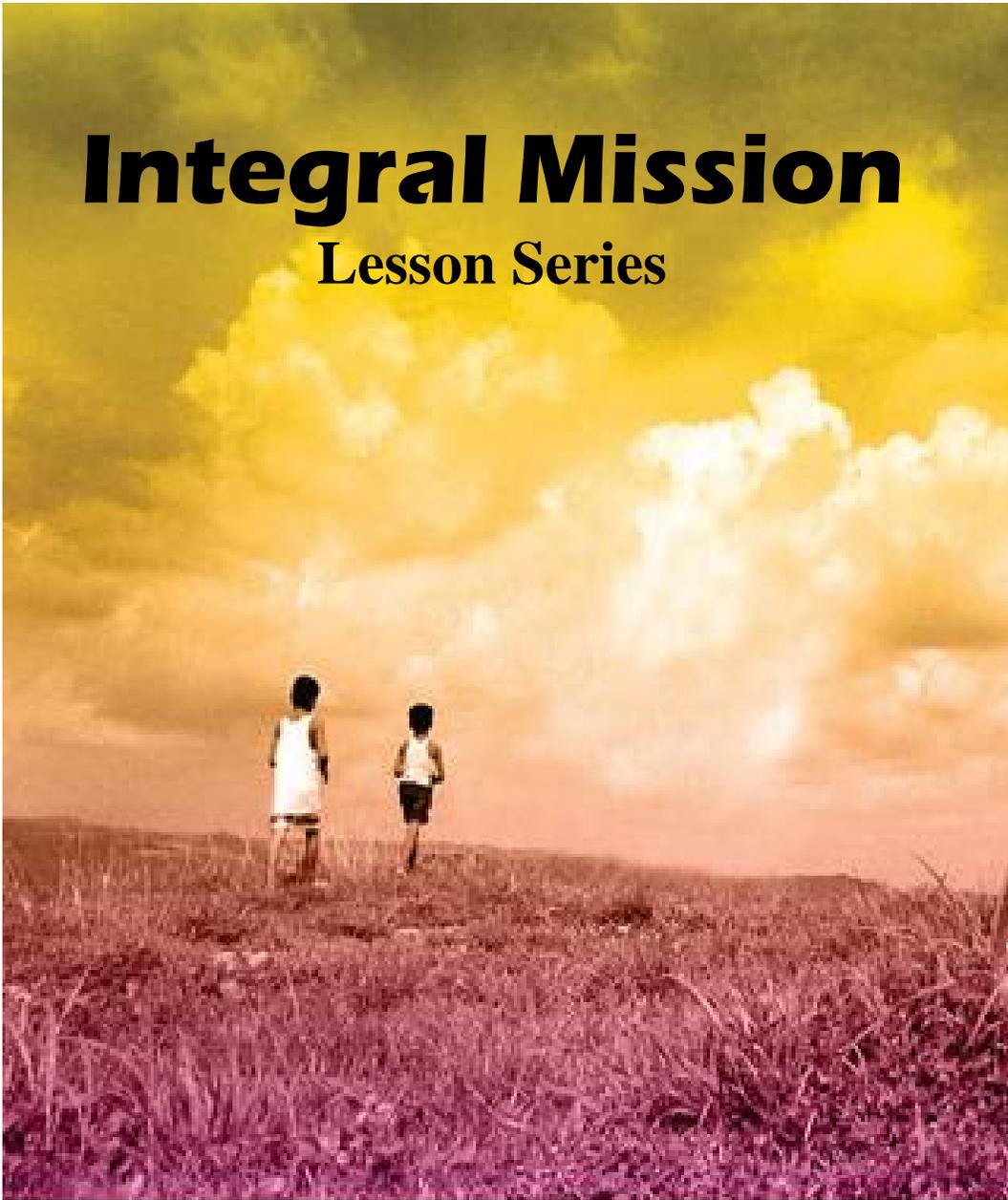
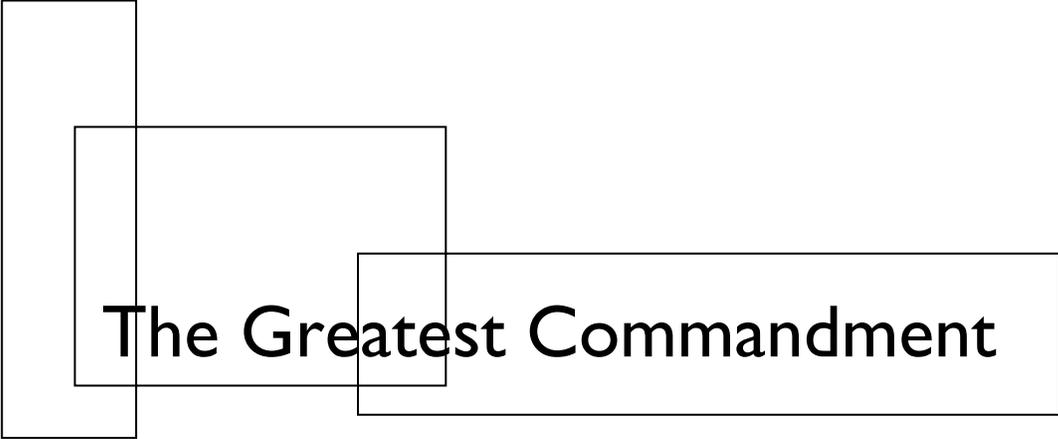


Integral Mission

Lesson Series



*Prepared by the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture (ISACC)
in partnership with Tearfund UK
for Micah Challenge Philippines*



The Greatest Commandment

- Recovering the Greatest Commandment
- Understanding the Greatest Commandment
- Testing the Greatest Commandment
- Doing the Greatest Commandment
- Fighting for the Greatest Commandment
- Integration

Recovering the Greatest Commandment

*Text: Matthew 22: 34-40***WARM-UP**

- Welcome everyone in the group. Start the session with a prayer.
- Set the theme for the session by having the members share to the group the things that they consider as “pinaka” in their lives. (Ex. pinaka-ayaw, pinakamahalaga, pinakamaliit, etc.)

DISCUSS-IN

Let the group read the text silently and carefully. Ask the members to close their eyes and meditate on what they just read. Then have someone read the text again slowly with conviction. After which, allow everyone to open their eyes, then proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- Of the many commands in the Bible, how many could you remember?
- According to Jesus himself, of all these commandments of God which is the greatest?
- Why do you think it is important that we fulfill the command that Jesus deemed as the most important before we do anything else for God?
- Personally, what are the dangers of neglecting a conscious observance of the Greatest Commandment?

Did you know?

The rabbis counted 613 distinct commandments in the Law, of which 248 were positive precepts and 365 were prohibitions. They classified these as either ‘light’ or ‘heavy,’ according to the seriousness of the subject. Hence is the query, “Which of these is the greatest commandment?”

Point of Discussion

“On an individual level, it means that we see to it that all we do really proceeds from the love of God...It may be that our lifeline to God has dried up, and we have ceased to drink deeply of the only well that sustains life, health and passion. It may be that we have ‘hewn out cisterns for yourselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water’ as Jeremiah puts it. Like Israel, we trust in the jars of clay that our hands have fashioned, only to discover, in the heat and drought of summer, that the water has seeped through the cracks, lapped dry by the parched ground.

Ultimately it is the love of God and neighbor that will make any work endure.”

Questions for Discussion

- Why is it important to note that the person who asked Jesus is an expert in the law?
- Do you think you have been successful at fulfilling what Jesus thinks is the most important command of all? Why or why not?
- How much has the church succeeded in exerting a corporate action towards fulfilling the Greatest Commandment?

Did you know?

Massive global poverty is making traditional ways of doing missions obsolete and has put to crisis theologies and prevailing paradigms of social engagement.

Point of Discussion

“Much of our enterprises as communities of evangelical faith is centered on ‘evangelism,’ narrowly understood as proclaiming salvation for the hereafter and getting people to come to our side and believe what we believe. It may startle some to know that the greatest commandment, according to Jesus, is not the ‘Great Commission’ but the mandate to ‘Love God and neighbor.’”

