

Lesson 1: What Is The Mission?

What we want students to learn: That God has been at work, weaving His rescue mission through history, making a way for people to be saved from the effects of sin.

What we want them to do with what they've learned: To step back and realize how amazing it is that God did all He did with them in mind, and to help them know how to respond accordingly.

Scripture Focus: Genesis 12:1-3, Deuteronomy 6:20-24, Zechariah 1:1-6, Jeremiah 23:5-6; Isaiah 53:5-7

Overview: God's mission. It's a concept that is tossed around in certain circles, but one that might prove hard to define. But it shouldn't be. In fact, all of Scripture speaks to His mission. What is God's mission? It's God's plan to redeem humankind from the effects of sin, demonstrated as He interjects His will throughout history and in the lives of humankind. Put simply, God's mission is rescue. It is recovery. We see this mission begin in Genesis, reach a new level in the Gospels, and ultimately, see its completion in Revelation. In this three-lesson study, your students will learn what God's mission is and where it started (Lesson 1), how Jesus was the apex of God's rescue mission (Lesson 2), and their role in being a part of God's mission.

Teacher Prep Video

The *elements Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your "God's Mission Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/gods-mission-teacher-prep>

Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* gives you background info for each book, while *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passages are used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **ym360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **What's The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

The Details

Genesis and Deuteronomy

- **Author:** While there's no specific author named within the texts, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis and Deuteronomy, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).

- **Time frame:** It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (a name for the first five books of the Bible, of which Genesis and Deuteronomy are a part.) Most of the material originated from Moses himself, and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), that would make the date for the writing of Genesis and Deuteronomy sometime in the 1400s or the 1200s BC
- **Purpose:** Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eves' fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people, but as the group God would work through to bring redemption to the world. Deuteronomy means, "second law." It was a reminder of the law of God for the second generation of Israelites in the desert before they entered the Promised Land. It reminded the people that the Lord is God. He is faithful to keep his promises to His people.

Zechariah

- **Author:** Zechariah, a priest, wrote the book of Zechariah, though there is some debate over the authorship of the last 5 chapters.
- **Time Frame:** The events of the book begin approximately 520 BC. It's possible the later chapters were not written until the early 5th century BC.
- **Purpose:** Zechariah is written after the Israelites returned from exile. Even though, the people had returned home, their lives were still exceedingly difficult. Zechariah wrote to encourage the people that God was in control and that He would remain faithful to them. Zechariah also writes about a Messiah from the line of David, who would bring peace back to the people.

Isaiah

- **Author:** Isaiah, son of Amoz wrote the book of Isaiah.
- **Time frame:** The events of Isaiah occurred between 740 and 681 B.C., though some parts of the book would have been constructed at a later date.
- **Purpose:** The purpose of this book was to call the nation of Judah back to God, to warn of coming judgment, and to tell of God's ultimate salvation through the Messiah.

The Main Point

These passages will be used to show that God is on a mission throughout the biblical storyline. This lesson is an overview and each passage is a snapshot that gives us clues about the bigger narrative of Scripture.

In this collection of verses we see God choosing Abram, rescuing Israel, giving the Law, being patient with Israel's disobedience, and telling of a coming Rescuer. All of these passages show God's on mission in the world and throughout history in order to rescue people from sin and death.

Lesson Plan

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible study section called *The Main Event*; an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

The Lead In

- **Goal:** To illustrate how God is at work weaving his rescue plan through all history making a way for people to be saved from the effects of sin.
- **Set-Up:** Create as many index cards as you will have groups of five to eight students. On each index card, write the name of a machine. These can be machines you see around you each day (i.e., a washing machine, a crane, a car, and so on), or they could include at least one fanciful machine (i.e., a back-hair groomer, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich maker, and so on).

FIRST, divide your group into teams of five to eight. If your group is small enough for only one team, that will work too. If it's larger, then the teams can compete against each other.

NEXT, explain that each team will be given a card with the name of a machine on the card. Their task is to work together to create a human version of that machine. The only rule is that everyone in the group must participate and each member should be one part of the machine. Give them five or so minutes to complete their machines.

THEN, allow the students to demonstrate how their machine works. When they've finished, gather the students back together.

FINALLY, explain that today, you'll be starting a three-lesson study on God's Mission, all about how God has been at work throughout history to make a way for people to be saved.

