

# The Missionary Nature of God

**Memory Text:** “Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and commander for the people.” (Isaiah 55:4)

**Setting The Stage:** Did you know that 94% of the world’s population recognizes the red and white Coca-Cola logo? Did you know that around the world the average person consumes a Coke product very four days? Did you know that Coca-Cola spends more money on advertising than Microsoft and Apple combined (\$2.9 billion v. \$2.3 billion)? Do you think Coca-Cola is on a mission? Someone said, “If God had given the task of world evangelization to the Coke company it would probably be done by now.”

Mission - “a sending or being sent to perform a service.” The church has been given a mission (Matt. 28:19, 20; Rev. 14:6-12). Essentially the mission is to share the good news of God’s saving grace (death, resurrection, and return) with those who don’t know or haven’t received it.

Missionary Statistics:

- In the un-evangelized world, there are about 20,500 full-time Christian workers and 10,200 foreign missionaries.
- In the evangelized non-Christian world, there are 1.31 million full-time Christian workers.
- In the Christian world, there are 306,000 foreign missionaries to other Christian lands. Also, 4.19 million full-time Christian workers (95%) work within the Christian world
- Bible distribution - approximately 78.5 million Bibles are distributed globally per year.
- Number of Christian books in print - there are approximately 6 million books about Christianity in print today.
- Number of Christian martyrs worldwide - an average of 159,960 per year.

Some begin the timeline of Christian missions with exploits of the apostle Paul, but you have to go back further than that to know where missions began. Ultimately, the Christian mission is God’s mission not ours. It began in the heart of God, is based on the love of God, and will be accomplished by the will and power of God.

This quarter’s lessons are based on the following model of salvation history:

1. God created men and women and gave them free will.
2. Our first parents abused their free will by disobeying God and they had to leave paradise.
3. God could not use force to bring them back to paradise.
4. God sent His Son on a mission to die in their place and reconcile them to Him.

5. God's mission is to make the offer of salvation known to all people and thus open the way for them to have redemption.

"At its basic level, mission is letting the whole world know about Jesus and what He has done for each of us and about what He promises to for us, now and for eternity. In short, we who know about these promises have been called to tell others about them as well."

## **Sunday – God Created Man and Woman**

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7

Have you ever wondered about your heritage; where you came from? It seems humans are a curious lot and desire to know our history. As of December 2013, the company Ancestry.com provided access to approximately 12.7 billion records and had 2.14 million paying subscribers. User-generated content included 191 million uploaded photos and more than 16 million uploaded stories, all in an attempt to help people find their roots.

Genesis 1 and 2 reveals our origin. It didn't begin in the primordial soup and turn into goo, which landed in the zoo, which in turn became you. The Bible reveals that this intricate, complex, and incredibly advanced piece of machinery came from the hand of a benevolent Creator.

**Genesis 1:26-28:** "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

What is about humans that stand out from other parts of this creation?

1. Adam and Eve were the crowning act of God's creation
2. Adam and Eve were not spoken into existence like everything else up to and including day six of creation. They were made with the hands of God.
3. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. They were given a moral capacity that other creatures were not given.
4. Adam and Eve were given dominion over all the creatures of the land, sea, and air.

*"Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character."*  
(Patriarchs & Prophets, p. 45) That image was likely most evident in terms of their spiritual nature. Adam and Eve were living beings endowed with a free will, a self-conscious personality.

## Monday – Free Will

Genesis 2:15-17; Joshua 24:15, 1 Kings 18:21

How do we know Adam and Eve were free moral agents? First, the Bible reveals that “God is love,” (1 John 4:8) and only love is real when it is given and received freely. Second, in the story of beginnings we find that God had planted a tree in the Garden of Eden that was to be a test of our first parent’s loyalty to their Maker. The very presence of the tree in the garden revealed that man was a free moral agent.

**Genesis 2:15-17:** “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

**Deuteronomy 30:19:** “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.”

**Joshua 24:15:** “And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

**1 Kings 18:21:** “And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word.”

God values our freedom to choose more than anything. Having free will means: 1) God does not determine my course of action; 2) I will be held morally accountable for my actions; 3) The universe didn’t make me do it. I have a choice regarding my actions.

## Tuesday – The Fall

Genesis 3:6, 7, 22-24

**Genesis 3:6, 7.** The fruit itself was not harmful (Education, p. 25) so what made the act of eating from the tree so bad? 1) The fruit was chosen above the express command of God signifying disobedience and rebellion; 2) The basis by which the fruit was taken implied God could not be trusted or loved. This one choice of our first parents had dire consequences, for in dying they would die, and all the world would reap the results of misery and ultimately death.

