



AGWM

# All Peoples

A biblically based study  
of God's mission

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



# All Peoples

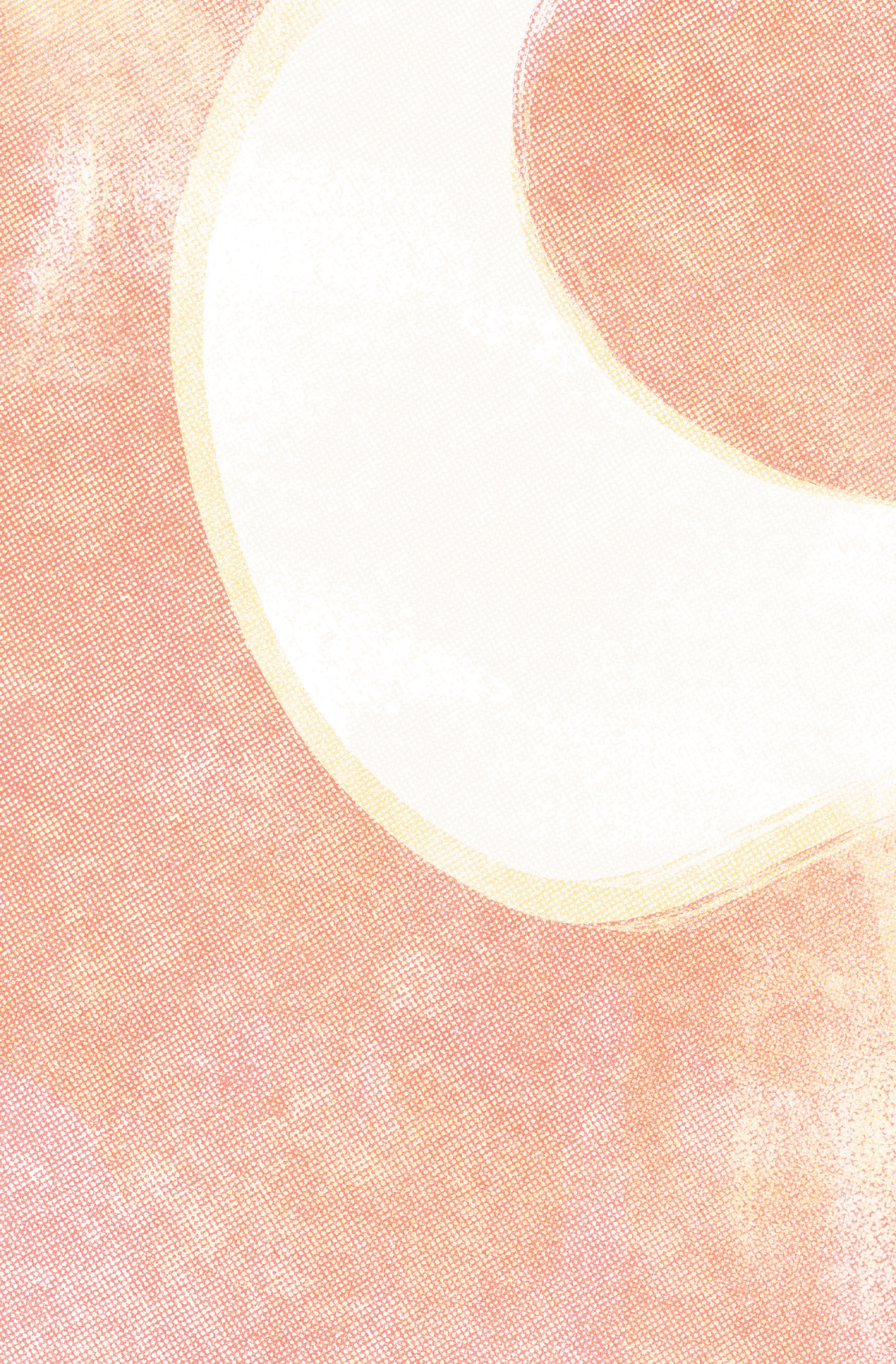
**AGWM**

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Assemblies of God World Missions  
Missiological Resources

1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894





LESSON ONE

# God's Plan

# Bible Reading Plan

**DAY 1** Genesis 1-3

**DAY 2** Genesis 4-8

**DAY 3** Genesis 9-11

**DAY 4** John 1:12, John 3:16-21,  
Luke 18:18-30, Matthew 13:34-35

**DAY 5** Genesis 12:3, 18:18-19, Revelation 21 & 22

Read through the lesson prior to the group gathering.

