

ACT ONE:

Four Designs In Creation:

ACT TWO:

Genesis _____

ACT THREE:

The _____ **The** _____
The _____

INTERLUDE:

ACT FOUR:

Announces _____

Gathers _____

Renews _____

ACT FIVE:

I.

II.

III.

ACT SIX:

Redeems _____

Demolishes _____

Establishes _____

2

The Story of His Glory

Studying this lesson will help you:

- Show how several of the main events of the Bible's story contribute to the unfolding of God's purpose to glorify Himself on a global scale by the worship of all nations.
- Describe how God pursued His global purpose by establishing a great reputation for powerful, faithful and loving dealings with His people. Describe why God's name is associated with this story.
- Explain how the story of Jonah shows God's ways of sending His people to the nations.
- Explain how both an expansive and an attractive force have always been used by God to advance His mission purpose.
- Recognize God's mission purpose found in the "Lord's Prayer."
- Explain the sentence: "Missions exists because worship doesn't."
- Explain how worship both reveals and delights God, and expresses His love for people by bringing them near to Him in obedient love.
- Explain some of the biblical grounds for seeing worship that expresses specific cultures of diverse peoples as being valuable to God.
- Explain how hope for God's glory and kingdom can be integrated with compassion for people's needs as a more compelling and sustainable motivation for mission.

Most of us learned the Bible using a story-by-story approach. Lessons from these stories were usually applied to our personal concerns. Because of this we may have wrongly assumed that the Bible is a loose collection of stories with no overriding, integrating purpose. Furthermore, we may quite selfishly conclude that the Bible is all about our personal lives. The reality is that the Bible is far more about God than it is about people. With God at the center and the end of it all, the Bible can be seen not as a disjointed collection of ancient stories and statements, but rather as a single driving saga. This story is still unfolding today.

This all-encompassing story of the Bible is about what God began and what He will finish. As we behold God at work throughout the Bible, we will encounter His zealous passion. Christ wants us to share in His passion in order to enter His mission.

A well-known mission leader once declared, "Let my heart be broken by the things which break the heart of God." We'll explore some of the matters which strike the heart of God with grief, but we'll do it later in the course. At this point, we'll start with what thrills God. Let our hearts first be rejoiced by the things which rejoice the heart of God!

passion Passion is the heart set free to pursue that which is truly worthy. Those who set their hearts on what is most worthy—the glory of God—live with joy-filled abandon. Their hearts are both seized and satisfied with the ambition for Jesus to be ardently worshiped. That love comes to dominate and integrate all other desires so that they live in the freedom of single-minded purpose.

I. The Story of His Glory

The story of the Bible is a story about God more than it is about people. In order to see how the biblical stories come together into a single prolonged story, we'll need a fresh grasp of three biblical terms:

- **Glory:** intrinsic worth, substance, brilliance and beauty.
- **God's Name:** Beyond the function of reference and revelation, the public reputation and open renown of God.
- **Worship:** that which glorifies God by recognizing His glory and by honoring Him with the offerings of the lesser, but worthy glories of the nations. Worship not only delights and reveals God, it fulfills God's love for people by bringing them to a place of their highest honor before Him.

Double Direction of God's Glory. God's mission purpose throughout the story of the Bible can be seen in the double direction of God's glory:

God reveals His glory *to* all nations
in order to receive glory *from* all nations.

World evangelization is the fullest expression of God revealing His glory *to* the nations with the purpose of God receiving glory *from* the nations.

Read Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," pp. 49-52b

A. Abraham: A People For His Name. Abraham opens the story by openly honoring God's name. His life provides a preview to the later history of the faith family: He made God's name known in worship. God made His name great by dramatic redemptive power. The result was an occasion of multi-national worship with the messianic figure of Melchizedek presiding. Abraham was blessed to be a blessing—with further purpose—in order that the nations would bless God Himself with their grateful worship.

B. The Great Display. God makes Himself known by name to the nations at the Exodus. The subsequent establishing of Israel in the land and the opening of the temple made His purpose even more clear.

