



Called to be women in mission

Exploring new opportunities

*A Bible study that helps women
understand their calling wherever they are*



contents



1	introduction	<i>5–10 minutes</i>	3
2	the mission of God	<i>30 minutes</i>	5
3	women in the mission of God	<i>30 minutes</i>	8
4	new possibilities	<i>5–10 minutes</i>	9
5	closing	<i>5–10 minutes</i>	10

To the leader

This Bible study provides a foundation for understanding God's call to us to be women in mission—in our homes, in our congregations, in our communities, and in the world.

Participants will work in clusters of 16–24 people divided into four small groups (4–6 people in each small group). Each cluster will work on one “mission map,” with each small group studying three Scripture passages and working on one quarter of the map. The size of your total group will determine how many mission maps you will need (if you have fewer than 16 participants, you will need only one map). Make arrangements to use a comfortable room with movable chairs.

Time required

Approximately 1½ hours

Materials needed

- Copies of *Lutheran Book of Worship* or *With One Voice*
- Bibles (several translations)
- Large sheets of newsprint prepared in advance to create the mission map shown on page 4
- A sheet of newsprint displaying the assigned Scripture passages and discussion questions for groups A, B, C, and D (see page 5). Or page 5 could be photocopied as a handout.
- A sheet of newsprint displaying the two questions on page 9
- Marking pens (at least one for each small group)
- Masking tape or thumbtacks (for hanging the maps)
- A copy of the handout on page 11 for each participant
- Packets of small square self-sticking notes in a variety of colors

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introduction: the vision *5-10 minutes*

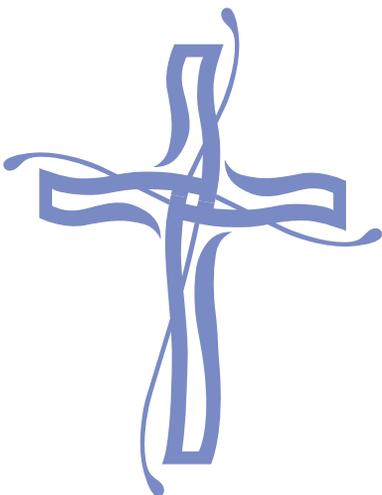
Open with a reading of 2 Corinthians 5:17–20a (you may read the passage yourself or secure a volunteer reader in advance):

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ; since God is making his appeal through us.

Follow the Scripture reading with a prayer that will help the participants to focus on the purpose of the Bible study. You may use your own prayer or the prayer below:

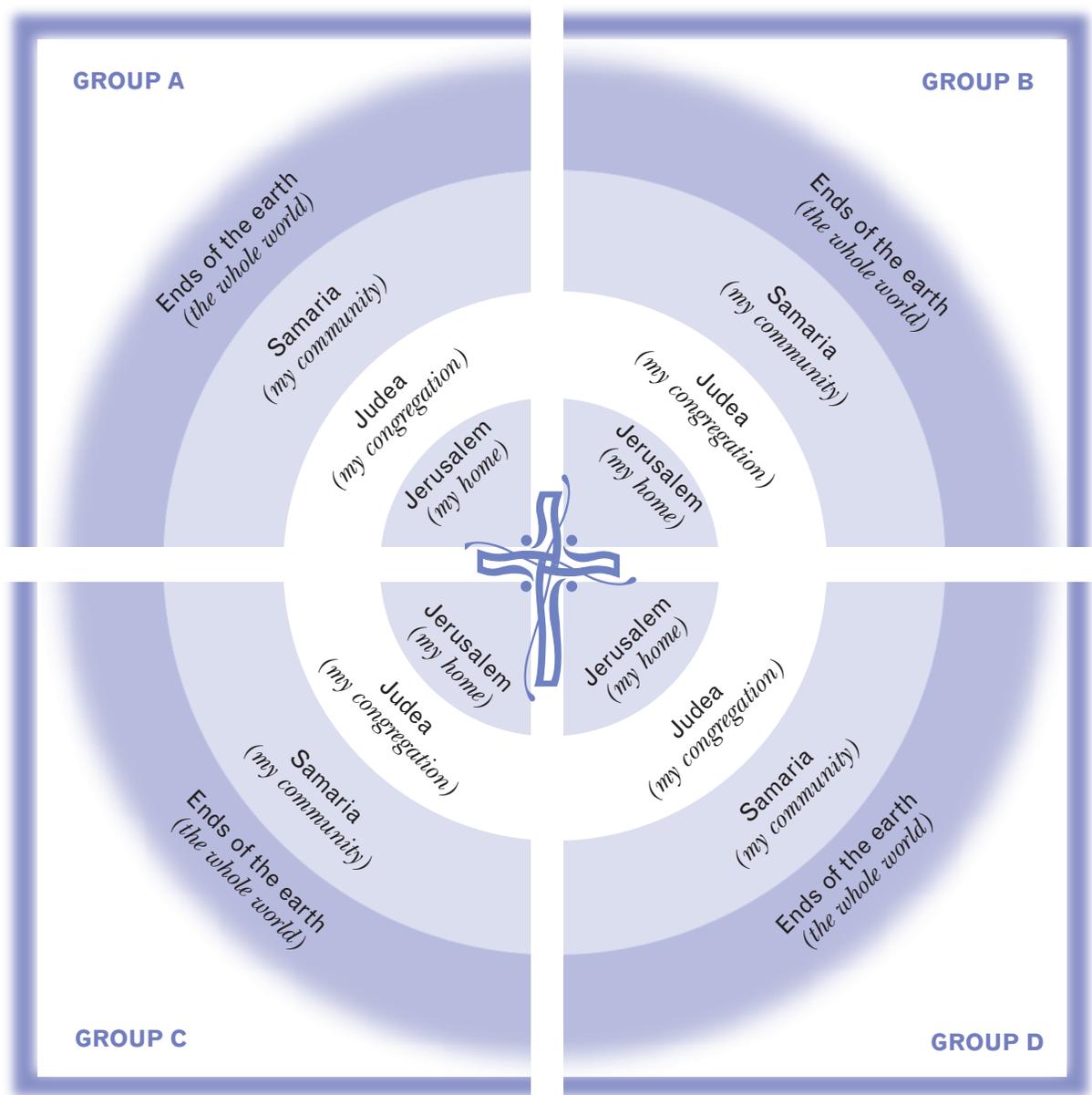
Gracious God, you have shown your love to us in so many ways, and especially through the gift of your Son. Help us to feel that we are indeed your new creation, and open our hearts as we seek to understand new ways to be your representatives in the world. Help us to share the good news of Jesus Christ and to be wise, courageous, and compassionate ministers of reconciliation to those we meet in all parts of our lives. Amen

