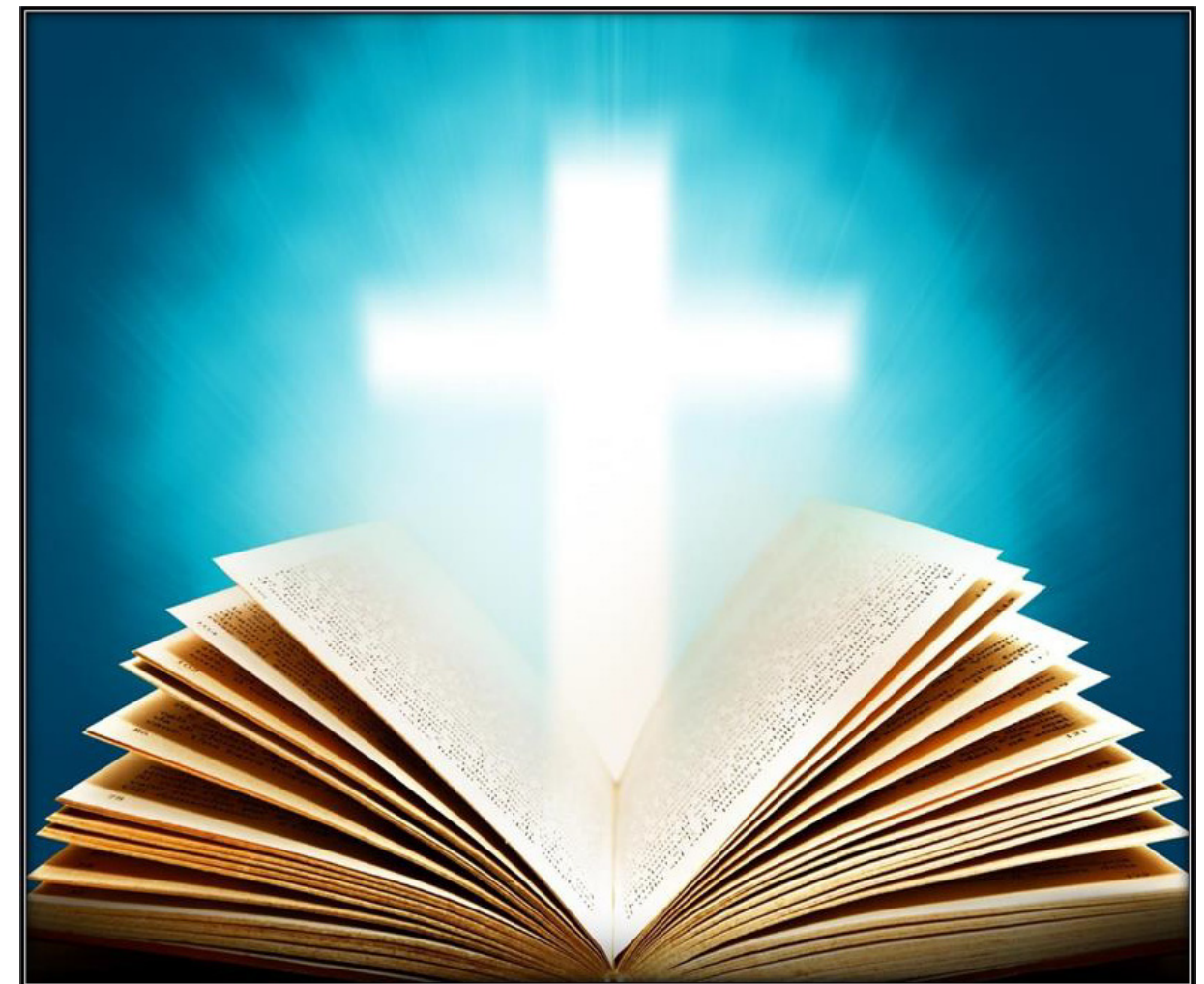


EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS



School of Global Missions

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS

KINGDOM DISCIPLESHIP

DISCIPLESHIP 203

Encountering World Missions

School of Global Missions
Dr. Frederick Osborn, M.Div., D.Min.

The School of Global Mission course curriculum for EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING is divided into six parts. Classes will meet one evening each week for one hour. Each part will be 12 lessons. It will take two years to complete all six parts.

Students will be required to take home extra materials and class handouts to read and study on their own.

At the end of each year (36 Lessons) each student will be required to submit a written summary of what they have learned (submission must be no less than three typed pages, single space, Times New Roman 12 pt. font). However, if the student has no access to a computer, special arrangements can be made for a handwritten paper to be submitted.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frederick Osborn traveled the world teaching and preaching the Word of God from 2005 - 2017. His first trip to South Asia was in 2001, and since 2005 he has been fully involved in ministry. His books and study guides have been used in classrooms by hundreds of students around the world.

In 2013 he earned his M.Div. from Andhra Christian Theological College in Hyderabad, India and in that same year was officially ordained into the ministry in a holy convocation administered by Indian pastors representing AG, CSA, and other non-denominational ministries. In 2017 he completed his D.Min. from Covenant Bible College & Seminary, Florida, USA.

He and his wife, Deena now live near Atlanta, GA where he continues to write, teach, and publish his books and study guides.

Evangelism and Church Planting Movements

Discipleship 203
Encountering World Missions

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Course Materials for EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS

Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey, Second Edition, A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, © 2004, 2015, Pub. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI

Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues, Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, with Timothy C. Tennent, © 2010, Pub. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI

Developing A Strategy For Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction, John Mark Terry, J. D. Payne, © 2013, Pub. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI

Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for intercultural Ministry, Tom Steffen, Lois McKinney Douglas, © 2008, Pub. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI

Reference Material Published by Dr. Frederick Osborn:

Church Planting Movements: India

Exploring the New Testament

Kingdom Discipleship: Becoming Like Jesus

Messiah: The Mission of Jesus of Nazareth

Reviving A Nation

The Apocalyptic Vision: Understanding the Apocalyptic Writings of the Bible

The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements

The Holy Spirit in You: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and power in You

The Revelation of Jesus Christ: John the Apostle's Heavenly Vision of Christ the King

The Way, the Truth, and the Life: the Teachings and Ministry of Jesus the Messiah

This Gospel of the Kingdom

School of Global Missions

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES: DISCIPLESHIP 201-203

COURSE SYLLABUS - PROFESSOR

Dr. Frederick Osborn, Academic Dean | Chancellor/President, SGM
678-702-1597 frederickosb7@outlook.com | SGM www.school-missions.com

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course in EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS is designed to teach and train three groups: (1) those who are preparing to go to unreached people groups in foreign mission fields (2) those indigenous workers who need more teaching and training for the work they are doing, and (3) to provide materials for indigenous church planters to teach and train others for evangelism and church planting.

CREDIT VALUE:

SGM uses what is known as a *Trimester Calendar* for holding classes. In a trimester system, students have three terms of 12 weeks in each school year. The students will cover a full year's worth of teaching in a normal two-semester year. This course in EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS has a 30-credit hour value (Three Terms in Evangelism and Church Planting Movements Studies in the first year and Three Terms in Evangelism and Church Planting Studies in the second year).

COURSE TEXT:

The only required text for all School of Global Mission courses is THE HOLY BIBLE. We recommend that each student has a good Study Bible, if possible.

NOTE TO STUDENTS: SGM recommends the website, www.blueletterbible.org for Bible translations and reference materials for Bible study. The site is also available on Mobile apps for your phone or tablet.

NOTE TO PROFESSORS: Additional materials are included in the teaching materials that you may or may not wish to take advantage of. Anything that is identified as HANDOUT material is NOT seen by the students unless you copy and give it to them as supplemental material. It will be up to the individual teacher to review the teaching materials and decide what to emphasize in their class time. Whatever is not covered in the class, the students will be able read and study as homework assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE STUDENTS:

1. Read the required texts.

NOTE TO PROFESSORS: Because the Bible is the only required text for all BIBLICAL STUDIES classes, the students should read the relevant chapters from the Scriptures. The chapters and verses covered in each class should be given at the beginning of each lesson.
2. Attend all classes in person or online, or review recording of an excused class (maximum two per term).
3. At the end of each term (12 weeks) write a term paper of at least three typewritten pages (12 point, Times New Roman font, single space.)

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS (SECOND YEAR LESSONS)

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS: DISCIPLESHIP 201 LESSONS

Making Disciples

1. Introduction to Kingdom Discipleship
2. Being Salt and Light to the World
3. Making Disciples Like Jesus
4. Jesus the Teacher: Jesus Taught “Be Like Me”
5. Jesus the Teacher: Jesus Taught “Follow Me”
6. Jesus the Teacher: Jesus Taught “Be Transformed”
7. Jesus the Teacher: Jesus Taught “Remember Me”
8. Jesus the Teacher: Jesus Taught “I Am the Way”
9. Jesus the Teacher: Jesus Taught “I Am the Truth”
10. Jesus the Teacher: Jesus Taught “I Am the Life”
11. Reviving a Nation
12. Preparing Students for Revival

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS: DISCIPLESHIP 202 LESSONS

Biblical Leadership

1. Intro The Man God Chooses to Lead
2. The Character of a Leader
3. How God Chooses a Man to Lead
4. The Commitment of a Leader
5. Ministerial Ethics
6. The Covering of a Leader: Spiritual Authority and Accountability
7. The Cooperation of a Leader: Maintaining Unity in the Body
8. The Integrity of a Leader
Encountering Missions as a Sent One and as a Sender
9. Introducing World Missions “Personal and Family Issues”
10. Introducing World Missions “Strategic and Ministry Issues”
11. Introducing World Missions “Relating to People of Other Cultures”
12. Introducing World Missions “Relating to Churches and Other Shareholders”

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS: DISCIPLESHIP 203 LESSONS

Encountering World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey

1. Encountering Mission in the Modern World
Encountering Mission in the Scriptures
2. Encountering Mission in the Old Testament
3. Encountering Mission in the Gospels
4. Encountering Mission in the New Testament Church
5. Encountering Mission Theology

Encountering Missions in the Contemporary World

6. Charting a Path from Here to There
7. Communicating with People of Other Cultures
8. Missions Trends and Paradigm Shifts
9. Encountering the Religions of the World
10. Jesus’s Model of Gifted Mission
11. The Task of Missions: Making Known the Kingdom of God
12. Spiritual Dynamics and Mission

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203 – ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

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NOTE: ALL HANDOUTS FOR THIS COURSE ARE IN A SEPARATE FILE. HANDOUTS ARE NOT INCLUDED WITH THE STUDENT NOTES. THE HANDOUTS MAY BE COPIED FOR THE STUDENTS AT THE TEACHER'S DISCRETION.

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

Some of the materials for these lessons of the School of Global Mission's DISCIPLESHIP 203 COURSE are taken from other materials written by Dr. Frederick Osborn. The source material has been edited and reformatted from the original to conform to the hour-long lessons. No part of these TEACHING NOTES may be copied and distributed to others without the written permission of the author or the School of Global Missions administration.

These special *Teaching Notes* are intended for the teachers only; they are in Times New Roman #14 for ease of reading while teaching. A separate set of notes for the students has been produced and are intended for the student to read and follow as you use the Teaching Notes.

Because this course uses the Inductive Method of Bible Study, you will notice a number of places where words, phrases, or sentences are in **bold print and underlined** these are intended for the students as fill-in-the-blank answers in their Student Notes as they follow your lesson.

In some lessons, there are more notes in the teaching materials than can be taught in the one-hour class time. So, it is best to review each lesson before you start teaching and refer to the student notes for reading and homework assignments. The additional materials in the *Teacher's Notes* allow the teacher some flexibility in how they teach this course. The teacher may look through the HANDOUTS and select which of the additional materials they want to copy and distribute to their students.

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-1: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

ENCOUNTERING MISSIONS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Note: The Primary Resource for This Lesson is *Introducing World Missions, Second Edition, A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, © 2004, 2015 by A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee; Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Lesson Outline for the Students

- I. Missions in the Contemporary World
 - a. Evangelization Is No Longer from West to East
- II. The Challenge of AI
- III. The Biblical Answer for the Modern World

MISSIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

In Part Five of *Introducing World Missions*, the authors state, "...the contemporary world presents numerous and formidable challenges to the church. Even so, God calls all Christians to faithful service for his kingdom no matter what the world brings against the church." This is true for every age. From the beginning of Acts to our present age, cross-cultural communication has been a major obstacle to overcome to introduce the world to Jesus Christ – the Jewish Messiah and Savior of the world.

Beginning with Paul's and Barnabas' first mission trip, missionaries have faced the many ups and downs of short-term missions. Tensions between Jewish believers and the new Gentile believers almost sunk the church before it could gain traction in the Roman world. Financing missions was an important consideration for senders, while spiritual warfare threatened missionaries as they battled for lost souls.

With every new age of the civilized world, Christian missions had to shift focus, methods, and messaging. The collapse of the Roman Empire and the invasions of warlike Pagan tribes made the preservation of the arts and sciences of the Western world an important function of the church while they sought new ways to convert the tribes who came only to pillage and destroy everything in their way. Through the Dark Ages, the church acted as the light of the world. In the Ages of Reason and Discovery, the church educated the masses in Europe while sending missionaries to new worlds that once were shrouded in mystery.

The invention of the printing press, the flowering of the Enlightenment, and the dawning of the Industrial Revolution, each brought with them new challenges for the church for evangelization. The Great Reformation started a revolution in the

church itself as new Christian leaders fought against popes and kings – and eventually against each other – over the future of the church. The Reformation brought new challenges for world evangelism that was no longer directed and financed by kings and popes.

Once again, Christian missions had to adjust – this time to the rapidly changing tides of a modern technological age of scientific advancement, computers, and worldwide, instant communication over the Internet. In the second half of the twentieth century, cheap and convenient Jet travel made short-term missions to distant places popular. But after major terrorist attacks made airport security a headache for travelers, and Jet travel became too expensive, it forced a re-evaluation of the cost versus results for short-term missions.

In our contemporary world, a new challenge to missions is emerging. Like it or not, the age of Artificial Intelligence is upon us. Unlike any other development of man's scientific knowledge and human ingenuity, Artificial Intelligence has the potential not only to change the ways people and cultures interact with each other but may have the potential to alter the human soul. How people understand and relate to the world around them, how they perceive reality, discern what is true or false, and how they conduct their daily lives will be changed drastically by the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Christian leaders need to get serious about AI and start formulating strategies for how to preserve and present biblical truth in a world controlled by AI. The potential for drastic and life-altering change is real and will only increase in the years ahead. In the last century, nations were in a nuclear arms race for political and military dominance. In this century a new arms race is taking place: a race for who will harness the power of AI first and dominate the world, by the production and control of what is being generated by super-human computers that will surpass by far anything any human mind can process.

Only God knows what a future controlled by AI will mean for His creation. But the mission of the church has never changed and will not change; it is to go and preach the gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth, to make disciples of every nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to glorify God until He returns at the end of the ages (Matthew 28:19-20).

Evangelization Is No Longer from West to East

In his contribution to *Popular Culture and Philosophy*, David Weberman wrote, "The film *The Matrix* was released in 1999, not 1969. Because of this it easily finds resonance among its viewers. We understand it; we recognize its power – not only as a futuristic science fiction, but as a commentary on who we are. It is not the first film or artwork to test these waters. But it is perhaps the most sustained

(implicitly) philosophical film to address one of the central features of postmodern experience: the blurred or vanishing line between reality and simulation.” (*The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, © 2002, Edited by William Irwin, p.226).

Artists, philosophers, scientists, and intellectuals of all kinds have been preparing – or at least trying to prepare – the world for what they foresee as the cultural wasteland that postmodernism and globalization are leading mankind to. The modern age of industrial progress and scientific certainty was totally dismantled after two world wars, the Holocaust, totalitarian fascism and Communism, and the threat of total nuclear annihilation during a decades-long Cold War between East and West. Postmodern intellectuals said that recent history proved the failure of mankind to advance beyond their primitive instincts for self-survival of the strongest over the weak. “In the arts and in architecture, the ideals of purity and depth have given way to irony and the play of surfaces while the distinction between high and low or popular art has come to seem quaint and indefensible.” (*The Matrix and Philosophy*, p.225).

The first generation of youth that was cultivated on a steady diet of television programs proliferating on cable and satellite outlets were led to abandon their faith in God. In previous generations the home (family), church house, and local schoolhouse were the primary carriers of cultural norms. Today’s youth are culturally abandoned waifs left to fend for themselves in a wilderness of conflicting values flashing at them with lightning speed from television and computer screens, and smart phones. This first generation of the 21st century no longer believes there is any reason to search for truth because they see no answers to questions like “What is knowledge?” and “How do we know things?”

Children raised in the postmodern Western world have been trained to abandon any search for meaning, ethical norms, or transcendent truths to validate their personal experiences, knowledge, and values. When presented with the gospel of salvation in Jesus, the typical responses are “Who says?” “Who knows?” and “Who cares?” Therefore, Christians in the West can no longer assume that people will listen to them if they declare Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life because those who are saturated with postmodernism will respond with a shrug of their shoulders and respond, “Whose way?” “Which truth?” And “Who gives you the right to tell me how to live?”

Missions in the contemporary world must adopt a new paradigm for evangelism. Before this century, missions were always thought of as being from West to East. Christian majorities in Europe and America were mobilized to send missionaries East – to Asian and African regions where most evangelism was needed. However, in this new century things have changed

dramatically. Christianity has been in decline in the West for decades. Although most Westerners still consider themselves “Christian”, the truth is only a small remnant of them attend church every week, read and study their Bibles regularly, or believe the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. Some Christian denominations have capitulated to the radicals pushing LBGTQ+ propaganda and have gone so far as to accept practicing homosexuals into the clergy and solemnizing gay and trans marriages in their church.

Added to the spiritual decline of Christianity in the West is the recent influx of non-Christian migrants created by open door policies of Western politicians. Globalists believe that large-scale legal and illegal immigration is a good thing. They have allowed mass immigration to destabilize Christian culture and have suppressed Christian majorities who want to openly evangelize non-Christian immigrants.

Europe and America can no longer boast of being fortresses of Christianity. In many ways, the thriving churches of Asia and Africa have as much or more to contribute to world evangelization as the West. A new globalized humanity and a worldwide church are shifting the center of gravity for Christianity away from the West to Asia and Africa. “In a globalized world in which missions are conducted from all nations to all nations, it is fitting that the voices of majority world Christians are heard in regard to the conduct of missions. Global consultations include Christian leaders from around the world. The collected works of these conferences bring the reflections of majority world Christians to the attention of Western readers.” (*The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*, © 2005 by Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, and Douglas McConnell, Pub. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 13-14)

THE CHALLENGE OF AI

“From the pinnacle of scientific achievement to the depths of moral anguish, J. Robert Oppenheimer’s journey after unleashing atomic devastation would forever reshape the landscape of human conscience. As the scientific director of the Manhattan Project, Oppenheimer played a pivotal role in developing the world’s first atomic bomb, a feat that would catapult him into the annals of history and burden him with an immense moral weight for the remainder of his life.”
<https://neurolaunch.com/did-oppenheimer-regret/>

Scientists and technocrats are on the threshold of unleashing upon the world a force more powerful than the atomic bomb. What makes AI so powerful is that unlike any other manmade device, it has the power not only to build or destroy, but

it also has the power to reshape the human soul. How people think, how they perceive the world, how they understand what is real and what is not – everything that makes us human will be placed on the cutting board of a technology that few, if any, humans can control. Some intellectuals see AI as a way to finally evolve the human race to the next level; others see it creating a “Frankenstein’s Monster” – something that will terrorize the masses and that the masses will want to stop because they do not understand it.

“I’m a human, not a bot; I perceive and understand the world in a way than the large language model I’m speaking with (and the [self-driving] cars I’m avoiding on the road) cannot. I see the lemon tree out our window; I taste the third-wave coffee brewed in the neighborhood café; I feel the salt breeze off the bay. I know my neighbors—the farmer at the market who brings peaches, the dad who works at the Tesla plant—and I know the God that I worship at the church down the street, past the poppies and roses.” – Russell Moore

Nations, East and West, are fully engaged in an “arms race” to see who will dominate a world driven by Artificial Intelligence. And like atomic power, AI is a tool that will have the potential to do tremendous good for mankind or harm mankind, depending upon who is using it. Artificial Intelligence is already being integrated with digital programs. Before our eyes, AI is being merged with mobile devices, vehicles, televisions, workplaces, and of course the internet. In many cases users do not realize they are already encountering AI technology. With each passing year, people are becoming more aware of the benefits of AI for learning and creating content for personal or public consumption. However, some intellectuals are asking questions about the potential risks to human beings by exposing them to a constant stream of powerful AI technologies.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” **Galatians 5:1** (NIV)

All heroic human beings are on one of two quests: one is to enslave mankind and force them to do their will; the other is to free mankind to live as God created them to live on this earth. As Christians, our Bible-centered theology must be in the forefront of ethical and moral considerations for how AI technology is to be used. We should be aware of the potential for great harm that can be done to human beings by the misuse of AI. (See HANDOUT: Three Biblical Considerations for Christians Living in the Age of AI)

Scientists will discuss the ways AI can be applied, but they are not equipped to address the moral and ethical issues surrounding if, when, or how it should be used. Artists, philosophers, and a few theologians are starting to ask some hard questions about the implications of virtual realities. (For a more thorough treatment of the philosophical implications of AI see: *The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, © 2002, Edited by William Irwin. And *Philosophers Explore the Matrix*, Edited by Christopher Grau, © 2005, Pub. Oxford University Press, NY).

THE BIBLICAL ANSWER FOR THE MODERN WORLD

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

John 3:16

Although the modern world presents new challenges to the tasks of missions, the message remains the same. The fallen human condition has not changed. Since the beginning, all human beings – no matter what their race, culture, or geography – have had the same needs. All the arts, sciences, literature, and philosophies are the expressions of mankind’s deep longings to be loved, to be accepted, and to have meaning. No matter what age of history, and no matter where missionaries may go in the world, because human beings have been created in the same image, they will share the same three greatest human needs. Central to the gospel message is the truth that these great needs are met only in Jesus Christ.

The Three Greatest Human Needs Are:

1. WE ALL WANT TO **BE LOVED** – To love and be loved may be the greatest longing of the human soul.
2. WE ALL WANT TO **BE ACCEPTED** FOR WHO WE TRULY ARE – to be accepted without pretenses, masks, games – to be known and not to be rejected
3. WE ALL WANT OUR LIFE TO **HAVE MEANING** – That we are not just a grain of salt floating in a vast cosmic sea... here for a moment and then gone forever.

LOVE

It should not be surprising to discover that love is one of the greatest themes found in the Bible. The word “love” appears way over 3,000 times in the Bible and describes every kind of love human beings experience. Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (John 14:23)

It makes perfect sense that love is so important in the Bible because it is critical to the mental, emotional, and physical health of human beings. Doctors and psychologists say whether it is romantic, familial, friendship, or from a religious experience, love releases hormones that make people feel better. Scientists have discovered that brain chemicals like dopamine and oxytocin can trigger energy and create a sense of attachment when released. This bond can lower blood pressure and stress hormones and improve your overall mood.

John had already noted that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. (John 11:5). In the story of Mary anointing Jesus ahead of His burial (John 12:1-8) we see how Jesus was able to answer her great need to feel that she was loved. By taking the focus off of herself and pouring out a costly oil to anoint Jesus, she was making a gesture of pure devotion that was possible only because she was loved by Jesus. Mary's act of devotion was motivated by a longing for Jesus to address something that was unfulfilled in her soul.

There is no question that love is central to who we are as human beings. All people everywhere share a common need to love and to be loved. The Son of God understood this and when asked what the greatest commandment is, he replied, "you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31).

In his first epistle, the Apostle John had much to say about love and its central role in the Christian faith. At one point he says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:7-11).

Unlike every other religion, love is the central pillar and the capstone that upholds everything we preach and do. When a Christian fails to love God and love others like Jesus does, they have missed the entire purpose for which they have been saved. It is the unconditional love of God for us that lifts us out of the mud and mire of sin, washes us clean, and saves us. This is the message we have heard from the beginning and it is the message that everyone needs to hear. "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39). The gospel we must proclaim to the modern world is that **in Christ, we are loved, and it is His love that makes us able to love God, others, and ourselves.**

ACCEPTANCE

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;
Before you were born I sanctified you;
I ordained you a prophet to the nations." **Jeremiah 1:5**

To be accepted for who we truly are without pretenses, masks, games – to be known completely and not to be rejected is the deep longing of every soul. However, most human behavior is intended to keep others from knowing who we truly are on the inside. Most people fear that they may be rejected if people really knew what they thought, and how they felt. So, we are taught from an early age to wear masks to disguise our true selves. We conform to societal and peer pressure to act certain ways and to think like others. Sometimes people will engage in destructive and self-destructive behaviors because they want to fit in with the "right people" or blend in with the crowd.

However, psychologists say that being accepted by others for who we truly are is important to our mental and emotional health. Belonging is a psychological need. If an individual does not feel a sense of belonging, it negatively impacts their mental health and sense of well-being. Psychologists have noted that the need for acceptance is part of the human make-up. When the need to feel accepted and to belong with others is denied, it causes great psychological harm to us.

When Jesus said we are to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39), He was speaking of another aspect of acceptance: accepting ourselves. Whenever a person dwells upon past sins and past mistakes, they will only feel worse. Too often we find that it is harder to forgive ourselves than it is to forgive others. The encounter between Peter and Jesus after His resurrection is a perfect example of how the Lord restores someone who has failed himself and the Lord. The Gospels tell the story of Peter's denial of Jesus after declaring he would follow Jesus to the cross. Peter assured the Lord that even if everyone else abandoned Him, he would not. But the moment Jesus was arrested and taken away, Peter fled into the night with the rest of the disciples. Later, Peter was outside with a small group of people warming themselves by the fire while Jesus was inside on trial for His life. When given the opportunity to admit he was one of Jesus' disciples, Peter denied it strongly – just as Jesus predicted he would. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared again to His disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Peter was broken and ashamed by his failure to identify himself as one of Jesus' disciples. But in a personal exchange between Jesus and Peter, Jesus restored Peter and showed him the way forward (John 21:15-22).

Peter's story demonstrates that God's acceptance of us is not based upon our performance but is based upon Christ alone. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:1-

2 that we have been made right in God's sight by faith alone. We have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ has done for us, and not upon what we have done for Him. Because of our faith in Christ, He has brought us into right standing with Him (justified). Because we are accepted in the Lord, it gives us peace within and helps us to forgive others as Christ has forgiven us.

"Our acceptance is based on Christ... On the one hand, we are complete in Christ (our acceptance with him is secure); on the other hand, we are growing in Christ (we are becoming more and more like him). At the same time we have the status of kings and the duties of slaves. We feel both the presence of Christ and the pressure of sin. We enjoy the peace that comes from being made right with God, but we still face daily problems that help us grow. If we remember these two sides of the Christian life, we will not grow discouraged as we face temptations and problems. Instead, we will learn to depend on the power available to us from Christ, who lives in us by the Holy Spirit." (Neil S. Wilson, *The Handbook of Bible Application*, Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., © 2000, p.5-6).

MEANING

Psychologists, philosophers, and theologians have long recognized that meaning in life is an important psychological need. The more people feel meaningful, the more they experience overall positive psychological well-being. Moreover, meaning reduces the risk for depression, addiction, and suicide. Meaning is also positively associated with physical health and longevity.

In the story of Mary anointing Jesus ahead of His burial (John 12:1-8) we not only see how Jesus was able to answer her great need to give and receive love, we also discover how our devotion to Christ adds deeper meaning and significance to our life. Matthew's and Mark's account add Jesus' declaration to all who just witnessed this moment, "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." (Mark 14:9)

In Christ, our life is given new meaning a purpose: "Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).

From Genesis to Revelation we find a consistent theme that mankind was created for a purpose. This universe, the earth, and all living things were created by God for the glory of God. And mankind has a unique purpose as the crown of God's

creation to reflect the *imago dei* (image of God). Genesis 1:27 says, "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them..." Everything God made was made for man's well-being.

So, mankind as a whole has significance but more than that, each individual has significance:

"For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.
How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;
When I awake, I am still with You." Psalms 139:13-18.

The Bible is the story of God's relationship with the people He created. Every book of the Bible affirms the truth that every life has eternal value. God assures us over and over again that He loves us, cares about us, will be there for us if we will call upon His name:

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." **James 4:7-10**

Missions in the modern world is the same as missions in the early days of the church. The whole world is lost and confused: poets and artists are seeking answers about what love is; philosophers wonder about who they are and if there is any meaning to life. The vast majority of the world's problems would be solved if only they would embrace the gospel which says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have

everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (John 3:16–17).

Questions for Lesson One

1. What are some of the challenges to missions in the modern world?
2. What does the statement “Evangelization Is No Longer from West to East” mean?
3. How does Artificial Intelligence affect missions in the modern world?
4. What are the three greatest needs of human beings?
5. How does the gospel meet the three greatest needs of human beings?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-2: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

ENCOUNTERING MISSION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Note: The Primary Resource for This Lesson is *Introducing World Missions, Second Edition, A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, © 2004, 2015 by A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee; Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Lesson Outline for the Students

- I. In the Beginning – Protoevangelium (Genesis 1 – 11)
 - a. Creation and the Fall of Mankind
 - b. Noah’s Flood
 - c. Babel
- II. Mission in the Patriarchs (Genesis 12 – 50)
 - a. Abraham
 - b. Isaac
 - c. Jacob
 - d. Joseph
- III. Mission in the Old Testament’s Historical Narratives
 - a. Exodus
 - b. The Kings and Prophets
 - c. The Exile and Return
- IV. God’s Mission to Save the Nations

IN THE BEGINNING – PROTOEVANGELIUM (GENESIS 1 – 11)

“The Bible tells the story of God’s work for and among all the peoples of the world. The fact that the word *mission* does not appear anywhere in the Bible, then, does not mean that the Bible is not a missionary text through and through.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.27)

The Old Testament is a divine tapestry of people, places, and objects that are woven together in such a way as to reveal a grand story of the relationship of the

Creator with mankind (Adam and Eve and their descendants). Abraham and his descendants (the Patriarchs) dominate the story of the Old Testament, but to understand that part of the story, it is essential to see it as it relates to **all the nations** surrounding them, while watching for the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan to save His creation and reconcile all things in the end. This plan to save mankind, the crown of His creation, is revealed first in **Genesis 3:15** when God says to the serpent, the instrument through which Satan entered the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam and Eve, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Called *the protoevangelium* by theologians, Genesis 3:15 is recognized as the first announcement of the gospel – the "good news" that a Savior would come and defeat Satan and his demons and redeem mankind from their sins once and for all.

There are any number of threads that one can follow through the pages of the Old Testament: including God's grace, God's covenants with humanity, God's hand in saving His chosen people, and the promises of God to name a few. However, for the purposes of this course, the study of *the protoevangelium* as the **mission of God** and His people in the Old Testament is the theme followed because *the protoevangelium* shows us that *God always had the plan of salvation in mind*, and informed Adam and his descendants of His plan immediately after sin entered the world. Throughout the Old Testament there are reminders that the Messiah (Savior) of the world is coming. In Jesus the Messiah, the Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament merge to point us to the end of the story of mankind's salvation first revealed in Genesis 3:15.

Creation and the Fall of Mankind

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" **Genesis 1:26–28**

Implied in the creation story is the spiritual truth that the sovereign God of the universe that He created is **intimately involved** with those He created in His image. Man is not only given the unique position of being created in His image, but also of

being the crown of His creation. Man was created to have dominion over the earth and all living things in the skies above, the earth below, and in the oceans.

When sin entered into the heart of man, he lost his mastery over himself, his family, the earth and nature. From Adam to Noah, God made His appeals directly to individuals to save them from destroying themselves and others. ("So the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.'" (Genesis 4:6–7). Mankind refused to listen to God and so, the sins of Adam spread like an unchecked cancer until "...the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." (Genesis 6:5-6).

Noah's Flood

God's remedy was to remove those who refused to repent and to start over with one man, Noah, and his family: "...Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. And Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." (Genesis 6:10-12). After the flood waters receded and the earth recovered from the effects of the flood, Noah and his family started to replenish the human population. However, it was not long before the fallen nature of Adam's race surfaced in their actions and in the actions of descendants. "And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent..." (Genesis 9:20–21). Noah became drunk with wine and exposed himself for all to see. Because he disrespected his father in his drunken state, Canaan and his descendants were cursed by Noah, but his other two sons were blessed.

Babel

"Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there." (Genesis 11:1–2). The sin nature in man continues to spread and instead of following God's command to spread out and populate the whole earth, they concentrate in one area. They use their unity to build a great city, Babel, and start to build a temple to their own glory. Again, God is forced to intervene and scatters the people, confusing their languages (11:5-9). Chapter eleven of Genesis concludes with a history of Abraham's ancestors from Noah's son Shem to Abraham's father Terah.

MISSION IN THE PATRIARCHS (GENESIS 12 – 50)

Abraham

There is a distinct change in the mission strategy of God beginning in Genesis 12 with the choosing of Abraham. Instead of dealing with all of mankind at once, God is going to work with one man and his descendants:

“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.
I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1–3)

The promises of God to Abraham and his descendants – that he will be blessed, become a great nation, and that all nations of the earth shall be blessed by him – are the loom upon which the stories of the Old Testament are woven together. In the end, the books of Moses and the prophets, the histories and the poetry of Israel’s kings produce a clear image of the one, true, and living God of creation.

Isaac

The promises of God to Abraham are passed on to Isaac, the **child of the promise**. “Then he went up from there to Beersheba. And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.’” (Genesis 26:23–24). In the story of Isaac and Ishmael we see two important things: (1) that the Lord is keeping and protecting His promises to Abraham, and (2) the bitterroot of the conflicts between the people of Israel and the Arab nations.

Jacob

The importance of Jacob as a patriarch is indicated by the fact that his story spans **25 chapters** of Genesis. His story overlaps his father Isaac, and his son, Joseph. Genesis 25 describes his birth and Genesis 50 describes his death. In Jacob’s story, God confirms the covenant he made with Abraham (Genesis 28:10-15). Jacob vows to serve God only if God will keep His promises to protect and provide for him

(Genesis 28:16-22). Eventually Jacob has twelve sons which will eventually become the twelve tribes of Israel.