WRAP-UP

“Jesus’ understanding of what it means to truly obey God has little to do with getting people to assent to our creeds or other such propositions. To follow God is to love him with passion, and, similarly, to love our neighbor with the same care and total attention that we shower on ourselves. This was Jesus’ reply to the lawyer who wanted to ‘test’ him, representing a gang of Pharisees conspiring to entrap him in his talk.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, ask 5 persons that you will meet what they think is the most important thing that God expects to be done.
- Be ready to share your experiences next meeting.

Lesson 2

Understanding the Greatest Commandment

Text: Matthew 22: 34-40

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share experiences from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by running an unfreezing activity called the "Dynamic Duos."

(Way ahead before the study, the Facilitator prepares a set of cards, each card containing the name of one member of a dynamic duo. Each participant is given a card. The Facilitator tells the participants that the aim of the task is to find his or her own pair at the shortest time possible. The Facilitator explains that since nobody else in the room knows who they are, they'll have to act out their identity to be recognized by their partner. The first three pairs who are able to look for their partner will get a prize. Examples of dynamic duo: Romeo & Juliet, Tarzan & Jane, Batman & Robin, David & Goliath, Samson & Delilah).
- After the activity, the Facilitator allows about ten seconds for the participants to regroup. Once ready, the Facilitator asks the participants to sit down in a circle and encourages them to share their experience during the activity. Then the Facilitator emphasizes the importance of each member of the pair in order to form the dynamic duo.

DISCUSS-IN

Read the text. Give the group a moment to reflect on the passage. Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- Why do you think Jesus gave two answers to the question "which is the greatest commandment?"
- Is loving God very much like loving our neighbor?

Point of Discussion

"The new thing about Jesus' answer was that he puts Deuteronomy 6:5 ("Love the Lord your God...") in the same breath as Leviticus 19:18 (Love your neighbor as...) and gives them equal weight. The Leviticus text, says Jesus, is 'like' the first one. As such, he puts it on the same level,

Did you know?

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" forms the second part of the Shema, the Jewish profession of faith, which begins with "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

Section 1: The Greatest Commandment

making it equally 'heavy.' The two commands, says Jesus, are like pegs on which all the teachings of the Law and the Prophets hang. They sum up what the Lord requires."

Questions for Discussion

- Can you love God without loving your neighbor?
- What is the effect of love for God without love for one's neighbor?

Point of Discussion

"True religion always has social and moral consequences. Conversely, it seems to me that we can not truly love our neighbor without at the same time loving God."

Did you know?

James strongly picks up this theme by refusing the divide between word and deed, faith and works, or, in contemporary language, religion and social action. (See James 1:26-27)

Questions for Discussion

- Can you love your neighbor without loving God?
- What are the dangers of loving our neighbor without love for God?

Point of Discussion

"There is no force on earth, besides the grace of God, that can deliver us from the insatiable appetite for profit, or the many subtle ways by which we use 'the greater good for the greater number' to camouflage our interests and eliminate competition or opposition. Biblical pessimism about human nature tells us that no amount of social engineering can neutralize the acquisitive instinct and will to power, or reorder the sinful bent towards selfishness and greed."

Did you know?

The Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky, writing in the 19th century, predicted with a great deal of prescience that 'with the downfall of the altar of God, we are left with either the superman or the anthill.' What he meant by this is that apart from the high and humbling view that we are made in the image of a great God, we lose a sense of proportion about ourselves.

WRAP-UP

"In the mind of Jesus, these two acts of love are seamlessly one. To love God then is to love our neighbor, and to love our neighbor is to love God.

Loving God and loving our neighbor is a single, not a sequential act. It is not that when we love God, we shall, in the next instance, love others also. Jesus makes the two commandments virtually one, such that there is no sense in which we can love God without at the same time loving our neighbor.

On this, the Jerusalem Bible Commentary notes that “To this arrangement of the two commandments so that they become effectively one, there is no parallel in Jewish literature.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, do a special treat that you normally do for yourself to someone else.
- Be ready to share your experiences next meeting.

Lesson 3

Testing the Greatest Commandment

Text: Luke 10:25-37

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share experiences from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by asking the question, "Close ka ba sa mga kapit-bahay mo?"
- After some time of sharing, give each member a piece of paper. Instruct them to draw a large circle on the center with 6 smaller circles around it. Ask them to right their name on the large circle. Then, tell them to write the names of six neighbors whom they rarely have the chance to talk to or even avoid talking with.

DISCUSS-IN

- Ask the members to open their Bibles to Luke 10:25-37. Let the members take turns reading a verse each.
- Explain to the members that in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus gave the Greatest Commandment a concrete application.

Questions for Discussion

- The expert on the law was well aware of the Greatest Commandment. But what was his problem in verse 29? What do you think moved him to ask such a question?
- In the Parable, why do you think the priest and the Levite avoided the beaten man?
- Lately, have you done a similar thing to what the two religious people in the parable did? What pushed you to act in such a way?

Did you know?

Both the priest and the Levite "passed by on the other side," perhaps to avoid having to touch what looked like a dead body. Apparently, fear of ritual contamination took prior importance to helping the man, in contrast to the Samaritan who was simply moved to pity and took all the trouble and expense needed to take care of him.

Point of Discussion

"The 'expert in the law' was taken aback by Jesus' backhanded charge that he put to practice what he well knows to be the way to life. He evaded having to apply to himself the meaning of loving God and neighbor. Instead, he engaged Jesus on an abstract discussion of a technical detail: 'And who is my neighbor?'"

Jesus refused to get drawn into the finer points of this theoretical question. Instead he told the story of how a member of a despised race, -- the Samaritans -- proved to be more of a 'neighbor' to someone in need than the religious leaders of his day."

Questions for Discussion

- What do you think the Samaritan had that the two religious leaders did not have?
- Could you honestly do what the Samaritan had done in the parable if you were in his place?

Did you know?

We are told that the giving of a cup of water can be a sacred act, on par with more obviously spiritual tasks like the casting out of demons. Such gestures of compassion, if done in Jesus' name, will by no means lose their reward, he says. (Mark 9:38-41)

Point of Discussion

"Jesus...shifted the issue from 'who has the right to be called my neighbor?' to 'who has actively served as neighbor?' Jesus shows up false religion here and radically breaks down fences, refusing barriers of race, religious scruples and pieties in the face of someone's need for compassion."

Questions for Discussion

- Looking back in your life, who are the people that made it to your actual "list of neighbors"? Who have been unconsciously or unintentionally excluded from your 'list'? Why?
- At the present, how wide is your "neighborhood"? Have you been good neighbor?

Point of Discussion

"To love God is to love beyond boundaries, or our sense of self, be it race or notions of what constitutes purity or 'uncleanness.' This is the pointed message of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke's version of the story. (Luke 10:25-37).

WRAP-UP

To Jesus, it is not important who or what kind of people should get help, -- they could be morally unsavory characters like prostitutes, traitors like tax collectors, or gentiles like the widow at Zarephath. The more relevant question is, 'who is prepared to be neighbor to anyone in need?'"

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Throughout the week, try taking some time out to talk to a neighbor that you rarely talk to. Try finding some ways by which you could be of help or assistance.
- Be ready to share your experiences next meeting.

Lesson 4

Doing the Greatest Commandment

*Text: Deuteronomy 15:4-5***WARM-UP**

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share experiences from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme by gathering the thoughts of the members on the perennial question, "Why are there poor people in the world?"

DISCUSS-IN

- Read the text. Give the group a moment to reflect on the passage. Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- In the verse, what kind of life did God want his people to have and experience?
- Is poverty God's design for his people?
- Distribute the following verses among the members: Exodus 22:21, 22-24, 25-27, Exodus 23:10-11, Leviticus 19:9-10, Deuteronomy 15:7, 24:10-13, 14-15.
- List the various ways God laid down to Israel to make sure that the welfare of the poor and the helpless among them are taken care of and ensured.

Did you know?

In responding to the needy, the church has tended to put emphasis either on social compassion or social construction. The pendulum tends to swing between purely personal involvement or structural engagement, depending on such factors as to whether the church is in a minority or majority situation, theologically tending to withdraw because pessimistic about the world or confidently engaged because the kingdom is now at work in the world.

