



Video Curriculum and Teaching Series

THEME ONE: MISSION
Visual Liturgy “Mystery”

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THEME ONE: MISSION

Theme Introduction	3
Lesson One Facilitator's Guide	6
Visual Liturgy: Mystery	7
Appendix 1: About To Be Told.....	8

THEME ONE

Introduction

The day that Jesus told his followers to “go into all the world” with His amazing message that the Kingdom of God had arrived was the day the word “mission” took on a whole new meaning. Ever since, Jesus’ followers have felt compelled to move onward and outward with that good news so that others, too, might believe. Unfortunately, Jesus didn’t hand His disciples a manual called, “Three Easy Steps To World Evangelization” or, “Seven Critical Things A Missionary Needs To Do In My Name.” He simply said, “Be my witnesses.” He also said, “Teach all that I have commanded you.”

He left the rest up to us, His followers, to discern with the help of the Holy Spirit. And maybe He knew that we would be better off with the living Spirit of God guiding us as opposed to a set of specific rules and techniques. Maybe He knew that the rules and techniques would need to change with each new generation. The closest thing to a rule that Jesus gave us in this regard is simply that all of us should go.

Here I Am

It seems, though, that somewhere along the way we lost The Way. We relinquished the mission to the few who were daring enough to pray, “Here I am Lord, send me,” and then we breathed a sigh of relief to have been released from our assignment.

With so many different needs in so many places, we became overwhelmed and confused. We not only forgot whose mission we were on, we forgot that we were on a mission at all. We substituted God’s Divine plan with our own plans for significance and purpose. Action replaced compassion. Rational decision-making replaced radical listening. And in the process, we began to see others who are not like us as objects worthy only of our benevolence or fear rather than subjects, exactly like us, of powerful possibility and potential.

Maybe it seems obvious to you that we have gotten detoured along the way and you, too, are searching for the way back. Or maybe you think things are as good as they can possibly be considering human nature and our being prone to misinterpretation and missteps. Maybe you wonder, “What’s the big deal about this one aspect of Christianity anyway? Why should we focus so much on the mission that Jesus gave us?”

Early Missionaries

Our beliefs about mission are important because they affect all of our actions. Throughout most of history, for instance, Christians believed that spreading God’s message was to be done no matter what the cost. A Christian missionary looked like an explorer or pioneer, and unfortunately at times-- a conquistador.

Sent by emperors and kings, popes and monastic orders, they were brave souls going into unknown territories with the charge of claiming those places for their kings and for their God. Many were single men or women who left family and friends for the sake of their call. Others went as families or with teams to take God’s message where others dared not go. Throngs of missionaries lost their lives trying faithfully to fulfill what they thought Jesus meant by His mandate for mission.

But many of these missionaries were influenced by the dominant beliefs and values of their own cultures and kingdoms without a full understanding of how their culture had intermingled with and even interfered with Jesus’ original charge.

Creeds and Covenants

As church missionary societies began forming in the early 1600’s, they developed formal creeds and covenants that established the hard and fast rules and techniques that

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THEME ONE

Introduction

Jesus had refused to establish. They trained men and women in theology and missiology with the hope that their newly-gained knowledge would prepare them for their global missions.

That knowledge, however, was informed by the cultural influences of the dominant nations that were sending the missionaries out. The result was that European cultural values and norms were mingled with and presented as Christian values and norms. As they spread the good news of God's Kingdom, these missionaries also spread the influence and dominance of European Christendom. In the process, the beliefs, values, and cultural heritage of other nations was often buried.

Specialized Skills

Later, in the early 1900s, being a missionary began looking much like any other career choice for North Americans and Europeans. Missionaries went out with the same kinds of skills and knowledge-base as their counterparts in business, engineering, social studies, science, or government. They participated as specialists or managed an increasing number of people, projects, and resources for their particular denomination or sending agency's initiatives in other countries.

With their knowledge and skills, they also began receiving a new type of orientation to help them "cross over" to new cultures in order to minister effectively. But once again, what that orientation looked like was largely left to the discretion of the sending church or mission agency. The teaching was based on the beliefs and values from the dominant culture that assumed the ones being sent had the right or duty, even the obligation, to enforce their systems and frameworks on others. And even though dominant nations were becoming more aware of the possible negative consequences of "ethnocentrism"¹, They found it increasingly difficult to break from their framework as they went about their mission business in other parts of the world.