The themes of **separation** and **faithfulness** to the only true God are important to Jacob’s story. Separation unto God, separation from the idol worshipers, and separation within families are built upon. Jacob has an epiphany by the Jabok River and God changes his name to “Israel” (*one who struggles with God*).

Jacob builds altars in Shechem (33:17-20) and Bethel (35:1). He collects and buries all the idols in his camp and then builds another altar to God. As Jacob’s revelation of God grows, He describes Him as “God, the God of Israel” and “the God of the house of God.” In Genesis 35:9-15, God again confirms to Jacob the covenant He made with Abraham.

Joseph

Joseph was the favored son of Jacob (Israel). Sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph was able to rise to the second highest position of power in Egypt because of God’s favor upon him. A famine back in Canaan forced his brothers to seek grain from Egypt. Unrecognized by his brothers, Joseph engineered their move to Egypt along with their father, Jacob, and the rest of the family. Joseph revealed himself to his family and forgave his brothers. Encouraged to remain in Egypt, the small tribe of seventy souls lived in Goshen under the protection of Joseph. Before his death, Jacob blessed his children and prophesied about the Davidic kingdom and the coming of the Messiah from Judah, saying, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.” (Genesis 49:10).

MISSION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT’S HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

“For a space of 400 years, during which, politically, the face of the ‘Fertile Crescent’ was completely altered, the Bible is silent. In these four centuries there took place a vast rearrangement of the disposition of national groups. They interrupted the history of the Semitic kingdoms that for 1,000 years had maintained their sway on the Euphrates and the Tigris. The great island of civilization in the Middle East was rudely dragged from its self-sufficient existence. Foreign peoples with foreign ways surged in from distant and hitherto unknown lands. For the first time it felt the clash with the outside world.” (Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, William Morrow and Company, New York, © 1980, p. 108)

Exodus – the historical narrative of the Israelites escape from captivity in Egypt is often used as a metaphor for the salvation of all God’s people from this sin-stained world.

“Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, ‘Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.’ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens...” **Exodus 1:8–11a**

The book of Exodus opens a new act in God’s mission to fulfill His promises to Abraham and save His people. “God’s people find themselves in Egypt rather than in the land promised to Abraham. God knows that they probably would remain content to live in Egypt forever, but the time has come for them to claim the heritage that Abraham had received by faith. It is time again for God to intervene. Now God will take his people out of Egypt and place them in the land from which they would serve as a blessing to the people of the world.” (*Introducing World Missions*, pp. 33-34).

It is approximately 1500 B.C., and God sees the **time is fulfilled** for Abraham’s children to leave Egypt. Their time in Egypt was not wasted. They entered Egypt a small group of twelve families, now they have become a multitude. In Egypt, Israel was united by several important factors:

- While in Egypt they maintained their **separate identities**: Ethnic, within families, and geographic.
- They never forgot that their true homeland was the **Promised Land** in Canaan: “And Joseph said to his brethren, ‘I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.’ Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.’” (Genesis 50:24–25)
- The **rite of circumcision** was continued as the Lord commanded: “This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.” (Genesis 17:10–12)

- Israel’s **hopes and dreams** as God’s chosen people were kept alive in Egypt by their belief that one day, God would send a deliverer to set them free. God said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” (Genesis 15:13–14)

United by the **oppression** they experienced under Pharaoh and the **miraculous events** surrounding their deliverance, Israel was held together on their 40-year journey to Canaan by the **leadership of Moses**. During their sojourn at Mount Sinai, Israel was given the distinct moral, civil, and religious laws that would guide them in a fallen world filled with idol worship and the decadence that surrounds it. On the threshold of the Promised Land, Israel had become a new nation, ready to conquer.

The victories secured by divine intervention and under the leadership of Joshua, slowed and came to a premature halt. Israel was instructed not to stop until every last vestige of evil and corruption was cleansed from the Promised Land. Although they controlled the territory of Canaan, after Joshua’s generation passed away, the Israelites ignored God’s warnings (Numbers 33:55; Joshua 23:13) and allowed the remnants of the idol worshiping Canaanites to remain in the land. “Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so.” (Judges 2:16–17).

The Kings and Prophets – From 1050-586 B.C., God’s people were led by a series of kings. United under Saul, David, and Solomon, the wealth, power and boundaries of the nation expand. After Solomon, the nation splits into the Kingdom of Israel in the north and the Kingdom of Judah in the south. “Again and again throughout the monarchical period, the time of the divided kingdom, and the subsequent exiles, the people turn their backs on God. He alternately disciplines and extends mercy to them. The discipline is a stark reminder of God’s unwillingness to share the glory due him with any rival. God’s acts of mercy demonstrate his love not only for those he has called but also for every people he has created.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.34).

Long before the kings and prophets of Israel take center stage in the biblical message of God’s mission to redeem the fallen race of Adam, the pattern of man’s consistent **sin and rebellion** against their God and Creator and the need for God’s gracious forgiveness has been well-established. The sins of the Patriarchs, the

children of Israel in the Wilderness, the sins and backsliding of the twelve tribes in the time of the Judges, and now the sins of the kings and the people they led are recorded clearly for all to read. God makes His appeals to the people to repent and turn from their sins, sometimes directly, or through His chosen leaders, but except for brief periods of obedience and faith, most of Israel's kingdom history is about their **disobedience and unbelief**.

The Exile and Return – Throughout the kingdom period of Israel's history, God uses His **chosen prophets** to make His appeals to the people for them to repent and return to Him. The prophets' repeated warnings that failure to repent will lead to their destruction are ignored in the end, and first the northern, then the southern kingdoms are swept away. But God does not abandon His people entirely and promises them that a remnant will return to Judah and Jerusalem.

Some of Israel's greatest prophets ministered in the years leading up to the exile of the Jews in Babylon and immediately after their return. Prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi reveal that God has a divine plan for His people. The prophecies in Daniel transcend God's mission to save the Jews and reveal that God's mission to save is for **the whole world**.

GOD'S MISSION TO SAVE THE NATIONS

“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; And let them say among the nations, ‘The LORD reigns.’” **1 Chronicles 16:31**

It is a serious misunderstanding of the Old Testament to think it is only for and about the Jewish people. Embedded in the Old Testament's stories concerning the salvation of God's chosen people, is God's **universal intent** to extend His salvation to the nations. “Although the story of rescue and separation involves one people in particular, the fact of God's universal intent through that one people remains clear. Just as God called one person (Abraham) to be a blessing for the whole world, so now he begins with one land (Israel) to renew the whole earth... Israel is only the starting point of a universal program of God.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.35).

From the moment God chose Abram in the land of Ur, to the return of a remnant of people from exile, God's intention was to use His chosen people to make Himself known to the nations. The promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him was passed down from generation to generation (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 28:14). The LORD made it clear that He would make His name declared in all the earth (Exodus 9:16). God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from

bondage in Egypt was to show all the peoples of the earth the mighty hand of the LORD so that all “may fear the LORD your God forever.” (Joshua 4:24).

With each new victory, the kings of Israel and Judah demonstrated the supreme power of the Lord over all the other gods:

“O LORD, my strength and my fortress,
my refuge in time of distress,
to you the nations will come
from the ends of the earth and say,
‘Our fathers possessed nothing but false gods,
worthless idols that did them no good.
Do men make their own gods?
Yes, but they are not gods!’” **Jeremiah 16:19–20**

When King David brought the ark of God to Jerusalem and placed it in the permanent tabernacle erected for it, after the sacrifices were made and Levite priests were appointed to minister in it, David composed a song of thanksgiving, which included the words, “Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his wonders among all peoples.” (1 Chronicles 16:23-24).

When King Solomon completed the great temple in Jerusalem, he included these words in his prayer of dedication: “Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name's sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name.” (1 Kings 8:41–43).

The Psalms are not often thought of as being missionary in content, but upon closer examination, they contain many verses that refer to the mission of God as not only for the salvation of Israel, but as **for the nations** also: Psalms 2:8; 22:27; 33:8; 47:1; 48:10; 64:9; 67:2, 3, 7; 72:11, 17; 82:8; 86:9; 96:1, 3; 97:6; 98:3; 102:15; 117:1; 145:21; 148:7, 11. Missiologists have pointed to more than 175 references to God's universal intent in the Psalms. Selected verses in the Psalms call on all peoples of all nations to praise the Lord (Ps. 47:1; 67:3, 5; 100:1; 117:1). Even more directly, the Levitical choirs of Israel urged the people to tell, proclaim, and make known the mighty deeds of Yahweh (Ps. 9:11; 105:1) and to join them in singing praises to God (Ps. 18:49; 57:9; 96:2-3; 108:3). In the end, the intent of the Lord that “All the ends

of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You.” (Ps. 22:27) emerges as a major theme in the Psalms.

Israel’s mighty prophets span the history of their kings. Their primary function was to keep the people in line who were constantly going astray and chasing after idols. Woven into their messages for God’s people was the understanding that obedience to the Law of God brought victory, but disobedience would lead to their defeat and destruction. Israel was lifted up as a banner to the nations (Isaiah 5:26; 11:12; 13:2; 18:3; 30:17; 31:9; 62:10).

The prophets revealed that God’s mission always included the salvation of the Gentiles alongside His chosen people (See HANDOUT “OT Prophecies on the Salvation of the Nations”). For good or ill, Israel would be an **example to the nations** to lead them to repentance and faith in the one true living God. It was the curse of idolatry that led His people astray and caused them to lose their effective witness to the nations. Isaiah 11:10 says, “And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious.” Idolatry brought God’s wrath upon Israel and in the end, it will bring God’s wrath upon the nations (Jeremiah 44:7-10).

The prophets of Israel spoke often of the **promised restoration** of God for His fallen creation. The fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 was slowly being narrowed down from “a seed of the woman” to a descendant of Abraham to a descendant of Judah to a descendant of King David. “...the promise first given in Genesis 3:15 is narrowed down from a particular people to a particular person who will redeem Israel and provide hope for the nations... Individuals from among the people of Israel, especially the prophets, are sent by God to call the people to repentance and deliverance. Israel as a nation is to serve in the same capacity among the rest of the nations of the world.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.36).

God’s mission to the nations does not end with Israel’s downfall. The stories of God’s people in captivity, demonstrate how God kept on using His chosen people to communicate His message of salvation for all nations. Some of Israel’s greatest prophets live and minister to the people in this time of crisis for the Jews. Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah all look ahead to a Messianic age when Jerusalem will be restored to its former glory, when the nations will stream to the temple to worship the God of Israel in spirit and truth, and a new covenant will be struck with all of mankind:

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least

of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” **Jeremiah 31:33–34**

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.” **Zechariah 14:16**

The mission of God that began in the Old Testament involves individuals chosen by God for specific purposes, the community of God’s chosen people, and Gentiles who respond in faith from their encounters with God and His people. In the Old Testament the mission of God is largely concealed like a treasure hidden in a field. Although the nations are invited to join with God’s covenant people, the complete salvation of the nations is prophesied for a future messianic age.

Questions for Lesson Two

1. How does Genesis 3:15, the *protoevangelium* shape the Old Testament’s stories?
2. How do the promises of God to Abraham and his descendants shape the mission of God in the Old Testament?
3. How does the mission of God to save mankind relate to the historical narratives in the Old Testament?
4. What roles do Israel’s kings and prophets play in revealing God’s mission to save the nations?
5. What is the importance of the Psalms to God’s mission to save all people?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-3: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

ENCOUNTERING MISSION IN THE GOSPELS

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Lesson Outline for the Students

- I. Encountering Mission in the Gospel of Matthew
- II. Encountering Mission in in the Gospel of Mark
- III. Encountering Mission in in the Gospel of Luke
- IV. Encountering Mission in in the Gospel of John

“Seen through the Gospels, God at last answers the hopes that the prophets had planted, nurtured, and stirred in his people. However, the fulfillment of their hopes comes in an unexpected way. Jesus does not come as a conquering king ready to take over Rome. Rather, he comes as a humble teacher prepared to die on behalf of his people.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.41)

ENCOUNTERING MISSION IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” **Matthew 24:14**

The proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom is a central theme in Matthew’s Gospel. The Old Testament prophets fired up the expectations of the Jewish people that the Messiah would arrive according to Daniel’s prophetic timeline revealed in the vision of the “Seventy Weeks” (Daniel 9:24-27). By the time Jesus of Nazareth arrived on the scene, the Jews were looking everywhere for the one who would conquer the Romans and reestablish the line of King David.

Although the concept of a heavenly kingdom to come at some time in the future was totally unfamiliar to the Gentiles, the children of Israel, it was of utmost importance to the Jews. However, Jesus’ teachings on the kingdom of heaven were

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uniquely His and were not what the Jews were expecting. He is quoted referring to the kingdom eighty-two times in the Gospels but as E. Stanley Jones noted, “The Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit are the two missing notes in much of our Christianity. And Jesus made both of them central – one the pattern, the other the power.” The Gospel of Matthew leaves little doubt about the importance of the **Kingdom of God** in Jesus’ message. Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 record how Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing people.

Because those who came to hear Jesus were immersed in the worldview shaped by the Old Testament, they expected an **earthly King** who would immediately overthrow the Gentile nations that were oppressing the Jewish people and rule over the territories originally conquered by David (Isaiah 9:6–7). Jerusalem would be the religious and political **center of the world**, and all the kings of the earth would pay homage to the divine King that sat on David’s throne. (Isaiah 2:2-4). However, it is clear from the Gospels that the kingdom Jesus said was “in the midst” of them was totally different from the one the Jews had come to expect. An incident recorded in Matthew’s Gospel reveals the ambivalence of those Jews who thought Jesus might indeed be the “Expected One”, but did not understand why He did not make the moves they expected from the one who was destined to sit on David’s throne.

John the Baptist was no different than the other Jews that were watching and waiting for the coming King. John, like the other Old Testament prophets before him, knew that when the Messiah came, he would usher in the promised new age (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

As John sat in his prison cell, he saw no evidence of a “Golden Messianic Age” that the Jews were looking for from their Messiah. The wicked King Herod was still on the throne; there was no army of righteous warriors gathering together to overthrow the hated Roman Governor and his legions. The only ones following Jesus were the weak, the humble, the downtrodden and the powerless. John the Baptist must have been wondering at that time if he had got it wrong. Had he missed the Lord? Was Jesus really the Anointed One? Or should the Jews look for yet another to deliver them?

“And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’” **Matthew 11:2–6**

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Surely, Jesus' answer to John must have shaken his expectations concerning who and what he thought the Messiah would be. His answer, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see..." was designed to challenge **John's presuppositions** concerning the Messiah and the kingdom of God. But layered in His response to John were clear prophecies that revealed a ministry of the Messiah that the Jews were not looking for but was there all along (Psalms 118:22-23; 146:7-9; Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:3-6; 61:1-3). It was this gospel of the kingdom – **the good news of salvation** for all by grace that the builders rejected – that was essential to all of what Jesus did and taught. When Jesus heard that the religious leaders were complaining about the sinners flocking to Him for healing and cleansing, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Matthew 9:12-13).

All of the Gospels tell the story of how Jesus went through all the cities and villages, teaching and proclaiming **the gospel of the kingdom** to those who were captive to sin and death. He began His public ministry by announcing, "the kingdom of God is at hand". Jesus and His disciples set the pattern for all missionaries when they went from village to village demonstrating the kingdom of God has come. "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand...'" (Matthew 10:7).

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." **Matthew 28:19-20**

What then did Jesus mean when He instructed His disciples to go, preach the kingdom was at hand, and make disciples of all nations? Clearly, He was calling His disciples to teach His **new and unexpected reality** of God's kingdom: that the way of salvation by repentance and faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God was now open to all. Jesus' public teaching described His bold new concept of His church living as citizens of His heavenly kingdom. "From a missionary perspective, an intriguing element of making disciples of all nations is the implied demand of crossing cultures and discipling those who are different from us." (*Introducing World Missions*, p.45).

In His final days with His disciples, before His Ascension, Jesus was still speaking to His disciples of the things concerning the kingdom (Acts 1:3). And yet it was clear that the kingdom of which He spoke did not fit the Old Testament expressions of that kingdom. Nowhere did Jesus ever suggest that the Old Testament prophets had been in error or that their prophecies should be set aside – He said only

that the time of fulfillment for all that was written was in the Father's hands (Acts 1:7).

ENCOUNTERING MISSION IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

"GOD'S SERVANT IS HERE! 'The gospel is neither a discussion nor a debate,' said Dr. Paul S. Rees. 'It is an announcement!' Mark wasted no time giving that announcement, for it is found in the opening words of his book." Warren W. Wiersbe

Mark's Gospel is believed to be the earliest of all the Gospels. It was written for Gentile readers, especially Romans. Because Mark was born a Jew and because the primary source for His Gospel is believed to be the Apostle Peter, it may be considered the first attempt to communicate the Gospel to a **cross-cultural audience**.

From the opening verse, Mark emphasizes the divine side of Jesus: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God..." (Mark 1:1). At the same time, Mark never ignores the human side of Jesus. William Barclay noted in his commentary on Mark that, "It is in Mark's gospel, above all, that we get a picture of a Jesus who shared emotions and passions with us. The sheer humanity of Jesus in Mark's picture brings him very near to us." Jesus, the ultimate servant of God, is portrayed as a man of action who acts decisively (The word *immediately* is used over forty times to describe Jesus' conduct.)

Everywhere Jesus went in public, three types of people were almost always in the crowds that surrounded Him:

- First, there were the multitudes; the first eight chapters of Mark center on Christ's ministry to the crowds that followed Him.
- The second group of people were His disciples; chapters 8 – 10 concentrate on Christ's ministry to His disciples. (See HANDOUT "Meditating on Discipleship Failure in Mark")
- The third group of people who surrounded Jesus were the Jewish religious rulers; chapters 11 – 16 describe the confrontations Jesus had with the Jewish leaders who refused to believe in Him or accept His sacrifice for sins. Mark devotes six chapters to the final week of Christ's life.

Throughout His public ministry, Jesus addressed these groups with the same core message: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45). The fact that Mark does not record many of Jesus' sermons or teachings places his emphasis on what Jesus did rather than what Jesus said as proof that He was the Son of God.

Jesus is God's Servant. He was sent to minister to suffering people and to die for the sins of the world. Because Mark was addressing primarily a Gentile audience that would have little or no interest in Jesus' Jewish lineage, he did not need to give an account His birth or record His genealogy.

The beginning of Mark's Gospel states three important facts about God's Servant and bears witness to those facts to the end:

1. Jesus is **God's Chosen Servant** (1:1–11). Mark adds the testimonies of three reliable witnesses to assure his audience that Jesus is who He claimed to be.

First is **John Mark**, the author himself. Although he does not include himself by name anywhere in the book, it is probable that Mark was an eyewitness to at least some of the events he wrote about. Many scholars believe that Mark was the young man described in 14:51-52. His mother, another woman named Mary, provided a meeting place for believers in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). And because Peter called Mark "my son" (1 Peter 5:13), it is likely that Peter was the one who disciplined Mark in Jesus Christ.

The second witness is that of **the prophets** (1:2-3). Mark quotes only two of the many Messianic prophecies from the Old Testament prophets, Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. But the quotes echo the prophetic voice of the forerunner to Jesus the Messiah: John the Baptist (1:4-8). "By calling the nation to repentance, John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah and Malachi join voices in declaring that Jesus Christ is the Lord, Jehovah God."

The Father and the Holy Spirit are Mark's final witness to witnesses to the identity of God's Servant (1:9-11). When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit came on Him as a dove, and the Father spoke from heaven identifying Him as His beloved Son. John's message of repentance and baptism were preparations so that the people would be ready to meet and trust Jesus the Messiah when He was revealed.

2. Jesus is a Servant with **Divine Authority** (1:12–28). From the beginning, Mark makes it clear that Jesus was no ordinary Servant, but as God's chosen Servant, He exercises an authority that gives Him power over sickness and disease, demons, nature, and even over death itself. Jesus gives orders that are obeyed.

Mark establishes Jesus' authority over Satan and his demons with the account of **His temptation** in the wilderness (1:12-13) and by healing the man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue in Capernaum (1:21-28). Mark notes that Jesus was in the midst of wild beasts and evil spirits, but they could not harm Him. Jesus gave a demonstration of the peace and righteousness that He

would bring in this life, and when He returns to establish His eternal kingdom to come (Isa. 11:9; 35:9).

Jesus taught with authority. Everywhere He went, God's chosen Servant spoke with an authority that the religious leaders of the Jews did not have. His message is not political; it is spiritual. The gospel of the kingdom of God that Jesus and His followers preach has to do with the reign of God in the lives of His people.

Mark notes the emotions of the people who witnessed Jesus' Messianic authority. The people are often "astonished" at His teachings and "amazed" at His healing powers (Mark 1:27; 2:12; 5:20, 42; 6:2, 51; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18), while Jesus expresses amazement at the unbelief of the people (Mark 6:6). Jesus did not encourage public acclaim (Mark 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36–37; 8:26, 30; 9:9). On the one hand it would create problems with the religious leaders and on the other, it would arouse the Romans' suspicions. The overarching reason why Jesus did not encourage the public to praise Him is because He came to Serve and glorify His Father.

3. Mark's Gospel shows Jesus as a Servant who is **able to sympathize** with the masses (1:29-45). The first chapter describes two of Jesus' early miracles of healing which reveal His compassion. Great crowds started following Jesus because He was the Savior of those in need. And because He had been sent to the people as God's servant, He ministered to all who came to Him seeking healing for every kind of sickness and disease and deliverance from demons.

Warren Wiersbe expressed the missionary lesson from Mark's Gospel best when he commented on this first chapter: "We should learn some important spiritual lessons from this chapter. To begin with, if the Son of God came as a servant, then being a servant is the highest of all callings. We are never more like the Lord Jesus than when we are serving others. Second, God shares His authority with His servants. Only those who are under authority have the right to exercise authority. Finally, if you are going to be a servant, be sure you have compassion, because people will come to you for help and rarely ask if it is convenient! Yet, what a privilege it is to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ and meet the needs of others by being one of God's compassionate servants."

ENCOUNTERING MISSION IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Together, Luke's Gospel plus Acts provide the clearest presentation of mission in the Bible. In Luke, Jesus is not only the "Sent One" but He is also the Sender of others: His disciples, and after His resurrection, His Apostles, prophets, evangelists,

preachers, and teachers. After reading Luke and Acts, believers should be inspired and committed to taking Christ to the nations.

Another important feature of the Gospel of Luke is the ease modern readers have to understand it. Because Luke (like John) was not writing for an exclusively Jewish audience, he was writing to people who were like us, making it a universal gospel. Luke makes it clear that all the barriers that separated His chosen people from the nations are down. The ethnic, geographical, and separation within families that distinguished His people from the rest of the world were being dismantled by the Messiah Jesus who is for all people without distinction. “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” (Hebrews 10:1–4).

Luke’s Gospel is the only one that records this important moment in Jesus’ story when He announced the reason His Father sent His Son into the world. Quoting from the prophet Isaiah, Jesus opens the scroll and reads to all those present in the synagogue of His hometown Nazareth:

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” **Luke 4:18–19**

“Possibly the most discussed passage in Luke in contemporary missions is Jesus’s disclosure of his task as the sent one in 4:18-19. Central to Jesus’s understanding is that it is the Spirit on him and anointing him to carry out his mission. Thus mission comes out of the anointing and sending of the Spirit, not from our own initiative.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.48). By declaring, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (v.21), Jesus not only introduced Himself as the promised Messiah, but He also revealed what His mission would be.

The Mission of Jesus:

1. Proclaim the “good news” (gospel) to the poor (in spirit) (Matt. 5:3)

2. Proclaim freedom to the prisoners (persecuted for righteousness’ sake) (Matt. 5:10)
3. Recovery of sight to the (spiritually) blind (Matt. 5:8)
4. Set free the oppressed (meek) (Matt. 5:5)
5. Proclaim the year of God’s favor (Matt. 5:12)

In the Gospel of Luke, the spiritual is of primary importance; it is the liberation of the soul that produces liberation in other ways – the liberation the Son of God brings is holistic.

Note that Jesus omits the part of the passage of Isaiah that says, “the day of God’s vengeance.” By omitting the reference to God’s vengeance, Jesus indicates that His mission focuses on the “acceptable year” of reconciliation rather than revenge, and this reconciliation is extended even to God’s enemies (the idolatrous Gentile nations). Later, John will write in his book of Revelation about the Second Coming of the Lord when the rest of Isaiah’s prophecy will be fulfilled.

In his commentary on Luke, William Barclay noted four major characteristics of Luke’s Gospel that the reader should note. These characteristics will help guide missionaries as they carry on the mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

1. The Gospel of Prayer. Luke’s Gospel can be called the Gospel of Prayer since he shows Jesus praying at all the great moments in His life. Jesus was praying at His baptism when the heavens opened up and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (3:21-22). Luke says that Jesus would withdraw to desolate places to pray before and after ministering to the people (5:16). He went to a mountain and prayed through the night before choosing the Twelve Apostles (6:12-16). Jesus was praying by Himself before He turned to His disciples and asked them the key question about who they thought He was, and Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ of God (9:18-20). At the transfiguration, Jesus took Peter, John, and James up the mountain with Him to pray, and He was transfigured in front of them (9:28-29). Luke reveals that Jesus prayed for Peter that in his greatest hour of testing his faith would not fail him (22:32).

Only Luke recounts the prayer parables of Jesus: the parable of the friend at midnight (11:5-13), and the parable of the unjust judge (18:1-8).

Luke’s Gospel speaks to missionaries and all who minister in the name of Christ Jesus about the essential need for prayer. Pray before entering the mission field. Pray in every circumstance and before making any important ministry decision. Teaching others to pray is an important part of making disciples who will be able to resist every temptation and stand in the face of persecution.

2. The Gospel of Women. Ancient Israel, like most cultures around the world up to today, was a patriarchal society. Women around the world are persecuted

more or less depending upon cultural norms. In most modern Western nations, women are treated equally – or at least very close to it. But in many other countries, women struggle for equality and independence. In Jesus' day, a common Jewish morning prayer for men included a thanks to God that he did not make him "a Gentile, a slave or a woman." However, Luke's Gospel, notes the very special way Jesus treated women.

Although the stories in the Gospels and Acts reflect clearly the patriarchal society of first century Palestine, women play an important role in the development of the church. Daughters are mentioned 24 times in the Gospels, Mothers are mentioned 72 times, and the words "woman" or "women" occur 78 times. In Luke's Gospel, women play a key role in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Every time Jesus came in contact with a woman that contact inevitably lifted them and granted them a significance and dignity that was denied them in their society. The story of Jesus' birth is told from Mary's point of view. It is in Luke that we learn about Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, of Anna, of the widow at Nain, and of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet in the house of Simon. It is in Luke that we learn of the sisters Martha and Mary, and the story of Mary Magdalene.

Jesus did not come to directly confront the patriarchal structure of the Jewish culture, but He did interact with women in ways that challenged the contemporary views of rabbinic Judaism. Jesus saw the great value His Father placed in women and the significance that they were denied in their society. Luke described Jesus' encounters with women that were intended to be transformational. So, Luke was careful to include in his Gospel how Jesus liberated women and lifted them to an equality unknown to first century women. Christian ministry should bring a spiritual redemption for women that not only restores them to a position of equality before the Father but also restores them to the equality with men that God intended for them to enjoy from the beginning.

3. **The Gospel of Praise.** The phrase "Praising God" is featured in Luke's Gospel. Three of the great hymns passed down through the church have their origins in the first two chapters of Luke. Known in Latin as the *Magnificat* (1:46-55), the *Benedictus* (1:68-79) and the *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29-32), these prayers of praise and glory were inspired by God's promises for His people being fulfilled. (See HANDOUT "What Is Mary's Song and What Does It Teach Modern Readers?") "There is a radiance in Luke's gospel which is a lovely thing., as if the sheen of heaven had touched the things of earth." (William Barclay).

4. **The Universal Gospel.** Luke is similar to John's Gospel in its universal appeal. Jesus Christ saves all who come to Him. The kingdom of heaven is not for Jews alone, but is for Gentiles, Publicans, and sinners – all who repent and call upon the Lord to be saved. Luke includes the parable of the Good Samaritan (9:51-56), Jesus ministers to a widow in Syria (4:25-27), and praises a Roman citizen for his faith (7:9). Above all Luke shows Jesus as the friend of outcasts and sinners. "Jesus' royalty is not of this world. It is based on character. It is ignored by the proud, but welcomed by the poor. It is fairest to those whose eyes are anointed to penetrate the veil and discern the eternal realities; and of their enthusiasm, praise to God is the irresistible expression." F. B. Meyer.

ENCOUNTERING MISSION IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." **John 1:1-5**

"In John's Gospel, God is the center of mission; it is he who so loved the world that he sent his unique Son (3:16). Some argue that the book itself is primarily an evangelistic treatise... If so, it certainly follows that there would be a strong mission theme in the Fourth Gospel." (*Introducing World Missions*, pp.49-50). In the first few verses of John's Gospel, Jesus is immediately identified as the one who is sent from God and who is God incarnate.

The missionary message of this Gospel is established in the first chapter of John and is reinforced over and over until the end when John says, "This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and worth these things; and we know that his testimony is true." (21:24).

John the Apostle skips over the birth narratives and genealogies of Matthew and Luke and presents the **eternal origin** of the Son of God. John the Baptist's mission was to bear witness of the eternal Light in Christ so "that all through him might believe" in the true Light "which gives light to every man". The introduction to the Gospel of John from the *Life Application Study Bible* states the message of the Gospel very well:

"He spoke, and galaxies whirled into place, stars burned the heavens, and planets began orbiting their suns—words of awesome, unlimited, unleashed power. He spoke again, and the waters and lands

were filled with plants and creatures, running, swimming, growing, and multiplying—words of animating, breathing, pulsing life. Again he spoke, and man and woman were formed, thinking, speaking, and loving—words of personal and creative glory. Eternal, infinite, unlimited—he was, is, and always will be the Maker and Lord of all that exists.

And then he came in the flesh to a speck in the universe called planet Earth. The mighty Creator became a part of the creation, limited by time and space and susceptible to aging, sickness, and death. But love propelled him, and so he came to rescue and save those who were lost and to give them the gift of eternity. He is the Word; he is Jesus, the Messiah.”

John’s Gospel was written with the entire world in mind. The message is clear that the Son of God and Savior of mankind has come into the world. Jesus is the way, truth, and life for every tribe and tongue and the church exists to bear witness to the eternal Light that is revealed in the Son of God.

Questions for Lesson Four

1. In what way was the kingdom Jesus said was "in the midst" of them was totally different from the one the Jews had come to expect?
2. What are the lessons for missionaries found Mark’s portrayal of the Son of God as God’s Servant?
3. What is Jesus’ missionary message in Luke 4:18–19 and how does that message relate to encountering mission today?
4. What is the primary message for missionaries in the Gospel of John?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-4: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

ENCOUNTERING MISSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Note: The Primary Resource for This Lesson is *Introducing World Missions, Second Edition, A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, © 2004, 2015 by A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee; Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Lesson Outline for the Students

- I. Characteristics of the Church’s Missionary Methods
 - a. People need to hear the message about salvation in Jesus Christ
 - b. In order for people to hear the gospel Christians need to go where the people live
 - c. Christians need to seek people who are willing to listen and employ effective methods to communicate the Gospel
 - d. Ethnic identity, class, culture, and gender are relevant matters to be considered when sharing the Gospel

- II. Missionary Principles for Planting Healthy Churches
 - a. Biblical teaching must be intelligible and easy to understand for new believers unfamiliar with the Scriptures
 - b. Ministries and Church Planting Movements must not be so costly that indigenous people are unable to support them without outside help
 - c. Indigenous churches must be taught to be self-supporting and self-propagating from the beginning
 - d. Mutual responsibility and accountability of the church must be established from the beginning
 - e. The exercise of the ministry gifts given in the New Testament Scriptures should be encouraged from the beginning

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH’S MISSIONARY METHODS

In the chapter on the New Testament Church from *Introducing World Missions* the authors noted that the divine drama that began with the Old Testament and that continued through the Gospels, does not end with the death and resurrection of Jesus. The story continues in Acts: “In this act of the divine drama, the church is both the center and the agent for the kingdom of God in the world, and the story of the church

as portrayed in Acts is the story of God's mission. That story continues to focus on sending and going into the world, calling peoples of all nations, tongues, and tribes to glorify God through living worshipful lives." (p.53).

We have already studied the Book of Acts in our **Discipleship 101 Course of Evangelism and Church Planting Movements**. So, this lesson on "Encountering Mission in The New Testament Church" will concentrate on the broader issues of **God's calling of the church** to preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the ends of the earth. The church was founded in Acts chapter two on the day of Pentecost. The early chapters of Acts describe the rapid growth of the church from the preaching of the Gospel with the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit. The persecution of the church led to the scattering of believers from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and beyond.

"The early church was called to live its life and maintain its testimony in tumultuous times. As early as the first preaching in Acts and the Pauline missionary tours, the fires of persecution are seen clearly in all their intensity; and we read that Christians are being hauled before Jewish authorities and Roman officials, and required to attest their allegiance to Jesus Christ. It is not unexpected, therefore, that the Christian confessions should have been shaped by this process. In time of conflict and duress the distinctive and dearly-cherished forms of the faith are crystallized and molded." (Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* © 1964, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, p.63)

The Epistles of Paul and the other Apostles expand the story of the church, build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and His teachings, and define the mission of the church. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles described the practical applications of Christ's teachings. The Apostles outlined the two-fold mission of the church: first, proclaiming Christ as Lord and Savior, and second, making disciples of those who believe.

In order to fulfill its mission, the Apostles taught the church that **People need to hear the message about salvation in Jesus Christ**: "I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:4-9).

