

Study Guide



Week 1 - Identify

April 8, 2018

Welcome (40 Minutes)

Be intentional to have authentic relationships...

Worship (5 Minutes)

As the group transitions from a time of fellowship to a time of intentional study of the word, it is important to facilitate that transition with a time of worship. This can look like praying together, singing songs together, or rejoicing in what the Lord has done throughout the week.

Word (45 Minutes)

We have been looking at Jesus' five discourses in Matthew, sitting at His feet, and we have learned how to be disciples and disciple-makers. We have challenged everyone to share the gospel as we have been sent to share the good news of Jesus with others. The next four weeks is planned to equip our members practically as we are sent to live on mission and to be intentional with our relationships and time. The material used for this study comes from North American Mission Board's book, *Life on Mission: Gospel. Mission. Ministry* (2013).

For further study on this week's study please check out the following pages...

Prayer & Missions

June— Serve Shreveport

July— Community Outreach

For further information visit

norrisferrychurch.org or contact Jared

Clary (clary@norrisferrychurch.org)

Calendar

March 4th- April 15th— Connection Group

March 4th- April 15th— Kids Shine

May 6th— Member's Meeting

June 11th-16th— Youth Camp

Welcome (40 Minutes)

As you fellowship with one another, please be intentional about sharing what the Lord is doing in your lives. Get to know one another and encourage one another. Are your conversations pointing one another toward Christ?

Worship (5 Minutes)

If you are looking for a song to sing this week, here are the lyrics to "[O Praise the Name](#)":

I cast my mind to Calvary
Where Jesus bled and died for me.
I see His wounds, His hands, His feet.
My Savior on that cursed tree

His body bound and drenched in tears
They laid Him down in Joseph's tomb.
The entrance sealed by heavy stone
Messiah still and all alone

O praise the name of the Lord our God
O praise His name forever more
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

And then on the third at break of dawn,
The Son of heaven rose again.
O trampled death where is your sting?
The angels roar for Christ the King

O praise the name of the Lord our God
O praise His name forever more
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

He shall return in robes of white,
The blazing Son shall pierce the night.
And I will rise among the saints,
My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face

O praise the name of the Lord our God
O praise His name forever more
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

Chapter 7: The Mission

*A missionary reorients his or her life to join God
in the work He is already doing.*

The Mission

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come. Everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

As followers of Jesus, missionaries understand they are sent, just as Jesus was sent. They live a life of consistent sacrifice, while proclaiming the incredible news of hope through the gospel. Being entrusted with this ministry of reconciliation, missionaries see God's heart for those who do not know Him, and they realize that they were once in a place without hope. Missionaries go to their communities, to the nations and wherever else God may send them as ambassadors of the gospel.

Here are some characteristics of an individual who is living on mission:

- He is intentionally building relationships with people for the purpose of sharing the gospel. (See 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.)
- He learns ways to share the good news of Jesus Christ in different contexts by focusing on how God rescued him from his own sin. (See 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.)
- He shares the gospel in both deeds (serving) and words (proclamation). (See Colossians 3:17.)
- He learns the rhythms and patterns of culture so he can better identify with it. (See Acts 17:16-34.)

Mission: Driven by the Gospel

Since sin entered the story of humanity through Adam, God has been on a rescue mission to redeem humanity from Satan, sin and death. God could use any means to communicate the truth of the hope that is offered through His Son, Jesus, yet He chooses to use ordinary people like you and me. (See Acts 4:13.)

Joining in the mission of God is the natural outworking of growing in the gospel. As you grow in your understanding of the fact that "He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," your heart will be compelled toward missions. (See 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

If you're reading this, odds are you have been exposed to the gospel a great deal. Maybe that staggering news has grown stale in your heart, simply because it's very familiar. But every day we are given the opportunity to be amazed by it all over again. Why? Because every day we fall short of the glory of God. We choose idols over the one true God. We live selfishly. We fail to love people with the same love that Jesus has given us.

And yet—"He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The fact that this glorious reality never becomes less true is enough to wreck us every day for the rest of our lives. That's what Jesus does; He comes in and wrecks our lives, in the best way possible.

When you are truly moved by something—when you genuinely love something—you can't help but talk about it.

