

Baptist
Mission
Australia



May Mission Month 2024

Mending!

Pastor's & Leader's
Guide



www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/Mending

Mending!

Joining with God in mending
a beautiful, broken world.

The Pastor's and Leader's Guide



This resource has been written by theologian and author, Rev Dr Graham Joseph Hill.

It has been written as a launching pad for sermons and small group discussions. Each of the sessions can be used as part of the full Mending! series or as a standalone resource.

In each session, there are five steps:

1. Read the Bible passage
2. Discuss some takeaways
3. Explore discussion questions
4. Engage in a small group practice
5. Pray together

1. **Renewing:** Galatians 5:16–17, 22–26
It starts with us.
2. **Relating:** Matthew 4:18–22
It's always about relationships.
3. **Restoring:** Luke 4:14–21
It's about the whole Gospel for the whole world.
4. **Responding:** John 1:35–42
It's about availability.

No matter where we are, we can join God in mending a beautiful, broken world.

We don't bring healing in our strength—we are co-menders with God in Jesus Christ, our Healer and Saviour. Being a co-mender means joining God in renewing creation and communities, developing meaningful and authentic relationships, restoring people and the planet through God's healing and love, and making ourselves available to be used by God.

God is mending a beautiful, broken world in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Spirit of Christ invites us to join God in this vital ministry of renewal, relationship, restoration and response. Jesus calls us to be co-menders with God, joining with God wherever He brings healing, shalom, reconciliation and renewal.



Explore more Mending! resources:
[www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/
MayMissionMonth](http://www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/MayMissionMonth)

1. Renewing

>> **It starts with us**
Galatians 5:16–17, 22–26

Session Introduction

We live in a broken world, and our lives are testimonies to this brokenness. Yet, amid this reality, we find hope. Our mending God doesn't discard us due to our fractures; instead, God desires to use us, broken as we are, transforming our wounds into wellsprings of empathy and strength.

In Galatians 5:16–17, 22–26, we discover that this transformation begins within us, as we are renewed daily by the Holy Spirit, learning to live, look, love and lead more like Jesus. We cannot achieve this process on our own; we are wholly dependent on the Spirit's work. The Holy Spirit cultivates in us love, joy, peace, and other fruits, that empower and equip us to mend alongside God.

Our challenge—and indeed, our opportunity—is to courageously cooperate with the Spirit's renewing work in our lives.

As we open ourselves to this divine mending, we step into our calling as authentic co-menders, embodying Henri Nouwen's vision of "wounded healers". By this, Nouwen means that we are all wounded, but our woundedness can be a source of strength and healing as we serve others. Together, let's embark on this sacred journey, embracing our brokenness and the beautiful mending God offers as we seek to bring healing and hope to our world.

Co-menders walk in the power, presence and fruit of the Spirit as they join with God in bringing healing and renewal.

Scriptures

Galatians 5:16–17, 22–26 (NIV)

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Explorations & Takeaways

1. Renewing through dependence on the Spirit

- » Galatians 5:16–17 emphasises the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. It invites us to walk by the Spirit to not gratify the desires of the flesh. Just as prayer was central to Jesus' ministry, our reliance on the Holy Spirit is crucial for our spiritual journey. Walking by the Spirit is our continual act of prayerful dependence.
- » Living by the Spirit leads to a life that is not only resistant to the desires of the flesh but also positively influenced by the fruits of the Spirit. As we depend on the Holy Spirit, we're empowered to live out the characteristics of Christ, shaping our mission and interactions with others.
- » This renewing reliance transforms us into the likeness of Christ, affecting our words, actions and mission. As we walk by the Spirit, we become vessels of God's mending work, capable of bringing healing and hope to a broken world.

2. Renewing through cultivating the fruit of the Spirit

- » Galatians 5:22–23 describes the fruit of the Spirit, a direct result of living in accordance with the Spirit’s guidance. This isn’t merely a moral checklist but a transformative process that changes us from the inside out.
- » Each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) is a component of Christ’s character. As we allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate these traits in us, our lives more accurately reflect Christ to those around us.
- » This renewing cultivation is not just for our personal holiness but for mission as well. As we embody these virtues, our lives become a testament to the Gospel, opening doors for authentic conversations and opportunities to share the love of Christ with others.

