

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry Unit 3
Module 1: Missions and Evangelism
Week 1 – The Big Picture

Editors' note:

- *Italics (lower case or ALL CAPS) show what students should write in their student outline.*
- **Bold (including bold italics and bold ALL CAPS) shows what appears in the student outline.**
- Regular text is used for lecture notes; ALL CAPS are used for emphasis.

Overview:

- [The Big Picture](#)
 - [Missions is the central plot of the Bible](#)
 - [Missions is the prime mover of history](#)
 - [Missions is the primary purpose of the church](#)
 - [Missions is the key to victorious Christian living](#)
- [The Goal of this Class](#)
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The big picture: What is God's overall purpose?

If you plan to become a worker for God, you need an understanding of God's overall purpose (beginning with the end in mind).

What is God's overall purpose? Christians answer this question in a variety of ways. Here are a few:

- God wants to enrich the lives of his children who believe in him.
- God wants us to praise and exalt him.
- God wants us to fight injustice and defend the downtrodden.
- God wants us to reform our culture and our laws so they reflect his values.

DISCUSSION: How would one's view of God's overall purpose affect each of the areas below?

- The church meeting.
- The approach taken to growing spiritually.
- The role Christians should play in the society around them.

Any statement of God's purpose should be drawn from scripture:

(Ephesians 1:9,10) And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, (10) to be put into effect when the times

will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

God's will, his purpose, is "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head."

This involves two things:

- *God wants to bring us back into a relationship with himself.* That requires REDEMPTION (define). Note how often in this passage God's efforts to save are emphasized (v 6-8, 13-14).
- *God wants to bring his creation back under his RULE ("under one head").* God's goal is to bring all things under his benevolent rulership once again.

Based on passages like Ephesians 1:9,10 we will argue that MISSIONS, as defined below, is at the center of God's purpose for humanity.

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 reveals his plan through a series of blessings he gives to key individuals in the Bible. Let's look at four statements that express the centrality of this main theme of missions:

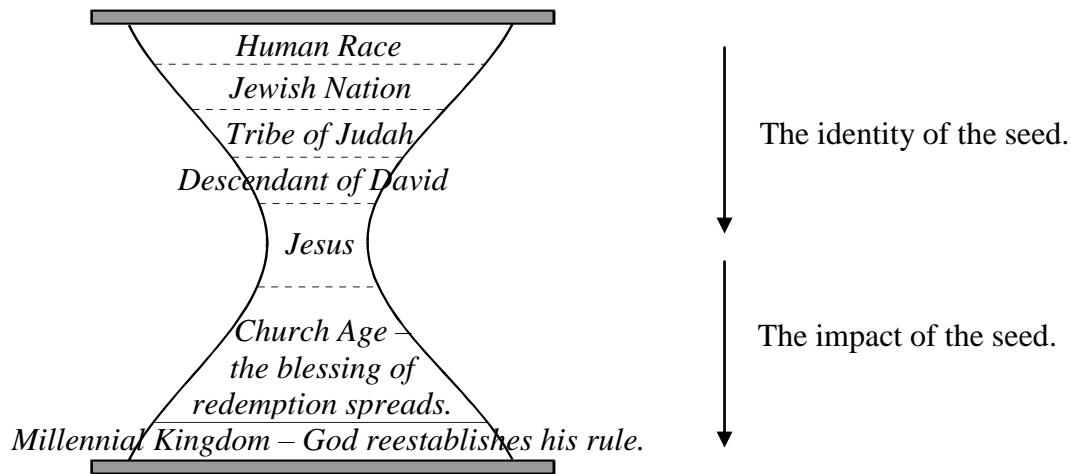
1. Missions is the central plot of the Bible.

Like any good story, the Bible has a plot. This is an amazing fact when you consider that the Bible was written by dozens of men separated by time, culture, language and geography. Yet read together in the Bible, their books tell a unified and coherent story.

