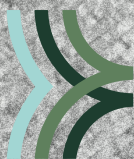


Baptist
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Alongsiders
Pastor's & Leader's Guide



www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/Alongsiders

Alongsiders

The Pastor's and Leader's Guide

This resource has been written by Rev Dr Graham Joseph Hill, Baptist Mission Australia's WA State Leader, theologian and author.

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 Alongsiders series or as a standalone resource.

In each session, there are five steps:

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

Each session also includes three further resources:

1. The full Bible texts
2. Mission stories
3. Optional reading and Bible memorisation

1. **People of Prayer:** Mark 1:35–39

We follow Jesus' model of retreating to pray before stepping out

2. **People of Peace:** Acts 16:11–15

We are people who bring peace and seek people of peace

3. **People of Love:** 1 John 3:17–18

We love people and holistically respond to their needs

4. **People who Partner:** Philippians 1:3–8

We partner together in God's mission

No matter where we are, we can journey alongside our neighbours and friends.

Being an Alongsider means listening, showing hospitality, bringing peace, and humbly sharing the good news of Jesus. It means praying and seeking the Spirit's leading. It means loving the people God has put in your world, as well as loving the world.

Being an Alongsider means sharing God's love in genuine, active, and relevant ways. It means partnering together with each other and God – sending and being sent, giving, and receiving. Working together as partners in God's mission.



Explore more Alongsiders resources:

www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/

MayMissionMonth

1. People of Prayer

We follow Jesus' model of retreating before stepping out.

Session Introduction

We are Alongsiders when we follow Jesus's model of retreating to pray before stepping out in service and mission.

Prayer changes hearts. It opens us to God and what God wants to say to us and do in our lives. That's why the Bible says to 'devote yourselves to prayer' (Col 4:2a).

Prayer is a powerful practice. It has an immeasurable impact on our lives, our churches and the world. We pray in many ways: in song, in word, through liturgy and the creative arts, and through acts of justice and mercy. Prayer creates space for lament and weeping, for deep listening and love, for seeking the Spirit's leading and for growing understanding and reconciliation between groups.

Prayer creates space for us to listen to God and speak with God. It creates a space to grow and change. As we pray, God invites us to become like Him, in love, holiness, mercy, rest and peace. Prayer moves us into mission and enables us to be Alongsiders.

Alongsiders follow Jesus's model of prayer and the way he retreats to pray before stepping out in service and mission.

Scriptures

Full texts found in the session resources section on page 7.

- » Mark 1:35–39
- » Colossians 4:2–6
- » 2 Chronicles 7:14

Explorations & Takeaways

1. Prayer empowers us for mission

- » Mark 1:35–39 says that Jesus went regularly to a solitary place to pray. Jesus' intimacy with God empowered Him for mission and it is the same for us. In this passage, we see Jesus praying first and then stepping out to preach, move in the power of the Spirit and join the Father in mission.
- » The history of mission is the story of prayer. Prayer opens us up to the power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer assists the integrity of our life and witness. Prayer keeps us humble and focused on Jesus.

Prayer stokes our passion for God and the Gospel. It helps us achieve personal and communal breakthroughs and victories. Prayer enables us to hear God and discern what He is doing in us and in the world. Seeing Jesus's dedication to prayer, the disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray!" (Lk 11:1b).
- » Prayer empowers us for mission because it changes our hearts and lives, and helps us become more like Jesus.

2. Prayer opens doors for the Gospel

- » Colossians 4:2–6 instructs us to be devoted to prayer. Our prayer should be watchful and thankful.
- » Being devoted to prayer opens doors for the Gospel. How does it do that? Our devotion to prayer changes our lives and communities. Prayer changes our lives so that we become bolder and humbler and more courageous as the Gospel is advanced and proclaimed. Prayer changes our communities as the power of God brings healing, repentance and openness to the Gospel.
- » Colossians 4:4–6 gives us further guides. Pray that you may proclaim the Gospel clearly. Pray that you may be wise in relationships with outsiders and make the most of every opportunity. Pray that your words are full of grace and seasoned with the salt of the Gospel.

3. We are empowered by the Spirit

- » 2 Chronicles 7:14 shows us that prayer is essential for revival and the renewal of the church, as well as for the healing of the world.
- » Prayer must never be a standalone activity. Prayer that moves hearts and that God listens to is accompanied by humility, repentance, godly actions and a passionate seeking after God and His will.
- » Notice, too, that these aren't individual actions only: they are collective and communal prayers and actions. We are *Alongsiders together*.