As you read through the Bible, think about these questions:

- Why did God create humans on earth, and what went wrong?
- What is God's plan to make things right? Is God's plan a good one?
- What role do humans have in God's merciful plan?

## **LESSON ONE BIG TAKEAWAY:**

**God's people are God's sent ones to all peoples everywhere.**



## PEOPLE WERE CREATED TO RULE, BUT HUMANS DISOBEYED AND BROKE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

In this first lesson, we start at the beginning of the Bible to understand God's original purpose for humanity and His redemptive mission in a world that has gone astray. If we go to the end of the story in Revelation, we see the culmination of God's perfect plan to restore human beings and the broken world to all that God had meant them to be—restored and in wonderful fellowship with God again. “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (Revelation 21:3, ESV). We also see that the trajectory of God's redemptive mission is that He be glorified and known among all the diversity of humanity—“every tribe and people and language and nation” (Revelation. 5:9 and 7:9, ESV).

## GOD'S MERCIFUL PLAN BEGINS WITH HIS JUDGMENT.

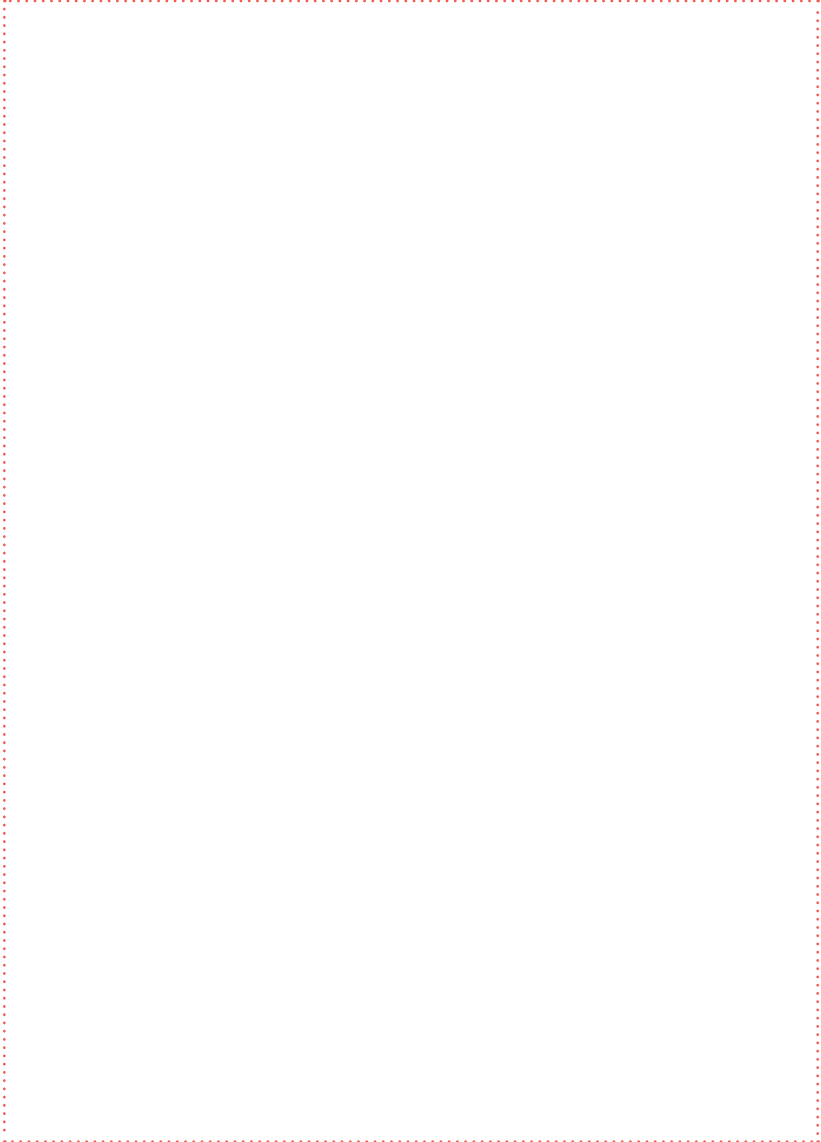
- The tragedies we see in the world today are simply the symptoms of the deeper evil in this world.
- God's love means He loves humans so much that He will not force them into His presence.
- God's wrath is never retaliatory or destructive.

