



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N41 October 18, 2026

UNHINDERED

"A Story Worth Telling"

Acts 21:17-22:29

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Life Purpose

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in his kingdom purposes for his glory.

"But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

Acts 20:24



How did Paul defend himself against the charges he faced?

The creed for Life Purpose defines this Core Competency in terms of something believers are to *do*. Christians are to *believe* something, namely, that they are stewards of God's resources, and are to *do* something, namely, use those resources to participate in God's kingdom purposes. Paul's own life purpose involved doing something (Ac 9:6). It was spelled out in detail to Ananias for him to share with the apostle. "The Lord said to [Ananias], 'Go, for [Saul] is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name'" (vv. 15-16; cf. 22:14-15). During his ministry, Paul acknowledged what amounted to this life purpose. On his return to Jerusalem, he told the Ephesian elders: "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (20:24). And toward the end of his life he wrote: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2Ti 4:6-7). Of course, Paul's personal life purpose is not for everyone, for God has equipped each one of his own to accomplish their own "doing" purpose through the use of the gifts he has given them.

That said, God not only has an *individualized* purpose for each and every believer, he also has one *fundamental* purpose for all believers alike regardless of their gifting, one that can be defined in terms of *becoming* something. Paul spells out this life purpose in Romans 8:29, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be *conformed to the image of his Son*, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." God in-

tends for all believers "to become like his Son" (NLT), which certainly involves having the mind of Christ (Php 2:5) and ultimately a resurrection body like his. One commentator writes: "Paul represents two aspects of this conformity. By sharing in the sufferings of Christ (Phil 3:10) that is based on having the *mind* of Christ (Phil 2:5-8), the believer is gradually being made into his likeness. This is the essence of sanctification. Its second and final aspect is conformity of the *body* to that of the risen Lord, to be realized at the resurrection (Phil 3:21), which is the culmination of a growth in likeness to Christ based on the Spirit's work in the believer (2 Cor 3:18)" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 10, 98).

The portrait of a fully developing disciple of Christ can be sketched out using certain Core Competencies. It's fair to say that sanctification, spiritual formation, and discipleship — *three* words used to describe the *one* process believers go through to become like Jesus — can be described in terms of a person's central beliefs, central practices, and central virtues. In other words, someone who is being conformed to the likeness of Christ is growing in their understanding of ten central beliefs: Authority of the Bible, Church, Eternity, the Holy Spirit, Humanity, Identity in Christ, Jesus Christ, Life Purpose, and Salvation by Grace; is engaging more and more in ten central practices (i.e., spiritual disciplines): Bible Study, Biblical Community, Compassion, Disciple-Making, Evangelism, Generosity, Prayer, Single-Mindedness, and Worship; and as a result is exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit to a greater degree: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness/Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control, Grace, Hope, and Humility. Here's the point simply stated: the life purpose of all believers can be realized through the pursuit of these Core Competencies.

Read Acts 21:17-22:29**Acts 22:1-21**

1 "Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you."

2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said:

3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters [9:1-2a] to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished [9:2b].

6 "As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me [9:3]. 7 And I fell to the ground [9:4a] and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' [9:4b] 8 And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' [9:5a] And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' [9:5b] 9 Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. [9:8b] 10 And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.' [9:6] 11 And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, [9:8] and came into Damascus. [9:9]

12 "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, [9:10] 13 came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' [9:17] And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. [9:18] 14 And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; 15 for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.' [9:18b]

17 "When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' 19 And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20 And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.' [7:58] 21 And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

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

- Circle "brothers and fathers" in v. 1.
- Circle "defense" in v. 1.
- Underline "Hebrew language" in v. 2.
- Underline "born," "brought up," and "educated" in v. 3.
- Box "as" indicating comparison in v. 3.
- Bracket "high priest," "whole council of elders," and "brothers" in v. 5.
- Highlight v. 12
- Circle "God of our fathers" and "the righteous One" in v. 14.
- Underline "be baptized," "wash away," and "calling on" in v. 16.
- Bracket "in the temple" in v. 17.
- Highlight v. 21.