3. Renewing through community in the Spirit

- » Galatians 5:25–26 calls us to live in step with the Spirit, not becoming conceited, provoking one another or envying each other. This passage highlights the communal aspect of walking by the Spirit—it’s not just an individual endeavour but something we do together as the body of Christ.
- » As we engage in communal life, guided by the Spirit, we find support, correction, encouragement and a shared mission. This community is a space where the fruits of the Spirit can be practiced and witnessed, offering a glimpse of God’s Kingdom to the world.
- » This renewing community acts as a force of mending in a broken world. As we live out the love, joy, peace, and other aspects of the Spirit together, we become a beacon of hope and healing, collectively participating in God’s mission to mend and renew all things.

Questions

- » What stands out to you in Galatians 5:16–17, 22–26 regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
- » Is there anything that holds you back from fully embracing the Spirit’s leading and the cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit in your life?
- » What does “walking by the Spirit” or “living in step with the Spirit” mean to you in your daily life?
- » Can you share a time when you felt the Holy Spirit guiding you or producing fruit in your life?
- » What is one practical step you can take this week to be more attuned to the Spirit’s leading?
- » Read the ‘In Practice’ reflection below, what encourages or challenges you from what Ben shares? Is there someone in your life who exemplifies living by the Spirit?

In Practice



Ben serves with Baptist Mission Australia in the Silk Road Area.

On this theme, Ben shares, “Sometimes being led by the Holy Spirit is easy. Prayers are obviously answered. A call is clearly discerned. This was the case in how my family ended up in the Silk Road Area.

Sometimes though it is really hard! This has been my experience recently. It was clear that the Holy Spirit was leading my family to change location from the village we had lived in for five years to the city. It was clear that doors were opening for my wife, Petra, to be involved in a ministry she has a heart for. But what about me?

In this season, I’m not sure what I’m meant to be doing. However, I am confident that God has a plan for my family, myself included! I know that the Holy Spirit has led us to this place and so I’m waiting; anxiously sometimes, prayerfully often, and trusting that in His time, I will know what ministry to step into next.”

Small Group Practice

Subscribe to Baptist Mission Australia News and Prayer, a fortnightly e-newsletter. Spend time this week praying for Baptist Mission Australia intercultural teams around the world.



Subscribe or read News and Prayer here:
www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/NewsPrayer

Prayer

May our walk with the Spirit bring renewal and mending to a beautiful, broken world.

Creator God, we humbly come before you seeking:

*Guidance to walk by your Spirit, avoiding the desires of the flesh,
Cultivation within us of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control,
Strength to live in a community that reflects your Spirit, fostering
unity and love among us,
Encouragement to embrace our role as co-menders in your
Kingdom, using our gifts and experiences to bring healing
and hope,
Clarity to discern your will and direction in our lives and the
courage to follow where you lead,
Inspiration from those around us who live by the Spirit, learning
from their examples and being spurred on to grow,
And a deepened commitment to living out the fruits of the
Spirit in all our lives, impacting those we meet with your love
and grace.*

*We pray that our lives, transformed by your Spirit, would be a
testament to your power and love, drawing others to you and
participating in your mission of mending the world.*

*Make us vessels of your peace and healing, equipped and willing to
join you in this beautiful work of renewal.*

Amen.

Your Notes & Reflections

2. Relating

>> It's always about relationships
Matthew 4:18–22

Session Introduction

Matthew 4:18–22 helps us understand how authentic, meaningful relationships are vital for co-mending the world with God. Our Baptist Mission Australia team exemplifies this by embedding themselves within local communities worldwide, fostering genuine connections and living as good neighbours. They cross streets and cultural divides to embody the hope of Jesus through both word and deed.

Like Jesus, who became proximal by moving into our human neighbourhood and investing deeply in personal relationships, we are called to adopt an incarnational, relational approach.

This session invites us to reflect on how we can live as credible witnesses in our local neighbourhoods, sharing our lives and stories of hope and transformation. Through modelling the words, ways and works of Jesus in our relationships, we actively participate in God's mending work within our broken world.

Co-menders live as credible witnesses to Jesus, building relationships and sharing stories of hope and transformation.