1. **The Exodus:** the pivotal moment when God revealed Himself globally by name, distinguishing and honoring His name above any other god.
2. **The Conquest:** God's way of establishing the purity of worship to Himself.
3. **The Temple:** God's way of signaling that people from every nation could encounter and worship Him personally.

Read Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," pp. 52c-57a

C. The Great Delay. Just when it looked as if Israel was going to make God's name widely known among the nations, Solomon led the way in idolatry. Idolatry profaned, or made common, the name of international renown that God had sanctified, or exalted, in the view of the nations. Then began centuries of up and down struggles with idolatry. God finally removed the people from the land, sending them among the nations into a time of captivity known as the Exile.

Look up the verses and describe the reputation God seeks for Himself by filling in the last column. The first three rows are filled in as examples.

God's Fame Among the Nations		
	Name-Tag Name Function: Reference Words used to refer to God.	Fame Name Function: Reputation The public report for God's global renown.
Melchizedek —Genesis 14:1-20 In the presence of Abram, the king of Sodom and other kings	God Most High	Genesis 14:20 "... who has delivered your enemies into your hand."
Jethro —Exodus 18:7-12 After the delivery from Egypt	The LORD (Yahweh)	Exodus 18:11 "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods..."
Gibeonites —Joshua 9:3-10 Canaanites pretending to be a people from a distant land who heard of God's name	The LORD your God	Joshua 9:9-10 "... because of the fame (literally name) of the LORD your God, for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt."
Moses —Exodus 33:15-34:8 At Sinai after God said that he would pass by Moses and proclaim His name	The LORD God	Exodus 34:6-7 Write what God proclaimed to be His name:
Moses —Numbers 14:1-21 After God said He would destroy the people, Moses prayed, arguing on the basis of God's name	The LORD	Numbers 14:14 What the nations had heard: Numbers 14:15-16 What the nations would conclude if God destroyed the people: Numbers 14:17-18 What Moses knew God wanted as His reputation among the nations:
Jonah —Jonah 3:4-4:2 The truth about God that Jonah did not want to disclose to a Gentile nation	God (Elohim)	Jonah 4:2 Compare to Moses above:
Malachi —Malachi 1:11-14 God describing how pure whole-hearted worship reveals His kingly glory	Lord of Hosts	Malachi 1:14 "...I am a great _____ and my _____ is to be _____ among the _____."

D. God's Persistence and Renewed Promise. God never ceased to pursue His original promise and purpose. The people were brought again into the land, the temple was rebuilt, and a Messiah was expected. God's word about this restoration is clear; it was all for the fulfillment of His global purpose. Many other expressions of the psalmists and prophets clarify God's purpose to be worshiped.

*Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD,
To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath,
And holds fast My covenant;
Even those I will bring to My holy mountain,
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar;
For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.*

— Isaiah 56:6–7

Read Isaiah 56:6-7 carefully to see the context of the statement "For my house shall be called a house of prayer..." Note the references to prayer in verse 7. What kind of prayers are described? Who is offering these prayers? Jesus did not just quote this verse. He taught about it during what was likely the most public hour of His ministry (Mark 11:17). What kinds of prayer did Jesus want to see?

