

# Exploring



## Purpose and Overview

Exploring God's Mission Here is a resource designed to assist districts with the task of helping congregations discern their current challenges, identify a predominant focus area, and commit to actionable next steps. The complete resource integrates Bible study, guided discussion, appraisal questions, and facilitator resources into a single, end-to-end experience. However, it is also designed to be flexible, giving districts the option to choose the portions they wish to use.

## Core Flow

The complete resource is divided up into an introduction followed by six parts.

- The Introduction anchors the workshop in Acts 17:24–26, emphasizing God's sovereignty over people, place, and time.
- Part 1 (God's Ongoing Mission) references the account of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10) and the words of Jesus in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20) to establish the biblical mission and to frame local ministry within the context of Word and Sacrament ministry. It includes discussion prompts on “gathering” and “shepherding.”
- Part 2 (The People Whom God Has Called Us to Serve) recounts God’s intervention in Paul’s missionary work (Acts 16:16–10) and Moses’ plea for God to intervene in dealing with the complaints of the Israelites (Num. 11:4–6, 10–15) as the impetus for discernment of the local mission field. Appraisal questions are introduced to help capture local community realities.
- Part 3 (What Can We Do?) uses the feeding of the 5000 (John 6:6–13) to invite a discussion about congregational resources. Appraisal questions are included on pastoral care and finances.

- Part 4 (What Have We Been Doing?) begins with the account Jesus calling Peter, James, and John (Luke 5:1–11) and encourages discussion about recent ministry efforts and readiness for change. Appraisal questions deal with congregation demographics and unity of focus.
- Part 5 (What Should We Do?) references Jesus’ encounter with a demon-possessed man (Mark 5:1–20) as a model for mission in action. Appraisal results are synthesized using a mapping key and scatter diagram, with the goal of identifying focus areas (Alignment, Revitalization, Church Planting/Replanting, Finishing Well).
- Part 6 (What Will We Do?) uses Paul’s encouragement to the church in Corinth (2 Cor. 4:7–18) to motivate action, reinforce resilience, and remind that that God's power is made perfect in weakness.

## Combination Files and Descriptions

As indicated earlier, Exploring God’s Mission Here is intended to allow for flexibility regarding which portions are used. The following combinations are available in Microsoft Word format. Other customizations can be made at the discretion of the district.

### [Exploring God's Mission Here](#)

Contents; The full resource, including Bible study and discussion questions (Parts 1–6), appraisal questions (Parts 2–4), part 5 appraisal pages, and facilitator notes (foundational questions, workshop schedule, mapping key instructions, a list of resources available from the LCMS Office of National Mission resources that are linked to the four focus areas). Use when you want a single source for an end-to-end experience.

### [Exploring God's Mission Here - Bible Study Only](#)

Contents; The Bible study narrative for Parts 1–6 along with discussion questions. Use when you want full biblical framing and group discussion, with the option to facilitate appraisal via a separate handout.

### [Exploring God's Mission Here - Appraisal Questions With Key](#)

Contents; All appraisal questions (Parts 2–4) and the mapping key in one file, along with the Part 5 appraisal pages for plotting/summarizing. Use when a group is ready to complete the appraisal and immediately map results in one sitting (no separate key is needed).

### [Exploring God's Mission Here - Appraisal Questions Without Key](#)

Contents; All appraisal questions (Parts 2–4) without the mapping key. Use for participants’ booklets so they can’t see how answers map while responding; the facilitator can then reveal the key afterward to avoid bias.

[Exploring God's Mission Here - Appraisal Questions With Facilitator Instructions and Key](#)

Contents; A consolidated packet combining appraisal questions, facilitator instructions, and the mapping key, plus the Part 5 appraisal pages. Use when a single document is preferred for the leader and the group, providing streamlined delivery with embedded instructions and mapping.

[Exploring God's Mission Here - Facilitator Instructions With Key](#)

Contents; Complete facilitator instructions together with the mapping key together, designed for leaders to guide the workshop and then reveal the key after participants complete the questions. Use as the leader's guide alongside a participant handout that contains the questions only.

[Exploring God's Mission Here - Facilitator Instructions Without Key](#)

Contents; Facilitator instructions without the mapping key, emphasizing process control (e.g., timing, small-group combination, local relevance). Use when the mapping key is distributed separately or displayed later.

[Exploring God's Mission Here - Mapping Key Only](#)

Contents; Only the appraisal mapping key (answer-to-quadrant table) for Parts 2–4. Use as a controlled handout to be given after the appraisal is fully completed, enabling unbiased plotting in Part 5.

The table below provides a brief summary of the combinations described in more detail above:

File Name (all ending with .docx)	Description
Exploring God's Mission Here	Full workshop: Bible Study, discussion questions, appraisal questions, facilitator notes, and instructions for mapping key usage.
Exploring God's Mission Here - Bible Study Only	Complete Bible study narrative for Parts 1–6 with discussion questions; excludes detailed appraisal question lists.
Exploring God's Mission Here - Appraisal Questions With Key	All appraisal questions (Parts 2–4) along with the mapping key.
Exploring God's Mission Here - Appraisal Questions Without Key	Appraisal questions only; mapping key withheld for unbiased responses.
Exploring God's Mission Here - Appraisal Questions With Facilitator Instructions and Key	Consolidated packet with appraisal questions, facilitator instructions, and mapping key.
Exploring God's Mission Here - Facilitator Instructions With Key	Facilitator instructions and mapping key combined for leader guidance.
Exploring God's Mission Here - Facilitator Instructions Without Key	Facilitator instructions only; mapping key provided separately.
Exploring God's Mission Here - Mapping Key Only	Mapping key only; distributed after appraisal completion.

## Practical Use Suggestions

Based upon reviews and pilot testing, the following suggestions are offered for district consideration:

- Clearly communicate the goals of the process to prospective participants ahead of time
- Focus on mission and ministry, with an emphasis on biblical foundations and the ongoing nature of Christ's work
- Encourage discussion and reflection on what has been learned and next steps for the congregation
- Emphasize the importance of knowing the local community, how it has changed, and how the congregation can reach out and serve
- Provide opportunities for the participants to honestly acknowledge barriers to outreach: reluctance to engage the community, societal isolation, difficulty in practicing hospitality, etc.
- Encourage consideration of congregational strengths and challenges and how these have an impact on mission
- Remind participants that Christ is the Lord of the Church and we are merely His instruments for carrying out mission and ministry in our local contexts

## Workshop Schedule

A table provided within the facilitator notes gives a possible schedule for the various parts of the process. The total time for the entire process is listed there as just shy of 5 ½ hours. This should be viewed as optimal, but not rigid. In initial pilot testing of one-day Saturday workshops, the total time was trimmed down to 4 ½ to 5 hours, including 30-minute lunch breaks.

Another option for working through the entire process would be to complete the Bible study and discussion questions one day and the appraisal questions another. Using this approach, consideration would need to be given as to how the Bible study for Part 6 would be done if the appraisal portion has not already been completed. Alternatively, the Bible study and discussion questions for Parts 1-5 could be done one day, and the appraisal questions and Part 6 done another.