

# Mission Minded Church



Tabernacle Baptist Church, Penarth  
5 Small Group Studies for Lent 2014



# Mission Minded Church

Enlarging our vision of God's call on our lives and his mission in the world he created

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# Introduction

There has been much talk in recent years, not least of all here in Wales, about 'Missional Church' and 'Missional Communities.' Everyone agrees (well, nearly everybody!) that in the face of decline and marginalisation the church needs to engage in mission and outreach. The days of church services and activities being primarily about keeping the congregation happy have gone. We must now always be thinking about the outsider; the lost; the world that God loves. But what does being Missional Church actually mean? It seems there are many different understandings (and misunderstandings) about this simple phrase.

Dan Kimball in "The Emerging Church" (Zondervan, 2003) describes the missional church "as a body of people sent on a mission who gather in community for worship, encouragement, and teaching from the Word that supplements what they are feeding themselves throughout the week." 'Big church' on a Sunday, small groups mid week and personal study and prayer working hand in hand.

David Horrox in a blog article titled "The Missional Church" writes, "The church should stop mimicking the surrounding culture and become an alternative community, with a different set of beliefs, values and behaviours. Ministers would no longer engage in marketing; churches would no longer place primary emphasis on programs to serve members. The traditional ways of evaluating 'successful churches' – bigger buildings, more people, bigger budgets, larger ministerial staff, new and more programs to serve members – would be rejected. New yardsticks would be the norm: To what extent is our church a 'sent' community in which each believer is reaching out to his community? To what extent is our church impacting the community with a Christian message that challenges the values of our secular society?"

Jesus told us to go into the entire world and be his ambassadors and disciples, but many churches today have exchanged the "go and be" command to a "come and see" appeal. We have grown attached to

buildings, programs and styles of worship designed to attract and entertain people. It is time to change both our worldview and our practice if we are to become relevant once again both here and around the world.

Author Rick Meigs says, "Missional is a helpful term used to describe what happens when you and I replace the "come to us" invitations with a "go to them" life. A life where "the way of Jesus" informs and radically transforms our existence to one wholly focused on sacrificially living for him and others and where we adopt a missionary stance in relation to our culture. It speaks of the very nature of the Jesus follower."

One of the dangers facing the church today is the desire to put structures in place which are intended to be missional rather than actually engaging in mission. Whole denominations are restructuring and writing new mission statements without actually significantly engaging in mission at all. The truth is we already have more than enough people, more than enough resources, more than enough networks and relationships to get on and do the job. We could easily spend all our time talking about what the future is going to look like whilst missing what God is doing right now. Jesus turned the world upside down with a dozen people who had left everything to follow him. Think of all the advantages we have over that!

God's mission has always called on people to enlarge their vision of what the Kingdom of God encompasses. When Pilate was questioning Jesus, he was intrigued to know whether Jesus thought of himself as a king. As representative of Rome he was concerned at rival claims to authority in the Empire. However, Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36). Pilate was thinking in temporal and local geographical terms, whilst Jesus was speaking in eternal and cosmic terms.

In the same way, at the ascension the disciples asked Jesus whether he would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus replied that it was none of their business what God's plans for Israel were, but when they received the power of the Holy Spirit they were to go and

be witnesses to the very ends of the earth. (Acts 2:6-8) The disciple's vision of what God was doing was restricted to the immediate vicinity of Israel, but Jesus expanded that vision to encompass the very ends of the earth.

We often think of the Gospel as being good news for people: Paul reminds us that it is Good News for the whole of creation (Romans 8:19-24). We translate John 3:16 as "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." This is a weak translation. Rather the original Greek says that God loved the whole *Cosmos*. Our vision of what God is doing is too small, and if we want to join in God's mission (*Missio dei*) we have to expand our vision to beyond the borders of Jerusalem and Judea to encompass the whole of creation; we need to look far beyond the walls of our own church, association, denomination, Principality or United Kingdom to the very ends of the earth.

