

# The CHURCH and the WORLD

## In the Kingdom Mission



**“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” John 17:15-18 (NIV)**

The central mission of the Church remains the same as it was at its launch party: **Matthew 28:18-20** — discipling. Across the globe. Among all people. Christopher Wright in “The Mission of God” describes it this way, “It is not so much that God has a mission for His Church in the world, but that God has a Church for His mission in the world.”

We, the people of God, the universal Church, are here to unite as the hands and feet of Jesus across our world. **John 17:15-18** makes it clear that we are to be in the world but different to the world. We are, in fact, sent into the world with the message of the Gospel and with the ministry of justice (**Micah 6:8**). We are to reflect the redeeming love of God to humanity, a humanity that is wrecked by the effects of widespread evil and personal rebellion from the Creator.

“Jesus’ life on earth ended in a gruesome death. But that death was utterly reversed by a resurrected life so strong that it shattered the grip of sin and death. Jesus ascended with His Father’s approval... to rule at the right hand of God Almighty. A life designed for death, a death designed for life, and the virtues of utter goodness are what He taught and how He lived.”  
—Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer in *A Church Called To*

### EXPLORE AND SHARE

Jesus did not endure the agonies of the cross for us to inhabit a holy huddle or to live a life that is cloistered from the world.

**1. Not OF this world (Galatians 5:19-25)** In Galatians 5 we see a striking contrast between the acts of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. The distinction between the kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of heaven is an incredibly wide gap. It might well be that this vast difference is what motivates some followers of Jesus to sequester themselves for fear that they might begin a slippery slope of choices that reflect the kingdom of the world far more than the Kingdom of heaven.

**Discuss:** *In what ways are we vulnerable to living in the world AND OF the world? Jesus prayed that we would be sanctified by the truth. What does that mean? What does it look like for us daily?*

**2. INTO the world (Mark 10:42-45)** It is about time that we defined the word “world” as we use it in this study. It can describe cultures and societies that are in opposition to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet, more simply, it is ANYTHING that is in opposition to God, whether an individual or a group of individuals. Anyone who sets themselves up as their own god is adopting a “worldly” worldview.

**Discuss:** *What is the greatest need of anyone who is living in opposition to Christ? If the Gospel of Jesus is the hope of the ages, which we believe it to be, how can we share it with someone who might not believe they are hopelessly in need of the hope of Jesus?*

**3. A message and ministry (Ephesians 3:7-10)** We are most effective as servants of the Gospel if we are listeners and doers of the Word if we speak of Jesus while we serve the needs of the people. Eugene H. Peterson puts it this way in Ephesians 3 (The Message)— “This is my life work: helping people understand and respond to this Message. It came as a sheer gift to me, a real surprise, God handling all the details. When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God’s way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities. And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ. My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along. Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!”.

**Discuss:** *In what ways does Paul’s attitude of humility and lack of qualifications encourage you as a messenger of the Gospel? Pray for God’s leading as you consider the needs around you. What are some ways that your Connect could better impact the needs of those in your community? Create some action steps and begin to implement your plan.*

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### **PRAYER**

Dear Lord, break our hearts for what breaks Yours. Give us Your eyes to see the needs around us, Your heart to respond, and courage to act! Amen

### **SUGGESTED RESOURCES on The Church and the World:**

*The Mission of God*, Christopher J.H. Wright

*Kingdom Conspiracy*, Scot McKnight

*Letters to the Church*, Francis Chan

*The Jesus Way*, Eugene H. Peterson