

# GOD'S PRESENT INTENTIONS

## THE CHURCH AS A WINDOW

### **Overview Statement:**

Obedience to God's commands is what God desires from all believers. Our obedience to Christ's commandments demonstrates the goodness of God's intentions for salvation and restoration both in the future and in the present. Our disobedience creates a wall that keeps the world from knowing about God's great love for them. The Church is like a "window" through which the broken world can see God's intentions.

### **Main points:**

1. God commands His people to demonstrate His good intentions NOW in all areas of life.
2. Our sin, our lack of obedience to God's present intentions, created a wall that prevents the world from seeing and experiencing God's love.
3. When God's people obey Him, they become a window through which others can see His good intentions and are drawn to Him.
4. Scripture provides numerous metaphors to illustrate God's intended role for the Church on earth today.

### **Outcomes:**

1. Now:
  - a. To grasp and express the main ideas of the lesson in their own words.
  - b. To plan and carry out one new step in response to a main idea of this lesson to let someone see God's good intentions through a simple act of loving service.
2. Beyond:
  - a. To recognize that they have not shown God's love to others, repent of their sin and disobedience, and commit to intentionally express God's loving intentions for both the present and the future.
  - b. To work as leaders to communicate and challenge God's people to intentionally express God's good and loving intentions for the present and the future.

# **GOD'S PRESENT INTENTIONS – THE CHURCH AS A WINDOW**

## **Participant Outline**

### **I. Review**

### **II. Introduction**

### **III. Key Verse: Matthew 6:9-10**

- A. Where is God's will perfectly done?
- B. What are we to pray about God's will?
- C. What are God's intentions for the present?
- D. What makes the difference between heaven and earth?
- E. What would happen if God's will were done on earth as it is done in heaven?

### **IV. What are God's general intentions for the present?**

- John 14:15
- Acts 13:22b
- Matthew 28:18-20

**V. How do we know God's intentions – His will?**

- Psalms 119:99-100
- Proverbs 2:1-5
- John 16:13

**VI. What are God's intentions/will for our personal lives?**

- Acts 14:22
- Ephesians 5:17:20
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3,11

**VII. What are God's intentions for our families?**

- Ephesians 5:21
- Ephesians 6:4

**VIII. What are God's intentions for our Christian brothers and sisters?**

- John 13:34
- John 17:20-23

**IX. What are God's intentions for our relationships with those in the world?**

- Romans 13:9

- James 1:27
- Jeremiah 22:3, 15-16

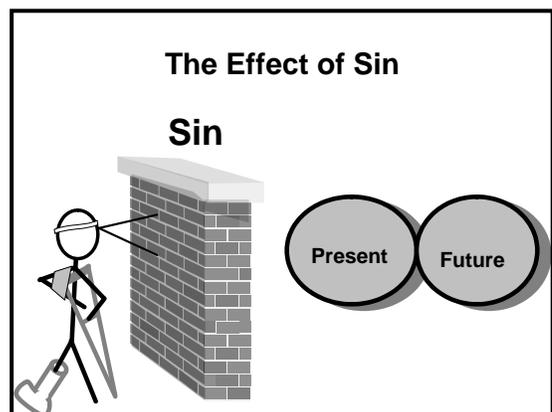
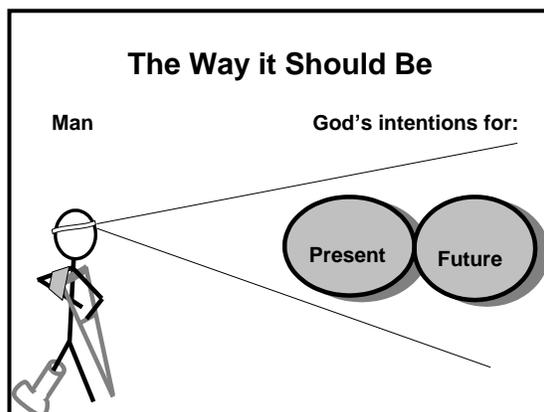
**X. What are God's intentions for our employers, servants and government?**