Point of Discussion

"Historically, the Jews were told to create a society where, because of the memory of their own slavery, the poor, the weak and the stranger are to be treated with special care. There were gleaning and harvest laws meant to provide for landless poor like Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 2:1-3). These are but some of the host of legislation designed to 'remember the poor.' In both the Old and New Testament, there is strong concern that Israel should put them at the center of their vision (See, for instance, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, Psalm 41:1, Proverbs 19:17, Matthew 19:21, Galatians 2:10)."

Questions for Discussion

- During the times of the Early Church, how did they show their concern for the poor and needy? (See specifically Acts 2:45 and 6:1-4)
- Specifically, what do you think drove the Early Church to engage in such actions?
- Can this kind of motivation and level of effort to serve the needy be seen among our churches today?

Point of Discussion

“The Early Church built on Judaism’s legacy of institutionalized charity. They pooled their resources together, enrolled widows into some kind of feeding program, and in general functioned as a social safety net for those who are especially needing help among them.

Missionary movements, like the modern ones that rose from the evangelical awakenings of the 18th century onwards, likewise built schools and hospitals in their wake, doing various works of mercy in far-flung places alongside evangelization.

Such institutions of social compassion are important in themselves and have their own value and integrity. They are not to be treated as mere means to an end, like evangelism or some such enterprise.”

Did you know?

Nelson Mandela, in the 1998 world assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, paid tribute to such efforts. As a boy he was too poor, he said. If not for the mission schools, he could not have gone to school.

WRAP-UP

“Since loving God and loving our neighbor is a single act, what we do with the poor among us is a test of what we are as a society and as a people of God.

Scripture elsewhere illustrates how this works. Matthew 25:40 tells us that the poor, in a very real yet mysterious sense, are ‘proxies for Christ,’ to borrow the phrase of the Jesuit Aloysius Pieris. Part of the mystery of the incarnate God is that he has so identified with those in the margins that their hunger, nakedness and strangeness have become his. What we do with the poor, we do with Jesus.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Throughout the week, count the instances that you encounter a needy person, a street child, a beggar and other depressing situations that exhibit the poverty of our country.
- Be ready to share how many encounters you have had next meeting.

Lesson 5

Fighting for the Greatest Commandment

Text: Ephesians 6:12

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share how many times they have encountered Jesus in the guise of the needy that they have encountered (from last meeting's Take-Out).
- Ask the members to name TV programs that try to reach out and help our poor countrymen. Have the members debate regarding the pros and cons that these shows bring.

DISCUSS-IN

- Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- What are the usual ways by which our churches are trying to help out the poor and the needy?
- With these efforts, have our churches really been able to address the real cause of the problem?

Point of Discussion

Confronting “power structures.” People of faith have shown themselves to be fairly good in concrete delivery of social services. The presence of a volunteer force, dedicated staff and relatively high standards of professional and ethical commitment are today enabling many faith-based organizations to win the trust and respect of donor communities. There is a need, however, to address the larger context of poverty and injustice. Besides relief and development, we need to engage in politics, recompose power elites, restructure social arrangements and do various advocacies on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Did you know?

There is the idea among us that evangelism is in itself a response to the need for social transformation. Changing individuals will automatically mean change in societies. This is not always true. Often, there are larger, much more complex forces at work that keep people in bondage to poverty in many societies.

Questions for Discussion

- Read the text. Give the group a moment to reflect on the passage.

- According to the text, who are we really fighting with in this world? Allow the members to identify these “enemies” one by one.
- Is the text talking only about demons and evil spirits? Ask them to observe the text carefully.

Point of Discussion

“My own sensing about Paul’s language here is not only that there are spiritual forces behind much of the degradation of our societies. There are subhuman ‘powers’ and ‘principalities’ that need to be confronted; life systems and structures that entrench the demonic, causing the defeat of well-meaning efforts and crushing the individuals that dare to transform them.”

Did you know?

Mere social development can run into a bottomless pit. Development experiences in Africa and other places show that incessant political conflicts, tribal wars, bad governance and other such systemic ills result in unsettled demographics and perpetual instability. Painstaking development gains in grassroots communities can get easily wiped out by political disasters.

Questions for Discussion

- If there are indeed “forces” at work in our society that need to be confronted, what or who do you think these could possibly be?
- Could we really “love God” and “our neighbor” and at the same time permit the existence of such “forces” and “structures” that keep the people poor? Why?
- What could our churches do to confront what appear to be the deeper cause of poverty?

Point of Discussion

“To love God, it seems to me, is to turn from the idols of our time and bring our lives and central structures -- like family and governance -- under his lordship. It means naming the powers that rule our lives, our cultures and our life systems, and dethroning them. For churches in the West, it may mean not just turning away from materialism, but confronting the forces that make the rest of the world poor. For those of us in the Two-Thirds World, it may mean breaking free, not just from the stranglehold of nature and ancestral spirits, but hierarchies, authorities and systems that keep people poor and oppressed and without rights.”

Did you know?

In ancient Israel ... on the fiftieth year [the Jubilee Year] the slaves are to be released, the debts cancelled, and ancestral lands redeemed and returned to the original owners (Leviticus 25).

WRAP-UP

“The reality of ‘principalities and powers,’ of complex social forces that perpetuate oppression and inequality, compels us to also deal with the structural causes of poverty.

Subjective change in inner attitudes towards social status, wealth creation and wealth sharing needs to be accompanied by objective changes in economic and social relations.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Throughout the week, take some time out to watch the news on television. From the problems reported by the news program, identify 3 possible causes (“forces at work”) that gave rise to such situations. Identify first “the case” then what you perceived to be the corresponding “cause”.
- Be ready to share your observations next meeting.

Lesson 6

The Greatest Commandment (Integration)

Text: *Deuteronomy 15:4-5*

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for the group members to share their observations from last meeting's Take-Out.
- Proceed by requesting the members to organize themselves into five groups and choose a leader or representative.
- The Leader will ask the representatives to pick a piece of paper on which is written one of the passages below:
 1. To truly obey God has little to do with getting people to assent to our creeds or other such propositions. To follow God is to love him with passion, and to love our neighbor with the same care and total attention that we shower on ourselves.
 2. Loving God and loving our neighbor is a single, not a sequential act. It is not that when we love God, we shall, in the next instance, love others also. Jesus makes the two commandments virtually one, such that there is no sense in which we can love God without at the same time loving our neighbor.
 3. Since loving God and loving our neighbor is a single act, what we do with the poor among us is a test of what we are as a society and as a people of God.
 4. To Jesus, it is not important who or what kind of people should get help, -- they could be morally unsavory characters like prostitutes, traitors like tax collectors, or gentiles like the widow at Zarephath. The more relevant question is, 'who is prepared to be neighbor to anyone in need?'
 5. The reality of 'principalities and powers,' of complex social forces that perpetuate oppression and inequality, compels us to also deal with the structural causes of poverty.
- The task of each group is to creatively role play the themes and plots to deliver the message enshrined in the passages enumerated above. The groups will be given 10 minutes to plan how they will go about the role play.

- Each group will be given three (3) minutes to present what they came up with. The groups who are not performing will be asked to guess the theme or themes in the presentation. After three answers from the audience, the leader of the presenting group reads the passage that became the basis of their presentation.

DISCUSS-IN

- Explain that in the previous five lessons, we revisited a major biblical theme which has always put together what historically has been rent asunder: the command to ‘love God and neighbor.’ In the process we explored the landscape of biblical teachings on what it means to serve the poor and the needy among us.
- Ask the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- Which of the five lessons has created the greatest impact upon you?
- After the five lessons, how have you changed as person and as a Christian?
- How much would change if our churches would take on the challenge of addressing the plight of the poor in our country?
- Before embarking on any endeavor, at the back of our minds we might as well be wondering about the chances of success. Do you think that we can honestly end poverty in our country? In the world? Why or Why not?

Point of Discussion

“Can we end poverty? Traveling through Europe, I noticed banners emblazoned in churches, “Make poverty history.” As someone living in a corner of the world where poverty looks like a never-ending wrong, I thought this was a bit too optimistic. It struck me, though, that such confidence is perhaps peculiar to Europe, and may spring from a history of having substantially reduced poverty, or at least, enough to make the poor invisible.

