



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N32 August 10, 2025

PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

"Psalm 115"

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Worship

I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me.

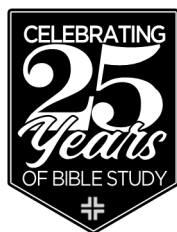
"Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. 3 For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods."

Psalm 95:1-3



Q?

Why are we to trust in the LORD our God?



We worship God for who he is and what he has done for us. According to Psalm 115, God, namely, Yahweh (v. 1), is a God who "does whatever pleases him" (v. 3) or "whatever he pleases" (GNT, HCSB, NASB, NET, NKJV, RSV, et al.); cf. "He does whatever he wants to do" (NLV). This verse implies three related attributes of God: *freedom*, *omnipotence*, and *sovereignty*.

Freedom is a profound attribute of God that speaks to his self-existence, autonomy, and perfect will. In theological reflection, divine freedom means that God is not constrained by anything outside of himself. He is free from external coercion, necessity, or limitation, acting solely according to his nature and will. This attribute is foundational to understanding his omnipotence and sovereignty, as God's actions flow not from external pressures but from his eternal purpose and wisdom.

God's *freedom* is rooted in his aseity — his self-existence. Unlike created beings, who are contingent and influenced by circumstances, God exists necessarily and independently. He does not act out of compulsion or necessity but out of deliberate choice. Scripture affirms this in passages such as Psalm 115:3: "*Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.*" This verse highlights that God's will is perfectly free and aligned with his nature. He is not subject to fate, chance, or even the will of his creatures. On aseity, one theologian writes: "God depends on nothing other than himself for his existence" and "God is independent of all things in that his choices and purposes are independent of influences from anyone and anything other than himself . . . God has the faculty of absolute self-determination. Absolute self-determination means that God's choices depend on his own desires and purposes alone and that he has the power to actualize those choices" (John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, Foundation of Evangelical Theology, 239, 240).

As suggested in the previous citation, this divine freedom is intricately connected to God's

omnipotence. Omnipotence refers to God's unlimited power to do all things consistent with his nature. Because he is free, God exercises his power as he chooses, unbound by external constraint. However, his freedom and omnipotence do not imply that God can act contrary to his own nature. For example, God cannot lie or do evil — not because of a lack of power but because such actions would contradict his holiness and truthfulness. The fact that God cannot lie does not diminish his freedom; instead, it makes God more free to act in accordance with his character. Thus, divine freedom operates in perfect harmony with God's moral perfection.

God's *sovereignty* is the exercise of his kingly rule over all creation. It is the outward expression of his freedom and power. In his sovereign will, God ordains all things according to his purposes, and yet he does so in a way that does not violate the moral agency of human beings. Ephesians 1:11 says that God "*works all things according to the counsel of his will.*" This sovereignty reflects not arbitrary rule, but the outworking of God's wise, free, and loving purposes in creation and redemption.

Importantly, divine freedom is never divorced from God's character. God's will is always righteous, wise, and good. His freedom is not license but the expression of perfect wisdom and love. The incarnation of Christ demonstrates this most clearly: God freely chose to enter human history in Jesus, not out of necessity, but out of love, to accomplish the redemption of sinners. This act was neither demanded nor constrained — it was the free expression of divine grace.

In conclusion, God's freedom is an essential attribute that upholds his omnipotence and sovereignty. He acts without coercion and with absolute power, always in accord with his righteous nature. His freedom assures believers that God's plans are not arbitrary, but deliberate and good. It invites trust, worship, and confidence in a God who rules all things freely and wisely for his glory and the good of his people.

Read Psalm 115:1-18

- 1 Not to us, LORD, not to us
but to your name be the glory,
because of your love and faithfulness.
- 2 Why do the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
- 3 Our God is in heaven;
he does whatever pleases him.
- 4 But their idols are silver and gold,
made by human hands.
- 5 They have mouths, but cannot speak,
eyes, but cannot see.
- 6 They have ears, but cannot hear,
noses, but cannot smell.
- 7 They have hands, but cannot feel,
feet, but cannot walk,
nor can they utter a sound with their throats.
- 8 Those who make them will be like them,
and so will all who trust in them.
- 9 All you Israelites, trust in the LORD –
he is their help and shield.
- 10 House of Aaron, trust in the LORD –
he is their help and shield.
- 11 You who fear him, trust in the LORD –
he is their help and shield.
- 12 The LORD remembers us and will bless us:
He will bless his people Israel,
he will bless the house of Aaron,
13 he will bless those who fear the LORD –
small and great alike.
- 14 May the LORD cause you to flourish,
both you and your children.
- 15 May you be blessed by the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- 16 The highest heavens belong to the LORD,
but the earth he has given to mankind.
- 17 It is not the dead who praise the LORD,
those who go down to the place of silence;
- 18 it is we who extol the LORD,
both now and forevermore.

