

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry 3: Moving Into a Ministry Lifestyle
Week 1: A Lifestyle of Self-Giving Love – The Big Picture

Introduction

The purpose of this unit is to introduce you to a lifestyle of Christian ministry.

The core dynamic of this lifestyle is receiving God’s love and giving it away to others.¹ “Freely you have received—freely give” (Matt. 10:8). In Jn. 13, Jesus made this the final lesson that he modeled for his disciples.

- THE SETTING (13:1,2):
- JESUS’ “KNOWLEDGE” (13:3):
- JESUS’ SERVICE (13:4,5):
- JESUS’ CALL (13:12-16):
- JESUS’ PROMISE (13:17):

Jesus spoke of only two different ways of life & two different outcomes:

(Matthew 16:25*) For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

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2 different ways of life

Which of these two ways of life are you following? One way you can tell is to see which questions you tend to focus on concerning the following areas:

	SELF-SERVING	SELF-GIVING
KEY PEOPLE	“Are they treating me the way I want to be treated?”	“Am I learning to love the people that are in my life—especially those that don’t love me well?” (Lk. 6:27-38)
FREE TIME	“Do I have enough time for myself to do what I want to do? If not, how can I get more of this?”	“How much of this time am I using to creatively serve others?” (Eph. 5:1,2,15,16)

¹ Many, many New Testament passages teach this way of life. See for example Jn. 4:34; 6:1-13; Mk. 8:34,35; Rom. 12:1-15:14; 1 Tim. 1:4,5; 1 Jn. 4:7-21.

GOODS & SERVICES	“Am I getting all or most of the goods and services that I desire?”	“How can I become more financially generous—to relieve others’ suffering, help them develop, etc.?” (1 Tim. 6:17-19; Eph. 4:28)
LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES	“Are my circumstances going the way I want them to? Am I getting the breaks? How can I get them going my way?”	“How can I develop as a servant in every circumstance?” (1 Cor. 10:33; Col. 3:17ff.)

- Are you increasingly asking the second set of questions?
- Are you increasingly making decisions based on your answers to them?

2 different outcomes

SELF-SERVING	SELF-GIVING
increasing dissatisfaction & disappointment	increasing contentment
pattern of relational failure	greater relational success
growing sense of slavery & victimhood	growing sense of freedom
increased emotional problems	growing emotional health ²

REMEMBER: True happiness isn’t the ultimate goal; it is the by-product of following Jesus by receiving God’s love and giving it away to others.

Receiving God’s love

(1 John 4:16,17) And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

² For confirmation from research, see the “Positive Psychology” movement, including Peterson & Seligman, *Character Strengths & Virtues A Handbook & Classification* (New York: Oxford Press, 2004).

You can't *dabble* in this way of life; you have to sell out to it over the long haul.

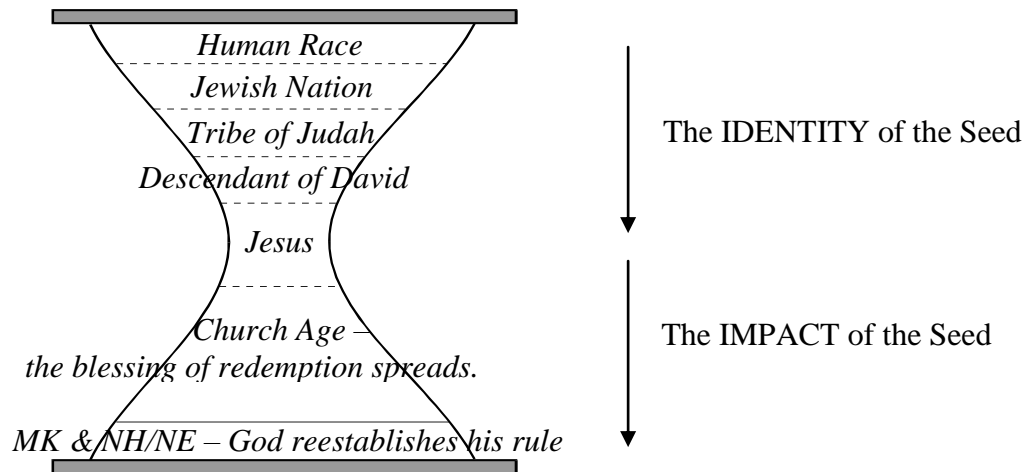
HOW TO VIEW THE WEEKLY TOPICS OF THIS COURSE:

Missions: God's blessing

Our individual lives make sense only in light of God's larger plan. So we begin with a look at God's world-wide plan to bless all nations—usually called “missions.” **Missions is God's core purpose for humanity: His plan to REDEEM lost humanity, and to reestablish his RULE through Jesus.** This plan of God is called “the blessing” because God accomplishes his mission through a series of blessings he gives to key individuals in the Bible in order that they may bless others. Let's look at four statements that express the centrality of this theme:

1. Missions is the central plot of the Bible

At the center of God's plan is a Person the Bible calls “the Seed,” a human descendant of Adam and Eve who will *redeem* humanity and reestablish *God's rule* over the earth.