Questions for Discussion

- Do you think the Scriptures have anything to say with regards to the possibility of ending poverty?
- What does Deut. 15:4-5 and Mark 14:7 seem to tell us?
- What hope could we then hold on to as we embark on this “mission”?

Did you know?

Micah Challenge is a global campaign with a two-fold aim:

- a) To deepen the engagement of Christians with the poor.
- b) Hold governments accountable to fulfill their public promise to cut to half poverty levels in their countries by 2015.

Point of Discussion

In the early years of Israel, when the nation was yet in its incipient form, Moses declared that “there should be no poor among you... if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today” (Deuteronomy 15:4-5). To the extent that other societies are similarly sensitive to God’s demands for justice and equity, there should be no absolute destitution among them.

Did you know?

Israel was to be a showcase of a nation who, because carefully obedient to the laws of loving God and neighbor, is able to eliminate at least absolute poverty.

At the same time, the same passage tells us that “There will always be poor people in the land. “This strand of thinking finds reinforcement in Jesus’ famous remark that “The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.” (See Matthew 26:11, Mark 14: 7).

WRAP-UP

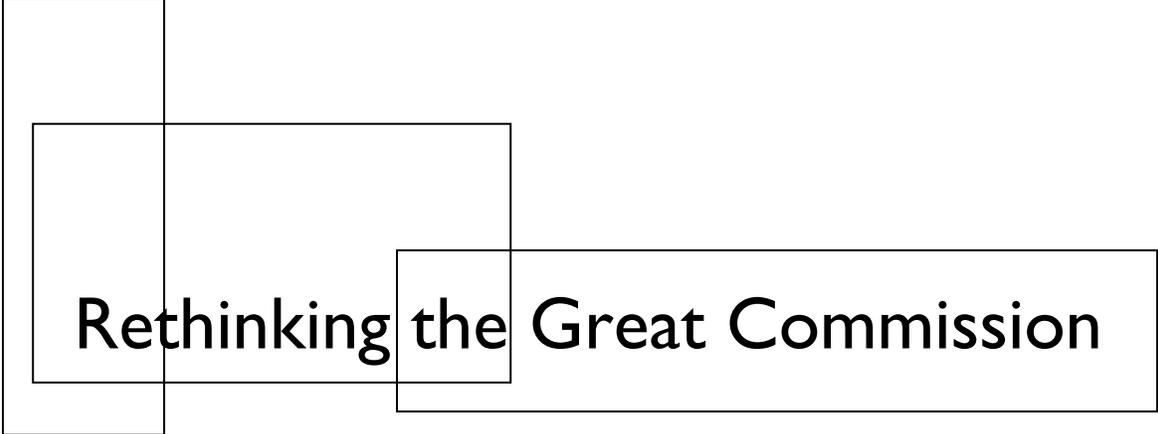
“Scripture, it seems to me, is both optimistic and realistic about ending poverty.

Certainly, by some stroke of misfortune or a complex of reasons, some people will inevitably fall through the cracks. But far from encouraging fatalism, this fact is supposed to rouse people to compassion: “Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in the land.” (Deuteronomy 15:11) By such generosity, coupled with structural safety nets, those on the margins should only be a fraction of the population in a normal society.”

TAKE-OUT

Bring the first part of the series to a close by performing a simple ceremony.

- Post a collage of pictures on the wall showing those who are in prison, those in orphanages, a boy selling sampaguita, an old woman begging for alms in the overpass, etc.
- Allow the members to reflect on the pictures, then throw in the question, “Are you prepared to be a neighbor to anyone in need?” Let the question linger to give the members time to decide whether they will take on the challenge.
- After a minute, distribute a piece of paper to everyone and ask them to write on it what they commit to do in response to the command to love the Lord and the neighbor. Have them post the pieces of paper on top of the pictures on the wall.
- After the last member posts her commitment, join hands and end the meeting with a prayer.



Rethinking the Great Commission

- An Unsuccessful Commission
- A Nations-wide Commission
- A Holistic Commission
- Three-fold Commission
- Powerful Commission
- Integration

Lesson 7

An Unsuccessful Commission

Text: *Matthew 28: 19-20*

WARM-UP

- Welcome everyone in the group. Announce the second part of the lesson series. Start the session with prayer.
- Set the theme for the session by asking the members to share to the group the times when they miserably failed someone or failed in something (“pumalpak”).

DISCUSS-IN

Let the group read the text together in unison. Emphasize the part of the verse “all nations.” Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- How successful has the church been in making disciples of ‘all nations’?
- Why is the Philippines the only Christian nation in Asia?
- Why has it not spread fully to other neighboring countries despite the presence of numerous missionary efforts?

Point of Discussion

“What accounts for this inability to penetrate the cultures of Asia with the gospel? It would not be far off the mark to say that a large part could be accounted to the continuing lack of a deep enough engagement with these great cultures.”

Did you know?

“Christianity, we are told, began in the East and Christian missions have been in Asia for quite a long time... Yet till this day, Asia is the one continent where Christianity had been relatively unsuccessful. After two thousand years, only about 3 to 5 percent of its vast population are Christians. With the exception of the Philippines, its cultures continue to be deeply rooted in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and their variants, religious traditions.”

Questions for Discussion

- What do you feel about other religious traditions like Buddhism or Hinduism?
- What do you think about how other religions/nations feel about Christianity?

Point of Discussion

“In countries that are particularly resistant, Christianity is seen as a colonial religion. Its converts are considered to be no longer part of their cultures, aliens in their own land. This is particularly true in places like India or Japan.

The tiny churches are all too conscious that they are minorities and so feel besieged. This tends to result in further alienation. They drop out of the common life...

In countries where Christians are in the majority... the churches tend to be made in the image of the West.”

WRAP-UP

“The failure to engage cultures, to speak against sin as it expresses itself in institutions such as the caste system and other forms of systemic injustice, has meant the continuing irrelevance of the kind of Christianity that has been transplanted in Asia. As a consequence, the nations remain unreached, undisciplined in those aspects where they are most in need of conversion.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, think of 3 Asian countries. Identify their religion. Think of what would have changed if their countries have become Christian.
- Be ready to share your reflection next meeting.

Lesson 8

A Nations-wide Commission

Text: Matthew 28: 19-20

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share experiences from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by playing a simple game. Divide the members into two groups and assign a representative from each group. The objective of the game is for each representative to name as many provinces as they can according to certain categories (example: provinces that start with the letter "T"). The person who names the most number of provinces wins.

DISCUSS-IN

Read the text. Give the group a moment to reflect on the passage. Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- Have you tried doing the Great Commission? What are your personal experiences in evangelism? In discipling new believers?
- Who has experienced getting on missionary trips or activities?

Point of Discussion

"Most of us are familiar with the Great Commission, the one major call that occupies our churches. We evangelize our friends, officemates and neighborhoods and send countless missionaries to near and far in obedience to it. Lately, we have focused on the countries located in the so-called '10/40 window', site of the poorest of the poor and host to the world's great religions."

Did you know?

The risen Jesus appears to his disciples on a mountain in Galilee. He charges them to 'make disciples of all nations,' calling all peoples to be under the lordship of the triune God. This early instruction to the apostles has been famously known as the 'Great Commission.'

Questions for Discussion

- According to the text who are we supposed to disciple?
- What difference would it make if we are to understand the text as referring to nations instead of individuals?
- Is it possible to disciple individuals and yet still leave their nation untouched?

Section 2: Rethinking the Great Commission

- How would such understanding of the Great Commission affect the way we do evangelism?

Point of Discussion

“The apostles are to gather disciples of all nations, people with cultures, nationalities and ethnicities. Jesus is no longer just ‘king of the Jews’, but ‘king of all nations.’ The apostles’ mission is no longer limited to the Jews but to all the peoples of the earth.

We are to disciple, not just individuals, but nations.”

Questions for Discussion

- What does it mean and what will it take to disciple nations?
- In all our evangelistic efforts, could we say that we have been discipling the nations? How?
- Are there signs that show the failure to disciple our own nation?

Did you know?

