

Lesson Plan & Study Guide



Basic Doctrines: Mission

Walking with Jesus

iFOLLOW

The iFollow Discipleship Series



About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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www.ifollowdiscipleship.org

Basic Doctrines: Mission

Learning Objectives

1. Realize that the mission of Christ is the focal point of the church
2. Feel a new urgency to spread the gospel
3. Find new ways to be an active missionary

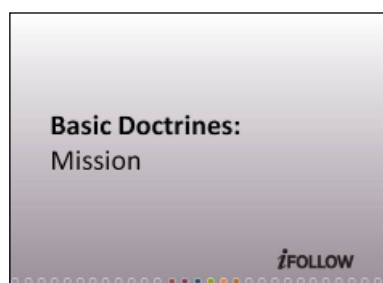
Content Outline

- A. The body of Christ and the work of Christ
- B. Central Importance of Mission
- C. Adapting to Different Needs
- D. The Need for Local and Global Missions
- E. Your Role in Missions

Background Material for the Presenter

In God's marvelous master plan to spread the gospel, He has devised a strategy that is both corporate and personal (1 Cor. 12:11-28). There is one body, but that body is constructed of many members working harmoniously to achieve the end of sharing the good news of salvation with a dying world.

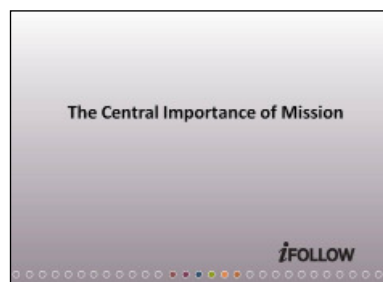
When the body is working for the salvation of others, something wonderful happens to its individual parts. "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph. 4:14-16, NIV).



If the church is truly the body of Christ, it will have loving arms that reach out to others, especially those who are suffering and careworn. It just can't help it, because that's what Jesus does, and He is the one and only head of this body.

The Central Importance of Mission

Jesus made it clear throughout His life that He was here for one purpose only; to show a dying race what God was **really** like. His preaching, His teaching, His storytelling, His miracles, and almost more than anything else, His healing, all proclaimed unequivocally that God loved them. It had come to be popular, as it does periodically in human history, to believe that God was either distant and uncaring or angrily watching closely for every transgression, just daring each person to give Him an excuse to curse them. People who were sick, poor, or otherwise afflicted were assumed to have displeased God—or perhaps their parents had done so even before they were born!



Now, along came this pretentious Rabbi, (who didn't even have proper rabbinical training) not only being very careless of some of the rituals, but claiming that the Most High, unnameable Holy One was His Abba! "Abba," insisted Jesus, "loves you!"

So when He left, He made it equally clear that His followers were to take on the same mission. Beginning in Jerusalem and moving outward like some mighty vortex of love and joy, they were to pass on the Good News. The Best News, in fact, that the human race had ever heard. John the Beloved reports that when Jesus appeared among the disciples in the upper room some days after His resurrection, He "said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'" (John 20:21) Just as Jesus had come with one agenda, one mission, and had stuck to it no matter what through the years of His time here, now His followers were being sent with the same mission.

But first, they must be prepared. Aside from the three years and more of hands-on training they had received, they needed the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This seems to have come in two phases. John continues, "And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" (Vs. 22)

Then He told them, as recorded in Acts 1:4-5, that the Spirit was to come in even more power, and that they were not to leave Jerusalem until this happened. "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Do you suppose they wondered how they would know when it happened? Today, Christians sometimes argue about what it means to be "baptized with the Holy Spirit," but there was no doubt on Pentecost!

All the “Great Commission” passages, in the four Gospels and in the book of Acts, show us the picture of a God who, like a commanding general, prepares His troops for battle. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus bestows power on the disciples (Verse 20); Jesus authorizes the use of His power in clearly defined ways (Verses 19-20); Jesus promises to back up His disciples in times of need (Verse 19); Jesus prepares them before He sends them out (Verse 20).

Now, they were ready. They were to go. And go they did. They turned the known world upside down in a generation.

Nothing has changed. The Great Commission is still a priority for the Christian. The salvation of many depends on our ability to spread the news of God’s grace (vs. 16). The Bible establishes an unambiguous route to salvation. “No one comes to the Father,” but through Christ (John 14:6, NIV); salvation is found in “no other name” (Acts 4:12, NIV); and we can know whether or not we have eternal life, because it is “in his Son” and “he who has the Son has life” (1 John 5:11, 12, NIV).