In the first chapters of Genesis, after God creates Adam and Eve, a problem arises. Adam and Eve rejected God's rule and chose to disobey him. Theologians call this act of disobedience "The Fall" and it marked the entry of sin into the world. As a result, God drove humans out of his presence.

The rest of the Bible describes God's plan to overcome the problems caused by sin. His plan involves providing *redemption* to bring humans back to himself and ending our rebellion by *restoring his rule*. At the center of God 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.

Instructors, direct students' attention to the "hour glass" model in the student notes. Have them fill out each layer as you work through the verses below.



We are going to look at some passages that through time bring into increasing focus the **IDENTITY** of the "seed" (the narrowing of the top of the hourglass), and then some passages that explain the increasing **IMPACT** of the "seed" (the widening of the lower half).

Old Testament: The blessing promised

God wasn't caught off guard when the Serpent (Satan) enticed Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. He had a plan from the beginning to deal with the problems caused by the Fall (see 1 Peter 1:18-20). God gives us his first hint of his plan when he curses Satan:

(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: The "seed" will be *a member of the HUMAN RACE*: One of Eve's descendants will defeat Satan.

WHAT: The "seed" *will crush Satan*. God hints at two comings of this seed—one in which he is injured (though not mortally) by Satan, and one in which he mortally wounds Satan.

(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; 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."

This promise from God to Abraham is called the **Abrahamic Covenant**. It was given around 2100 BC. Note key elements of the promise:

- *land*
- *nationhood*

- *all the nations blessed through one of Abraham's descendants.*

WHO: The "seed" will come *from the JEWISH NATION* – the nation springing from Abraham.

WHAT: The "seed" will *bless all the nations*. The Jewish nation is "chosen," not so that all of its members go to heaven, but to be the people through which God works to bring salvation to all "families" (people-groups). (See also Ex. 19:6; Ps. 67.) As the Old Testament unfolds, this blessing primarily involves redeeming humanity and establishing God's rule.

God repeats this promise to Abraham using the term "seed":

(Gen. 22:17,18) . . . your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

The promise is repeated to Isaac & Jacob:

(Gen. 26:3,4) Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. (4) I will make your descendants (seed) as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring (seed) all nations on earth will be blessed

(Gen. 28:13,14) There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants (seed) the land on which you are lying. (14) Your descendants (seed) will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring (seed).

(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.

This promise was given about 1859 B.C.

WHO: The "seed" will be a member of the *TRIBE OF JUDAH*.

WHAT: The "seed" will be *a king who establishes God's righteous rule*. "Shiloh" means "him to whom it (rulership) belongs." He will be the rightful ruler of all the peoples (nations).

(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. (2 Samuel 7 contains a parallel passage.)

This is the **Davidic Covenant**, which was given about 1000 BC: *One of David's descendants will be an eternal king.*

WHO: The "seed" *will be a DESCENDANT OF DAVID* (a member of the tribe of Judah). This becomes the kingly line of Israel.

WHAT: The "seed" will be *an eternal ruler*. God will establish a dynasty through David and Solomon which will culminate in an everlasting King. This coming king is called the Messiah (anointed one). David evidently understood this (see his response in 2 Sam. 7:19) because he called this promise from God a "charter for humanity." The future king would be human, yet divine (see Isaiah 9:6,7) and rule from David's throne. This "shoot" from David ("stem of Jesse") who is also called "Branch" will bring the blessing of his rule to all the nations (see Isaiah 11:1,2,10).

Note: The "seed" is depicted as a king who restores God's rule AND as a suffering servant who redeems humanity.

This theme is alluded to in Gen. 3:15 ("...you shall bruise his heel..."), developed in the sacrificial system (see Christian Ministry 1, Module 2 on Substitutionary Atonement), and is fulfilled in a human being (Isaiah 53). Although it was not clear in the Old Testament, these two roles are fulfilled in the two comings of Jesus Christ. Zech. 6:12,13 hints that the same person will be both king who rules AND a priest who makes atonement (a covering for sin). See also Psalm 110.