The early church was not static but was constantly moving forward. They realized that **in order for people to hear the gospel Christians need to go where the people live**. In the Old Testament, it was expected that the nations would have to come to Jerusalem to know and worship God in spirit and truth. However, after Pentecost (Acts 2), the church was given the mandate and the power to go to the nations. In the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit was the driving force of all missionary efforts. Philip's work among the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-18), Peter's mission to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household (Acts 10), and every one of Paul's missionary journeys were instigated by the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote to the church at Rome: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'" (10:14-15). And it has been so ever since. Every generation of believers has been commissioned to go and preach the gospel of salvation to the unreached of their generation. In this manner, the church has survived and grown: "Then He said, 'What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.'" (Luke 13:18-19).

Another important characteristic of the church's missionary methods is the recognition that **Christians need to seek people who are willing to listen and employ effective methods to communicate the gospel**. Paul's missionary journeys set the example for all those who follow in his footsteps. Paul gauged his audiences and determined in advance how he should communicate the gospel to them. His Jewish audiences in the Synagogue would not be interested to listen to a message about worshipping an "unknown god" any more than his Greek audience would want to hear a message about the superiority of Jesus' Melchizedekian priesthood over that of the Levites.

Jesus warned His disciples that He would be sending them out "as sheep in the midst of wolves." He knew that His disciples would be delivered up to governing councils and religious conclaves to be scourged, thrown into prison, and worse. However, whenever followers of Jesus are brought before "governors and kings for My sake" it would be for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But Jesus said, we are not to worry about how or what to speak, "For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." (Matthew 10:16-20).

Some people will be too hardhearted and too far gone into a lifestyle of sin to have ears to hear and hearts to receive the gospel message but that should not stop us from trying to reach out to those who are willing to listen. However, Christians

should be willing and able to try new methods and the latest technologies to reach the lost. Missionaries to unreached people groups face different challenges for how to communicate the gospel to those from different cultures who are willing to hear it. “Certainly, one of the geniuses of God’s message of Christ as revealed in the Bible is that it is translatable into every culture in the world. It is in no small measure due to this reality that the church has exploded around the world... This fact of translatability is reflective of a reality: To make sense to a local people, the gospel – indeed, the Christian faith – must be enfolded in their local culture.” (*The Changing Face of World Missions* © 2005 by Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen. And Douglas McConnell, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, p.321).

Communication requires the missionary to consider ethnic identity, class, culture, and gender to be relevant matters when sharing the Gospel. Peter realized that even the prophets of Old wanted to know more about the gospel of salvation they were preaching. The prophets wondered what time or situation the Spirit of God was talking about when they prophesied about Christ’s suffering, His great glory, and the gracious salvation prepared for the nations. Peter went on to say, “To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.” (1 Peter 1:12).

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” **Galatians 4:4–5**

In many ways, the ancient world into which the church was born was like our modern world. “Like many societies, Rome and its provinces were characterized by a hierarchical class structure divided along economic lines. These lines were more rigidly drawn than in most contemporary Western societies, though some upward (and downward) mobility was possible. In addition to wealth, Roman society pivoted on the axes of aristocracy versus plebe, male versus female, slave versus free, citizen versus non-citizen, Roman versus provincial, and Roman/Greek versus ‘barbarian’. More subtle distinctions also applied.” (*Christianity in the Greco-Roman World*, © 2010, Moyer V. Hubbard, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, p.143).

We discover in the Epistles of Paul and the other Apostles that they were aware of and sensitive to the cultural norms of ethnic identity, class, culture, and gender distinctions. Their preaching of the gospel was never intended to overturn or create revolutionary changes to the political and cultural landscapes of their day. Inspired and given wisdom by the Holy Spirit, the authors of the New Testament (and the other spiritual leaders of the church) were able to present the gospel in the least

disruptive way. But there were of course, violent reactions to the preaching of the gospel which were recorded in the book of Acts (and have been seen throughout church history). However, those reactions were not caused by deliberate attempts to upset the social order around them. Modern liberation theologies may cross the line from setting people free from spiritual oppression to becoming the excuse to force Western political and social orders on indigenous people.

Truth, justice, fairness, and the humane treatment of others will flow naturally from hearts that have been born again and are being conformed to Christlikeness. The power of the gospel is its ability to change people from within; it is not intended to force social change from the outside in the hope that it will produce a change of heart on the inside.

MISSIONARY PRINCIPLES FOR PLANTING HEALTHY CHURCHES

Jesus commands His disciples to teach new believers to observe/obey His teachings. This command makes Biblical teaching and preaching an essential part of the discipling process. To be effective, **biblical teaching must be intelligible and easy to understand for new believers unfamiliar with the Scriptures**. The New Testament book of Hebrews makes it clear that the Christians of Jewish backgrounds had a deep understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. However, since the vast majority of new believers have little or no understanding of the Old Testament, it requires a greater effort to teach them the deep connection between the Old and New Testaments. The best way to make that connection for most new (and old) believers is make **expository preaching** the primary method of Christian preaching.

Expository preaching is the method of Bible preaching/teaching that focuses on explaining and applying specific passages of Scripture by revealing the original meaning and intent of the text to the congregation. A *Gospel Coalition* blog collected the remarks of some of the most renowned expository preachers and teachers of our time to help us understand (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/what-is-expository-preaching/>). Here are a few of those quotes:

John MacArthur: The message finds its sole source in Scripture. The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis. The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context. The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture. The message applies the Scriptural meaning for today. (*Preaching*)

Bryan Chappell: The main idea of an expository sermon – the topic, the divisions of that idea, main points, and the development of those divisions – all come from truths the text itself contains. No significant portion of the text is ignored. In other words, expositors willingly stay within the boundaries of

the text and do not leave until they have surveyed its entirety with its hearers. (*Christ-Centered Preaching*)

John Stott: Exposition refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor opens what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted, and unfolds what is tightly packed. (*Between Two Worlds*)

Alistair Begg: Unfolding the text of Scripture in such a way that makes contact with the listeners' world while exalting Christ and confronting them with the need for action. (*Preaching for God's Glory*)

David Helm: Expository preaching is empowered preaching that rightfully submits the shape and emphasis of the sermon to the shape and emphasis of a biblical text. (*Expositional Preaching*)

Albert Mohler: Expository preaching is that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible . . . all other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the biblical text. (*He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*)

Mark Dever: Expository preaching is preaching in which the main point of the biblical text being considered becomes the main point of the sermon being preached. (*Preach: Theology Meets Practice*)

Tim Keller— Expository preaching grounds the message in the text so that all the sermon's points are the points in the text, and it majors in the text's major ideas. It aligns the interpretation of the text with the doctrinal truths of the rest of the Bible (being sensitive to systematic theology). And it always situates the passage within the Bible's narrative, showing how Christ is the final fulfillment of the text's theme (being sensitive to biblical theology). (*Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*)

There are several different methods expository preachers use to make the Scriptures intelligible and easy to understand. Expository preaching that is **Text-Driven** prioritizes the biblical text itself as the source of the message, rather than starting with a pre-determined topic or idea. When the **Interpretation and**

Application method is used, the preacher will carefully interpret the text, consider its context, historical background, and literary style, and then show the specific application of the Scripture to the lives of the hearers.

The best-known and most common method of expository preaching is the **Verse-by-Verse Approach**. Verse-by-verse expository preaching is the systematic exploration of a passage that moves through its verses or sections in a logical order. In some cases the method that **Focuses on God's Message** may be the best way to help the congregation understand what God is saying in the passage and to respond to that message in faith and obedience.

All expository preaching relies heavily on **exegesis** (the careful and systematic study of the biblical text to determine its original meaning). This may be done by preaching through an entire book or chapter of the Bible, or even a specific section of a passage but always staying within the boundaries of the text. Expository preaching contrasts with **topical preaching**, which focuses on a specific theme or topic that is not necessarily related to a particular passage of Scripture. But no matter what method of biblical preaching/teaching is used, the most important goal is to make the hearers understand God's word.

Planting Healthy Churches

“For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written:

‘To whom He was not announced, they shall see;
And those who have not heard shall understand.’” **Romans 15:18–21**

Equally important to teaching and preaching the Bible clearly is planting healthy churches. As believers grow spiritually, they will naturally develop the desire to multiply and plant new churches in unreached places. Key to planting healthy churches is making them self-supporting. **Ministries and Church Planting Movements must not be so costly that indigenous people are unable to support them without outside help.**

As new churches are being planted, finances necessary to manage the administration of the church should be placed in the hands of that local church as quickly as possible. **Therefore, indigenous churches must be taught to be self-supporting and self-propagating from the beginning.**

The quickest way to stop a church planting movement is to make one central church or missionary organization responsible to fund every church and its ministries. In the book of Acts and in Paul's letters, we have the model for the rapid, exponential growth of the church. As Paul and the other Apostles, evangelists, and missionaries spread out and planted new churches, these churches were made to be self-supporting and self-propagating. From Paul's letters we see how he encouraged these churches to be giving and not receiving. Paul refused to be a financial burden to any of the churches he planted; at times he would work with his own hands rather than demand support from the churches he planted:

“But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” **1 Thessalonians 2:4–9**

The mission of the church to be the instrument through which the gospel of the kingdom is preached to the nations will naturally lead to new churches being planted in previously unreached areas. It also means that as the Christian community grows in places where the church has been established, more congregations will start up. With each new fellowship of believers, there will be a need for leaders to be appointed. In order for the churches to stay healthy and theologically sound, **Mutual responsibility and accountability of the church leadership must be established from the beginning.** Once again, we must turn to the Word of God for guidance.

“The book of Acts introduces nearly all of the significant types of leaders in the first decades of the Jesus movement: apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors, overseers, elders, and perhaps deacons as well. In terms of visible community organization, Jerusalem is noteworthy for having a council of ‘apostles and elders’ (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 16:4) overseeing the ministry there. The jurisdiction of the leadership in Jerusalem extended beyond Jerusalem itself.” (*Christianity in the Greco-Roman World*, © 2010, Moyer V. Hubbard, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, p.210).

The church is unique among all other religions and secular organizations in the world in that only the church is designed to function with mutual **responsibility and accountability** of the leaders. Worldly leadership models are almost always “top-down” structures. The leader is the C.E.O. in the business or the high priest, pope, or “spiritual” father that all must obey and follow. Jesus said that in His church, the leader must be the servant of all: “And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’ Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.’” (Mark 9:35–37).

To be an effective leader who is free from the traps and snares of the devil, they must learn to be open and transparent to all. The story is repeated far too often of the pastor or ministry leader who falls from grace after it is discovered that for months or years they have been living a double life in sin, but no one knew about it until it was exposed, and the leader was forced to confess their sins. This is why the Apostle Peter wrote to the church: “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for

‘God resists the proud,

But gives grace to the humble.’

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (1 Peter 5:5-9).

Leaders in the church and ministry must be careful not to have wrong motives hidden in their hearts in serving the Lord. The devil will try to put wrong motives in leaders so that the testimony of Jesus may be dishonored, divisions will erupt, and confusion be brought into the churches. The constant prayer of all spiritual leaders should be the same as Bro. Bakht Sing of India prayed, “Lord, remove all unworthy and wrong motives from my heart and make me a Spirit-filled servant of Thine, whom Thou canst use anytime, anywhere.”

The exercise of the ministry gifts given in the New Testament Scriptures should be encouraged from the beginning. The Apostle Paul said:

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of

Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”
Ephesians 4:11–16

It has not changed since the beginning: the church has always needed those who are chosen by God to equip His people for the work of fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Apostles (missionaries) and evangelists are needed to go to the unreached nations. Prophets, pastors, and teachers are needed for equipping the saints with the word of God for the work of ministry. Each of these ministry gifts are still needed for today for the edifying of the body of Christ, and for the expansion of His kingdom.

Spiritual leaders have the responsibility to equip the members of the church for their part of the work of ministry. Leaders fail if they only allow their members to sit in their seats on Sunday mornings, enjoy the show, and go home unchanged and uninspired to share the gospel with others. Or even worse, leaders fail their members when they discourage them from stepping out in faith and starting a ministry or mission to reach the unreached.

The Great Commission is NOT just for those who have a doctorate in theology or for those who are paid clergy. Throughout the history of the church (from the first disciples to today) the most important work of encountering mission in the New Testament church has always been done by lay men and women who have answered God’s call:

“No account of the advance of Christianity would be complete without considering the importance of pioneer evangelists who risked their lives, their livelihood, and their reputation telling other people the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus... while Paul was critical in the spreading of the faith, he was by no means alone. In the accounts of Acts and the writings of Paul we also hear of people like Barnabas, Phillip, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, Andronicus and Junia, and many more – to say nothing of the other apostles. When Paul writes to Rome, the city already has a significant Christian presence, complete with problems that need to be addressed (Rom 14), yet we have no idea who carried the embers to the capital.” (*Christianity in the Greco-Roman World*, © 2010, Moyer V. Hubbard, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, p.231-232).

Questions for Lesson Four

1. One of the characteristics of the church’s missionary methods is to go where the people are. How does the church do that?
2. How can Christians faithfully communicate the gospel while considering ethnic identity, class, culture, and gender issues?
3. What is expository preaching and teaching and how does it make the Bible intelligible and easy to understand for new believers unfamiliar with the Scriptures?
4. The primary goal of the church’s missionary efforts is to plant healthy churches. What are the indicators of a healthy church?
5. In what ways do spiritual gifts help equip the members of the church for their part of the work of missions and ministry?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-5: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

ENCOUNTERING MISSION THEOLOGY

Note: The Primary Resource for This Lesson is *Introducing World Missions, Second Edition, A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, © 2004, 2015 by A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee; Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Lesson Outline for the Students

- I. “Missions” Defined
 - a. “Mission” Defined
 - b. What is *Missio Dei*?
 - c. “Missiology” Defined
- II. Questions for Mission Theology
 - a. How Does *Mission Theology* Fit into Christian Theology as a Whole?
 - b. What is the Appropriate Foundation for a Christian Theology of Mission?
 - c. Which Guiding Themes Provide the Direction to our Mission Theology?

“MISSIONS” DEFINED

“Within mission discussions since the 1950s, terms have developed in such a way that it can be confusing to the uninitiated... Essentially, *mission* (without the *s*) and *missions* (with the *s*) are used to indicate different things. As if that were not confusing enough, another term, *missio Dei*, was coined to indicate a new way of thinking about mission.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.69).

Christians today use the term *missions* for the various tasks involved with **proclaiming the gospel** to every people group that has not yet heard it. The ultimate goal of missions is to **establish churches** that are able to reproduce by preaching and teaching others, and sending their own missionaries out.

“Missions is not only what we do, it is who we are in Jesus Christ. It is to show the love of God in everything we do, no matter if we feel or think we are not making a big impact around us. Because surely God is working something big when you do not even realize.” – Karla Gonzalez, *Go Now Missionary*

Missions is accomplished by the work of mission agencies and churches that send forth individual missionaries around the world and beyond the boundaries of

the New Testament church to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who believe and receive the gospel message are incorporated quickly into the body of Christ and are discipled. “More recently, Southern Baptist mission leader Avery Willis and *Experiencing God* author Henry Blackaby have explained missions as ‘the activity of God’s people – the church – to proclaim and to demonstrate the kingdom of God cross-culturally in the world.’” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.70).

Mission (without the *s*) is defined separately from *missions*. It is used more often than *missions* because it may refer to practically everything the church is called to do to bring others into the **kingdom of God**. The biblical purpose for the church is to be on mission with Jesus Christ until the end of the age. The church is empowered by His Holy Spirit to complete the Lord’s mission to seek and save the lost and bring them into the kingdom of heaven. The mission of the church is to be “sent” into the world as pilgrims, strangers, witnesses, prophets, and servants. The mission of the church is to be “salt” to make others thirsty for God’s righteousness, and to preserve those who are perishing in their sins. The mission is to be light in a world of darkness. “Thus missions is a subset of mission, and mission combines the total assignment of the church while including the traditional idea of missions.” (p.70).



Because denominations and evangelical mission scholars have been unable to come to an agreement on what the legitimate tasks of the church’s mission should be, some missionaries have strayed from the traditional tasks of evangelism and church planting and have included fighting for “social justice”, promoting social or political liberation, and seeking common ground with people of other faiths through dialog and interfaith conferences as missions of the church. Therefore, it is important to (1) establish a clear understanding of what their church’s or ministry’s **theology**

of mission is, and (2) what their missions should encompass. All churches and ministries have limited resources of money and manpower to be devoted to the tasks of missions; a clear theology of missions will guide them on how best to use those resources.

Missio Dei

“*Missio Dei*, Latin for ‘**the sending of God,**’ is a relatively new term in evangelical mission circles. Over the course of the twentieth century, mission scholars gained a new appreciation for the fact that mission originates in God, not in the church or in people.” (*Introducing World Missions*, pp.70-71). Traditionally, the focus of missions was on what the church (or denomination) does. Mission was focused on what the evangelist or missionary does. Beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, the focus of mission shifted to a God-centered theology that sought to discover everything God himself is doing to establish His kingdom on the earth. This God-centered theology of mission meant that the church is privileged to participate in God’s mission to save the world (John 3:16).

The term *Missio Dei* transcends political and economic agendas that tend to reduce the church’s work in the world to social programs or works that may improve the living conditions of poor and oppressed nations but does little to secure the eternal salvation of lost souls. God sends His chosen apostles, prophets, evangelists, preachers, and teachers into the world to preach “the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God...” (Ephesians 3:8_b – 9_a).



“In sum, *missio Dei* is a comprehensive term encompassing everything God does in relation to the kingdom *and* everything the church is sent to do on earth. The term *mission* represents something narrower: everything with redemptive purpose that the church is sent to do. Finally, *missions* is the most specialized of the terms,

describing the activity of the churches, agencies, and people in making disciples and planting churches.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.71).

Missiology

“Missiology is an applied discipline, not an armchair one. Theory without practice cuts off the reason for thinking missiologically.”

The formal, systematic study of mission is called *missiology*. Before the 19th century the academic study of the history and methodology of missions was not considered. The few pioneers in the theological study of missions advocated its importance to prepare Western missionaries to enter their field of ministry. As the study of missions developed in scope, its relation to other theological and social sciences became obvious. Almost all of the major doctrines of the Christian faith intersect with the theology of missions at some point:

- *The Doctrine of God the Father* – including the biblical concept of God, the attributes of God, God’s work in creation, etc. – may be studied in relation to other world religions
- *The Doctrine of the Son* – New Testament Christology must be understood in order for the missionary evangelist to relate it to those who do not know who Jesus is or why He must be worshiped.
- *The Doctrine of God the Holy Spirit* – The work of the Holy Spirit to empower His people for the ministry is another important study.
- *The Doctrines of Humanity and Sin* – What it means to be a human created in the image of God and a biblical view of sin is foundational to our presentation of the gospel.
- *The Doctrine of Salvation* – The biblical idea of mankind’s need for salvation and especially the New Testament’s message of the comprehensiveness of God’s salvation are essential to the evangelization of the nations.
- *The Doctrine of Last Things* – Christian eschatology, including the final judgment of all people, may be studied in relation to the doctrines of other religions.
- *The Doctrine of the Church* – The nature, ministry, and mission of the church are the motivation for starting Church Planting Movements in unreached regions.

“Because the task of missiology comes out of our role as Christ’s ambassadors, however, it must go beyond these disciplines. They are tools to help Christians understand mission, but they are more than that. They also help Christians chart ways

to improve their work as missionaries seeking to bring Christ to a needy world.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.71). Since the mission of God involves the participation of the people of God in God's action in the world, the theological study of mission (called missiology) has become an important study for those who are about to enter full-time cross-cultural ministry. This is why today missiology is taught at many Christian theological schools and why its scope of study and relations with the other theological and social sciences are a separate field of study.

QUESTIONS FOR MISSION THEOLOGY

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

Ephesians 2:19–22

How Does Mission Theology Fit into Christian Theology as a Whole?

When constructing a biblically based theology of *mission* for your church or ministry, several key questions will help in the process. Constructing a theology of mission is not unlike the construction of a physical building. Not all buildings are the same and the function of the building – for a private home, school, office, retail shop, or manufacturing – will determine the design and materials used. For our purposes (evangelism, church planting, and discipleship) Ephesians 2:19-22 will be the blueprint we shall follow as we answer some key questions.

Bible college or seminary students will be familiar with the important doctrines of the Christian faith mentioned above. How a person applies these doctrines to in their theology and practice of mission will depend largely on what the focus of their mission is to the overarching **mission of God on the earth**. Numerous charts and graphs have been created to illustrate where mission theology fits best in the whole subject of Christian theology.

In chapter two of Ephesians, Paul uses the Doctrine of Salvation to motivate believers to take up the ministry of reconciliation that belongs to the church (2 Corinthians 5:18). Those who are “without Christ” are aliens and strangers to the household of God and are without hope in this world and eternally (2:12). But in Christ, they are no longer strangers (2:13); the Apostle Peter says they have become “a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9). All those who are without God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3) need to be reconciled to God. The enmity between sinners and God (Ephesians 2:16–18) is finished when they believe in Him. So, we

see in these few verses how the theologies of God the Father, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and Humanity and Sin, Salvation all intersect with the Theology of Mission to guide and motivate believers to evangelize, establish churches, and disciple new Christians.

When we study Paul's letters, his theology of mission becomes clear. Paul's passion to go evangelize and disciple the Gentile nations resulted in him **planting churches** everywhere he went. Although Paul's letters do not contain any explicit commands for the church to evangelize and plant new churches, the expectation that believers will follow in his footsteps is implied (note Romans 10 for example). In Paul's theology of mission, there is the expected multiplication of established churches. Paul's letters assume the propagation of the faith and the churches he established understood their responsibility for mission (note Acts 19:8-10). Paul calls the church “ambassadors” and “ministers of reconciliation” on mission with him and the other Apostles. While in prison, Paul speaks of unnamed persons who were emboldened by his example of courage “to speak the word without fear” (Philippians 1:12-14). “In Paul's discussion of spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:10-17, he speaks of putting on the shoes of the gospel of peace and of taking up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Verse 15 is translated in the NRSV, ‘As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.’ The picture is one not merely of a defensive but also of an offensive posture. The believer is to be ready to present the gospel confidently and in the power of the Spirit.” (*Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues*, © 2010 by Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, p.49).

Zane Pratt, Vice President, Assessment/Deployment and Training, International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention said that the relationship between theology and mission goes two ways. Good missiology will be rooted in theology, and good theology will produce missions. Evangelical theology must drive anyone who truly understands it into missionary practice; if not, then it shows that they do not understand their theology at all. Pratt went on to say, “If you understand who God is, the spiritual condition and destiny of the peoples of the world, the glories of the gospel, the nature of Christian discipleship, and the trajectory of history under the sovereign hand of God, you will be compelled to take part in God's global mission. If you are not, you either do not understand your theology, or you do not actually know God.” (<https://www.mbs.edu/2021/10/how-theology-drives-missions/>).

What is the Appropriate Foundation for a Christian Theology of Mission?

The Word of God has much to say about foundations. The word “foundation” appears more than 400 times in the Old and New Testaments combined. The Bible

gives the details concerning the physical foundations of the temple, and God is often described as the one who laid the foundations of the earth. Another important image in the Bible is the strong spiritual foundation that is laid in the hearts and minds of God's people: "When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation." (Proverbs 10:25). Jesus described those who heard *and* followed His commandments as those who built their house on the rock (Matthew 7:24-27). The Messiah himself is called a foundation stone:

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation,
A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation;
Whoever believes will not act hastily." **Isaiah 28:16.**

Hebrews 11:8-10 reminds Christians of the faith of Abraham who "obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance." By faith, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwelt in tents in the Promised Land waiting for "the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

In the pages of the New Testament, the church becomes **God's spiritual dwelling-place**. In his letter to the Ephesian church (2:19-22), Paul describes the saints as members of God's household, "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." And as members of God's household, believers are being built together on that foundation to be "a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

The most relevant passage in the New Testament concerning the church and the mission of God is found in 1 Corinthians 3:9-15:

"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

When choosing a foundation for our mission, it is important to select a foundation that will stand the test of time in the midst of the trials and persecutions that may follow wherever the Gospel is preached in spirit and truth. Warren W.

Wiersbe commented on this passage: "God is concerned that we build with quality. The church does not belong to the preacher or to the congregation. It is God's church. 'Ye are God's building' (1 Cor. 3:9). If we are going to build the local church the way God wants it built, we must meet certain conditions." Therefore, when developing a plan for our mission, it should be founded on **the right foundation** (vv. 10-11) – and that foundation is Jesus Christ. Apart from the preaching of the necessity of the death and resurrection of the Son of God no one will be truly born again.

Second, we must **build with the right materials** (vv. 12-17). Manmade doctrines and religion are the wood, hay, and stubble that will quickly burn in the fires of persecution on the one side or the fires of God's judgment on the other. Only the doctrines of God's word and truth are the gold, silver, and precious stones that reflect the beauty and endurance of the kingdom of God. As Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6).

Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:1, 14). Therefore, it only makes sense for our theology of mission to be founded upon the Bible itself. "The Bible alone has the authority to guide the church through the complex questions that face each new generation. It alone provides the general principles on which a theology of mission must be built and the specific instructions given to the church by God that inform our view of mission today." (*Introducing World Missions*, p.74).

Which Guiding Themes Provide the Direction to our Mission Theology?

When considering any missionary endeavor, it is critical to **settle on a specific guiding theme** or image to keep the work on track. Anyone who surveys the broad landscape of nations where the gospel is needed the most will quickly discover wide open fields of opportunities to serve. In poverty-stricken areas there is a great need for food distribution, medicines, doctors, social works, and more. In areas of the world where the largest numbers of unreached people live, the need for effective evangelization and church planting is greatest. No single missionary or missions organization or church can possibly address every possible need; their mission will lose focus, their resources and manpower will be spread too thin, and ministry burnout will be the result. So, before the church, organization, or individual missionary commits to a mission, it is essential that they develop a plan based upon a theology of mission as their guide.

In their chapter on this subject, Moreau, Corwin, and McGee gave some examples for guiding themes for mission and how they helped to define specific boundaries for mission. The following is a Table they include to help the students:

TABLE 5.2

Some Guiding Themes for Mission	
If the guiding theme is...	Then the mission is...
<i>Missio Dei</i>	Everything God is doing in the world to manifest his rule or reign
All that those sent by God are to do	Everything that the church does and should be doing on behalf of God's mission in the world
The central core of the "sent one's" responsibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Glorifying God (worship or liberation), or 2. Proclaiming God's rule through evangelism and/or prophetic pronouncements, or 3. Manifesting (or demonstrating or signifying) God's call to the world through righteous living, or 4. Ushering in liberation through implementing social change
A single commissioned task that the "sent one" is uniquely to perform	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evangelism (the Great Commission) 2. Service (the Great Commandment) 3. Prophecy (against societal evils) 4. Justice (social restructuring)

It should be obvious by now that the School of Global Missions courses on Evangelism and Church Planting movements has a **Mission-Shaped Evangelism** theology for their foundation. Therefore, our courses are designed to:

- Teach and train missionaries not to get people to church, but to make people to **be the church**. "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven..." (Hebrews 12:22–23_a)
- See what God is already doing to **transform their lives** and what He wants to do to transform the lives of others; "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18)
- Get people to **see the kingdom of heaven** in them and in the world around them; "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand...'" (Matthew 10:7)
- **Teach and train missionaries** to answer the Lord's prayer in John 17:15-19, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the

world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

- **Go and make disciples** (not converts) who will follow the Lord's commands and then go out and make more disciples "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen'" (Matthew 28:18–20).

In many ways, the School of Global Missions' theology of mission is compatible with *The Frankfurt Declaration of the Fundamental Crisis in Christian Mission*. The opening paragraph of that document unanimously accepted on March 4, 1970, stated:

"Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" 1 Corinthians 9: 16 RSV

The Church of Jesus Christ has the sacred privilege and irrevocable obligation to participate in the mission of the triune God a mission which must extend into all the world. Through the Church's outreach, His name shall be glorified among all people, mankind shall be saved from His future wrath and led into new life, and the lordship of His Son Jesus Christ shall be established in the Expectation of His second coming.

This is the way that Christianity has always understood the Great Commission of Christ, though, we must confess not always with the same degree of fidelity and clarity. The recognition of the task and the total missionary obligation of the Church led to the endeavor to integrate missions into the German Protestant churches and the World Council of Churches, whose Commission and Division of World Mission and Evangelism was established in 1961.

It is the goal of this division, by the terms of its constitution, to insure "the proclamation to the whole world of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the end that all men may believe in Him and be saved." It is our conviction that this definition reflects the basic apostolic concern of the New Testament and restores the understanding of mission held by the fathers of the Protestant missionary movement."

Questions for Lesson Five

1. Explain the difference between the terms “mission” and “missions”.
2. What does the term *Missio Dei* mean and how does it shape world missions today?
3. Review Ephesians 2:19–22. How Does that passage help to guide our mission theology?
4. What does the Bible indicate is the appropriate Foundation for a Christian Theology of Mission?
5. How does a theme for our mission theology provide a clear direction to our mission?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-6: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

CHARTING A PATH FROM HERE TO THERE

Note: The Primary Resources for This Lesson are:

Introducing World Missions, Second Edition, A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey, © 2004, 2015 by A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee; Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

“Short-Term Missions or Glorified Tourism” (Parts 1-3) by Georges Housney, *Journal of Biblical Missiology*, Jan 18, Jan 25, and Feb 1, 2021 (<https://biblicalmissiology.org/>)

Lesson Outline for the Students

- I. Long or Short-term Missions Trips?
- II. Choosing a Missions Partnership
 - a. Choosing a Missions Agency
 - b. Partnering with a Home Church
 - c. Jesus and Paul: a Biblical Perspective of Missionaries
- III. Relief and Development Opportunities

LONG OR SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TRIPS?

“It you sense that God would have you in full-time ministry in a cross-cultural setting, one important issue to consider is how you will get from where you are now to where God will have you serve.”
(*Introducing World Missions*, p.179)

In the 21st century world, there are more choices than before for those who believed they are called to serve as a missionary. In the past, the commitment to be a missionary required years of preparation, Bible study, learning a new language, and acquiring the knowledge of the particular culture and religion of the people. The missionary was expected to commit to their place of service for many years – if not a lifetime. Today, new technologies, the speed of travel, and globalization have opened new avenues for doing missions. “In addition to the traditional path of going with an agency, the multitude of other options are open. Many people have technical skills that enable them to find international jobs. Professional organizations are available to help with networking to send people with appropriate skills overseas.

Relief and development agencies enable those who can sensitively serve needy communities find meaningful places to help around the world. Some of the larger churches have been acting like mini-agencies, funding and overseeing their own missionary forces.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.179).

Short-term Missions

“Whether long-term or short-term, missions is all about obeying the Great Commission. Jesus did not specify a period of time during which we need to engage in missions. I believe his call is for a life-long commitment to be light to the nations and the salt of the earth. In other words, long-term and short-term missions should be one and the same. Missions is a lifestyle.” – Georges Housney

For good or ill, short-term mission trips have grown in popularity since the “Baby Boom” generation discovered a world that was being made increasingly smaller by jet tourism and instant communications with distant places that previous generations could only read about in books and magazines. Missionaries are able to visit home more often and share interesting stories of their life on the field. Short-term missions became an effective way to expose a large number of Christians to the opportunities available for them to serve on a foreign mission field without having to leave home for the rest of their life. Missionaries who had already made a life-long commitment to the mission field encouraged short-term missionaries to visit them in the hope that they would return for a longer commitment. Over time, more and more churches and mission agencies started using short-term trips as a recruitment tool for the full-time ministry.

Today, it is estimated that over 1.5 million people from the United States participate in short-term mission trips every year and spend about \$2 billion for these trips. Exact figures are hard to find, but it is estimated that only 1.7% of “Missions Giving” goes to work among Unreached Peoples, which amounts to an estimated \$1.32 billion (far less than what short-term missionaries spend on travel, food, hotels, etc.). This has caused many churches and missions organizations to re-assess the value of short-term missions. Christians are debating whether or not to support short-term missions; and if they do support them, how they should be done to make the cost legitimate.

Although a short-term mission may last from two weeks to two years, the vast majority of short-term teams go for only two weeks or less. Youth are more often motivated to join a mission by a sense of excitement and adventure. Georges Housney noted in his article for the *Journal of Biblical Missiology*, “...it seems to me that short-term missions is advertised as a self-centered, self-fulfilling experience, promoting personal enjoyment and improvement.” Churches and

missions organizations often lower the expectations for short-term missions teams by giving them simple tasks to do that do not involve in-depth evangelism or large numbers of conversions. Realistically, a group of short-term missionaries ministering cross-culturally without knowing the language or understanding the culture will not see many people accept Christ personally. Unless they are people with special skills being sent for the specific purpose of using those skills, pastors and missions leaders should not encourage anyone who asks to sign up for a short-term mission. Saying that their presence is enough, and anything they can do to help is great is not the best way to select team members. However, by teaming inexperienced team members with those who are experienced short-term missionaries and by having a clear focus and purpose for the mission, good things may be the result.

CHOOSING A MISSIONS PARTNERSHIP

One of the greatest drawbacks to short-term missions – besides the cost – is the fact that far too many people who are convinced to take a trip have no deep desire to fully understand and appreciate the culture or people they are about to interact with. This is why **Choosing a Missions Partnership** is so important. (See HANDOUT “Seven questions to Ask When Choosing a Missions Agency”)

Because short-term missionaries often feel it is “only” for a short time and there is no commitment to return any time soon (if at all) it is very likely that some of them will behave in culturally insensitive ways. **Choosing a Missions Agency** or a home church that has experience preparing and sending short-term teams to foreign countries is best. Most Asian and African countries are very conservative by Western standards, and if the short-term team is not properly briefed on how to dress and behave in public, they may easily offend by the way they dress or act. Western missionaries may take for granted their expensive iPhones and high-tech devices and think nothing of carrying a large amount of cash, but these things can cause unhealthy feelings in places where such luxuries are beyond the reach of the people.