## GOD INVITES HUMANS TO BE PART OF RESTORING THE WORLD IN HIS MERCIFUL PLAN.

- God's plan to restore relationships with people from all nations will be accomplished through His people.
- God gives you the privilege of having a role in His redemptive mission to introduce people from every nation to our King, Jesus.

# Discussion

1. Create sketches of or discuss what you learned in this lesson about God's plan for this world.

A large rectangular area defined by a red dotted border, intended for sketches or discussion.

2. How would you respond if a friend asked why a loving God would bring judgment to this world?

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3. In what way does knowing God's plan inform us about how we as Christians should respond to the world's news? or to our own difficulties?

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4. What are some practical actions you can take right now to align with God's redemptive plan?

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# Prayer

**PEOPLE GROUP:** The Japanese

**POPULATION:** 125.7 million

**UNREACHED:** 97.9%

**EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN:** .57%

## PRAYER POINTS

1. More missionaries and pastors.
2. An outpouring of the Holy Spirit with signs and wonders.
3. Boldness among Japanese Christians to share their faith.

# Disciplines

## PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

### *Simple prayers*

For the week ahead, set aside multiple times each day to say a prayer for those who are lost. The prayer does not have to be long and involved. We are trying to develop a discipline or habit that keeps us connected to the heartbeat of God. We can make major steps in this direction by simply repeating a prayer for the lost throughout the day.