We are familiar with the idea of discipling individuals, of making Christ known and obeyed by people. We are less familiar, in fact may even be surprised, with the idea that we are to ‘disciple nations.’ But this is in fact the exact literal rendering of the original text of the Great Commission...To **‘disciple all nations’** means that one is dealing here not just with individuals but with nations.

Point of Discussion

“We are told to **make disciples, not just of individuals, but of nations.** This means that not only people but entire life systems are to be turned towards Christ. We are to engage people in their contexts, help them to work out their faith within their cultures and societies.”

WRAP-UP

“We are to disciple, not just individuals, but nations.

Whole peoples, entire nations, are to be brought at the feet of Jesus, their cultures increasingly transformed as they obey him in all aspects of their lives.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, try to know how other people are trying to disciple entire nations. For starters, listen to 702 DZAS (AM Band) and listen to Ed Lapiz’ Day by Day (6PM). Observe how he engages the Filipino spirit in his messages.
- Be ready to share your observations next meeting.

Lesson 9

A Holistic Commission

Text: *Matthew 28: 19-20*

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers to the group if there are any. Allow some time for members to share observations from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by conducting a simple activity. Divide the members into two groups. Give a cartolina and several copies of newspapers to each group. Ask them to cut out pictures of what seems to them would best describe the situation of the country today.

DISCUSS-IN

Ask someone to read the text. Give the group a moment to reflect on the passage. Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- Despite being the only Christian nation in Asia, how come our country turned out to be one of the most corrupt in the world?
- Considering the miserable state of the country, what kind of disciples have our churches produced?
- What are the usual ways by which we have tried to 'make disciples?'
- Is it possible that we have yet to really understand and obey the Great Commission?

Did you know?

There is a great deal of church growth in many places today, most of them in the Two-Thirds World. But why is it that the nations in which these churches are growing seem to be largely untouched by the ethic of the gospel? Why is there no discernible impact on issues like corruption in governance and the plight of the poor?

Point of Discussion

"The gospel is understood to be merely for the 'soul,' a legacy of Greek dualism that sees the body as a mere 'tomb' for the spirit, and divides life between the 'sacred' and the 'secular.' Religion has to do only with the supernatural, with the appeasing of spirits through rituals and sacrifices, or with 'salvation,' understood as merely getting a ticket to heaven or the assurance that 'all is well with my soul.'

Such retreat from everyday life has given the impression that the gospel has nothing to do with the structures that shape our societies. It continues to serve as a stumbling

block to addressing poverty, the environment, governance and other such issues deemed 'worldly.' Hence, our involvement in society is at best limited to being peaceable citizens who pay taxes and do not 'rock the boat' so to speak."

Questions for Discussion

- To thoroughly fulfill the Great Commission what more do you think needs to be done in the way we make disciples?
- How should "discipled-people" conduct themselves?

Point of Discussion

"The Great Commission is not just about 'saving souls,' but redeeming whole communities of people from the bondage of sin as it expresses itself in our institutions and other forms of organized life. It means dethroning the powers – whether economic, political or cultural – which seek to set themselves up as gods in place of the Lord of the nations... This is what is meant by 'discipling the nations.'

We engage our cultures and the structures of our societies in such a way that they are increasingly aligned and obedient to the will of God for human life."

WRAP-UP

"To call nations to 'turn from idols to the living God' means that the central structures – like governance, business and family life – are to be brought under Jesus' lordship, in line with the norms and purposes for which they were instituted in the first place."

'Discipling the nations' then does not mean merely getting individuals to make 'decisions' for Christ."

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, try listening to the radio. If there is a news that the gospel could give out in response to the news that is being aired, what do you think it would be? List down your headlines.
- Be ready to share your headlines next meeting.

Lesson 10

Three-fold Commission

Text: Matthew 28: 19-20

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share the headlines from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by conducting a simple activity. Divide the groups into three. Ask each group to list down the farthest places that they have been to, the kind of place where they have been baptized and the school where they graduated from. The group with the least common answers with the others wins.

DISCUSS-IN

Have the text read in English and Filipino translation. Take note of the words used by the two translations. Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- How many commands did you see in the passage we just read?
- What is the Great Commission all about?

Point of Discussion

“The main verb is the making of disciples, not the going. This has large implications on how we do our witness.

It means, for one, that...‘As you go’, as you do your work or sit on a bus or hang around with friends and colleagues, you make disciples.”

Did you know?

As you go, make disciples of all nations. (v.19) Scholars say that in the original Greek the main verb here is not to ‘go,’ but to ‘**make disciples,**’ *matheteusate*. It is best translated as ‘**going, make disciples of all nations**’ or ‘**as you go, disciple all nations.**’

As one goes about, one is to make a *matheteuo*, a disciple of every nation.

Questions for Discussion

- Besides the ‘going,’ what else needs to be done in the task of making disciples?
- What does it mean when someone is baptized? What is its role in a disciple’s life?

Point of Discussion

“Believers are to be baptized **in the name of the Triune God**. They are to declare publicly through this rite of passage that they belong to

Did you know?

Baptism is a rite of passage, initiating a disciple into a community that publicly witnesses to the fact that they belong to him whose name is invoked during the rites.

God, who has created, redeemed and sanctified them. To be ‘baptized’ into the name of the three-Person God is to come under the full subjection and ownership of him who has brought us into being, has bought us by his own life and purifies us by his empowering grace.”

Questions for Discussion

- What is the difference between teaching and learning?
- How do you think Jesus would want his commandments to be taught?
- If we are meant to disciple nations, then how are we to teach the commands of Jesus?

Point of Discussion

Disciples are to be part of a visible community that lives by all that Jesus taught, in such a way that the church becomes a community of lifelong learners. They are not to remain babies, always rehashing early memories of conversion or stuck with elementary doctrines of the faith. They are to continually grow into the height and depth of what it means to belong to Christ.

Did you know?

Teach all I have commanded you (v.20). The original word for ‘teach’ here is *didasko*, from the root *dao*, meaning ‘to learn.’ The apostles are to teach in such a way that the believers observe or carefully watch (Greek *tereo*) the new way of life that Jesus established. This kind of teaching is not merely cognitive; it carries the meaning of modeling and following. The apostles are to live and obey all that Jesus commanded. Those who follow them learn by watching closely their example.

WRAP-UP

“The task of making disciples is to be done primarily as one goes about the daily business of life. Whether we are stay-at home housewives chattering with neighbors over the clothesline or globally mobile professionals on business, we are to constantly bear witness through the quality of our work and the love in our relationships.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, try to do concrete actions by which you could bear witness through “the quality of your work” or the “love in your relationships.”
- Be ready to share your experiences next meeting.

Powerful Commission

Text: Matthew 28: 16-20

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share their experiences from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by conducting a simple activity. Ask the members of the group to name one public official whom s/he really admires and why.

DISCUSS-IN

- Ask the members to open their Bibles to Matthew 28:16-20. Let the members take turns reading a verse each.

Questions for Discussion

- In verse 17, when Jesus appeared to the disciples, there were some who doubted. What could have caused them to doubt? What causes you to doubt?
- What did Jesus declare in verse 18 to assure the disciples and cast away the lurking doubts within them?
- Why is it important for Jesus to give such strong words of confidence to his disciples?

Did you know?

All authority has been given to me (v.18). The Greek word *exousia*, translated here as 'authority,' also denotes power. All authority and power, both terrestrial and cosmic, has been given to the risen Jesus. Things in heaven, things on earth and things under the earth are all subject to his name (compare, for instance, Philippians 2:9-11).

Point of Discussion

"There is no conceivable place where Jesus does not reign. There is also no authority that one can invoke that is higher than his name.

Principalities and powers, whether political or spiritual, are subject to him. It is under this capacious and all-powerful authority that the disciples were commissioned to go beyond the borders of Israel and witness to the expansion of his kingdom over all the earth."

Questions for Discussion

- Putting all the social and political problems of our nation in mind, how would Jesus' declaration in verse 18 make sense? In the first place, what did Jesus mean when he uttered those words?

- How would a fresh understanding of such words impact the way we fulfill the Great Commission? The way we do our missions?