God is a missionary God, involved in transforming the whole world: each person, the church, society, and the earth itself. God brings life to the dead and good news to a hurting, broken world. There is no place or condition of humanity that is outside or beyond the love of God in Christ. From within our most intimate selves to the far-flung corners of the earth, all of existence is the scene of God's mission activity.



introduction (continued)

Our diagram (*point to the drawing on the newsprint prepared in advance*) depicts this mission: the cross of Jesus stands at the center of a continual outward movement to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8 challenges us to comprehend the vast scope of God's mission: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."





the mission of God *30 minutes*

The purpose of this part of the Bible study is to help us understand the fullness of God's mission in the world. By looking at a variety of Scripture passages, we will identify the varied settings and aspects of God's saving and transforming work.

A large map (in four sections) should be provided for each group of 16–24 women working with the assigned Scripture texts (A, B, C, or D). Each group will search its Bible passages to find the commands that relate to Jerusalem (the home), Judea (the congregation), Samaria (the community), and the ends of the earth (the whole world).

ASSIGNMENT *(Allow 15 minutes for small group work.)*

Each group (A, B, C, or D) of 4–6 persons studies three assigned texts.

GROUP A

Matthew 28:19–20
Luke 4:18–19
Mark 12:30–31

GROUP C

Luke 15:6, 9, 32
Ephesians 2:8–22
2 Corinthians 5:18–20

GROUP B

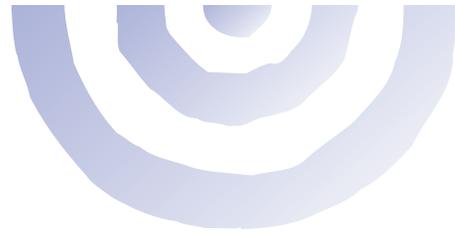
John 17:20–23
Matthew 25:31–46
Mark 16:6–7

GROUP D

Matthew 10:5–8
Luke 24:45–49
Romans 8:19–21

For each Scripture passage, answer the following questions:

- *What kind of situation is being transformed by the activity of God? (Note: a passage may contain more than one arena of activity.)*
- *What is the mission challenge in this situation? How are we challenged to be involved?*
- *Summarize each mission challenge in a word or phrase expressed as a command. (There may be several commands in each text.) Write each command on your segment of the mission map, scattering them over the entire area of the map.*



the mission of God *(continued)*

TO THE LEADER

The following commands might be identified in the Scripture texts:

GROUP A

Matthew 28:19–20	Go! Make disciples!	Baptize!	Teach!
Luke 4:18–19	Preach!	Proclaim release!	Set free!
	Recover sight!	Liberate!	
Mark 12:30–31	Love God!	Love your neighbor!	