Another drawback attached to short-term missions is the fact that short-term visitors are often shielded from the harsher realities of living and working in a foreign country. Missionaries may be fascinated by the exotic (to them) music, folklore, dress, and lifestyle, but few understand the darker side – the lostness and spiritual depravity – of those who live without Christ. Being kept from the dangers and persecutions that often exist in other countries may also cause short-term people to have expectations for positive results set too high, which may cause some to feel let down and disappointed. “Some expect to love the people in those countries but find out they are not as kind or attractive as they were promised. Some expect to see many people saved. They end up painting walls and laying bricks and hardly seeing

any natives. Some return from a short-term mission disappointed because they did not lead anyone to Christ, and they feel that they have failed and that they are not made for missions.” (Georges Houssey)

The impact of short-term missionaries on the national church is not always positive. Short-term teams that are full of immature believers who are inexperienced with ministry will demand a lot of attention from their hosts. Having to take care of short-term missionaries takes national pastors and fulltime missionaries away from their regular routine and disrupts the established ministry.

The Positives

Of course, not everything about short-term missions is negative. Many short-term missionaries end up in fulltime ministry and often go back to the place where they had their first short-term experience. A short-term mission is often the best way for someone to test the waters and see if career missions might be where God is calling them. Other short-term missionaries may never return to the field, but their experience makes them appreciate the work of the fulltime missionaries they met and shared experiences with; they often become faithful supporters, prayer partners, and mobilizers to help those who are on the field.

Taking a short-term mission trip can make a positive change in Christians. Many young people who have lived their entire lives in affluent Western countries have their eyes opened by a short-term mission where they see firsthand the poverty, hardships, and the spiritual depravity that the majority of people of other countries experience every day of their lives. Others who have never shared their faith back home become bold evangelists after spending time with a like-minded team witnessing in a cross-cultural context. Some Christians who have career, health, family, or other responsibilities that keep them from considering fulltime ministry in a foreign country discover they can make a difference by taking a short-term mission and doing something meaningful instead of taking an entertaining family vacation or taking a trip on a luxury cruise ship.

Jesus and Paul: A Biblical Perspective of Missionaries

“By today’s standards Jesus came to earth on a short mission trip! In fact, his three years of ministry were a series of short-term trips as he went from village to town to city, and from one region to another. He was on what some call a traveling team.” Georges Houssey

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words indicates that the English word “missionary” came out of the Greek *apostolos* (a messenger who is sent to accomplish a certain mission):

APOSTLE, APOSTLESHIP

1. *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος, 652) is, lit., “one sent forth” (*apo*, “from,” *stello*, “to send”). “The word is used of the Lord Jesus to describe His relation to God, *Heb. 3:1*; see *John 17:3*. The twelve disciples chosen by the Lord for special training were so called, *Luke 6:13; 9:10*. Paul, though he had seen the Lord Jesus, *1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8*, had not ‘accompanied with’ the Twelve ‘all the time’ of His earthly ministry, and hence was not eligible for a place among them, according to Peter’s description of the necessary qualifications, *Acts 1:22*. Paul was commissioned directly, by the Lord Himself, after His Ascension, to carry the gospel to the Gentiles.

“The word has also a wider reference. In *Acts 14:4, 14*, it is used of Barnabas as well as of Paul; in *Rom. 16:7* of Andronicus and Junias. In *2 Cor. 8:23* (RV, margin) two unnamed brethren are called ‘apostles of the churches’; in *Phil. 2:25* (RV, margin) Epaphroditus is referred to as ‘your apostle.’ It is used in *1 Thess. 2:6* of Paul, Silas and Timothy, to define their relation to Christ.”

2. *apostole* (ἀποστολή, 651), “a sending, a mission,” signifies an apostleship, *Acts 1:25; Rom. 1:5; 1 Cor. 9:2; Gal. 2:8.*¶

W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), 30–31.

When we examine the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, it will help us gain a clearer understanding of who and what an apostle is. If we view Jesus’ ministry as that of an Apostle sent by His Father, His primary missionary journey was made up of a series of short-term mission trips that took him all around Galilee, to Judea, Samaria, Caesarea Philippi (in Gaulanitis), Decapolis, and Perea. Jesus revealed His threefold mission to be 1st, to seek and save the lost (*Luke 19:10*), healing them in body and soul (*Matthew 9:35*); 2nd, to make disciples (*Luke 6:13*), teaching and training them to be like Him and carry on the mission after He returned to His heavenly kingdom (*Luke 6:40*); and 3rd, to glorify His Father (*John 17:1*).

The strongest example of how Jesus trained His Apostles to carry on His mission can be found in *Luke 9:1-6* (also in *Mark 6:7-12, 30-32*):

“Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, ‘Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece.’

Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them. So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.” **Luke 9:1–6**

As He trained His disciples, Jesus instilled in them the same attitude all missionaries need to take with them when they are sent by God to the world. He taught them (and by extension, all who would follow them) that they were chosen to be fishers of men, and salt and light to a dying world full of darkness. From the beginning, Jesus’s “sent ones” were called to be seed planters, disciple makers, and preachers of the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus demonstrated a holistic salvation that not only saved souls that were perishing but also saved those who were sick in their body, or were hungry, naked, lonely, and afraid. All were to be treated equally; from the greatest to the least among us (Matthew 25:31-46)

The Apostle Paul was no doubt the greatest missionary in the 1st century church. More than half of the book of Acts (13:1 – 28:31) focuses on Paul’s efforts to break out from the restrictions of Mosaic law with the good news that salvation and the forgiveness of sins was now open to the Gentiles. Because of the Lord Jesus Christ all are now saved by grace and faith alone. Paul was like Jesus in that he was constantly traveling on short mission trips. On his first missionary journey, he usually stayed only a few days or a few short weeks in each place he stopped. On his second and third journeys, he stayed longer in each place – typically several weeks to several months. [He spent one and a half years in Corinth (Acts 18:11), three months in Greece (Acts 20:3), and his longest stay was for three years in Ephesus (Acts 20: 31)].

All missionaries will learn about ministering to the needs of people from Jesus’s example of ministry: “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” (Matthew 9:35–38).

The Gospels reveal that Jesus Christ’s humanitarian work complimented His preaching and teaching ministry and that His preaching and teaching ministry always complimented His humanitarian ministry. So, Jesus could say to a paralytic man without equivocating or confusing the issue: “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” And then turn to those who accused Him of blasphemy and say, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven

you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk?’ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” (Matthew 9:2–6). The Apostles Peter, John, Paul, and others understood this and wrote to the church. Peter said, “He commanded us to preach to the people and testify.” (Acts 10:42). Paul told the Corinthians that “...Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” (1 Corinthians 1:17). And John addressed the church, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:18).

Modern-day missionaries can learn several **practical principles** for successful short-term mission trips from Jesus and His chosen Apostles. Those who are considering organizing and sending short-term missionaries away from home must follow **biblical principles** modeled by Jesus and His Apostles if they are going to be successful spiritually. To do otherwise will cause the trip to be more of a vacation, or adventure with no lasting impact on the souls that need to be saved.

1. **Each trip must be focused on God’s agenda to advance His kingdom.** Whether short-term or long-term, a missions trip is not about fulfilling a personal agenda or drawing attention to ourselves. Georges Housney said, “Although there is fulfillment and joy in serving God, the only objective we have is to love God and serve him. A mission that is not God-centered is no mission at all.” The question everyone should ask themselves before they go on a missions trip is “What is the purpose of this trip?” If the answer has nothing to do with the Lord’s commandment to work in the spiritual harvest of lost souls, then the mission should be refocused or reconsidered.
2. **Missions is a Divine Calling** and should be undertaken only by those who have been prayed for, anointed, and have been recognized by church leaders to have a calling to go. Note in Acts how Paul and Barnabas were selected to go: “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.” (Acts 13:1–3). Therefore, the second question to ask before going on any missions trip is, “Why am I going?” If it is not because you have been called by God to go, then you may need to reconsider your decision to go.
3. **Missions candidates must be prepared to minister to others.** What kind of preparations must be made and for how long are debatable. There was a time when no church or mission organization would consider a missionary

candidate unless they had finished a theological degree. Before sending a missionary, they had to be committed to lifelong service in a particular country. Included in their qualifications was being fluent in the native language where they were being sent. However, the trend today is to send people with little or no preparation beyond a brief orientation. If a person is willing to go as part of a short-term team, they can go practically anywhere they want for as long as they want. If someone is considering a stay longer than 2-3 weeks, greater pre-trip preparation including instruction in witnessing to people of another religion, as well as cultural and social training may be required. Today, the problem with most short-term missionaries from the West is that they are being sent out unprepared, uncalled, and unmotivated to reach a specific unreached people group. Without a serious calling to minister to others, no one should go on a missions trip.

The next question a person should ask themselves before going on a missions trip is, “Who am I?” Another essential but often overlooked part of preparation is evaluating the **Character and Integrity** of those wanting to go on a short-term missions trip. It can cause a strong reaction to the sending church or ministry leaders if they ask about standards of conduct and the spiritual maturity of those wanting to take a short-term trip. It must be impressed upon candidates that missionaries represent the heavenly kingdom and must live lives worthy of the calling (Ephesians 4:1). True, no one is perfect, and all have fallen short of God’s commands at times. However, the overall Christian character and moral behavior of every team member is important because the bad behavior of one team member will reflect poorly on the entire team, the minister hosting the team, and the senders at home that the team represents.

4. Before going on a missions trip, the candidate should ask themselves, “When I return, what will I have accomplished?” Short-term missions trips are often laser-focused on accomplishing a certain task. It may be anything from a medical mission to perform certain kinds of surgery, a construction project that requires certain skills or manpower that the local community cannot provide, or a mission of mercy to a disaster-stricken area, etc. It is often the case that not everything planned will be successful or that some unexpected event or need will arise that will alter the course of the mission. But if the missions trip starts out focused on God’s agenda, and every team member is a called, prepared, and spiritually matured person, then they will overcome every obstacle and return home with a good report. (Note Acts 14:27 “Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”)

Whether it is for the short-term or longer, **effective mentoring (discipling) of recruits** who are called to cross-cultural ministry is essential to the success of the ministry. Those who are new to missions and to the culture they are entering will need to be adequately trained. There is only so much that can be done at home and because one of the greatest purposes of short-term missions is to make long-term missionaries, it is extremely valuable to have some short-term experience on the field before making the long-term, life-changing move to full-time missions. Therefore, the new missionary should have someone who can mentor them while they are on the field. Inexperienced workers should be paired with mature successful workers to model appropriate conduct and ministry. Being paired with an indigenous worker can be of immense value.

RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A note on **Tent-Making** as a means to fulfill God’s calling to missions:

The numbers are hard to confirm, but organizations like Global Opportunities are dedicated to helping tentmaking missionaries find jobs overseas; they estimate that there are millions of jobs filled by Westerners, and that many of those jobs can be filled by those who are called to be missionaries. “Thus many who want to bring the gospel to new cultures do not need to go through traditional missions agencies. Instead, they choose an educational path that provides them with professional skills in the anticipation that they will work in cross-cultural settings as contemporary tentmakers, following the model of Paul and Apollos in Corinth.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.184).

Global relief and development agencies provide another path to cross-cultural ministry. “The reality of ongoing pain and suffering stemming from natural and human-made disasters as well as the overwhelming need for development in many countries in the world make this path to ministry one that strategic for human development and for sharing Christ.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.187). However, those who are working for the spiritual harvest the Lord commands must be completed before the end of the age, are quick to point out that working as tentmakers, or as relief and development agents make it hard to stay on course with their missions calling to make Christ known to the nations. Working for humanitarian causes that restrict Christians from evangelism, discipleship, and church planting are failing the Lord’s Great Commission.

The word “missions” should be reserved for apostolic spiritual ministry. A humanitarian mission – a medical trip, digging a well, building infrastructure, or a construction project – may have great value for those who make the sacrifice to join one (note: Matthew 25:31-46) but those trips should be called by their real purpose: a cross-cultural trip with a purpose. To be truly called a “mission” the trip needs to include a spiritual element that is vital to the trip and not incidental to it.

“If a short-mission trip starts and ends at the airport, then it has failed to instill a missionary mindset into the participants. Missions is a lifestyle. That is why it is crucial that the agency or church involved in sending people on these trips start preparing them weeks and even months before the trip. Weekly Bible studies, orientation, training, and team prayer are necessary in preparation. At the conclusion of the trip, the church or agency must find ways to plug the short-term missionary into ongoing opportunities with ministries. This way the money and time spent is not wasted but utilized to have an ongoing and increasing impact.” Georges Housney

Questions for Lesson Six

1. What are some of the negatives for short-term missions?
2. What are some of the positives for short-term missions?
3. Why is choosing the right missions partnership so important?
4. What are some of the important missions lessons to be learned from Jesus, Paul, and the other Apostles?
5. What are some of the practical and biblical principles short-term missionaries should follow when deciding to take a missions trip?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-7: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER CULTURES

Note: The Primary Resource for This Lesson is *Introducing World Missions, Second Edition, A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, © 2004, 2015 by A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee; Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Lesson Outline for the Students

- I. Introduction
 - a. Important Communication Facts
 - b. Conflicting Worldviews
- II. Cultural Values That Affect How We Communicate
- III. Overcoming Barriers to Cross-cultural Communication
 - a. Globalization and Mass Migration
 - b. Training and Equipping Indigenous Workers
- IV. Biblical Basis for the Use of Culture in Ministry
- V. Globalization's Effect on Missions

INTRODUCTION

“Why do you want to be effective in inter-cultural communication? Your ultimate desire should be to communicate Christ. To do that in a cross-cultural setting, you must be effective in intercultural communication. Not only will you be a better communicator, but also, in the long run, you will be better able to enjoy your cross-cultural experience.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.252).

In their chapter on communicating with people of other cultures, Moreau, Corwin, and McGee noted several important facts about communication that should be considered. First, **everything that people do** communicates. Its not just our words that must be considered, but also our actions. Cecil Stalnaker in his July 31, 2017 article “Missionary Communication Blunders” for The Master’s Academy International (<https://www.tmai.org/missionary-communication-blunders/>) said, “In preaching the gospel in another culture, we must not forget that every behavior of the preacher, his mannerism, his facial expression, his dress, and even the way he

stands communicates something. All will be interpreted in light of the worldview of those who are listening to the message.” Second, the goal of effective communication is always more than just imparting **information**. Jesus’s way of ministering to others involved more than words, His interactions with people reveal the great lengths Jesus would go to identify with people, to understand them and to communicate with His audience. The third fact to consider is that the communication process is **more complex** than most people realize. Missionaries should be concerned how they relate and communicate to people immersed in another culture. If they are not conscious of differences in external behaviors, beliefs and values, and worldviews they are in danger of hindering the advance of the gospel. Missionaries who are **culturally sensitive** are more apt to get a hearing for the gospel. This was on the mind of Paul as he entered Greek and Roman cultures:

“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 (NIV)

Moreau, Corwin, and McGee also noted that “The communications process is dynamic, not static. To understand what is happening in any given instance of communication, the interpreter must ‘get into’ the context, understand the worldview, and examine the give-and-take (and much more) of the communication event in question.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.253).

Unfortunately, the ability to develop communication patterns that build trust is an invaluable missionary skill that is too often neglected. Culture is a complex system of external behaviors, beliefs and values that shape the worldview of a people group. Understanding the culture is of great importance to missionary training, especially in relation to the communication of the gospel. If the missionary desires to communicate effectively the message of Jesus Christ they must be aware of the cultural differences between themselves and those they are going to minister to.

“We must not limit or hinder our ministry by failing to become students of the culture. In some cases, missionaries bring things to cultures that are not biblical but are more driven by their own culture. I witnessed the unfortunate demise of a

Korean missionary in Belgium. As his French language ability increased, he seemed to increasingly make attempts to alter church culture in Belgium by imposing Korean spiritual discipline practices on them. At one time, he severely condemned the spirituality of Belgian Christians, denigrating them for not gathering for early morning prayer meetings—a practice common in his native culture. He seriously criticized the spirituality of the Belgians based on his own cultural lens. As a result, he lost ministry opportunities among Belgians. They began to withdraw from him when it came to ministry. Although he desired to make a life of ministry in Belgium, his missionary career was cut short because he did not understand the Belgian church culture. Discouraged, he left the mission field. Every missionary must understand the culture they’re ministering in, lest they run the risk of a diminished or failed ministry.” – Cecil Stalnaker, from his article “Missionary Communication Blunders”

CULTURAL VALUES THAT AFFECT HOW WE COMMUNICATE

“We may be seeing the birth of a new missiological movement. This new era in Christian missions will build upon the accomplishments of the last two hundred years, but it must also be adapted to our world context.” Albert Mohler

For centuries, Christians from the West naturally assumed their values, standards, and lifestyles were superior to the Asian and African peoples they lived and worked among. Whenever a Western way of living conflicted with the non-Western lifestyle, the locals were expected to conform to the Westerners’ way. Unfortunately, this attitude carried over to most of the Western missionaries. With few exceptions (like Hudson Taylor’s China Inland Mission) “Christianization” became synonymous with **Westernization**. This left deep feelings of resentment in many formerly colonized countries in today’s world. Despite their attempts to strip any connection between their preaching of the Gospel and the Western worldview, Christian missionaries from the West to the largely unreached nations of Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East are often viewed with suspicion. Because people in those nations are unable to distinguish between the behaviors of a Christian-in-name-only and a truly born-again believer, many have rejected Christian missionaries.

Today, when missionaries go into another culture and come face-to-face with different behaviors, beliefs, and values that shape their worldview, they no longer assume they are inferior. **Cultural sensitivity training** should be, but is not always, an important part of missionary training. If the missionaries have been trained properly, they will respect cultural differences. The missionary to a foreign country cannot communicate the gospel without being concerned with cultural differences; the ways and means of communication are inextricable from culture. Christ became flesh, dwelt among humanity, and declared the truth about Himself to them. So too,

those who declare the truth of the Gospels must have cultural awareness to make their message meaningful.

Anthropologists who study how culture impacts intercultural communication, have found that how societies value the role of direct versus indirect communication, and how societies value time make a profound difference in the ability to communicate. Other factors that influence cross-cultural communication are self-awareness (individualism or collectivism), gender roles, distribution of gender roles, and how uncertainty is handled. So, it is no longer simply a matter of just learning a new language before entering a mission field, **learning a new culture** has now become of equal importance.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

“I am not suggesting that we go to extremes in order to be relevant, but it is imperative to integrate the gospel with culture in a responsible manner. Integration must be done within the context of a community who are mature in their faith and knowledge of the scripture. It must never be the attempt of a lone ranger.” Cecil Stalnaker

With all of this complexity for understanding culture and the great need for intensive training of missionary candidates, beyond the theological training, it seems almost impossible for all but a very few gifted and intensely-trained persons to take the step away from their home culture and answer the call of the Great Commission to “go” and make disciples of all nations. However, we may find solutions to these issues that will help Christians overcome these barriers.

In today's world, one does not have to move physically from one country or unreached people group to another to face the challenges of cross-cultural communication. **Globalization and mass migration have created multicultural situations in every major city in the world.** Most churches today have multicultural congregations with people from different ethnic groups. Pat Gustin, director of the Institute of World Missions, Andrews University, said, “When a missionary or pastor encounters a new culture, their view of ‘normalcy’ evaporates. Familiar behaviors and products, familiar ‘behavior cues’ and accustomed values and beliefs undergo challenge. Life takes on a surreal feeling.” This is especially true in America and Europe which have seen a flood of mass migrations in the 21st century. Pastors often avoid the questions missionaries face about worship, behavior, standards, and other cultural issues by keeping the congregations separated – usually meeting at different times on Sundays or if their facilities are large enough, meeting in different places on the campus.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE USE OF CULTURE IN MINISTRY

Cecil Stalnaker said that “Every minister in a cross-cultural setting must take seriously the culture where he is ministering. We should become students of the culture...” The reasons he stated in his online article for the Masters Academy International are:

No matter how sound our argument may be, it is imperative we seek the scripture and let God’s word guide our thinking. Below are four points to consider.

1. God established human culture and revealed himself. As recorded in Genesis 1:26-31, God created man capable of governing the world. We see God's tender care and love for the well-being of this masterpiece of his workmanship, in creating the world previously to the creation of man... God created humanity, male and female, in his own likeness by gifting them with distinctive human faculties—rational, moral, social, creative and spiritual. He also told them to have children, to fill the earth and to subdue it (Genesis 1:26-28).

These divine commands are the origin of human culture. Having established human culture, God revealed himself to Adam and Eve, to Cain and Abel, to Moses and Abraham. He took the common practices of the then-known human world to communicate his covenant love. During early human civilization, agreement between two people or two groups was sealed with a covenant. God took on this human culture to communicate his love for the people. By making a covenant with Abraham, God promised to bless his descendants and to make them his special people. Abraham, in return, was to remain faithful to God and to serve as a channel through which God’s blessings could flow to the rest of the world (Genesis 12:1-3).

2. Jesus identified with human culture. The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 2:5-8 that when Jesus took on the form of a human being he (1) identified with humanity, (2) entered human culture and (3) lived and ministered within human culture. Having lived among us, he now commissions us: “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’” (John 20:21). This verse simply says, “As I was sent to proclaim the truth of the Most High, and to convert sinners to God, I send you for the very same purpose, clothed with the very same authority and influenced by the very same Spirit.”

A careful analysis of Jesus' ministry on earth reveals his willingness to identify with people, to understand their worldview and to communicate within a cultural context of the audience... If God had not entered into human culture and communicated within the cultural context of humanity, communication would have been almost impossible.

3. The Apostle Paul identified with all people. The principle that Paul espoused in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 was “mobility in methods, not mobility in morals.” In discussing his self-sacrificing concern in verses 19-23, he mentions three groups of people: the Jews, the Gentiles and the weak. The purpose of his identification with the people is “so that by all possible means I might save some” (9:22). Paul identified with the culture of the people so that he could relate to them and communicate the gospel in understandable terms. To confirm this, let us explore the communication methods of the apostles.

4. The apostles identified with the culture and based their communication according to their cultures. Peter and Paul’s sermons to the Jews and to the Gentiles highlight their sensitivity to the audience and their willingness to work within the confines of the target audience.

Keeping in mind the strong biblical basis for bridging the cultural gap in order to communicate the gospel, it would go a long way towards that goal if the leaders of congregations with different cultures that use the same facilities would encourage cross-cultural encounters with their congregations. By making a conscious effort to create situations where the groups can fellowship together, cross-cultural communication will take place naturally in a non-threatening environment.

GLOBALIZATION’S EFFECT ON MISSIONS

In a November 2017 article for *Tabletalk Magazine*, Albert Mohler wrote “Christianity is a global faith, and our world is increasingly a global community. Throughout most of history, however, humanity primarily lived in cultural and social isolation. Even within the ‘melting pot’ of America, ethnic and language groups tended to inhabit their own unique neighborhoods and spheres.” This ethnic isolation has not disappeared entirely. Depending on the group, many first and second-generation immigrants remain in isolated communities within the host country. It is largely up to the church to break down these cultural barriers and reach out to them with the good news of the kingdom.

Dean Sieberhagen, Professor of Missions at Southwestern Seminary noted four ways that globalization is changing modern missions. Those who are on the cutting edge of missions today have recognized the fact that globalization has changed missions to such a degree that they will probably never be the same. Cultures have become increasingly interconnected because of new technologies that allow people to communicate faster and farther than ever before. Online learning platforms instantly connect students in one classroom with students in another classroom on the other side of the world. With smartphones, children in the West can now chat in real time with their friends and family members anywhere in the

world. People with distant and distinct ways of life are finding common ground by talking to one another.

Sieberhagen also noted how exposure to Western culture through news and entertainment channels and podcasts are affecting changes in Asian cultures. “And whether you live in New Delhi or New York, there’s a good chance that your world is nearly unrecognizable from the one your grandparents grew up in. This world of rapid change presents an exciting challenge to us as Christians.” This “exciting challenge” presents Christians with their greatest obstacle: in a world of rapid change, and where cultural traditions are transitioning and adapting to globalization, our God and His Word are unchanging truths (Hebrews 3:8). “Our God and his Word are the same yesterday, today, and forever, and we have both the privilege and the responsibility of bringing this unchanging Gospel to an ever-changing world. Pursuing this task will require us to rethink our tactics and reimagine our strategies.”

Globalization has changed how missionaries decide which language to learn. For centuries, it was assumed that any cross-cultural mission required learning at least one new language. However, as of 2024, there are 57 sovereign states and 28 non-sovereign entities where English is an official language. In addition, there are a number of administrative divisions that have declared English an official language at the local or regional level. Of course, it is always better to learn the “heart language” of the people group where the missionary is ministering, but in a growing number of countries English is welcome. Globalization has made international business, and higher education in science, medicine, and technology conducted in English preferable. Students from Africa and Asia often excel in the US because they have learned English at home. Globalization has made the world linguistically diverse which allows missionaries great flexibility to reach a linguistically globalized community with the gospel.

Missionaries are no longer being sent out to a world where most people live in “mono-ethnic villages” surrounded only by people of their own tribe. Satellites and smartphones have connected many villages that once remained isolated from the large cities and urbanized population in their own region. “Today, the world’s population is moving very quickly to the cities in a process called ‘urbanization.’ Young people in particular, don’t see a future for themselves in their villages, so as quickly as they can, they move to the big city for work and education. Many large cities develop what’s called a ‘global culture,’ where dozens and dozens of ethnic groups, languages, religions, and nationalities mingle in the same community. (Sieberhagen).

Globalization has led many believers to plant international churches in global cities (also called world cities or world centers) like Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney, Jakarta, Bangkok, and Lagos. These congregations often include English and encourage multicultural fellowships composed of different people groups. They are

“global churches” designed to reach the needs of their globalized citizens. As Albert Mohler said, “The most important dimension of any vision for world missions is a passion to glorify God. The Bible declares that God is glorifying Himself in the salvation of sinners all over the world, and that He desires to be worshiped among all the peoples of the earth. Therefore, we have the glad opportunity to glorify God by declaring the gospel to all the peoples of the earth.”

Another missions strategy that’s on the rise in our globalized world is using business as missions. Many countries where missions and evangelism are unwelcome or illegal, they are still open to entrepreneurs willing to invest in their economy. Visas for engineers, teachers, and technicians of all kinds are often needed in countries where they refuse visas to missionaries. This allows missionaries to gain entry to these nations through business strategies that offer value to those countries. To be successful, it often requires the missionary in business to find national partners (ideally, local believers who are willing to work alongside missionaries who make kingdom work their top priority). Doing business as missions has the added benefit of helping indigenous Christians finance kingdom work in their country.

What may be the greatest change globalization has made in the way missions are being done today is that missionaries no longer have to get on a plane, train, or ship and cross geopolitical borders to fulfill their part of the Great Commission. In his article on ways globalization has changed missions, Dean Sieberhagen wrote, “Where I live in Fort Worth, I can drive to my local Walmart and greet people from India, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ghana, and Brazil. People from around the world are flocking to our cities, and we have the incredible opportunity to minister to the nations without even leaving our neighborhoods.” All across America and the West, it is the same. The mass migration that has been the strategy of the globalists all along, has reached its peak. Illegal immigrants, legitimate refugees, international students, and highly skilled engineers have flooded Christian majority nations.

Many churches in major cities in the West are developing ministries of welcoming for the immigrants. Believers must not ignore the needs of the foreigners who have come truly to contribute to the nation and make a better life for themselves and their families. Unfortunately, far too many have come to the West under false pretenses: some have come to the West only looking for handouts and free services. Others have been trafficked for slave labor, or to be forced into sex work. Christians have the obligation to show kindness to foreigners. Immigrants in need should be able to turn to the church for help. However, Christians may have to walk a fine line between helping those who only need help to get on their feet, and those who only want to take advantage of those who opened the door to them.

It may be true that “Globalization has certainly complicated our world, but with those complications come opportunities.” Are missions-minded Christians up to the challenge? Will they look for new innovative ways to share the unchanging

Gospel with our ever-changing world.? It remains to be seen. The hopeful news in all of this is that Christianity has always been and will remain a global faith until the Lord’s Second Coming. It seems that until the end of the age, our world will increasingly be a global community. Dr. R. Albert Mohler Jr., the President and Centennial Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky said it well:

“The church, when it is faithful, always thinks in global terms. The world now thinks of globalization as a great economic, technological, and political fact. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ understands global mission as a command and as a mandate from the Lord. While the world may debate globalization in terms of its economic and sociological effects, the church must see globalization as an unprecedented opportunity. Globalization may be a surprise to sociologists, politicians, and businessmen, but it comes as great promise to followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The current generation of Christians has unprecedented opportunities to proclaim the name of Jesus in all of the world and to see people of all tribes, tongues, and nations bow the knee to the King.”

By 2025, things have changed greatly in the US and Canada. Some sociologists predict that by mid-century no race or ethnicity will be a majority in the United States. When Christians look around them they will quickly see that the nations of the world are living right next to them. Spiritually speaking, it seems that since the church in America failed in its mission to reach the world with the gospel, God is sending the world to us. The reality is that the nations of the world are living right here, and yet, few Americans are making the effort to cross the street and share the gospel with someone who is from another country and culture. We must do a much better job of sharing the gospel with the foreigners among us or the world will overwhelm us.

It has reached a point when the United States has more immigrants than any other country in the world. The latest from the Pew Research group calculates that more than 40 million people living in the U.S. were born in another country (about 12% of the population), and just about every nation in the world is represented among the foreign-born population. The massive influx of undocumented and unvetted immigrants into the United States makes them face the complexities of immediately learning English and figuring out the culture. Sadly, too many immigrants are choosing to isolate themselves into their own communities where they do not have to learn the language or understand American culture. This is creating a crisis of having millions upon millions of people who do not feel they need to assimilate the new culture. Ignorance and walls of separation only breed hate and suspicion. Only the church can share the love of Jesus Christ that is desperately

needed. Simply by cultivating friendships and welcoming foreigners to fellowship with Americans, it can make the difference between immigrants thriving or merely surviving.

A number of churches and missions organizations intentionally cater to immigrants and treat them as if they were an unreached people group. By sharing life with our foreign-born neighbors, we can prayerfully introduce them to Jesus in the hope that not only will they become disciples of Jesus, but also, they will share the gospel with their friends and family here and back home. The massive wave of illegal immigrants only complicates the issue of how you share Christ with those who broke the law and disrespected the culture by paying money to Mexican drug cartels and rushing past US border patrols.

Writing for Global Frontier Missions, Ed Stetzer said, “For us to be faithful in assisting our churches in the tasks of evangelism and church planting, we need an awareness of what work is underway so believers, churches, denominations, and ministries can support and participate in these missions efforts here in North America. We will not make significant progress in fulfilling the Great Commission in North America until we take seriously the mandate to reach more of the millions of immigrants and hundreds of people groups in our communities with the gospel.”

Questions for Lesson Seven

1. How has globalization affected Western missionaries’ attitude towards non-Western cultures?
2. Why is learning a new culture as important as learning a new language?
3. In what way is Christianity a global faith?
4. In what ways has globalization changed missions in the 21st century?
5. What should be the church’s response to mass immigration in this century?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-8: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

MISSIONS TRENDS AND PARADIGM SHIFTS

Note: The Primary Resources for This Lesson are
Introducing World Missions, Second Edition, A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey, © 2004, 2015 by A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee; Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Spiritual Warfare and Missions: The Battle for God’s Glory Among the Nations, © 2010 by Jerry Rankin and Ed Stetzer, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, TN

Outline for the Students

- I. New Faces of Christianity in the Global South
 - a. Seven Global Currents
 - b. Tensions between North and South
- II. Spiritual Warfare in Missions
 - a. God’s Purpose
 - b. Satan’s Strategies

NEW FACES OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

“Many new realities exist for missions today. The primary one that missionaries and missions senders must face at the moment is rapid change. This is the information age, a time when travel around the world is relatively inexpensive, access to knowledge of places and peoples is easily obtainable, and communication with those far away is instantaneous. Important shifts have taken place in missions as a result.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.265)

Mission-sending churches and mission organizations are facing many new challenges in the 21st century. In 2007, a group led by Fritz Kling completed a global listening tour, interviewing more than 150 church leaders in nineteen countries. Their interviews revealed what they concluded are **Seven Global Currents** trending in our time. They are as follows:

1. **Mercy** in the name of “social justice” is leading many missionaries – especially among the young – to emphasize the physical needs of the people ahead of the spiritual needs.

2. **Mutuality** – in many respects, globalization is leading to closing the gap between many of the traditionally poorer countries in the South and the mostly Christian North. Increased access to education, technology, and economic growth are causing leaders in the global South to demand a greater voice in the church.
3. **Mass Migration** from the poorer and less free countries to the West and North is causing rapid societal change in Europe and the United States. Migrants are straining the resources of public and private institutions. “All future Christian outreaches will need to adapt their messages for radically diverse audiences.”
4. **Monoculture** – sociologists use this term to describe the dominance of a single cultural, ideological, or organizational paradigm within a given context among global or national masses. Monoculture is typically economically motivated because it is based around films, music, or television programs. It often stirs controversy in developing nations because it is largely based on Western popular culture. When Christians are communicating with global neighbors, they will need to be aware that they are competing with influences of more than one competing idea being marketed in that culture.

Characteristics of Monocultures

Sociological monocultures share several key traits:

1. **Homogeneity:** A lack of diversity in ideas, values, or practices. This uniformity simplifies systems but reduces adaptability.
2. **Standardization:** Processes, behaviors, or beliefs are streamlined for uniformity, often at the cost of alternative approaches.
3. **Centralization:** Decision-making and power are concentrated within a dominant entity or ideology, creating hierarchical structures.
4. **Exclusion:** Alternative perspectives or practices are often marginalized or suppressed, stifling potential innovation.

These characteristics underscore both the efficiency, and the risks associated with monocultures, highlighting their dual-edged nature in sociological systems.

<https://easysociology.com/sociology-of-culture/introducing-monocultures/>

5. **Technology** – missionaries must be aware of the changes satellite communications on the Internet, cell phones, television, and personal computers are having on the lives of those they are ministering the gospel to.
6. **Mediation** – On the one hand, with the help of technology, globalization is bringing cultures together, but at the same time, partisan political rivalries, and ancient ethnic and religious conflicts are proliferating in every corner of the globe. “Splinter groups now have more communication avenues for

inciting discord and attracting sympathizers than ever, and the global church must find a mediating role amid increasing polarization of all kinds.”