Praise the LORD.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 1, 4, 5 (2x), 6 (2x), 7 (2x), 16.
- Bracket "be the glory" in v. 1.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 1.
- Bracket the question in v. 2.
- Highlight v. 3.
- Bracket "silver and gold" in v. 4.
- Bracket "will be like them" in v. 8.
- Underline "Israelites" in v. 9, "House of Aaron" in v. 10, and "You who fear him" in v. 11.
- Bracket "help and shield" in vv. 9-11 (3x).
- Circle "remembers us" in v. 12.
- Double underline "will bless" in vv. 12-13 (4x).
- Bracket "small and great alike" in v. 13.
- Circle "May" in vv. 14-15 (2x).
- Circle "place of silence" in v. 17.
- Circle "extol" in v. 18.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Explain the *contrast* in verse 1.
 2. What do the nations think of Israel's God (v. 2)?
 3. Explain the *contrast* in verse 4.
 4. What does the psalmist think of the nations' gods (vv. 5-7)?
 5. Explain the *comparison* in verse 8, "will be *like* them."
 6. What does the psalmist direct all Israel *to do* and *why* (vv. 9-11)?
 7. *Summarize* what verses 12-13 reveal about God's blessings.
 8. What does the word "May" indicate about verses 14-15?
 9. There is a *contrast* between verse 17 and verse 18, although it is not introduced by "but." Explain the *contrast*.
 10. **Discussion:** The psalmist writes about irrational, destructive idolatry. Talk about what we can learn about our "idols" from what the psalmist says about the nations' idols.
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Commentary On The Text

A brief overview of Psalm 115 is given by one commentator, who writes: "Psalm 115 is the fifth psalm in a group of psalms in Book Five known as the *halēlū yāh* psalms (Psalms 111-118). In addition, it is third in the collection of 'Egyptian Hallel' psalms (Psalms 113-18), psalms recited during the Passover meal on the eight day of Passover. Psalms 113 and 114 are read before the meal; Psalms 115-118 are read at its conclusion . . . Psalm 115 is classified as a community hymn. It is a strong polemic against human-made idols and an affirmation of the sovereignty of God over the heavens and the earth. Some suggest it was recited antiphonally by leaders and congregants in various worship setting in the life of Israel" (Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf F. Jacobson and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, 855; cf. Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 429).

Its author and historical setting are unknown, although commentators generally believe it was written at a time when Israel was being taunted over the presumed inactivity of Yahweh—perhaps at the time of the Babylonian exile or just after (see Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 439). Commentators also generally agree on the structure of the psalm, which is commonly divided into five parts: vv. 1-2; vv. 3-8; vv. 9-11; vv. 12-15; and vv. 16-18.

The *first* part (vv. 1-2) contains a prayer. In it the psalmist petitions the LORD to glorify himself—"to your name be the glory"—presumably by vindicating his people Israel. This he is to do not because they are deserving but because of his "love and faithfulness" (v. 1). Confronted by the nations' question, "Where is their God" (v. 2), the psalmist asks Yahweh to act on Israel's behalf for his own glory not Israel's. Foreign peoples are in effect dissing Israel's God, given the sorry state of the nation. The rest of the psalm amounts to the psalmist's reply to that question, a question that demonstrates the inquirers' ignorance. According to one commentator, "Verse 2 has a fine defiance about it, a prelude to the withering retort to the enemy in 3-8" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 439).

In the *second* part (vv. 3-8), the psalmist *contrasts* Israel's God with the gods of the nations. "The pagan's pride in what he can see, and his contempt for what he cannot (which are modern attitudes as well as ancient) are flung back at him" (Kidner, 439-40). The self-existent transcendent God of Israel dwells in the heavens and is sovereign over all the earth. "He does whatever pleases him" (v. 3). But the nations' idols are no more than material objects made by human hands and so are impotent (vv. 4-7). They have anatomies of silver and gold—i.e., ears and noses, hands and feet, even throats—without the senses associated with them. They do not hear, do not smell, do not feel, do not walk, and do not speak! The

irrational nature of crude idolatry is exploited by the prophet Isaiah in 40:9-20. He concludes with this description of an idolater: "The poor, deluded fool feeds on ashes. He trusts something that can't help him at all. Yet he cannot bring himself to ask, 'Is this idol that I'm holding in my hand a lie?'" (NLT). The psalmist's taunt continues in verse 8. Ironically, those who make and trust idols will ultimately wind up like them, namely, mere vanities.