Think about it. What's the last book that brought you to tears? What's the last movie that you just couldn't stop thinking about? What TV series have you been gripped by? How many people did you tell about it?

Those of you who have kids, how often do you brag on them and talk about them?

Those of you (us) who go crazy over college football—how much time during fall do you spend talking about your team?

You get the point, right? The goal is not to guilt yourself into being on mission. The goal is to be so in awe of Jesus, so grateful that His mercies are new every morning, that you are simply swept up into His mission. You talk about Him because you can't stop thinking about how good He is. You are naturally on mission with those around you simply because Jesus is so important to you that what He's done in your life is going to come up in conversation. God has reconciled you to Himself, and that news is so profound to you that you can't help but go around offering it to others.

When mission is driven by the gospel, being on mission is not forced or weird but rather something that flows out of who you are.

What is God preparing you for? How does that play into His mission of reconciliation?

The Bible is God's story of using people who overcome great obstacles to accomplish His mission. What are some of the obstacles in your life?

The Wrong Man

Tia was a college student when she became a believer in Jesus. God rescued her from a painful past, and she quickly got connected to a local church where she continued to grow.

Amazed by Jesus' work in her own life, Tia wanted to spread that good news to others. God specifically gave her a heart for the homeless in her city, so she and some friends started walking through the downtown park, handing out food and starting conversations with homeless people who tended to populate the park during the day.

One afternoon she walked up on a small Hispanic man in his late thirties. He was passed out drunk, lying in a ditch, adjacent to the park. Tia felt led to get his attention, so she said, "Hey—wake up."

And, he did. He woke up and began talking to the group of college students. He introduced himself (We'll call him Alex.) and began to tell them about his past, which offered an explanation to why he was drinking rubbing alcohol. Yes, you read it right—rubbing alcohol.

The next Sunday, Alex came to church with Tia and her friends. His personality quickly began to show, as he would laugh and say things like, "You guys catch the wrong man ..."

What started out as a gospel-fueled walk in the park for Tia led to incredible things for Alex. In a matter of months, he came to know Jesus, and Tia stood there with tears flowing as he was baptized in the midst of the roaring cheers of his new church family. Over time Alex got a job, moved off the streets, joined a small group and even started to minister to the homeless himself, bringing others around the church family.

When we join God in His mission, nothing is insignificant. A short conversation or even a walk in the park can lead to unbelievable life change when the God of the universe is involved.

Mission Practices

Missionaries don't just study, learn and have a relationship with God. They also act—living out their faith in real life. They spread the good news of Jesus to those around them.

In studying Scripture, the life of Jesus, and the ministry of Paul, we have discerned a clear process of missionary practices. We seek to bring clarity to them and practical direction for your life as a missionary in the following pages. The four missionary practices are as follows:

- Identify – Identify people who need the gospel.
- Invest – Invest your life in others as you share the gospel.
- Invite – Invite people into disciple-making relationships.
- Increase – Increase disciple making by sending people out.

As we study these four practices, ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and insight into how to pursue them practically in your life.

Notes:

Chapter 8: Identify

Identify people who need the gospel.

Identify

"At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah, for which I am in prison, so that I may reveal it as I am required to speak" (Colossians 4:3-4).

Gospel Thread

As you meditate on the gospel and continually rediscover how it changes and frees you, you will grow deeper in your understanding of God, yourself and others.

By nature we are all sinfully self-absorbed people. Think about it: how much time in each day do you spend thinking about your life? It's very easy to be completely consumed by yourself, to only think about how situations affect you, to make friends and pursue relationships based solely on what they have to offer you.

At the heart of this self-obsession is idolatry. We set ourselves up as idols by expecting people and situations in life to give us joy, meaning and approval. Like in the Greek myth of Narcissus, we only have eyes for ourselves and want to take whatever we can. Meanwhile, all around us are people in desperate need of the gospel who go unnoticed. Our self-absorption blinds us to them.

However, when we meditate on the gospel, we realize that in Jesus we've already been given everything that we are searching for. He offers us all the satisfaction, purpose and validation we could ever need.

Jesus not only gave everything for us, He also gave everything to us.

Since we are fully affirmed in Jesus, we don't need to look to other people for approval.

Since we are fully satisfied in Jesus, we don't need to look to other people for joy.