Notice in 1 John 5:11, 12 that God does not ask us to earn eternal life. As if we could! God has given it to all who have placed their trust in Jesus as their personal Savior. God has one Way to eternal life, and He has not only given it to us, He has provided the means to get there. Hence, the choice to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord is the most important decision we make in life.

Yet it is also true that the Bible explains that God has “winked at” (KJV) or “overlooked” (NIV) times of ignorance, when people honestly did not know how to serve Him. There will be uncounted multitudes in heaven who never heard of Jesus or only heard lies about Him, but followed in the honesty of their hearts the Creator they instinctively knew existed. According to clear Bible truth, whether they knew Him or not, they are there only and entirely by the blood of Jesus.

Therefore, we must take care **how** we present the Gospel. Not all well-meaning missionaries have made it sound like **good** news. The apostle Paul explained to the fledgling Timothy that the law of God addresses those who behave contrary to “sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10). The Greek word for sound, as used here by Paul means “to be healthy.” It is the word from which we get the term hygiene. “Salvation,” for that matter, means wholeness and health. The early people had a much more complete vision of these matters than many today who are only concerned with the future state of souls, and not with the present and future state of the whole being.

Seventh-day Adventism has built-in safeguards against errors on both sides of this road, believing as we do that health is “the right arm” of the gospel. In many, many countries, in both hemispheres, once people have learned that we care about their well-being here and now, whether physical, mental, emotional, or social, they become interested to learn about our understanding of the everlasting gospel.

Adapting to Different Needs

In the preaching of the gospel, many specious beliefs are added by well-meaning, and not-so-well-intentioned, people. This is nothing new. It is these unclean, human-made doctrines that Jesus denounced as “rules taught by men” (Matt. 15:9, NIV). There have been plenty more added since His time on earth! How, then, can we avoid being seen as yet another group of people who think their way is the only way, in competition with every other faith group out there?



Paul faced this sort of cynicism even in the early days of the church. He determined to anchor his preaching in Jesus alone. “When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.” (1 Cor. 2:1-5) This kind of humble yet steadfast attitude can help to disarm many, though not all critics. Jesus said that He, if He were lifted up, would draw all. We don’t have to draw them. We just have to lift Him up.

Yet Paul also adapted his message depending on his audience. Note the similarities and differences in his messages to the Corinthian church (here in 1 Cor. 2) and to the pagan thinkers at Mars’ Hill in Athens. (Acts 17:16-31) To the Corinthians he used such phrases as “we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began” (Verse 7) and “words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words” (Verse 14) and quotes the Bible twice. To the Athenians, he spoke of “the unknown God,” an inscription on their own statuary, (v. 23) said this God could not live in a temple built by human hands, (Verse 24), which was something Plato would have said, and quoted from one of their own poets (Verse 28). How could he have done this unless he had read their poets?

If we are serious about reaching all the world for Christ, we must let go of our notions of our own superiority (or worse yet, the superiority of our methods) and meet all kinds of people on their own ground, being humble enough to assume that we may have something to learn from them as well. This means different people are sent to different people groups (unsurprisingly), and that one person’s mission field may be another’s territory to be avoided.

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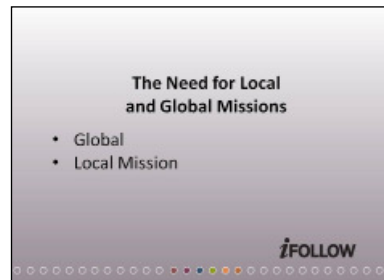
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The Need for Local and Global Missions

Global: From childhood, at least for those growing up in a church culture, the word “mission” conjures up long voyages to dark jungles and living with people drastically different from those among whom the missionary has grown up. Those who were most successful in these endeavors (measured by the people’s response to and love of the missionaries) were those who went with an attitude of love and humility, who lived with the people in the way the people lived, learned new ways of eating and dressing, learned new languages, and adapted their teaching to that new language. Books abound that tell stories of people groups who were resistant until a missionary who was paying attention enough to **their** belief systems began to talk about the Everlasting Gospel through the stories of the people themselves. Most often, the missionaries gained new insights into God’s love and grace, as well.



A term that has become very familiar in recent years is the “10/40 Window,” the designation for that area of the world in which the majority of people have not heard about Jesus. This is the area between ten degrees and forty degrees north of the equator and stretches from North Africa to China. It is not only an area that is underserved by Christian outreach, it is also an area of heavy population density, and of great need. If missionaries arrive whose only goal is to tell these people “how to get to heaven,” they will not have as much impact as those who also help them live healthfully and safely today, where they are, and without trying to erase their own cultures.