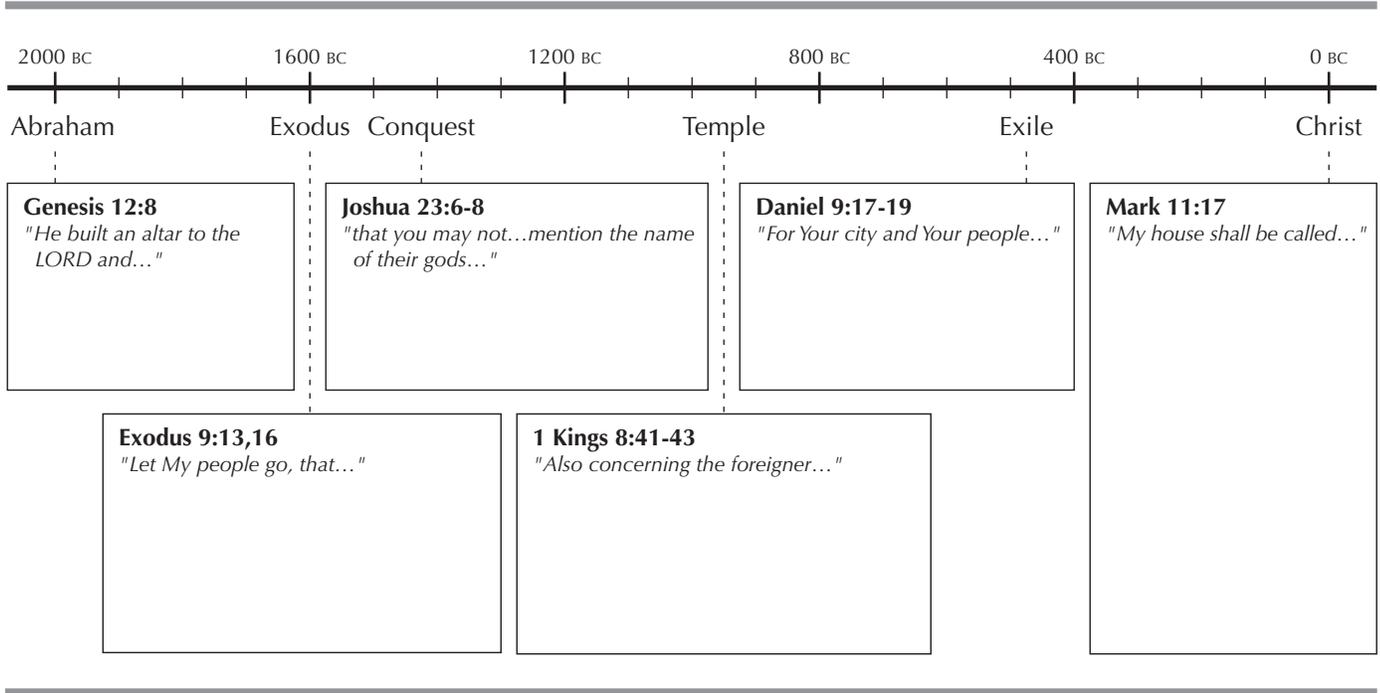
This passage is often used to encourage prayer on behalf of the nations. This is fine, but it may miss the point of Christ's passionate teaching and temple-cleansing: the hope that the nations *themselves* will pray in full-hearted worship.

E. The Glory of God in Christ. Jesus fulfilled God's purpose to reveal His glory to the world in order to receive glory from the nations.

- 1. Prayers For the Name.** By the prayer He taught and the prayers He prayed, we can see how Jesus aimed His entire life at fulfilling the ancient purpose of making God's name known. For God's name to be "hallowed" or "sanctified" is for His namesake to be distinguished, exalted and honored. No prayer could be more basic to the mission purpose of God.
- 2. A House of Worship From All Peoples.** The text in Isaiah that Jesus quoted in the temple makes it clear that God rejoiced to receive worship arising *from* nations other than Israel. The temple was destined to become a place of worship that all peoples could easily access in order to meet God, bringing Him their prayerful worship.

Read Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," pp. 57b-60a

What did God do for His glory at each of the successive points of the story? Either finish writing out the verse in the spaces provided, or add another note describing God’s actions and intentions.



II. Fulfilling the Missionary Task

How was Israel supposed to fulfill her mission mandate? It might appear that Israel was only to play a passive role, attracting the nations to God’s worship. Some have concluded that there was not an active mandate to go to the nations until the days of the New Testament. Look again at the biblical record to see the steady, relentless plan of God—both sending His people to the nations to declare the truth of His name, as well as attracting the nations to join His people in worship.

- A. Two Forces.** Jonathan Lewis describes two mechanisms, or forces of mission, which were constantly at work.
- 1. Expansive or Centrifugal.** Found throughout the story of Scripture is the outward-bound dynamic, which Lewis calls the expansive force. Others have called this the centrifugal force of missions, or a “go” structure of mission.
 - 2. Attractive or Centripetal.** There is also found throughout the Bible the inward-bound dynamic, which Lewis calls the attractive force. Others have called this the centripetal force of missions, or a “come” structure of mission.