Questions

These can be used for small groups or with your congregation as part of a sermon.

- » What stands out to you in these passages?
- » Is there anything that holds you back from prayer?
- » What does 'retreating before stepping out' mean for you in your life? What about 'being a person of prayer'?
- » Discuss a time when God answered your prayers.
- » How does prayer empower us for mission? What has been your experience?
- » What one thing can you do this week to spend more time in prayer?
- » **Choose one of the mission stories on pages 8 or 9.** What encourages or challenges you from this story? What you can learn from it?

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 here: www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/NewsPrayer

Prayer

Pray together as a small group or church. Pray for each other and Baptist Mission Australia intercultural teams.

*May our intimacy with God empower us for service and mission.
Lord Jesus, we ask that you would:*

Open us up to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Assist the integrity of our life and witness.

Keep us focused on Jesus and humble.

Stoke our passion for God and the Gospel.

Help us achieve personal and communal breakthroughs and victories.

Enable us to hear God and discern what God is doing in us and in the world.

Teach us to pray.

We pray you would open doors for the Gospel.

Please change our lives and communities.

Change our lives so that we become bolder and humbler and more courageous as the Gospel is advanced and proclaimed.

Change our communities as the power of God brings healing, repentance, and openness to the Gospel.

We ask you to make us Alongsiders who are people of prayer.

Amen.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Full Bible Texts

Mark 1:35–39

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” ³⁸ Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” ³⁹ So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues, and driving out demons.

Colossians 4:2–6

² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

2 Chronicles 7:14

¹⁴ if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Mission Stories

These stories relate to the theme. They can be used as sermon illustrations and small group discussion starters.

1. Daz and Bee, South East Asia

Baptist Mission Australia intercultural team members

Daz and Bee are establishing a new cafe ministry in South East Asia. Here they share about the questions they are asking at each step.

Bee and Daz write, “Laying good foundations - as any builder will know - is key to the longevity and sustainability of any building or structure. This is the picture that God gave us for the new social enterprise cafe we are establishing here in South East Asia: A brick wall and a Spirit level.

We could have rushed into opening a new cafe ASAP after the closure of the previous one, but it was important for us to learn from our previous experience and take those learnings and apply them to this new venture. **We have really felt God impressing on us the importance of getting the foundations of this new ministry true and level. He is our Spirit Level.**

With each process, task, interaction and dream. With each brick laid, **we need to stop, take a moment and check... Is this right? Is this in line with what God is already doing here? Does this bring Him honour and glory? Is this what He called us to? Is this going to expand His Kingdom? Are we operating with integrity?**

These are the questions we are asking every step of the way. This business is not about us and what we can achieve, it is about Him and what He will achieve. He is inviting us to join Him.

We have received all our permissions, and are now working hard to prepare a well thought through business plan and model. We are praying and waiting on God to direct us to the right staff and leadership team for the cafe and are trusting Him to provide all our financial needs. This all takes time! We know He is directing our path, and we trust that He is with us each step of the way.”

2. Liz and Glenn, Thailand

Baptist Mission Australia intercultural team members

Liz writes, “The opening of Baan Sawang English Language Centre has been a wonderful experience and we are very excited to see how God is working in that space. Glenn and I have opened our home, backyard and the school and we are loving having people come, but we felt a leading by God to not rely on this. That while an open home was great, we also needed to be looking for more opportunities to ‘cross the street’.

After prayer about what this could look like we were excited when an opportunity arose to start an English/Thai exchange class in our local general store/nursery. What happened was, Aunty Nu asked if I would be willing to teach her English. **She asked how much I charged per hour, and when I told her I would be willing to teach her for free she seemed a little taken a back.**

So, I suggested that if I taught her English for an hour, she could tell me stories in Thai afterwards and that would help me with my Thai. She seemed please with this idea. Then, because it wasn’t going to cost, she asked if I would be willing to come and do it in her store and if I would be OK if she invited others. Being in the general store, I also got to introduce myself and meet a hand full of locals that I had never met.

A perfect answer to our prayers!

On our second meeting, at the end of our class the women started asking questions about my family. They wanted to know why I was kind and happy to teach them for free, and why my husband was so happy and nice to everyone. I took the opportunity to share with them that Glenn was kind because he loves Jesus.