7. **Memory** – Globalization may be reshaping the world, but every nation, tribe, and culture has its own history that cannot be ignored. The collective memories of people preserved in their shared history may have a much deeper and more profound influence on their culture than globalism. When studying the culture they are about to enter, missionaries must understand how their yesterday affects who they are today.

The broader issues raised by the Global Currents trending today may be brought into narrower focus by examining the **Tensions Rising Between the Global North and South**. One trend in the global South that is creating tension is how the Bible communicates to many in the South in ways that it cannot communicate with modern Western Christians immersed in secular skepticism. In his chapter “North and South” Philip Jenkins wrote, “The impact of the Bible in the global South must raise questions that are at once exhilarating and disturbing. Nobody is suggesting that in order to recreate this experience this excitement, Christians need to return to a social order reminiscent of the first-century Mediterranean – still less to renounce modern medicine. But we can reasonably ask whether the emerging Christian traditions of the Two-Thirds World have recaptured themes and trends in Christianity that the older churches have forgotten, and if so, what can we learn from their insights.” (*The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*, © 2006 by Philip Jenkins, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, p.178).

Jenkins, like other missionaries from North to South, have recognized that the Bible speaks differently to many global South Christians. Jenkins used examples of Christians from Europe who encountered new believers in Africa who asked probing questions about the Bible’s stories that the European ministers were unprepared to answer because it challenged their faith in the Bible in ways they had never been challenged before. The heart of the issue is how weak and ineffective modern liberal theology is. The missionary who considers the Bible to be a flawed, man-made document, open for interpretation, and readily blended and harmonized with other religions will soon discover themselves sinking in the quicksand of unbelief. “What Americans customarily think of as Christianity is, often, a specific manifestation of the faith that operates in the post-Enlightenment West. Ideas that might appear natural to the religion may not seem so elsewhere. For many Christians outside the West, it is not obvious that religion should be an individual or privatized matter; that church and state be separate; that secular values predominate in some spheres of life; or that scriptures be evaluated according to the canons of historical scholarship.” (*The New Faces of Christianity*, pp. 181-182).

Jenkins may have considerable merit as an historian and social commentator, but as a conservative Christian theologian that argues for orthodoxy, he lacks merit. He wrote, “Sober academics seek other reasons for the charismatic nature of much global South religion. Why, for instance, do these churches so emphasize healing, visions, and prophecy? Perhaps, one might suggest, that they are rather too much in contact with their pre-Christian roots, with traditional worlds of healing or magic or shamanism. For Northern liberals, contemplating a belief in demons and exorcisms based on a fundamentalist reading of scripture, this seems to be the realm of cults, not Christianity.” (*The New Faces of Christianity*, p.16).

The rising tension between the church in the global North and South has a lot to do with their different approaches to the Bible. Generally speaking, Christians in African and Asian countries are true to their Bibles and take seriously the Word of God and biblical authority. They show little if any tolerance for any of the so-called “lost” Gospels of the Gnostics or of those who incorporate other religious texts into their practice of Christianity. Southerners practice their Christianity as it is modeled in the book of Acts. They are offended by and resist completely the liberalism of Northern Christians who have compromised with secular culture, tolerating sexual hedonism and moral relativism. “The North-South contrast naturally appeals to Southern churches themselves, anxious to assert their independence from Europe and North America, and to prove that they are neither vestiges of colonialism nor puppets of Western globalization. The idea of Southern authenticity also lends itself to conservative political conclusions. If in fact Christians of the South are following the footsteps of the earliest believers, while Euro-Americans have systematically compromised with liberalism and secular scholarship, then rising churches claim not just greater numbers, but greater access to truth...” (*The New Faces of Christianity*, p.186).

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN MISSIONS

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” **Ephesians 6:10–12**

Christians must be reminded constantly that from the beginning, the earth is a battlefield, not a picnic ground. People have to choose which side of the war between good and evil they are on (Joshua 24:14-15; 1 Kings 18:21; John 3:18-21; Acts 26:15-18). Missionaries are those who have chosen to be on the frontline of the battle

for the lost souls of men. The renowned British missionary C.T. Studd expressed the attitude of many of those who choose the hardships of ministry over the comforts of life on the sidelines when he said, “Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop, within a yard of hell.” In the Foreword to *Spiritual Warfare and Missions*, Pastor and author David Platt wrote, “There is a spiritual battle presently raging for the souls of billions of men and women around the world. The scope of this spiritual battle is universal. It covers and comprises every tongue, tribe, language, nation, person, and people group. There is no place on this earth where this war is not being waged.”

All those who are in full-time ministry should understand that the stakes in this spiritual battle are eternal. Paul expressed the eternal stakes of this warfare in Romans 8:1-11. Christ alone sets free from sin and death to live according to the Spirit of life. By His death on the cross, He condemned sin in the flesh and fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law for those who live according to the Spirit, “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

After Christ, there is no greater figure in the New Testament than the Apostle Paul who was chosen by God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He is the inspiration and model for every missionary (apostle) and evangelist that follows his example. Many are called, but few answer that call to engage in this cosmic struggle for the lost souls held captive by the devil. The whole world is in bondage to demonic strongholds, deceptive arguments of science so-called (1 Timothy 6:20) and every high thing of false religion that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:5).

This warfare does not take place only in the “world outside” of the church, but it rages also in the church pews. Platt continues to speak of Satan’s strategy: “Where the church exists, he works to draw us in through temptation and discourage us in trial. He lures us with possessions and prosperity, and he lulls us to sleep with comforts and complacency. He deceives, deters, and distracts the church from knowing the wonder of Christ and declaring the worth of Christ to the ends of the earth.” The truth is the church was created by God and exists only for His purpose: that He be exalted among the nations. It is the responsibility of the leaders of God’s people – the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers – to train and mobilize God’s people to fulfill **God’s Purpose: to be exalted among the nations.** The very heart of this warfare is God’s desire that He and His kingdom will be exalted over all His creation and Satan’s strategy to do everything possible to oppose God and prevent His kingdom from being established over all the earth.

At the start of the 21st century economists began to use the idea of the world being “flat” to describe how globalization has made the world more interconnected and a level playing field where countries, companies, and individuals compete in a global market. However, when speaking spiritually, the world became “flat” on the

first Pentecost after Jesus ascended to His heavenly kingdom and the Holy Spirit was sent in His name to empower the church. To fulfill its mission to glorify God to the ends of the earth all the nations would be treated equally. On that day over two thousand years ago, God created “global Christians”, and the Holy Spirit leveled the spiritual economy for all people. “If only one nation had experienced Pentecost, that one nation could have felt favored. But God favors every tribe equally. There is no one guardian of special faith, knowledge, or mystical experiences. No skin color or people group can elevate themselves over the rest. God is the great gift giver partially because all of us are the blessed receivers of His gift.” (*Spiritual Warfare in Missions*, pp. 6-7)

The significance of the world being “flat” means that Christians can travel from people group to people group and preach the gospel equally to all. People do not have to give up their language or culture to be welcomed into the church. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.” (1 Corinthians 12:13–14). The spiritual principle of **unity in diversity** was lost in the church for centuries but has been revived in today’s globalized world. Christians see now more than ever, that focusing their evangelistic efforts only on their own race, ethnic group, or neighborhood is the greatest hinderance to fulfilling God’s vision for a multiethnic and multicultural church.

That God’s glory should be declared among the nations is a central theme of both the Old and New Testaments. This is made clear by almost sixty passages from the Old Testament and thirty from the New. The church was created to declare God’s glory and was given the task of missions to declare God’s glory to every tribe, tongue, and nation. When the Apostle Paul turned from preaching to the Jews first, he said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us:

*‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,
That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’” Acts 13:46–47*

Will we be found faithful in the end? In the final chapter of their book on spiritual warfare and missions, Jerry Rankin and Ed Stetzer ask the question that remains unanswered in the Gospels: “...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). “Jesus Christ came and died for the sins of the world so that whoever calls on the name of the Lord can be saved. But many of the peoples of the world have not heard that good news, and they continue to perish in their sins... We are the couriers sent to proclaim deliverance to all peoples, but we have stopped short. Instead of reaching the most remote regions, we have been diverted to caring for our own people and investing more in our own church

programs than getting the gospel to all peoples.” (*Spiritual Warfare and Missions*, p.279).

SATAN’S STRATEGIES

The church must not condemn itself alone for the unfinished work of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20. The fact is we live in a fallen world where Satan, our adversary the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). And so, the devil obstructs, hinders, diverts, and does all he can to stand in the way. This is why the church must be on alert constantly and always have the full armor of God.

Rankin and Stetzer devote the bulk of their book (ten of twelve chapters) to recognizing and understanding Satan’s strategy to oppose the gospel of the Kingdom of God from being made known to the ends of the earth. The average Christian living in the Western and Northern Hemispheres is able to live their life without ever being aware of the great spiritual battle raging over the earth. Modern secularism and the materialistic worldview it created have caused the church in majority Christian countries to live in denial of the spiritual forces of darkness that fight against them. In his book, *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis wrote about Satan’s strategy in a series of letters from a devil to his pupil. Screwtape writes:

“I wonder you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of your own existence. That question, at least for the present phase of the struggle, has been answered for us by the High Command. Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves. Of course this has not always been so. We are faced with a cruel dilemma. When the humans disbelieve in our existence we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism and make no magicians. On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and sceptics... I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that ‘devils’ are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that (it is an old textbook method of confusing them) he therefore cannot believe in you.”

Anyone who has spent a significant amount of time in one of the countries in Africa, Asia, or South America will not have to be convinced that there are evil forces at work in the world. **Fear and superstition** are strong motivating factors to keep people in bondage. Satan deceives and leads multitudes astray by causing them

to turn to idols and false worship based upon rites and rituals that are supposed to protect them from demons, but in fact, only puts them into deeper bondage to the forces of evil they are afraid of.

Christians bear with them the good news of the kingdom of God – that Jesus Christ has come into the world to “...preach the gospel to the poor... to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed... and proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” (Luke 4:18–19). Satan will do all he can to stop us, but he will not succeed in the end.

“The reality is that there is an enemy of the kingdom of God who is intent on depriving God of His praise and glory among the nations. He works subtly in darkness and anonymity to defeat the individual Christian, distort the mission of the church, and divert God’s people from their calling to declare His salvation and proclaim His glory among the nations. God’s Word alerts us to this enemy and admonishes us to be alert to his devious schemes; we are told to stand firm against this deception, resist temptation, and claim the victory that has already been assured. It is a victory rooted in God’s character, won for us by Christ’s resurrection, and manifested by the Spirit’s indwelling presence in the church. God’s praise and glory is our supreme priority, and proclaiming and displaying it our greatest privilege.” (*Spiritual Warfare and Missions*, p.47)

In chapter after chapter, Jerry Rankin and Ed Stetzer describe Satan’s strategies to deprive God of the praise and glory due Him. They go into detail about the ways the devil deceives the nations, keeps nations closed to the gospel, keep people groups hidden from the awareness of the church, persecute believers and destroys churches, convince Christians that missions is optional, erode the authority of God’s word, distort the call of God, erode the faith of God’s people, and destroy the spiritual vitality of the church.

Christians need to wake up to the fact that we are fighting a war against the devil on two fronts: attacks from **outside the church** to persecute and kill Christians and attacks from **inside the church** to deceive and destroy the faith of believers. This two-front war has been going on since the beginning of the church. The letters of Paul and the other Apostles contain numerous verses warning Christians not to be deceived by false prophets and teachers that slip into the churches and secretly introduce heresies. Paul warned believers to keep their eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which they learned from the Apostles. He told them to turn away from such men because they are not of our Lord

Christ but are self-serving who use their soft and flattering speech to deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting (Romans 16:17–18).

Paul saw the danger of false prophets and teachers. He looked behind the surface and saw “deceitful spirits” who advocate “doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1). Peter warned believers not to be persuaded by those who “secretly introduce destructive heresies” even denying the Master, Jesus Christ who gave His teachings to His chosen disciples (2 Peter 2:1). Paul refused to tolerate anyone who was teaching false doctrines; he called them false brothers (2 Corinthians 11:26); false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13), false speakers, and liars (1 Timothy 4:2). The apostle John also warned the church not to believe every spirit, but “test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Paul’s final words to the Ephesian elders when he met with them near Miletus included a solemn warning about false teachers. He told them, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:28–30).

The Apostles understood that false prophets and teachers are more than wrong; **they are dangerous**, and Christians should not expose their minds to them. Like pornographers or drug dealers, they pervert holy thinking and poison both soul and body. False prophets are like spiritual beasts that devour Christians; they are immeasurably more deadly than the physical ones. Jude called them unreasoning animals, “But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.” (Jude 10).

False prophets and teachers will be fought off by sound doctrines taught honestly and truthfully by good shepherds of the sheep that have been taught by other shepherds to know and obey the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Satan’s other attacks on the church are more brazen and obvious. They come in the form of persecutions and threats against the lives and property of Christians. Open Doors is a ministry that works in more than 70 countries, supporting Christians who suffer persecution and discrimination for their faith. On their website, they posted an article “22 Scriptures Persecuted Christians Cling To” (<https://www.opendoorsus.org/>). In this article they included the testimonies of Christians around the world that are facing different kinds of persecution but are able to take comfort in the Scriptures. The article says about these Scriptures, “They are the words that Christians have spoken, sung, whispered, written and meditated on through the ages. They are the lyrics that David spoke as he hid in caves, on the run from Saul ... the epistles that Paul wrote, encouraging and challenging the churches

he planted as they faced opposition ... the lessons Jesus taught as He shared His life and wisdom with people, preparing them for the difficult path they had chosen. And they are the words that persecuted Christians read and still cling to today.”

A Christian in Laos said about Psalm 91:4 (NASB): *He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.* “This was my scripture when my husband was imprisoned for his faith. I had great faith in the Lord to keep him safe. I was confident he would be fine because he has God in his life. I believe in God’s promise.”

A Christian worker in northern India quoted Romans 8:38-39: *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* He said, “I had to move from more than three villages because villagers and anti-Christians opposed me. I faced false accusations and have been imprisoned and interrogated. Yet wherever I went, I never stopped serving the Lord. I was able to gather people and pray. These verses always remind me that nothing can separate me from God's love; God’s love empowers me to face the trials and opposition. With my family, I will continue to serve the Lord all the days of my life.”

A Christian sister in Eritrea quoted Psalm 23:4: *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me.* She added, “The first arrest of my husband was when we were engaged. He was suddenly picked from his house. In Eritrea, your life is always at risk. Though we are afraid, at the same time we are also living boldly. This verse assures me: Even though you are in prison, even though you are on the streets, even though you are being hunted, God is with you, wherever. And God understands what we are passing through. Jesus understands. He passed through this for us.”

A brother from Sudan quoted John 3:16, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* And testified, “As soon as I met Jesus, persecution followed. My family tried to force me back to Islam. I have run for my life for my faith in Jesus. I have been in prison for Him. I have lost all my possessions, including my home. But He gave His Son for me. He is worth it. I will continue to share His hope.”

After quoting Acts 1:8: *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* A brother named Cho from Myanmar, said, “This verse is my anchor. It says we are Jesus’ witnesses to others. Witnesses in how we speak, how we act, how we live, in everything we do. Our lives are a witness. So, I must be a witness to others. Even to those who make life hard for us. In our identity card, our tribe name is Chin and religion is Christian. When people see it, they don’t give us the priority. We are discriminated [against]. This is the first thing we experience in

Myanmar. They do not care about us. This verse strengthens me to teach others and lead others to God. Even though the journey is hard, there is joy. I don’t consider it a problem because it’s our burden to share what we have learned from the Word of God, and when we do it—when we obey and be His witnesses—the burden becomes light.”

There are countless numbers of stories of Christians from around the world and down through the centuries that have lived and died through every kind of pain and suffering that persecution can cause a human being to endure. Every Apostle of Jesus Christ suffered persecution unto death (except for John who was persecuted but was allowed to die of natural causes). If you are a Christian and are living in a place where being persecuted for your faith is not a normal part of your life, then you are the exception and not the norm. As the end of the age draws nearer, the persecution of Christians will only get worse because Satan will only grow more desperate to destroy the church before the Lord returns in glory.

Rankin and Stetzer in their chapter on Satan’s strategy to persecute believers wrote, “Christians who live in free, democratic countries in the West where persecution is not a normal occurrence often cringe in horror when they hear reports of brothers and sisters around the globe experiencing atrocities of suffering and death for their faith. Our natural inclination is to cry out in opposition against these tragedies. We want to extract these victims of persecution from the environment of persecution and thereby make the mistake of removing the power of their witness. We need to examine whether or not our responses are biblically informed. A biblical theology of persecution creates a framework for understanding God’s sovereign purpose in allowing the evil dominions of darkness to inflict suffering on his children.” (*Spiritual Warfare and Missions*, p.145)

Questions for Lesson 8

1. Review the Seven Global Currents trending in our time. How do they shape global missions in the 21st century?
2. Explain the rising tension between the churches in the global North and South.
3. What are the negative effects of globalization on Christian missions?
4. What are the positive effects of globalization on Christian missions?
5. Describe the “two fronts” of the spiritual warfare Satan is waging against Christians.

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-9: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

ENCOUNTERING THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

Note: The Primary Resource for This Lesson is *Introducing World Missions, Second Edition, A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, © 2004, 2015 by A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee; Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Lesson Outline for the Students

- I. Learning About Other Religions
 - a. Seven Roles the Missionary Can Play Relating to Other Religions
 - b. The Role of the Missionary as an Ambassador for Christ
 - c. The Role of the Missionary as an Advocate
- II. The Challenge of Defending Our Faith

LEARNING ABOUT OTHER RELIGIONS

With rare exceptions and only for short periods of time, encounters between Christians and other world religions have been painful and contentious. So far, the 21st century has not been an exception – if anything, the relations between Christians and other major world religions are as bad as they have ever been. When missionaries study the world map and locate the area of the world where the vast majority of people live, they quickly realize that this is also the same area where the least number of Christians live. The region, sometimes known as the 10/40 Window, is where Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism have their greatest influence. “Those who live in non-Christian contexts and come to Christ will inevitably come face-to-face with competing truth claims. These claims focus on issues that impact daily life rather than simply theoretical ones.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.281).

Learning about other religions has almost become a necessity for believers in even in so-called Christianized parts of the world because they now discover that many in their communities, workplaces, and marketplaces are new immigrants from countries around the world where people actively subscribe to other religions. Many of the world’s religions that once were known only in distant places far from Christian Europe and America, are now coming into close contact with the West. Christian apologists who once had to contend for the faith only with atheists, agnostics, or apathetic neighbors now find out they must be prepared to defend and

define their faith with Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews. Christians in majority Christian nations can no longer afford to keep to themselves and let others practice their beliefs however they choose.

The relativism and pluralism of modern Western cultures have led to the false belief that all religions are basically the same and only teach different paths to the same end. However, this belief is founded upon ignorance of the truth-claims of Christianity and the other major religions of the world. “Orthodox Christianity claims to be the true religion. So does Islam, and so do other religions. Even Hinduism and Buddhism, in spite of their eclectic veneer, claim to be true. Since there are mutually exclusive truth-claims among these religions, it is obvious that they cannot all be correct. For example, some religions are monotheistic, such as traditional Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Others are pantheistic, such as Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, and Christian Science. Paganism, neopaganism, and Mormonism are polytheistic. These have incompatible views of God. In the final analysis, only one can be true, and the others must be false. The uniqueness of Christianity is found in its singular claims about God, Christ, the Bible, and the way of salvation. While there are other monotheistic religions, Christianity claims to have the true view of God – Trinitarianism.” (*The Portable Seminary*, David Horton, General Editor, © 2006, Bethany House Pub., Bloomington, MN, pp.420-421).

In their chapter “Encountering the Religions of the World”, Moreau, Corwin, and McGee describe “**seven roles that the missionary can play in relating to those of other religions.**”

1. **Adherent or Insider.** In this role, the missionary adopts the habits, practices, and rituals of that religion while maintaining their Christian beliefs. On the surface, the missionary appears to be sympathetic with or even a follower of their religion. In the end, this role has been judged to be an inappropriate strategy for missions because it involves deception.
2. **Seeker or Inquirer.** This role is chosen by those who explore another religion with the intention of adopting or converting to that religion. However, this strategy also involves deception if the missionary has no intention of converting from Christianity to another religion. “Evangelicals generally have rejected this approach, asserting that in Christ, truth has been revealed and the Christian who denies Christ for another religion has turned away from the truth.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.284).
3. **Explorer.** This role is chosen by the missionary who wants to pursue an honest dialogue with adherents of another faith. The emphasis is on an interpersonal exchange of ideas, but with no attempt to convert one side or the other.

However, engaging in dialogue apart from any attempt to persuade or cause someone to turn to Christ in repentance and faith, falls far short of what Christian missionaries are called to do. “Missionaries may at times take on the role of the explorer, but they need to move beyond that role if they want to obey Christ.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.285)

4. **Reporter.** “Reporters are outsiders whose job is to accurately describe or report the religion they encounter. They may be thought of as social scientists of religion who try to be as objective as possible. Their focus is on understanding and describing rather than on evaluating or judging.” (p.285). The role of a reporter is more appropriate for communicating with churches and supporters back home. People who have been raised in a Christianized country or who have spent little or no time in foreign countries where other religions dominate, very often have no knowledge of what other religions teach or how people live who are under their influence. “Although missionaries are not to become advocates for another religion, they can serve as voices of moderation when appropriate to ensure that those who pray for them, properly understand the adherents among whom they live.” (pp.285-286)
5. **Specialist.** The purpose for a missionary becoming an expert or specialist concerning one religion – or possibly one unique aspect of that religion – is to develop more effective strategies for communicating the gospel cross-culturally and contextualized in the framework of their religion. The specialist is motivated to draw people to Christ alone for their salvation.
6. **Advocate of a New Religion.** The role of the missionary is to challenge and stimulate adherents of other religions to consider another way of looking at their world. As an advocate of Christianity the missionary uses whatever resources are available to make known the content, context, and meaning of the Christian faith found in the Scriptures. The hope is that once exposed to the truth of the gospel, the Holy Spirit will draw them in. “Though missionaries may temporarily take on the role of seeker, they eventually must move beyond that role to engage non-Christians by calling them to Christ. To do any less is to deny the fundamental nature of Christ’s command to disciple all nations.” (p.286)
7. **Apologist or Antagonist.** The traditional role of the missionary is that of an apologist. ““Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have’ (1 Peter 3:15). ‘Contend for the

faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints’ (Jude 3). These and other biblical passages encourage Christians to maintain a firm grasp on what they believe so they can explain it to others. This, in essence, is what apologetics is all about. It is not a matter of making excuses or apologies for our faith, as the word might seem to imply; rather it involves the logical, systematic explanation or defense of Christianity.” (*The Portable Seminary*, p.338).

Christian missionaries often encounter non-Christian religious practices that are immoral, dehumanizing, or unjust. When that happens, the role of the antagonist becomes great. There are dangers to the role of an opponent to a religion: one is becoming too critical of all the adherents to a particular religion and overlooking any positive effects that religion may be having. The other is creating a reputation for Christians as a people who disparage other religions and who try to force their beliefs upon others.

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” **2 Corinthians 5:20**

No matter what strategy the Christian missionary uses to encounter other religions, they should keep in mind the fact that they are to have the same frame of mind of an ambassador to another country but with a mandate to convince people to leave their religion behind and worship Jesus Christ. Like good ambassadors, Christian missionaries must conduct themselves humbly, respectfully, and with sensitivity for people who live and think differently; all while advocating for the gospel of the Kingdom of heaven.

Respect and Sensitivity. Good missionaries are careful not to disrespect the religious beliefs of the people they serve. Whether they are there for long-term or short-term, Christians should understand that the religious beliefs of others are deeply held and are often steeped in centuries of traditions and culture. “Sensitivity means not only understanding the worldview of others but also connecting with their feelings and frustrations” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.287). Mocking or joking about others’ beliefs can slam shut doors to honest dialogue with them. For example, Hindus hold cows to be sacred animals and treat them as such. Americans may not understand this belief, but that is no excuse for them to make comments about Big Macs and how tasty beef is in America in the presence of Hindus. Respecting the beliefs of others does not mean that Christians have to agree with them; it means they should do their best to not offend them by their words, attitudes, or actions.

Humility. “Humility is essential for service to others. Jesus advised people not to rush for the best places at a feast. People today are just as eager to raise their social status, whether by being with the right people, dressing for success, or driving the right car. Whom do you try to impress? Rather than aiming for prestige, look for a place where you can serve. If God wants you to serve on a wider scale, he will invite you to take a higher place.” (Neil S. Wilson, *The Handbook of Bible Application*, Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., © 2000, p.307).

The Apostle Paul understood how important it is for believers to be humble. He wrote:

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” **Philippians 2:5–11**

Jesus Christ is the model for every Christian, and especially for those in ministry. Some leaders try to give the appearance of humility, but God knows what is in their heart. Truly humble people do not beat themselves down; neither do they beat others down. By comparing ourselves only with Christ, we realize our sinfulness and understand that we are no better or worse than anyone else. True humility allows us to recognize our gifts and strengths without being “puffed up” with spiritual pride. In humility we are willing and able to use what God has given in the way Christ intends. True humility enables the missionary to make a realistic assessment of their calling and commitment to serve God and others.

Probably, the most important role of a missionary is to be an **advocate or promoter** of belief in Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation and to eternal life. However, to be effective, the missionary should be cautious and study carefully what people actually believe about their own religion before preaching Christianity to them. Most of the major world religions are complex systems of beliefs that have formed over centuries. Often adherents to one of these religions may hold onto a different form of that religion than what the missionary learned in a comparative religion class in Seminary. So, when entering a mission field it is best to take some time to listen and learn what the locals actually believe and observe how they

practice their religion in the area where the ministry is taking place. “The cross is already a stumbling block to adherents of non-Christian religions; don’t add to the stumbling block a type of advocacy that demeans or denigrates people made in God’s image and for whom Christ died. After all, your goal is not to defeat them but to woo and win them for Christ.” (*Introducing World Missions*, p.288).

Another very important aspect of being an advocate for Christianity is learning how people in your place of ministry feel and think about Christians and Christianity. Unfortunately, for many missionaries, the field where they have chosen to live, and work may have been planted with bad seeds by previous missionaries who were poor witnesses and bad examples of Christlike followers of Jesus. Some things that are said about Christians are totally untrue or exaggerations deliberately spread by opponents to Christianity. Therefore, it is important to learn about the history of missionary activity – if any – in the area where you are going to start your ministry. It is not just foreign missionaries that may have stirred up opposition to the Gospel; sometimes a local pastor or minister may not have been a faithful witness or may have been the cause of trouble by his actions or insensitive attitudes towards his non-Christian neighbors.

A Christian missionary may be unaware of local feuds or rivalries between different pastors or ministers in the area. They may ignorantly step into a bitter fight that they have no idea about. In any case, their ability to advocate for belief in Jesus Christ will depend upon them being a peace-maker between warring factions first.

To be an effective advocate or promoter of the Christian faith requires a positive, healthy mental attitude towards their work and towards the people they are ministering to. Therefore, missionaries are often called upon to be more than preachers or evangelists, they may be called upon to bless the poor in spirit; comfort those who are grieving; encourage the meek and lift the spirits of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness in a corrupt land; show mercy to those who are troubled and help the pure in heart to see Christ; and to be a peacemaker between those who are fighting each other. And as is often the case in this world, missionaries will need to comfort and encourage those who are being persecuted for righteousness’ sake, and for the sake of Jesus Christ.

THE CHALLENGE OF DEFENDING OUR FAITH

From the beginning of the church it has been necessary for believers to both define and defend their faith in Jesus Christ. Christians have never been without those who have attacked their faith and demanded they explain the reasons for their belief that the crucified Jewish rabbi from Galilee is all that His worshippers say He is. Unfortunately, in our modern era, few Christians know how to give a strong argument for their faith in Jesus the Son of God, which is what *apologetics* is for. In

the 21st century, Christians for the most part are unable to stand in the global arena with non-believers and tell them exactly why they are Christians and why they should be too. Today, it is not enough to say, “Jesus said it; I believe it; and that settles it.”

When the average Christian hears the term *apologetics*, they think it is a complex theological discipline that is only for the highly intellectual Seminary students to learn about. But the simple truth is *apologetics* defines “Christianity” and what a “Christian” is; it tells us how to **define ourselves** and **defend what we believe** to an unbelieving world – which are things every Christian should know even if they never go to a Bible college or intend to go out and evangelize the world.

Pastors, Bible teachers, preachers and other spiritual leaders in the church should take seriously the responsibility to make sure every believer in their care knows what they believe, why they believe, and how to defend their beliefs against all comers. In their chapter introducing Apologetics, the *Portable Seminary* states, “Apologetics attempts to render the Christian faith persuasive to the contemporary individual. For unbelievers, it is **belief forming**; it helps to defuse attacks upon Christianity and to establish Christianity as credible by giving intellectual support to the explanatory value of a biblical worldview. For believers, it is **belief sustaining**; it nurtures Christian faith by calling believers to love their Lord with their minds (Matthew 22:37).” (p.340). As a branch of theology, *apologetics* has become a lost art in the contemporary church. Which may be why so many Christians are so weak in their faith, and why Christianity is in crisis in the so-called Christianized West.

Although related, *apologetics* is different from evangelism. But apologetics is more important for people who are already Christian because it gives them an intellectual foundation that will hold up to the mounting pressure of competing belief systems that challenge their faith. At the same time, a sound apologetic strengthens Christians when they go through times of doubt – as most will do. Depending upon the audience and the end-goal of the encounter, the evangelistic approach with Spirit and power that the Apostle Paul advocates in 1 Corinthians may be best:

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” **1 Corinthians 2:1–5**

The apologetics approach is most effective when logical arguments, historical debates, philosophical discussions, and interpretive disputes are needed. In fact, the

early apologists developed defenses for Christians to refute the attacks on the faith that were coming from the Pagan Romans and Greeks. and to assure Christians that the various attacks on the church were untrue or irrational. “Some were bishops and some were laymen. Some became martyrs and some of their deaths were unknown. All of them individually and together shaped the story of Christianity largely by making sure that it did not retreat under withering criticism into an underground existence as just another mystery religion. They helped develop Christian thought into theology proper – intellectual and reasonable examination and defense of the Christian message.” (Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*, © 1999, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, p.58)

Winning people to Christ through **evangelism** (preaching the gospel to persuade them) is almost always bolstered to some degree by the arguments presented in early apologetic writings. Preaching the gospel with Spirit and power in an evangelistic message has always been the preferred way of leading non-believers to the Lord. The use of sophisticated philosophical arguments often associated with *apologetics* can be used in evangelism when specific **stumbling blocks** are encountered when attempting to convince opponents to accept the validity of Christianity. It is then that the most effective arguments of evangelists, established by the recognized principles of Christian thought are needed. But the arguments of apologetics are not only about convincing unbelievers that Christianity is rational; they are even more important for people who are struggling Christians, to give them an intellectual foundation that (1) will stand the pressures of the many competing belief systems they will encounter in our globalized culture, and (2) strengthen them when they go through times of personal doubt.

“Christian apologetics lays before the watching world such a winsome embodiment of the Christian faith that for any and all who are willing to observe there will be an intellectually and emotionally credible witness to its fundamental truth... The success of any given apologetic argument is not whether it wins converts or strengthens the faith of any given believer, but whether it is faithful to Jesus. The reasons that are given, the rhetoric that express these and the life of the apologist and the larger community of faith must, then, demonstrate their truth.” (*Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing Really Is Believing*, James W. Sire, © 2014, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, p.14)

A complete Seminary-level course on the subject of *apologetics* requires a concentration on a variety of related disciplines and theological approaches to arguing for the Christian faith; all of which may seem too much for the average Christian to absorb. However, in their most basic form, and stripped of the exalted

jargon of college professors, the subject may be understood and conquered by anyone who studies seriously the Scriptures. The Old Testament lays the foundation: the first three chapters of Genesis reveal that there is no cosmic dualism between spirit and matter. The Creator of the heavens and earth and mankind, rules out atheism, pantheism, polytheism, materialism (physical matter is the only reality), dualism, humanism (everything revolves around mankind), Darwinism, fatalism, syncretism (the combining or mixing different beliefs), and deism (See HANDOUT “Genesis 1–3”). Furthermore, the Old Testament provides overwhelming arguments that God is sovereign over history and is actively involved in His creation. It provides us with arguments for the problem of evil and the need for a moral apologetic.

The New Testament provides Christians with the prophetic apologetic that Jesus fulfills God’s redemptive plan for mankind. It provides a political apologetic that Christianity deserves to be considered *religio licita* (“permitted religion” or “approved religion”) tolerated by governments. The New Testament also provides Christians with the apostolic apologetic that Christian missionaries are appointed to proclaim the gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike. The letters of Paul and the other Apostles contain strong arguments to help Christians defend their beliefs against all opponents.

Because presuppositions (something that is assumed to be true, especially something that a person must assume is true in order to continue with what they are saying or thinking) play a crucial role when forming resistance to their message, Christian missionaries and evangelists may choose to look inside or outside of the text of the Bible to prove its merit. Looking inside the Bible for defense (*autopistic*), apologists use this method to allow Scripture to verify Scripture. Examples of this method are: God could swear to His truth by none greater than Himself (Hebrews 6:13-16, Isaiah 45:23, and Jeremiah 22:5). The Bible also has its internal, historical, and prophetic self-authentication. Or apologists may choose to look outside of the text of the Bible to prove its merit (*axiopistic*). Organizations like Answers in Genesis use evidence from anthropology, geology, etc. to argue for the accuracy of Scripture. Other apologetic ministries like the Biblical Archeological Society and The Bible Museum in Washington, D.C. use archeological and historical evidence to support the accuracy of Scripture. Whether internal or external, the decision of which to use should be determined by what needs to be defended.