Read Lewis, “Two Forces,” sidebar, pp. 80-81

B. Jonah. Jonah is one of several people in the Old Testament that God sent beyond the borders of Israel. Johannes Verkuyl does not consider the sending of Jonah to be an exception, but an example of the self-centered attitude of God's people. Verkuyl believes that, by the Holy Spirit, the book of Jonah speaks to the Church today. Follow his exposition through the eight scenes of Jonah. Take note of how he describes Jonah's anger because God extended mercy beyond the borders of Israel, even though he knew God's namesake was to be globally known as a "gracious and compassionate" God. Notice Verkuyl's description of Jonah's refusal to acknowledge the purpose of God's covenant with Israel for the salvation of the nations.

Read Verkuyl, "The Biblical Foundation for the Worldwide Mission Mandate," pp. 45c-48 (the Jonah section)

Conclusion of Key Readings for this lesson. 

III. Passion For God's Glory

Paul was motivated by the hope that God would be glorified among the nations. How was Paul's mission, as described in Romans 15, a mission that he aimed to finish? Can or should that be our vision today? Steven Hawthorne describes three changes in practice worth considering as we recognize our part in the ongoing story of God's glory.

- A. Deepen Our Motive Base.** When mission is merely a compassionate response to human need, motivation can be limited to feelings of concern toward people. Some mobilization can be limited to stirring up guilt. But when mission is defined primarily as an enterprise that brings about something for God, and secondarily as that which brings about something benefitting people, then both our motivation and our mobilization can be more balanced. Compassion may actually run deeper. We can be deeply moved by needs while acting boldly for God's highest purpose.
- B. Define the Task.** Focusing on God's glory helps us see the value of planting churches which will become an expression of the sanctified best of their particular culture. This may be one of the best grounds for planting church movements among every people group. The people group *approach* is not as important as setting our vision on the people group *result*.
- C. Integrate Efforts.** Which is more important: evangelism or social action? This is a false dichotomy, in large part answered by lifting vision beyond what happens *for people* (which is usually emphasized in both evangelism and social action) and aiming instead at bringing about glory, thanks, praise and honor *for God*. A single vision for God's glory can integrate and motivate efforts to serve people in their present-hour need, as well as save people from eternal loss.

Read Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," pp. 60a-62

IV. The Worth of Each Ethnicity

In the final paragraphs of “The Story of His Glory,” Hawthorne states that God “yearns for the unique outpouring of love, righteousness, wisdom and worship that can come from every people” (page 62b). What Hawthorne refers to as “the distinctive wonder of each people group” is part of why Psalm 96:7 calls the “families of the peoples” to give to the Lord “glory and strength” (see Hawthorne, page 52b). The beauty and worth of human cultures, even though we now see them distorted and darkened by evil, is something the Bible celebrates with anticipation. In the age to come, although the city of God is illumined by the glory of God (Rev 21:23), it will be adorned with the glories of all the ethnicities of humankind. The nations “will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it” (Rev 21:26).

Such high regard for culture and the distinctive worth of every tribe, tongue and people can be seen in the creation accounts of Scripture. Miriam Adeney describes how God endowed humanity to create culture and to flourish in distinctive communities. This means that the reality and value of ethnicity is rooted in creation. God prizes and delights in the cultures of humankind, even though now, because of sin, as Adeney observes, “the cultures we create reek with evil.” As we seek to fulfill our part of God’s mission, we should evaluate and value culture from God’s point of view. Mission work can be seen as helping people begin to bring God a measure of the “glory and the honor of the nations.”

Read Adeney, “Is God Colorblind or Colorful?” pp. 416b-417d (“A Place in the Story”), and Sauer, “Created to Create Culture,” p. 417

V. God-Centered Mission

We’ve explored how God’s purpose for glory unfolds in history. John Piper restates the case for focusing our motive in mission on God’s glory in the worship of the nations. Piper says that world evangelization is a secondary, means-to-an-end activity. God’s glory is the primary purpose for mission. “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.” In other words, the reason God gives us our mission is to bring about obedient, love-filled and life-giving worship among peoples and in places where there is none.