This series of studies are adapted from material supplied by BMS World Mission and the Wycliffe Bible Translators. They are designed to help us lift up our eyes beyond our immediate church and cultural situations and see what God is doing throughout the world. We have a long association with BMS as a mission agency and are proud of our support of it. Of course, not only do we financially support BMS, but we also send people on short terms mission trips, and in the last 2 years have commissioned and released the Douglas family to go and serve in Nepal. This Lent I invite you to get excited about what God is doing: here in Tabernacle, in Penarth, in Wales and to the very ends of the earth!

Roger Grafton  
Lent 2014

# Study 1 - Acts 3 (part 1): Mission On The Margins

## Read Acts 3

Make some notes on what you think the key themes are in the passage. In particular look out for evidence of the following:

- Where did the Christian community hang out? (see also Acts 2:46)
- Who approached whom first? What were they looking for?
- Did they get what they asked for or expected?
- How does this affect our thinking of how we do mission today?
- Which came first – the words or the actions?
- What's the relationship between belonging and believing?
- Is mission always about crossing cultures or going overseas?

## A question and a story to think about

What does this story in Acts teach you about the way Christians engage in mission? There's a lot of discussion about what mission is. A story often helps clarify things.



*Nadah is a late teenage Karen woman with a baby boy in Thailand. A prostitute from the age of ten or so, she was thrown out when she was found to be pregnant and HIV-positive. Disowned by family and friends, she was given a home at the House of Love, a Christian refuge/hospice for women and children with HIV and Aids in Chiang Mai. In her new home she found acceptance, help, healthcare and, eventually, faith.*

The book of Acts tells us that everything the House of Love does is mission. Indeed, it's almost Acts 3 in action!

What is Acts all about? A key verse can be found in 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.*” This tells us that it’s about making Jesus known in work and word throughout the world. It is the story of how the earliest Christians struggled to make this last command of Jesus a reality.

The invasion of this new world into our old world is spelled out in chapters three and four in the context of 2: 42-47 and 4: 32-37 which form brackets around this single story.

### **Hand ups more than hand outs**

Peter and John met a man with some big need at a place known as the Beautiful Gate. *Spiritually* he was barred from entering the temple. *Physically* he couldn’t get in and *theologically* as a disabled person he was excluded from festivals and the priesthood. *Socially* he was excluded from the world of work, normal family and social life. He was an object of pity – but no one offered him any hope of a new life.



**A BMS partner recently visited a caste family in Hyderabad frequently would not permit their children to eat the food in a mixed caste school, only because it had been handled by a Dalit chef.**

Peter gave the man at the gate his life back. This was **not a hand out but rather a hand up** and is the model that Jesus adopted. (Luke 5: 12-16, 13: 10-21 based on 4: 18)

**Reflect:** What are the implications of this model in Acts 3 for mission workers in places like India where there is considerable social exclusion?





## **Study 2 - (part 2):**



## **Acts 3**

# Outside The Margins

Last week we looked at the story of Peter and James encountering a beggar at the Temple gate. We are going to look at that story again this week, so quickly look at the story again.

## Motivation for mission

It's clear from Acts 3: 11-26 that Peter is motivated by a good knowledge of scripture and a living experience of Jesus.

## A good knowledge of scripture

When Peter preaches Jesus, he refers to Moses (Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18) and God's promise for the whole world to Abraham in Genesis 12: 1-3. He refers to the prophets (Acts 3: 18, 21, 24) and especially Isaiah 40-55.

## A living experience of Jesus

Peter had a living experience of Jesus for just three years but understood some important facts about him:

- ✘ He modelled a servant life (3: 13-14, 26)
- ✘ His name had authority: (3: 16; see 2: 21; 38; 3: 6) the focus of God's action in the world shifts from Israel and the temple to Jesus. His name is more powerful than any god, ideology, philosophy, even unbelief.
- ✘ He looked for faith to enter this new world – not birth, wealth, social position, or even access to the temple. (3: 12-16)

**Reflect:** Are you motivated for mission? Are you involved in mission in your local situation in any way? What, if anything, motivates you to share your faith?