GROUP B

John 17:20–23	Be one!		
Matthew 25:31–46	Feed the hungry!	Give water to the thirsty!	
	Clothe the naked!	Welcome the stranger!	
	Care for the sick!	Visit the imprisoned!	
Mark 16:6–7	Go and tell!		

GROUP C

Luke 15:6, 9, 32	Find the lost!		
Ephesians 2:8–22	Break down walls!	Create anew!	
	Reconcile!	Preach peace!	
2 Corinthians 5:18–20	Reconcile!	Represent Christ!	Appeal!

GROUP D

Matthew 10:5–8	Go!	Preach!	Heal!
	Raise the dead!	Cleanse!	Cast out demons!
Luke 24:45–49	Preach forgiveness!		
Romans 8:19–21	Liberate creation!		

Reassemble as a large group and have groups A, B, C, and D share their portion of the mission map, reviewing for the others the commands they have identified. Pieces of the map should be placed together on the wall or floor in front of the larger group; the groups' efforts may resemble the completed map shown on page 7. (Allow 10 minutes for sharing.)

biblical mission commands

GROUP A

GROUP B

Ends of the earth
(the whole world)

*Proclaim
release!*

Visit the imprisoned!

Samaria
(my community)

Love God!

Preach!

*Welcome the
stranger!*

Care for the sick!

Set free!

Judea
(my congregation)

Feed the hungry!

*Love your
neighbor!*

Liberate!

Baptize!

Go and tell!

Clothe the naked!

Go! Make disciples!

Jerusalem
(my home)

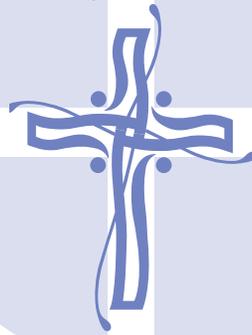
Be one!

Recover sight!

Teach!

Send!

*Give water to
the thirsty!*



Create anew!

Preach!

*Break
down walls!*

Heal!

Cleanse!

Appeal!

Reconcile!

Go!

*Liberate
creation!*

*Raise the
dead!*

Preach peace!

Find the lost!

*Preach
forgiveness!*

Represent Christ!

*Cast out
demons!*

GROUP C

GROUP D

3

women in the mission of God *30 minutes*

women in mission as individuals

Ask the participants to name examples of women in the Bible who were involved in God's mission in the world. Encourage them to elaborate on the challenge each woman faced or the particular contribution she made. (Examples could include Miriam, Sarah, Ruth, Naomi, or Esther in the Old Testament, or Mary, Elizabeth, Mary Magdalene, Lydia, or Dorcas in the New Testament. You may wish to bring up a lesser-known example, such as Phoebe, a deacon in the early church (Romans 12:1), or Shiphrah and Puah, two Egyptian midwives in the time of Moses (Exodus 1:15–22). *(10 minutes)*)

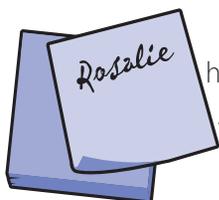
Empowered by the Holy Spirit, these women were caught up in bringing God's redeeming presence into a variety of personal and historical situations. They listened, prayed, suffered, rejoiced, and often risked their lives being the women of God.

Other women in history come to mind. Katie Luther carried out her own ministry of hospitality and care in addition to helping her husband, Martin Luther. Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch Protestant, spent time in the Ravensbruck concentration camp because of her family's involvement in helping Jews escape the Nazis during World War II. She organized a highly successful Bible study in the camp, where her barracks became known as "the crazy place where there is hope," and she survived to bear compelling witness to her faith. These women are part of a continuing stream of witnesses from the beginning until now. *(Leader: Add or substitute other historical examples.)*

Just as women throughout history have participated in God's mission in the world (including our own mothers, grandmothers, and aunts!), so do we today. We listen, follow, serve, witness, take risks, and work to bring God's peace and wholeness to the ends of the earth. In the following assignments, we will identify ourselves, individually and communally, as women who participate in the mission of God in our daily lives.

ASSIGNMENT *(10 minutes)*

Distribute the handout on page 11 to each person, and ask the participants to gather again in their groups of 4–6. Ask for a volunteer in each group to serve as facilitator for the discussion and make sure that everyone gets a chance to participate.



At the end of the reflection and discussion period, ask each participant to write her name on several self-sticking notes and place them on the mission map by the specific commands she fulfills.

Reassemble as a larger group and review the map together. Note the variety of ways individual women are participating in the mission of God.



Women meet and work together to fulfill the mission of God.

women in mission as part of a community

As a community of women, we also participate in God's mission. Like the company of women who followed Jesus (see Luke 8:1-3), companies of followers today are meeting and working together to fulfill the mission of God.

