



**JAMAICA BAPTIST UNION
MISSION AGENCY**

Evangelism and Discipleship Committee

**MISSION MONTH
September 2010**

BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE



THEME:

**Hope
Alive**



BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE

Mission Emphasis Month – September 2010

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Preface

These bible studies were prepared for use during the JBU's mission emphasis month – September, under the theme 'Hope Alive'. There is a study for each of the four (4) weeks in September.

There are five sections in each of the four studies; the intended purpose of each is as follows:

1. ***Door into the text***
An overview of the text, but specifically worded to compliment each sub-theme.
2. ***Points to note from the text***
Key details are highlighted in this section that may assist with interpreting the text
3. ***Considerations***
Here the study focuses on the interpretations arising from the text in light of the theme and the context of mission.
4. ***Implications from the text***
The study at this point deliberately considers the messages from the text for contemporary engagement in mission.
5. ***Reflections***
An opportunity to appropriate the content of the study for our individual lives and for the church.

WEEK #1

THEME: Hope Alive (*A study of St. John 21*)

SUB-THEME: From 'My Life' to God's Mission

TEXT: St. John 21:1-9

Hope can be seen as a God inspired vision for life that gives birth to work. Hope of this kind is never 'dead' or futile and therefore the term 'hope alive' cannot be seen with redundancy as hope that has life. 'Hope alive' should be understood as the progressive realization of the possibilities for life/mission that comes through our hope in God. These possibilities are appreciated as assurances toward the fulfilment of hope. Once hope enters the heart it becomes like a flame that allows us to see God who was already at work in our lives revealing possibilities for life/mission.

Door into the text

The context of St. John 21:1-9 is post-resurrection. The disciples' reason for going fishing is not clear in the text and they found the fishing experience to be unproductive. Early in the morning a voice from the shore guided them to a miraculous catch of fish (verses 5 & 6a). It was here that the disciples realized two things: (1) that it was the Lord who had directed them to the miraculous catch, and (2) for the Lord, catching fish was not limited to the use of nets and boats.

Points to note from the text:

- The disciples, including Thomas, at this point knew that the Lord had risen from the dead; they have both seen him and touched him (St. John 20:19, 26).
- Fishing was the disciples' livelihood and whether the reason for going again was economical or psychological, it seemed it would offer them help.
- The initiative to go fishing was the disciples' and as they fished they would have employed all their skills and efforts (verse 3).
- The idea to cast the net on the other side of the boat was not the disciples'; this possibility was introduced by the voice calling from the shore (verses 5&6).
- It was through spiritual insight that one of the disciples realized that the voice calling from the shore was that of the Lord's (verse 7a).
- On reaching the shore the disciples had a second chance to realize another miracle had been performed by the Lord to acquire fish (verse 9).

Considerations:

1. **The initiative to go fishing was the disciples yet the Lord displayed ownership of their fishing expedition. They went out to care for themselves but ended up being cared for by the Lord.**
2. **The voice calling to the disciples from the shore offered hope, in that, the option to cast their net on the other side of the boat was God-inspired to which they responded with the actual casting of the net.**

Implications from the text

- **Livelihood and mission**

One's livelihood is not immune to and should not be treated as separate and apart from God's missional agenda. Therefore, life and what happens therein is our mission field, the

place where we find opportunities to see God at work and to partner with Him. Jobs and hobbies can be platforms for understanding one's purpose and call to serve God. (Compare St. John 21:5-7 & St. Luke 5:1-11)

- **The futility of human efforts apart from God**

There is an abundance which results from hope in the Lord; a better and more productive alternative for life is always given by God with the required obedience to simply follow it through. The contrary is true. All human efforts apart from God lack this hope which therefore results in futility.

- **Mission is God-owned and God-directed**

The Lord's ownership of the mission is displayed through caring for those who work for God and the Lord will direct God's work in the world. Note: those who work for God progressively realize possibilities for life/mission, which is the experience of hope alive.