## Lessons for our world

This story grows out of Acts 2: 42-47 and illustrates the way of life in the Christian community in the days immediately after the first Christian Pentecost.

**Life lived in the community:** they met in Solomon's portico. (3: 11; see 5: 12). This church was not a secret society; they had nothing to hide; they were prepared to be seen – warts and all (see 5: 1-11 – almost certainly this happened in the open!)

**Reflect:** What are the pros and cons of doing church **outside** of a traditional church building in a place that is seen by everyone passing through?



**Scott and Anjanette hope to reach out to Peruvians who live in a middle-class area of Peru called Cusco where there are currently very few churches. They have recently started a café church project where they hope to hold activities like English classes, film nights, pre-school music, as well as Bible studies and church services. In the future, they also hope to use resources from this church plant to minister to a poorer community, with the intention that both church communities become sustainable.**

**Welcome for all:** especially those excluded by the wider society – like this man. They were prepared for anyone to join them – some did (2:41, 4:4); some didn't (5:13) – though it seems they respected what the Christians stood for.



**Reflect:** What forms of welcome have you received that have been different in another culture either in the UK or overseas?

**Actions precede words:** St Francis said that we should preach the gospel at all times – and only use words if we have to. Actions not only build a platform for our message, they are also a vital part of the message.



**Reflect:** When was the last time someone asked you about your faith after seeing your actions?



**Belonging precedes believing:** We often set hurdles for people to jump – ‘believe this’, ‘do that’ – before we’re prepared to let them in to our churches. It is vital that we welcome people and give them space to find out what they – think of what we believe and whether they want to believe it too. This was Peter’s way: the new life of God’s Kingdom was seen and felt **before** it was explained. The lame man had no test to pass – **NOT** even faith (that referred to in Acts 3:16 is firstly Jesus’ and secondly Peter’s and John’s, not the man’s at all).

**Reflect:** Do we welcome people regardless of their lifestyle so that in the context of belonging they can experience the Kingdom, encounter God, and maybe come to believe?



#### **4. All mission is cross-cultural**

It could be argued that all mission requires a bridge across two cultures. The disciples were a bridge between the new world of forgiveness and healing, life, justice and peace that – we’re part of through our faith in Jesus and the old world of sin and sickness, death, injustice and strife that so many of our neighbours live in.

Peter and the rest of the disciples didn’t lose touch with that world by locking themselves away; they lived among their neighbours, felt their pain, shared their longings and showed that in Jesus there is hope.

***During the 34 day war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006, Beirut Baptist School turned their building into a temporary food distribution centre and medical facility for the parents of hundreds of Shi’ite Muslim children in west Beirut.***

**Reflect:** What bridges would you expect to build between cultures in somewhere like Lebanon? Or Homs (Syria)? Or Belfast? What bridges need building here in Penarth?



God often takes us on a journey that requires that we leave our comfort zone and enter a world of pain and trouble in order to bring people to a new world of justice and joy. Acts

# Study 3 - Acts 10:

## Crossing Boundaries

### Read Acts 10: 1-48

Make some notes on what you think are the key themes in the passage. In particular look out for evidence of the following:

- Who sets the agenda for our mission?
- Where does that mission happen?
- Who is impacted most by our mission?
- How safe is mission?

### Here are some more questions to think about

How would I describe God's dream for the world?

How do I participate in that dream?

How can we be sure that it's God calling us to take risks (as he called Peter to) and not wishful thinking?

When have we shared God's dream with someone who holds a completely different mind-set from our own?

Sometimes our theology can become unsettled when we begin to engage in mission with people from other faith groups.

***A letter dated 13 October 2007 was sent from leaders of the Muslim faith to leaders of the Christian faith. It calls for peace between Muslims and Christians and tries to work for common ground and understanding among both faiths, in line with the Biblical and Quranic commandment to love God, and one's neighbour. (see [www.acommonword.com](http://www.acommonword.com))***

***One of the most appreciative responses, acknowledged by Muslims, has been the Baptist World Alliance response.***



Engaging with these kinds of issues may feel unsettling at first but sometimes it can be life-changing and reshape the way we have always understood the nature of God.