There is an unimaginable amount of freedom in this. If our souls are satisfied in Jesus, we can turn our eyes away from ourselves. By grace we can stop being so self-absorbed. Christ's love and mercy compel us to enter the mission field.

In this process of growing in spiritual maturity, the Holy Spirit will turn our gaze outward. We will begin to see with new eyes—to have an accurate perspective on the world around us. We will notice that God is at work all around us. We will identify people who desperately need the hope of Jesus.

In which areas of your life do you tend to be self-absorbed? In what ways do you need the gospel to free you from self-absorption?

What about your community? What about your city? Are there neighborhood meetings you can attend, or other rhythms you can be part of to get to know those around you?

One morning Jack was running late for work and was low on gas as well. He couldn't chance running out of gas so he stopped to fill up at Stu's convenience store. Stu's was an old, run-down gas station where you couldn't even pay at the pump to get a tank of gas. This meant Jack would have to go inside and interact with an actual human—crazy idea these days, I know. But God used a moment on a Wednesday

morning when Jack was running low on gas and running late to the office as a means to help Jack identify with whom God wanted him to eventually share the gospel. See, the truth is, Jack filled his car up at this gas station a few times a month. This was a normal rhythm of life for him.

Jack had already overslept on this morning and had not had any caffeine. As he hurried into Stu's convenience store, he picked up on the smell of freshly brewed coffee. Jack asked the older lady behind the counter, Mrs. Helen, how much the coffee cost and she said, "Honey, the coffee is not for sale—I brew it fresh every morning for myself, but I'll pour you a cup if you'd like."

Jack responded, "Nah, that's OK. I'm good," though deep down he really wanted that cup of coffee. But Mrs. Helen insisted. At this point Jack was already going to be late, so he took the cup and then asked the simple question, "So, how are you doing?"

She said in a quieter voice than before, "I'm doing OK ... I'm doing OK, not great, but OK." It was then that Jack knew this woman had some pain—it was made evident in the tone of her voice. This was a woman who needed compassion and grace. Jack discovered so much about Mrs. Helen over the next several months as he began to stop in every morning for a cup of coffee and a conversation. He would stand (no seats in this place) and listen as she talked about her four sons and all the grandchildren she was still raising in her own home. Jack was able to identify story after story of heartache and would then just say a quick prayer for her and be on his way. This old, rundown gas station was a natural rhythm in Jack's life, but it is amazing what can take place when gospel intentionality is woven into the fabric of our everyday rhythms. Jack was able to display compassion and grace to this woman and eventually to her family, but it all began with identifying the opportunity on a morning when he was running late.

Whatever your natural rhythms in life are, start there because it's not a mistake how God made you. Your passions and interests often help you identify the group of people God is calling you to share the gospel and your life with as a missionary. Psalm 139 tells us that He knit us together in our mother's womb, so that means He helped form our passions—what we love to do.

When we combine our natural rhythms and passions with the gospel and use them for the purpose of building relationships with those around us, powerful things can happen. Our passions can help us identify missionary opportunities for sharing the gospel.

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you where He is already at work around you and how you can join Him. Write down anything He reveals.

List the people or groups you interact with in your normal rhythm of life. What on your list could be an opportunity for missions?

What are your specific passions and gifts? What opportunities for missions could lie there?

The Economy of Jesus

To identify where God is at work around you, look first at the glaring needs around you. These may be physical needs among the poor, or maybe a high concentration of single mothers or at-risk youth. On the other hand, needs may be more relational or spiritual than physical—people struggling with loneliness, depression, addictions or even the hopelessness of greed and materialism.

A good rule of thumb is: look in the margins of your world. Who are the people others tend to shy away from or avoid? Who are the “untouchables” in your world? This does not have to be a dirty, homeless person begging for loose change. Honestly, it could be, but it is just as likely to be an awkward person at work or school who doesn’t have many friends. Often being a missionary requires stepping out and over social boundaries, looking for opportunities to identify the marginalized as you seek to put the gospel on display.