- Colossians 4:1
- I Peter 2:13-15
- Romans 13:1

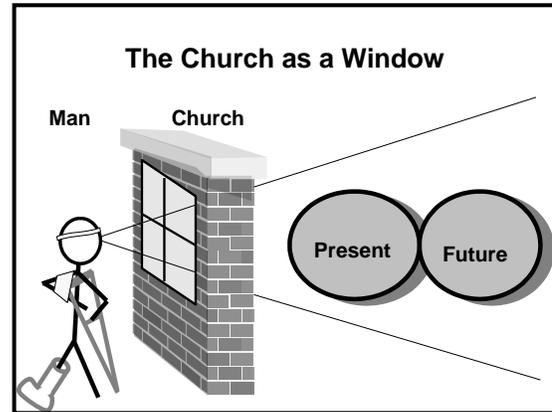
**XI. What are God's intentions for our relationships to our enemies?**

- Luke 6:27, 35-36

**XII. Equation for God's Intentions for the Present**



### **XIII. The Church As A Window**



### **XIV. Pictures of the Church**

- Deuteronomy 4:5-8
- Matthew 5:13-16
- John 17:18
- II Corinthians 3:2-3
- Philippians 2:5-8
- I Peter 2:12
- Romans 8:19

## XV. Application Plan

### A. Personal Reflection

- List at least 2 new activities in each of the 4 areas that your church could do to demonstrate God's present intentions to the people of your community.  
**Remember** – Plan something
  - (a) **New**
  - (b) **Realistic**
  - (c) **Specific** (What, Who, When, Where)
  - (d) **Shared**

<u><b>Wisdom</b></u>	<u><b>Spiritual</b></u>
<u><b>Physical</b></u>	<u><b>Social</b></u>

### B. Commitment and Plan

- Share your ideas with another participant and pray for one another.
- Meet with one or more leaders of your local church and show them your list and discuss the feasibility of your ideas.

# GOD'S PRESENT INTENTIONS

## THE CHURCH AS A WINDOW

### Lesson Narrative

Does God have any good news for now—for the present? Yes! His good news is not only for the future. Think of how He taught His disciples to pray: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-10). On earth as it is in heaven! We may have recited this prayer so often that it has become meaningless. But it is not meaningless—it is powerful!

Where is God's will done? According to the Lord's Prayer, it is done in heaven. But Jesus taught us to pray that God's will would be done *on earth* as it is done in heaven. God has intentions that His will be done, in the present, on earth. What would happen if God's will were done on earth as it is done in heaven? What would happen if God's will were done in your community or in your nation as it is in heaven? Earth would be very much like heaven! (Of course, God's will is done perfectly in heaven; on earth, in the present, it is only done incompletely.)

#### ***Knowing God's Intentions and His Will***

What are some general aspects of God's will for the present? In John 14:13 we see that, if we love God, we obey Him. God's will is that we *do* His will! Matthew 28:18-20 affirms that doing His will includes discipling others to obey His will, too. Often, people remember only one part of the charge that Jesus gave to His church in the Great Commission—to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. But that is not the whole task. It is just the beginning of the task. After people have come to Christ, we are to disciple them to *do* God's will. If we have not done that, we have not finished the Great Commission's task. We must also disciple others to obey all that God has commanded.

How do we know God's intentions—His will? We do not instinctively know His will, yet we have often even made knowing His will overly complex. We need revelation from His Word and His Spirit for what it means to do His will. Psalms 119:99-100 reminds us to meditate on and obey His Word. Proverbs 2:1-5 urges us to accept God's Word to know His will. John 16:13 affirms that it is the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth.

Abraham's chief servant provides an excellent model for us. He made an oath with Abraham to go back to Abraham's country to get a wife for Isaac. He left for his journey and as he was going, the Lord led him. He had no idea what to do and how to find a wife that would agree to return to a foreign land. So, as he was going, he continued to seek the Lord and each step of the way, the Lord faithfully led him and the servant followed (Gen 24:48). There are some simple truths for us to learn from in this example: Be on a journey, seek the Lord as you are going, listen to Him and obey what He shows you to do. It is of little use to seek to know God's will if we are not already on the journey of obeying what you already understand of His intentions.