We need to pay much more attention to Jesus’ missionary methods. He arrived with humility, lived with little fanfare among the people for **three decades**, which seems a shocking waste of time to us, wore their clothes, ate their food, spoke their language, and showed by His every word and action that they were deeply important to Him and to His Father. Then, when He spoke, they listened.

Local Mission: As important as that 10/40 window is, it is equally imperative that Jesus is known to all in our own communities. In many ways, this means an even deeper preparation in learning the languages and customs of the people group to which one is called. Just because we speak English, and even perhaps go to church, it does not follow that we think the same or understand our neighbors when they speak. We have a good track record in speaking to people from similar, Bible-based, church-going cultures to our own. If someone believes the Bible is the Word of God, we know how to show them what it says about various topics they may have questions about, or how it speaks to a need or crisis they may be facing.

But what if my neighbors are completely secular, perhaps never having seen the inside of a church? What if they aren’t even sure there is a God, let alone that Jesus was His (or Her or Its) Son? What if they are Neopagan, or New Age, or spiritualist or Buddhist? What if

every word I am used to saying about God is like so much gibberish to them? Then I have a few choices.

I can try to talk to them in the missionary language of my childhood and then give up, assuming that “they don’t care.” This is, quite simply, not a godly choice. It’s a judgment we are not equipped to make.

I can wait for someone else to reach them. This may be a valid choice. I may not be called by God to evangelize them, but only to love them openly, pray for them fervently, and wait for God to move.

I can learn their language and try to enter their world with the hope of inviting them into mine. This is a dangerous choice, because in “entering their world” we don’t mean living in a way that denies or compromises our faith, we mean trying to learn to see things through their eyes, to “walk in their moccasins” for awhile. So I’d better not do it unless I am certain that God is calling me, personally, to this mission field, and unless I have close, supportive, strong Christian backup.

Your Role in Christ’s Mission

Probably the most important thing to understand about mission is that **God** is the one who does the calling, and calls different people to different tasks. That’s why the Spirit has to come first.

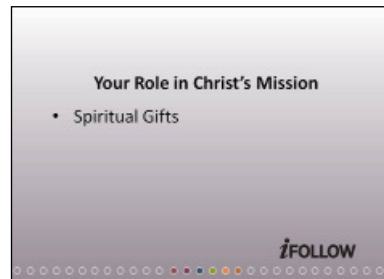
If you want to know what it is that God is calling you to do, the first task, and by far the most important, is to be certain of your own saving relationship. If work needs to be done in your own heart, do it first. Have you completely turned yourself over to Jesus? Do you know for certain that He has accepted you? This question is not meant to imply that He sometimes doesn’t. He promises to accept all who come to Him. It is meant to emphasize that those who are uncertain of their own safety with God already have trust issues and may not be the best ones to be offering comfort on the front lines, though it is also true that in attempting to strengthen the faith of others, we will strengthen our own, and it is a mistake to wait until we are “strong enough, good enough, or perfect enough.”

Have you recognized the presence of the Spirit in your life, even though you still find that astonishing, given what you know about your inmost soul?

If these things are in good order, and if you are feeling a call on your life, something that is starting to take hold of you, a person or people group, even in your own neighborhood or workplace whom you love and are drawn to and long to somehow help to see God clearly, then your next task is to find a mentor or partner or group with whom to work. Different missions require different workers, and yours may be a group mission (most likely) or it may be solitary, but if that’s the case, it’s even more essential that you have backup. Especially if you’re going deep into enemy territory!

Which brings up an often-ignored or overlooked, but vital, mission—to be a backup person for someone else on the front lines. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, may simply be to stay in the background with rations of heavenly manna, canteens of living water, the biggest arsenals of prayer you can stockpile, and lots of bandages!

Spiritual Gifts: The trend in recent years has been to take inventory of the spiritual gifts within a church family and to use those gifts in specific ways to implement a mission strategy. This can be far more effective than simply using the latest Power Point seminar to train everybody to “do evangelism” and then sending them all out shotgun style. Jesus did the same by giving His disciples tasks that complemented their abilities and furthered the gospel commission. Of course, He often had a better idea of their hidden gifts than they did, and still tends to ask people to do things they are certain they could never do.