- **Spirituality and mission**

Spiritual insight is needed to discern and to recognize the guiding voice for mission as the voice of the Lord. Knowing the Lord is crucial for the mission!

Reflections

- a. Should believers understand their contribution through their livelihood to society as participation in God's work in the world; and should they understand this contribution as a platform for realizing their purpose and call to serve in God's mission?
- b. Since the mission is God-owned and God-directed should there be a limit to the creative possibilities for mission available to our churches?

WEEK #2

THEME: Hope Alive (*A study of St. John 21*)

SUB-THEME: The Mission is God's and God is the Host

TEXT: St. John 21:9-14

Hope can be seen as a God inspired vision for life that gives birth to work. Hope of this kind is never 'dead' or futile and therefore the term 'hope alive' cannot be seen with redundancy as hope that has life. 'Hope alive' should be understood as the progressive realization of the possibilities for life/mission that comes through our hope in God. These possibilities are appreciated as assurances toward the fulfilment of hope. Once hope enters the heart it becomes like a flame that allows us to see God who was already at work in our lives revealing possibilities for life/mission.

Door into the text

A major shift in the story occurs in St. John 21:9-14. The setting was for dining; the Lord was the Host and the disciples were now guests. There was at this point no doubt in the minds of the disciples regarding who was in charge of the event.

Points to note from the text:

- The Host asks for and accepts the contribution of additional fish from his guests (verse 10). The Host also highlighted the fact that his guests 'caught' the fish, though He was responsible for providing and locating the fish to be caught.
- The Host prepares the meal – breakfast (verse 9).
- The Host invites his guests to dine (verse 12) and serves his guests (verse 13).
- The Host's generosity was displayed through providing a large number of fish (153) and bread for the feast.
- There was a subtle awkwardness about the guests in the presence of the Host (verse 12b).
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Considerations

1. **There is a partnership that the Host encouraged between Himself and His guests: first, both the Host and his guests participated in the miraculous catch and secondly, both contributed the items needed for the meal.**
2. **It is in the context of their livelihood that obedience to the Lord allowed the disciples to receive from their Host far more than they could consume for themselves and therefore were at a point where they were open to consider sharing with others. The possibilities for seeing the larger and more hopeful context of mission would seem clearer.**
3. **Experiencing the generosity of the Host may have challenged or removed inclinations within the disciples towards self-sufficiency and self-preservation. It may have also renewed their hope with regard to the sufficiency of the Lord to care for His servants in His mission.**
4. **The worth of the Host was appreciated by His guests (worship), which allowed for a sense of awe (reticence) as they dined. Twice His guests called Him 'LORD' – Deity (*St. John 21:12 & 7*). Note also *St. John 20:28 & 25*.**

Implications from the text

- **Partnership and mission**

God's work in the world is shared between God and humanity. This partnership is encouraged by God and should be treated by human beings as an experience of grace. This principle of grace not only suggests a partnership between human beings in God's mission but also it ought to shape the framework and the attitude by which human beings enter into such partnerships with each other.

- **The providence of God and the principle of giving**

As Host, God generously provides what is needed for God's work within the world: God calls and invites human beings to work; God equips humanity with the necessary gifts, strength and skills; God provides partnerships, physical resources and finances; and God works alongside human beings to accomplish the goal of mission. This lavished providence of God is more than is needed and therefore, instead of hoarding we are prompted to share.

- **From self-reliance to dependence on God**

The experience of God as Host challenges the temptation towards self-reliance and opens us up to not just depend on God but also to recognize those God-initiated possibilities/provisions for mission, which is the confirmation of hope alive moving towards hope's fulfilment.

- **Worship and mission**

As humanity works along with God in the world and experiences God as Host, worship flows as a natural response because of who God is and what God does. In mission humanity is awed by God as Host.

Reflections

- a. Since grace ought to shape the framework of mission partnerships give three (3) principles that should be a part of any such partnership relationship.
- b. Since the start of this year, how has your church experienced hope alive? List three possibilities for mission that were presented to your church in recent times.