ASSIGNMENT *(10 minutes)*

Identify and describe groups in your congregation who are participating in God's mission today. If you currently have a women's organization in the congregation, include its activities. Think, too, of other groups of women in the congregation and of groups that include women along with men or children.

For each group identified, write the group's name on a self-sticking note and place it on the mission map by the mission command in which they participate.



Women participate in the mission of God in a variety of ways, offering a great diversity of gifts in their witness to Christ. As we name ourselves and other women, we renew and broaden our vision of God's mission and the many ways women participate in it. We are surrounded by a multitude of witnesses to our life-giving God, women empowered by the Spirit to witness to the ends of the earth.

new possibilities *5-10 minutes*



In this part of the Bible study we will identify new directions and possibilities for participating in God's mission.

We have renewed our vision of God's mission in Christ through this Bible study. We have identified women who have participated in God's mission. As Lutheran women, we stand at the edge of new mission opportunities.

Assignment

- *What is God calling us to do in the years ahead?*
- *Are there some special mission challenges God is placing before us?*



Allow 5 minutes of silent meditation for each participant to think about the questions above. On a self-sticking note, each may write down one mission challenge to which she wants to respond or one to which the group should respond.

Invite the women to share their visions and attach the visions to the map(s). You may wish to alternate the sharing with the singing of each stanza of the closing hymn.



closing *5-10 minutes*

HYMN

Sing a mission hymn together at the conclusion of the Bible study. Or alternate singing one stanza of the hymn with listening to visions for mission shared by portions of the group in turn. (*Note: The visions for new mission directions should be saved and used in your group's future planning meetings.*)

Suggestions for hymns from *Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)* and *With One Voice (WOV)*:

- "Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling" (LBW 381)
- "Rise Up, O Saints of God!" (LBW 383)
- "Rise, Shine, You People!" (LBW 393)
- "Lord, Speak to Us, That We May Speak" (LBW 403)
- "Christ Is the King!" (LBW 386)
- "O Lord, Send Forth Your Spirit" (LBW 392)
- "The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve" (WOV 723)
- "We All Are One in Mission" (WOV 755)
- "Arise, Your Light Has Come!" (WOV 652)
- "Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading" (WOV 687)

PRAYER

When all have shared their visions, offer a brief prayer, thanking God for the ministry of all people and asking for God's power and vision for each woman's own life, for your congregation, and for the whole Church's ministry of reconciliation in the world. You may use your own prayer or the prayer below:

O God, we have been reminded of the joyful task we have of witnessing to your activity in our lives and in the world. Thank you for trusting us with this work. Help each woman present as she seeks to be your servant in a troubled and hurting world. Open our eyes to signs of your grace and to our opportunities for witness and service. Give us the courage to carry out your mission as individuals and as part of our congregation, our community, and the whole Church, so that all people may come to know your saving love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Called to Be Women in Mission

FOR REFLECTION

Review the commands on the mission map and think about the ways that you as an individual carry them out

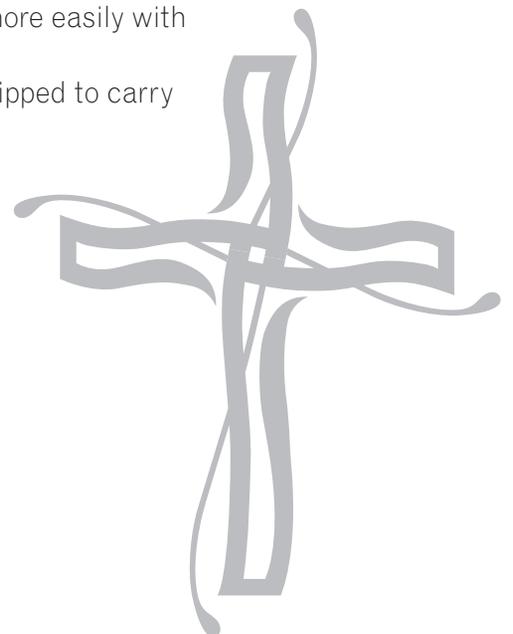
- in your home
- in your congregation
- in your neighborhood or community and in your work
- in areas beyond your community

Remember the ways that you use your money and your prayers as well as your time and energies in fulfilling these commands to carry out God's mission.

FOR DISCUSSION

Share your individual reflections with each other (if you feel comfortable doing so). Then reflect together on the following questions:

- Which commands are easier to fulfill? Why?
- Which commands are harder to fulfill? Why?
- Are there some commands that we can carry out more easily as individuals?
- Are there some commands that we can carry out more easily with the help and companionship of others?
- What can we do when we feel unqualified or ill equipped to carry out a mission command?



Called to Be Women in Mission is one program in the Listen, God Is Calling series produced by the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to help women's groups explore together what God is calling them to be and do.

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