¹ Ethnocentrism means evaluating or judging other peoples and cultures with the criteria and standards of one's own culture.

Short-term Missions

In the latter part of the same century, with the ease of travel and the proliferation of churches, mission agencies, and newly forming non-governmental organizations, what it looked like to be a missionary morphed once again. It became popular to mobilize groups of young people to participate in "short-term serving teams" or "mission trips." Anyone who so desired could now choose to experience "missions" for a period ranging from a few days to a few years.

As a result, the 1980s and 1990s approach to missions became more project-oriented, donor-driven, and almost entirely focused on the experience of the ones being sent. Few people questioned how their sense of entitlement might muddle up the mission.

Missions as "Partnerships"

As the millennium changed, the mission paradigm evolved yet again. "Partnership" became the new buzzword. And although the intent was to develop more empowering, mutually-beneficial North/South relationships for the purpose of being more compassionate in a less paternalistic way, the business connotation of "partner" that North Americans applied to the interactions left neighbors to the South a bit wary.

Even when people got the relational part right, they tended to create partnerships that kept the nexus of power securely in their hands. The result is that some nations accuse other nations of using church relationships to knowingly or unknowingly control, manipulate, or patronize.

Maybe it would serve us well to take some time to listen, question, and think about what "mission" means in God's Kingdom – and think about how we do what we do in Jesus' name.

THEME ONE

Introduction

About this Theme

This theme of this To Be Told DVD series is entitled, "Mission." This theme is meant to provoke thought, encourage analysis and evaluation, and motivate all of us to consider what it would mean for us to realign ourselves to God's mission. As we gain profound insights and increased perspective from theologians, pastors, Christian leaders, and practitioners with experience following God in all walks of life, we will be asked to evaluate our own beliefs and practices as related to mission and the church.

The various videos that make up this theme will introduce us to what our friends from other areas of the world have to say about mission, and the way missiological history has been written. Those of us from a dominant nation whose ideals and behaviors have become the ones to emulate can scarcely fathom what it would feel like to be challenged or questioned. But our friends do so with such grace and humility that even those of us most adamant about the Euro/American lifestyle, culture and gospel may begin to understand some of the unnecessary costs to others associated with our way of doing things.

This theme has an accompanying facilitator's guide that will allow a small group or larger gathering of people of faith to see, reflect, evaluate thoughts and feelings, and respond to the various themes presented.

Through teaching videos, liturgical videos, and stories in different modules, participants will be challenged to grow deeper in their own understanding, listen to the stories of others, and tell other people about their own journey.

In this theme there are four lessons:

Lesson One, "Whose Mission," explores our thinking about Misio Dei, or God's mission.

Lesson Two, "The Whole Mission," offers insight on what the mission is all about, and it challenges our tendencies to be historically reductionist in our understanding.

Lesson Three, "Friendship Trips," examines the attitudes and beliefs about mission, serving, compassion, and behaviors that accompany them.

Lesson Four, "Kingdom Connections," helps us look at alternative ways of becoming Kingdom citizens together as we respond to God's invitation to join Him in His plan for total restoration of His creation.

To learn more about To Be Told, please see Appendix One. You can also visit:

- www.theworkofthepeople.com
- www.tobetold.info

THEME ONE

Lesson One: Whose Mission?

Facilitator's Guide

The purpose of the Facilitator's Guide is to help you create a space for meaningful dialogue and discussion around some core principles relating to the Kingdom of God. The **To Be Told** series presents key issues from the perspective of Jesus followers commonly overlooked and whose voices often remain unheard or ignored. Our hope is that as participants reflect in community on the ideas and values presented, they will gain valuable understanding and insight concerning God and His mission for humanity and all of His creation.

We recommend finding an experienced facilitator to help group processing. If one is not available, have the group assign someone to serve in the role who is familiarized with the material who will ensure a safe and respectful environment and keep the group conversation moving in a positive direction that permits full engagement and participation of each group member according to their desire and willingness to do so. Individuals may wish to reflect on their own first and then enter into dialogue with others in the participating community to process significant ideas, concerns, pertinent experiences, learning's or suggestions.

Please read each discussion question carefully and allow time for responses and conversation. Be sure to allow sufficient time according the number of people in the group (2-3 minutes per person). Try to synthesize and capture key ideas as the group processes by writing them down on a flip chart or white board.

