

Neighbors and Nations

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Week 2 | Ambassadors for Christ

As of November 2023, the United States has 271 embassies and consulates in 173 countries, and 217 ambassadors deployed around the globe. So, what exactly do these ambassadors do? At their core, they represent the ideals, values, and policies of the U.S. and work to build strong relationships between their home country and the one they're stationed in.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul insists that as Christians, our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20) and calls Christians to be ambassadors for Christ in whatever earthly nation we find ourselves (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are to be his representatives in every sphere of our lives — where we live, work, and play. We're tasked by God to demonstrate his love and reflect his truth in our words and actions.

In our Neighbors and Nations series, we're considering the impact we can have in the lives of others as we live on mission for Jesus. This week, we'll focus on our role as Christ's ambassadors.

Day 1

Representing Christ to the world — it's a high calling, and not an easy one. But then, it never has been. The earliest Christians lived under the threat of persecution in a culture that was constantly pressuring them to abandon Jesus for other gods. Yet Jesus had left them with an audacious call — to go out and make disciples of all nations. How could a relatively small group of Christ's followers carry out this mission? They had everything they needed — the Holy Spirit, each other, and the good news that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord.

The gospel spread like wildfire through the Roman empire in the decades after Jesus first gave his commission. Life after life was changed by the power of the Spirit, as people experienced salvation and redemption through Christ, and the number of believers multiplied. We have the same Spirit who empowers us to share Christ's love, and we can start with those closest to us.

Read

1 Corinthians 7:17

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

Think About

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is helping the Christians of Corinth think about how their lives should change after committing to Christ. If they were married to an unbeliever, should they stay married? If they were uncircumcised, should they get circumcised? In the verse we read above, Paul tells them to live as believers in whatever situation that they were in.

Throughout history there have been cults that require their members to abandon everything from their former life — from the way they dress, to where they live, to their relationships with family. While God calls us to separate ourselves from sin, we aren't required to renounce every aspect of our old life. To the contrary, God often keeps us right where we are, so we can impact those around us for Christ.

The gospel transforms us from the inside out. We are a new creation, and the Spirit empowers us to live as a follower of Jesus in all kinds of contexts. Our salvation will affect everything about our lives from the way we communicate with our family members, to the way we respond to our boss, to the way we treat the checker at the grocery store. As we live out his love, compassion, truth, and mercy, we are acting as Christ's ambassadors and representing his ways.

There is a reason Jesus doesn't transport us straight to heaven after we're saved — he has work for us to do here on earth. Our mission field starts right where we live. This week we're going to look at how this mission should impact our relationships where we live, work, and play.

Reflect

Think about the people that you spend the most time with — your spouse, kids, roommates, friends, fellow students, teammates, gym buddies, co-workers, and so on. This week, ask the Spirit to show you how you can demonstrate Christ's love to the people in your life. Whatever their starting point, whether they are far from God, or already walking with him, consider how you can nudge them a little bit closer to Jesus through your words and actions.

Day 2

In our new series, Neighbors and Nations, we are accepting Christ's mission to reach the world with his truth and love, and we are starting by focusing close to home.

It's a sad reality that the people with whom we are closest are also the ones we are most likely to hurt. When we're unhappy, frustrated, or angry, they are the ones who often bear the brunt. The Spirit empowers us to do better. Part of living out Christ's mission means loving people, and we can all work to be more intentional in showing Christlike love to those in our immediate sphere — our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

Read

1 Corinthians 13:1–8a

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails.

Think About

Any discussion of love should acknowledge its source. God is love and we love because he first loved us (1 John 4:8 & 4:19). Every description Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 13:1–8 is first and foremost a description of Jesus who loves perfectly.

God loves you with a faithful, unending, never-failing love. Jesus went to the cross so that you could be reconciled to the Father and sent you the Spirit to comfort and guide you. When we accept his love and allow it to fill us, we will show greater and greater love to others.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul reminds us that love is not just an emotion, it must be lived out. Love is a passionate commitment to the well-being of another. Loving someone includes being patient, kind, caring and forgiving. We will be genuinely happy when they are happy and will help carry their burdens when they are in need. We have a unique opportunity in our closest relationships to grow in love and in our ability to love.