Jesus' First Coming: The blessing of redemption fulfilled

Matthew 1 – Now we can understand the significance of Jesus' genealogy and why Matthew starts his gospel with it. Note how Jesus' human lineage traces back through David and Judah to Abraham just as the OT record indicated the messiah's ancestry would. Matthew is connecting Jesus to the promises made about the "seed" to Abraham and David.

WHO: The "seed" is *JESUS CHRIST*

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

- **Is rejected as Messiah by the people of Israel.** The people didn't want a suffering servant to redeem them; they wanted a ruling king.

- **Dies on the cross to redeem humanity.** God sovereignly worked through Israel's rejection of the Messiah to accomplish his salvation for the world through Jesus' atoning death.
- **Will one day return as king and restore God's rule (Matthew 25:35-46).** When he comes again he will crush his enemies and set up his kingdom.

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). Because Israel rejected her Messiah, God gave his kingdom to "a people producing the fruit of it"—the church. This is why Peter calls the church the "people of God" (1 Peter 2:9,10). At the end of history, God will honor his promises to the nation of Israel and work through them once again (Romans 11:25-29).

Now that we have solved the *identity* of the Seed – Jesus Christ – let's examine the impact of the seed (bottom half of the hourglass). How will the blessing he brings impact all the nations?

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

Now that God has brought the "blessing" of forgiveness through Jesus, he wants Jesus' followers to spread the news of this blessing to all people-groups.

(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. Jesus commands his followers to make disciples of Jesus from all people groups** (ethnoi). God wants the message of what Jesus has done to be accessible to every distinct cultural group in the world. This is the portion of the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) to be fulfilled in this period of redemptive history ("in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed"). Note the apostles' references to Christians as recipients of the blessing of Abraham (Gal. 3:6-9,29; Rom. 4:9-18).

The main verb in this passage is "make disciples." It is modified by three participial phrases which explain how to do this. **Making disciples involves:**

- "*going*" (taking initiative to go where the people are vs. "stay in the land")
- "*baptizing*" (implies evangelism and actual conversion), and
- "*teaching*" (speaks of grounding, equipping, and maturing believers so that workers are multiplied).

The Great Commission implies that this will take a long period of time ("...to the very end of the age.")

As we share what we know about God with others and see them come to Christ and as we take the responsibility to nurture their growth, we are participating in God's promise to Abraham to bless all the nations. The central goal of this course is to equip you to make disciples so you can participate in spreading the blessing Jesus secured for us on the cross.

(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: ("...Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."). The first century church came to understand this strategy and implemented it with unparalleled effectiveness.

The rest of Acts narrates how God guided, empowered, and at times thrust the Church out to do this. By the end of Acts, the gospel had spread numerically, from 120 to thousands, geographically, from Jerusalem to Rome and ethnically, from a Jewish sect to a Gentile movement.

See also Acts 1:1 (...all that Jesus began to do...")

IMPACT: During *the Church Age*, *the blessing of redemption spreads*.

(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 fulfillment of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 and 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.

This is a vision of a future time when Jesus returns and rules on earth, a time known as the "Millennial Kingdom" (more on this later). This is the

continued fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and David (e.g. Gen. 22:17,18; Gen. 49:8-10).

IMPACT: After his return, Jesus (the Messiah) completes the blessing of the seed by **restoring God's rule over the entire earth during the Millennial Kingdom**. On the bottom layer of the hourglass, write: *MILLENNIAL KINGDOM – God reestablishes his rule.*

(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.

Application: When all the dust settles, God will have his way! *Why not let him rule now in your life?*

Instructor's note: You may want to check for understanding here and ask students to identify how Rev. 20:4 and Rev. 22:3-5 fulfill God's promises to Abraham and David.

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

Since God is sovereign over history and since the fulfillment of his mission purpose is his goal...

A. God is working through historical events to accomplish *his purposes*.

(Eph. 1:10,11) And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...

Biblical Examples:

- *Joseph sold into slavery and ending up in Egypt:* Was this merely a terrible tragedy for Joseph, or God preserving his people?