God often wants to stretch us, make us think and open our eyes to the fact that there's so much we don't understand. Here, in this story both Peter and Cornelius find themselves being wrenched from the comfortable boxes they'd settled into. It's a story with many lessons for us – if we're prepared to venture outside our comfort zones and encounter God.

## **The context**

### **1. Life-changing meetings**

**Cornelius:** a Gentile, a soldier of the Roman occupation of Israel (Palestine as the Romans called it); an enemy with a capital E – even if he did have a soft spot for God and do a bit of charity work. And God talks to him in answer to his prayers...

**Peter:** a good Jew, who went to the temple (3:1-10), said his prayers (10:9b); didn't mix or eat with Gentiles. And yet he hosts Gentiles, goes to the home of a Gentile. Worse, he shares his faith with them. Worse still, he baptises uncircumcised people, accepts them as members of God's people!

### **2. Learning on the hoof**

Peter's doing OK – he's just about keeping on top of what God's doing; having a successful time in Joppa and now this: a vision which seems to throw large chunks of the Law and plenty of his culture up for grabs! No wonder he struggles to grasp what God's saying to him. We can find ourselves in the same position in a rapidly changing world.

Here are some of the lessons Peter learned – though it probably took a while for them to sink in:

**The mission is God's, not ours:** God initiates the action all through this story (10: 3, 10, 19, 44). Our structures and strategies are disposable – God's calling the shots and we're playing catch up.

**Peter and the sheet:** a heritage set aside; boundaries swept away; a new theology of the people of God based not on ethnicity but faith in Jesus (Galatians 2: 15-16). This has far-reaching implications for the way we do mission, the people

with whom we share the good news. How open are our ears and eyes?

**Peter's preaching was interrupted by the Holy Spirit:** God is moving faster than Peter can get the words out. It means Peter has to be prepared to go where the Spirit leads and work out what's going on later. So do we!

**The mission is in the world not the church:** it would have been quicker for Cornelius to come to Peter, but God was keen to teach us a lesson. Matthew 28: 19 is a 'general' word about going; Acts 10: 20 is very specific. God has already been speaking to Cornelius though perhaps there is no mention of Jesus until Peter gets there because God is drawing Cornelius in. Are we listening to our neighbours; looking for signs that God's talking to them? (This is considered further in the study on Acts 17.)



**Reflect:** Where are we prepared to go to share the good news?  
What are we prepared to leave behind to share the good news?



### 3. Mission changes us

Who has been converted here – Cornelius? For sure. Peter? Not finished yet: Gal 2: 11-14 – more painful lessons; but see 1 Peter 2:10 (written to followers of Jesus from all ethnicities!)

Peter's identity is challenged to the core through mission. Am I a product of background, ethnicity, upbringing or a new creation in Jesus? Am I prepared to encounter Jesus when I am actually sharing my faith, doing some kind of mission activity? Are we only taking answers or are we asking questions as well? (This means mission is about us learning as well as teaching.)

Peter's wrenched from his comfort zone, forced by God to speak a language that wasn't natural to him so Cornelius would hear the gospel:

Acts 10:34-35, 43 (everyone here includes Gentiles),  
Acts 10:47 (no longer is circumcision the boundary marker that matters, but baptism).

**Reflect:** In what ways do I need to change so that others can hear and respond to the gospel?



#### **4. Mission risks misunderstanding**

Peter goes into the home of an enemy, he entertains Gentiles – his fellow Christians are critical (11: 1-3). It's often the church that misunderstands people who do mission on the edge.

God is working to fulfil his promise to Abraham (Genesis 12: 1-3), to bring his kingdom of justice and peace to the world and he wants us on board. Peter hears God's at work in this enemy, inspiring and responding to his best hopes and aspirations: Peter is able to show how these are fulfilled in Jesus only because he's there (10: 34-35, 38, 45-47). Are we prepared to take similar risks?