There is an old saying, “people don’t care what you know until they know you care.” That’s true even in our closest relationships. A parent can be full of Bible knowledge, but if they don’t give love to their son or daughter in ways he or she can receive, it might not matter how many Bible verses they teach. A Christian may want to share Christ with an atheist friend, but if they aren’t demonstrating Christ’s kindness, not a single argument for the existence of God will penetrate. It’s all just noise, like a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

When we love others, we are reflecting out into the world the love Jesus pours into us. In the same way that Jesus was a tangible presence of God’s love, his followers are called to be a faithful presence to those around them. This kind of love can manifest itself in the simplest of ways — from a kind act, to a friendly word, to a reassuring hug, to simply being there. If we want to help our friends and family find and follow Christ, we must show them love.

Reflect

- Offer up praise to God for the love he has poured out on you. How does experiencing his love allow you to love others?
- In trying to live out Paul’s description of love with the people in your life, in what areas do you struggle the most? Ask the Spirit to show you how to demonstrate Christ’s love more and more.

Day 3

It’s a cliché, but that’s because it just might be true: parenting is the hardest job in the world. Teaching and molding our children to become the people God wants them to be is a sacred task that requires constant prayer and guidance from the Spirit.

What’s more, shepherding the next generation is a responsibility every member of Christ’s body shares. While the primary role belongs to the parents, all of us should love and support children as they grow. Even if you’re not a parent or if your kids are grown and gone, you can have a profound influence on the children in your extended family, church, and community.

Part of our mission to be people helping people find and follow Christ is to reach the next generation with his powerful truth and unending love. The verses we'll look at today give us some guidance on how we can do that.

Read

Deuteronomy 6:4–9 (NIV)

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Ephesians 6:4 (NIV)

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Think About

My grandmother tried to warn me. I love the look of English Ivy and decided to plant it in one of my flower beds. "It's pretty," she said, "but you'll have to keep after it, or it will take off and spread everywhere." She was right.

Since I'm not much of a gardener, and I didn't "keep after it," the ivy grew well beyond the boundaries of my flower bed. It spread across the yard and choked out a patch of grass. It wound its way up the nearest trees and bushes. If I'd done what my grandmother suggested and trained it to stay inside the bed, it would have been beautiful. Because I didn't, it became a serious nuisance.

Part of our responsibility in parenting is to train our children in the way they should go by providing boundaries that we establish according to God's design. In Ephesians 6, God gives parents the responsibility "to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord." To understand what that looks like we can go back to Deuteronomy 6 to the guidance God gave to Israel — to impress God's Word on the hearts of Israel's children by talking about it during the course of everyday life.

In every stage of their development, we can help our kids understand who God is and what he desires for his people. This can come in the form of regular family devotionals, and intentional teaching moments, but it can also come in the real time application of God's Word to everyday situations. Some of the most meaningful conversations I've had with my kids are ones in which we talked through their conflicts, struggles, and even successes and together applied God's love and truth to what they were experiencing.

In Ephesians Paul warns against exasperating children. To exasperate means to irritate, to provoke to anger or resentment. One way we exasperate our children is by failing to give them clear, consistent, loving boundaries and hold them accountable when they cross them. Like the English Ivy in my yard, we have to train our children in the way they should go, and correct their course when they are growing in the wrong direction.

The model we want to follow is the one God provides as he disciplines us. Because he loves us and wants what's best for us, God encourages our growth in the right direction and prunes us back when we need it. The pruning can be painful in the moment, but it's nothing compared to the pain that will come if we move outside of the loving boundaries God has set up for us.

While the majority of training and instruction will come from parents, there is nothing better than having other adults in your children's lives who will back you up. From school teachers and coaches to children's and student's ministry shepherds to grandparents, aunts and uncles, and family friends, having people who love, support, and correct your children is a true blessing. I'm so grateful to the people in my life who've taken the time to get to know my children, love on them, and nudge them towards Jesus.

Reflect

- If you are a parent with kids at home, how are you intentionally doing Ephesians 6 and Deuteronomy 6? What part does prayer need to play (hint: a very big part!). Are you actively praying for your kids?
- How can you be an influence for Jesus in the lives of kids in your extended family, church, or community? (Another hint: Christ Fellowship's Children's and Student Ministries could use you!)

Day 4

This week we're talking about how we can be Christ's ambassadors where we live, work, and play. We want to reflect Christ's character in our words and actions as we share his love with those around us.

Many of us spend considerable time each week working at our jobs. How we do our jobs and interact with our co-workers and supervisors can be part of our mission to help people find and follow Christ.

Read

Colossians 3:23–24

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Think About

The average adult spends a lot of time working. Whether you're a senior vice president, a salesperson, an auto mechanic, a stay-at-home parent, or a booster club president, you are using your abilities and efforts to get things done. (Some of you even get paid for it.) Unfortunately, a lot of people view their work as a drudgery. They often find their minds drifting to visions of lounge chairs on white sand beaches. If only life could be an endless vacation!