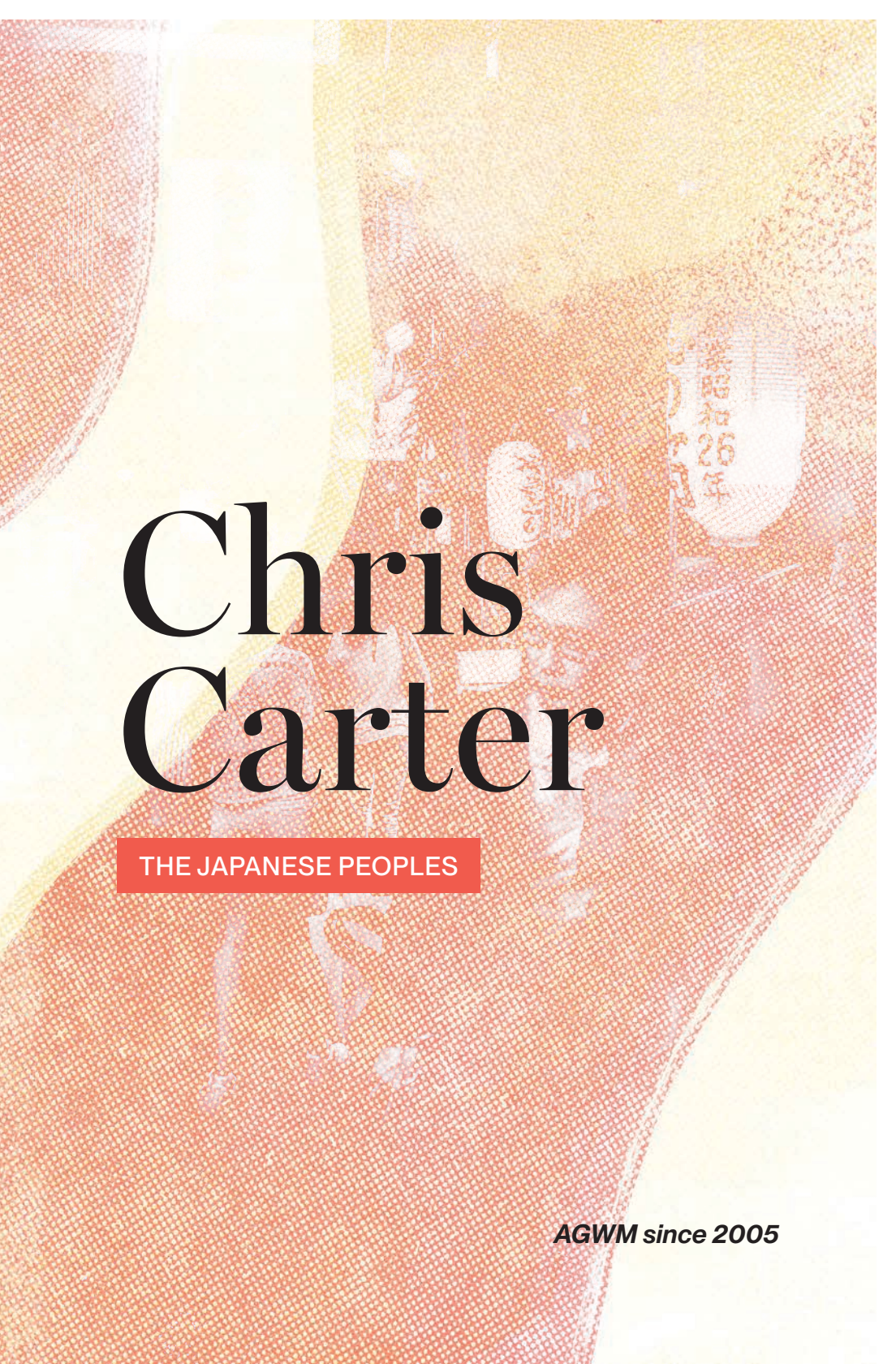
Try something like, “Loving Father, will You draw those who are lost to yourself today?”

Repeat this throughout the day as often as it comes to mind. You may want to set your phone or watch to remind you several times in a day. You can insert the name of a friend, a country, or a people group into the prayer.

Prayer walk through your neighborhood. Do these people know Jesus? Be concerned about the souls of your neighbor, your letter carrier, or someone of another nationality who lives on your street.

## COMMUNAL DISCIPLINE

Find time and opportunity to connect with someone from the group or with another believer. Take a walk around your neighborhood, school, or office building and pray these short prayers for the lost in your city. Report back to the group next week. What did you experience? How did the Spirit lead you to pray?



# Chris Carter

THE JAPANESE PEOPLES

*AGWM since 2005*

**A**s Yabe sat in a Japanese prison cell, he knew his life had gone off the rails. How had he gotten here? Why had he joined the yakuza (Japanese mafia)? Why had he pulled that trigger? And what was left for him now? Yet, in this pit of despair, Yabe found Jesus! The light of the gospel somehow penetrated his dark world, and he saw what so many in Japan haven't yet—his own sinfulness and his need for a savior. Strange as it may seem, Yabe had an advantage compared to most.

The word *tsumi* in Japanese means “sin,” but it typically only applies to hardened criminals. It is a word for murderers, drug dealers, and members of the yakuza like Yabe. When most hear it, they immediately think, “That’s not me. If the good news is forgiveness from sin and the judgment that comes with it, then it doesn’t apply to me because I’m basically a good person. I’m no criminal!”

