

SESSION ONE: THE BIG STORY (1 hour)

We recommend you read through these notes before leading the session. They are intended to help you understand the purpose and journey of the session, and to help you keep the group focused on the core issues.

OVERVIEW:

We begin this course by stepping back and looking at the big picture of mission: the story of God's work throughout history to restore and redeem the whole of creation. We would encourage you to get your group to engage with at least one or two of these core ideas:

- *God created a world full of creative potential. We have corrupted it, but God is always at work to make things new again.*
- *God's consistent plan throughout history has been to work through a group of people to bring restoration and reconciliation to the world.*
- *God has always called his people to demonstrate his love for justice and care for the weak through how they live.*
- *As God's people we have a role to play in seeking to see God's will done on earth as in heaven, in anticipation of the day when heaven and earth are united and made new.*

START (10min):

If your group do not already know one another well, we recommend opening with an activity to help people start talking [see Extras].

Explain to the group that in a moment you are going to ask them to arrange themselves in a circle. They will need to stand in order of **how long they have been involved with this church**. Explain that on your left will be the person newest to the church, and on your right will be the person who has been here the longest. Each person needs to work out how long they have been part of the church, and then talk to one another to find the right place for them to stand.

Once everyone is standing in a circle (hopefully in the right place!), ask everyone to introduce themselves, and how long they have been involved with the church. You could also invite them to share whether or not they live in the local area, and if so, for how long.

Play the vox pops which introduces some people who have done this course before.

In the light of these comments, discuss as a group the hopes or concerns for the next six weeks of the course?

WATCH (10min):

Watch the DVD teaching clip 'Big Story' in which Chris Wright, Celia Appageyi-Collins and Mark Melluish reflect on God's mission throughout the Old Testament and on to today.

- What stood out to you the most from these comments?
- What challenged you about this understanding of mission?

DISCUSS (20min):

Read Luke 4:14-21 and answer these questions together.

1. If v18-19 summarises what Jesus was here to do, what does it have in common with what God had called Israel to do in the past?
2. What kind of help or intervention does Jesus claim he is anointed to bring? For each of them, consider whether this change is spiritual, emotional, physical or relational.
3. Where in the gospels do you see examples of Jesus brings about these changes to peoples' lives? What examples can you give of your church doing the same?
4. How would you sum up God's mission in the world?

Some thoughts on the questions:

1. *While Jesus' appearance in history is totally unique, unprecedented and changed everything, his ministry also stood in continuity with everything that God had been doing and saying throughout human history, in particular in his call to Israel to be a light to the Gentiles and bring salvation to them.*
2. *Is Jesus speaking literally or metaphorically when he says he is here to 'proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind'? He left his cousin to die in prison, and yet he did literally give sight to the blind. It is actually very hard to categorize the kind of change Jesus offered, because it seemed to touch every dimension of life.*
3. *Share examples of Jesus' teaching, as well as his healing and practical changes. Comparing ourselves to Jesus might not be the most encouraging exercise, but reflecting on the different ways Jesus brought change to people's lives can help us to consider how God wants to bring new life in every sense, not just in terms of what we believe.*
4. *This question is not a test, but an opportunity for the group to reflect on how they understand God's mission at the moment. It is helpful for the group to articulate what they think about this, as the next five sessions will probe this question more deeply, and perhaps challenge what they believe.*

STORY (Optional Extra)

Two examples of churches finding their place in God's big story of mission

- Battersea (3 min)
- MOSAIC Pieces – overseas example (6 min)

PRAY (15min):

Play the DVD clip of Pete Greig and write down one thing that stands out to you.

In twos, share your hopes and concerns as discussed at the start of the group and bring them to God.

ACT (5min):

This week's action is a piece of research. Ask a friend or colleague who is not a Christian the following two questions:

- What comes to mind when you think of Jesus?
- What comes to mind when you think of the church?

Bring whatever you find out back next week to share with the group.

EXTRAS

Each week we'll suggest some more ideas or resources that you might find helpful when preparing the session, especially if you have more than an hour. They include extra reading – an article or books – and additional activities or film clips you can swap in, to tailor the session to your group. Go to [website] to find out more.

During the session -

Opening Activity (*as above*)

Extra film clips

- Battersea (3 min)
- MOSAIC Pieces – overseas example (6 min)

In your own time -

Inside Out journal – Chapter 1

Suggested further reading

- Tim Chester, (ed.) *Justice, Mercy and Humility: Integral Mission and the Poor* (Paternoster)
- Donald B. Kraybill, *The Upside Down Kingdom* (Herald Press)
- Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret* (SPCK)
- Chris Sugden and Vinay Samuel, *Mission as Transformation* (ed.) (IVP)
- Chris Wright, *The Mission of God's People* (Zondervan)
- NT Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (SPCK)
- NT Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (SPCK)