***The theological faculty of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut approached some Shi'ite Muslim leaders and requested them to give lectures to Christian pastors on "what every Christian should know about Islam from a Shi'ite perspective". Some months later a reciprocal approach was made from an Islamic seminary to present "what every Muslim should know about Christianity". As a result some fruitful engagement is beginning to take place between Christians and Muslims.***

**Reflect:** What risks of misunderstanding am I prepared to take to see God's kingdom advance?





# Study 4 - Acts 17: Telling Our Story And God's

## Read Acts 17: 16-34

Make some notes on what you think are the key themes in the passage. In particular look out for evidence of the following:

- The similarities between Athens and our world
- Paul's method in getting his message across
- How Paul connects with his audience
- How the audience reacts to Paul's words

## Some more questions to think about

How do we see and hear the culture around us? What do we watch and listen to? Who do we talk to?

What are the idols that affect our society and us? How do we talk about them?

How do we balance concern for our locality with concern for the wider world – especially the faraway world of other countries and cultures?

What one thing have I learned from Acts about how to share my faith with those round me: Young people? Work colleagues? Neighbours? How will I ensure I put the lesson into practice?

## Some more detailed thoughts on the passage

Our world is full of idols. Whether it's the temples of the Far East with their statues of gods or the shopping malls of the West with their icons to consumerism. Paul, sight-seeing in Athens, gives us some clues about how we should respond to this situation.

### 1. Seeing the world around us (v16)

Mission starts with our eyes not our hands mouths. What do we see when we look at our world? How do we feel? Paul is distressed (v16): people are living for all the wrong things. Here are three observations:

**Cut off:** Many Christians appear cocooned from the world, We don't see or know or even seem to care about what's happening in our world. When we do look, often all we do is throw our hands up in horror, exclaiming "I just don't know what the world's coming to".



**Crisis:** So many are coming to grief because they're living for the wrong things: idols, money, work, sex, self, family, etc. This is a cultural as well as a personal and spiritual crisis.

**Calling:** a key part of the gospel is sorting out what we live for, worship, serve with our lives and our money (Ephesians 4: 17-25). Christians ought to be distressed when people are living for something other than God – hence mission: taking the good news of Jesus to all regardless of culture, race, background or religion.

## **2. Speaking to our world (v17-18)**

Often distress at what's going on leads to people muttering "someone ought to do something!" Paul's distress led him to take action by speaking to groups who might listen and be affected by his words:

### **Where Paul spoke**

This is not random street evangelism:

- ✠ Synagogue (v17) – an audience sympathetic to his concern about idols
- ✠ Civic centre (v17c) – a place where all kinds of ideas were discussed
- ✠ The Areopagus was a licensing body (v19); nobody was allowed to teach philosophical ideas in Athens without their approval. We need to remember that Socrates was condemned to death for introducing foreign divinities to the city. Hence Paul's visit.

He went on to their turf, on their terms with their language but with his message.

**Reflect:** What about us: are we sharing the good news with family, neighbours, college, sports teams? With neighbours from other cultures?



**What Paul said when he spoke about Jesus (v18)** He did not express his opinion about the state of the world, but proclaimed the good news about its saviour and Lord. How did he go about it?  
\_ There are some great lessons for us:

**He started where people were (v22-23)** These people were religious but unsure; looking for God but uncertain where to find him. Lots of people in our world believe in God but they don't know who he is.

**He spoke in a way they understood (v24-29)** Paul based what he said around the ideas of people his audience knew and liked:

- ✠ v24 Epicurean view;

- ✠ v25 Stoic view;
- ✠ v28 Epimenides and Aratus – pop poets (the rock n’ roll stars of their day)

Paul nowhere quotes the Bible! He uses secular stuff to make a biblical case. Likewise we need to know what the culture is saying, who people are listening to and watching and quote them as a way of furthering our case.