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. When Paul met with James and the elders of the Jerusalem church, they advised him of a delicate situation that had to be addressed (cf. 21:20-22). Explain.
 2. Explain *why* Paul was in the temple, identify *who* laid hands on him, and specify their *accusations* against him (cf. 21:26-29).
 3. After he was arrested, the Roman tribune allowed Paul to speak to the crowd. What did the apostle do to quiet the unruly mob?
 4. In verse 3, Paul described his *birth*, *upbringing* and *education*. Explain *how* that served his defense.
 5. In verses 4-5, Paul described his zeal for God in terms of his persecution of the Way. Explain *how* that served his defense.
 6. Verses 6-11, Paul described his encounter with the risen Jesus. *What* point is Paul making in the service of his defense?
 7. Ananias was a *disciple* of Jesus (cf. 9:10). Explain *why* he is referred to differently in verse 12.
 8. God commissioned Paul to “be a witness for him to *everyone* of what you have seen and heard” (v. 15). Explain the significance of “everyone” to Paul’s defense.
 9. Ananias told Paul: “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” Does this mean that water baptism washes away sin? And wasn’t Paul saved on the road to Damascus? (See note on v. 16b.)
 10. **Discussion:** While the Jews were not persuaded by Paul’s defense, clearly Luke’s readers are. If Paul is not guilty of the charges brought against him, what does that imply about the Christian faith? Talk about it.
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Commentary On The Text

Acts 22:1-21 contains the defense Paul offered to charges leveled against him in the temple by the Jews (21:27-29). When he arrived in Jerusalem, he received a warm welcome from James and the elders of the church, who glorified God (21:19) upon hearing what “God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry” (v. 20). God had also done great things among the Jews in Jerusalem. Thousands of those “zealous for the law” had believed (v. 20), but there was a problem. An accusation was circulating among them against Paul that had to be laid to rest, namely, that Paul was a renegade Jew, who was “teaching Diaspora Jews ‘apostasy from Moses.’ Specifically, Paul, according to the charge, advocates that Jews stop circumcising their children and walking ‘by the customs,’ that is, the law” (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 268)—a false charge, indeed, but not a surprising one, since the inclusion of Gentiles in Paul’s gospel mission put pressure, overt or covert, on Jewish Christians to abandon their Jewish way of life. “One of the effects of the growth of the gentile mission is the inclusion of Jewish Christians in social groups that no longer support their Jewish way of life” (Tannehill, 269). The cry of Paul’s accusers was the cry of a people trying to maintain themselves against a perceived threat to their identity.

In an effort to appease the Jewish Christians, James and the elders proposed a solution intended to demonstrate that Paul supported the right of Jewish Christians to live as Jews, just as Gentile Christians live as Gentiles. The apostle was to join in the purification rites of four men who had taken a vow and pay their expenses (vv. 23-24). “The four men evidently had a Nazirite vow. At the conclusion of their vow some costly sacrifices were required of each man (cf. Num. 6:13-17). These men evidently were too poor to pay for them. Paul was asked to underwrite the expense of their sacrifices and thereby display his sympathy with the zealots of **the Law**” (Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 416).

But when Paul was seen by “the Jews from Asia” (v. 27), probably Ephesus, in the temple, they supposed he had brought Trophimus, the Ephesian, into a temple court off-limits to Gentiles. They then incited a riot, crying out: “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place” (v. 28). The crowd wanted to beat Paul to death, but he was rescued by a Roman tribune, who mistook him for an Egyptian insurrectionist. Im-

pressed by Paul’s Tarsian citizenship and his ability to speak Greek, the tribune gave the apostle permission to speak to the people.

While Paul’s defense contains content included in Luke’s narrative of the apostle’s conversion (9:1-19), in 22:1-22 Paul tells his own story, telling it to refute the charge that he is a renegade from Judaism. The speech can be divided into four parts that reflect in general the structure of forensic rhetoric.