But it's also possible to make a spiritual gifts test of some kind the latest How To Do Evangelism method and get so caught up in making precise definitions and lists of each one's gifts (and arguing over whether a gift should really be on the list or not) that still, no real outreach gets done. Worse yet, people are discouraged and less likely to try again. It's simpler than we like to admit. **Ask God.** He knows what He wants you to do, and yes, He will tell you.

Summary

Life needs to have purpose for it to feel truly worth living. No one wants the epitaph on their tombstone merely to read: “Used up oxygen, took up space.” The longer we live, the more we sense a need to live a life beyond ourselves. Perhaps Horace Mann, the brilliant politician and noted educator, captured this yearning best when he said, “Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.”



Human beings were created with a divine hankering for a mission greater than themselves, a calling that helps broken people traverse this life through the good news of salvation and gives them hope for the future. In fulfilling this mission, we find a deep inner peace with God and ourselves.

Handouts in this Package

1. Participant Notes



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Additional Resources

Dybdahl, Jon (1999). *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association.

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Fitzgerald, Troy (2008). *20 Questions God Wants to Ask You*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press.

Froom, LeRoy (1950-54). *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 volumes. Washington DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association.

Oosterwal, Gottfried (1972). *Mission Possible: The Challenge of Mission Today*. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association.

Reid, G. W.; editor (2000). *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association. Pages 857-892.

Rice, Richard (1985). *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press. Pages 209-236.

Scriven, Charles (2009). *The Promise of Peace*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press.

Wade, Loron (2009). *Simply Put: What God's Been Saying All Along*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association.

White, Ellen (1898). *The Desire of Ages*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press. Pages 818-828.

White, Ellen (1911). *The Acts of the Apostles*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association. Pages 17-34.

Web Site

The Office of Adventist Mission at the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church provides a web site with much information about missions around the world. You can sign up for a free, quarterly DVD with video reports suitable to share at church or in your Sabbath School class or small group. There are also downloadable documents with more information about many aspects of mission and information on each nation in the world. www.adventistmission.org

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) conducts thousands of projects around the world among the poor and suffering in Christ's name. It provides a web site with DVD reports from Adventist missionaries who are fighting AIDS, poverty and hunger in many nations. There are also resources for your local church

for World AIDS Sabbath in December each year and other projects you can do to respond to major disasters such as the earthquakes in Haiti and China, or drought in Africa: www.adra.org

AdventSource is the distribution center for leadership resource materials for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. It includes study guides for small-group outreach, public evangelism materials, community service manuals and supplies, etc. There are many books, DVDs and other materials that give detailed how-to information for local missions: www.adventsource.org

The Center for Creative Ministry focuses on the cutting edge in local missions, conducting research and development for the North American Division, local and union conferences and local congregations. Its web site includes the most recent research on what works in evangelism, church growth and outreach. There are training curricula with DVDs for friendship evangelism and leaders of community-based ministries. www.creativeministry.org

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Discussion Questions

1. What was the kindest deed ever done for you and who did it?
2. Who first shared the gospel with you, and how did they do it? Did you accept right away? What helped you to decide or made it difficult?
3. Read Matthew 5. Why was Jesus so effective in sharing present truth with the lost of His day?
4. Read Matthew 10 and list three specific directives Jesus gave that were meant to comfort His disciples and prepare them for their mission.
5. Peter exhorts us always to be ready to give every man a reason for the hope within us (1 Pet. 3:15). What are two different ways we can share the hope that Christ has given to us with our coworkers?
6. The call to be witnesses first where we currently live is established in Acts 1:8. Yet, the Internet and other electronic media have shrunk the world, so to speak, allowing a single person to witness on a global scale. In what ways can we use technology to share Jesus?
7. How is each of us called to be a missionary?
8. As a congregation, how can we improve our local missions?
9. In what ways do we sometimes allow our zeal to get the gospel to the ends of the earth to adversely affect witnessing in our community?
10. What is one of your spiritual gifts? How do you or can you use that to further God's work?

Group Activity

Purpose: To begin the process of creating a personal mission statement, and to experiment with creating a group one.

Preparation: You will need writing materials for each participant as well as a flipchart or board and markers. On the board write “Our group exists to ...”

Assignment: 1. Say, “Let’s begin with that great existential question: What is your reason for existence. In other words, what gets you up in the morning? What is your purpose in life? What difference do you make in the world? Please write your answer to that huge question as briefly as possible.” Allow about three minutes of quiet time for the participants to work.

2. “Now, take what you related in the above question and write a personal mission statement. Keep it short (no more than one sentence), simple, and easy to understand and remember.” Allow another three minutes of quiet time for the participants to work.