Please pray that as these relationships develop, I will find ways to show God’s love to these women. And pray that there will be more opportunities to share about Jesus with them.”

Optional Reading and Bible Memorisation

The Bible teaches us to pray as we come alongside people. Bible memorisation equips and empowers us to be Alongsiders who pray and then step out in mission.

Small group activity during May Mission Month or beyond:

- » Read the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Hide This in Your Heart: Memorising Scripture for Kingdom Impact* (Frost and Hill: NavPress, 2020). You’ll learn how memorising the Bible empowers us for prayer, discipleship, and mission.
- » Memorise 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”
- » Reflect on how 2 Chronicles 7:14 inspires you to be a ‘person of prayer’.

Alongsiders:

2. People of Peace

We are people who bring peace and seek people of peace.

Session Introduction

God calls us to be Alongsiders who both bring peace and seek to engage with people of peace. Peacemaking is an action, often carried out with great courage and at a personal price. Peacemakers also look for people of peace who open opportunities for the Gospel, mission and meaningful relationships in society.

Alongsiders commit to peacemaking and seeking out people of peace.

Scriptures

Full texts found in the session resources section on page 15.

- » Acts 16:11–15
- » Matthew 5:9
- » James 3:13–18

Explorations & Takeaways

1. Peacemakers seek people of peace

- » **Acts 16:11–15** tells the story of Lydia coming faith in Jesus in Philippi. Paul and his companions meet Lydia and God opens her heart to respond to the Gospel. After she and the members of her household are baptised, she invites Paul and his companions into her home. She is a person of peace, connecting her household and community with Jesus' messengers and Gospel.

- » People of peace are prepared by God to open opportunities into their families, neighbourhoods, workplaces, or communities for the Gospel. Jesus modelled this approach in His relationship with Levi and His approach to eating with people (Mark 2:13–17). Paul modelled this approach with Lydia and her family.
- » Jesus instructed his disciples to search for a “worthy” person or a “person of peace” when they enter neighbourhoods and communities (Matthew 10:11 and Luke 10:5–7).

2. Peacemakers are called the children of God

- » **Matthew 5:9** says peacemakers are blessed and will be called children of God.
- » Peacemakers are called children of God because they care about what God cares about and they engage in God's mission. God's mission is a mission of peace and reconciliation.
- » Instead of getting involved in conflict and division, peacemakers follow Jesus in His way of peace and compassion. Peacemakers join Jesus' mission of bringing healing and hope to a divided world.

3. Peacemakers show the wisdom of heaven

- » **James 3:13–18** talks about the wisdom of heaven. This wisdom of God is shown in our peacemaking, character, deeds done in humility, forgiveness, purity, compassion, and more. Alongsiders are peacemakers who sow in peace.
- » Peacemaking is an action, often carried out with great courage and at a personal price. James shows us how peacemaking involves both a posture and a set of actions. Peacemakers strive to live righteously and with integrity, setting aside envy and strife and selfish ambition. They seek the wisdom of God, which is “first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” Peacemaking is proactive, hands-on, and purposeful.

- » God is our peace. God is love. God is the divine reconciler. It is no surprise, then, that peacemaking and reconciliation show the wisdom of heaven. Jesus calls his church to be Alongsiders who seek peace and build relationships with people of peace.

Questions

These can be used for small groups or with your congregation as part of a sermon.

- » What was new to you in these passages?
- » Is there anything that holds you back from peacemaking? Why is it hard?
- » What practical steps can we take to find and build friendships with ‘people of peace’?
- » Why are peacemakers called children of God?
- » Why does James connect peacemaking with humility, mercy, forgiveness, purity and character?
- » How will you seek to be a peacemaker in your life?
- » **Choose one of the mission stories on pages 16 or 17.** What encourages or challenges you from this story? What can you learn from it?

Small Group Practice

Followers of Jesus can model peace between groups.



Look at the Welcome Dinner Project with your small group: www.welcomedinnerproject.org. Either host a Welcome Dinner as a small group or do something similar.

Prayer

Pray together as a small group or church. Pray for each other and Baptist Mission Australia intercultural teams.

*Lord Jesus, help us be peacemakers who seek people of peace.
As Alongsiders, may our lives reflect the Prince of Peace:*

Welcoming and embracing those marginalised and excluded.

Loving our neighbours and enemies.

Pursuing peace and reconciliation.

Healing broken relationships.

Asking for forgiveness for our wrongs.

Seeing conflict as a chance to serve others and grow in Christlikeness.