Scripture

Matthew 4:18–22 (NIV)

¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Explorations & Takeaways

1. Relating through proximity

- » Matthew 4:18–22 depicts Jesus calling his first disciples, emphasising His relationship-building approach. He didn't wait for them to come to Him; instead, He went to where they were. This proximity is at the heart of building authentic relationships and is fundamental to our mending mission.
- » Just as our Baptist Mission Australia team members embed themselves in local communities, we, too, are called to cross our streets and comfort zones to engage with others. Being proximal means more than just physical closeness; it's about consciously understanding, empathising and connecting with people's realities.
- » Relating through proximity challenges us to reflect on our willingness to step into other people's lives. It's about embodying Jesus' incarnational approach by being present and engaged in our neighbourhoods, workplaces and social circles, seeking to understand and share life with those around us.

2. Relating through shared lives

- » Jesus' invitation to the disciples was to follow Him and enter into a relationship with Him. He shared His life with them, teaching, eating and journeying together. This relational model is a powerful aspect of the mending work of God.
- » Sharing our lives means opening up, being vulnerable and allowing others to see the hope and transformation within us. It's about mutual exchange, where both parties are enriched and encouraged. This level of authenticity fosters deeper connections and opens doors to meaningful conversations about faith, hope and God's work.
- » Relating through shared lives prompts us to consider how to invest more intentionally in relationships. It encourages us to be deliberate in spending time, sharing stories and doing life with others, showing the love of Christ not just in words but through our actions and interactions.

3. Relating as credible witnesses

- » In Matthew 4:19, Jesus tells the disciples, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." This indicates a transformation through a relationship with Christ that turns followers into witnesses. Our transformed lives testify to God's grace and love as we relate to others.
- » Being a credible witness means our words and actions align, demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit. It's about living so that others can see Christ in us, the hope and transformation He brings, and the difference He makes in how we live, love and relate to others.
- » Relating as credible witnesses challenges us to live out the Gospel daily. It invites us to reflect on how our relationships demonstrate the words, ways and works of Jesus. As we interact with those around us, we're called to be authentic representations of Christ's love, serving as conduits for His mending work in the world.

Questions

- » What stands out in Matthew 4:18–22 about Jesus' approach to building relationships and calling his disciples?
- » Is anything holding you back from actively engaging in your community and building meaningful relationships?
- » Can you discuss a time when forming a meaningful relationship allowed you to share or witness God's love and mending work?
- » Why do you think building authentic, meaningful relationships is critical to participating in God's mission of mending the world?
- » What is one practical step you can take this week to develop deeper relationships in your local neighbourhood or community?
- » Read the 'In Practice' reflection below, what encourages or challenges you from what Scott shares? Is there someone in your life who exemplifies Jesus' relational approach?

In Practice



Scott serves with Baptist Mission Australia in Mozambique.

He writes, "I always love putting my hand to something practical, and at the moment it's working alongside a team of guys to replace the dangerous and leaky roofs on two schools.

The schools are a fair way out on bad roads, so given the difficulty accessing the schools, we have set up a workshop at our place. This means the local guys and I can cut, plane, bend and weld all the wood and steel needed for the buildings here.

It's been a hive of activity the past few months as different men have brought skills and learned new skills. As we have worked, we have also spent time talking about the joys and struggles of life, as well as exploring stories from God's Word.

Many people are seeking employment and support at the moment, and I have often been able to offer some people casual work, which helps both them and the project.

Doing practical things with people, creating space for their gifts and teaching new skills, building relationships, listening to other's stories and telling a few of my own, opening the Word of God and applying it to life's different moments - this is a privilege! And it is only possible when we get alongside people and meet them where they are."

Small Group Practice

Begin with prayer, asking for open hearts and eyes.

Split into small groups and walk through a nearby neighbourhood, observing and, if appropriate, engaging in friendly conversations with locals. Focus on understanding the community's needs and strengths. After the walk, regroup to share observations and pray for the community. Discuss your group's potential actions or initiatives to continue building relationships and serving this area.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, guide us as we seek to build authentic, meaningful relationships in your name.

As your followers, may our lives reflect your incarnational love:

*Stepping into our communities with intention and grace,
Fostering connections and friendships that transcend barriers,
Sharing our lives and stories, revealing your transformative work within us,
Investing time and heart into understanding and empathising with others,
Seeking to live out your words, ways and works daily,
Embracing our role as co-menders in a broken world,
Demonstrating humility, kindness and patience in all our interactions,
Encouraging and uplifting those around us, becoming beacons of your hope and love,
Actively participating in your mission to heal and restore,
And always relying on your Spirit to guide and empower us in these endeavours.*

Lord Jesus, we depend on your strength and wisdom to be credible witnesses of your love, forming deep, lasting relationships that reflect your heart for community and mending.