When a Christian holds that only by experiencing God’s grace can their truth-claims be validated, they are using what is call subjectivist apologetics. When they argue that depending upon reason to attract people to God, they must focus on experiential truth which is too often personal and subjective. If a Christian supports their truth-claims from the changed lives of believers and the love of God shown to others, they are using what is called relational apologetics. Showing the radical love

and compassion Jesus commands us to show to those who are hurting (friend or foe) is a way to demonstrate to others the genuine quality of our faith. As Jesus said,

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” (Luke 6:27–31).

Some Christians, like Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984), use cultural apologetics to examine cultural themes in the various arts and literature to show how man’s search for absolutes, meaning, and destiny can only be truly answered by faith in Christ. Collin Hansen, in his February 16, 2023, online article for the Gospel Coalition said the following:

“Christians themselves are the best bridge between hope and non-Christians. The world sees Jesus in how the body of Christ lives together with grace, in truth, for love. Thus, cultural apologetics seeks spiritual and moral renewal in the church as testimony to the transforming power of the gospel. Paul Gould defines cultural apologetics as the ‘work of establishing the Christian voice, conscience, and imagination within a culture so that Christianity is seen as true and satisfying.’ In this noisy culture, with seemingly infinite voices competing for attention, the church captures the imagination of nonbelievers when we love them and each other. This is what Jesus prayed in John 17:23—the world will know the Father sent him when we are one.” (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-cultural-apologetics/>).

The approach the evangelist or missionary takes to defend or promote the “good news” of salvation in Jesus Christ to the world, depends upon who they are addressing, and what the purpose is for engaging them about the Christian faith. Every method of engaging those of other faiths, and every technique of presenting the truth-claims of Christianity have their strong points and weaknesses. There is no perfect formula for convincing anyone of those things they are being told with certainty by Christians. Missionaries will be disappointed if they believe they have a simple formula to defeat the arguments against them. In the end, each unbeliever must be treated as an individual and never assume that all people who share a non-Christian religion believe the same things, have the same feelings, and face the same problems, fears, and concerns.

Questions for Lesson Nine

1. Why is it important for Christians to study the beliefs of other religions?
2. Review the seven roles that the missionary can play in relating to those of other religions. What are the strengths and weaknesses for each?
3. Why are the qualities of respect, sensitivity, and humility important when encountering those who adhere to other religions?
4. What is *apologetics* and why is it important for every Christian to have some training in *apologetics*?
5. Why is it necessary to understand the several kinds of *apologetics* described in this lesson?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-10: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

JESUS'S MODEL OF GIFTIVE MISSION

Note: The Primary Resource for This Lesson is *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-first Century*, © 2009 by Terry C. Muck and Frances S. Adeney, Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Some parts of this lesson were taken from *The Holy Spirit in You: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and Power in You*, © 2016, Frederick Osborn, Printed in U.S.A.

Lesson Outline for the Students

- I. Jesus the Mission Innovator
- II. Jesus the Mission Theologian
- III. Jesus the Mission Standard

JESUS THE MISSION INNOVATOR

“If we could get all of our mission exemplars into a room together, they would find they have much in common. Paul’s insistence on the universality of mission would resonate well with Billy Graham’s missional ecumenicity. Patrick’s focus on the importance of fellowship would sound familiar to Mother Teresa, with her insistence on charity for everyone, and vice versa. Matteo Ricci’s creative contextualizations in China would light up Catherine Booth’s recognition of the needs of both rich and poor in nineteenth-century England. And so on. But the point on which they would have the most agreement would not be a mission strategy or a theoretical insight; it would be a person, Jesus Christ.” (*Christianity Encountering World Religions*, p.210)

The ministries necessary for fulfilling the task of world missions are as vast and varied as are the myriad of people, places, and cultures around the world. And the universal, catholic church is far from united in their efforts to reach the unreached with the gospel of the kingdom all are commanded to proclaim until the Lord’s Second Coming. Muck and Adeney state in their book, “Without the anchor of Jesus, they would all be adrift in a sea of confusion.” If there is one thing that ought to unite all Christians’ efforts to evangelize the world it should be that all are doing what

they are doing because of **Jesus Christ**. There is no other reason for making the sacrifices of time, money, and lives than the absolute conviction that everything the gospel writers and the Apostles wrote and preached about Jesus Christ is the absolute truth.

The Gospels reveal to us how Jesus taught His disciples to follow His example for how to evangelize the lost. The book of Acts shows us how the disciples-turned-Apostles continued Jesus's mission to save the lost and make disciples, all to the glory of the Father. In the classic commentary by A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, he wrote the following about the First Attempts at Evangelism: "The twelve are now to come before us as active agents in advancing the kingdom of God. Having been for some time in Christ's company, witnessing His miraculous works, bearing His doctrine concerning the kingdom, and learning how to pray and how to live, they were at length sent forth to evangelize the towns and villages of their native province, and to heal the sick in their Master's name, and by His power." Bruce goes on and notes how this first mission was "educational" and an "experiment" for their own benefit. But its primary purpose was to **meet the spiritual needs of the people**, "whose neglected condition lay heavy on Christ's heart."

Throughout His time in public ministry, Jesus was bringing a new message to an old religion (Judaism). In private, he was preparing His disciples to take up their cross and despite the anger, bitterness, hostility, and persecution go themselves peacefully, and as gentle as lambs to preach the gospel of the kingdom. Christianity started as a new religion in a world entrenched in the old religions. To this day, the members of the established religions are the ones that are most likely to react with the most violence against their mission. But resistance never stopped Jesus – even when it cost Him His life – and His example encourages and inspires His messengers today to persevere. "He persevered, and eventually his offer of the free gift of salvation to everyone who would accept gained a toehold in the world." (*Christianity Encountering World Religions*, p.211).

"Then He said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest...'" **Luke 10:2**

The work of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is far from complete. Only one third of the world's population today identify themselves as Christian. That means 2 of 3 people have either not heard the gospel or have heard it but rejected it. Although the ways and means of doing missions have changed dramatically since Jesus walked the dusty roads of Palestine, missionaries are still needed to share His teachings and invite the lost sheep to come home to the Father. Unfortunately, far too many Christians today are afraid to share their faith because they are afraid that

their efforts will fail to measure up to what Jesus and His chosen apostles did; or because they are afraid of the negative reactions their efforts will stir up in non-believers; or because they have convinced themselves that it is the job of paid clergy to evangelize the lost.

JESUS THE MISSION INNOVATOR

"Love is the place to start, the root of all mission. And it is where we end – with love. Love is the fruit of all mission, if our mission is blessed by God." (*Christianity Encountering World Religions*, p.211)

It may be safe to say that more has been written about this one word than about any other word that appears in the Bible. Probably since the days of Adam, men have talked and written about the subject of love from every aspect. The Greeks were not satisfied with only one word to describe the feeling and used several. Poets, philosophers, authors, and theologians have written volumes on the subject of love; and the best Christian minds have contributed greatly to the description of biblical love. "...no human society can possibly express perfect love. So any culture with which the Christian gospel comes in contact will have an expression of love, but it will be a flawed expression of love, sometimes a seriously flawed expression of biblical love" (p.211). Christian missionaries have the advantage of being able to introduce to the world the kind of love that Jesus exhibited during His time on earth. If they fail to show the love of Jesus to those who are seeking it, they will have failed in the most important part of what it means to be a disciple.

"Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.'" (Mark 10:21). The Greek word for "love" that Mark used here is "Agape." It describes the unique kind of love that Jesus demonstrated all of His life and especially in His sacrificial death. "If we have this love, we give ourselves joyfully to the service of others and are willing to suffer for them." (John Hargreaves, *A Guide to St. Mark's Gospel*, ISPCK, Delhi, India, Pub. 2006, p.164).

The man in this passage from Mark's Gospel was unwilling and unable to give up what he believed was necessary for him to live. Jesus called, but because the rich young man loved his wealth more than Jesus, he fell by the wayside. Some religions, like Buddhism and Hinduism, teach a form of renunciation which is total abandonment of any pursuit of material comforts in the interests of achieving Enlightenment, or Liberation. But in Christianity, our love for God motivates us to not allow anything to come between us and following Jesus. Jesus gave everything for us, including His very life's blood upon the cross so that we might have eternal

life and dwell with Him now and forever. How then can we give anything less than our all for Him?

Giving our all to Jesus, is not the same as the Eastern concept of renunciation which involves renouncing everything to do with this worldly life and become a homeless wandering mendicant in the pursuit of enlightenment. For the Christian, wealth and possessions are not the issue; the issue is our attachment to worldly possessions. Anything less than unconditional love (agape) for God, for our neighbors, and for our self, which is the life of Christ in us, is insufficient. Apart from agape no one will ever be able to follow the Master into fulltime missions to the ends of the world if necessary. A person will never be able to forsake all in this world in their own strength. At some point in time, their love for someone or something in this world will cause them to waver and turn back. "Love for God and love for the world cannot coexist in the same soul: the stronger drives out the weaker, and it soon appears who loves the world, and who follows Christ. The strength of people's love is shown in what they do" – Richard Rolle. That is why Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).

"For God so loved the world..." Apart from love, sinners cannot be saved. God's love for the lost is the only true motivator for His disciples to risk reputations, or face persecutions and rejections to share the gospel with others. And sinners will not respond to the gospel apart from loving God for giving all to save them from destruction.

Because they had no love for God, the religious leaders of the Jews had no heart for those who were perishing. They could not understand why Jesus broke traditions and embraced those that they thought were hopeless. "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." (Luke 7:47)

This story from Luke 7 is known by every sinner that discovered by faith the grace and mercy of God for the forgiveness of their sins. Because Jesus loved much, He gave much, including His own life, to redeem all mankind from sin and death. Our love and devotion to Him is directly proportional to our recognition of our own sinfulness and total unworthiness to receive such a gracious salvation. Anyone who thinks for one minute that they have anything within that will justify them before the Lord will choke off the flow of the life of the Vine within. Self-righteousness acts like an obstruction in the branch that prevents the righteousness of Christ in us from reaching the fruit-bearing places in the branch. "The one thing that shuts us off from God is self-sufficiency. And the strange thing is that the better we are, the more keenly we feel our sin. Paul could speak of sinners 'of whom I am the foremost' (1

Timothy 1:15). Francis of Assisi could say, 'There is nowhere a more wretched and a more miserable sinner than I.' It is true to say that the greatest of sins is to be conscious of no sin; but a sense of need will open the door to the forgiveness of God, because God is love, and love's greatest glory is to be needed." (William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of Luke*, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, pub. 2010, pp. 113-114).

The Apostle Paul instructed the church, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." (Colossians 3:1-4 NIV). Christians who have their lives set on things of this earth will turn into lukewarm and passionless Christians who have lost their sense of sinfulness. The so-called seeker friendly churches that want to draw in the crowds on Sunday mornings with feel-good messages that gloss over sins and build self-esteem are the result of decades of preaching a cheap salvation that promises health, wealth, and happiness to Christians because Jesus paid it all for them. Apart from brokenness and true repentance over the seriousness of our own sins and for the sins of others (like the woman in Luke 7), no one will ever be motivated to give up their own life for the sake of Christ to reach those who are still lost in sin.

"For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel." (John 5:20). Agape is the life-force that binds the Persons of the Godhead together in all eternity. It is that same life-force that flows through the Vine to the branches and brings forth the fruit of Christlikeness in the disciple, the branch that remains in the Vine (John 15).

Near the end of His earthly ministry (John 14:19-24), Jesus gathered His disciples around him and told them, "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also." Because the Vine lives, we have life. It does not depend upon us or our ability to generate life. The only thing a branch can produce in and of itself is an artificial life – something that "looks" real but is in fact dead. Jesus continued, "At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Jesus is not content for His followers to be hearers only. There is an expectation that those who have ears to hear and hearts to receive will respond in obedience (Note also the conclusion to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:21-27). However, apart from the presence of agape flowing in and through the life of the branch, obedience becomes works righteousness that will cause the branch to

become saturated with self-righteousness, which produces only bad fruit. Jesus said to those loveless missionaries, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” (Matthew 23:15).

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.’” Love is intimately connected with God’s word. Keeping (obeying) God’s word is impossible without love. When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus quickly answered, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-39). **Unconditional love** for God and others is the only power able to move the hearts of men towards God and towards being on mission with God to seek and save the lost.

The Gospel of John includes details of Jesus’s personal relationships to show that Jesus was not a loner or separatist. “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” (John 11:5). He loved many people including His disciples, His mother, brothers, and sisters. He often loved people He encountered along the way. Near the end of His time with His disciples He told them, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35).

“When we as Christians try to communicate in areas that have been traditionally Roman Catholic or Muslim or Communist, we must always remember that no matter how right we are about an issue, the minute we act without love, we are being controlled by our own nature and not living in Christ. And that is sin. No matter how much ‘truth’ comes from our mouths about the need for repentance and faith in Christ, and about the inability of any other religion or philosophy to bring people to God, if it is spoken without love it will not please God.” (George Verwer, *The Revolution of Love*, © 1989, OM Books, India, p.18)

A tree does not send forth a single branch, but many branches that are all connected to the same vine. The same life of the vine flows through all the branches and they all produce the same kind of fruit. Olive branches of the same tree all

produce the same fruit. The branches of the fig tree all produce figs from the same elements that nourish all the branches. So too, Christians are intended to be in **community** with one another. Missionaries are sent to create new communities held together by love. True Christian community is only possible when we dwell (abide) in the same vine with the same life flowing into us and making us one. This is Jesus’ most ardent prayer for His disciples: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:20-23) “When our heart is filled with God’s love, the Holy Spirit takes control. Good fruit springs forth in words and actions as the result of this loving relationship.” Jack and Dona Eggar

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” (John 13:1) The core of the message that Christian missionaries have for the world is **the love of God**. The love of Jesus for those He calls “His own” is unending. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) But Jesus also knew that there would be many who would refuse the life He had to give them because “...men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19b)

Those who walk in darkness cannot produce the good fruit of the kingdom. Because their deeds are evil, they can only produce evil. Jesus said, “...you shall know them by their fruits.” It is only when we are firmly abiding in Christ, allowing His love to flow in us and through us that we are able to produce the good fruit of agape. “There is no mystery about it. We love others, we love everybody, and we love our enemies, because He first loved us.” – Henry Drummond.

Agape is the only remedy for the self-referential love that the world offers. Sadhu Sundar Singh of India said, “When a man with all his heart, mind, and soul loves God and his neighbor as himself there will be no room for doubts, but in him will be established that Kingdom of God of which there should be no end, and he, melted and molded in the fire of love, will be made into the image of his heavenly Father, who at the first make him like Himself.” Apart from the vine, our love is always tainted by the flesh (we love when it benefits us, or we love if they love us). All human love is tainted with hidden agendas, taking personal advantage of others, the desires to look and feel good. Apart from the life of the vine flowing in and through us we often use love as a means to manipulate and control others – we give love if they do what we ask and withhold it if they do not. Without agape, we are

only capable of loving if it does not cost us more than we are willing to sacrifice to keep on loving others. But when the life of the vine is in us, we have agape – a self-sacrificing love that loves for the sake of the one being loved and not for whatever benefit we may get from it. “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.” (1 John 3:14; note also 4:7, 10-13, & 16-19).

JESUS THE MISSION THEOLOGIAN

“Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” **Matthew 22:35–40**

Luis Mostacero, a Mission Worker with GLO, wrote, “Twenty-five years ago, I left my home country to become a cross-cultural missionary on the Operation Mobilization Ship Logos 2. It was exciting to share the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ with people from many countries. My heart was full of joy. I felt motivated by love for God and His work. Yet now, I wonder. Was I motivated by a love for missions? Or was I motivated to do missions out of love? There’s a huge difference. What motivates me now? Whether you are a beginning missionary or a veteran, do you wonder about your motivation? How can we do what’s right? I think God shows us.”

Mostacero noted that God is on a two-fold mission: First, is **His love for the world** (John 3:16). And second, is **His love for His disciples** (John 15:13; 1 John 4:19). “His love motivates us to love Him and others. Our love is a living illustration of the gospel. ‘By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another’ (John 13:35).” To these two, Thomas Jay Oord would add, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” said Jesus. Standing in his hometown temple, he continues reading a passage from Isaiah: ‘he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor’ (Lk. 4:18-19). Among the many ways biblical authors talk about God seeking and saving, the themes of healing and freedom from oppression appear often. Healing and deliverance are part of the well-being/abundant life/favor the Lord generously offers. And we desperately need the well-being – shalom – of God’s salvation.”

Jesus was on a mission and love was the crucial and relentless motivation of every encounter as He moved forward to fulfill His mission to redeem all those who called upon His saving grace. Jesus’s missional theology is a **theology of love**. The way into His kingdom is love not hate, light not darkness, and truth not deception. His kingdom means eternal life for all who enter it. But Jesus’s love is not self-referential human love; it is the sacrificial, unconditional love of God. Human love can be pictured as an arrow that turns back on itself; it is love with a hook in it. Agape loves without a self-referential hook. It is a love that goes out to the hurting, dying world full of darkness and sin without seeking anything in exchange. We can either choose to accept it or reject it, but Agape does not depend upon us to initiate it. Paul described agape as the force that controls the desires of the born-again believers: “For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ compels us...” (2 Corinthians 5:13–14a). The love of Christ is relational; Christian community would be impossible without it (1 Corinthians 8:3; 13:2; Ephesians 4:11-16). Without Agape, the Lord’s command that we love our enemies would be impossible to obey. Raw human emotions demand an “eye for an eye” but Agape forgives the unforgivable. The love of Christ will never go away or come to an end; it is for eternity. As the Apostle Paul said, “Love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:8).

“A missional theology supporting the endeavor to seek and save the lost is not based primarily on an evangelistic canvassing strategy. Nor is it based primarily upon duty and obedience to God. It’s not even based primarily upon worship. Strategies, obedience, and worship are all important. But missional theology is based primarily on love. – Luis Mostacero.

JESUS THE MISSION STANDARD

Dr. Brian L. Powell, Superintendent of the Kentucky District Church of the Nazarene said, “God’s mission is our mission, and his mission starts with love: ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life’ (John 3:16). If God loved the world (you and me) enough to lay down his life through Jesus, then our calling to the world included loving sacrificially. Mission starts and ends with love. Love must be the centerpiece in all we do. It is foundational in the work of the Gospel.”

Mission-sending churches and organizations often set the standards for those who sign-up for long or short-term missions. The standards differ from organization to organization depending on the mission, the place, and the length of commitment. When we examine the Gospels, we discover clues from Jesus’s training of the twelve that lead us to believe that Jesus had His standards for those who would answer His call to the Great Commission:

1. **God-Centered.** Everywhere Jesus went, and everything He did was all for the glory of His Father. In His final hours, Jesus declared to the Father, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” (John 17:4–5). Jesus set the standard for Himself first, and then for His disciples: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8). Whatever the mission, its purpose should be centered on glorifying God.
2. **Empowering Relationships.** Jesus’s standards meant establishing healthy, interdependent, on-going relationships first between Himself and His disciples and second, between those who supported Him and received Him along the way. Besides His disciples, Matthew mentioned that “many women” followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him... among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.” The other Gospels name Martha, Mary, and Lazarus but many will remain anonymous. Jesus nurtured relationships with those He trusted. An important part of being on mission with Jesus is to develop healthy relationships of mutual trust with ministry partners and accountability to supporters at home.
3. **Qualified Leaders.** The primary focus of Jesus’s ministry of making disciples was to prepare them to be qualified leaders in the church. The Gospels demonstrate how Jesus was involved in an on-going training and equipping of His disciples for leadership. Preparing for and then being on a mission trip allows the Holy Spirit to test, train, and develop believers who may become qualified spiritual leaders who have demonstrated a mature character, competent leadership on the field, and able to empower and equip others for leadership.
4. **Thorough Follow-Through.** Jesus made sure that His disciples were learning what He was teaching them to do. Jesus was always asking disciples “Do you understand what I am saying?” And when they returned from a short-term mission, Jesus received their report. While on the field, the missionaries should give regular reports of their progress; and when the mission trip ends, the sending church or organization should receive a comprehensive debriefing from all those who participated in the mission. This serves two purposes: one is to encourage and inspire others to take a mission trip; and second, is to assure those who are supporting the mission that it is bearing fruit.

In the end, the sacrifice of time, energy, money, and resources for missions is worth it if they are given to make known the love of God for this Fallen and sin-stained world. The command is to love and give the hope of salvation to all who are lost and hurt in the world. “We must be persuaded in the midst of our sacrifices that the love of God is ‘better than life’ (Psalm 63:3). Loving people doesn’t earn you the reward of heaven; it gives you the peace and joy of the Lord. May it be ours as we engage God’s *Mission of Love!*” Dr. Brian Powell

Questions for Lesson Ten

1. What is the primary purpose for the Lord to motivate His disciples to participate in missions?
2. Why is love (agape) essential to missions?
3. What happens to Christians who set their hearts on the things of this world above the kingdom of God?
4. What is Jesus’s the theology of missions?
5. Why are missions standards important?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-11: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

THE TASK OF MISSIONS: MAKING KNOWN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

NOTE: The Primary Source for this Lesson is *The Kingdom: The emerging Rule of Christ Among Men, The Original Classic by George Dana Boardman Compiled by Bob Mumford and Jack Taylor*, © 2008, Bob Mumford and Jack Taylor, Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., Shippensburg, PA

Some parts of this lesson were taken from, *This Gospel of the Kingdom*, © 2011, 2014, 2018, BfA Books, U.S.A.

Outline for the Students

- I. The Kingdom Defined
 - a. What the Kingdom of God is not and is
 - b. What Jesus said about the Kingdom of God
- II. The Kingdom and the Mission
 - a. The Church and the Kingdom
 - b. The Growth of the Kingdom

THE KINGDOM DEFINED

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” **Matthew 24:14**

Any thorough study of the Kingdom of God (also called the Kingdom of Heaven) would require a full course in itself. The Kingdom has deep roots in the Old Testament and in post-exilic Jewish theology. **Correcting the misconceptions** about the kingdom of God was a major part of Jesus’ teachings. The Jewish expectations for the coming Kingdom and its King, and Jesus’ failure in their eyes to meet those expectations played a major role in their rejection and calls for Him to be done away with by the Romans. Anyone who understood the history of Jews for the 400 years after their return from Babylonian exile would have been shocked by their cries in John 9:15, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” and “We have no king but Caesar!” after Pilate asked, “Shall I crucify your King?”

Throughout its history, the church has done little better in understanding the Kingdom in Jesus’s teachings. This is confirmed by those who believe in the bodily Jesus returning to reign and rule over the kingdoms of this world from a physical

throne. The presence of false impressions of the Kingdom in the church are also confirmed by those who believe the Kingdom can be established as **a political kingdom ruled by the saints**. There were those who thought that the Kingdom of God could be established on the earth by force of Crusading armies. And there are those even to this day who believe if they can insert the name of Christ into their constitution or stamp their money and official government documents with an acknowledgement of Christ over their nation, the Kingdom of God will be established over their territory at least. And there are too many by far who equate the churches of men (or more specifically, their denomination) with the Kingdom of God. “Or, most pitiable of all, look at Christian competitors, who, like our King’s own apostles, imagine that the Kingdom of God is a kingdom of personal promotions, and therefore contend with each other as to which of them shall become Pope of Rome, Archbishop of Canterbury, Moderator of General Assembly, Superintendent of General Conference, President of Ministerial Association. Oh, how much even modern Christians need to learn what our King meant by His own phrase, ‘The Kingdom of God!’” (*The Kingdom: The emerging Rule of Christ Among Men*, p.40).

How then is the Kingdom of God defined? **A good starting point is seeing what the Kingdom of God is not.** The reign of God (God’s *Basileia*, Greek βασιλεία) is not a physical kingdom or nation on earth. The Kingdom of God is not defined by a set of rules, laws, or ethical conduct. And the Kingdom of God is not God’s general reign over the domain of the physical universe. God’s Kingdom is infinite and eternal; it has no boundaries that any human being can define or even understand fully. The Kingdom of God has always been, always is, and always will be. The Lord rules over His Kingdom. He is the Lord of lords, King of kings; He is the one who was, is, and is to come – the Almighty. The Kingdom of God is far more than anyone could think or imagine because it includes the seen (His creation) and the unseen spiritual realms.

The Kingdom of God is **the reign of God in man**. “As the phrase is used in the New Testament, the Kingdom of God is God’s Christian kingdom in man. Not that God’s kingdom of Grace in man is really different from God’s kingdom of nature and morals over man; for, as God Himself is one, so is God’s sway one.” (*The Kingdom: The emerging Rule of Christ Among Men*, p.48). But for now we see the Kingdom of God in man “in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

When a person is truly born-again, the spiritual veil that keeps Him from seeing the present reality of the Kingdom is taken away. “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same

image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:17–18).

"The Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit are the two missing notes in much of our Christianity. And Jesus made both of them central – one the pattern, the other the power." E. Stanley Jones

Jesus' teachings on the kingdom of heaven were uniquely His. Jesus spoke of the necessity of being "born again" only once (John 3:3-7), but Jesus is quoted as referring to the kingdom eighty-two times. And in fact, His teaching on being born again is in direct reference to His teaching Nicodemus concerning the prerequisites for entering into the kingdom of God. In John 3:3, 5, Jesus told Nicodemus that no one can see the Kingdom of God, let alone enter it unless they are born again. Why? Because the Kingdom of God is a spiritual Kingdom, it takes the Spirit of God in man to see it and enter in.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke leave little doubt of the **importance of the Kingdom of God** in Jesus' message. Matthew 4:23 and 9:35, describe Jesus in Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing the people. Mark 1:14-15 says that after John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the gospel, telling the crowds that "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Luke notes that the Twelve were with Jesus as He traveled from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. (Luke 8:1). Luke also says in 9:11 that Jesus welcomed the crowds that followed Him, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

After His resurrection and before His Ascension, Luke says that Jesus showed himself to the apostles "...to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). "Can the church of the living God improve on the method of her King and His apostles? As in the days of His flesh, so now on His throne at His Father's right hand, the King still says to His church, 'Go, preach the Kingdom of God; and, as ye go, say, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; repent, and believe in the good news.'" (*The Kingdom: The emerging Rule of Christ Among Men*, p.54).

Those who came to hear Jesus in His day were immersed in a worldview shaped by the Old Testament; they had come to expect an **earthly Messiah** who would immediately overthrow the Gentile nations that were oppressing the Jewish people and rule over the territories originally conquered by David. Christian missionaries today, must preach the Kingdom of God to those around the world who

are immersed in their own worldviews that are often shaped by centuries of traditions.

Jesus shaped His pronouncements on His Kingdom in a way to address those who expected a Jewish king who would reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, "establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness" (Isaiah 9:6-7). The Jews believed that Jerusalem would be the **religious and political center of the world** and all the kings of the earth would pay homage to the King that sat on David's throne. (Isaiah 2:2-4). However, it is clear from the Gospels that the kingdom Jesus said was "in the midst" of them was totally different from the one the Jews had come to expect.

An incident recorded in Matthew's Gospel reveals the ambivalence of those Jews who thought Jesus might indeed be the "Expected One", but did not understand why He did not make the moves they expected from the one who was destined to sit on David's throne:

"When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.'"

Matthew 11:2-6 NIV

The significance of Jesus pointing to Messianic passages from Isaiah 29:18; 35:4-6; and Psalm 22:26 was not lost on John the Baptist and those who were expecting the immediate fulfillment of their expectations for a new golden age of a Davidic Kingdom. John the Baptist was no different than the other Jews that were watching and waiting for the coming King. John, like the other Old Testament prophets before him, knew that when the Messiah came, he would usher in a new age:

"The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord.

'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them

to the greatest,' declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'" Jeremiah 31:31-34

As John sat in his prison cell, he saw no evidence of a **Golden Messianic Age** that the Jews were looking for from their Messiah. The wicked King Herod was still on the throne; there was no army of righteous warriors gathering together to overthrow the hated Roman Governor and his legions. The only ones following Jesus were the weak, the humble, the downtrodden and the powerless. John the Baptist must have been wondering at that time if he had got it wrong. Had he missed the Lord? Was Jesus really the Anointed One? Or should the Jews look for yet another to deliver them?

Today, Christian missionaries face the same challenges that Jesus faced when He started to reveal the truth of the Kingdom of God. Nowhere in the world do we see any evidence of the Kingdom of God. In every corner of the world there is wickedness and sin. All around us are the weak, poor, downtrodden, and powerless masses. Injustice, cruelty, and neglect characterize most nations of the world; and people in the most affluent countries tend to ignore the problems in the rest of the world as they live out their lives in comfort and self-indulgence. And yet, in the midst of all this is the **present reality of the Kingdom of heaven** that may only be seen by those who have eyes to see it.

Surely, Jesus' answer to John must have shaken his expectations concerning who and what he thought the Messiah would be. His answer, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me..." was designed to **challenge John's presuppositions** concerning the Messiah and the kingdom of God. But layered in His response to John were clear prophecies that revealed a ministry of the Messiah that all people around the world are longing for but cannot see it manifested anywhere but in Jesus Christ and His Kingdom:

- "He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, and the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked." **Psalms 146:7-9**
- "In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the Lord; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." **Isaiah 29:18-19**

- "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.' Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert." **Isaiah 35:3-6**
- "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor." **Isaiah 61:1-3**

It is this gospel of the Kingdom of God – the gospel of the King that **the builders rejected** – that was essential to all of what Jesus did and taught. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each tell the story of how Jesus went through all the cities and villages, teaching and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom to those who were captive to sin and death. He began His public ministry by announcing, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). Jesus and His disciples then went from village to village demonstrating the Kingdom of God in the midst of them. And in His final days with His disciples, before His Ascension, Jesus was still speaking to His disciples of the things concerning the Kingdom (Acts 1:3). And yet it was clear that the Kingdom of which He spoke did not fit the Old Testament expressions of that kingdom. Nowhere did Jesus ever suggest that the Old Testament prophets had been in error or that their prophecies should be set aside – He said only that **the time of fulfillment** for **all** that was written was in the Father's hands (Acts 1:7).

F. B. Meyer said, "Jesus' royalty is not of this world. It is based on character. It is ignored by the proud but welcomed by the poor. It is fairest to those whose eyes are anointed to penetrate the veil and discern the eternal realities; and of their enthusiasm, praise to God is the irresistible expression." What then did Jesus mean when he said that the kingdom was at hand? And what do Christian missionaries mean when they preach of the coming Kingdom of God? Clearly, Jesus was introducing a new and unexpected reality of God's kingdom here on earth to His disciples – it is also clear that most of Jesus' public teaching described His bold new concept of living as citizens of this invisible kingdom.

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14). Is what Jesus proclaimed in His sermons and in His parables about this gospel of the Kingdom the same as what His missionaries preach to the nations today? And is what He taught about the kingdom the same as His disciples teach today?

THE KINGDOM AND THE MISSION

The Church and the Kingdom. Dan Bouchelle, the President of Mission Resource Network, wrote in his blog, “Kingdom Thinking vs. Institution and Nation Thinking” (<https://www.mrnet.org/blog-db-1/2021/6/8-9nlyl>): “For us to get clear on God’s mission, we really need to recover the concept of God’s kingdom. Yet, this may be the most neglected core subject by Christians in the American church and communities around the globe influenced by American churches.” If Christians are to have a clear understanding of the church’s role regarding the world around us, we need to have a clear understanding of everything Jesus taught us about the Kingdom of God. Missionaries will not have a clear understanding of their mission, what God is doing in the world, and how the church must respond to the often-overwhelming needs of people who are living and dying without any hope of eternal life. If Christians do not obtain a biblical gospel message based upon Jesus’s teachings on the Kingdom of God, they will end up importing the values and teachings from other religions and cultures into their mission. “Before long,” Bouchelle wrote, “the church becomes just a religious version of all the other organizations we see around us. When that happens, the church offers little that is transformational for people caught in the life-crippling lies of the world.”

Evangelicals preach endlessly about the need to have a “*personal relationship*” with Jesus and describe Jesus as a *personal* Lord and Savior who is there to answer every need. Evangelical leaders often make the case for why everyone needs to have a church home and attend church regularly an important topic for their Sunday sermons. There is a tendency by contemporary Charismatic believers to treat Jesus casually as they would their bestie or buddy in heaven. Believing they have been given an authority equal to or greater than Jesus Christ, they routinely command nature to alter its course, order sicknesses cured, and diseases to disappear without regard to seeking first the will of God (Matthew 6:10). Still, other Christians equate the church with institutional kingdoms on the earth that have borders, governmental structures, and a military to enforce its authority. What are too often lacking in Sunday sermons are messages on the absolute authority and sovereignty of God, and His reign and rule of God over every person and over every kingdom on earth. “But we have heard little about the kingdom of God or reign of

God that draws us into the epic story told throughout scripture. We struggle to see ourselves as part of a larger reality than a personal faith with great afterlife benefits, part of something which is not limited to a local congregation nor focused on a single country or national culture.” – Dan Bouchelle.

A careful study of the Gospels will reveal that the Kingdom of God was **the primary subject** of Jesus’ preaching and teaching ministry. Mark highlights Jesus’ preaching ministry by recording His first public preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (1:14-15).

Repentance is far more than feeling sorry for your sins; it means living consistently with the understanding that the Holy Spirit rules the repentant heart through Christ the King. As the Apostle Paul said,

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints... Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus... Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.” **1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13; 4:1,2,8**

The gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus preached and commanded His disciples to preach is a much larger concept than any single congregation or denomination. The Kingdom of God includes every local community of believers but is not exclusive to any of them. The Kingdom of God exists in every country and nation-state, but it is separate from and above all of them, whether they acknowledge it or not (John 19:10-11). Because God’s Kingdom is a spiritual, heavenly Kingdom, the earthly kingdoms of men (the political entities of nation-states or countries) will always be in conflict with those who owe their allegiance to God’s heavenly Kingdom. Returning to the Mission Resource Network blog, “God’s kingdom draws together people from every nation (i.e., people group not nation-state), tribe, and tongue. It does not respect national boundaries and makes claims that supersedes any other king, president, or prime minister. It challenges any effort to reduce God’s mission to the service of any nation-state’s wellbeing or make God’s power serve an institution (congregation or parachurch organization) instead of those entities serving God’s kingdom.”

