

MISSION
with the
MASTER
JOURNAL



CONTENTS

02	<i>Message from Rev Anthony Lee</i>
04	<i>Introduction</i>
05	<i>Week 1 Master on a Mission</i>
09	<i>Week 2 Rewiring Ourselves</i>
13	<i>Week 3 In Union with Christ</i>
17	<i>Week 4 Mission Not Impossible</i>
21	<i>Week 5 The People are the Mission, Not the Impediment</i>
25	<i>Week 6 Bare Fruit or Bear Fruit?</i>
29	<i>In Summary</i>
31	<i>Notes</i>



Message from Rev Anthony Lee

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

By now you should have learned that our church theme for 2023 is "Mission with the Master."

This theme is merely an extension and a mere subset of our 2022 church theme, which is "God calls." After all, we must consistently and consciously obey God's call throughout our lives. We can thus see it as "God Calls: Mission with the Master."

The amazing thing is that **being with Jesus our Master changes us**. Acts 4:13 testifies: *"When [the Jewish leaders] saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."*

Being with Jesus turned a motley crew of uneducated fishermen into world-changing evangelists. Likewise, I believe as we spend time with Jesus, three things would happen.

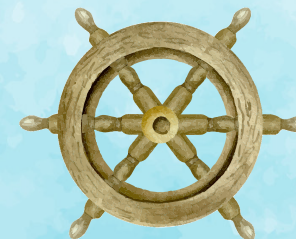
First, we begin to capture His heart for people. Second, we begin to learn His ways – the ways of His Kingdom. Finally, others will begin to see God's glory through us.

John 1:18 tells us that *"No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."* Earlier in that same chapter, John 1:14, John the Apostle testifies, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

What better time to give ourselves over to our Lord and Master than in the season of Lent? I pray that your learning journey will be blessed, and that God's Word and Truth will continue to direct your paths.

Blessings in Christ,

Rev Anthony Lee



welcome aboard

Introduction



Our 2023 church theme is “Mission with the Master”.

For many of us, we tend to seek God only for **our** needs, on **our** terms, and at **our** convenience. What our 2023 church theme emphasises, therefore, is a specific re-orientation for **all of us** to join God, our Master on **His** Mission – to let God’s agenda be our agenda, to prioritise our obedience above our convenience.

When we spend time with Jesus our Master, as individuals as well as a spiritual family, we can be sure that others will experience God’s heart, understand God’s ways, and behold God’s glory through us.

This 6-week series is created to further illustrate “Mission with the Master” as well as to outline the steps we must take in getting ourselves mentally, emotionally, and spiritually prepared to embark on this lifelong but obligatory mission with our Master. All are encouraged to participate in this series with your family or with your cell group members.

Week **1**

MASTER ON A MISSION

As we begin, take some time to answer this question truthfully: ***Who is your master?***

Have you – knowingly or unknowingly – allowed greed, pride, lust (i.e. sin), money, work or even family to be your master? Or will you choose God to be your master? If you think about it, your honest answer to this question is the one that ultimately directs and rules your life. Who or what are you allowing to rule your life?

Many of us find ourselves enslaved by a myriad of things – e.g. the need to accumulate more possessions, finding excuses to constantly stuff ourselves with good food, the desire for success and progression, being too busy with secular activities... the list continues. How do we extricate ourselves from the grasp of such toxic “masters”?

Matthew 6:33 holds the answer: ***“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”***

1. Why choose God as our Master?

In 2 Peter 2:1 God is referred to as ‘the sovereign Lord’, reminding us that God is the ultimate source of all power, authority and He holds dominion over everything that

exists. Yet, despite His sovereignty we learn from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) that God is also full of love, kindness, and mercy, and that He provides for us in all ways should we choose to seek Him.

Therefore, instead of constantly desiring and pursuing worldly things we ought to focus on seeking God's will and His kingdom. We must allow and trust our heavenly Father to lovingly care for us, His children, and allow Him to be our Master.

2. Who does God expect us to be?

Being a Christian is far from enjoying a reconciled and restored relationship with God, reaping the benefits of salvation, and then sitting around for the rest of our lives waiting to enter heaven. By choosing God as the Master of our lives we must also choose to do His will, His righteousness, and to follow in His ways by rejecting sin and becoming obedient to His commands. God expects us to live as His holy children every day of our lives.