Paul tells his audience God hasn’t just spoken, he has acted and hence is different from all other gods they’d encountered. The resurrection is a demonstration of his power and love. People today need to see the truth of what we say through how we live and what we do.

**He sought a response (v30-31)** Paul was not just offering another new idea – the kind the Athenians loved – nor another god to add to their collection. He was not offering lifestyle advice or opinions like daytime TV. Paul spoke about a unique God: Jesus – killed and raised and now holding the world accountable for actions and worship.

And Paul urges them to change their way of life, stop worshipping false gods and start worshipping the true God by following Jesus.

### Sharing good news in a dark world

*Emily is a BMS mid-term mission worker working with a partner organisation called NightLight. NightLight is a ministry in Bangkok that reaches out to women and children working in the bar areas of a neighbourhood with a growing sex trade. NightLight’s vision is to share Jesus, the light of the world, in both word and deed, to those living in spiritual darkness. Starting where people are, and communicating in a language that people can understand is essential when sharing the gospel.*

### 3. Sticking to our guns (v32-34)

At first sight it seems Paul was not that successful; the response wasn’t that great – v32-33. But pay attention to verse 34! Whatever the response, he stuck to his guns – the tense of the verbs in verses 17 is present continuous. Why?

- ✠ because people need to hear the same thing several times before they grasp it



Emily (left) talking with sex workers in Bangkok.

- ✘ because people need an opportunity to debate what's being said, ask questions, check out the facts
- ✘ because people need to watch and see if the walk of the messenger matches the talk
- ✘ because time is short: people have got to decide for or against Jesus before he returns as judge

The gospel is not a fad or a fashion; it's not the flavour of the month (v21!) It's the truth about God and us and lots of people are groping around in the dark trying to find this unknown god. We need to help them:

**Reflect:** What do you see when we look at the world – our street, estate, workplace, country, planet? How do you feel about it? Are you distressed:

- ✘ because people are missing out on what God can do in their lives through Jesus?
- ✘ because they're lost and groping in dark: and you have access to the light?

**What are you going to do about it?**



# Study 5 - Ruth 2:

## She just happened to go there and just happened to meet him...

The last 4 studies we have looked at have been prepared by BMS to help us widen our vision and understanding of what we are called to be as a church. Worshipping at a good sized church in Penarth, it would be easy to restrict our vision to our own congregational needs or our own town. Living in the Principality it would be equally easy to focus our thinking about mission on Wales. Living in the UK, we could equally think that our calling stops at the edge of the English Channel. We need to keep reminding ourselves that we live in a worldwide community which, thanks to globalisation, communication advances and the multi-cultural nature of our society, is getting smaller all the time. This study was prepared on behalf of Wycliffe Bible Translators by Pastor Mark Altroge. Most of us know him as the writer of the songs “You did not wait for me (I’m forever grateful),” “I want to serve the purpose of God in my generation” and “I stand, I stand in awe of you.” Mark currently serves as a pastor at Sovereign Grace Church in Indiana.

### Read Ruth chapter 2

Ruth had recently come with Naomi, her Jewish mother-in-law, from the land of Moab. She was an impoverished stranger in a strange land just hoping to eke out an existence. God had told Israel that they shouldn’t pick their fields clean in the harvest but leave the droppings and edges for the poor to glean (Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19). That’s what Ruth was hoping for: to find a field, any field, where she could get permission to glean enough for her and Naomi to survive a few days. In developing countries today gleaning is still an important practice which means the difference between life and death for many people.

She found a field and she “happened” to come to a part of the field owned by a man named Boaz. She just “happened” to come there, at least that would



have been how Ruth saw it. Little did she know that someday this “random” happening would lead to her becoming the wife of Boaz, an ancestor of King David and eventually of Jesus himself.

We can see that this is God’s providence. God was directing her every step. Years earlier Naomi and her husband “happened” to decide to move to Moab where they “happened” to meet Ruth who “happened” to marry their son. Years later, forced by poverty, Naomi and Ruth “happened” to return to Israel and now Ruth “happened” to come to a particular field.