It’s difficult for missionaries in Japan because most people are not confronted by their sinfulness directly. They find it in the secret spaces of their lives in unseen actions, hidden thoughts, and motivations. The Japanese, who know nothing of holiness and God’s law, feel no guilt for what happens in secret. As a people, the Japanese think more in terms of honor and shame than in terms of guilt and innocence. From their perspective, shame is a public matter, and what happens in private causes no shame.

For Yabe, guilt and shame were a matter of public record. Society had rejected him. He would never escape his past. A criminal court had exposed the brokenness of his world. He could no longer deny it or evade his sin, and he could do nothing to fix it on his own. His need for rescue had become obvious. But Yabe’s story is not unique to mafia members and other criminals. Romans 2:16 speaks of “the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ” (NIV). The Bible is clear on this matter. We cannot escape

shame and guilt by keeping it secret. In truth, everyone's world is just as broken as Yabe's was. A day will come when we will stand naked before God. He will see right through the pretenses of our self-presentations, and He will expose our secret and true selves. He will bring into the light what we all know so well: Our worlds are broken.

No one will be able to endure the shame of that day. But for those who know Christ, there is nothing to fear. Jesus hung naked on the cross, exposed to public shame. He endured this in our place. He received judgment on our behalf. And those who receive His rescue have no fear of the day of exposed secrets. Their worlds have been mended already.

Yabe got the rescue he needed, and I know his story because he became my student at Central Bible College in Tokyo. He is now a minister in the Japan Assemblies of God. Yabe tells his story often as he boldly declares God's power to fix our hidden brokenness.









LESSON TWO

# God's Sent Ones

# Bible Reading Plan

**DAY 1** Exodus 19:3-6, 1 Peter 2-3  
(special emphasis on 2:9-10 and 3:13-18)

**DAY 2** Revelation 5:9, 7:9-17, 21:22-22:5

**DAY 3** Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21-23, Acts 1:4-8.  
These reflect five versions of the commission of Jesus.

**DAY 4** John 1:12, John 3:16-21,  
Luke 18:18-30, Matthew 13:34-35

**DAY 5** Acts 13:1-14, 16:1-15, Romans 10: 11-17,  
Romans 15:14-22

Questions to consider as you read:

- Who can be a recipient of God's redemptive plan?
- What is the role of the church in global missions?
- What are the two different dimensions of the task of God's people?

Lesson One Big Takeaway: Paradise was lost through human rebellion, but God has a plan to put things right.

## LESSON TWO BIG TAKEAWAY:

God's people are God's sent ones to all peoples everywhere.

## GOD'S REDEMPITIVE PLAN IS TO BE KNOWN AMONG ALL PEOPLES.

God's redemptive plan is to be worshipped and served by the nations (Greek *ethne*), and the world once again would flourish and glorify their creator.

## THE BIBLE IS THE STRATEGIC PLAN THAT INFORMS THE CHURCH OF ITS TASK IN GLOBAL MISSIONS.

We are to bear witness to all God has done in Jesus Christ, and we are to teach those who believe so that they become disciples as well; not just to people like us, but also to people who have different languages, religions, and customs and who do not have access to the gospel. This is critically important. Remember, the end of the Bible declares that some from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation will be around the throne (Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 21:24).

The last words of Jesus expressed in the Gospels and Acts (Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21-23, Acts 1:4-8) give us an overarching picture of the role God's people are to play in His redemptive plan:

- Make disciples of all the nations (*ethne*) and proclaim the good news of the gospel to every creature.

- Preach repentance and forgiveness in Jesus' name to all nations.
- Witness about Christ from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
- Incorporate believers into the family of God through baptism.
- Teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded.
- Go into the world as the Father sent Jesus into the world.
- Receive power from the Spirit to cross cultural boundaries around the world to share the gospel of Jesus.