In the first part (vv. 1-2), Paul gains the attention of his hearers and establishes solidarity with them by speaking in Aramaic and addressing them as “brothers and fathers.”

In the second part (vv. 3-5), he establishes his Jewish identity and credibility by identifying as a Jew, by describing his *birth* in Tarsus, *upbringing* in Jerusalem, and *training* under Gamaliel (v. 3), and by declaring that he was previously an exceptionally zealous Jew, *like his hearers*, and a persecutor of the Way as well (vv. 4-5).

In the third part (vv. 6-16), he recounts his Damascus encounter with the risen Christ in support of his defense. Premise one, he encountered the risen Jesus while actively opposing his followers (vv. 6-9). Premise two, this encounter was accompanied by divine revelation and confirmed by Ananias, a devout man respected by all the Jews (vv. 10-13). Premise three, he was explicitly commissioned by God to be a witness to everyone (vv. 14-15). Taken together these points verify that his ministry was not the result of apostasy or rebellion against God—not an assault on the people, the law, or the temple (cf. 21:28)—but was the result of a divine commission.

In the fourth part (vv. 17-21), Paul explains that when he later returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, he received a vision: “Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me” (22:18). The location is significant. Paul does not portray himself as abandoning the temple. He prayed there and received a word from the Lord there: “Go for I will send you far away to the Gentiles” (v. 21).

As a defense, Paul’s speech was a failure. Mention of the Gentiles at the end provoked a frenzied cry from the crowd: “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live” (v. 22). “So the speech ends with the tension between Jewish origins and loyalties, on the one hand, and a mission in the gentile world, on the other, at high voltage” (Tannehill, 279).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 **brothers and fathers** “Paul addressed the crowd with the formal introduction Stephen used before the Sanhedrin, ‘brothers and fathers’ (v. 1: cf. 7:2). Both were making a defense and were concerned to establish their loyalty to Judaism; hence this deferential Jewish address” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 457).

v. 1 **defense** “Paul described his address in formal language as a ‘defense’ (*apologia*). His speech did not, however, address the charge that started the riot—that he had desecrated the temple [by taking Trophimus, a Gentile, into its inner courts]. It did address the larger issue—Paul’s faithfulness to Judaism” (Polhill, 457). “He is replying in a general way to the charge that he teaches ‘against the people’ (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 276). “The speeches in Acts so far have been mainly in the form of *deliberative* rhetoric, the purpose of which is to make people change their minds and lives. In chapters 22 through 26, however, the speeches are *forensic* rhetoric, designed mainly for defensive and apologetic purposes” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 202 ed., 413, italics added, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf).

v. 2 **Hebrew language** “Just as Paul got the tribune’s attention with his Greek (21:37), he quieted the Jewish crowd by speaking Aramaic (see ESV footnote on 21:40), the most common language spoken by ordinary Jews in Jerusalem” (*ESV Study Bible*, not on Ac 22:2).

v. 3 **born, brought up . . .** Cf. Ac 21:39a. “The triad of “birth,” “upbringing,” and “training” was used in antiquity to describe a man’s youth (Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 524-25). “**Brought up in this city** most likely means that Paul’s parents moved to Jerusalem when he was very young and he was reared in the city (cf. 23:16), but some take it to mean only that Paul came to Jerusalem as a young man for his rabbinic training under **Gamaliel**” (*ESV Study Bible* note on Ac 22:3).

v. 3 **as** “Far from being a law-breaker, as they were now accusing him (21:21, 28). Paul’s former life had been marked by a zeal for the law that matched or exceeded their own” (Polhill, 458). “His zeal for the law is like that of the crowd, implying that he understands what is motivating them” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 659).

v. 5 **high priest . . .** “Paul was a persecutor who even delivered men and women of the Way (Acts 9:2) to prison (8:3) . . . He knows that the high priest and other leaders can testify to this. He even had letters from the high priest and elders with authority to go to the Damascus brethren, that is, the Jews there, and bring some mem-

bers of the Way back to Jerusalem in bonds (Acts 9:1-2)” (Bock, 659-60).