## Questions

- ✘ How many times in our lives do we just “happen” to go somewhere or meet someone and later find out that it was God’s wonderful providence? Do you have any examples of this?
- ✘ Have there been times in your life where you’ve been able to look back much later and see that God was at work?
- ✘ Yesterday as I preached I saw a family sitting there who years ago just “happened” to move next door to another family in our church who invited them to a dinner where they heard the gospel and eventually got saved. Was God in the move of house which led to their salvation, was it an accident, or did God use the circumstances he hadn’t planned afterwards?

You don’t just “happen” to meet your husband. You didn’t just “happen” to wind up where you live. You don’t just “happen” to your church. God has been directing you every step of the way.

- ✘ Take a few moments to share some of your story and how you have ended up as a Christian in Penarth. Can you see God at work in your life?

Life isn’t just “happening” to you either. You may work under a miserable boss; you



may be going through tough times; you may have been told that you need a hip replacement or have a serious illness; that unexpected tax bill or that transfer to another job; that tree that fell on your garage... You get the idea. Nothing just “happens” to us. God may have transferred you so you would meet someone you will share the good news of Jesus with. That tree that crushed your garage? The tree surgeon that comes to clear up the mess may someday lead the children’s ministry in your church and you wouldn’t have met him but for your unfortunate accident. Scripture says that all things work for good for those who love Christ Jesus (Rom 8:28).

- ✠ Are you aware of things which initially appear bad happening in your life which worked out for good? Maybe you’ve heard stories from other people’s lives?

### **Read Matthew 10:29-30**

Jesus tells us *“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered”*. The next time you ask “Why is this happening to me?” remember God’s love and providence. He has you right where he wants you for your good and his glory. Nothing just “happens” to us. Not a sparrow falls apart from God’s will. He handcrafts every snowflake and every lightning bolt. Our blessings and our afflictions are tailor made by the loving hand of God. Do you honestly believe that God is in control of every hair on your head and every bird in the air?

- ✠ When bad things happen to us, or other people, what does that tell us about the nature of God?
- ✠ How can a good God allow suffering?
- ✠ When we see natural disasters from around the world such as the earthquake in Haiti, the Asian Tsunami or drought and famine, how can we continue to believe in a loving God who is all-powerful and completely in charge?
- ✠ What are the roles of mission societies like BMS, Wycliffe or the

Bible Society in fulfilling God's good purposes in difficult circumstances? What is our role as a church or individuals?

Keep an eye out for God's providence in your life. Someday you will say, "Oh so that's why that happened. It didn't seem good at the time but if that hadn't happened I wouldn't be enjoying this blessing right now."

- ✠ What difficult things are you going through now that you would like prayer for? Do you have faith that God can use difficult times in the present to bring glory and joy in the future?
- ✠ Would you be willing to go through tough times now in order to see blessing in the future and know that God is receiving glory?

Heaven will be the grand review of all God's providence in our lives, seeing how God orchestrated events and lives to bring you into the world, to bring you to Jesus and transform and use you for his glory. What an incredible day that will be when we stand before the King of kings and Lord of lords and are able to say, "Ah, that's why it happened"!







BMS World Mission (formerly known as the Baptist Missionary Society) is a Christian mission organisation, working in around 35 countries on four continents. BMS personnel are mainly involved in church planting, development, disaster relief, education, health, and media and advocacy.

You can find out more about their work at:  
**[www.bmsworldmission.org](http://www.bmsworldmission.org)**



Worldwide, 98 million people have no known Scripture and do not have access to the Bible in the language that they understand the best, their 'heart' language. Wycliffe Bible Translators believe that the Bible is the best way for people to come to know and understand who God is. Their vision is that by working with churches, organisations and individuals from around the world all people will have access to God's word in a language that they truly understand.

You can find out more about their work at:  
**[www.wycliffe.org.uk](http://www.wycliffe.org.uk)**

Or by talking to Helen and Cedric Longville here at Tabs.



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