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Colossians 3:1–4

Christians are called to set their minds on things above where the Kingdom of God is. Those who have their minds set on the Kingdom of God are always thinking of ways to participate in the expansion of His rightful reign and rule over all mankind. When believers have their minds set on the Kingdom of God they are able to look beyond their immediate circumstances and see His divine will working all things together for good (Romans 8:28). Bouchelle said, “Kingdom thinking lifts up everyone it engages. It is about serving others, insiders or outsiders, in the name of Jesus and helping them to thrive as they move ever deeper into the life and story of God revealed in Jesus. *A Kingdom mentality uses structures to serve people.*” Or to sum it all up in one statement: Having your mind set on the Kingdom of God makes everything you think, say, and do, about **God and His Kingdom mission.**

The Growth of the Kingdom (see HANDOUT: “Biblical Basis for Missions / God’s Heart for the Nations). The global missions organizations like Global Frontiers Mission recognizes that “The Kingdom of God is one of the main themes throughout the Bible - God’s **rule, reign, power, and authority** are made evident throughout Scripture.” That authority is entrusted to Jesus’ disciples, but not without limits set by the will of God (Mark 3:35; Luke 9:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 1:11, 8-12; Hebrews 10:36-39; 1 Peter 3:17; 1 John 2:17). Jesus set the standard for growing His Kingdom in the sermons and parables He preached. He demonstrated the reality of the Kingdom of God through miracles, power, and showing His love for the downtrodden masses (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34). “Jesus sent His 12 and 70 disciples in groups of two to proclaim and live out the Kingdom of God as well (Mt 10:6; Lk 10:9). At the end of his life, Christ told his disciples that all authority on Heaven and earth had been given to Him and then commissioned them to go out and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19,20). He mentioned that once the Gospel of the Kingdom had been proclaimed among all the nations, then the end would come (Mt 24:14)!”

In his online article “Pushing Back the Darkness: Advancing God’s Kingdom in Our Work” 24 Jul 2024 (<https://lausanne.org/about/blog/pushing-back-the-darkness-advancing-gods-kingdom>), Vinoth Ramachandra, the Secretary for Dialogue and Social Engagement for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students wrote “Those who follow Jesus are called to identify with those ‘at the bottom’ of our social and political systems, to embrace a suffering that may not be directly our own. This would involve learning to see the world from their

perspective, thus rejecting the comfortable perspectives of those who benefit from the present world-order.”

After using Jesus’ Beatitudes from His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-7) to describe the *character* of those who belong to His Kingdom, Vinoth describes the mission of Jesus’ disciples to be both “salt” (5:13) and “light” (5:14-16) to the world. “In this way, the church is called to live as a sign, a foretaste and an instrument of the reign of God which is both a present and future reality. We do not build or bring about God’s kingdom. We bear witness to it... The primary way the church impacts the world is not through its evangelistic or social programs, or by multiplying religious professionals, or starting more mission agencies, but through the character and the daily work of Christian men and women in offices, schools, factories, village councils, research laboratories, corporate boardrooms, and so on. These are the contemporary sites of Christian mission.”

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” **Matthew 16:18–19**

Few passages of the New Testament are more abused than this one where Jesus speaks to Peter as the rock upon which Christ will build His church. Some believers have taken Jesus’ words here too literally and used them to claim ecclesiastical power and authority over all Christendom based upon their ability to trace their line of Apostolic authority back to Peter. Those who interpret Jesus’ words that way must ignore the obvious fact that Jesus was referring to His heavenly Kingdom at this point and not any earthly administration or organization. “For there is an ecclesia larger and diviner than even the ecclesiastical organizations of the apostolic period; it is the Kingdom of God as administered by His Son in the hearts of men, the spiritual corporation of transfigured characters, the body of Christ, the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (*The Kingdom: The emerging Rule of Christ Among Men*, p.309).

Furthermore, when Jesus says He is giving the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter it was an obvious reference to Isaiah 22:22, which is about stewardship, not ownership. When taken in context of Jesus’ other teachings on stewardship and discipleship, then it is clear that Jesus was not giving Peter the keys to the church to be passed down by “Apostolic Succession” or giving independent church leaders Godlike ecclesiastical power and authority. “Peter’s keys are not keys of the human ecclesia or organized church: Peter’s keys are keys of the divine ecclesia or God’s spiritual Kingdom” (p.311). The keys are given for “binding and loosing” a rabbinic

term, meaning “to forbid or to allow.” The keys being promised to Peter here are the same keys given to all of His disciples (Matthew 18:18; John 20:22-23). “And as the keys which our King promised to Peter were spiritual keys, opening and shutting the Kingdom of Heaven, so the binding and loosing He promised was a spiritual binding and loosing – the promise of a spiritual authority in the Kingdom of God. Nor was this binding and loosing power conferred on Peter alone.” (*The Kingdom: The emerging Rule of Christ Among Men*, p.312). The “binding and loosing” authority given to the church is not absolute or without limits. The Lord Jesus Christ has not surrendered His power and authority over the heavens or the earth to men. But all ecclesiastical authority is subject to the will of God and the truth of God expressed in His Word – written and spoken, the church only declares the conditions of remission and retention which have already been set in heaven. No human being is an absolute Lawgiver or divine Judge over the souls of men. The church is a prophetic voice in the wilderness, only when it echoes her King’s judgments upon unrepentant sinners or His salvation for all those who believe and receive the Son of God.

Questions for Lesson Eleven

1. What are some of the false beliefs Christians have as a result of misunderstanding Jesus’ teachings on the Kingdom of God?
2. What is the biblical definition of the Kingdom of God?
3. What was the significance of Jesus pointing to Messianic passages from Isaiah 29:18; 35:4-6; and Psalm 22:26 when answering John the Baptist?
4. In what ways were Jesus’ teachings on the Kingdom of God contrary to the Jewish expectations of the Messiah?
5. In what ways are Jesus’ teachings on the Kingdom of God in Matthew 16:18-19 misinterpreted by Christians?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 203-12: ENCOUNTERING WORLD MISSIONS

SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS AND MISSION

Note: The Primary Resource for This Lesson is *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues*, © 2010 by Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss with Timothy C. Tennent, Pub. by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

Outline for the Students

- I. The Holy Spirit and Mission
- II. The Kingdom and Spiritual Dynamics
- III. Prayer and Mission
- IV. Signs, Wonders, and Unseen Powers in Mission

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MISSION

“The work of Missions takes place in the spiritual realm and involves complex issues of spiritual power. All missionaries need a theology of mission that includes a biblical understanding of spiritual dynamics and how they should use God’s power to battle their satanic enemy.” (*Encountering Theology of Mission*, p.238)

Christians must never forget that their faith is rooted and grounded in the belief in the existence of the **supernatural**. God is a supernatural Being. Angels and demons are supernatural. Miracles are supernatural. Heaven and hell exist in the supernatural. The New Testament does not make any sense to the materialist who refuses to believe in the existence of anything that their five senses cannot experience. Paul was not the first or the last missionary to preach Christ the power and wisdom of God to those who are full of the wisdom of the worldly-wise. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write a response for all those who would follow his footsteps to the ends of the earth:

“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews

and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” **1 Corinthians 1:20–25**

Starting with the first missionaries described in the book of Acts and throughout church history, missionaries have gone out into the world fully aware that they needed **spiritual power** to fulfill their mission. Missionaries have often shared their stories of miraculous answers to prayers, the appearance of miracle signs, wonders, provisions, protections, etc. at critical times in their ministry. In the 21st century, the greatest expansion of the church has taken place in the global South where spiritism, animistic religions, and superstitions are deeply rooted in the cultures. When confronting the principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12), the anti-supernaturalism of European Christians and most Western missionaries makes them ill-equipped to overcome those who are in spiritual bondage to Satanic forces.

In the global West and North, materialistic cultures have created a desire for spiritual experiences for people who are unfulfilled in cultures driven by endless consumerism. Christians are surrounded by individuals who reject the Bible, saying they are spiritual but not religious. This “new” spirituality is nothing more than the old Eastern Mysticism mixed with New Age occultism. New so-called revivals in the church in the US and Europe are often sparked by **supernatural manifestations** that have little or nothing to do with Christian orthodoxy. The danger for modern missiologists is to succumb to the pressures of taking fresh approaches to ministry that emphasize employing supernatural “power encounters” that emphasize personal experiences over the written Word of God in the Bible. Christian leaders can avoid being led astray by supernatural experiences by submitting everything they do to God’s Word while conducting spiritual warfare:

“Our approach to issues of spiritual dynamics must be rooted in scripture and must respond carefully to cultures oriented around spiritual power. While addressing the felt needs and worldviews of peoples around the world, we must not fall into the trap of adopting a cultural perspective on spiritual power. On the one hand, the materialistic worldview that still dominates most Westerners’ mind-sets can lead to downplaying the importance of spiritual dynamics. A proper emphasis on the spiritual dynamics of mission to see the world as a spiritual place; challenges the idea that problems can be reduced to psychological, social, physiological, or circumstantial factors; and shows that serious prayer matters.” (*Encountering Theology of Mission*, p.240)

The work of the Holy Spirit has been and continues to be essential to the vitality and growth of the church. Beginning in Acts chapter 2, and continuing to this day, the Holy Spirit’s role is central to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Jesus told His disciples that He would send the “Helper” the Spirit of truth from the Father to empower believers to testify to Salvation in the Son of God:

- “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” **John 15:26–27**
- “But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” **John 16:5–11**
- “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.” **John 16:12–15**

In His final hours with His disciples before He would be taken away from them and crucified, Jesus prepared His disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Before He Ascended to His Father’s right hand in heaven, Jesus instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received **the baptism of the Holy Spirit**, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8). Jesus knew that the fulfillment of the Mission of His church would be impossible without the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit’s work in the church would result in Mission going forward from Jerusalem. From these three key passages from John’s Gospel, believers can understand the essential work of the Holy Spirit in the church’s mission to seek and save the lost, make disciples of all nations, and to glorify the Father to the ends of the earth.

First, Jesus identifies the Holy Spirit as **“the Helper”** whom He shall send from the Father. As the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will teach

His disciples all things and bring to remembrance everything Jesus taught His disciples. Jesus said the Holy Spirit will also **“testify”** or serve as evidence or proof of Jesus existing and of everything the disciples said about Him “because you have been with Me from the beginning.” The Greek word used here will add some more meaning to the English “Comforter” or “Helper”. The Greek *parakletos* literally means **“called to one’s side”** and suggests coming to one’s aid. It was used as a legal term to denote a counsel for the defense or advocate. It was used commonly for anyone who pleads another’s cause, or intercedes on their behalf. Christ was this to His disciples while He was with them and remained so after His Ascension by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7).

For a reason and with a purpose, Jesus sends the Helper to all those who believe in Him. Although the gifts of the Spirit are of great value and are useful in ministry, the gifts are not the primary mission of the Holy Spirit. Jesus revealed the mission of the Holy Spirit to the unbelieving world. Left on their own, sinners will be unable to escape the power of sin. Paul said, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...” (1 Timothy 4:1–2). And to Titus, Paul added, “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” (Titus 1:15–16).

Unless the Holy Spirit brings **conviction of sin and righteousness**, the hearts and minds of unbelievers will be like the hard soil in Jesus’ parable: “When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts...” (Mark 4:15). Those who refuse to believe in the Son of God will face final judgment and the second death (Revelation 21:8). The world will never understand God’s standard of righteousness but for anyone who believes, the Holy Spirit will reveal it:

“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” **Hebrews 2:1–4**

Because Christ would no longer be physically present on earth, the Holy Spirit fulfills the role of demonstrating Christ’s judgment over Satan, the ruler of this

world. The Holy Spirit is essential to the mission of the church because without His guidance, convicting power, and revelations, missionaries (apostles), prophets, evangelists, preachers, and teachers would have to go alone and face a hostile world of unrepentant sinners. The mission of the church continues unbroken despite persecutions, unbelief, false religions, and spiritual blindness because it is the Holy Spirit working in and through the church as they preach the good news of salvation to the world.

THE KINGDOM AND SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS

“If recognizing the role of the Holy Spirit is the starting place for mission, understanding the nature of the present age is the crucial context for depending on his power. God’s people live in an age when Jesus has defeated Satan on the cross and inaugurated his rule, but during which Satan is still the active, powerful ruler of a sinful world. This age of conflict is the setting for an ongoing fierce spiritual war, and mission is at the very center of that struggle.” (*Encountering Theology of Mission*, p.242)

One of the great mysteries of the Kingdom of God is its **“already-but-not-yet”** quality. This means that God’s people live in an era when the present reality of the Kingdom of God remains hidden to most of the world. Jesus said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:20–21).

Because God’s Kingdom is a **spiritual kingdom**, we experience the reign and rule of Christ the King in the spirit but not as a physical kingdom with defined borders and a national identity. Christians discover that in the presence of the King is where His Kingdom is found. Jesus demonstrated the present reality of His Kingdom by healing the sick, raising the dead, and curing the blind, the lame, and the lepers (Luke 10:8-9).

Not only did Jesus preach that the Kingdom of God has come near, and is found within, but He also preached that the Kingdom would come in its fulness at a **future time**: not until His Second Coming when all things will be fulfilled. “Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” (Acts 1:6–8).

Because we live in a time before the kingdom has come in its full reality, we live in a world where Satan still exercises great power over the souls of men who give themselves to him. “Though Satan’s rule in this world is subject to God’s overarching permission and power, scripture makes it clear that Satan does presently rule over ‘human society in rebellion against God’... He is the ‘prince of this world’ (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), the ‘ruler of the kingdom of the air’ (Eph. 2:2), ‘the god of this age’ (2 Cor. 4:4). Further, he rules a ‘dominion of darkness’ (Col. 1:13), and the whole world is under his control (1 John 5:19).” (*Encountering Theology of Mission*, p.243).

The Bible teaches us that since the Fall of mankind, Satan has gained tremendous power and authority over Adam’s descendants. Satan has set all the kingdoms of this world in conflict against the Kingdom of God. But his power over this earth is limited; it is still subject to God’s supreme authority and power, which the Son of God proved time and time again.

Death came into the world through Adam, and Satan rules over it until the end (Revelation 20:14). But now the resurrection from the dead is assured through Christ; and everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. When Christ was raised, it demonstrated **His power over Satan’s domain**: “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Revelation 1:17–18). Therefore, all who belong to Christ will be raised when He returns. “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (1 Corinthians 15:24-25).

In this *already-and-not-yet* spiritual dynamic of the kingdom the mission of the church is to **combat Satan**, the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan’s other titles:

- the “prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
- the “ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Ephesians 2:2)
- the ruler of a “dominion of darkness” (Colossians 1:13)

And because the whole world is under his control (1 John 5:19), Satan uses human **societies or governments** to keep people in bondage. But the mission of the church is to proclaim that Christ has come and all those who call upon Him will be saved and set free (Luke 4:16-21).

“How important is the Word of God in confronting the forces of darkness? The last piece of the whole armor of God in Ephesians is the weapon the Spirit uses. ‘Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God’s word’ (Eph. 6:17). When confronting internal and external satanic obstacles to the mission of God, the Word of God

is critical. The rest of the battle armor that is listed in Paul’s famous warfare passage is defensive in nature. Yet we know that to take the gospel to our friends, communities, and the nations will involve forward, offensive movement. Not offensive, like a foul odor but offensive as in the advancement of a military force.” (*Spiritual Warfare and Missions*, © 2010 by Jerry Rankin and Ed Stetzer, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, TN, pp.176-177).

PRAYER AND MISSION

“Though believers live in a time of fierce spiritual warfare and though we face a strong enemy, we must never forget that Satan and his demons are created beings and so are limited. Satan is not God. He is not omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent. Although we should not underestimate Satan’s power and knowledge (2 Pet. 2:10-12; Jude 8-10), in Christ we have nothing to fear from them.” (*Encountering Theology of Mission*, pp.244-245).

The Holy Spirit is the **driving force of mission**. He guides God’s missionaries and gives them the strength to persevere through all the trials and temptations they face along the way. The Holy Spirit convicts sinners, reveals truth, and gives His people wisdom to witness to an unbelieving world. **Prayer** is the way Christians acknowledge their dependence upon the Holy Spirit, put on the full armor of God, and emerge victorious in the battle against “principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:10–13). (See HANDOUT: “5 Steps to Become a Prayer Warrior”).

Countless numbers of books have been written on the subject of prayer and the history of the church is full of stories of great men and women of God who devoted themselves to prayer. There are almost 2,000 verses of Scripture that refer to prayer. That prayer is essential to mission is indisputable. The success or failure of every effort to reach the unreached people groups of the world with the gospel depends upon faithful **prayer warriors** who are willing to sacrifice their time and personal comforts to reach out in the spirit and seek the Lord for His will, protection, provision, and power to move forward with their mission. “Actually, all a church has to do is pray for the peoples and nations of the world, and God has promised to claim them as His possession. ‘Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance and the ends of the earth Your possession’ (Ps. 2:8). God is sovereign over the nations and will deliver them to the lordship of Jesus Christ, for either judgment or salvation; should not we intercede and pray for them that God would open their culture to a

channel of witness and their hearts to His saving grace? But such prayer is born out of compassionate hearts that are burdened for a lost world, stirred in response to the Great Commandment of our Lord.” (*Spiritual Warfare and Missions*, p.228).

One of Satan’s most important strategies is to keep God’s people from praying or if they pray, to keep them focused only on their own personal wants and desires. Satan and his demons know the power and effectiveness of the prayers of God’s people better than most Christians do. This is demonstrated by the **lack of prayer in our churches**. Few, if any churches in the West call for special prayer meetings; and if they do announce a special meeting, few people show up. A big reason why Christians in the West are so weak and why most of the world remains unreached with the Gospel of the Kingdom is because the church is so apathetic about prayer.

Matthew 17:14-21, Mark 9:14-21, and Luke 9:37-42 all tell the story of when Jesus returned from the mountain where He was transfigured. A crowd had gathered around some of His disciples who had tried but failed to deliver a demon possessed boy. The disciples were perplexed over why the demon was unresponsive to their commands that he leave the boy. The moment Jesus arrived on the scene, the spirit convulsed the boy again, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. As the curious crowd grew in numbers, Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and commanded it to leave. Immediately, the boy was delivered. After the crowd dispersed and Jesus was alone with His disciples, they asked Him why they could not cast the demon out. Jesus said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

The disciples failed then, and disciples fail today, because they attempt to do the work of missions apart from a lifestyle of **prayer and fasting**. Notice in the passage cited above that Jesus did not stop at that moment and pray before commanding the demon to leave the boy. Jesus succeeded where His disciples failed because Jesus lived a lifestyle of prayer and fasting; it was a part of who He was. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote to the church, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).

Of course, there is a time and place for praying for our needs and the needs of our family, friends, and members of our church. However, the focus of our prayers should be on **empowering the church** for the task of touching a distant city, a people group, or a culture where the masses are living in darkness and sin. Christians need to be praying to be like Jesus “...when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” (Matthew 9:36–38).

It is human nature for Christians to be less reliant on prayer when they live in a country where their financial resources are plentiful; and where they have access to good education, health care, good government, and where they live in relative freedom. However, in most of the world, Christians do not have such benefits. Most Christians live in places where they have fewer resources; where poverty is widespread, in cultures hostile to the Christian minority. Christians who live in these conditions are rarely apathetic to prayer. In fact, these Christians and the missionaries who live and work among them learn to rely on God alone for resources, protection, and boldness to proclaim the gospel.

SIGNS, WONDERS, AND UNSEEN POWERS IN MISSION

“Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.”
Psalms 96:3

“Any discussion of spiritual dynamics and mission must address the spirit world that plays such a prominent role in the current age of conflict. The presence and power of these unseen forces is a real part of both biblical theology and the worldview of most of the people of the earth.” (*Encountering Theology of Mission*, p.252)

Despite the fact that church history contains countless stories of miracles, signs, and wonders taking place wherever the gospel was being preached, today there is **great disagreement** among believers over how normative the miraculous is or even if it should be accepted at all. Beginning with the book of Acts and continuing to this day with the testimonies of contemporary missionaries, the evidence suggests that signs and wonders may happen as part of evangelistic outreach, especially where the gospel has never been preached before. But questions remain about how often supernatural manifestations truly take place. Or if they take place at all, how necessary are they for evangelistic outreach? Controversy remains in the church over supernatural miracles: should they be encouraged where the church is already established? (See HANDOUT: “Cessationist or Continuationist: Have Some Gifts Ceased?”)

Those who insist that the supernatural gifts are essential for evangelistic outreach believe that signs and wonders are a sure way to convince non-believers to want to become Christians. However, the overwhelming evidence from Scripture shows that signs, miracles, and wonders do not necessarily have the effect that Pentecostals and Charismatics claim. Israel had the miracle of daily manna and saw many other great miracles but returned to idol worship again and again. The Holy Spirit worked signs and wonders through the Apostle Paul, but many were still

unconvinced. Acts 14:3-4 says when Paul visited Iconium, "...they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles."

The more recent New Apostolic Revival movement that gained momentum in the late twentieth century has made supernatural experiences the centerpiece of their meetings. Extreme signs and wonders like gold fillings appearing in teeth, glory clouds, fire tunnels, falling down, hysterical laughter, being drunk in the Spirit, etc. are added to the spiritual gifts named in the New Testament. These extreme experiences are often confusing and startling to believers and non-believers alike. Those who jump into this "Charis-mania" with both feet, hungry for extra-ordinary experiences often throw spiritual discernment into the wind. Christians must never forget that although everything from the Holy Spirit is supernatural, not everything that is supernatural is of the Holy Spirit.

Most Westerners are influenced by the postmodern idea that **experience validates truth**: simply because a person experiences something they believe is valid, does not mean that it is something they should experience or that it is true. The biblical mindset teaches us that **truth validates experience**: the Scripture, the Word of God, is the only truth that Christians should use to discern whether or not an experience is valid and is something they should experience. "Power encounter must always be balanced with truth encounter. It is not enough for people to be persuaded that Christ is more powerful than their old gods. Their belief system and worldview must also be thoroughly transformed. 'Syncretism is sometimes occasioned by an over-emphasis on power encounter and a corresponding under-emphasis on truth encounter' (Hesselgrave 2006, 86). Paul was careful to keep power and truth together in his church planting (Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1 Thess. 1:4-5)." (*Encountering Theology of Mission*, p.255).

Generally speaking, non-Western cultures are much more open to the supernatural. Many animistic tribal religions and religions that feature the worship of idols are based on ancient myths and folk tales of spirit-beings that inhabit the world alongside human beings. Western missionaries who are not prepared to address the fears and superstitions that control unreached people groups will be ill-equipped to address the spiritual darkness of witchcraft, demonic possession, and irrational terrors of the night.

Daniel chapter 10 gives us further insight into the great spiritual battle over the people God wants to save and those demonic powers who want to destroy them. In Daniel, the heavenly warfare was to be directed against Persia and then Greece because the evil "spirit princes," or demons controlling those nations had power over God's people. But the truth is revealed that God is in control of all past, present, and future events. Some missionaries have developed strategies for defeating territorial

spirits based upon what is recorded in Daniel 10, Ephesians 6:10-20; and 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. After discerning information about the spirits indigenous people believe in, and opposing in prayer the corporate sin of that area, the missionary will engage indigenous believers in aggressive corporate prayer against those spirits. Many people living in the global South and East are convinced that certain spirits have control over specific locations, objects, or families. The superstitious often turn to charms, amulets, sacred objects, or special incantations to protect them from every evil, harm, and danger – real or imagined. Even though they may never have been called upon before to do it, Western missionaries must be prepared to be called upon to cast out demons from objects, locations, and individuals who were involved in the occult.

"As Great Commission followers of Jesus, we must embark on our mission only in full dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit. We are engaged in a brutal spiritual war. Ultimate victory has already been secured by our Lord at the cross and in the resurrection, but Satan's destructive violence will continue until Christ's return. As we carry the gospel to the nations, we dare not ignore the unseen powers that seek to deceive and destroy, but we need not fear them. Jesus as promised to build his church in the face of this satanic opposition (Matt. 16:18) and has given us all the resources we need to wage this war. Our responsibility is to appropriate those resources through prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit." (*Encountering Theology of Mission*, p.261)

Questions for Lesson Twelve

1. Why is the Christian faith rooted and grounded in the belief in the supernatural?
2. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in missions?
3. What is the mystery of the Kingdom of God?
4. Explain the importance of prayer to the mission.
5. Explain the disagreement among Christians concerning signs, wonders, and miracles in missions?



Frederick Osborn traveled the world teaching and preaching the Word of God. His first trip to South Asia was in 2001, and since 2005 he has been fully involved in ministry. Currently he volunteers his time on the mission fields of South Asia and around the world as a speaker and lecturer, distributing Bibles and biblical resources to pastors, evangelists, and ministry leaders. His books and study guides have been used in classrooms by hundreds of students.

In 2013 he earned his M.Div. from Andhra Christian Theological College in Hyderabad, India and in that same year was officially ordained into the ministry in a holy convocation administered by Indian pastors representing AG, CSA, and other non-denominational ministries. In 2017 he completed his D.Min. from Covenant Bible College & Seminary, Florida, USA. He and his wife, Deena, now live near Atlanta, GA where he continues to preach, teach, write, and publish his books and study guides.

Books Written by Frederick Osborn

1. *Church Planting Movements – India*
2. *Daniel: Kingdoms in Conflict*
3. *Deceived! Overcoming the Age of Mass Deception*
4. *Disciple-to-Disciple: Making Disciples Like Jesus*
5. *Disciple- to-Disciple: Making Disciples Like Jesus, Study Guide*
6. *Exploring the New Testament*
7. *Exploring the Old Testament: Vol. One – The Pentateuch*
8. *Following Christ on the Indian Road: A Missionary's Story of Discipleship*
9. *From Genesis to Revelation: Interpreting the Book of Revelation Through the Old Testament Scriptures*
10. *Healing Miracles of the Bible*
11. *Jesus Over India: A 52 Week Spiritual Journey Through the Heart of India*
12. *Judges: A 21st Century Prophetic Commentary*
13. *Keys to Effective Faith: Living by a Faith that Can Move Mountains*
14. *Kingdom Discipleship: Becoming Like Jesus*
15. *Kingdom Discipleship: Becoming a Disciple Like Jesus, Study Guide*

16. *Kingdom Economics*
17. *Living in Dystopia: A Christian Guide Victory in an Orwellian World*
18. *One Holy Passion: A Daily Devotional Guide for 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting for the 1040 Nations*
19. *Our Jehovah Rapha: A Christ Centered Holistic Approach to Wellness*
20. *Reviving A Nation*
21. *Seven Laws of Dying to Self*
22. *Spiritual Lessons for the Grafted-In*
23. *The Apocalyptic Vision: Understanding the Apocalyptic Writings of the Bible*
24. *The Blood*
25. *The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements*
26. *The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements- Study Guide*
27. *The Gospel of John: Speaking Truth to Power*
28. *The Gospel of Salvation*
29. *The Gospel of Salvation: Study Guide*
30. *The Healthy Heart*
31. *The Holy Spirit in You: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and power in You*
32. *The Keys to Effective Prayer*
33. *The LGBTQI Community and the Church*
34. *The Legacy of Women in the Bible – Study Guide*
35. *The New Reformation: An Assessment of the New Apostolic Reformation from Toronto to Redding*
36. *The Physics of Heaven: The Theology of the New Apostolic Reformation*
37. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: John the Apostle's Heavenly Vision of Christ the King*
38. *The Spirit of Religion*
39. *The Way, the Truth, and the Life: the Teachings and Ministry of Jesus the Messiah*
40. *This Gospel of the Kingdom*
41. *This Gospel of the Kingdom – Study Guide*
42. *To the Heart of the Nations – Prayer Journal*
43. *Twelve Woes*

Supplemental Handout Materials

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 203-1

Three Biblical Considerations for Christians Living in the Age of AI

Excerpt from the Online Article:

A Christian's Perspective on Artificial Intelligence By Dustin Ryan

<https://christooverall.com/article/longform/a-christians-perspective-on-artificial-intelligence/>

Because of the kindness and love of God, he has given us his Word as a lamp to our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105). And going forward into the Wild West of Artificial Intelligence, we are going to need the principles of Scripture more than ever. As we close, therefore, let me offer three biblical considerations for Christians living in the age of AI.

1. AI Does Not Threaten God's Sovereign Rule

The printing press, the telegraph, and the internet all represent revolutionary changes in information, and yet through all these the sovereign God has remained on his throne. We should not be afraid of uncertainty as the revolution of artificial intelligence continues to advance and machines begin to outperform humans. In uncertain times, we might be tempted to trust in our own ability to guard ourselves from the risks of rapidly advancing technologies, but we ought rather to rest on the promises of God: the church will prevail (Matt. 16:18); God is with us to strengthen and uphold us (Isa 41:10); God will provide for our needs (Matt. 6:25–34); and king Jesus will one day return (1 Thess. 4:13–18). A world full of artificial intelligence changes these truths not one iota. While the power of AI may far surpass the abilities of even the most talented human beings, AI will never surpass the power of an almighty God.

For those cleansed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and adopted into the family of God, there is no good reason to fear what the future holds in the age of AI. Do not give in to the temptation to fear the things of man. Trust God and draw near to him. He will be near to his people whatever the future holds for humanity.

2. The Bible is True and Trustworthy.

The world and the people in it are full of deception. Since creation, mankind has been lied to and manipulated through various methods, and AI technologies now introduce a new attack vector for spreading falsehoods, manipulation, and deception. Decades from now, when screens are flooded with AI-generated content that may or may not be true, Pilate's question ("What is truth?") will become critically significant. Even so, God's word, the Bible, is the standard of truth that will not change even in the AI age. The scriptures are an inerrant guide to judge what is good and pure or untrue and unholy. It never hallucinates. It never generates what it thinks you want to hear. It doesn't make information up. Why? Consider what Psalm 19:7–9 says,

19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
19:8 the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the LORD is pure,
 enlightening the eyes;
 19:9 the fear of the LORD is clean,
 enduring forever;
 the rules of the LORD are true,
 and righteous altogether.

AI technology is sometimes inaccurate and unreliable. But the instruction of the Lord is perfect, trustworthy, reliable, and righteous, making the inexperienced man wise and the heart glad.

3. Christians Have a Christ-given Responsibility to Contribute to Advancing the Gospel.

In an age where human ability is being eclipsed by machine power, and in a time when the nature of truth itself is becoming uncertain, Christians have an excellent opportunity to present the very gospel that addresses these fears and more. Jesus died on the cross to forgive the penalty of sin and to break the power of sin—and AI cannot do this. Jesus rose from the grave in omnipotent power, and as powerful as AI may become, it will never bring life from death. Confessing with one's mouth and believing in one's heart that Jesus is Lord will deliver from the fear of death—even death via AI apocalypse. AI holds out no such comfort. In an age of AI deepfakes, fake news, and claims of conspiracies, the Christian holds out to the world the unbreakable word of truth from the God who never lies. The gospel is just as relevant and true today as it was when Jesus first defeated death for all time, and Christians will do well to diligently cling to the truth of the gospel and boldly share to all the world what Jesus has done for mankind.

The Great Commission of Jesus Christ given to us makes it clear that God wills that people of all nations be made into faithful disciples of Jesus. And our obedient fulfillment of this charge has been historically accelerated by advances in technology. Moveable type printing, steel ship hulls, radio communication, commercial air travel, accessible websites—all of these have been harnessed by wise Christians in the past to bring the message of the cross to more people. At the dawn of a new technological revolution, we have the unique ability to use AI tools in ways never before possible to share what Jesus has done with the world. If we believe the truth of the gospel, we should wisely do everything in our power to achieve the effective communication of the gospel as obediently and faithfully as possible.

Conclusion

In the book of Genesis, God instructed Adam and Eve to exercise dominion over the earth. This command involves being good stewards of the gifts God has provided by exercising authority without being destructive or harmful. The dominion of man extends to every area of life, including the physical world, our finances, emotions—and also artificial intelligence technology. While guarding against idolizing this technology, we have the responsibility to exercise dominion over this technology and use it for good and holy purposes. Christian men and women should not avoid AI; they ought rather to understand how AI can be used to promote obedience to God while opposing sin.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 203-2

OT Prophecies on the Salvation of the Nations

ISAIAH

2:2 – “In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.”

25:6 – “On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines.”

25:7 – “On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;”

34:1 – “Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it!”

40:5 – “And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

42:10 – “Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise from the ends of the earth...”

43:6 – “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth.”

45:22 – “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”

45:23 – “By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.”

49:6 – “(The Lord) says: ‘It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

52:10 – “The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.”

56:7 – “.these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

61:11 – “For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.”

66:18 – “And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory.”

66:20 – “And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD — .”

66:23 – ““From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,’ says the LORD.”

JEREMIAH

3:17 – “At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the LORD, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the LORD. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts.”

33:9 – “Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it.”

EZEKIEL 39:21 – “I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them.”

DANIEL 7:14 – “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

ZEPHANIAH

2:11 – “The LORD will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the land. The nations on every shore will worship him, every one in its own land.”

3:9 – “Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him shoulder to shoulder.”

HAGGAI 2:7 – “‘I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

ZECHARIAH

8:23 – “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, “Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.”’”

9:10 – “I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

MALACHI 3:12 – “‘Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 203-3

MEDITATING ON DISCIPLESHIP FAILURE IN MARK

In his Gospel, Mark prominently presents the consistent failures of Jesus’s disciples. As you look through these examples, consider how the pillars of the church themselves were slow to learn, and yet Jesus used them to turn the world upside down. Given our own failures, this is good news for us today!