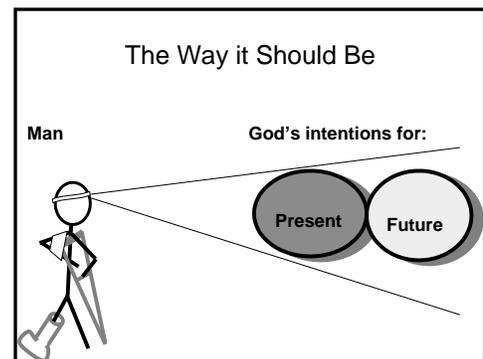
Do all Christians in our community find God's will this way—searching Scripture, guided by the Spirit and obeying what they understand of what He is showing them? What would happen if all who claim to be Christians in our community would seek to know God's will as they make decisions about how they are to live and would then obey what their Father told them to do?

## God's Intentions for the Present

What does God tell us in His Word that He wants us to do in our personal lives? Many things! Acts 14:22 urges us to endure hardships. Ephesians 5:17-20 exhorts us to be sober and Spirit-filled—singing and thankful. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and 11 tell us to live holy, pure, productive lives. Do all who call themselves Christians in our community endure hardship? Are they sober and Spirit-filled, singing and thankful? Are they living holy and pure and productive lives? What are God's intentions for our families? In Ephesians 5:21, we are told to be submissive and respectful of one another. Ephesians 6:4 tells us to train our children in holy living. What are God's intentions for our relationships with our brothers and sisters? In John 13:34, we are told to love each other, and John 17:20-23 instructs us to live in unity. What would happen if all the Christians in our community sought to know God's will and live as He commands? What if we all lived holy, pure, productive, respectful lives in our personal lives and families? What if we were united in our relationships with other believers? There would be a revolution!

What are God's intentions for our present relationships to the needy of the world? In Romans 13:9, we are commanded to love our neighbors. In James 1:27, we learn we are to care for widows and orphans. In Jeremiah 22:3, 15, and 16, we learn that God expects us to advocate for those in need. What are God's intentions for our relationships to employers, servants, government, and enemies? Colossians 4:1 tells us to be fair to those under our authority. 1 Peter 2:13-15 commands us to respect those in authority over us. Romans 13:1 also exhorts us to submit to those in authority. Luke 6:27, 35, and 36 instruct us to love our enemies and bless them. Do all Christians in our community live according to God's will in these ways? What would happen if, at 9 o'clock next Monday morning, all of those who call themselves Christians would begin to live this way? It would be more than a revolution—it would be a revival! People would be drawn to God.

The impact of our obedience goes far beyond our own relationships with the Lord. We use this drawing to illustrate the significance of our obedience to God's intentions for the present and the future. We are being watched—not only by God, but also by the broken people of the world. As we obey God, we demonstrate His love and concern for them in the present as well as in the future. This is the way it should be! When the broken people of our community look at us, they should be able to see God's good intentions for both the present and the future.



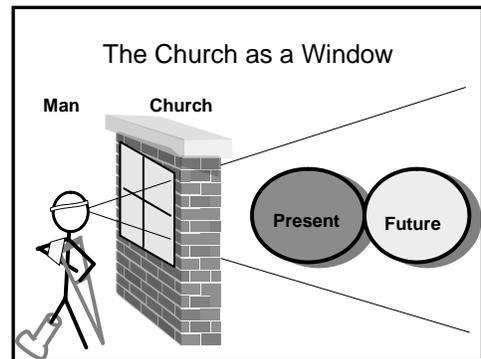
They should see not only His good intentions for the future—the saving grace of God and rescue from eternal death. They should also see the great good news that God has for them NOW. They should see this, but they often cannot. Why? There is a wall that obstructs their vision. This wall is the wall of sin. We like to believe that it is the sin of the *world* that keeps the broken people in our communities from seeing God's purposes. No, it is not only the sin of the world—it is *our* sin and disobedience. It is our unwillingness to live the way God calls us to live in the present representing God's purposes to the broken world around us. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us" (II Corinthians 5:20).