A. God’s Passion. God’s supremacy over other gods provides clear rationale for mission. But an even stronger motive is God’s inexhaustible enthusiasm that there be praise arising from the nations. Worship is not only the goal but also the fuel of missions.

B. God-Centered Compassion. Calling the nations to worship is to seek their best interest. Understanding the redemptive value of worship can energize our acts of mercy even when, at times, feelings of love for others fade. As the nations experience the dignity of worshiping the living God, His call to come near to Him by worship becomes the highlight of all the blessings He bestows. And it becomes the most shareable message in the world.

Read Piper, “Let the Nations Be Glad!” pp. 64-69 (all)

VI. Co-Working With God on Mission

Tim Dearborn's article is one of the most important in the course. Ponder it carefully. He makes one of the most important distinctions that can be made: We can either see our mission as a series of need-meeting projects, energized by an awareness of the problems of the world. Or we can frame our understanding of mission as an invitation to join with God as He pursues His purpose in the world. What makes it possible to pursue mission in the latter way is a vision of God steadily accomplishing His mission through history. So far in the course we have been tracing the story of how God has pursued His glory and His kingdom.

- A. Beyond Duty.** Dearborn explores some commonplace attitudes toward mission motivation. He exposes the inadequacy of being compelled by human needs. If our primary passion is directed to mission activities, mission will inevitably "degenerate into a wearisome, overwhelming duty." Instead, He suggests that there is one singular passion: "When the King and His kingdom are the unifying, controlling source and goal of all we do," then mission becomes an adventure of joy, passion and hope.
- B. God on Mission With His Church.** Dearborn says it is better to affirm that "the God of mission has a Church in the world" than it is to say "the Church has a mission for God in the world." This means that God's mission is always greater than the mission He has entrusted to His Church. In a very real sense, this means that we are not necessary. How does this idea compare with what Piper and Hawthorne have stated?
- C. The Integrating Reality: The King and His Kingdom.** So many competing agendas and divergent needs call for our attention. They usually amount to sad news of unsolvable problems. Instead of adding to this exhausting, never-ending challenge, Dearborn calls us to see the great victory of Christ and the reality of how God Himself establishes His coming kingdom. He has given us a pivotal role, "but the work remains God's."
- D. Signs of the Kingdom.** Take note of Dearborn's statement that the Church is not to be an "underground railway" to heaven. We are privileged to have a part in the great unfolding story of God's kingdom. He desires that we become living signs of His kingdom and bring about signs of kingdom life in the world. How do such signs of God's kingdom bring glory to God?

Read Dearborn, "Beyond Duty," pp. 70-73 (all)

VII. God on Mission

Henry Blackaby and Avery Willis describe God on mission through history. Although the sentences are short and simple, they are profound. Like Dearborn, they describe God's mission as aiming to establish His kingdom, but integrated with God's kingdom they see God's Name being glorified and the world being reconciled to God.

- A. God Initiates Mission.** Examine the examples of God initiating an act of advancing His mission by revealing what He was going to do. In every case, God gave His people something to accomplish, and yet, God was the one who accomplished everything. Why does God choose to do things in this way? Blackaby and Willis assert that God desires a loving but purposeful relationship with His people.

B. Jesus: On Mission With His Father. There are countless calls to understand our mission as an imitation or continuation of Jesus' work in the world. What Blackaby and Willis offer is something very different. Take note of it. Instead of a call to imitate Jesus' activities, they describe what it means to follow Jesus' example as He joined Himself with the Father in mission. The result was that Jesus united "His life with His Father's mission." Consider how you may be hearing God speak as you work through this course. How can you resolve to follow Christ's example so that you can unite your life with God's mission?

Read Blackaby and Willis, "On Mission With God," pp. 74-76a (up until "Knowing and Working in God's Ways")

Conclusion of Certificate Readings for this lesson. 

VIII. The Local Church: His Glory Made Visible

Jim Montgomery encouraged many people to multiply churches throughout the world with a vision he called, "saturation church planting." We include this brief excerpt to explore how God intended for local churches to bring Him glory in the communities of earth.