v. 12 **Ananias** “Paul introduced Ananias as a pious Jew, a strict observer of the Torah, and a person held in high esteem by the Jewish community in Damascus . . . In Paul’s account before the Jerusalem Jews, Ananias’s devotion to Judaism was stressed. Paul wished to make the same point about Ananias he had been making about himself—that his Christian faith in no way detracted from his loyalty to Judaism” (Polhill, 461).

v. 14 **God of our fathers . . .** “The Jewish flavor of the episode is strengthened by the expression ‘the God of our fathers’ and the messianic title ‘the righteous One’ (v.14; cf. 3:14)” (Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 526).

v. 16 **be baptized, wash away . . .** “The writers of Scripture present water baptism elsewhere, not as the agent of spiritual cleansing, but as the consequence and illustration of spiritual cleansing that has already taken place (1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 3:21) . . . Paul had evidently experienced regeneration on the Damascus Road, since he was persuaded by Ananias to ‘be baptized’ shortly afterward. He believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the divine Messiah predicted in the Old Testament (v. 10; cf. Gal. 1:11-12; Acts 9:17-18). The Greek word *epikalesamenos*, translated ‘calling on,’ is an aorist participle meaning ‘having called on.’ Paul experienced baptism in water several days after he had called on the Lord for salvation” (Constable, 416-17).

v. 17 **in the temple** “The account of Acts 9 does not relate this incident. Perhaps the reason Paul referred to it is that it indirectly answers the mob’s charge that he had defiled the temple. A person who goes to the temple for prayer is not likely to desecrate it” (Polhill, 462). “From Damascus Paul returned to Jerusalem and went into the temple, again showing his piety and practice of following the law” (Bock, 662).

v. 21 **far away to Gentiles** “With the mention that Israel’s God has called him to invite the Gentiles into blessing, the crowd reacts, no doubt feeling somewhat confirmed in its suspicious about Paul’s pro-Gentile attitudes” (Bock, 663). “This does not mean that Paul was to limit his ministry to the Gentiles but that it was to include the Gentiles” (Constable, 417).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Paul was not antisemitic for, true to his calling, he shared the gospel of God's grace with Jews and Gentiles alike, assuring Jewish Christians that they did not have to abandon their Mosaic traditions.

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 the author of this passage want me to *know*?
2. What does the author of this passage want me to *do*?
3. What does the author of this passage want me to *be*?



PARENT CONNECTION

Do you know when your kids are lying? One of my kids gets a weird quiver in their lips, another gets shifty eyes, and another's voice trails up a few octaves as the lie escalates. I've always told my kids that I know everything and every lie will eventually be found out, so they might as well just tell me the truth and minimize the pain of the inevitable consequences. One of my boys figured this out pretty early and saved himself a lot of spankings. Another, not so much. We're all going to make mistakes, and our natural inclination, even as adults, is to try to manipulate truth and dance around the problem with little white lies that reduce the infraction. This just never works. The truth is always the best way to go. Paul sets us up for a solid life lesson in today's text. Though he was falsely accused, Paul could have tried to make up a wild scheme to get out of trouble. Instead, he focuses on truth and the Gospel. Paul doesn't get crazy emotional. He doesn't try to fight back. He doesn't resist. He simply approaches the problem with the truth while focusing on God's good work of redemption. Your kids are going to be put in situations where they will be tempted to lie. They are going to try to get out of trouble, especially when they are falsely accused. Help them understand that the truth is always the best route to take. Applaud and encourage truth with reduced consequences or even a necessary apology for thinking the worst. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 21:17-22:29.

1. Why was Paul arrested?
2. How did Paul respond to the false accusation?
3. What story did Paul tell the crowd in verses 22:1-21?

What Do You Think?

Why was it important for Paul to tell the truth?

What Do You Do?

Have you ever been tempted to lie to get out of trouble?

CORE COMPETENCY: Life Purpose

I believe God wants me to glorify Him in all I say and do.

MEMORY VERSE: Romans 12:18

"If possible, as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids 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.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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