3. “Now, one by one, without conferring with each other, go up and add a word from your own mission statement to the sentence stem on the board until we have a written mission statement for our group. Watch how the statement develops.” Allow about one minute per person in the group for this part of the exercise.

Debrief: Discuss whether or not all are “on the same page” when it comes to the purpose and direction of the group. If it is practical (if this is a group in “real life,” other than just for this presentation) determine if something useful can be made of this mission statement for future use. If not, discuss ways to do something similar with each one’s home church, Sabbath School class, or small group.

Time: It will take about 20 minutes for a small group (12 or less) for the first three steps in this exercise. If you have a larger group, you may want to break out into groups of 12 or less and then come back together again after 20 minutes and take another 15 minutes or more to hear reports from each of the breakout groups. The debriefing discussion will take at least another 15 minutes.

Handout

Key Concept 13: Mission

Key Texts: Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-47, Luke 4:16-19, Matthew 28:16-19, John 14:6, 2 Peter 2:1-3, Revelation 14:6-12

Concept: Mission is not a program of the church; it is God's reason for the existence of the church. Church is not about "us." It is about "them."

Connecting with Scripture

A. Write your answer to the following: What is your reason for existence? In other words, what gets you up in the morning? What is your purpose in life? Like George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*, what difference do you make in the world? If you don't know, what steps will you take to find out?

B. Now, take what you related in the above question and write a personal mission statement. Keep it short (no more than one sentence), simple, and easy to understand and remember.

Sharing and Receiving Scripture

A. Our great commission is to take the gospel to the whole world (Mark 16:15-16 and Luke 24:46-47). Why is it important for us to do this?

1. It is good for our spiritual growth; we learn to depend on Jesus while we witness
2. Every person needs the proper information to make an informed decision
3. We've been told us to do it, and that's reason enough
4. Blessed are those who believe simply because of our personal testimony (apart from miracles)
5. It is not so important anymore; God saves those who simply believe and choose good over evil
6. Other ...

B. Compare Luke 4:16-19 and Matthew 28:16-19. What do these "mission statements" by Jesus reveal about His goals?

1. The Matthew statement is more important for us today than the Luke statement
2. The Luke statement is more important for us today than the Matthew statement
3. These two texts make up the "bookends" of Christ's mission and must be blended in our missionary strategy today
4. The two passages seem to contradict each other
5. The two passages speak of the same spiritual realities
6. Other ...

C. In John 14:6 Jesus claims to be the only true path to heaven. What is the best way to get that message out?

1. Hold public meetings so that people have a place to come and learn this message
2. Go out and personally talk to people about their need of Jesus
3. Let people see the effects of Jesus in our lives and then answer their questions when they ask
4. Deliver literature door-to-door and offer to give Bible studies
5. Some combination of the above
6. Other...

D. How hard should we work to counteract the effects of false teachings that are described in 2 Peter 2:1-3?

1. People need to have clear choices, so we should merely make the truth available to them
2. The devil works hard to deceive people, and we need to work just as hard to warn them
3. We should study the devil's tactics so we'll know how to confront them
4. We need to actively point out false teachings and condemn false religious systems
5. We plant seeds of truth and water them, but the real work of converting hearts belongs to God
6. Other...

E. What role does the message of Revelation 14:6-12 play in 21st century Christianity?

1. Not much; we have bigger issues to deal with today like hunger and homelessness
2. It is interesting to study, but the fulfillment is way off in the future and not meaningful now
3. Without this passage, we have no reason to exist as a church; it is our mission statement
4. It's always good to focus on spreading the everlasting gospel around the world
5. Not much in the larger Christian community because Adventists haven't shared it enough
6. Other ...

Applying the Scripture

Choose one of the following options and work on a solution. If the opportunity arises, share your solution with someone else.

Option 1: If you could snap your fingers and go anywhere in the world to share the gospel of Jesus, where would you go and what would you do? Why?

Option 2: What is a mission need here at home? Is your community suffering from a lack of prophetic understanding or a lack of proper nutrition and affordable housing?

Is there a way that your church can address both of these issues at the same time?

Option 3: Using paper and crayons or markers, draw and color something that represents what you see as the mission field (a person, a place, etc.). Pin your artistic rendering on your wall to remind you of your calling.

Valuing Scripture in Your Life

First thing in the morning, spend some time meditating on what you believe God is calling you to do with your life. Write about what thoughts and images came to you.

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