3. What does God want us to do?

It can be said that the whole of Scripture has one overarching theme – which is God's mission to redeem the world (1 Timothy 2:4) starting with His plan to gather His lost sheep and reconcile them to a relationship with Him (Romans 5:1). That is why God sent His only Son Jesus Christ to die as a penalty for the cost of all our sins (John 3:16) – so that every single one of us may be redeemed and reconciled to God. Indeed, mission is wrapped up in God's identity, and Jesus is the embodiment of that mission. That is the message we proclaim every Christmas.

As followers of Christ, God wants us to join Him in His work of reaching out to lost people and to introduce them to Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour (Romans 10:13-15). The work does not stop there - we must continue to invest in their lives, helping them to grow to be faithful disciples of Christ, teaching, equipping, and supporting them to join God's mission too.

Perhaps the clearest command of our Master can be found in The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19): ***“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”***



*Remember the former things,
those of long ago;
I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me.
I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come.
I say, 'My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please.'*

Isaiah 46:9-10

1. *Be honest: In which areas are you allowing worldly things to usurp God's rightful reign in your life?*
2. *What habits can you instill to follow the teachings of Jesus?*
3. *In what ways should the mission of Jesus alter the priorities in your life?*

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REWIRING OURSELVES

As humans, we have the tendency to put ourselves first before others, and very often, before God. Indeed, social and consumer culture has twisted our understanding of what we want versus what we need. Nowadays, everything is deemed “expendable”. We are encouraged to consume something for as long as it makes us happy – and if we are not, move on. Naturally, many of us have succumbed to this consumer mindset even in church... *“I don’t like this pastor’s preaching”, “The worshippers here aren’t fun and cool”, “God didn’t grant my prayer”* and so forth. If we do not get what we want out of God or the Church, we lose interest or move on.

Let us remember that the Church is a faith community built with Jesus Christ as the foundation. Therefore, we must renew our minds (Romans 12:2) to refrain from thinking of God as a vending machine and the Church as a consumable product.

1. Moving away from consumer culture

Life in the church does not centre around us, but around Christ our Lord and Master. While consumerism has conditioned us to think that we take priority, Jesus instructs us to do the exact opposite by prioritising others first (1 Peter 4:7-10). We must become Christ-centred by emulating Him and following His lead to serve others. As John the

Baptist so wisely frames it - ***"He must become greater; I must become less."*** (John 3:30)

2. Embracing humility and brokenness

Sin separates us from God. However, Scripture also does promise that God will not despise a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17). To be humble and broken down is to admit that we are sinful, and completely dependent on Christ as our Saviour and Master (Proverbs 11:2). Humility also expresses to God that we are teachable and willing to be moulded by our Lord for His purpose (Philippians 2:5-8). We are all broken in different ways, but through God's grace we can be redeemed, transformed, and conformed to the image of Jesus – essentially, made whole again (1 Peter 5:6).

3. Fasting and prayer

In the New Testament, prayer and fasting was a common biblical practice (Acts 14:23). Even Jesus Himself fasted (Luke 4:1-2). John Wesley, the founder of our Methodist church, also advocated fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays as an important of a Christian's life. He himself often fasted from sundown on Thursday nights to Friday 3pm earliest.

Fasting is the ultimate act of self-humility by declaring to God how much we need Him and showing the depth of our desire for Him (Joel 2:12). Literally and metaphorically, fasting is expressing hunger for God. By emptying ourselves before God, we allow Him to use us to do His good work.

Coupled with seeking God in prayer, we can hear God more clearly as we build a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him (Daniel 9:3). Additionally, as we become more connected with God's Spirit, we are equipped with the spiritual strength to overcome spiritual warfare and subdue our natural carnal instincts, and to ultimately change our hearts for God.

To be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and for Him to truly be our Master, we need to surrender ourselves fully to Him. Matthew 6:24 reminds us of the stark truth: ***No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.***



*Therefore, I urge you, brothers,
in view of God's mercy,
to offer your bodies as living sacrifices,
holy and pleasing to God
-- this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Romans 12:1

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- This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school writing paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

The essence of being a Christian is to worship God. As Jesus explains, *"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."* (John 4:24). This means we must not only be sincere in worshipping Him, but that our worship must be rooted in Scriptural revelation, for all Scriptures is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). To truly say we are one with Christ we must take steps to cultivate that relationship.

Matthew 22:36-40 tells us that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. If we worship and love Him with all that we are, then we must do what we can to draw closer to Him. Since sin is a barrier between us and God (Isaiah 59:2), the first step we should take is to actively eradicate wilful sins from our lives (James 4:8). We must confess our sins to God, repent, and work on obeying His every Word.