The *third* part (vv. 9-11) is the psalmist's call to all Israel to trust in the LORD. "God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him" (v. 3). He is not like idols that are the impotent products of human hands—all who trust them become like them—so all Israelites are to trust in Yahweh. The three groups mentioned, regardless of their relationship to one another, clearly together connote all who fear the LORD, "small and great alike." But why the change from a *second person imperative command*, "[you] trust in the LORD," to "*he is their help and shield*," i.e., "*deliverer and protector*," a *third person declarative statement*? Commentators generally suggest that the change arose out of the liturgical use of the psalm. Worship leaders likely recited the *command* in the first half of each verse, and the worshipers likely responded with the *declarative statement* in the second half of each verse when the psalm was used in worship.

The *fourth* part (vv. 12-15), adds the assurance that the LORD "remembers" his people—the skepticism of the nations notwithstanding—meaning that Yahweh has repeatedly come to the aid of his people in times of distress and will continue to do so. "The threefold call to trust the Lord, the three groups of people, and the threefold assurance of God's protection find their symmetric complement in vv.12-15a with a threefold formula of blessing ('will bless us') and a restatement of the three groups ('house of Israel,' 'house of Aaron,' and 'those who fear the LORD')" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 841).

The *fifth* part (vv. 16-18), contains declarations regarding offering praise to the LORD. The heavens are Yahweh's domain, not the domain of pagan gods. He owns them, but he has given the earth to people for their habitation, and it's important for them to praise the Lord while they are alive. Consequently, generations of the living are forevermore to praise the LORD.

"The lives of believers today are filled with idols that are the making of the hands of humankind (v. 4). But, as the psalmist points out, these idols have no voice, no vision, no hearing, no senses of smell or feeling. They cannot walk and they cannot utter a single sound. There are merely idols—the house, the boat, the car, the fine jewelry, the awards and recognition, the high-paying job, the self-help method. What ultimately matters, what lasts, is the God of the house of Israel, whose blessings extend beyond our own earthly existence to those who come after us" (deClaissé-Walford, 857).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *be the glory* Cf. “give glory” (ESV, RSV, HCSB, NKJV) or “glorify your name,” namely, by acting on Israel’s behalf. “Verse 1 is formally a petition, although it is explicitly not for the petitioners’ sake but for Yahweh’s” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 429).

v. 2 *Where is their God?* “In v. 2, the psalmist recounts a question with which the nations taunt Israel over and over: Where is their God? (see Pss. 42:3, 10; 79:10)” (Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf F. Jacobson and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, 855). “It would seem that Israel is at this moment in a sorry state. In that case verse 1 must be taken as a plea for help, though a confident one: the God will save his people, not for their sake but for his (cf. Ezek. 36:21f.)” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 439).

v. 3 *whatever pleases him* See p. 1. “The psalmist did not mean that Yahweh is capricious but that He is a free agent, independent of the actions of His worshippers. God is sovereign” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Psalms,” 2025 ed., 415, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf). “The significance of this is seen in the contrast with the pagan’s **idols**. **Made** of metal, they are only the works of men’s **hands** (Ps. 115:4), so they are totally impotent” (Allan P. Ross, “Psalms,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 876).

v. 4 *silver and gold* Cf. Isa 40:18-20; 44:9-20. “These precious metals probably served as a plating for the idols made of wood or other cheaper material” (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 2:787).

v. 8 *will be like them* “Not only are idols worthless, but also those who worship them do so in vain (cf. 2Ki 17:15; Isa 44:9-20; Jer 2:5; Ro 1:21-32). False worship is not innocent but demoralizing, and ultimately the worshipers will perish together with their perishable idols” (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 756). “This is a prediction or a prayer: either ‘Their makers will end up like them . . .’ (JB, cf. RV, NEB), or ‘may their makers end up like them . . .’ (cf. TEV) — in either case dead. This is truly ‘their end’, as Psalm 73:17 puts it, in contrast to that of the righteous, whose God is theirs ‘for ever’ (73:26)” (Kidner, 440).

vv. 9-11 *Israelites . . .* “Should we understand these as three distinct groups within ancient Israelite life: the Israel community as a whole; the priests and Levites of the temple; and outsiders who have joined with Israel and adopted the faith (see, e.g., Exod. 12:38; Josh. 6:25; 9:21)? Should we understand them to be two groups — the Israelites and the priests and Levites, with the phrase *the ones who fear the LORD* as a summary naming of the two? . . . Or should we view the three designations as parallel descriptors for the whole people of ancient Israel?” (deClaissé-Walford, 855-56). In any case, all are blessed, “small and great alike” (v. 13).