The Old Testament brings into increasing focus the IDENTITY of the "Seed."
The New Testament explains the increasing IMPACT of the "Seed."

The IDENTITY of the Seed

(Gen. 3:15) “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall crush you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

WHO:

WHAT:

(Gen. 12:1-3) Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; 2 and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; 3 and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse and *in you* all the families of the earth will be blessed."**

WHO:

WHAT:

(Gen. 49:8-10) Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. (9) You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? (10) The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

WHO:

WHAT:

(1 Chron. 17:11-14) When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring (seed) to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. (12) He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. (13) I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. (14) I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.

WHO:

WHAT:

Note: The “Seed” is depicted as a King who restores God’s rule AND as a Suffering Servant who redeems humanity. (See Gen. 3:15; the Old Testament sacrificial system; Isa. 53; Zech. 6:12,13; Ps. 110)

Jesus' First Coming: The blessing of redemption fulfilled

Matthew 1:1-17

WHO:

WHAT: According to the Gospels, the "Seed" ...

- Is rejected as Messiah by the people of Israel.
- Dies on the cross to redeem humanity.
- Will one day return as King and restore God’s rule.

NOTE: The gospels also record God’s plan to temporarily suspend Israel’s role as chosen nation and work instead through the church (Matt. 21:42-44).

The Church Age: Our role in spreading the blessing of redemption

(Matt. 28:18-20*) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This is the Great Commission, the portion of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) to be fulfilled in this period of redemptive history. Jesus *promises* his followers his authority and presence, and he *commands* us to make disciples of Jesus from all people groups. Making disciples involves:

- "going"
- "baptizing"
- "teaching"

(Acts 1:8) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Jesus outlines the beginning of his expansion strategy.

(Rev. 7:9,10) After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, *from every nation, tribe, people and language,*

standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. (10) And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

John sees a vision of the future fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Jesus' Second Coming: The blessing of redemption & rulership consummated

(Rev. 20:4) I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and *reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

John sees a vision of the "Millennial Kingdom" (see Christian Ministry 1)—the future return of Jesus to restore God's rule on earth.

(Rev. 22:3-5) And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; (4) and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. (5) And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.

This is a vision of the "new heavens and new earth—the consummation of God's plan, when his people are fully redeemed and his reign is fully restored.

2. Missions is the prime mover of history, both within the biblical period and beyond.

Since God is sovereign over history and the fulfillment of his mission purpose is his goal, God is working through historical events to accomplish his purposes (Eph. 1:10,11).

Biblical examples:

- *Joseph sold into slavery and ending up in Egypt*

(Gen. 50:20) You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

- *God working through Jesus' rejection and crucifixion to accomplish redemption*

(Acts 2:23, 24) . . . this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed him to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (24) And God raised Him up again . . .

Extra-biblical examples (We can't be dogmatic about all of these. But behind the headlines, God is at work advancing his plan in history):

- *The regathering of Israel*
- *China under Communist rule*
- *China's emergence as a super-power*

Application: If we believe this, we should:

- Look at historical/current events in terms of how God is working through them to fulfill the Great Commission.
- Look at our personal circumstances this same way (Phil. 1:12-14).
- Understand that God is prolonging this age until the Great Commission is fulfilled (Matt. 24:14), and that the Church can hasten Jesus' return by obeying the Great Commission (2 Pet. 3:12).

3. Missions is the primary purpose of the Church.

The Church does many good things . . .

But above all, the Church is God's instrument to reach out to the nations. As someone put it, "The church is the only social entity that exists primarily for the benefit of its *non-members*." At Xenos, we are committed to evangelism and missions as the ministry "hub" around which all other concerns revolve.

Xenos Mission Statement:

God has called on the church to cooperate with him as he reconciles the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). Therefore, Xenos Christian Fellowship exists to help people learn to draw close to God. This work begins by inviting people to receive the gift of forgiveness offered through Christ.

We are committed to fostering spiritual growth by encouraging people to respond to God's love through loving service toward God and all people.

Specifically, we direct our resources to serving the family, the non-Christian community locally and internationally, and the broader Christian community.

4. Missions is the key to victorious Christian living.

This brings us full-circle back to the first section of our class tonight!

Xenos Vision Statement

Xenos has set out to build a highly trained, sophisticated, caring, leadable, cohesive, committed, and flexible workforce of Christian servants who continually strive to serve the Lord and do his will.

Memory Verses

Matthew 16:25* There are only two ways of life (self-serving & self-giving) leading to two different outcomes (death & life).

Gen. 12:1-3** The Abrahamic Covenant, in which God promised to provide his redemptive blessing to the world through Abraham's descendants. Key elements of the promise: land, nationhood, and all the nations blessed through one of Abraham's descendants.

Matthew 28:18-20* The Great Commission, which promises Jesus' authority and presence, and commands us to go, baptize, and teach all people groups.

Assignment

- **Complete the *Ministry to the Poor Assignment*.**
- **Read the article titled “Catch the Vision” and write a one paragraph summary of what you read.**