*“The tide of woe that flowed from the transgression of our first parents is regarded by many as too awful a consequence for so small a sin, and they impeach the wisdom and justice of God in His dealings with man. But if they would look more deeply into this*

*question, they might discern their error. God created man after His own likeness, free from sin.*

*“The earth was to be peopled with beings only a little lower than the angels; but their obedience must be tested; for God would not permit the world to be filled with those who would disregard His law. Yet, in His great mercy, He appointed Adam no severe test. And the very lightness of the prohibition made the sin exceedingly great. If Adam could not bear the smallest of tests, he could not have endured a greater trial had he been entrusted with higher responsibilities.*

*“Had some great test been appointed Adam, then those whose hearts incline to evil would have excused themselves by saying, “This is a trivial matter, and God is not so particular about little things.” And there would be continual transgression in things looked upon as small, and which pass unrebuked among men. But the Lord has made it evident that sin in any degree is offensive to Him.” (Patriarchs & Prophets, p. 60, 61)*

Why was the pair barred from the tree of life? **Genesis 3:22.** God had no plan to perpetuate sin, and so while sin existed on planet earth the tree of life could not be accessed. But all those who remain faithful to God will once again enjoy the fruit from the tree.

**Revelation 22:14:** “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.”

### **Wednesday – God’s Initiative to Save Us**

Genesis 3:9; John 3:14, 15; 2 Corinthians 5:21

I think we understand what someone means when, after they have lived a life ignorant of God’s salvation or opposing His free gift, they turn their hearts toward God and say, “I found Jesus.” It’s not like God wasn’t there all along trying to woo that person to His side. Actually, our response of repentance when “finding” Jesus reveals that God was pursuing us before we even thought about Him. “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8)

**Genesis 3:9.** The Bible records that after Adam and Eve sinned God came looking for them, not the other way around. On the contrary, because their shame and guilt, Adam and Eve hid from God’s presence, and humanity has been doing that ever since. Fortunately, God has been coming after us ever since as well. He speaks to each of us and says, “You don’t need to hide from life, your life; I will cleanse you, I will satisfy your deepest spiritual longing. I will give your life meaning and purpose. I will save you entirely.”

God’s missionary spirit is fully seen in the reincarnation and ministry of Jesus when He came to reveal the character of God, to prove Satan’s accusations wrong, to show the law of God could be kept, to die in the place of humanity, and to destroy death and the works of Satan.

What do the following verses tell us about the death of Jesus, the greatest demonstration of the love of God?

**John 3:14, 15:** “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

**Isaiah 53:4-6:** “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

**2 Corinthians 5:21:** “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

*“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’”* (Desire of Ages, p. 25)

On a mission Afghanistan to find high-value enemy insurgents, Staff Sergeant Robert Miller’s team of eight elite American soldiers and 15 Afghan troops were moving along a rocky, snow covered trail when shots rang out. Miller's captain was injured almost immediately.

As the squad took cover Miller realized they were badly outnumbered from above (100 to 22). Rather than retreat to safer ground he ran directly at the enemy, providing his men with the cover they needed to escape. His parents were told he saved the lives of 22 men. What makes a man give his life in order to save others? What makes a God make the ultimate sacrifice in order to save us? Love is the answer.

### **Thursday – Metaphors of Mission**

Luke 24:13-49

Mission is God’s initiative to save lost humanity and it is motivated by His love for each one of us. The gospels present Jesus on a mission to “seek and save that which is lost,” (Luke 19:10) to “do the will of” His Father, and “to finish the work.” (John 4:34) And, “as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” (John 20:21)

In **Matthew 5:13, 14**, what the two metaphors used for mission, and what do they stand for?

Salt and light represent the influence God desires Christians will have in the world. **Salt** is only worthwhile if it is applied and mixed into food (ever eaten salt-less bread before?). In Palestine it was gathered from marshes along the seashore or from inland lakes. The simple facilities for gathering it resulted in the presence of impurities. In contact with dampness, or exposed to rain, the highly soluble salt itself would wash away, leaving on the tasteless impurities.

The underlying idea Jesus is conveying when comparing our influence in this world to salt is in our quality to preserve. Before refrigeration, salt and spices were largely used for preservation. In a similar way you and I, by becoming an agent in saving others, exert a preserving and purifying influence in the world. This world would be a lot worse if it were not for the godly example and influence of Christians.

**Light** dispels darkness, and it is God's plan that through the lives of God's people they will dispel the darkness of the misapprehension of the character of God. Ancient lamps consisted of a clay or metal bowl often in the shape of a saucer, with the wick floating in the oil and its lighted portion resting on the side of the dish or projecting through a small opening. As we take in God's word and through the Holy Spirit live that word, then the light of God's goodness shines to all.

*"The missionary spirit needs to be revived in our churches. Every member of the church should study how to help forward the work of God, both in home missions and in foreign countries. Scarcely a thousandth part of the work is being done that ought to be done in missionary fields. God calls upon His workers to annex new territory for Him. There are rich fields of toil waiting for the faithful worker. And ministering angels will co-operate with every member of the church who will labor unselfishly for the Master."* (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 29)

**Appeal:** God's nature draws Him to seek us, to reveal Himself to us, and to draw us into a saving relationship with Him. God always invited men and women to become His agents in His mission. How will you respond to the invitation today?