Lesson One

"Whose Mission?" explores to the concept of *Misio Dei* or God's mission. What we believe about this directly affects what we do and how we do it. If, for example, we unwittingly mingle the gospel message with a particular national, political, or organizational mindset, what we do and how we do it will be influenced by that particular mindset.

If, however, we understand that all of us are on one mission and that mission is the brainchild of the One who created all of us, we will more likely be influenced by His agenda.

We may develop the ability to see those places where our institutional culture or national heritage is muddying the Gospel message. We may then become more eager to cooperate with each other to accomplish His mission instead of focusing so intently on our own goals and accomplishments. We may be more likely to look for a solution that makes sense for everyone, and to include all stakeholders in the decision-making and planning instead of seeking to control what is done and how it is done. We may be more sensitive to how our actions affect others, and we may therefore seek to avoid those things that are detrimental to others.

Additional parts of this Lesson include:

- Teaching Video: *Misio Dei*
- Video Testimony: Julio's Story

THEME ONE

Lesson One: Whose Mission?



Visual Liturgy: Mystery

Introduction:

The imagery and text of biblical passages are meant to encourage us to think about God's ongoing work of creation and redemption. It tells a story that began "in the beginning," and is still unfolding today.

As we rethink how we define mission, we may begin to recognize that it is not something we do, but rather something already in motion that God invites us to join. Unlike the other video segments in this lesson, the idea is to allow the liturgy to "speak" to participants as a work of art without a long, formal discussion. Suggested questions for personal reflection and/or group conversation are included below.

Note to Facilitator:

If you have not already done so, please read the **Facilitator's Guide** to create an appropriate environment for participants to engage meaningfully in the conversation. Be sure participants have had time to get to know one another and then proceed through the guide, allowing enough time for the group to fully discuss and interact.

[Watch the Liturgical Video now and allow participants time afterward for soaking it in. We suggest singing a song or praying as an introduction to the gathering time. We also suggest the facilitator give a general overview of the Theme and Lesson before beginning presentation of the other segments and how it relates to this particular group or gathering.]

Reflecting:

- Do you think that this video tells a story? If so, what story does it tell? If not, what do you think the video is "about"?
- What images or phrases stick with you even after the video is over? Why do you think those images remain with you?
- How does this video portray God's ongoing mission?
- What does that portrayal say about your role in God's mission?
- What is the danger in seeing mission work as something that we do for others? How does it change if the mission is not ours, but God's mission that we have been personally invited to join?

THEME ONE

Appendix 1: About To Be Told

“They will ask, ‘When will it come? Is it here or is it there?’ But I tell you, the Kingdom of God is here now among you, my followers.” -- Jesus of Nazareth

Introducing you to a new way of experiencing God's Mission

To Be Told is a powerful multi-media, alternative teaching series featuring stories that reveal God's Kingdom on earth and the integral nature of the Gospel. Our hope is that as you hear and see these stories you will be moved toward Jesus and passionate participation in His mission to make all things new.

God has been using stories to reveal himself since the beginning of time, but today, many of these stories are never told. We are called to tell them. And like Jesus, we seek to tell them with creativity, artistry, and passion. The stories tell the dreams, experiences, lessons, and hopes of faith communities in some of the more marginalized and forgotten places in Latin America, North America, Africa, and beyond as they seek to become the new kind of community Jesus dreamed of when He taught about peace, justice, faith and love.

This series challenges the status quo, raises a new awareness of God's Kingdom as present and active in today's world, and promote more intimate and synergistic connections among diverse communities of faith.

Inviting you into a new way of relating to others on the Way

To Be Told uses real stories, powerful images, visual liturgy and guiding questions to help churches and communities of faith move toward new paradigms of integral and relational mission.

You will be challenged to re-imagine the Kingdom in your own community, and re-integrate your community into the global community of faith that is actively participating in God's plan for total restoration of His creation.

The materials include:

- **Video modules.** Stand-alone video testimonials that convey truths of God's message and Kingdom principals. These videos can be used individually or together.
- **Guides for group processing.** Discussion guides that accompany the video testimonial series provide questions designed to stimulate deeper reflection towards action.
- **Web-based social networking.** Parts of the video project will be placed on various social networks as a part of a viral strategy to communicate these powerful stories on a broader scale. Interacting with other people via the web will help provide new insights, ways of thinking, relating, and acting that align with God's restorative plans.

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