vv. 9-11 *help and shield* Cf. “deliverer and protector” (NET; cf. GNT). “The change from the second person [imperative command] to the third person plural [declarative statement] is slightly harsh, but it may be due to the fact that the Psalm may have been performed antiphonally” (Anderson, 788). “Perhaps the worship leaders recited the command of the first half of each verse . . . and each group (whether two or three) responded on behalf of the others(s) with the declarative statement in the second half of each verse” (deClaissé-Walford, 856).

v. 12 *remembers us* Cf. “has remembered us” (ESV; cf. NASB, NKJV, RSV). “‘Yahweh has remembered (Hb. perfect) us and will bless (Hb. imperfect).’ At key moments in their history, especially during a period of distress, Yahweh had ‘remembered’ his people (Exod. 2:24; Pss. 9:12; 98:3; 105:8, 42; 106:45; 111:5; 136:23; also 74:2; 106:4)” (Broyles, 430-31).

vv. 12-13 *will bless* Based on the fact that God has remembered his people in the past, “the three groups found within verses 9-11 are then assured in verses 12b-13 that Yahweh **will bless** them. The form of divine action sought here lies not in the momentous historic deliverances of the nation but in the daily blessing of individuals and their families — both **small and great alike**” (Broyles, 431).

v. 13 *small and great alike* “The blessing of God extends to all who truly worship him, without any regard for their rank or social importance. It can also mean ‘everyone’, i.e., the whole community” (Anderson, 789) — i.e., all of the faithful without exception. “If any of the faithful have been omitted from the previous threefold summary, they are included in the concluding cola of v. 13” (deClaissé-Walford, 856).

vv. 14-15 *May* The psalmist petitions the LORD for the blessing promised in verses 12-13. “Verses 14-15 formally seek that blessing for the congregation (here addressed as **you**), also acknowledging the bestower of blessing as he **Maker of heaven and earth** (cf. Gen. 14-19)” (Broyles, 431). “Since He made heaven and earth, He is able to bless, and His blessing can be abundant” (Constable, 416).

v. 17 *place of silence* I.e., Sheol. Synonymous parallelism the phrase refers “to those who have already gone down to the shadowy death-realm of the ancient Israelite belief system. From there (from Sheol), praising God was not possible; only in the realm of the living could humankind commune with and praise God” (deClaissé-Walford, 857).

v. 18 *extol* Cf. “bless” (ESV); “praise” (NET). The Hb. term *barāk*, means “to bless” (vv. 12-13; cf. Ps 104:1). In this verse the term means to “praise” or “honor” him, not to “enrich” him in some way; cf. “praise the LORD” (v. 18b), i.e., “praise Yahweh,” Hb. *hal-lū-yāh*, “hallelujah.”



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Extol the LORD throughout your life for he is the only true God, the sovereign One,
who blesses all those who fear him.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

We live in a time where truth is relative, reality is subjective, and artificial intelligence is there to lend support no matter which side of the fence you're on. Spend a few minutes on socials and you begin to realize that AI can do some pretty amazing things. Everything can be manipulated and it's often hard to know if images, videos, animals or even people are real or fake. And what about the message they're sending? A bit concerning, huh? This seems to be representative of everything in our world right now. Part of parenting is helping our kids learn how to be critical thinkers—how to break things down and get to the core; how to research reliable information; how to think objectively and separate feelings from truth (feelings can be real but aren't always true). Here are a few things to consider as you engage with your kids. Ask open-ended, fact-finding questions. Don't tell your kids what to think; instead lead them through the quest for truth by asking lots of questions. Be available. Are your kids afraid to ask you things because they think you're too busy or will just yell at them? Encourage curiosity and allow kids to explore. Don't get caught up in the mess, but dive into dirty and discover together. I had a friend who spent half a day filling up empty milk jugs with water to discover how many gallons the bathtub would hold. That's good parenting. Model critical thinking by explaining your thought process and reasoning behind decisions. Always point to the Bible for clarity. As our basis for truth, it's our trustworthy source.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 115.

1. Why will God's name be glorified?
2. How is the One True God different from the false gods in verses 3-6?
3. What repeated words describe God?

What Do You Think?

What does it mean to trust the Lord in your daily life?

What Do You Do?

Verses 14 -15 are a prayer of blessing over the people. Each night at dinnertime, light a candle and have the whole family repeat this verse together.

CORE COMPETENCY: Worship

I celebrate God for who He is and what He has done for me.

MEMORY VERSE: James 1:19-20

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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**CENTRAL
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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.