Amen.

3. Restoring

>> **It's about the whole Gospel
for the whole world**
Luke 4:14–21

Session Introduction

In Luke 4:14–21, Jesus announces His mission to bring holistic restoration. As co-menders, we are called to engage in this mission by responding to the brokenness and injustice around us and worldwide. God envisions a restored creation—people and planet alike—and invites us to participate in this grand, restorative vision.

We are to model Jesus' approach, combining word and deed, proclamation and demonstration, and expressing God's love tangibly.

'Integral mission' is articulated in the Lausanne Movement declaration and the Asia-Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF) Holistic Transformation Statement (QR codes below). We're called to offer the whole Gospel to the entire world.

Where do we begin? By opening our eyes to the needs around us and recognising what God has placed in our hands and hearts. Let our hearts be broken by the things that break the heart of God, and let that passion drive us to action.

Co-menders long to see justice and restoration for all people.



Lausanne Movement on Integral Mission
<https://lausanne.org/networks/issues/integral-mission>



APBF Commitment to Holistic Transformation
<https://shorturl.at/ijPTV>

Scripture

Luke 4:14–21 (NIV)

¹⁴ Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read,¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Explorations & Takeaways

1. Restoring through proclamation and demonstration

- » Luke 4:14–21 records Jesus proclaiming His mission, which was not just about words but also about actions—bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom and recovering sight. This dual approach of proclamation and demonstration is central to the concept of integral mission. As co-menders, we must embody these aspects in responding to brokenness and injustice.

- » Jesus' approach to mission sets a model for us. How are we using our words to bring hope and our actions to bring healing? Jesus' mode shows us that our words must align with our deeds, ensuring that our Gospel proclamation matches our demonstration of his love and justice.
- » Restoring through proclamation and demonstration challenges us to consider the balance in our ministry. Are we as committed to social justice and practical help as evangelism and spiritual teaching? How can we better integrate these into our mission?

2. Restoring through personal engagement

- » Jesus' ministry was deeply personal. He met individuals where they were, addressing their specific needs and situations. Similarly, we are called to engage personally with the world around us. This means understanding the broader issues of injustice and brokenness and seeing and responding to the individual stories within.
- » Personal engagement can deepen our impact. It's one thing to speak about poverty or injustice; it's another to know someone by name living that reality. How can we move from abstract ideas to personal involvement as a church and as individuals?
- » Restoring through personal engagement prompts us to reflect on our level of involvement in God's restorative work. Are we willing to step into the messy, complicated lives of others, offering our resources and our time and presence?

3. Restoring through community in the Spirit

- » The mission Jesus announces in Luke 4 is not just for Him but for the whole body of believers. It's a communal calling. As a community, the church is meant to reflect the fullness of God's love and power, showing the world a picture of His Kingdom. This means working together, each contributing our unique gifts and resources, to bring holistic healing and restoration.

- » Discuss what this looks like in practice. How can our small group or church community better work together to address our community's physical, spiritual, and emotional needs? How does each member's unique gifting contribute to a holistic approach to mission?
- » Restoring as a community calls us to consider how we foster unity and cooperation in our mission efforts. Are we encouraging and making space for each member to contribute? Are we partnering with other churches and organisations to broaden our impact? How can we better reflect Christ's united, diverse body in our mission work?

Questions

- » What stands out in Luke 4:14–21 about Jesus' mission and how He integrates word, sign and deed?
- » Is anything holding you back from fully embracing and participating in a holistic mission that combines word, sign and deed?
- » Can you discuss a time when you witnessed or were part of a mission that effectively combined word and action? What impact did it have?
- » Why do you think offering the whole Gospel (word, sign and deed) is essential for effectively mending the world?
- » What is one practical step you can take this week to more actively engage in both proclaiming and demonstrating the Gospel in your community?
- » Read the 'In Practice' story on the following page, what encourages or challenges you from what Ryan and Suzie share? Is there someone in your life who inspires you through their holistic approach to the Gospel.

