

SESSION 5

INDIVIDUAL STUDY GUIDE

OVERVIEW AND GOAL

The goal of this session is to explore more fully the importance of being global disciples in our world today, and to root our discipleship in the examples provided in scripture. You will be reminded of the challenges that face God's people in the world today, and be invited to join with people and partnerships that are bearing fruit for the Kingdom of God.

KEY BIBLICAL PASSAGES

*Luke 10:25-37; Acts 15:1-35; 21:17-26; 1 Corinthians 9:19-27;
2 Corinthians 8:8-15*

BACKGROUND

Ethnic and racial conflict. Economic inequality and crippling poverty. Religious violence and ethical confusion. The world of the New Testament was strikingly similar to ours today, and the challenges facing the early followers of Christ required creativity, generosity and courage, and dependence on the Holy Spirit to be faithful to the Kingdom purposes of God. The scriptures provide early examples of mutual ministry and partnership that can inspire and instruct us today.

BRIEF THEME SUMMARY

Followers of Christ today find themselves participating in an exciting and dynamic movement of the Spirit worldwide. With the expansion of the church to every corner of our world, and the opportunity for creative partnerships, there is unprecedented possibility for those of us who are committed to living as God's Kingdom people. The challenge comes on two fronts: first, the forces of evil remain active and evident in the violence, poverty and pain experienced daily around the world; second, it takes intentional and prayerful effort to work cooperatively with others, because it requires patience and love.

In this session we will set the challenges of our day next to scriptural examples that provide examples of partnership in the teaching of Jesus and the example of the early church leaders such as James and Paul. Along with modern examples and opportunities for mutual ministry, these can guide us into new and deeper partnerships in our own lives as individuals, groups, and churches.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

As you read the overview for this week, what inspires and challenges you?

What was it in the working relationship between Paul and James that was crucial to an effective partnership in mission? What did each have to “give up” in order for God’s love to be shared?

The Apostle Paul instructed the Corinthian church to be generous in a time when physical famine was a threat to many people in Jerusalem. This is a clear example of God’s people sharing globally. As you read the passages from 1 and 2 Corinthians, note Paul’s generosity of spirit, and his own commitment to discipline and working with others. What is the biggest challenge for you in working with others? What are some lifestyle changes you can make in order to make you better able to support those in need in our world?

In the Good Samaritan example, the Samaritan makes some courageous decisions to help the person in need, putting himself in a place of inconvenience and even danger. This illustrated Jesus’ teaching about the need to love our neighbour as ourselves. What are some fears or apprehensions that prevent you from caring more boldly and generously for those in need in our world?

SERMON CONNECTION

The Preaching Guide has offered your pastor notes for a sermon based on Acts 15:1-35. You may want to invite your pastor to offer you a summary of this complex passage or discuss with you any follow-up questions you may have.

The key meeting at Jerusalem involved listening and learning from other churches in other parts of the world in order to support and promote the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ. In working through a sticky issue that was affecting the well-being of a church in Syria (the Antioch church), the Christians in Jerusalem made decisions to offer encouragement and support – both personally and with practical advice.

REFLECTION POINTS: What issue(s) are you presently wrestling with that affects the ministry of churches in other parts of the world? How are you helping them? What are you learning from the global church that is helping you live your Christian life more wisely?

The decision of James (the leader of the first church in Jerusalem) showed the wisdom and humility of being able to make adjustments so that Christians of a different cultural background could fellowship together (eat together!) with mutual respect. What are the experiences you have had in cross-cultural friendship with other Christians? What have been some of the challenges you face in bridging cultural tastes? What are some of the joys or insights you experienced?

APPLICATION TOOLS: Deepen your understanding and support for CBM’s Global Field Staff and international partnerships by exploring www.cbmin.org.

Take time to study the challenges and possibilities for individuals on the Canadian Micah Challenge website at www.micahchallenge.ca.

Consider at least one new activity or commitment for this next year that would strengthen a partnership that supports people in need in our world. As you pray and consider the future direction of your ministry in partnership with others, also consider using a daily reading guide such as Charles Ringma’s *Cry Freedom with Voices From the Third World* (Albatross Books, 1998). This will deepen your understanding of how Christians from places of poverty have come to understand and embrace and live out the good news of Jesus Christ.

INDIVIDUAL STUDY GUIDE

PRAYER GUIDE: Using a globe or world map, pray regularly for continents, countries and people around the world as you come to understand their needs. Focus on one continent every day and pray about the social issues it is facing. Combine this with a prayer for your church's involvements in the world.

South American table grace:

Lord God, give bread to those who are hungry; give hunger for justice to those who have bread. Amen.