(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, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

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: *This* isn't just a miraculous story of one nation reappearing on the map. God is at work bringing the Jews back into their land.
- China under Communist rule: Was this merely a terrible threat to U.S. security, or God sifting the church so he can propagate it?
- China and Russia opening back up to the West: Is this merely a new market opportunity for the U.S., or God showing us his power and giving us the opportunity to reach out to them?

Application:

- This means that **alternate theories about the purpose and direction of history are wrong.**

e.g. History is not just an evolutionary march toward higher complexity; the Marxists were wrong that class conflict will ultimately lead to a utopian society; history is not simply a sorrowful "wheel of despair" as some eastern religions teach; the Nihilists are mistaken who argue that history is headed nowhere because everything is meaningless.

God is orchestrating history to fill the earth with his glory. Everything that happens is permitted by God toward this end. God will accomplish his purpose; we have the option of being voluntarily involved or being used anyway (like Herod and Pilate with Jesus' death >> Acts 2:23).

- If we believe this, **we should look at all current events through the lens of missions.** How is God working through this event to fulfill the Great Commission?
- **God can advance his purposes through us regardless of our circumstances.** As Christians we realize also that God is sovereign in our lives and in whatever circumstance we find ourselves God can use it to change us and advance his mission purpose (e.g. Phil. 1:12-14).

B. God is prolonging this age until the Great Commission is fulfilled. History will be prolonged until every nation has heard the gospel and some have responded.

(Matt. 24:14) And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

C. The church can "hasten" the coming of the end by *obeying the Great Commission*.

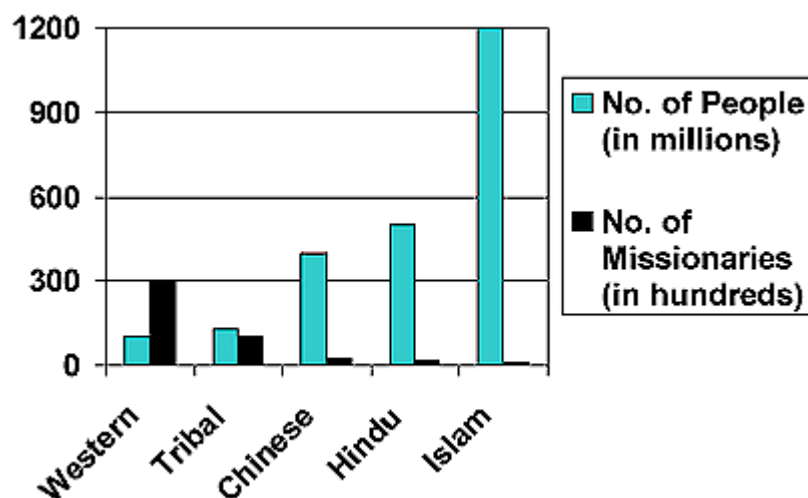
(2 Pet. 3:12) ... as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

Aside: How is the church today progressing in preaching the gospel to the whole world?

- **Roughly one third of the world's population call themselves Christians.**
- **One third are non-Christians living in already reached people groups.** Instructors should define the terms "reached/unreached" and "people group."
- **One third are non-Christians living in unreached people groups.**
- **Evangelical believers (define) are growing at a rate of three and one half times that of world population.**
- For the first time in history, there are fewer non-Christians within the unreached groups than there are within the reached groups.¹

The bad news is that the people groups that most need missionaries have the fewest resources: for example, 1.2 billion Islamic people have only 900 missionaries (6 from Xenos)! The chart below illustrates the problem.

The Present Allocation of Missionary Resources²



The good news is that there are more than sufficient resources to complete the task. While in 100 AD there were 12 unreached people groups for every local church,

¹ This information was taken from Mission Frontiers, a bulletin published by the U.S. Center for World Mission. Learn more at www.missionfrontiers.org/newslinks/statewe.htm.

² Patrick Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger Than You Think* (Evangelical Press, 1997) p. 231.

today there are 600 local churches for every remaining unreached people group.³
The resources are fully sufficient to complete the task!