1. **Jesus calms a storm (4:35-41).** The disciples lost faith when the storm arose. Jesus rebuked them after proving that he was still in control.
2. **Jesus heals a sick woman (5:25-34).** The disciples could not understand why Jesus was so concerned to find the one who had touched him, nor could they believe that he could discern the touch of one individual in the midst of a crowd. The woman showed more faith than they, and Jesus rewarded her.
3. **Jesus feeds five thousand (6:33-34).** The disciples did not believe Jesus could meet the food needs of the crowd. When told to give them something to eat, the disciples could only think of the expenses involved.
4. **Jesus walks on water (6:45-52).** They were amazed, “for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened” (v.52).
5. **Jesus has to explain a parable (7:14-23).** “Are you so dull?” They were still confusing externals with internals. Note that Jesus did give them the explanation.
6. **Jesus feeds four thousand (8:1-9).** This is after the feeding of the five thousand yet still they focus on the logistics and not on the Lord. He meets the needs of the crowd through them anyway.
7. **Jesus warns them of the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod (8:14-21).** They still confuse the physical (yeast in literal bread) with the spiritual (yeast as teachings that spread out). Jesus rebukes them and reviews the feedings to draw out the lessons he was teaching (that he has control over the physical, so stop being so concerned with it).
8. **Jesus predicts his death for the first time (8:31-38).** Peter actually took Jesus aside and rebuked him! The most stinging rebuke of all, “Out of my sight, Satan!” comes on the heels of great praise for Peter’s confession of Christ as Messiah.
9. **The Transformation of Jesus (9:2-13).** Peter was ready to set up tents and visit. God himself rebuked him this time.
10. **The healing of the boy with an evil spirit (9:14-29).** The other disciples were unable to cast out the spirit. Jesus refers to them as an unbelieving generation. He is exasperated with them (“How long shall I stay with you?” v.19).
11. **Who is the greatest? (9:30-40).** The disciples discuss who among them is the greatest and Jesus confronts them. He uses a child as a lesson, rebuking the disciples’ mindset of power-grabbing.
12. **Jesus blessed children. (10:13-16).** The disciples rebuke people for bringing their children to Jesus, and Jesus in turn rebukes the disciples.

13. **How hard for a rich man to enter heaven (10:23-27).** The disciples equated material blessings with spiritual ones. Jesus made use of hyperbole to remind them that they could not earn their salvation and that the material is not necessarily the spiritual.
14. **The request of James and John (10:35-37).** James and John still conceived of a physical kingdom and asked for their share in the leading of it (compare 9:33-37). The other disciples hear of it and become indignant, but for the wrong reasons.
15. **Jesus anointed at Bethany (14:3-11).** The disciples rebuke a woman for an act of loving worship. Jesus rebuked them – Judas in particular. This was the final straw for Judas; he went out to betray Jesus.
16. **Peter's denial of Christ (14:27-31, 66-72).** Jesus predicted Peter's denial and Peter vehemently denied it would happen, but it did. Peter denied Christ and broke down upon realizing what he had done.
17. **Praying in Gethsemane. (14:32-42).** During one of the greatest crises of Jesus' life, the disciples could not even stay awake with him.
18. **Jesus' arrest (14:43-52).** Mark simply reports. "Then everyone else deserted him and fled" (v.50). How devastating!

Reflection and Discussion

1. As you reflect on these instances, consider your own failures in light of those of the disciples. What did you learn?
2. How could you use the theme of Mark as an encouragement to missionaries who fail?

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HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 203-3

What Is Mary's Song and What Does It Teach Modern Readers?

Ashley Hooker

Updated December 10, 2024

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/what-is-marys-song.html>

What Is Mary's Song? Of the four gospels, Luke's is the only one to speak of Mary's song. Her words are found in Luke 1:46-55. Mary is visiting with her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. Upon that visit, Elizabeth asked in verse 43, "How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Mary is aware that she is going to give birth to the Christ child. The angel Gabriel has spoken to her and shared God's plan. But it seems that when she hears Elizabeth's question, she is overtaken with a spirit of praise.

Mary's song is a song of praise. She is not just sharing her thoughts with her cousin. She is saying that the Lord is great, and her spirit is rejoicing with the news that has come to her.

Today, Mary's song is called The Magnificat, meaning "my soul magnifies the Lord" in Latin. It can be heard in Catholic services as well as Lutheran and Anglican. Her song has been copied into the Book of Common Prayer and for most Protestant churches, is sung during the Advent season.

What Is the Significance of Mary's Song? One might wonder why Mary's song would be considered significant. Are they not just words spoken in a moment of happiness? The truth is that her song speaks of who she is and how deep her faith is. In verses 46-47 she says, "My soul praises the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Mary's faith is rooted in Jewish tradition. We can surmise that she has come from a devout Jewish family and she believes in the God of her ancestors.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 203-6

Seven Questions to Ask When Choosing a Missions Agency

John McVay, an experienced missions pastor and developer of the Ask-A-Missionary website, poses the following questions to ask of a missions agency.

The following seven issues present discussion points as you talk with various agencies. This list should not replace divine guidance, and there will be other questions that you will ask.

1. What is God's calling on the agency? In some cases that will be broad. For example, Youth With A Mission (YWAM) has a calling to evangelism, to training and to mercy ministries. Within this broad calling much of their activity is in training and short-term missions. But with over 7,000 full-time workers, they have many missionaries involved in almost every missions activity! Other groups, though large, may have a specialized mission. Wycliffe Bible Translators seek to translate the Bible into every language. One half of their 6,000 full-time workers are translators. The other half are support personnel: some in North America, others overseas. Many serve as teachers, administrators, bookkeepers, secretaries, etc.
2. What doctrinal areas are important to you? Important questions include worship style and speaking in tongues. For example charismatics should look into agencies that fit them and be aware that a few agencies only accept those who do not speak in tongues. The Frontiers agency allows both persuasions, but usually each overseas team is one or the other. WEC International and Operation Mobilization typically have mixed teams, though a missionary must agree not to push his or her understanding.

What roles can women have in the mission? Some groups allow and encourage women to rise to leadership. Others believe that only men should be leaders. Some

agencies hope for the married woman to serve the mission; others prefer her to be a full-time homemaker.

3. What is the financial policy of the agency? Some agencies, like WEC International, major on faith and prayer. Their missionaries may answer any question, but just as George Mueller expressed his needs to God and God alone, they will not ask anyone to make a financial gift.

In contrast, other organizations encourage their missionaries to take some initiative. Wycliffe practices full information, no solicitation. Other groups encourage missionaries to ask a potential supporter for a specific monthly commitment. Some agencies allow their missionaries to use any of these approaches.

What are the monthly support requirements? Some agencies may have a higher support level that includes medical, retirement, and other support services. It may take more effort and time to get to that level. Other agencies may give you a target, but if you sense God's leading, you may still go and live at a sacrificial level.

After you're on the field, what happens if your finances fall short or if you have an emergency? Some agencies have funds for such purposes. Others are not structured to facilitate such situations.

What contacts are available for raising support? Does the agency provide some leads or does the missionary develop all these alone? The mission board affiliated with your denomination can often provide numerous contacts. Also, some denominations have developed relationships with certain agencies.

4. What support services does the agency handle? What contacts are available for support raising? Some agencies take care of many needs: a car for furlough, processing contributions, newsletters, etc. Others are not able to do any of these. Perhaps your local church or a missionary service organization can help with such needs.
5. What structure does the agency have and how flexible are they? Some older agencies have learned from mistakes and have policies and structures to prevent repeating the past. In contrast, some younger agencies are more flexible and open to new ideas. One isn't better than the other, just different.

Learn where decisions are made. Is the authority centralized in an international office? How much authority is delegated to the field? Is the international director or the field director a strong personality? Does an effective board control the organization? What is the leadership style of those at the top?

Talk to the agency about how missionaries are placed. Who chooses where the missionary goes? Do you pray and then talk to your leaders or do they pray and then ask you?

Read a biography of the founder. WEC International was founded by C.T. Studd. Cameron Townsend began Wycliffe Bible Translators. If you are interested in YWAM, read the story of Loren Cunningham, *Is that Really You God?* With a smaller agency, try to meet the director he or she travels near your area.

6. Which countries and people groups are the agency working among? One missionary leader has said, 'The team you're playing with is more important than the stadium in which you're playing.' Let the Lord decide where He wants to place you in His world. Perhaps you have a specific geographic call that's clear and will focus your selection of an agency. But for most, God has given gifts and a desire to respond.

For example, half of those who join one worldwide agency don't begin with a geographical call. They know they are called to missions and to that agency.

Some agencies have global opportunities. Other groups have a focused geographical calling, such as Greater Europe Mission. The agency name may or may not indicate that focus. For example, Christian Associates International also works mainly in Europe.

Study the articles, advertisements and the career missions opportunities in the Great Commission Opportunities Handbook (www.aboutmissions.com). Look at which agencies are working in various countries as you pray through the book *Operation World* (www.operationworld.org). Look at online listings in www.mfinder.org and www.peopleteams.org.

If you are called to a specific country, read the Mission Handbook, available from billygrahamcenter.org. This lists 800 North American-based agencies in alphabetical order with cross references for countries of activity, types of mission work and church tradition. I know a man who heard God speak to him to go to Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo). He found Zaire on the map (it's in central Africa) and then used the Mission Handbook to find an agency that was active in Zaire in Bible teaching and open to his church background. Then he and his wife spent ten years serving there!

7. Is God bonding you with the agency? Do you sense a connection with the agency? Are you ready to join their family? The other issues should serve as confirmation to what you sense in prayer.

Selecting a mission agency is like selecting the right family. Missions organizations are as eager to find the right match as you are. As you take time to prayerfully search out God's choice, you can look forward to long-lasting and fruitful service to our Lord.

John McVay (www.askamissionary.com)

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 203-8

“All Nations” Verse List From Youth With A Mission

<https://ywam.org/get-involved-now/all-nations-verse-list>

The following Scripture references (New International Version) reveal God's heart for all ethnic groups: “all nations,” “all peoples,” “all mankind,” “all creation,” “every creature,” “every knee,” “every tongue,” “every language,” and “the world.”

Genesis 12:3 – “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and **all peoples on earth** will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 18:18 – “Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and **all nations on earth** will be blessed through him.”

Genesis 22:18 – “..and through your offspring **all nations on earth** will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

Genesis 26:4 – “I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring **all nations on earth** will be blessed,..”

Genesis 28:14 – “Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. **All peoples on earth** will be blessed through you and your offspring.”

Exodus 9:16 – “But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in **all the earth.**”

Joshua 4:24 – “He did this so that **all the peoples of the earth** might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God.”

1 Kings 8:43 – “..then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that **all the peoples of the earth** may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.”

1 Kings 8:60 – “..so that **all the peoples of the earth** may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other.”

1 Chronicles 16:23 – “Sing to the Lord, **all the earth**; proclaim his salvation day after day.”

1 Chronicles 16:24 – “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among **all peoples.**”

2 Chronicles 6:33 – “..then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that **all the peoples of the earth** may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.”

Psalm 2:8 – “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, **the ends of the earth** your possession.”

Psalm 22:27 – “**All the ends of the earth** will remember and turn to the LORD, and **all the families of the nations** will bow down before him,..”

Psalm 33:8 – “Let **all the earth** fear the Lord; let **all the people of the world** revere him.”

Psalm 47:1 – “Clap your hands, **all you nations**; shout to God with cries of joy.”

Psalm 48:10 – “Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to **the ends of the earth**; your right hand is filled with righteousness.”

Psalm 64:9 – “**All mankind** will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done.”

Psalm 67:2, 3 – “..that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among **all nations**.”

Psalm 67:7 – “God will bless us, and **all the ends of the earth** will fear him.”

Psalm 72:11 – “All kings will bow down to him and **all nations** will serve him.”

Psalm 72:17 – “May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. **All nations** will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed.”

Psalm 82:8 – “Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for **all the nations** are your inheritance.”

Psalm 86:9 – “**All the nations** you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name.”

Psalm 96:1 – “Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, **all the earth**.”

Psalm 96:3 – “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among **all peoples**.”

Psalm 97:6 – “The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and **all the peoples** see his glory.”

Psalm 98:3 – “He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; **all the ends of the earth** have seen the salvation of our God.”

Psalm 102:15 – “**The nations** will fear the name of the LORD, **all the kings of the earth** will revere your glory.”

Psalm 117:1 – “Praise the LORD, **all you nations**; extol him, **all you peoples**.”

Psalm 145:21 – “My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let **every creature** praise his holy name for ever and ever.”

Psalm 148:7, 11 – “Praise the Lord from the earth, ...kings of the earth and **all nations**, you princes and all rulers on earth,..”

Isaiah 2:2 – “In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and **all nations** will stream to it.”

Isaiah 25:6 – “On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for **all peoples**, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines.”

Isaiah 25:7 – “On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds **all peoples**, the sheet that covers **all nations**;”

Isaiah 34:1 – “Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, **you peoples!** Let **the earth** hear, and **all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it!**”

Isaiah 40:5 – “And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and **all mankind** together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

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Isaiah 43:6 – “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the **ends of the earth**.”

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Isaiah 45:23 – “By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me **every knee** will bow; by me **every tongue** will swear.”

Isaiah 49:6 – “(The Lord) says: ‘It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the **ends of the earth**.’”

Isaiah 52:10 – “The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of **all the nations**, and **all the ends of the earth** will see the salvation of our God.”

Isaiah 56:7 – “..these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for **all nations**.”

Isaiah 61:11 – “For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before **all nations**.”

Isaiah 66:18 – “And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather **all nations and tongues**, and they will come and see my glory.”

Isaiah 66:20 – “And they will bring all your brothers, from **all the nations**, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD — ..”

Isaiah 66:23 – “From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, **all mankind** will come and bow down before me,’ says the LORD.”

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Jeremiah 33:9 – “Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor before **all nations on earth** that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it.”

Ezekiel 39:21 – “I will display my glory among the nations, and **all the nations** will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them.”

Daniel 7:14 – “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; **all peoples, nations and men of every language** worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

Zephaniah 2:11 – “The LORD will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the land. The **nations on every shore** will worship him, **every one** in its own land.”

Zephaniah 3:9 – “Then will I purify the lips of **the peoples**, that **all of them** may call on the name of the LORD and serve him shoulder to shoulder.”

Haggai 2:7 – “I will shake **all nations**, and the desired of **all nations** will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

Zechariah 8:23 – “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In those days ten men from **all languages and nations** will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, “Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.”’”

Zechariah 9:10 – “I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the **ends of the earth**.”

Malachi 3:12 – “Then **all the nations** will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

Matthew 24:14 – “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the **whole world** as a testimony to **all nations**, and then the end will come.”

Matthew 28:19 – “Therefore go and make disciples of **all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..”

Mark 11:17 – “And as He taught them, He said, ‘Is it not written: “My house will be called a house of prayer for **all nations**“? ...” (Isaiah 56:7)

Mark 13:10 – “And the gospel must first be preached to **all nations**.”

Mark 13:27 – “And He will send His angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the **ends of the earth** to the ends of the heavens.”

Mark 16:15 – “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to **all creation**.”

Luke 2:31, 32 – ““which you have prepared in the sight of **all people**, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

Luke 3:6 – “And **all mankind** will see God’s salvation.”

Luke 24:47 – “..and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to **all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem.”

John 17:23 – “...to let **the world** know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Acts 1:8 – ““But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the **ends of the earth**.”

Acts 2:17a – ““In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on **all people**.”

Acts 3:25b – “He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring **all peoples** on earth will be blessed.”

Acts 10:35 – “...but accepts men from **every nation** who fear him and do what is right.”

Acts 13:47 – “For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the **ends of the earth**.”

Romans 1:5 – “Through Him and for His name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among **all the Gentiles** to the obedience that comes from faith.”

Romans 14:11 – “It is written: ““As surely as I live,” says the Lord, “**every knee** will bow before me; **every tongue** will confess to God.””

Romans 15:11 – “And again, ‘Praise the Lord, **all you Gentiles**, and sing praises to him, **all you peoples.**”

Romans 16:26 – “..but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that **all nations** might believe and obey him– ...”

Galatians 3:8 – “The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘**All nations** will be blessed through you.’”

Philippians 2:10, 11 – “that at the name of Jesus **every knee** should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and **every tongue** confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

1 Timothy 2:3, 4 – “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants **all men** to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

2 Peter 3:9 – “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but **everyone** to come to repentance.”

1 John 2:2 – “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the **whole world.**”

Revelation 5:9 – “And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from **every tribe and language and people and nation.**”

Revelation 7:9 – “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from **every nation, tribe, people and language**, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”

Revelation 12:5 – “She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule **all the nations** with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.”

Revelation 14:6 – “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth– to **every nation, tribe, language and people.**”

Revelation 15:4 – “Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. **All nations** will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version NIV. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 203-9

Genesis Chapters 1-3 Rebut

THE ATHEIST (There is no God) – God exists! He lives within us and within our hearts. He is creator of all things.

THE PANTHEIST (God is all things; the worship of “Mother Earth”; New Age beliefs) God is transcendent to all He created.

THE POLYTHEIST (Worship of many gods) “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the Lord is one!” Deut. 6:4 and “You shall not have any other gods before me.”

THE MATERIALIST (Physical matter is the only reality) – God is supernatural and matter has a supernatural beginning.

THE DUALIST (Two opposing characteristics in one entity) God is not good and evil. God is good, and everything He created is good. God is holy, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

THE HUMANIST (Everything revolves around mankind... “Man is the measure of all things”... God is not factored into any equation of life... God-less) God, not man is the ultimate reality... God is the maker and measure of all things!

THE DARWINIST (Natural Selection and the Survival of the Fittest) “Christianity has fought, still fights, and will fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus’ earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the son of god. Take away the meaning of his death. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing!” Richard Bozarth, “The Meaning of Evolution” *The American Atheist, Vol. 20, No. 2, Feb. 1978*
*Read Psalm 14

As born again, spirit-filled, Bible-believing Christians we must never compromise the foundational Verse of Genesis 1:1!

Remember: If Evolution Happened, Then A Tremendous Amount Of Death Occurred Before Man Evolved. But If Death Preceded The Fall Of Man And Was Not A Result Of Adam’s Sin, Then Sin Is A Fiction. If Sin Is A Fiction, Then We Have No Need For A Savior!

Evolution is NOT scientific fact, never has been scientific fact, and never will be scientific fact! Evolution is a theory, based upon the observations of a naturalist named Charles Darwin. The Bible is the TRUTH revealed by the Living God.

THE FATALIST (Everything is determined by fate) The Bible tells us that God has a plan and a purpose for His creation. Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 reminds us that there is a right time for

everything... “Everything is appropriate in its own time. But though God has planted eternity in the hearts of men, even so, man cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end.” The Living Bible vs. 11

SYNCRETISM (The combining or mixing different beliefs) No other god or belief compares with the eternal, all-powerful creator of the universe revealed in Genesis.

THE DEIST (Believes in the existence of God as the creator of the universe who after setting it in motion abandoned it, assumed no control over life, exerted no influence on natural phenomena and gave no supernatural revelation.) Genesis and every book of the Bible reveal a God of miracles who is active in creation, and is deeply involved with the human race. **God Binds Himself To His Creation.** “God has a consuming interest in that which he has fashioned. God watches over his creation, guards it, protects it, preserves it, loves it, and sustains it.”

Read Psalm 121

As Christians we can trust God to be there when we call out Him. In fact God earnestly desires that we be in fellowship with Him (John 4: 23-24).

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 203-11

Biblical Basis for Missions / God's Heart for the Nations

<https://www.globalfrontiermissions.org/missions-101/biblical-basis-of-missions>

Nations = Greek "ethnos" (sounds like ethnic) or "panta ta ethne" = all peoples; Hebrew "gowy." The Bible is one cohesive book with an introduction, story, and conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Gen 1:28 – God’s first words to humankind: “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, rule over it.”

Gen 3:1-24 – Sin enters the world, bringing death and separation from God, passed down through all generations until God repents that he had made man, decides to wipe out the whole earth by a flood, and start over with one man’s family.

Gen 9:1,7 – God’s first words to Noah after he got off the ark: “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, rule over it.”

Gen 11:1-4 – There was one language on the earth; the people’s main sin at Babel was that they wanted to make a NAME for themselves and NOT be scattered.

Gen 11:7-9 – God scrambles the languages and the people spread throughout the earth, setting the stage for our story.

Story

Gen 12:1-3 – God chooses a man named Abraham and his descendants (Israel) as his special people to be blessed by him (top line of the covenant) so that they would be a blessing to all peoples (bottom line of the covenant).

Gen 18:17-19 – Covenant repeated to Abraham in the presence of other men.

Gen 22:15-18 – Abraham hears the covenant again after his willingness and obedience to sacrifice his son... God says “I swear by myself” that this will happen, so we know that it is going to happen.

Gen 26:2-4 – Isaac gets the same promise passed on to him.

Gen 28:12-14 – Jacob gets the same promise passed on to him. Our story breaks with Joseph in Egypt and the Israelites growing in number as the slaves.

Ex 6:1-5 – God reminds Moses of the covenant and says that He is going to free Israel from slavery because of it.

Ex 12:37-38 – “Other people” went with the Israelites when they left Egypt.

Dt 2:25 – God would make all the nations under heaven hear about and fear Israel. Why? So that all worship Yahweh.

Dt 4:5-8 – God gives Israel the ten commandments and other righteous laws so that the nations would see their wisdom, understanding, and know that Israel’s God is near them (personal) and hears their prayers.

Josh 2:1-24 – Rahab helps Israel because she has heard about their God. (Pages 62 and 63 of the book Unveiled at Last gives many examples of Jews blessing Gentiles in the OT.)

1 Sam 17:45-46 – David defeats the Philistines so that the whole world would know that there is a God in Israel.

1 Chr 14:17 – The Lord makes all nations fear David. Why? He was a man after God’s own heart.

1 Chr 16:8, 24, 28, 31 – David announces that all the nations should worship God.

2 Chr 9:22-23 – King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all kings on earth; people from all nations listened.

Neh 6:15-16 – All the nations were in awe when the wall was rebuilt in 52 days.

Ps 67:1-7 – David understood God’s heart for the nations – (v. 7) God blesses us so that the ends of the earth may fear him.

Ps 46:10 – Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations in all the earth.

Is 26:17-18 – Israel understood that its task was to be God’s messenger of salvation to the nations and had not done its job.

Is 42:1 – God will put His Spirit in His servant and chosen one (Jesus) and bring justice to the nations.

Eze 5:5-7 – This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of all the nations, but she has rebelled against my laws. Look at Israel’s central geographic location in the world and see how God was being strategic in using it as a blessing to all nations.

Dan 6:25-26 – A Gentile king, Darius, tells all peoples, nations, and languages to fear and revere the God of Daniel. Sometimes God let his chosen instruments be taken into slavery or into exile in order to be a blessing to all nations.

Dan 7:13-14 – Son of Man given dominion, power, and the kingdom where all nations and peoples serve him.

Amos 9:7 – God loves all peoples equally.

Mal 1:11 – God’s name will be great among all the nations.
Word "nations" is used over 500 times in the OT.

Mt 24:14 – This gospel will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come.

Mt 28:19-20 – Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them to obey Christ.

Mk 11:17 – Jesus understood God’s desire for all nations; “my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

Lk 24:45-49 – Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures (Old Testament); Christ will suffer and rise on the third day (to bless us); repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations (to bless others). **Mk 16:15, Jn 20:21**

Acts 1:8 – The Holy Spirit will give you power; be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea, and the ends of the earth.

Acts 2:6 – The disciples were from Galilee, not Jerusalem (7); Jesus said to stay in Jerusalem because it was a strategic center, not because that is where they were from and familiar.

Acts 2:4, 6, 8-11 – Jesus talked about the coming of the Holy Spirit as the highlight of the New Testament; the disciples were to wait for Him to come before ministering; it’s the day the first century church started; 3000 people got saved; the Holy Spirit begins his ministry and sets the tone of the rest of the N.T. by having people from every nation under earth hearing the gospel in their own language. **2 Pe 3:9; 1 Tim 2:1-4; Rom 10:13-15 (Is 52:6-10); Rom 15:18-21**

Gal 3:7-9 – Paul calls “the gospel” Abraham’s call to bless the nations; we need to know we are sons of Abraham by faith.

CONCLUSION

Rev 5:9 – People redeemed from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

Rev 7:9-10 – People from all nations, tongues, and people groups worship the Lamb!

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 203-12

5 Steps to Become a Prayer Warrior

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/5-steps-to-become-a-prayer-warrior.html>

Heather Adams, Contributing Writer
Updated October 08, 2024

The title “prayer warrior” describes a Christian who has a strong affinity for and gifting in this area. Though all believers are called to pray, certain people turn to God more quickly and confidently in response to the ups and the downs of life. And they are willing to ask for others as well as themselves.

I’ve been blessed to know several prayer warriors in churches I’ve attended over the years. Each of them made lifting up praises and concerns a priority and a habit that was as natural as breathing. They all ended up doing a unique kind of ministry in and beyond the church walls.

What Does it Mean to Be a Prayer Warrior?

The word “warrior” usually conjures up an image of someone in a military uniform of some type, whether armor or fatigues. We picture them carrying offensive and defensive weapons. And we assume the person has been trained in fighting and hopefully in strategic thinking as well.

It might not seem like this image could be associated with prayer. But the Apostle Paul dedicated a section of his letter to the Ephesians to this analogy. He wanted us as followers of Christ to understand that we are indeed engaged in a war.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand” (Ephesians 6:10-13).

Paul goes on to list the pieces of armor and the weapons we have in Christ to overcome the enemy’s attacks. Then he finishes with an appeal for us to use prayer as a way to gain victory in battle.

Characteristics of a Prayer Warrior

The prayer warriors that I have known share a few similar traits:

- They are **worshipful**, seeking to glorify the Lord.

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- They are **God-centered**, focused on His greatness and mercy.
- They are **empathetic**, able to meet and accept people where they are.
- They are **persevering**, determined to repeatedly lift up requests.
- They are **loving**, wanting to help bring about God’s will for others.

I’ve also noticed a mindset that these warriors tend to have:

They are alert and ready, being sensitive to needs and acting quickly.

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people” (Ephesians 6:18).

They trust in God’s goodness, lifting up requests knowing He always answers.

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14-15).

They submit to God, calling on Him with a sense of awe and expectation.

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

Prayer Warriors in the Bible

King David

“Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God” (Psalm 4:1).

King Jehoshaphat

“Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chronicles 20:12).

Jeremiah

“You who are my Comforter in sorrow, my heart is faint within me. Listen to the cry of my people from a land far away: ‘Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King no longer there?’” (Jeremiah 8:18-19).

Jesus

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35).

Paul

“...we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:11-12).

5 Ways to Become a Prayer Warrior

God may be calling you to become more of a prayer warrior in your church or family. Ask Him to confirm that in your heart. Let Him change your spirit and shift your attitudes to align with Him. Then, be obedient to do your part in the process:

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1. Have More of a Hunger for God

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Warriors I’ve known absolutely love being in God’s Word and seek to be in His presence daily. They want to gain knowledge of Scripture to be able to speak it in their prayers. And they base their confidence partly on their own experiences with the Lord.

2. Have a Greater Desire to Be Used by God

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Colossians 4:2).

I’ve seen people who were natural prayer warriors, and people who in time grew into the role. But all of them started with a love of prayer, and an eagerness to serve God. They didn’t have to know everything – they just had a stirring in their spirit to follow the Lord’s call.

3. Seek More of God’s Holy Spirit

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans” (Romans 8:26).

Even the most seasoned Christians find themselves not knowing what or how to pray on occasion. Warriors rely on the Holy Spirit to lead them. Even when they do have something in mind to lift up, they have the wisdom to ask the Spirit to join with them.

4. Feel a Greater Sense of Concern for Others

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7).

Prayers are impactful when they are motivated by love. True warriors approach every request with care and respect. And they see the value in lifting up needs, whether they know the person being prayed for or not.

5. Learn How to Rely More on God for Strength and Endurance

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

A former pastor used to call prayer one of the “front line ministries” of our church. Those who become warriors learn quickly that it is both satisfying and demanding. So, to avoid burnout, they acknowledge God as the source for their ability and energy to do the work, and lean on Him rather than themselves.

God calls us to see prayer as a powerful tool – a way to relate with our Heavenly Father, a way to express our need for Him, a way to show the Lord devotion and trust, and as a tangible way to support others.

In addition, prayer warriors learn how to use prayer as an effective weapon in spiritual warfare.

They make a lifestyle of turning to God, lifting up requests, waiting in expectation.

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Romans 12:12).

**HANDOUT
DISCIPLESHIP 203-12****Cessationist or Continuationist: Have Some Gifts Ceased?**

Excerpt from Online article by Timothy Berg June 1, 2023

<https://www.logos.com/grow/hall-cessationist-or-continuationist/>

Edited by Frederick Osborn, 2025

All Christians must reckon with spiritual gifts in their Bibles. These gifts are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7–10, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:6–8, and 1 Peter 4:10–11, while other passages in the Gospels and Acts depict them at work.

What are spiritual gifts? According to Paul, spiritual gifts are “manifestations of the Spirit” given to all for the common good (1 Cor 12:7 NIV). Sam Storms defines gifts as “capacities or abilities imparted to Christians by the Holy Spirit to enable them to exceed the limitations of their finite humanity in order to serve other believers to the glory of God.”¹ These manifestations of God’s Spirit in and through us represent “God going public among His people.”²

What is a Continuationist? What is a Cessationist?

Two conflicting views on miraculous gifts exist in the church today: *continuationists* and *Cessationists*. Cessationists believe spiritual gifts in the miraculous category have ceased. Continuationists believe all spiritual gifts continue today.

Some of those on both sides of the issue will divide gifts into two categories: (1) non-miraculous gifts such as teaching, mercy, etc., and (2) miraculous gifts such as tongues, exorcism, healing, prophecy, etc. Not all Cessationists agree on which gifts have ceased and not all Continuationists agree on how normal are the manifestations of the gifts.

The difference matters. D. A. Carson warns that young clergy will wrestle with these issues “as frequently and in some instances as painfully” as anything they face.³ Paul commands us to follow the way of love and “eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy” (1 Cor 14:1 NIV), a command repeatedly supported (1 Cor 14:39); Rom 12:6; 1 Thess 5:19–22). If these gifts have not ceased, failing to seek them risks violating biblical commands.

A conclusion should result from close Bible study and listening to responsible representatives from both sides.

Categories of Continuationists and Cessationists

While a clear dividing line exists between camps, each is internally more complex. (I add a few categories to Wayne Grudem’s). **Cessationists** may be divided into: “Harsh” Cessationists, “Hard” Cessationists, and “Soft” Cessationists. While **Continuationists** may be divided into Third Wave Evangelicals, Charismatics (Second Wave), Pentecostals (First Wave), and “Chaos-matics”.

The different positions on the miraculous spiritual gifts are given by respected theologians and Bible commentators on both sides of the argument. Notable Cessationist theologians include:

- J. I. Packer
- Gerald Bray
- Richard Gaffin
- Norman Geisler
- Dan Wallace
- B. B. Warfield
- Vern Poythress

Cessationists disagree over which gifts have ceased, when and why they've ceased, the firmness of their Cessationism, and the attitude they take towards Continuationists. *Soft Cessationists* admit they could easily be wrong and recognize much good in the charismatic movement. *Hard Cessationists* are more sure of their position and suspicious of the whole charismatic movement. *Harsh Cessationists* are certain of their position and condemn the charismatic movement wholesale.

Soft Cessationism is ably represented by Tom Schreiner.⁴ Hard Cessationism is well-known through speakers and authors connected to the Strange Fire Conference,⁵ (some of whom would fall into my “harsh” category). Some Cessationists may object to a taxonomy dividing “harsh” from hard Cessationists. I see a line between them in both their firmness and their treatment of charismatics.

Notable Continuationists include theologians with different points of view on the gifts of the Spirit. They often disagree about how some gifts are understood and who should exercise them.

- D. A. Carson
- Andreas Köstenberger
- John Piper
- Wayne Grudem
- Craig Keener
- Sam Storms
- Gordon Fee

Pentecostals

The early twentieth century Pentecostal movement or “First Wave” of renewal sees Spirit baptism as separate from and subsequent to conversion, for all, with the gift of tongues as initial evidence of the baptism. The Assemblies of God is an example,⁶ represented by scholars like Gordon Fee (who debates the usefulness of this terminology).⁷

Charismatics

The doctrines of *subsequence* and *initial evidence* were rejected by the broader charismatic renewal movement that began in the 1960s and 70s. Adherents of this “Second Wave” rapidly multiply in every corner of global Christianity today.

Third Wave evangelicals

Third Wave evangelicalism, a renewal movement beginning in the 1980s, emphasizes signs and wonders as accompanying gospel proclamation. Prominently associated with John Wimber, this movement is ably represented today by theologians like Wayne Grudem or conferences like Convergence.

“Chaos-matics”

Some continuationists may object to a taxonomy including “Chaos-matic” on the Continuationist side. Most other Continuationists dissociate from the doctrines and practices at these extremes. However, a category should arguably exist for what most acknowledge to be blatant disregard of biblical teachings. Sadly, some leaders who believe in the gifts of the Spirit use those gifts in an openly “huckster-ish” fashion. Others put on events that descend into near madness, flouting the command—given precisely in the famous spiritual gifts passage of 1 Corinthians 14—to do all things “decently and in order.”

Open but cautious = not yet decided

Between these views lie the “open but cautious,” perhaps representing most US evangelicals—who have been convinced by neither Cessationist arguments nor the doctrines or practice of those who emphasize [miraculous] gifts today.⁸ This group is “simply undecided,”⁹ and have been occasionally described as Continuationists in theology but Cessationist in practice, though in reality fitting into neither of what can only be two positions.

First Corinthians 14:1 illustrates the dichotomy. The command to eagerly desire prophecy is either in force or it is not. If not in force, it should be ignored. If in force, it cannot be. No third option exists. “Open but cautious” should thus be seen not as a destination but as a waypoint between positions.

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¹ Sam Storms, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts: A Comprehensive Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 18.

² Sam Storms, *The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2013), 13.

³ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1987), 1.

⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts: What They Are and Why They Matter* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2018).

⁵ John F. MacArthur, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013).

⁶ “Assemblies of God 16 Fundamental Truths,” accessed May 13, 2023.

Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991).

⁷ Wayne A. Grudem, "Preface," in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 12–13.

⁸ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 1271–72.

⁹ Norman Geisler, *Signs and Wonders* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1988), 120.

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