## ALL GOD'S PEOPLE ARE SENT INTO THE WORLD WITH ONE UNIFYING TASK, BUT IT HAS TWO DIMENSIONS.

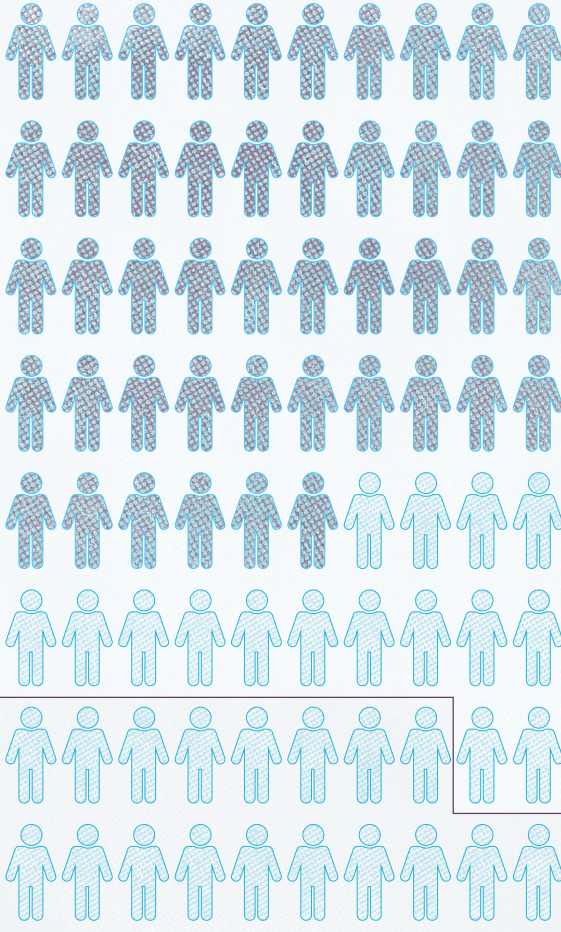
It is clear in Scripture that all God's people are "sent ones," but this sending has two dimensions. One sending is to those who live nearby geographically and are like us culturally. The other sending is to those who have a very different worldview and culture and have very little access to the gospel.

## WE TAKE THE GOSPEL TO THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE SAVING MESSAGE.

The reality is that there are still large blocks of people who live in societies where they have no access to this good news. Christian demographers estimate 87% of the people in the Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu worlds do not have a relationship with a single Christian. In secular Europe, Israel, and many other places, the tainted concept of Christianity and the lack of people who follow Jesus severely limit the possibility of a clear witness to Jesus.

The following diagram illustrates the need for gospel access among large segments of the world's population

## GLOBAL POPULATION: *8.1 Billion*



### 3.4 BILLION UNREACHED

*42% of total population  
Less than 2% evangelical*

### 1.85 BILLION OF THAT 3.4 BILLION

*Less than 0.1% (1 in 1000) are evangelical, making it very unlikely the unreached would ever meet a Christian.*

*This is 23% of total world population and 54% of all those who are classified as unreached.*

# Discussion

1. God's redemptive plan requires His people to take part. Reflect on the Great Commission and list the actions Jesus commanded. If we take these seriously, what activities should a church be doing in today's world? And what activities should cross-cultural workers be involved in to advance God's global mission?

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2. Make another list of the activities your group or church is currently doing. Compare the two lists.

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3. Based on what you learned in this lesson, what challenges you the most about your role and your church's role and participation in God's global mission?

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4. What step of obedience is the Holy Spirit prompting you to take as you grow in obedience to God's redemptive plan?

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# Prayer

**PEOPLE GROUP:** Ethnic Greeks (in Greece)

**POPULATION:** 8,398,000

**EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN:** 0.30%

## PRAYER POINTS

- 1. Creative reach and access.** In an increasingly secular climate, creativity is required for finding new and meaningful ways to build relationships in our community and to connect with the lost and spiritually homeless.
- 2. Church planting.** In Greece, a country of more than 10 million people, there are fewer than 20 AG-affiliated churches. We are praying and believing that we will see a resurgence of a church-planting movement in this nation. Pray that, with the support of global workers, locals will be called to ministry and to plant churches.
- 3. Unity.** Though the evangelical community in Greece is incredibly small (by some estimates, there are more Jehovah's Witnesses here than evangelical Christians), it is too often marred by division. Pray for a spirit of unity and health in and among the churches so those that do exist will flourish and multiply.

