

Discuss together which church **traditions** may be preventing believers from obeying Jesus freely and from helping others to do the same. Most such traditions come from foreign cultures.

Discuss together how your congregation may be depending on **money** donated by outsiders, and make plans for it to support itself. God blesses flocks that trust Him for their needs.

Find out which **people groups** near you do not have enough Christians and congregations. Pray and plan for some of your members to go as missionaries to help them.

Help other congregations whose shepherds you train to cooperate with missionary outreach.

3. Plan with co-workers the up-coming worship

Let believers read and **discuss** the Scriptures cited in Part 1 about how the Good News spreads.

Explain how believers shared the good news in the last 400 years of Christian history.

Let believers who have done missionary work **testify** about what God has done.

Have believers **testify** about how God has helped during home group and cell meetings.

Let the **children** present the drama that they have prepared.

To introduce the **Lord's Table** read Acts 20:7. Explain that from the beginning most believers have followed the example of the earliest churches of serving the Lord's Supper regularly.

Let small **groups** of two and three plan, pray and encourage one another.

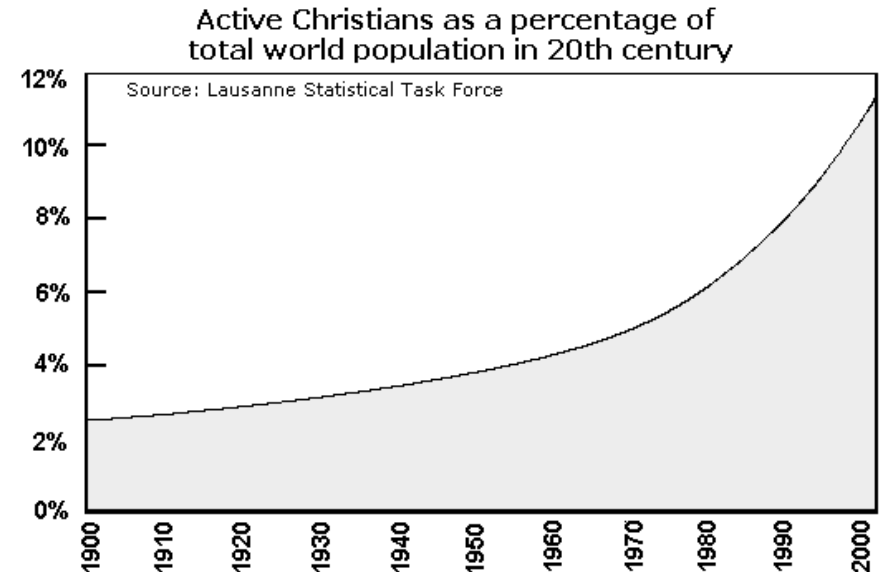
Memorise together Mark 4:31-32. Explain first that Jesus was describing the Kingdom of God.

Spread of Christianity from AD 1600 till Now

Note: You should read studies 66 and 67 about the ancient history of Christianity, before you read this study. Those who teach children should read children's study 68.

1. Prepare with prayer and the Word to teach the history of Christianity

Prayer. "Lord Jesus, please help me and my flock to learn what you have been doing in the world and what part we should play in taking the Good News to others."



It took 18 centuries for active Christians to grow from 0% of the world's population to 2.5% in 1900, only 70 years to grow from 2.5% to 5% in 1970, and only the last 30 years to grow from 5% to 11.2%.

In 2000, for the first time in history, there is one active Christian for every nine people who are either nominal or non-Christian.

Bible Study

Find in **Acts 6:5-7** what happens to the Good News when leaders empower ordinary Christians. [Answer: They take it farther and many more people will become believes.]

Find in **Acts 8:1-8** what normally happens to the Good news when authorities turn hostile towards Christians.

Find in **Acts 12:24** through **13:5** what the Holy Spirit asks congregations to do, so that other people groups can learn the Good News.

Find in **Acts 14:21-23** the main activities of workers who penetrate neglected people groups.

- What do they talk about? [Verse 21]
- To what kinds of places do they go?
- What do they do for new believers? [22]
- What kind of leaders do new Christians need? [23]
- Who will lead the new congregations after the missionaries leave them?

The years AD 1600 – 1900.

Spiritual and cultural reformation in Europe allowed Christians to obtain and read the Bible. This had several effects:

- Thousands of Europeans discovered true faith in Jesus and freedom from many church traditions.
- Northern Europeans revolted against Rome and the pope, destroying monasteries and starting the Protestant Reformation.
- Protestants in Germany and England sent missionaries to many coastal areas of the world.
- While Catholic armies conquered South America, many Protestants migrated to North America where they started many denominations.
- However, Rationalism (relying on human reason) slowly replaced Christian faith among most Europeans.

Martin Luther

A Catholic monk, Luther began studying the New Testament and discovered that God saves people by their faith alone. In **1517**, he published *Ninety-five Theses*, calling European Christians back to the Bible to find their beliefs and to choose their practices.

When the Catholic pope banned him, he had to hide. Luther's ideas from the Bible became very influential in Europe, helping to promote the Protestant Reformation. Today, many Protestant denominations need another Reformation back to the Bible.

The 20th Century.

Free from European domination, North Americans translated the Bible in more than 1000 languages and planted their denominations in most nations, with several effects:

- They started many independent, evangelical missionary organizations.
- National churches in many countries became independent, indigenous and evangelistic, sending their own missionaries.
- House church movements in China, although persecuted by authorities, spread rapidly.
- Evangelical Christianity is now the fastest-growing religious movement in the world.
- The great majority of Christians live in China, southern Asia, Africa, South America and Indonesia.

At the start of the 21st Century

Churches from many countries are now seeking to penetrate all remaining, neglected people groups. This is having several effects on Christianity:

- Spontaneous, independent “church planting movements” have started in most areas that are hostile to Christianity.
- Most Christians learn the Bible in their own language.
- Many believers are free from old church traditions, to obey Jesus in love, prayer, communion, mercy and evangelism.
- Many congregations choose their own spiritual leaders.
- Worshipers use forms and practices from their own culture.

2. Plan with co-workers activities of the coming week

Find out which believers do not have the **Bible** in their own language, and make plans to find Bibles that they can purchase.

Find out which believers cannot **read**, and make plans to have them learn to read their Bibles.