In Practice



In South Asia, our intercultural team serves through our partner NGO. Here, Suzie and Ryan share a story demonstrating the holistic and life changing impact of the work:

“Prior to 2016, ‘Ranu’ did not work and her husband’s \$4 per day income - which is well below the extreme poverty line - was not sufficient to provide for them and two sons. With minimal education and no cultivable land of her own, Ranu’s prospects for improving her family situation seemed slim.

In 2016, Ranu completed her functional education and joined a savings group facilitated by our partner NGO. Encouraged by the 20 other women in her group, Ranu joined them in saving and depositing 70c each week into the group’s savings account. In time the savings amassed, and Ranu was supported to take a loan of \$400 to buy her first two calves. She now has five cows and is able to collect 7-8 litres of milk from the cows each day!

With the increase in family income, Ranu purchased a piece of land next to her house to grow feed for her cattle. Ranu reports that her family is now more self-sufficient, and their living standard and physical health have improved from having more income.

“The group has benefited me a lot,” she says. “As a result of the group, I am easily able to carry out my income generation activities with a loan.”

Ranu is one of more than 20,000 (mostly) women who are a part of our partner NGO’s groups. Her story illustrates the simple, yet significant, difference this ministry is making in the lives of ordinary B people every day.”

Through engagement with our team and local NGO staff, people like Ranu also have the opportunity to connect with believers who can share the hope of Jesus in relevant ways with them.

Pray for more people like Ranu to experience God’s love through word and deed as they are empowered to support themselves and their families.

Small Group Practice

In response to Jesus’ holistic mission, plan a community engagement activity where your group serves a local need.

Start by choosing an initiative like supporting a shelter, organising a neighbourhood clean-up, or supporting a food drive. While serving, make a conscious effort to connect personally with those you’re helping, offering encouragement and prayer alongside the physical support. After the event, gather to share experiences and insights, reflecting on how you’ve witnessed the Gospel in action.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, empower us as bearers of your holistic Gospel.

As your followers, may our lives mirror your mission:

Proclaiming your good news to the poor and marginalised,
Bringing freedom and healing, in word and deed,
Seeking justice and restoration for the oppressed,
Combining our words of hope with acts of love,
Asking for guidance to see and meet the needs around us,
Seeing every encounter as an opportunity to serve and share your love,
Glorifying you through our dedication to your holistic mission,
Humbling ourselves to learn from those we serve,
Praying for wisdom and courage to act justly and love mercy,
Going out to be Your hands and feet in a broken world,
Seeking your strength in challenging circumstances,
And rejecting indifference and embracing active compassion.

The cross, the resurrection and the Gospel bring healing to the world.

Lord Jesus, we rely on your Spirit and strength to make us wholehearted participants in your mission, bringing the entire Gospel to the whole world.

Amen.

4. Responding

>> It's about availability John 1:35–42

Session Introduction

As we explore John 1:35–42, the Spirit invites us to consider our response to God's call. How do we, inspired by the previous sessions, become co-menders in our communities and beyond? The journey of mending begins with availability—a willingness to be used by God amidst the competing demands of life.

Peter's transformative journey illustrates the profound impact of availability. As he followed Jesus, his life and capacity to serve were radically changed, highlighting his absolute dependence on God's Spirit.

This session challenges us to reflect on our availability. How can we open ourselves to God's leading, ready to act and respond?

As we explore what it means to join God as co-menders, let's consider how we can make space in our hearts, time, and priorities to participate in his restorative work in the world.

Co-menders are willing to be used by God in His restorative work.

Scripture

John 1:35–42 (NIV)

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.
³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and

asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Explorations & Takeaways

1. Responding with availability

- » John 1:35–42 shows the first disciples responding to Jesus' call with immediate availability. They left what they were doing to follow Him. This readiness to be used by God is a crucial first step in becoming a co-mender.
- » Consider the transformative impact of Peter's availability. Peter's life was significantly changed as He followed Jesus, demonstrating the potential for growth and service when we make ourselves available to God. How might a similar commitment to availability transform your life and capacity to serve?
- » Responding with availability challenges us to examine our daily lives and make intentional choices that align with being available for God's use. It's about prioritising our relationship with God and being ready to act when He calls.