If we love someone, we will want to know more about them and spend time with them. Our relationship with God works the same way - if we love Him, then we should want to know more about Him. God reveals Himself to us through Scripture, hence the best way to get to know Him is to read the Bible (Joshua 1:8).

It is also important that we put aside time to talk with and listen to God. We may confess our sins, share our worries, offer our needs in prayer, or even just to give Him thanks (Ephesians 6:18). The beauty of prayer is that it can be done anywhere and anytime. On the other hand, it is perfectly fine not to say anything, and to just spend quiet time each day listening to what He might have to say to us – even Jesus often did so (Luke 5:16). Another way to draw closer to God is to worship Him through singing, dancing, playing musical instruments etc.

3. *Abiding in Him*

When we put our faith in Jesus and abide in Him (John 14:20), we enter into a spiritual relationship with Him i.e. we remain in Him and live in Him. To be bound to Christ is to bind to His mind (Philippians 2:5), as well as to be bound in love and faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3). Moreover, John 15:1-4 tells us that we may only bear fruit if we are connected to Christ, and if we are not, then nothing can be accomplished.

It is our divine destiny to be co-labourers with Jesus, however it is crucial for us to be bound to Him so that we may work in tandem with Him. Instead of being servants, Paul explains that we are co-labourers of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9). Why is that so? You see, servants are not the same as co-labourers. Servants are task-oriented; they do not know their master's business, neither do they do what their master does. Servants do not share anything personal with their masters, do not work to change their minds, and do not participate in their master's plans.

However, co-workers have equal responsibility in the ministry of Christ. Apart from Christ our work cannot be complete, and at the same time His work on earth cannot be complete without us. How can Christ accomplish His redemptive mission if people do not know Him, and how can they know Him and be saved if we do not share about Him (Romans 10:13-14)?



*I have been crucified with Christ.
It is no longer I who live,
but Christ who lives in me.
And the life I now live in the flesh
I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Galatians 2:20

1. *In which area of your life do you intend to first start purging sin?*
2. *How does one live "in Christ"?*
3. *As a co-worker of Christ, how can you be more hands-on in His mission?*

MISSION NOT IMPOSSIBLE

We live in a world filled with plenty of needy people looking for answers, and Jesus is the answer to everything mankind needs. He offers love, joy, peace, rest, protection, guidance, wisdom, mercy, forgiveness and most of all, everlasting life (which is to know God; John 17:3). However, these lost sheep will never know who the Good Shepherd is unless someone tells them about Him. Thus, those of us who have received salvation each have a duty to help spread the Good News of Jesus to one and all.

Outlined in Matthew 28:16–20, The Great Commission is a mandate given by Jesus to take on His ministry on earth. Jesus gave this command after His resurrection and not long before His ascension. We are to make disciples, baptise them, and teach them to obey the Lord – and these steps have been very clearly laid out for us.

The Gospel (literally, Good News) we are to declare comes in three interwoven strands:

1. *Gospel of Salvation* (Mark 16:15)

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have been granted the gift of salvation from God so that we may be delivered, preserved, and healed. Jesus made it possible for us to pass from death into life if we accept His provision (John 5:24). As Christians we have been commanded to

proclaim the Gospel to all around us and bring them to Jesus so that they may also receive the gift of salvation.

2. *Gospel of Transformation* (Matthew 28:18-20)

When we accept the Good News of the Gospel, we must allow this to effect real change in our lives. God works through the Gospel to transform our hearts and minds. The inward transformation of our minds being filled with love and gratitude to Christ should trigger an outward transformation of obedience to God (Romans 12:1-2). In fact, the Gospel must overflow from all our hearts and lives until God's presence transforms our entire community. When the entire human existence is so wholly transformed by Christ, it becomes innate in every person to obey all that He has commanded. This is when Scripture is fulfilled: whereby the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of God (Revelation 11:15).

3. *Gospel of Service* (Matthew 25:37-40)

God's saving intervention in our lives should result in His people's zeal to do what is good. When God calls us to serve, He has already shown a great example of His service by sending Jesus Christ who came to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45). He beckons His followers to show the same unconditional love, mercy, grace, and humble service to those around us. As such we must always radiate the love of Jesus by the way we think, speak and act. When our faith shines to those around us, others will be attracted by our transformation of His glorious likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18).