Glorifying God in our approach to conflict and division.

Getting the log out of our own eye instead of judging others.

Praying for humility and wisdom.

Learning to listen, empathise, and show compassion.

Getting help from God in difficult relationships.

Rejecting violence and vengeance.

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

Lord Jesus, we depend on your Spirit and power to make us people of peace who seek out people of peace in our communities

Amen.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Full Bible Texts

Acts 16:11–15

¹¹ From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. ¹² From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony, and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. ¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Matthew 5:9

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

James 3:13–18

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

Mission Stories

These stories relate to the theme and can be used as examples in sermons.

2. Sally, Mozambique

Baptist Mission Australia intercultural team member

Mama L is a Yawo woman and the matriarch of her extended family. She has grown up in an Islamic community, but the Holy Spirit has created within her a yearning to know more about Jesus. She has an openness to the good news.

Mamma L loves to sit with Sally, one of our intercultural team members, and hear good news stories. She loves to hear about Jesus and now moves freely around her community, sharing Jesus stories with others. Here we see God going ahead of us. God is preparing the heart of Mama L, and God is at work in Sally's life.

Sally needs a local language nurturer to help her learn the Yawo culture and language. And who becomes her nurturer? Mama L. They meet together everyday and a beautiful friendship develops. They eat together. They walk through villages together, sit in the dirt and lead Bible studies together and serve other women in their local community together.

Sally is a person of peace, a follower of Jesus with a compelling witness. Someone who's humble, caring, creative and loving. A person others want to be around.

And Mama L is also a person of peace who God has been at work within over many years. Even as she is on her own journey towards Jesus, she is a Kingdom conduit. Through her welcome of Sally, people are hearing the good news of Jesus.

2. Bob, Western Australia

Baptist Mission Australia supporter

Bob is a retiree in Western Australia. Scott Pilgrim, Baptist Mission Australia's Executive Director recently met Bob and heard his story.

Scott shared, "When Bob heard the words 'mission, evangelism and discipleship' he would become deflated. He felt weighed down by the things he hadn't done, could do or thought he should be doing.

And then he went to some training and heard more about a relational discipleship approach. He heard about having his eyes open for people of peace in his world.

Bob loves to play golf. He got talking with Peter, another player at his local golf club, and he realised that Peter was going through a difficult time in his life. **Over time, they kept talking and their friendship began to develop. Bob became more comfortable sharing some of his faith story, and Peter, still not yet a follower of Jesus, has become the door opener at the golf club.** He wants to know more about Jesus, and he wants others at the golf club to know more about Him too.

Peter has become that person of peace, that Bob might be the peacemaker and share the hope and the love of Jesus to his mates at the golf club.

It's transformed what the 19th hole means for Bob. Yes, it's still a drink, but it's also the opportunity to befriend his mates and be the hands and feet of Jesus."

Optional Reading and Bible Memorisation

The Bible teaches us to be peacemakers. Bible memorisation equips and empowers us to be Alongsiders who bring peace.

Small group activity during May Mission Month or beyond:

- » Read Chapter 2 of *Hide This in Your Heart: Memorising Scripture for Kingdom Impact* (Frost and Hill: NavPress, 2020). You'll learn how a big, beautiful, expansive Gospel helps us be Alongsiders who proclaim God's shalom (God's peace).
- » Memorise Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."
- » Reflect on how Matthew 5:9 encourages you to be a 'person of peace'.

Alongsiders:

3. People of Love

We love people and holistically respond to their needs

Session Introduction

We are Alongsiders when we love people and holistically respond to their needs. We witness to Jesus's love and Gospel when we bless others, both inside and outside the church. We are a people of love when we bless others through words of encouragement, acts of kindness and when we are generous with our gifts, time and life.

John says that we express genuine, Christ-imitating love through our actions and our practical giving. Jesus showed us the way when He laid down His life for us. When we see people in need we must give—this shows that the love of God is in us. “Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:17–18).

Loving people and responding to their needs is key to being Alongsiders.

Scriptures

Full texts found in the session resources section on page 23.

- » 1 John 3:16–18
- » 1 Thessalonians 5:11–19
- » 1 Timothy 2:1–7

Explorations & Takeaways

1. We are people of love in our words and actions

- » 1 John 3:16–18 tells us that words and speech are not enough. We must show people we love them through our actions and in truth. This means responding to people's needs – their practical, spiritual and other needs.
- » Our material possessions are a gift from God. So, God calls us to be generous. This shows that the love of God is in us.
- » Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. Jesus is our model of self-giving love. Jesus loved the world in action and in truth, and so should we.