# Disciplines

## PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

Choose a people group to pray for this week. Use the people groups in this study or search the Joshua Project website for ideas. Pray for the Holy Spirit to open the hearts of the people. Pray for believers in and near this group to have boldness and direction in sharing the gospel. Pray for more workers to be called to these people who are so loved by God. Ask God if you should give financially to a global worker or go.

As you go about your daily routine, look for people who may be from a different cultural background than you. Listen for conversations in other languages. Watch for women wearing Islamic dress in your grocery store. Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to have a conversation with or do a helpful act for someone from another culture.

## COMMUNAL DISCIPLINE

Last week you did some prayer walking in your home area. Did you discover, or are you aware of, people who are from a different cultural background than yours? (Perhaps the owners of your favorite Chinese restaurant? The German exchange student? The Somali refugee? The None—someone with no particular religious belief?) Do a little research to find out the beliefs and customs of these neighbors.

We all are sent to people who are close to us. Think of a person in your family or neighborhood who has different social, cultural, or religious views than you. How can you bear witness to Jesus without attacking their viewpoint or lifestyle? Following the

instruction in 1 Peter to give an answer for your faith in gentleness and respect, prepare a brief two-minute testimony of something Jesus has done in your life. Here's one resource to help you create your testimony: [needencouragement.com/two-minute-testimony](https://needencouragement.com/two-minute-testimony).

Encourage one another to find ways to build friendships with someone of another culture: smile, initiate conversations, invite to tea. One of the most natural things you can do is invite people from another culture to share a meal with you in your home. Be sensitive to their diets. Pray for them before they go. Be open to accepting hospitality as well. For more tips, check out [sayhelloinfo.com](https://sayhelloinfo.com).

It will be exciting to hear your stories at the beginning of our next meeting.





# Peter & Courtney Good

THE GREEK PEOPLES

*AGWM since 2013*

**I**n areas of the world with some form of state Christianity, it would be natural to assume that everyone has easy access to a clear and compelling gospel message that leads to an active, Spirit-led faith. However, there can be many reasons this is not the case. Often, because of politics and corruption, there is growing distrust in organized religion and religious leaders. Young people living in places with only more traditional, “high church” expressions of Christianity may experience church as irrelevant or alienating. Another factor that may hinder access to the gospel in some officially Christian nations is the language of the liturgy. In Greece, for example, the liturgy is in an ancient form of the language most people do not understand.

In Greece, nearly all Greeks are baptized as infants, regardless of whether their parents are practicing Christians. By virtue of living in a Christian nation and being baptized as a baby, most people would profess to be Christian, though very few (especially among younger generations) attend church regularly. The result is that the life of devoted faith is often relegated to the religious professionals, out of reach or irrelevant for everyone else. A recent conversation with a local tour guide illustrates this well.

We recently hosted American pastors on a tour of biblical sites in the footsteps of Paul. As we visited ancient churches on this tour, our local guide explained some information about infant baptism as it is practiced in Greece and shared her own experience of being a godmother. Our group leader asked how she would explain the gospel to someone who desired to convert and be baptized as an adult. She responded, “I couldn’t do that! Only a priest can do that!”

During the pandemic, there was a young woman who had reached rock bottom in her personal life. She had grown up culturally Orthodox, attending church only for special occasions, and she didn’t have a living and personal faith. Reaching a place of despair

and feeling hopeless, she turned to the best place she could think of to encounter God: a local monastery. On her visit, she offered God a desperate, bargaining prayer in solitude, committing to follow Him if He would intervene in her broken situation. To her astonishment, her prayer was answered upon her return home.