If you were God, what would you do to that wall? People often say that they would knock the wall down and destroy it! Be careful about that answer, since we are also talking about ourselves! Also, we know from Scripture that, until Jesus returns, sin is not going to be completely removed from the world. Instead, God has done something else with the wall of sin that keeps the world from seeing God's good intentions. He has put a window in the wall! That window is the Church—the Church of Jesus Christ. God intends,

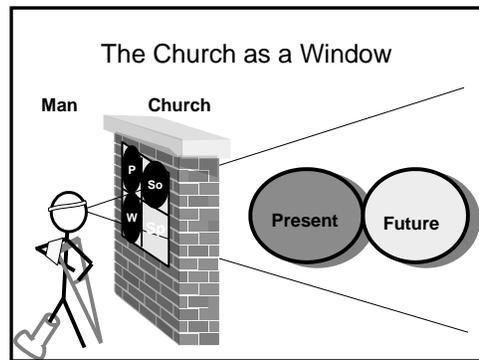
as the broken people of our community look through the window of His Church, that they will see His good news for the present and the future.

### **The Church as a Window**

We use a four-paned window illustration in this lesson. Each pane represents one of the four areas in which Jesus grew—“Wisdom,” “Physical,” “Spiritual,” and “Social.” Because Jesus grew in these four ways, let’s think of them as four areas of God’s concern for human healing and growth. The church is the window through which broken people see God’s good intentions in all of these areas. What do some churches do with this window?



- Some churches look at the pane marked “Physical” and say, “We don’t do physical ministry! We leave that to the government and welfare agencies.” When this happens, the window pane is darkened. The broken people of our community cannot see God’s concern for physical needs through the window of the Church.
- Another pane represents God’s intentions for healing of all kinds of social brokenness. Some churches might say: “This is not our mandate. We are not engaged in social work!” The window pane becomes darkened, and broken people cannot observe God’s intentions for social healing through the Church.
- Another pane represents wisdom. Churches might say, “We are engaged in wisdom—but only for people in the Church. They must come *into* the Church before they can learn God’s wisdom.” When that happens, this pane is darkened. People outside the Church cannot see God’s intentions for their growth in wisdom.
- The final part of the window is the spiritual pane. Churches might say: “Yes! We are called to proclaim the spiritual good news!” When the broken people of the community look through the window of the Church, then, what is the only thing they see if the physical, social, and wisdom panes are darkened? They only see God’s spiritual intentions. The spiritual area is of enormous present and future importance, but broken people may not know this. They may be like Juan, the young man Rudy encountered in a squatter slum of Lima, Peru. He tore up and swallowed the tract Rudy offered him—to make a point. He was saying, “I’m not interested in spiritual good news for the future. I’m hungry now! Does your God have any concern for me as a hungry, unemployed man—now?”



Our churches need to clean their windows! Broken people need to see through all the panes. God wants Juan, and all of his brothers and sisters who are broken, to be able to look through the window of the Church and see God’s good intentions for them in all areas of God’s concern—physical, spiritual, social, and wisdom.

There was an informal survey on a downtown street in the U.S. many people were asked, “If you were facing a major crisis in your life, where would you turn for help?” No one thought to mention the Church!

People do not know the Church as the Church that Jesus intended. If your church closed up tomorrow, would your community care? Would they even notice?

A few years ago, Bob was teaching church leaders on the Muslim-dominated island of Mindanao in the Philippines. Tension between Muslims and non-Muslims was high. The last day of the conference, ten people dressed in Muslim attire came into the church where they met. A hush fell over the audience. The organizers of the conference discovered that these were new Christian converts, delayed four days at military checkpoints on their way to the conference. They told their story. For many years, Christians had come to their village, preaching and handing out tracts. The village people rejected the message. Recently, a group of people had come to the village simply to minister lovingly to needs of the people. Only later did the village people discover that these caring people were Christians. The impact of this ministry was so powerful that these villagers came to Christ. The words of the last speaker, a teenage girl, are words of wisdom to us. Christians had come to her village doing traditional evangelism for years, but only when the Gospel came wrapped in love and good works did it reap a harvest. She concluded with an unforgettable question: “What took you so long?”