- Jesus had an in-depth conversation at a well with a woman who had lived a life of promiscuity and was currently living in an adulterous situation. This woman would have been severely ostracized by her community. (See John 4:1-42.)
- Jesus called a tax collector (someone completely despised by society) to walk with him as a follower. (See Matthew 9:9.)
- Jesus touched the leper that no one would even think about getting close to. (See Mark 1:40-45.)
- Jesus identified the people who were like sheep without a shepherd and had great compassion for them. (See Matthew 9:36.)
- Jesus protected a woman from being stoned to death who had literally just been caught in bed with a man who was not her husband. (See John 8:2-11.)
- Jesus identified ordinary, unschooled men as the men he would pour his life into during his three years of earthly ministry. (See Acts 4:13.)

The social economy of Jesus is completely the opposite. It's about descending, not ascending. It's not about looking to see what you can get from others, but looking to see how you can help others who have less than you. It's about pressing out toward the margins—to the people who need someone to love and befriend them.

Identifying the Needs Around You

Josh and his roommates were guys in their early twenties, living in a downtown neighborhood where they were all part of the same local church. After hearing a sermon about being on mission in daily life, they were convicted about looking for opportunities for mission work in their context. But what could they do? They felt overwhelmed, not knowing where to start.

After some prayer, Josh had the idea that they would bake a bunch of cookies and go around and give them to their neighbors and introduce themselves. Yes, you read it right—a bunch of 20-something-year-old guys baking away.

One Thursday evening, after the baking was successfully completed and the ziplock bags were stuffed with cookies, the fellas started their trek. They introduced themselves to more than 40 neighbors and overall received a very warm reception. Afterward, they went home where they sat on their thrift-store couches to discuss what they had learned. They were all amazed at how clear their direction was moving forward.

Simply put: their eyes were opened to a massive need. Out of the 40 or so homes they visited, 17 of them were single mothers raising children alone. And what do single mothers often need? Childcare. A break. Godly men to be an influence for their children.

It was such a simple, commonsense idea that the guys were blown away. One night a week, some of the girls from their church came over to help them offer free childcare at their house—a “Mother’s Night Out.” They had found a consistent way to serve their neighbors in a very meaningful way. They were amazed at how easily the need was seen after they decided to open their eyes and take a short walk.

Identifying to whom God is leading you may be as simple as taking a short walk with your eyes open.

Of course, it might involve much more than that, and God could lead you to a place farther from home physically or culturally. However, no matter where He leads, it all starts with opening your eyes.

What are some practical things you can do to identify the needs around you?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

List three different groups of people (neighbors, co-workers, etc.) you feel God is leading you toward with the gospel.

Stop now and ask God in this moment if He would reveal to you who He is burdening you for. After praying, list the group or individuals He reveals below:

Now take a few minutes before moving forward and ask God to continue to reveal to you what it really looks like to invest in the lives of the people you have listed in the question above.

Prayer is the power behind the mission.

Notes:

Walk (30 minutes)

After enjoying fellowship, worship, and time in God's word together, it is now time to pray together as a group and encourage one another in the faith. It is very easy for this portion of the group time to be consumed by the other portions. However, this segment of the group time is crucially important. It answers the question, how do we apply what we are learning in Matthew to our lives today?

Many groups have found that it is helpful to sometimes break up into a men's group and a women's group for the purpose of being able to be more transparent and honest as we encourage one another and keep one another accountable. I encourage you to try this in your groups.

In addition to praying for, and encouraging, one another, this portion of the group time should also be used for planning how your group can participate in God's work outside the walls of our church – "neighbors and nations." Discuss with your group some ideas on how you can be intentional with building relationships with your neighbors and co-workers. What can your Community Group do to impact the area around you?

Here is a list of local ministries Norris Ferry is actively involved in:

Hub/purchased	Celebrate recovery
Young life	Samaritan counseling
Heart of hope	Last call ministries
First priority	Golden age ministries
Ark-la-Tex crisis pregnancy center	Rescue mission
Community renewal	Luke's lighthouse
Grief counseling	FCA

Here is a list of missionaries Norris Ferry is actively involved in:

Shannon & Carrie Lewis (South Sudan)
Matt & Angie Johnson (Panama)
Meggie Hickson (Tanzania)
Kyle & Suzy Jagers (New Orleans)

May the Lord bless and encourage you as you are in your groups this week! Know that we are praying for you on a weekly basis and that we are here to help you in any way that we can!