Application:

- **Why can't we be the generation that gets the job done?!** No generation in the history of the world has been in a better position than we are to finish the task of taking the blessing of Jesus redemption to all of the nations. The resources are there, but the willingness is lacking.. God has given us the privilege of advancing his mission in the word and all Christians should play their part in carrying out the great commission. If you understand this, then you understand why Xenos is deeply committed to personal discipleship and world missions. It's not enough for us to be a local movement of home groups reaching out to our neighbors; the scope of our concern needs to include the unreached people groups of the world.

3. Missions is the primary purpose of the church

The church does many things - it provides a forum for social interaction and place to have fun. In Christian community, people find safety and shelter from the world, families are strengthened, people come together to praise God, and believers are equipped to serve. But none of those things are why the church exists. The future of the church is not the church itself. **The church is an instrument of God to reach out to the nations.** It is the nations, the lost people, not the found people, that are the central purpose of God's active concern.

This doesn't mean God doesn't care about his own. But his care extends beyond them to people all across the world who don't yet know him. The minute that a church forgets this and supposes that He only loves them (and starts spinning theologies that crowd out God's central concern), the clock is ticking toward the breakdown and destruction of that church.

Therefore, the church must not make its focus: political agenda; family protection; fundamentalist church protection; corporate worship, personal healing, etc.

DISCUSSION: Given that 'missions' is so central to God's ultimate purpose, what features, structures are most important in a local church? What structures/values are Xenos home churches susceptible to that could detract from this mission?

At Xenos, we are committed to evangelism and missions as the hub around which everything we do revolves.

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.

³ Ralph Winter, Mission Frontiers, November-December 1996, Volume 18, Number 11-12, pp. 18,19.

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.

There is nothing different about Xenos in this regard. We have been blessed by God (in part) because we have continued to obey the light that we have received. That light has consistently moved us in the direction described here. But God is not dependent on us to accomplish his purposes. If we move away from this purpose or shrink back from the steps of faith he asks us to take (domestic work and frontier work and example for others), God will find someone else to use. We will be bypassed in that sense, begin to experience inner "rot" and become eventually an empty husk. We should all be committed to not letting that happen in our lifetime.

The church is the only social entity that exists primarily for the benefit of its nonmembers.

4. Missions is a key to victorious Christian living

The average Christian bookstore is glutted with books on how to appropriate God's blessings for *you*, how to be all God wants *you* to be. American narcissistic, therapeutic, self-absorbed "spirituality" is antithetical to biblical spirituality. Where are the books that teach us how to follow, suffer for and die for Christ? They don't sell, so they are rarely printed, and few Christians read them. But there is no lasting fulfillment in Christianity apart from this!!

(John 12:24,25) I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. (25) The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

(Mark 8:34,35) Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (35) For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."

Any spirituality which focuses primarily on individual fulfillment, and does not focus on God's mission, is unbiblical and therefore doomed to failure and disappointment.

Recall that by mission we mean the extension of God's blessing (redemption and rule) to all people. Have you ever given up your small ambitions? Have you ever laid down your plans for your life, asking God to bless your agenda—and told him: "Here is my life—use it to fulfill your purpose?"

The goal of this class: *to equip you to play your role in this purpose.*

It is not primarily for self-improvement, knowledge quest or experiences with God. Though all of these are good, and may happen in this class, they are a byproduct of following Christ into his purpose.

(Eph. 4:11,12) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (12) to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

As you continue on in this course, prayerfully consider who you could build up, who you can share this information with. God wants you to use your gifts and knowledge to prepare *others* for works of service. This is why, throughout this course, we will continually urge you to be actively involved in evangelism and making disciples in your home group. In this context, you can practice this lifestyle, and begin to share what you are learning with others.

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.

Instructors may want to discuss & unpack each of these terms (ex: sophisticated – formidable theological knowledge vs. curriculum dependent small group leader, etc.)

Memory Verses

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, personal blessing, and all the nations blessed through one of Abraham's descendants.**

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.**