- Say: **Just like the parts of machine you created had to work together to complete the task, God has been orchestrating all of history to fulfill his mission.**

The Main Event

- **Goal:** That students will understand that God has been at work, weaving His rescue mission through history, making a way for people to be saved from the effects of sin.
- **Set-Up:** If possible bring a milkshake and a straw to use as an illustration for the first big teaching point.

FIRST, instruct students to turn to Genesis in their Bibles while you provide some context using the Bible Background. Set up the passage by telling them that this is a record of a conversation between God and Abram. Abram and his wife, Sarai, are unable to have children, yet God wants Abram to be the father of a great nation, the people of Israel. Then, read or have a student read Genesis 12:1-3. Ask:

- **What promises does God make to Abraham?**
 - *Answer:* "I will make you into a great nation," "I will bless you," "I will make your name great," "you will be a blessing."
- **Why is God's promise that Abram would be the father of a great nation so unbelievable?**
 - *Answer:* He and his wife are unable to have children.
- **According to verse two, what is the purpose of God blessing Abram?**
 - *Answer:* The purpose is that he would be a blessing. In other words, God is going to bless Abram, so that Abram can bless others.
- **What does it mean to be a blessing to others?**
 - *Answer:* The answers may vary, but the idea is to bring a happiness that is beyond circumstances. Abraham's family was to be a source of true joy for other people.

- **According to verse three, what is the scope of Abram’s blessing to others?**
 - *Answer:* All the peoples on earth will be blessed. The scope is worldwide. In other words, God has a worldwide mission to bring joy to all people through His chosen people.

NEXT, ask your students to think about their favorite milkshake. (You might even want to bring your favorite as an illustration) Ask:

- **What kind of milkshake do you like? What restaurant has the best milkshake in town?**
 - *Answer:* Answers will vary. Once you get them worked up about great milkshakes, ask them about their favorite straws.
- **Who has the best straws in town?**
 - *Answer:* Of course, they’ll think you’re crazy because straws are not a hot commodity.
- **When you drink a milkshake, do you use a straw? Why?**
 - *Answer:* The answer you’re looking for is because the straw gets the milkshake from the cup to your mouth.
- **What is the purpose of a straw?**
 - *Answer:* A straw is a conduit of milkshake from the glass to your mouth.

Explain that the point of a straw is to be a conduit of milkshake. The point of God choosing and blessing Abram was that he (and his family) would be a conduit of blessing to the entire world. God’s mission is to bless all people and he chose Abram’s family to be the channel for his blessing. Explain that this is the first big idea of this lesson: *that God called Abram to be the father of the Israelites, God’s chosen people, so that through Israel God would work to bring redemption to all nations.*

NEXT, instruct your students to go to Deuteronomy 6:20-24. Explain that this passage is describing Abram’s family many years later, after God rescued them from slavery in Egypt. God’s people wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, and then God brought them into the land He promised to Abram and gave them His law to live by. Remind them that God chose Israel in order to accomplish his mission for the entire world. Then, read or have a student read Deuteronomy 6:20-24 and ask:

- **What actions of God are described in this passage?**
 - *Answer:* God brought them out of Egypt, did great wonders, gave them land, fulfilled His oath, and gave them a law to obey.
- **How does God rescuing Israel from Egypt relate to His mission in the world?**
 - *Answer:* When God rescues Israel, He displays His power and His goodness to the entire world. He also demonstrates that He has authority over all people in all places.
- **How does God giving Israel the law and asking them to obey it relate to His mission in the world?**
 - *Answer:* The Law shows that God desires our obedience. When we disobey the Law serves to point out to us that we are a people who need to be rescued. Before people can be rescued from their sin, they must know that they have sinned.