Point of Discussion

“Jesus speaks to this momentary confusion and doubt by saying that all power and authority had been given to him. He may have died in humiliation, but now he is alive and reigns supreme over all conceivable powers in all possible realms. He is king, and the kingdom has begun.

There is a new element in human history. Jesus announces a new kind of existence where, because he reigns, we can cast out fear and all that hinders us from having a truly human life. We can have confidence because it is he who sits upon the throne.”

Questions for Discussion

- Besides the strong declaration, what did Jesus promise to his disciples in verse 20?
- If Jesus would really be with us as we do the Great Commission, how would it change the way we do our missions work?
- Jesus would surely keep his promise to be with us. The question that must be asked is whether or not we are with Him in his work. Are we, indeed, doing his work?

Did you know?

His resurrection is not merely restoration of life. Besides vindicating him as Messiah, his rising again signals the beginning of a new existence where he is ever present in the life of his Church. Always -- or literally, ‘all the days’ of this present age -- he is with his people as they continue his mission on earth.”

Point of Discussion

“Lest we get overwhelmed by the enormity of the task given to us, Jesus assures his disciples that “I am with you always...”

WRAP-UP

“Whatever road we are traveling, Jesus goes with us. We may not be aware of it, like the disheartened disciples on the road to Emmaus. Yet his risen life has inaugurated a new kind of existence where he is ever present. Through all our fear, loneliness or uncertainty, he is our *kasama*, the one who goes with us. It is a Presence that will not leave us till the end of the age.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, try to record the times when you are put in situations where you feel the need to assert Jesus’ authority and at the same time you also feel his presence.
- Be ready to share your experiences next meeting.

Lesson 12

Rethinking the Great Commission (Integration)

Text: Matthew 28: 16-20

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for the group members to share their observations from last meeting's Take-Out.
- Proceed by requesting the members to organize themselves into five groups and choose a leader or representative.
- The Leader will ask the representatives to pick a piece of paper on which is written one of the passages below:
 6. "The failure to engage cultures, to speak against sin as it expresses itself in institutions such as the caste system and other forms of systemic injustice, has meant the continuing irrelevance of the kind of Christianity that has been transplanted in Asia. As a consequence, the nations remain unreached, undisciplined in those aspects where they are most in need of conversion."
 7. "We are to disciple, not just individuals, but nations.
 8. 'Discipling the nations' then does not mean merely getting individuals to make 'decisions' for Christ."
 9. "The task of making disciples is to be done primarily as one goes about the daily business of life. Whether we are stay-at home housewives chattering with neighbors over the clothesline or globally mobile professionals on business, we are to constantly bear witness through the quality of our work and the love in our relationships."
 10. "Whatever road we are traveling, Jesus goes with us. We may not be aware of it, like the disheartened disciples on the road to Emmaus. Yet his risen life has inaugurated a new kind of existence where he is ever present. Through all our fear, loneliness or uncertainty, he is our *kasama*, the one who goes with us. It is a Presence that will not leave us till the end of the age."
- The task of each group is to make a "still picture" depicting the above mentioned situations. The groups will be given 10 minutes to plan how they will go about the "still pictures."
- Each group will be given a minute to present what they came up with. The groups who are not presenting will be asked to guess the theme of the still picture. After three

answers from the audience, the leader of the presenting group reads the passage that became the basis of their presentation.

DISCUSS-IN

- Explain that in the previous five lessons we revisited a very important passage. In the process we explored the landscape of biblical teachings on what it really means to make disciples.
- Ask the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- Which of the previous lessons has created the greatest impact upon you?
- Has it changed your understanding of the Great Commission? What are the main differences between your previous and new understanding?
- How will this new understanding change the way you and your church go about 'making disciples'?

Point of Discussion

“For the past three decades, there has been a recovery of the wholistic nature of the gospel among the churches. They were framed in various ways by significant gatherings held in various contexts and time settings.

The Lausanne movement which started in 1974 marched under the banner of ‘the whole gospel for the whole person for the whole world.’ In Malaysia in 1987, concerned activists, evangelicals and charismatics formulated their understanding of wholistic mission as ‘word, works and wonders.’

In 2001 at Oxford, 140 leaders of organizations working among the poor from 50 countries formed themselves into what is now known as the Micah Network, and under the immediate shadow of the 9/11 bombings, came up with a declaration on ‘integral mission.’”

Did you know?

Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.

-Micah Network Declaration

WRAP-UP

“If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world.”

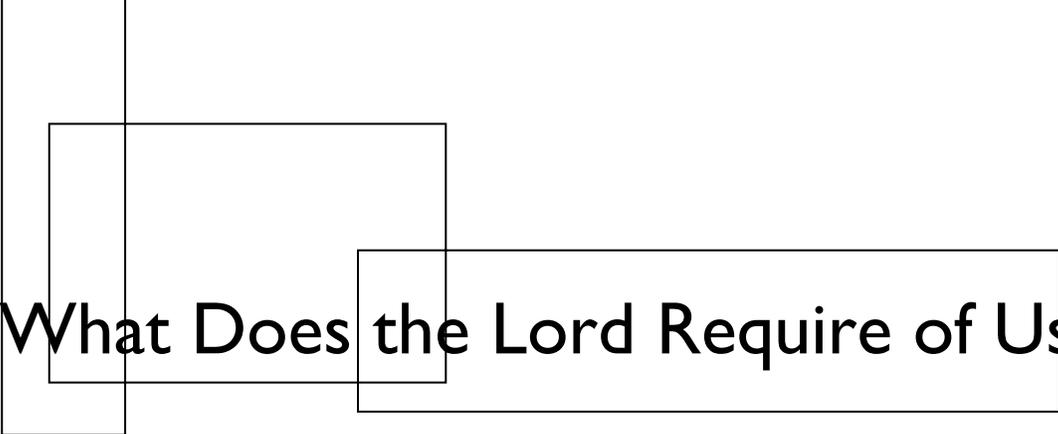
-Micah Network Declaration

(At this point, show a poster or distribute flyers of the Micah Challenge. Explain to the group how Micah Challenge is a response to integral mission and thus will fulfill the Great Commission in its truest sense.)

TAKE-OUT

Bring the second part of the series to a close by performing a simple ceremony.

- Unroll/unfold a map of the Philippines and then post it on the wall. (The said map is a bit different from the normal map. It must have a top layer cut into puzzle pieces.)
- Then sing the song, “Heal our Land” as the participants are invited to think of particular structures and parts of our culture that need to be aligned and made obedient to the will of God.
- Invite the members to approach the map, one by one and then write these structures on a piece of the map puzzle, read it aloud and pray for it.
- After everybody has done their part, join hands, sing the refrain of the song and end the meeting with a prayer.
- After the prayer give the benediction: “Go back to your daily work and be excited to show people what it means to come under Jesus’ lordship. Be conscious and confident in bearing witness to your families and other social institutions that Jesus is Lord.”



What Does the Lord Require of Us?

- Empty Religion
- What God Requires
- Act Justly
- Love Mercy
- Walk Humbly with God
- Integration

Lesson 13

Empty Religion

Text: Micah 6:1-7

WARM-UP

- Welcome everyone in the group. Announce the third part of the lesson series. Start the session with a prayer.
- Set the theme for the session by asking the members to share the times when they have been duped by a swindler or by a false marketing campaign.

DISCUSS-IN

- Ask someone to read the text. Give the group a moment to reflect on the passage. Proceed by describing the situation of the Israelites during Micah's time:

(Micah prophesied in a time just like ours. There was, if you like, what we would call a 'revival.' King Hezekiah had removed the idolatrous altars from the hills and mountain tops of the country, and great religious reforms were taking place. Yet this ritual purity and resurgence of religiosity had not affected the way they did business nor the social structures of their day. [The] renewal seems superficial, for alongside the ritual cleansing, injustice and oppression prevailed.)

- After which, divide the group into three. Ask the groups to answer and discuss the following questions among themselves. Read the questions and then ask a representative from each group to report what they come up with after 10 or 15 minutes. (Wrap up each section of questions with the insights from the Point of Discussion).

Questions for Discussion

- What is the Lord saying in Micah 6:2?

(Distribute small sheets of paper with the following verses in each: Micah 2:1-2 2:9 / 3:1-3 / 3:9-10 / 3:11 / 7:3 / 7:5-6). What was wrong with the Israelites during Micah's time?

