIONARY

Glory (v 18): God's awesome, majestic weightiness.

Grain offerings (v 20): a gift of grain to acknowledge God's provision.

Levites (v 21): the tribe within Israel responsible for serving in the temple.

- Who is ultimately responsible for it?

- What is the scope of this mission?

- What is the fruit of this mission?

In verses 19-20 we see that God's mission will be carried out in two stages.

3. What is the first stage of God's mission plan (v 19a)?

- **Read Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22-23.** Who is this "sign"?

- **Read John 12:32-33.** What in particular about this "sign" will draw people in?

4. What is the second stage of God's mission plan (Isaiah 66:19b)?



- Who will proclaim this message, and where will it be taken?

- Where will these people be gathered to, and what will they do (v 20-21)?



getting personal

Have you ever considered that you are a resident of a “distant island” that at one time had “not heard of [God’s] fame”? Pause to give thanks to God for those who first brought the gospel to your country—and for any individual or group who opened up the message of salvation for you.



apply

5. What are some of the implications of knowing that...

- all mission is God’s mission?

- the fruit of mission is the church?



↓ investigate

▶ Read Isaiah 66:22-24

DICTIONARY

Sabbath (v 23):
Saturday; the Jewish
holy day of rest.

6. What is the ultimate goal of God's mission (v 22, and also v 18-21)?

7. What would spoil "the new heavens and the new earth"? How does this account for the grotesque vision with which Isaiah finishes?



explore more

optional

Towards the end of the Bible we read again of "a new heaven and a new earth":

▶ Read Revelation 21:1-8

What similarities do you see between this passage and Isaiah's closing vision?

Why is such a terrible judgment necessary in order for God's glory to be established?

What ought this knowledge prompt us to do? (See Mark 9:42-49 for an example.)

→ apply

8. The ultimate goal of God's mission is his glory. How do your goals stack up against his? What difference would adopting God's goal make when it comes to world mission?

9. Often we look at the scale and evil of suffering, injustice and oppression in the world and ask, "What on earth is God doing?" What is the answer to that question, according to this passage?



getting personal

Consider where you fit in to the agenda for mission set out in this passage. How do your ambitions in life fit with Isaiah's vision of the future? Is there any action you will take as a result of this study?



pray

In the light of this vision, what ought we to be asking God to do? Pray for...

- yourself: that your goals and motives would increasingly line up with God's goals and motives.
- your church: for a common mind around a Bible-driven understanding of mission, and unity in the marshalling of resources for mission. Ask God to give you a fresh impetus for mission beyond the local area (or perhaps cross culturally within your locality).
- the world: which countries today are equivalent to those "distant islands who have not heard of his fame or seen his glory"? Bring them before God in prayer, and ask him to send out labourers especially into those parts of his harvest field (Matthew 8:38).