2. Responding to the call with others

- » The disciples didn't respond to Jesus' call in isolation; they did so in the community. John 1:41–42 shows Andrew bringing his brother Simon to Jesus. Reflect on the importance of community in responding to God's call. How does being part of a community of believers support and enhance your ability to respond to God?
- » Responding to the call with others emphasises the communal aspect of Christian service and mission. It's about fostering a supportive environment where everyone is encouraged and empowered to participate in God's restorative work.
- » Discuss how you can encourage and support each other in your group to respond to God's call. How can you help one another become more available to God and recognise and act on His leading in your lives?

3. Responding in the power of the Spirit

- » Just as Jesus began His ministry “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14), we, too, need the Holy Spirit's empowerment to respond effectively to God's call. Reflect on the role of the Holy Spirit in your life. How do you see the Spirit guiding and empowering you to be a co-mender?
- » Consider the areas where you feel inadequate or hesitant to respond to God's call. How might the Holy Spirit help you overcome these challenges? Discuss how you can more actively seek and rely on the Spirit's power in your life and ministry.
- » Responding in the power of the Spirit challenges us to not rely on our strength but to be continually open to and dependent on the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment. It's about living a Spirit-led, responsive and obedient life to God's calling.

Questions

- » What stands out in John 1:35–42 about the disciples' response to Jesus' invitation?
- » Is anything holding you back from making yourself fully available to God's call?
- » What does “making yourself available to God” mean to you? How do you practice it?
- » Why is our availability to God essential for participating in his mission of mending the world?
- » What is one practical step you can take this week to make yourself more available to God and his calling?
- » Read the ‘In Practice’ reflection below, what encourages or challenges you from what Suzanne shares? Is there someone in your life who inspires you through their response to God's call?

In Practice



Suzanne arrived in the Silk Road Area to join our team in 2023. Before she left Australia, she shared this reflection on saying “yes” to God's leading.

Suzanne writes, “Preparing for intercultural work is many things but very rarely boring! In a way, I've been doing it for the last 12 years, and yet new emotions, experiences and questions always find a way to appear. I heard the call to mission when I was 16. On a Christian camp, I prayed a scary prayer. I said that my life was God's. If He told me what He wanted me to do with it, I would do it – no asterisk, no take-backs.

I'm 28 now. Each of those 12 years have been part of the preparation that eventually led me to Baptist Mission Australia and the Silk Road Area. And the preparation isn't finished yet!

As I have been preparing to serve interculturally, I have been preparing to be welcomed into a range of new spaces and opportunities to share God's love. That's exciting!

I pray for and anticipate the friends I'll make, the adventures that await, and the feeling of finally reaching the destination and starting the new chapter!

The other side of the coin, though, is that I am keenly aware of how much I'll be saying goodbye to, even just for a few years. My Bible study group, bushwalks, seeing the first class I taught graduate, family dinners, getting to hug a friend or sing Christmas carols in the town centre – these small blessings will be a lot further away next year.

So even as I feel excited, I am grieving a little too. Grief isn't a bad thing. It grows gratitude for all that God has given and trust in all He is yet to give.

Preparing is a whirlwind, but so is intercultural work! Above all else, I feel thankful that it's a journey we never have to walk alone, but hand-in-hand with the God who calls me."

Small Group Practice

Contact your Baptist Mission Australia State Leader to arrange for them to come and speak with your small group or church. Be inspired by ways you can partner with and engage with mission.



Contact our team here:

www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/Contact

Prayer

Lord Jesus, guide us as we strive to be available and responsive to your call.

As your willing servants, may our lives reflect your inviting grace:

*Openly seeking and embracing your direction and purpose,
Lovingly engaging with our community and beyond,
Eagerly responding to your call with action and faith,
Transforming our lives to serve better and follow you,
Seeking forgiveness and growth through every step and misstep,
Viewing each day as an opportunity to live out your love,
Glorifying you in our willingness to say, "Here I am, send me.",
Removing our prejudices and opening our hearts to your leading,
Praying for the courage and strength to follow wherever you guide,
Actively listening for your voice amidst the noise of life,
Going out and embodying your love and light to others,
Seeking your wisdom in every decision and interaction,
And rejecting passivity and embracing your active mission.*

The cross, the resurrection and the Gospel empower us to respond to your call.

Lord Jesus, we rely on your Spirit and grace to be ever-ready responders, making ourselves available for your transformative work in the world.

Amen.



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