- How is Micah's time similar to what was happening in our country today?
- Is it really possible to be overtly religious and at the same time be morally corrupt? How?

Did you know?

This passage begins with a court scene, a cosmic legal drama where God as plaintiff puts forward his case against Israel as defendant. Yahweh summons the hills, the mountains and the very foundations of the earth to hear his case and stand as silent witnesses (6:1-2).

Point of Discussion

“The aristocracy ruled corruptly. They seized, by force and fraud, the lands and houses of small landowners. The magnates bribed the courts, business reeked with dishonesty. Prophets and priests were mercenaries, using religion to silence the voice of the oppressed and justify the violence of the rich. They lulled the people into a false hope, confident that Jerusalem, — and the temple in it — will always stand: “Is not the Lord among us? No disaster will come upon us.” All around was violence, deceit and the breakdown of trust even within families and friendships.

With this as social backdrop, Micah prophesies against a religion that does not lead the faithful to actual practice of justice and righteousness.”

Questions for Discussion

- How do the Israelites respond to God’s complaint against them? (Let everybody look at Micah 6:6-7).
- What are the things that they “offer” doing in response to God’s complaint? In what way is it impressive?
- How is their supposed solution similar to what our fellowmen are doing in the country today in an effort to project one’s religiosity?

Did you know?

Child sacrifice was expressly forbidden in the Mosaic law. That this thing can be found in Israel is indication of a creeping paganism, of how the people, bereft of insight, have slowly absorbed the cultures of their neighbors.

Point of Discussion

Does God need more religion?

“Here, Micah puts to words Israel’s understanding of what the Lord must be asking from them. Earnest religiosity and lavish cultic devotion did not seem to be enough. There was the willingness to sacrifice even a precious firstborn son.

Against [the] terrible social landscape, the people of Israel, appallingly clueless, did not quite get what the Lord was railing about. Against a backdrop of patent injustice, all that the people of Israel could think of was that they might have been remiss in their ritual duties. They thought that more religion was the answer.”

WRAP-UP

“As with ancient Israel in the time of Micah, it seems that one can have a kind of religion that has nothing to do with the everyday business of loving God and neighbor. There are enough sacrifices offered to keep cultic rites going, as well as those who presumably thrive by them. But true religion as understood by Micah and the rest of the prophets has yet to be seen.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, try thinking of famous religious rituals and festivities in our country that apparently appears to cover up the real problems of the people.
- Be ready to share your observations next meeting.

Lesson 14

What God Requires

Text: Micah 6:6-8

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share observations from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by having the members of the group share what to them has been God's most difficult requirement?

DISCUSS-IN

Let the group read the text together in unison. Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- What was Israel's idea of what God wants from them?
- According to Micah, would God approve the Israelites' idea of pleasing Him?
- What do you think is wrong with the mindset of the Israelites?

Point of Discussion

"Israel was apparently clueless as to whatever it was that God wanted from them. It was a time of relative prosperity and religious renewal. So what else do they need to do to appease God? Does he want a more meticulous observance of the Levitical laws? With increasing hyperbole, Israel is pictured as imagining God to be somehow won by an excess of sacrifices."

Questions for Discussion

- According to Micah, what is it does the Lord really require?
- How is this requirement different from what the Israelites thought of doing?
- Why do you think God prefers it over extravagant offering and sacrifices?

Did you know?

Verse 8 is a perfect summary of the teachings of the prophets. This text is perhaps the most famous and the high point of Micah's teaching. It summarizes the messages of the great prophets of the eighth century: Amos on righteousness, Hosea on steadfast love, and Isaiah on faith and obedience.

Point of Discussion

“Sacrifice without obedience, or ritual faithfulness without inward goodness, is worthless in the sight of God. External religion without authentic interiority or integrity of being is futile. “He has showed you, O man, what is good.” Yahweh has given Israel ample examples of what it means to walk in his ways. His ethical demands are plain enough.”

Questions for Discussion

- In what ways have we been “Israelites” in our own churches and as a consequence failed to accomplish what the Lord really requires of his people?
- How can we best obey what God requires from us in our contemporary situation?

Did you know?

Micah and Amos were rustic prophets who attacked the abuses of the rich and powerful in their day in a direct and forceful way.

Point of Discussion

“True religion, says Micah, always has social consequences. God is not as interested in sacrifices as in just governance and right dealings in the marketplace. He also cares for what we do with the need of our neighbors, those around us who daily call on our compassion. Ultimately, if we truly love God, we will work for justice and show kindness to the needy. Knowing that we can not do these without him, we walk closely with him and humbly seek his face for our daily sustenance.”

Did you know?

The poor, quite mysteriously, are proxies for Jesus. Whatever kindness we do to the least of these, we do to Christ. Love for Jesus can not be separated from love of neighbor.

WRAP-UP

“Micah has shown us long ago what the Lord requires. Justice, goodness and mercy are to characterize those who truly walk with God.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Take note of the times when you are confronted to:
 - act justly
 - love mercy
 - walk humbly with your God
- Be ready to share your “confrontations” next meeting.

Lesson 15

Act Justly

Text: Micah 6:8

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share their “confrontations” from last meeting’s Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by asking the members to group themselves into three and portray what justice means to them.

DISCUSS-IN

Have the text read in English and Filipino translation. Take note of the words used by the two translations. Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- What is your idea of justice? When does injustice happen?
- What are the common forms of injustice in our country today?
- How is injustice happening even inside our churches?
- In the following verses, how is justice supposed to be done: 2 Samuel 15:4, Psalm 82:3, Exodus 23:6-8.

Did you know?

The term for ‘justice’ here is the Hebrew *mispāt*. Often, the same word is translated as ‘righteousness.’ What God requires is right doing, a sense of probity and fairness in one’s public dealings.

Point of Discussion

“Instead of more religion, the Lord requires, first and foremost, the doing of justice. It is worth noting that in the Old Testament, ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’ are used interchangeably. To ‘do justice’ is to ‘declare one right.’”

Questions for Discussion

- How is Amos 5:21-24 similar to Micah’s appeal for justice?
- Notice that Amos is addressing not just individual believers but an entire community. How is Amos warning relevant to what our churches are doing today in terms of ensuring justice?

Section 3: What Does the Lord Require of Us?

- In what ways have churches been so pre-occupied with individual righteousness that we forgot about justice in society as a whole?
- How can our churches fulfill God's desire to see justice flowing freely in our land?

Point of Discussion

“Justice’ and ‘righteousness’ are usually treated as a pair, understood as one unit of thought.

What this means is that there is no biblical warrant for the kind of divide we see in our day between those who espouse ‘moral’ issues like abortion, divorce or homosexuality and those concerned for ‘political’ issues like land reform or global fair trade. Unlike the ‘culture wars’ happening in the US and in other places, where conservatives tend to put emphasis on ‘righteousness’ or moral issues and liberals on ‘justice’ or social issues, the Bible puts these two together as our twin mandate.”

We are to act justly, to see to it that the structures of our society are fair to those who are powerless and voiceless.

Did you know?

The word ‘justice’ is mentioned 26 times in the OT, once as a translation of the Hebrew *mispal*, as in this passage, but more often of the word *sedeq* or *sedeqa*, ‘righteousness.’ When these Hebrew words appear together, they are usually translated as ‘justice and righteousness.’

WRAP-UP

There is no divorce between concern for justice and personal righteousness, governance and giving, social liberation and loving acts of mercy.

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, distribute the flyers of Christian Convergence on Good Governance (CCGG). Give the following instructions:

- As you read the flyers in your own homes, think of concrete ways whereby you could be involved in fighting for justice in our country.
- Be ready to share your plans next meeting.

Lesson 16

Love Mercy

Text: Micah 6:8

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for members to share their plans from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by asking the members to share to the group the one person that has helped him/her the most.

DISCUSS-IN

Have the text read in English and Filipino translation. Take note of the words used by the two translations. Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- What does it mean to be merciful? Do you know anyone who is extra-ordinary in terms of being merciful?
- Recalling the situation during Micah's time (Ex. Micah 2:1-2 2:9). What did God have in mind when he urged the Israelites to love mercy?
- Is there a limit to becoming merciful? What?
- What does it mean to "love mercy" per se and not just to be merciful?

