THE GREAT COMMISSION
GOD’S HEART FOR THE WORLD

PRE-GAME
It’s ‘anything goes’ in most dining hall and locker room conversations these days. Yet, if there is one subject most people consider taboo, it’s anything that has to do with Jesus, heaven or hell. Many Christians are deeply committed to their faith and have experienced great joy in following Christ, but are hesitant to share their faith with others because they feel that religion is ‘personal’ or ‘private.’ While the Christian faith is personal, it was never meant to be private. In fact, God’s heart is for us to share with others the good news of Christ’s message of grace. Christ came into the world to ‘seek and save the lost’ and he has ordained that we should bring this good news to those who do not believe through our preaching and witnessing. God’s invitation for us to take part in his heart for the world is called the Great Commission. In this study, we will examine God’s heart for the world and the motivations that should lead us to invest our lives into this great mission.

THEME
God’s heart for the world is that his message of grace would be proclaimed to all people. He invites us to take part in this mission as an obedient response to his commands, as a reflection of our compassion for the lost and as an example of our passion for God’s glory.

PRACTICE
Understanding God’s heart for the world and our call to take part in the Great Commission should lead us to actively share our faith with those in our spheres of influence.

SYMBOL KEY

† Indicates discussion questions

📖 Indicates Biblical passages to look up

🔗 Indicates application questions to be discussed
I. God’s Heart for the World

What comes to mind when you think about evangelism or sharing your faith? Has your experience been positive or negative?

Read Matthew 28:18-20 - “The Great Commission”
- These are Jesus’ last recorded words to us in this book. Why does this make them so important?
- What is God’s heart for the world?
- How do you feel about this command? Do you think the disciples would have shared the same feelings?

The command given in this passage is called the Great Commission and expresses God’s heart for the world. Christ was sent into the world to ‘seek and save the lost’ and we are given the privilege and responsibility of carrying out this mission today.

Read Romans 10:1, 12-15
- What is the connection between God’s heart for the world and our responsibility?

Do you share Paul’s feelings in Romans 10:1 for anyone? Who? From this passage, what is the most caring thing you could do for them?

Read Acts 1:8
- What is the scope of our charge to witness?

What parallels do you see between these four geographic regions and your own life? Whom are we called to reach?

Jerusalem—your team, classmates, campus; Judea—beyond the campus, the nation; Samaria—those who are among us who are racially, culturally and religiously different; Ends of the Earth—the whole world, different people groups. We are called to witness in all of these regions.
II. THE MOTIVATION TO WITNESS

Obedience
Jesus as King commands us to witness to all nations. We must respond in obedience to this command by living out God’s heart for the world in our lives.

- Read 1 Corinthians 9:16
  - How seriously did Paul take his responsibility to share the Gospel?

Obedience should be a strong motivation to witness, but this alone is not sufficient.

- What feelings could result if obedience were your only motivation to share?

Compassion
Duty alone will not be a sufficient motivation for responding to our call to witness. Recognizing the reality of the spiritual death and hopelessness that non-believers face, we must have a deep, heartfelt compassion for the lost. Jesus is our ultimate example.

- Read Matthew 9: 36 – 38
  - What does it mean that the people were “harassed and helpless?”
  - What command does Jesus give to us in light of his compassion?

- Read Luke 15: 1–10
  - How is the attitude of Jesus toward sinners different than that of the Pharisees?
  - What do these stories teach us about God’s heart for the lost?

Seeing the crowds from God’s perspective, Jesus had compassion on those who did not trust him for eternal life. His compassion led him to action: he preached, served, loved and ultimately died so that men could know him and be reconciled to him.

- How would you approach your teammates or classmates differently if you had this time of compassion? What would this practically look like?
Zeal for God’s Glory

**worship: the goal of evangelism**

- Read Romans 1:21-25
  - When non-Christians turn from God, what do they turn to?

  “Changing worshipers of false gods into worshipers of the true God is the purpose of evangelism. We aren’t seeking just ‘decisions for Jesus’ but awe-inspired worshipers.”
  - Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth*

  How does this perspective help us see evangelism as involving something greater than just ourselves?

**worship: the fuel of evangelism**

- Skim Psalm 148
  - What reasons are given in this psalm for why we should praise God?
  - How is our call to praise God related to the task of evangelism?

  Our chief passion in life should be to worship and praise God. Evangelism is just one way we can bring honor to God as we proclaim the greatness of his name to those who are lost.

  Do you really believe that God is worthy of the whole world’s worship? How would this belief motivate you to share Christ with others?

Far from being fearful, Paul observes that “Christ’s love compels us” to be His ambassadors. Obedience to God’s command, compassion for the lost and a zeal for God’s glory come together to compel us to proclaim His greatness so that those near to us can praise the name of the Lord.

**IV. POST-GAME**

When we see something that is beautiful or when something exciting happens in our lives, we can’t help but tell others about it. The most basic, root motivation behind sharing is our own devotion to Christ and our own understanding of the gospel. As we continue to experience the grace of Christ in our lives, we will overflow with praise to God. This is the best motivation for calling others to Christ.