While the work seems daunting and like an impossible undertaking, the burden does not fall entirely on just one person or a group of people. We as a church must collectively take part in Christ's redemptive mission, and this can only work if all the parts of His Body (1 Corinthians 12:27) each individually strives to do their part (Ephesians 4:16) in bringing Christ to all who do not yet know Him.



*Again Jesus said,
"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me,
I am sending you."*

John 20:21

1. *Do you view the Great Commission as a joy or a burden – and why?*
2. *What is the motivation and attitude that we should have as Christians when living out this command by Jesus?*
3. *How do you plan to contribute to the work of the church in fulfilling the Great Commission?*

THE PEOPLE ARE THE MISSION, NOT THE IMPEDIMENT

In Numbers 13, when the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt, God commanded a leader from each tribe to explore the land of Canaan. Upon their return, they reported to the community that the land was flowing with milk and honey, however the people living there were very strong. When Caleb insisted that they could take possession of the land, the men who had gone up with him were so intimidated by the 'strong people' that they started spreading a bad report about the place amongst themselves.

How many of us have encountered people who were similarly stubborn and resistant while we were trying to share the Good News with them? Such people are often viewed as impediments to our mission, so instead of trying harder or a different way, a lot of us – like the Israelites – simply chose the easy way out by convincing ourselves to walk away.

John 4 records how Jesus stopped by a well for a drink and encountered a Samaritan woman. Within this short time, Jesus manages to completely change her life for the better. How did He manage to do that?

1. Breaking barriers

The Samaritan woman was at the well at high noon – likely with the intention of avoiding others - however, Jesus broke the ice by asking her for a favour. Samaritans had a bad reputation and were despised by everyone. Just by speaking to her, Jesus broke three barriers (John 4:9): *socio-ethnic* (Jew to Samaritan), *gender* (male to female) and *religious/moral* (pious to sinful). Jesus did what most of us would avoid doing i.e. starting a conversation with someone who was different.

2. Taking an interest in the needs of others

Even though the Samaritan woman was considered inferior and marginalised by others, Jesus accepted a drink of water from her (an unclean woman) in an unclean cup, and respectfully engaged her in a discussion about the nature of God, worship, as well as about Himself being the promised Messiah. He even drew out her sinfulness graciously and diplomatically.

Jesus did not push His agenda to her. He merely answered her questions and treated her with kindness and compassion, and without any judgement. Eventually, He won her confidence and trust. While this encounter began with Jesus' need for her water, it developed into her need for His Living Water (John 4:10-15).

3. The power of testimony

Many of us shy away from giving our testimony about what God has done for us in our lives. What we fail to realise is that our testimony is a powerful tool and can lead many people to the Truth. After talking with Jesus, the Samaritan woman went back to her town and shared about Jesus with them (John 4:28-29). The encounter with Jesus forever changed her life, therefore when she testified to her fellow Samaritans many of them believed her and accepted Him as the Messiah (John 4:41). Just as the Samaritan woman needed Jesus, He too needed her to go back and tell everyone she knew about Him – only then would they believe.

Jesus loved the Samaritan woman unconditionally, and despite her initial sarcasm and half-lies about her husband He did not shame her nor condemn her, neither did He load her with guilt. Instead, He met her right where she was and showed her mercy. Like Jesus, we must value the valueless by treating them with dignity and respect, and first take an interest in the needs of those we are trying to reach instead of aggressively shoving the Gospel message down people's throats. This is what Jesus did with the Samaritan woman, and what we will do well to learn from Him. After all, the root of the Gospel was born out of God's love for us, therefore this is what we must do to others first: Love them.



*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.
Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,
not looking to your own interests
but each of you to the interests of the others.*

Philippians 2:3-4

1. *How is the Lord calling you to look out for the interests of others and to value others over yourself?*
2. *Do you have a testimony of how showing Christ's love to someone led to them receiving the Gospel? Share the testimony to encourage others.*
3. *What walls could you break down to help someone get to Jesus?*

BARE FRUIT OR BEAR FRUIT?

Jesus is a shining example of what it means to live out the Gospel truth. During his time on earth, He chose to communicate the Gospel by example instead of merely sharing it verbally, and His method has been proven to be effective. Christ was bold and confident when sharing the Gospel, yet He adjusted the way He shared to the different people He spoke to and He paid attention to their needs.