### ***Pictures of the Church***

What takes us so long? It is our sin and disobedience. God’s plan for His Church is great! There are a number of metaphors that Paul, Jesus, and Peter used to describe the Church. (A metaphor is a word picture.)

- The Church is a ***priest***. Israel was to be a priest to the nations, and the Church today is like God intended Israel to be in the OT. We are to be a priest to the people outside the Church. As they look, they should see us obeying God’s will and thereby representing who He is.
- The Church is ***salt and light***. We often ask groups of people: “Do you like salt?” Almost everyone does! Then we say, “I’d like to give you an experiment. When you have your next meal, take a large spoonful of salt and eat it.” Their faces immediately react! “You don’t like that? I thought you said you like salt! Oh, you like it, but you don’t like it so concentrated! You want it sprinkled around!” Our churches are often like a spoonful of salt—too concentrated. God says, “Get out of the spoon! Go into the community. Sprinkle yourselves out there!”
- The Church is an ***embassy of the Kingdom of God***. Jesus sent His disciples out as ambassadors, so our churches are embassies. Embassies, as we know, represent the intentions of the government they represent. We must represent the intentions of the Kingdom to which we belong.
- The Church is a ***letter***. Paul wrote that we are like open letters, read by all. Sometimes, it is hard for people to read God’s letter when they see our lives. We need to be a ***legible*** letter that demonstrates God’s good news for the present.
- The Church is also an ***obedient servant, a good neighbor, and a first taste of something delicious***. Bob has a grapefruit tree in his backyard. In the late fall, the grapefruit begins to ripen. He looks for that very first grapefruit that’s ripe and ready to be eaten. He finds it, picks it, and peels it. He can’t wait to take that first bite. It’s delicious! He then knows what the rest of the fruit of that tree will taste like when they become ripe. That is a first fruit. But sometimes *we* are unripe, immature fruit. When the world bites into us, the taste is bitter. They spit us out. But God wants us to be a delicious first fruit—a first taste of His Kingdom.

There are other pictures of the Church that we did not cover in the lesson. The Church is the Body of Christ. As a body, the Church should carry out the intentions of its head, Jesus Christ, and each member has a unique function in this body. The Church is also the bride of Christ. God loves the Church with an infinite love. The intimate relationship between Christ and His bride provides high motivation for the Church to do His will. The Church is also the principal administrator of God’s

agenda to heal the broken world. It is the communicator and facilitator of the agenda and equips its members to go into every corner of society to do God's will.

It is important to apply what we learn! We often ask people to draw a window, label each section with one of the four areas of Jesus' growth, list two new activities in each area that their church could do to demonstrate God's present intentions in their communities, and commit to discuss these ideas with their church leaders. As you read this, you too can do this.

There is a new breeze blowing among the churches today as they learn to be embassies of God's full intentions. This breeze has the mark of the Spirit. It creates a longing to demonstrate God's full agenda in a broken world. There are individuals and churches whose sails are catching that breeze. It is our prayer that God will use them to turn the breeze into a mighty wind. The people of the Church should be such a clear and compelling witness of Christ's love for the spiritually, socially, and physically broken that all who see through the window of the Church will say, "What a loving and great God these people have!"<sup>1</sup>

*By Bob Moffitt, Harvest Foundation  
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<sup>1</sup> Several remarks in this narrative have been taken directly from *If Jesus Were Mayor*, also written by Bob Moffitt. Used by permission.

**Suggested Resources:**

Harvest Website: [www.harvestfoundation.org](http://www.harvestfoundation.org) . Sections: Materials: LDTP II Section 14-1 “What Kind of Churches?” and Local Church Ministry Training (LCMT) Part 2

Disciple Nations Alliance online course: [www.disciplenations.org/resources/course](http://www.disciplenations.org/resources/course). Section: Wholistic Ministry

*If Jesus Were Mayor*, Bob Moffitt and Karla Tesch, Chapter 13 pp. 312-316 and pp. 27-30, 33-34.