Did you know?

Mercy, — the Hebrew *hesed* — rendered as 'kindness' in the RSV or 'goodness' in other translations.

Point of Discussion

"Together with justice, we are to love 'kindness', or, in the more modern translations, 'mercy.' This 'loving kindness' is the proper response to victims of the violent, greedy and deceitful society of Micah's time."

Questions for Discussion

- How can we display "love of mercy" to those who have less in life?
- Should we take concrete unified action so that our efforts will be felt by a greater number of people who are in need? Why and how?

Point of Discussion

“We are told by scholars that the Hebrew ‘hesed’ refers to a steadfast love that binds two parties in a covenant. Besides kindness, it connotes loyalty and solidarity, as against the tendency these days to disavow responsibility for one another.”

It describes a kind of social contract where those at the edges of society are especially cared for. This is a stark contrast to the hardness we see today, where there is a return to the ‘survival of the fittest’, a kind of social Darwinism where the weak and the poor are sidelined, left to fend for themselves within the hard and abstract mechanisms of market forces.”

Did you know?

A theologian once defined ‘mercy’ as “the coming down of the Almighty to rescue the needy.” This is power on the side of the powerless. It is effective compassion focused on those who can not defend themselves against forces that put them down and make them sink deeper and deeper into misery.

WRAP-UP

“We are to love kindness, to embody in our personal lives God’s compassionate particularity over those who are swept to the edges of life. We are to combine appreciation of the complex social forces behind poverty with a certain simplicity about our responsibility to care for the concrete needs of those around us. We can not be like Lucy, that smart but crabby girl in the cartoon Peanuts, who says “I love humanity... it’s people I hate.”

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, try to do concrete ways of showing mercy to people who are in need. (Ex. drawing up plans together with other people, study the possibility of supporting organizations such as WorldVision, Compassion, etc.)
- Be ready to share your thoughts next meeting.

Lesson 17

Walk Humbly with God

Text: Micah 6:8

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers to the group if there are any. Allow some time for members to share their thoughts from last meeting's Take Out.
- Set the theme for the session by conducting a simple activity.

DISCUSS-IN

Have the text read in English and Filipino translation. Take note of the words used by the two translations. Proceed by asking the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- What was the last part of what God requires from us?
- Why do you think God considers this as important? What would the presence of God remind us about ourselves and our efforts?

Did you know?

Without God...we make ourselves into supermen, like Ayn Rand's mythical 'Atlas,' carrying within ourselves the fiction that the world moves because of us.

Point of Discussion

"Alongside the concern for justice and mutual caring is walking humbly with God. Without God as our center, we get messianic. We get this disproportionate sense that our work is so important that we shall sacrifice everything to the altar of the cause we serve. It becomes an idol, such that we become hard knights of justice who readily sacrifice people to the abstract symmetry of an idea.

God's presence in our lives gives us a sense of proportion. We are neither too small nor too big. It is a corrective against hubris, that overweening sense that we are "free and to none accountable," as one of Milton's demonic characters puts it."

Did you know?

Merely humanist ideologies lead to 'killing fields', whether those of Stalinist Russia or Pol Pot's Cambodia or our own mass graves of NPA revolutionaries executed by their former comrades. We need a deeper, higher reason for why we live and die. God alone is worthy of all that we work and long for, all that we have and all that we are.

Questions for Discussion

- What is the danger of not having God when doing acts of justice and works of mercy? Would there be difference between Christian and non-Christian efforts to help the needy?

Section 3: What Does the Lord Require of Us?

- How does walking closely with God help us in our efforts to help others?
- How does God's presence help those whom we are trying to help?

Point of Discussion

"We walk with God, who is the source of all life and meaning. Without him, we become mere activists who degenerate into judge and executioner of those who don't happen to fit our ideal social order. Or we become mere social workers, an army of 'bleeding hearts' who get burnt out by do-gooding.

Again and again, we need to ask: 'where does the power come from?' Is the force coming from a hard drivenness to get things done? Or is our work borne by the Spirit's gentle wind beneath our wings? 'Walking with God' also means that we are ever conscious of where our power lies."

Did you know?

After three decades of social activism, I have become aware that all change begins from the inside. It begins in that place where the Spirit moves people from helplessness to a sense of power, from despair to hope. It is a place where none of us can go. The best that we can do is to watch and wait for those faint stirrings within when the poor discover who and what they are, and begin to have a sense of the possible such that they take their life in their own hands.

WRAP-UP

"Ultimately, if we truly love God, we will work for justice and show kindness to the needy. Knowing that we can not do these without him, we walk closely with him and humbly seek his face for our daily sustenance."

TAKE-OUT

Before closing the session in prayer, give the following instructions:

- Over the week, get to know Christian organizations who are involved in ensuring social justice and doing works of mercy.
- Be ready to share your findings next meeting.

Lesson 18

Walk Humbly with God

Text: Micah 6:8

WARM-UP

- Welcome everybody in the group, and acknowledge newcomers if there are any. Allow some time for the group members to share their observations from last meeting's Take-Out.
- Proceed by requesting the members to organize themselves into five groups and choose a leader or representative.
- Set the theme for the session by asking the members to portray how Filipinos in various regions and from various churches express their religiosity. Divide the groups into three.

DISCUSS-IN

- Explain that in the previous five lessons, we explored what has been called the “Magna Carta of prophetic religion.” In the process, we get to see the picture of what God really wants from us.
- Ask the following questions to initiate discussion:

Questions for Discussion

- Do you find anything wrong with the religiosity of Filipinos?

Point of Discussion

“The Philippines, like much of Asia, is an unabashedly religious society. Unlike the secularized West, it wears its religion on its sleeve.

Yet for all the religiosity, the level of public justice and righteousness is far lower than those of Buddhist cultures and other neighboring countries that do not call themselves as ‘the only Christian nation in the Far East.’”

Questions for Discussion

- Why should we be concerned of the similarities between our time and Micah’s?
- Why should the people of God in this country be

Did you know?

For the past three decades or so, there have been surges of church growth, seen as ‘revival’ in Protestant churches or ‘renewal’ in Catholic ones.

In the history of the West, ‘revival’ has often meant remarkable changes in the social order. The 18th-century Methodist revival in England, for instance, has inspired the movement to abolish slavery. A host of social legislation was passed protecting the working conditions of particularly women and children. In [our] country and in many other cultures experiencing renewal of their Christian traditions, this kind of social impact has yet to happen.

most concerned of the lack of justice and mercy among the people?

Point of Discussion

“The country’s recurrent political crisis is obviously not going to be solved by the usual tools with which we engage the powers. As with much of our life these days, we are stumped, baffled by all the technological changes around us, and by the persistence of ancient wrongs that would not yield to all our efforts at social engineering. The paradigms which frame our understanding of our social problems are hopelessly outdated and obsolete.

Did you know?

In times like this we are tempted to throw up our hands, avert our eyes and look for some place else — preferably the US —where we can find decent jobs, hole up and live our lives in peace.

But as people of God, what does the Lord require of us in a time such as this?”

Questions for Discussion

- Which of the five lessons has created the greatest impact upon you?
- On what aspect of God’s requirement according to Micah have we been lacking?
- What is the one thing that our churches should keep in mind as it engages issues of injustice and works of mercy?
- How much would change if our churches would take seriously the things that God expects from his people?

Point of Discussion

“It is not more religion but social compassion that God requires. Yet, lest Israel got caught up in mere social activism, they were told to “walk humbly with your God.”

WRAP-UP

“True worship issues in justice and righteousness, and the confident humility that result from a daily encounter with the awesome mystery and the steadfast love of God.”

Is our religion as whole as this one?”

TAKE-OUT

Bring the last part of the series to a close by performing a simple ceremony.

- Distribute newspapers to the three groups. Ask each group to cut out objects and make a collage showing how we as people of God could respond to what He requires of us. (This will serve as an image of what they envision to happen).
- After ten minutes, have them post their collage on top of the pictures on the wall.
- After the last group had posted their collage, join hands and pray together for realization of the vision.