2. We are people of love in our encouragement and support

- » 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says to encourage people and build them up. It's easy to feel discouraged in life. People of love are encouragers.
- » Many people are lonely. Some people think loneliness is an epidemic in our society. So, we love people through our presence in their lives. We invite them into our homes, churches, families, friendships and lives.
- » We encourage people in our words and actions. 1 Thessalonians 5:14b–19 lists many practical ways we can encourage and support others.

3. We are people of love in our prayers and thanksgiving

- » 1 Timothy 2:1–7 shows us that our love is expressed through our prayers for all people. Prayer is an act of love.
- » We should also pray for those in authority in our communities and nation. We pray for their wellbeing, wisdom, and decision-making. We pray for the salvation of all people through Jesus and the Gospel.

- » We show our love in our thankfulness too. Instead of grumbling or being cynical, we choose to be grateful. Thankfulness is an expression of love.

Questions

These can be used for small groups or with your congregation as part of a sermon.

- » What stands out to you in these passages?
- » Is there anything that makes you uncomfortable? Where do you think this discomfort comes from?
- » What does being a ‘person of love’ mean to you in your life?
- » How are you challenged to engage with the world around you differently through the lens of being a ‘person of love’?
- » What one thing can you do this week to love in action, encouragement or prayer?
- » **Choose one of the mission stories on pages 24 or 25.** What encourages or challenges you from this story? What can you learn from it?

Small Group Practice

Think of two people you will bless this week through loving actions (one of whom is a member of your church and one of whom is not). Share the names of these people with your small group.

This week, love them through words of encouragement, acts of kindness and generosity. Also pray for them. Next week, share with the group how you went doing this.

Prayer

Pray together as a small group or church. Pray for each other and Baptist Mission Australia intercultural teams.

Open our hearts to our neighbours. May they become our friends.

Open our lives to strangers, immigrants and those we don't yet know. Help us show welcome and embrace.

Open our tables, so they become places of friendship, community and love.

Open our homes and our finances, so they bless others and express generosity.

Open our mouths to bless, affirm and honour others. Lead us to live lives that affirm and honour others, building them up.

Give us the grace to be open, welcoming, affirming and generous.

Enable us to be Alongsiders who are people of love.

Amen.

The Prayer is adapted from page 75 of *Hide This in Your Heart: Memorising Scripture for Kingdom Impact* by Michael Frost and Graham Joseph Hill (NavPress, 2020)

FURTHER RESOURCES

Full Bible Texts

1 John 3:16–18

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 Thessalonians 5:11–19

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. ¹² Now we ask you, brothers, and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit.

1 Timothy 2:1–7

¹ I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people— ² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. ⁷ And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth; I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

Mission Stories

These stories relate to the theme and can be used as examples in sermons.

2. Joyce and Jean-Claude, Malawi

Baptist Mission Australia intercultural team member

Joyce has been teaching Yawo women to sew through a two year tailoring course supported by Baptists across the Australian movement.

It's not a hand out initiative, but a hand up initiative. Joyce is seeking to also holistically love these women who have few choices, have been denied opportunities and are living in impoverished communities. Suddenly they're learning new skills and income generating opportunities are opening up from them

And as they learn, Joyce is naturally sharing the love and hope of Jesus by word and deed.

In graduating from this course, the women step out into a new future with income generating skills that will allow them to run micro-businesses. Something that will change their lives and empower them to provide for their families.

What is Joyce doing? She is modelling the holistic love of God. She has seen a need and she's acted in a relevant and practical way that brings transformation to lives around her. In love, she is addressing injustice and modelling the heart of Jesus.

2. Citywide Baptist Church, Tasmania

In Hobart over the last five years, the Nepalese population has grown from 600 to more than 10,000, creating a pool of many needs for these new people coming to Tasmania.

So what has the Citywide Baptist Church community done? They've come alongside the Nepalese people. They've seen their need. They've responded to the Holy Spirit's leading. They've chosen not to simply be comfortable and focus on their own needs as an English congregation, but to open their hearts, open their wallets and share their time to stand alongside the Nepalese people in Hobart.

In responding to the Holy Spirit, they're responding with holistic, transforming love. They've become advocates for their Nepalese friends and neighbours. They've established a driving school so Nepalese people can learn to drive to get a better chance of employment.