Explain that you’ll talk more about this idea in a minute, but for now it’s important to note that this passage describes God’s greatness, not the deeds of the people. All of God’s actions are a part of His mission to rescue people from the effects of sin. Explain to students that this is the second big idea of this lesson: *God worked in powerful ways--including saving Israel from slavery in Egypt and giving them His Law--to protect and uphold Israel, all with His rescue mission in mind.*

THEN, instruct your students to go to Zechariah 1:1-2. You’ll probably want to provide some context for this Book using the Bible Background. Explain that God brought Israel through an amazing time of prosperity and peace under David. But beginning with Solomon, Israel turned from God. Explain that for hundreds of years

God sent prophets to warn Israel that if they didn't turn back to God, that God would allow other nations to take them out. They didn't listen, and God did as He promised. Say:

- **Israel, God's chosen people, was pretty much wiped off the map. But even then, showing His amazing grace, God worked to rebuild Israel. Here, we see a message of His faithfulness, that He still called Israel back to Him and still promised to be their God.**

Read Zechariah 1:1-2 and ask:

- **Have you ever been in a grocery store and seen a child throwing a temper tantrum? How do you think the parent(s) of that child feel about their child's extreme and public disobedience?**
 - *Answer:* Basically, we're looking for answers along the lines of embarrassed.
- **Even though God did amazing wonders and gave His people His law, they still disobeyed. It seems like, of all people, God's chosen people, should be able to follow God's rules. Why would the Bible include such an embarrassing account of God's chosen people?**
 - *Answer:* All people are sinful and need to be rescued. The Bible includes these embarrassing accounts because God's mission is a rescue mission, not a 12-step program. This passage shows us that even people who know God can disobey Him and need to be rescued.
- **How does God's patience with Israel relate to His mission in the world?**
 - *Answer:* God's patience reveals God's heart for His people and His faithfulness to His mission to rescue.
- **Say: The third big idea of this lesson is that Israel turned from God over and over again, and experienced God's judgment. But through it all God remained true to His rescue mission.**

NEXT, explain to your students that God has been setting up for His big move. At the center of His rescue plan is a Rescuer. Even way back in the Old Testament, God spoke about a coming rescuer who will accomplish His mission. Instruct your students to read Isaiah 53:5-7. Explain to them that this passage was written about Jesus 600 years before He was born, yet it clearly describes what Jesus experienced on the cross. Lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **God's plan from the very beginning was to send Jesus to rescue us from our sin. He would suffer in our place taking on the punishment that we deserved for our sins, so we could be saved from the effects of sin. How does it make you feel to know that God's rescue plan was always to send Jesus?**
 - *Answer:* Answers could include grateful, overwhelmed, awestruck, etc.
- **How does Jesus fulfill the purpose of God's chosen people to be a 'blessing' to all the nations?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus brings true joy by defeating the power of sin in our lives.
- **Say: The fourth big idea of this lesson is: The goal all along was to send a Rescuer through God's people, a Rescuer who would pay the ultimate price so that through His sacrifice, redemption and salvation would be available to all nations.**

FINALLY, conclude by reviewing the four big ideas from this lesson. See how much of these students can remember off the top of their heads.

- **God called Abram to be the father of the Israelites, God's chosen people, so that through Israel God would work to bring redemption to all nations.**
- **God worked in powerful ways--including saving Israel from slavery in Egypt and giving them His Law--to protect and uphold Israel, all with His rescue mission in mind.**
- **Israel turned from God over and over again, and experienced God's judgment. But through it all God remained true to His rescue mission.**
- **The goal all along was to send a Rescuer through God's people, a Rescuer who would pay the ultimate price so that through His sacrifice, redemption and salvation would be available to all nations.**

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To step back and realize how amazing it is that God did all He did with them in mind, and to help them know how to respond accordingly.
- **Set-Up:** Paper (at least 8.5 x 11) and pens.

FIRST, make sure students have a good grasp on the main idea:

- **That God has been at work, weaving His rescue mission through history, making a way for people to be saved from the effects of sin.**

THEN, ask students to think about the series of circumstances that led to them coming to faith in Jesus. Ask:

- **Was God at work making a way for you to be saved from the effects of sin?**
 - Answer: Absolutely, just like God was at work through history, He also works in the events of our individual lives to bring us to faith in Jesus.

NEXT, pass out the pens and paper and instruct your students to develop a timeline of God's rescue plan. Tell them to include the four big ideas from the lesson today, but to also include significant events that God used to bring them to faith in Jesus. Allow each student time to share from their timeline if they would like.

FINALLY, ask:

- **How does it make you feel to know that God thought of you when He put His rescue plan in motion?**
- **What are some ways that God orchestrated events to rescue you?**

Close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the "God's Mission: Lesson 1" devotions to your students. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Facebook, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Consider texting students a couple of times during the week to encourage them to follow through with reading the devotions.

We Want To Hear From You . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.