Montgomery defines local churches in terms of the incarnation: Christ is somehow embodied in His people and is able to reveal His glory and life to the world. The idea of Christ being embodied in His people both defines the nature of the Church and the purpose of the Church. Such an understanding of the Church gives compelling motivation for working to see that churches are planted in every community of earth. Wolfgang Simson makes the same vision even more explicit. He says that we should be satisfied with "nothing short of the very presence of the living Christ in every neighborhood and village" of every nation.

Read Montgomery, "His Glory Made Visible," pp. 660-662 (all), and Simson, "The Shopping Window of God," sidebar, p. 661

IX. God's Mission

David Bosch introduces an important phrase. Don't let its significance be hidden by the Latin. The phrase is *missio Dei*, and it means God's mission, or the mission of God. As we have seen, it is important to focus on God as the author of mission. What if it was up to human ingenuity and mercy to engineer the changes that are needed in the world? That generally describes the approach of the world outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. Think about it. Without mission, the world is a pretty bleak place. The only glimmer of hope would be our best speculations about human progress, based on vague ideas of evolution. When these ideas and other ideas are seen to fail, the world becomes ripe with yearning for someone to be sent, for someone to redeem.

It's no wonder that the prayer Jesus prayed was for the Church to be one with God in mission so that the world would come to know that God had sent Jesus. John 17:11-23 is commonly misunderstood as if the world was to be attracted to God because God's people enjoy relational closeness with one

After studying this section you should be able to:

- Describe the mystery of how God is always the author of mission, and yet enlists people as His co-workers in Christ.
- Explain what it means for the earth to be “filled with God’s glory” in terms of church planting.

another. The context is all about Jesus leaving and sending His followers, even as He was sent. It’s very likely that the idea of being “one even as we are one” refers to a collaborative intimacy in mission rather than an essential unity or a task-free relational closeness. In any case, it is good news that God is on mission Himself. It is also marvelous that He would ever condescend to send others on His behalf. In this section we’ll seek to grasp some of the wonder of this awesome way of knowing God.

David Bosch occasionally uses technical words, but the meanings are usually nearby. For example, the word “prolepsis” is followed immediately by its meaning, “an anticipation.”

- A. God, the Author of Mission.** Bosch explains more about the light of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah. He points out that mission works in two directions with the Servant. Light flows from the Servant to the nations. And in response, the nations come and are gathered into a larger people by the attractive power of the light. The main point is that God is the author. Israel never appointed itself as a missionary nation. The Jews did not have a habit of sending themselves on errands of salvation. They were called by God to do so.
- B. The “Tender Mystery” of God and People on Mission.** Bosch explains why both mechanisms were at work throughout both the Old and New Testaments. It would seem that the centripetal or attractive force is God’s work. A careless reading of the story at this point would lead one to conclude that centrifugal or expansive mission is man’s work. This is a crucial mistake. To highlight the error, he uses the almost ridiculous phrase, “God and Man as Competitors?”

To sum up the issue: If God is the author of only centripetal, or attractive mission, then that seems to imply that people need to undertake the initiative for centrifugal mission. The mistake is compounded when everyday zeal is added to the mix, or American pragmatism that assumes we can do anything if we just put our mind to it. Mission is not to be treated in this spirit. Mission is a “tender mystery” of God and people co-working, though God is always the author. Take special note of the series of paradoxes which illustrate this “tender mystery.”

This is not an inconsequential issue. There are two extremes to avoid. If God is the sole initiator, not enlisting any collaboration from people, then there is resignation: Let be what will be. On the other hand, if God’s mission is a command waiting for someone to finally be obedient, then there are waves of fanaticism: It all depends on us.

- C. More Than a Command.** This marvelous co-working of God and His people is exactly why the Great Commission is not stamped on every page, but almost presumed throughout the New Testament. Bosch says, “Mission in the New Testament is more than a matter of obeying a command. It is, rather, the result of an encounter with Christ. To meet Christ means to become caught up in a mission to the world.” Bosch is not saying that the Great Commission does not have tremendous force. He is saying that the entire Bible supports the Great Commission in greater ways than finding parallel statements from God issuing direct imperative commands.

Read Bosch, “Witness to the World,” pp. 78-82 (all)