They're helping people with community integration and participation. They're helping people connect with local services and facilities. **They're providing food support. They're helping people get through the hoops of government red tape and fill out government forms. They're helping with the support of health and other basic needs. And they're seeing people come to faith.**

They're seeing people discover loving community. And now, in partnership with Baptist Mission Australia, the Nepalese congregation and the English congregation, together we're exploring opportunities to share that same love with people in their home country in Nepal.

It's a beautiful story of partnership. It's a beautiful story of a local church saying yes to love in action. What's true in Hobart is true for each of our communities around Australia. We're all called to be people who pursue shalom. **We're called to be alongsiders who model the heart of Jesus, who are attentive, who see the needs of brokenness around us and who do something.**

Optional Reading and Bible Memorisation

The Bible teaches us to come alongside people. Bible memorisation equips and empowers us to be Alongsiders in our words and actions.

Small group activity during May Mission Month or beyond:

- » Read Chapter 4 of *Hide This in Your Heart: Memorising Scripture for Kingdom Impact* (Frost and Hill: NavPress, 2020). You'll learn a Bible memory system that empowers you to be an Alongsider. Alongsiders love people through their generosity, hospitality, Spirit-sensitivity, Christlikeness and sentness.
- » Memorise 1 John 3:18: "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."
- » Reflect on how 1 John 3:18 helps guide you to be a 'person of love'.

4. People who Partner

We partner together in God's mission.

Session Introduction

We are Alongsiders when we partner together with God in His mission.

You may not feel like a missionary, but God has sent you out into the world to declare the Gospel and show God's love. We need to see ourselves as sent by God to everywhere life takes us.

We partner with others – churches, mission agencies and other believers – to share the good news of Jesus. This partnership empowers our mission.

Jesus invites us to live in a way that proclaims the Gospel and humbly shares about God's reign of reconciliation, justice, beauty and wholeness. We don't have our own mission and we don't do mission in our own strength. It is God's mission. And God gives us power in the Holy Spirit to be "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Partnering with other followers of Jesus enables us to be Alongsiders.

Scriptures

Full texts found in the session resources section on page 31.

- » Philippians 1:3–8
- » John 13:34–35
- » Matthew 28:18–20

Explorations & Takeaways

1. We are people who partner in the Gospel

- » **Philippians 1:3–8** reminds us of the power of partnership in the Gospel. God's transforming work in and through us is entirely an act of God's grace. When we partner together in the Gospel we are changed, and the world witnesses our unity and love.
- » Partnering with others involves serving together. But it also involves praying for each other. We thank God when we remember each other and pray with joy because of our partnership in the Gospel.
- » In the good and difficult times of mission we share together in God's grace.
- » Our affection for each other isn't natural. As we partner in the Gospel, we are filled with love for each other – Paul calls this "the affection of Jesus Christ."

2. We are people who partner in love

- » **John 13:34–35** shows us that God wants our partnership to be characterised by love. As Jesus loves us, so we must love one another.
- » Love is costly and hard. When we serve together, we sometimes find ourselves in conflict and disagreements. But we choose unity, forgiveness, patience, empathy and love. Partnership is a choice to forgive and love.
- » Everyone will know that we are Jesus' disciples when we love one another.

3. We are people who partner in the Great Commission

- » **Matthew 28:18–20** is an encouragement and command. We are encouraged by Jesus's presence, and we are commanded to join together in the Great Commission.

- » Jesus is Lord, and He has all authority in heaven and earth. He gives us the Gospel of salvation and commands us to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Notice that Jesus gives this Great Commission to a community of disciples who serve together in Gospel-partnership.
- » Our partnership isn’t just with each other, it’s also with Jesus Christ. He is with us always, “to the very end of the age.”

Questions

These can be used for small groups or with your congregation as part of a sermon.

- » What do you find encouraging or challenging in Philippians 1:3–8, John 13:34–35 or Matthew 28:18–20?
- » What’s been your experience of partnership in the Gospel and Great Commission?
- » Why do patience, forgiveness, thanksgiving and love help our partnerships and make them more effective in mission?
- » Reflecting on the full Alongsiders series, what are your next steps in mission engagement and partnership? In your local community and around the world?

Small Group Practice

Contact your Baptist Mission Australia State Leader to arrange for them to come and speak with your small group (or a gathering of all the small groups in your church).