WEEK #3

THEME: Hope Alive (*A study of St. John 21*)

SUB-THEME: Dying for the sake of God's mission

TEXT: St. John 21:15-19

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Door into the text

Though the disciples were commissioned in St. John 20:21-23, uncertainty seemed to have clouded their sense of purpose. Compounded to this was an obvious difference regarding the person of Jesus Christ their resurrected Lord. In our text (St. John 21:15-19) the Lord offered clarity to their purpose in his mission and highlighted the implication of serving in His mission.

Points to note from the text:

- The Lord challenged Peter after breakfast (verse 15)
- The latter part of the Lord's question to Peter (... *more than these*) may have referred to:
 - a) The fish and fishing apparatus
 - b) The other disciples
- Peter loved the Lord (verse 15b, 16b, 17c)
- These three images could have made connections in Peter's mind:
 - a) 'Feed my sheep' (verse 17d)
 - b) Bread broken and distributed by the Lord at breakfast (verse 13)
 - c) 'I am the bread of life' (St. John 6:51)
- Though there is not much of a difference between the images of 'sheep' and 'lamb' apart from maturity, we may understand them to be pointing to humanity on a whole and those who are born into the body of Christ respectively.
- The Lord used a parable to describe Peter's death (verse 18)

Considerations:

1. **The Lord's question to Peter sets love for God as the foundation on which Peter's participation in God's mission ought to be built. Because Peter loves the Lord, then Peter may now 'feed' people the bread of life.**
2. **The parable used to describe Peter's death not just describes Peter's literal death but the progressive death to self (self denial) for the cause of Christ that will result in his literal death. Peter who was initially called to the mission (*follow me and I will make you fishers of men*) ended up denying Christ was being challenged once again to see self-denial as a mission imperative. It can be inferred from the parable that the sign of spiritual maturity is a love-directed life – '*... but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go... and because you love Me you willingly go*'.**

3. **St. John 21 begins with Peter going out to fish to feed himself; he then finds himself being fed by the Lord, and now he is being sent by the Lord to feed others. Peter seemed to have gone from being 'self-centred' to 'God-centred' then to 'God's mission-centred'. Peter's restoration helps us to understand what appears to be 'stages' towards becoming mission conscious.**
4. **A love-directed life is one of the possibilities for God's mission that can be experienced through hope in God. Jesus' questions may have been the inspiration for this unique vision in Peter's heart.**

Implications from the text

- Love for God is a prerequisite for God's mission

It is because we love God why we should engage in God's mission. There are two implications that should be noted when our love for God forms the basis of our missional involvement:

- a. *Love for God finds natural and genuine expression in love for humanity.* Our capacity to be concerned with, and to become involved in the brokenness of humanity is enlarged through our relationship with God. It is God who allows us to envision the wholesome possibilities for humanity in the Kingdom of God.
- b. *Love for God strengthens our resolve to be engaged in mission.* When discouragement, distraction, hopelessness and complacency threaten to reduce or destroy our engagement in mission it is our love for God that offers us clarity, renewal and hope.

- Self-denial as an imperative for mission

Our involvement in God's mission becomes effective when ever we give up our own interests and replace them with God's mandate for His mission. This denial of self is willingly practiced and almost seems to flow naturally from one's love for God. It is this kind of self denial that allows for the wholesome and unselfish giving of self to God's mission that results in the daily death to self and ultimately the possible literal death for the fulfilment of the hope inspired by God.

- The three stages towards mission consciousness

Stage #1: Self-centeredness

The believer is preoccupied with the challenges of following the risen Lord and as such employs his/her own wisdom and efforts to cope with the demands of being a disciple.

Stage #2: God-centeredness

The believer encounters God in the midst of his/her preoccupation and realizes that God was already considering and helping with the challenges of being His disciple. It is from this realization that the believer is overtaken by the majesty of God and begins to consciously consider the meaning of his/her love for God.

Stage #3: God's mission-centeredness

Self-denial becomes the hallmark of the believer who has now taken on God's missional agenda as his/her own. The believer is now enlightened and truly realizes his/her call to 'follow' Christ.