I. Stand Firm

Although Jesus has sent us out on a mission to spread His Gospel, He cautions us that persecution will come (Matthew 10:16). Jesus compares us to the sheep which are meek and gentle, and He expects us to be tame despite the persecution we face from people who behave like 'wolves'. Nevertheless, He also wants us to be 'shrewd as snakes' and 'innocent as doves' i.e. we must go with our eyes wide open and be bold to share the Gospel, but at the same time we are to maintain a pure lifestyle and a clean conscience no matter what tests or trials we are put through (Matthew 4:1-11).

Even if we were in trouble, Christ reminds us to stay focused on the mission and not to be distracted from our devotion to Him (Matthew 10:19-20).

2. Fear God

Additionally, we must be on our guard as we should expect to face adversaries on our mission. While we may be opposed by others, lose friends, lose our jobs, or even in the worst-case scenario – lose our lives – but we only need to fear God and not people. By fearing God, we are given wisdom and are kept from sin such that we can live a pure and holy life. In fact, He is the only One whose opinion and judgement of us really matters.

3. Be a Fountain for Others

Our trust in Christ should affect the way we live – by being kind and forgiving, humble and honest, and helping people with their needs. We ought to live in the light of the Truth and in such a way that the Gospel message flows out of us and overflows into others. As we have drunk from the fountain of Living Water, we too, must become a fountain, for there to be a never-ending supply of Living Water for others who thirst (John 7:37-38).

4. Manifest God's Glory

To be able to manifest God's glory, we must step out of our comfort zones. When we surrender all and allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, He can work in us and through us (Acts 1:8). We have seen the glory of God and are thus called to display the glory of God to others (2 Corinthians 3:18). When others look upon God's glory, their eyes will be open to more aspects of His nature and character, and they will

receive an increasing revelation of God in the way He wants them to know Him.

As we go out into the world, we must be spiritually and mentally prepared for what we must be, and what or who we shall face. There is no need to hard-sell the Gospel message; instead let us look to the interests of others and have conversations rather than confrontations. No matter the challenges or curveballs thrown at us, we must remember to always trust in the Lord and remain rooted in Him in all that we say, do or think – only then shall we be successful in bearing fruit for His kingdom.



*A good tree cannot bear bad fruit,
and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.
Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down
and thrown into the fire.
Thus, by their fruit you will recognise them.*

Matthew 7:18-20

1. *God's kingdom work is not reserved for pastors and missionaries only. How will you carry out the mission God has called you for?*
2. *In what way can you bear witness for Christ – in action and/or words?*
3. *How has God gifted you in the Body of Christ? Are you using those gifts to be fruitful?*

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In Summary

- *It is not enough to confess Jesus as Saviour; as true followers of Christ, we must submit to His Lordship.*
- *For God to be Master in our lives, we must allow Him to rule and be in control of every aspect. By confessing God as our Master, we must also choose to follow His will and to join Christ's mission of salvation.*
- *We are commanded by Jesus to make disciples, baptise them and teach them obedience to God. By proclaiming the Gospel to people around us, we can bring them to Jesus so they can receive the gift of salvation.*
- *God works through the Gospel to bring about a real transformation in our lives and our community. By radiating the love of Jesus to those around us, others will see Him through us.*
- *We must put God before ourselves and to renew our minds from how we see God and the Church as consumables. Instead, we ought to remember that Christ is the foundation of the church.*
- *Sin separates us from God; hence we must radically eradicate wilful sins in our lives. We must embrace humility and brokenness, and be totally dependent on Christ for our needs.*

- *If we love the Lord, we should want to know more about Him and want to spend time with Him. As we grow spiritually in our relationship with Christ, we will be bound to Him and abide in Him.*
- *It is not easy to share the Gospel with everyone. People who are difficult are often seen as an obstacle to our mission. We can learn from Jesus' example by taking an interest in their needs first and letting them open their hearts to us before we share the Gospel message.*
- *We are called to be ambassadors for Christ; God invites us to partner with Him to testify about Him. When people are led to the Truth, their lives will change forever. This is the joy and privilege we have as co-labourers with Christ.*
- *Although we will face persecution and opposition from others while on our mission, Jesus reminds us to be gentle as doves yet shrewd as serpents, and to stand firm in order to fulfil our mission. We must continue to be rooted in Him and live a holy life no matter what.*
- *After drinking the Water of Life, we must overflow and become like a fountain, so that there is a constant supply of Living Water for those who thirst. The best way for others to see the glory of God is for us to manifest God's glory through our lives and deeds. We can do this by doing God's work, and by allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us.*

Notes

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