Your State Leader can share ways you can partner with our intercultural teams across the world. Contact them here: www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/Contact

Prayer

Pray together as a small group or church. Pray for each other and Baptist Mission Australia intercultural teams.

Grant us the grace to partner with each other in discipleship and mission.

*To work with others to declare and live out the Gospel,
To resist being moulded by the world,
To refuse complacency,
To see the world differently than the world sees itself,
To be eccentric—off centre, unique, different, and unconventional,
To not conform to the patterns of the world
but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds.*

Help us to be dissatisfied by sin and conformity to the world.

Enable us to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Grant us the strength and courage to resist the allure of competitiveness and division,

*To get back to unity, love, peace and partnership,
To be equipped to surprise the world with the good news of Jesus,
To challenge the way things are by living a life that has been truly set free by Christ.*

Give us the grace to work closely with others in our mission,

*As together we seek to be transformed nonconformists,
unified in our love and partnership in the Gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Enable us to be Alongsiders who embrace Christian unity and partnership.

Amen.

The Prayer is adapted from page 134 of *Hide This in Your Heart: Memorising Scripture for Kingdom Impact* by Michael Frost and Graham Joseph Hill (NavPress, 2020)

FURTHER RESOURCES

Full Bible Texts

Philippians 1:3–8

³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the Gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

John 13:34–35

³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Matthew 28:18–20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Mission Stories

These stories relate to the theme and can be used as examples in sermons.

2. John, Victoria

Baptist Mission Australia supporter

Scott Pilgrim, our Executive Director shares, “When I was visiting that church recently, a man named John came and spoke to me after a service. He told me a little bit of his story. He got a bit emotional because what stood out most for John was the fact that he'd been a supporter with Baptist Mission Australia for many years. He's a farmer and he told me that he and his wife always made sure that some of their income supported intercultural team members around the world.

He rattled off names of people over the years that he's prayed for. And then he said to me, 'Scott, I don't earn as much as I used to. I haven't got as much money as I once had, but I'm still committed to using the resources that I do have to support what God is doing around the world through Baptist Mission Australia.'

And he kind of tapped me on the shoulder as he went to walk away and he said, ‘And be assured I will keep on praying!’ You know, John's name could be written in Romans 16 today. **He's an alongsider. Someone committed to rolling up his sleeves and being involved in mission in his local community, as well as partnering alongside those serving in God's mission around the world.**

I celebrate and give thanks for the thousands of people like John across our movement. I celebrate the joy and the beauty of partnership.”

2. Leisha, Victoria

Baptist Mission Australia supporter

Leisha partners with Kate, a Baptist Mission Australia team member serving in South East Asia. Here she shares her partnership journey.

Leisha writes, “Everyone has a different calling on their life. I love that I can partner with someone who’s got a calling on their life to go. I might not be called to go, but I have faith that the support I am giving is helping to spread the word of God. My husband and I pray that the gifts we give will mean that people hear the Gospel.

Partnership is more than just financial giving. Your financial support means they can go, but it’s your encouragement and prayer partnership that will help them stay.

It was easy to decide to partner with Kate. I have known her for a long time and I have seen her go through the process of preparation and then head off to South East Asia. Partnering with her financially is one way that I can support her in that. We talk as well, but I want her to have the peace of mind that there are people looking out for her and supporting her.

I also love that it’s not just us! There is a whole community of people and churches sending Kate.

I believe that we should be generous with what we have. My husband and I support a few different ministries and we pray about how much to give and decide on an overall total, and then give from that. We also pray that the funds will go to where they are needed.

Ultimately our money is never going to be ours. It’s always God given. So at least some of it should be going back to God and His mission.

If someone asked me if they should partner with someone like Kate, I would say, “Just do it!”. I mean, if you’re able to, you should. Use what you’ve got, to help other people use what they’ve got to share Jesus with the world.”

Optional Reading and Bible Memorisation

The Bible teaches us to come alongside people. Bible memorisation equips and empowers us to be Alongsiders in our words and actions.

Small group activity during May Mission Month or beyond:

- » Read Chapter 6 of *Hide This in Your Heart: Memorising Scripture for Kingdom Impact* (Frost and Hill: NavPress, 2020). The words of Jesus and the Bible fuel our passion for being Alongsiders who seek social reform, spiritual renewal, Gospel-proclamation and partnership in mission.
- » Memorise John 13:34–35: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
- » Reflect on how John 13:34–35 helps shape you to be a ‘person who partners’.



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