While vacations are wonderful, and rest is necessary, God created us to do meaningful work. Before sin entered the world and our work became toil, God's image-bearers were designed to use their gifts and abilities to create and cultivate. We are to honor God and bless one another with our efforts. Although sin can corrupt our motivations and frustrate our efforts, God's purpose for work has not changed. Our work is supposed to matter!

Martin Luther said that when we pray for our "daily bread," we are praying for everything and everyone involved in the making of that bread. Stop and think about that for a moment. Consider all the people that contributed to the food in your cupboard. Recognizing how God's provision comes through other people impacts our view of our work and theirs, and helps us appreciate our fellow image-bearers.

While many of us are working for a paycheck so we can support ourselves and our families, Colossians 3:23–24 teaches us that our ultimate boss is not the person who signs that check, but the Lord. God is the primary audience for our work. That should shape not only the quality of our work, but how we respond to our employer and treat our co-workers. In all our efforts, we are ultimately serving the Lord. While we earn the pay we receive, our ultimate inheritance will come from our heavenly Father simply because we are his children.

As Christians, we want to live a fully integrated life where we are just as much a Christian at work as we are on Sundays at church. We want our words and actions to reflect the image of Jesus as we perform our daily tasks and interact with people. There are temptations in any job. When that temptation is to take the credit for someone else's work, take some inventory home for ourselves, or take advantage of opportunities to get away with minimal effort, we need the Spirit to remind us that it is the Lord Christ we are serving (v. 24). When we do excellent work, we are representing him well as

Reflect

- Thank God for the gifts and abilities he's given you and the circumstances in which he's placed you to use them. Whether you are currently working at your "dream job" or not, God has you in a place where you can glorify him and serve others.
- Think about your co-workers. How can you show them the love of Christ through the way you do your job? The way you treat them? The conversations you have with them?

Day 5

Happy Friday! On Day 5 we review our scriptures for the week and pray for the Spirit's guidance on how we should respond.

Reflect on what you've learned

Read through our key passages for the week once more.

- [1 Corinthians 7:17](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:1–8a](#)
- [Deuteronomy 6:4–7](#)
- [Ephesians 6:4](#)
- [Colossians 3:23–24](#)

What's your biggest takeaway from these verses? How do they help you understand why and how to fulfill Christ's mission where you live, work, and play?

Pray and Respond

If your nation calls you to be one of its ambassadors, you are sent to represent your country to another. In 2 Corinthians, Paul reminds us that we are ambassadors for Christ and that God has given us a wonderful message of reconciliation to share with the world.

*"And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. **So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"** For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:19–20 NLT).*

Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel message that we get to share! It's something that those who don't know God need to hear, and something that those who do know him may need to be reminded of. "Come back to God!" He is waiting with open arms.

Ambassadors not only share important messages, but they are also a faithful presence representing their home country. That's true of us as well. In our words and actions, let's reflect the character of King Jesus and the values of his kingdom. In our daily conversations, even with those we see all the time, let's be a faithful presence to the goodness and mercy of God. Let's love people well and ask the Spirit to use us to nudge them closer to Jesus.

What's Your Next Step?

In prayer, reflect on your next steps.

- How can you represent Jesus well where you live, work, and play? How can you be Christ's ambassador?
- How can you help build into the next generation of Christians? Are there ways you can support parents that you know as they raise their children in God's ways?
- Think about the people you spend the most time with — family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, teammates, etc. While we may talk to these people all the time, we may not be

having many meaningful conversations. How can you help them feel known and loved and help point them to Jesus?

Missions Focus

It's Missions Focus month here at Christ Fellowship! There will be some special opportunities for you to learn about and connect with some of our partners.

- We've been interviewing a few of our local partners on the [Pastors Pregame Podcast](#). Learn about these amazing organization straight from their representatives and hear inspiring stories about what God is doing.
- On November 10 we'll have a Missions Fair in the lobby after service. You can meet some of the amazing people serving our community and beyond.
- On November 14–16 you can participate in our "[Go and Serve](#)" event. Go as a family, with a few friends, or your whole small group to serve in our community. [Register](#) soon because space is limited for some opportunities!
- On November 17 we'll be asking our Christ Fellowship family to donate to a missions offering. This offering will fund our partnerships with our ministry partners both here and abroad. Begin praying now about how you might participate.