Reflection

- a. Which of the three stages towards mission consciousness best helps you to understand where your church is in striving to become mission conscious? Why?

WEEK #4

THEME: Hope Alive (*A study of St. John 21*)

SUB-THEME: Pitfalls to Avoid When Engaged in God's Mission

TEXT: St. John 21:20-23

Hope can be seen as a God inspired vision for life that gives birth to work. Hope of this kind is never 'dead' or futile and therefore the term 'hope alive' cannot be seen with redundancy as hope that has life. 'Hope alive' should be understood as the progressive realization of the possibilities for life/mission that comes through our hope in God. These possibilities are appreciated as assurances toward the fulfilment of hope. Once hope enters the heart it becomes like a flame that allows us to see God who was already at work in our lives revealing possibilities for life/mission.

Door into the text

Though hope, which is the God inspired vision and the accompanying work, may be present in our hearts it is possible to encounter pitfalls that can prevent us from realizing those God-initiated and progressive possibilities for mission. In other words, there are pitfalls that can prevent us from experiencing hope alive. St. John 21:20-23 highlights some of these possible pitfalls.

Points to note from the text:

- Peter allowed himself to become distracted from contemplating Jesus' command to follow him (verse 20).
- Peter's query (verse 21) had no immediate correlation with his answering of the Lord's bid to follow.
- The Lord's response to Peter's query shows a disapproval of both the content of Peter's query and of Peter's distractedness (verse 22a).
- The Lord strongly encouraged Peter to refocus on the Lord's bid to follow him (verse 22b).

Considerations:

1. The Lord's strong attempt to have Peter focus on the call 'follow me' betrays distraction as one of the pitfalls Peter must try to avoid. In Peter's case distraction interrupted the kind of meaningful contemplation that allows for effective service in God's mission.
2. Peter's query - 'What about him?' gives us glimpses of what might have been concerns/worries of Peter. These include:
 - a. *The fear to die (self-denial and physical) alone*
 - b. *The desire for another to share his fate in God's mission*
 - c. *The inevitable loneliness in life (self-denial) as well as in death (physical)*
3. The Lord's response to Peter's query could suggest a kind of preference by the Lord for the disciple whose fate Peter questioned. Note: this is the disciple who is repeatedly referred to as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' (verse 20a). Yet after Jesus' rebuke Peter's response to the other disciple was unlike Cain's response of anger and jealousy (Genesis 4:3-5) towards his brother Able who was shown favour by God.

Implications from the text:

- Distractedness defeats meaningful reflections for/on the mission

Whenever believers fall to distractedness the quality of their missional engagement is compromised. Because of the post-resurrection context it becomes important for believers to spend quality time:

- a. Discerning the will of God for the kingdom of God
- b. Appropriating the Lord's call upon their lives – 'follow me'
- c. Assessing their contribution to the mission and the results of such contributions

Sources of distractedness include anything that does not immediately relate to the mission but are competing for the believer's time, efforts and resources.

- Loneliness, though inevitable, can discourage believers from the mission

If believers are not watchful of this inevitable experience of loneliness on the missional journey they can fall to the temptation to become preoccupied with self-centred considerations as oppose to being concerned with God's mission. Believers should consider carefully the temptations on account of loneliness in the following common statements:

- a. *Why am I the only one serving?*
- b. *I should not be the only one giving! What about him/her?*
- c. *I feel like I'm the only one who cares about this church...*

- Jealousy and anger towards those whose calling seem more favourable

The temptation to become jealous and angry is always there, especially towards those who appear to be giving less of themselves yet are receiving more (Note: In Peter's eyes the disciple whom Jesus loved was not called to die, yet it seems he was receiving long life on the earth).

Reflections:

- a. How can believers avoid these pitfalls on the mission journey (*distraction, temptations that come from loneliness, and jealousy & anger*)? Can a church fall into one of these?
- b. How are these pitfalls dangerous to the believer's hope?