

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. The top left shows a sandy beach meeting the ocean. The rest of the image is dominated by dark, jagged rock formations extending into the sea. White-capped waves are crashing against the rocks, creating a stark contrast with the deep blue water. On the left side, a wooden boardwalk or path runs along the edge of the cliffside, providing a vantage point over the ocean.

Contending for the Renewal of the Central Coast

JUNE 2024 SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

WEEK 1

Called - Missional Mandate

In this first week, we investigate the idea that as followers of Jesus, every Christian is both an agent and an object of His divine mission. Not only are we agents of reconciliation – ambassadors who work with God to restore right relationships between all things; we are also objects – we too are things that need restoring! In other words, His reconciling mission is at work both WITHIN us and THROUGH us. That’s how it’s meant to work. A healthy, obedient, and sustainable life of apprenticeship to Jesus is attentive to both roles.

Your dialogue this week will reflect on the key scriptures below, which call us to embody this two-fold ministry. In your personal reflection and group dialogue, try to identify practical ways to live out this calling in your normal daily interactions. Consider how we move beyond theoretical understanding into actionable mission, participants in God’s plan of making all things new.

Key Scriptures



2 Corinthians 5:17-20

John 13:34-35

Matthew 28:18-20

Dialogue Questions

1. How does Jesus articulate this two-fold call in John 13:34-35, and how might His command shape both our identity and our actions?
2. Think through a normal day and start to catalogue the myriad places and situations where relationships between God, people, and things are disordered.
3. What practical steps can we take this week then, to live out our shared calling as ministers of reconciliation?

“God doesn’t just send the Church to do mission, He sends the Church as the mission.”

– Alan Hirsch

Personal Activity:

Contemplate – Consider how the relationship of perfect love between Father, Son and Spirit informs and gives shape to God’s ministry of reconciliation.



WEEK 2

Gifted - Equipped by the Spirit

During this second week, we focus on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts. Understanding and utilising these gifts is essential for the body of Christ to function effectively in its mission. When we explore the diversity of gifts as described in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Ephesians 4, we see the purpose of these gifts is to achieve growth, unity, and maturity within the church. It seems such ambitions aren't possible without this Spiritual equipping.

The week's dialogue ought to encourage participants to identify their own spiritual gifts through both an inventory activity, and the insights of friends. By recognizing how these gifts are manifested in our lives and in the lives of others, we can better appreciate the unique ways God equips His people for service. Understanding our gifting also fosters a sense of purpose, contribution, and belonging in the church's collective mission. As apprentices of Jesus, we aim to deepen both our understanding and our stewardship of our gifts and to motivate each other to actively engage those gifts in service to God's mission across the Central Coast and beyond.

Key Scriptures



1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Ephesians 4:11-16

WEEK 2 | GIFTED - EQUIPPED BY THE SPIRIT

Dialogue Questions

1. With each person sharing one at a time, what spiritual gifts you recognise and affirm in each other?
2. Where do you already see such gifts being used effectively in our community?
3. Reflecting on your own gifts, as recognised by your friends, how might these insights and affirmations influence your perspective on your role in God's mission?

“Spiritual gifts are not a luxury. They are a necessity.”

– Charles R. Swindoll

Personal Activity:

Gift Inventory - Complete the Gifts of the Spirit Assessment to help identify your gifts and reflect on how they can, and already do, contribute to the church's mission.



WEEK 3

Positioned - Placed Purposefully

This week, we examine the strategic positioning of every believer in various spheres of life—be it our homes, workplaces, sporting fields, places of learning etc. —as intentional placements by God for His purposes. Through key scriptures like Acts 17 and Jeremiah 29, we understand that our everyday environments are not random but are the fields where God calls us to be ambassadors of His renewal. As a practical exercise, we will engage in a 'Place Audit' to assess how effectively we are using our positions to influence and renew. Your dialogue will reflect on both the opportunities and the challenges of living out this mission, including societal barriers and personal limitations, and how we might the Lord already be at work to help you overcome them. By reflecting on our roles as renewed renewers and reconciled reconcilers, we aim to inspire each other to consider our God-given placement as divine assignments.

Key Scriptures



Acts 17:26-28

Jeremiah 29:1-7

Dialogue Questions

1. In light of our conversations the last two weeks, reflect on the places you frequent daily (work, school, community spaces). How might you already be an agent of renewal in these places?

2. Share a story where you or someone you know acted as a reconciler, restorer, renewer in their environment.

3. What barriers do we face in being agents of renewal in our spheres, and how might the gifts identified last week point to a way through?

“Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God’s will.”

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Personal Activity:

Place Audit – Catalogue all the places you normally attend on any given week. What or who in those places are in need of renewal?

Pick 3 of those places where you might contribute 1 thing, according to your gifting, that practically moves in the direction of restored relationship and renewal.



Prepared - History & Experience

In the final week, we reflect on how our personal and communal histories shape our readiness to participate in God's renewing mission. Drawing on scriptures such as Romans 5 and James 1, we will talk about how trials and triumphs prepare us for greater works in the kingdom of God. Encourage one another to share personal stories and reflections on how past experiences have equipped you for participation in God's plan.

This week includes a 'Story Reflection' activity, encouraging you to identify and articulate how your spiritual journey and historical context has moulded your passion and capacity for mission. You will explore the concept of divine preparation through past struggles, seeing them not just as setbacks but as stepping stones to greater effectiveness in ministry. This does not mean that we diminish the pain associated with such experiences, nor do we blame God for them. However we do celebrate that He is a redemptive genius who wastes nothing!

This week's aim is to empower one another to view life stories through a lens of purpose and preparation, fostering a deeper commitment to engage actively as both objects and agents in the mission of renewal.

Key Scriptures



Romans 5:3-5

James 1:2-4

WEEK 4 | PREPARED - HISTORY & EXPERIENCE

Dialogue Questions

1. How have your past experiences prepared you to participate in God's renewing work? Try to think of an example where an event or experience did not make sense at the time, only for the Lord to use it powerfully at some later date.
2. In what ways can our faith community leverage our collective history for His mission? What shared experiences might set us up for future impact?
3. How can we encourage each other to see our own life stories as part of God's preparation for greater works?

**“God uses our past to prepare us for our future.”
– Tony Evans**

Personal Activity:

Story Reflection - Recall a specific past struggle that did not make sense at the time. In what ways did that difficulty prepare you for subsequent challenges and opportunities? What is the relationship this preparation and God's reconciling mission? How might this reflection bring perspective to current circumstances and/or future events?