Not knowing what else to do or where to go for guidance in this commitment to live for God, she spent the next six months of lockdown eagerly reading through the entire Bible by herself. When she finished, she knew she needed to find a community of believers where she could grow in her faith. That is how she showed up at our storefront church one Sunday evening in the fall just as the church was emerging from lockdown restrictions. Our church helped make the message of the gospel and life in the Spirit accessible in a place where too often it's perceived as irrelevant, complicated, or corrupt.









LESSON THREE

God's  
Good  
News:  
*Jesus  
Christ*

# Bible Reading Plan

**DAY 1** Isaiah 9:1-7, Isaiah 52:13-53:12,  
Isaiah 61, Luke 4:14-30

**DAY 2** Luke 1:26-55, Mark 1:21-2:12, John 4: 1-42

**DAY 3** John 1:1-18, Philippians 2: 1-11,  
Colossians 1: 15-23, Hebrews 1

**DAY 4** John 3

**DAY 5** John 18-19

Questions to consider as you read; think about how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies:

- Who was Jesus? What did He bring to our world?
- What was the purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection?
- What is our purpose as Jesus followers?
- When and how will justice be fully restored on this earth?

Lesson One Big Takeaway: Paradise was lost through human rebellion, but God has a plan to put things right.

Lesson Two Big Takeaway: God's people are God's sent ones to all peoples everywhere.

### **LESSON THREE BIG TAKEAWAY:**

**Jesus is the good news that we as Christians take into this world.**

## **REVIEW: GOD'S PLAN, HIS MESSENGERS, AND TRULY GOOD NEWS**

In the first lesson, we looked at the impact of human rebellion against God's purpose for humans and the resulting necessity of a redemptive plan. In the second lesson, we identified the Bible as the source for the strategy to accomplish that plan—He sends the church into the world to witness in word and deed to everyone everywhere. Our focus was particularly on the role we are to play in sending and in going to the people in our world who have the least access to the message of Jesus.

What often stands out to us as we look at the broken world is the poverty, war, tragedies, and injustices; we would love to fix it. However, unless the fundamental problem of our broken relationship with God is dealt with decisively, we will remain alienated from each other and will multiply injustices and oppression.

In this lesson we want to get specific: If we, the church, are commissioned to take the good news to our neighbors and the far ends of the world, we need to be sure that we know what the good news is and why it is good news.

## **JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD WHO BROUGHT HOPE AND JOY INTO THE WORLD.**

Jesus is the image of God (Collosians 1:15-20), and in Him “all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Collosians 2:9, NIV)

Jesus brought the joy of God out of the temple and into the streets as He healed the sick, forgave sins, spoke truth, set people free, cast out demons, and raised the dead.

## **JESUS CONQUERED DEATH AND DESPAIR THROUGH HIS WORK ON THE CROSS AND HIS RESURRECTION.**

Jesus went to the cross, allowing himself to be beaten, taunted, spit on, and slandered because of His great love for the fallen world.

And in doing so, He conquered Satan, evil, and death.

But Jesus’ death was not the end; His Father vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead. It is through what Jesus accomplished by His death and the power of His resurrection that this God frees us from our bondage, transforming us and working through us to bring joy, wholeness, beauty, justice, and salvation in this world.

This is the good news we proclaim!

## **AS JESUS FOLLOWERS, WE BRING HOPE AND COMPASSION TO THIS BROKEN WORLD.**

This good news has priority over all that we do. However, turning to Jesus is not just mental assent; we don’t just agree in our minds. Repentance requires a radical “turning” from the way of self-rule to surrender to the Jesus way (Acts 26:20), demonstrating in attitude and action, in word and deed, that Jesus Christ, “He is Lord” (Acts 10:36). To truly follow Jesus requires conversion to living under the Kingdom rule of God, which means the desires of our hearts and the goals of our lives seek to align with God’s mission in this world.

People who follow Jesus as Lord should become a visible demonstration of the love and justice of Christ. Submission to Christ and mutual submission to one another in love demonstrate the power of the gospel in tangible ways, becoming a sign to the world of the love, justice, and presence of Christ (John 15:9-17).

## **WHEN JESUS RETURNS WE WILL SEE JUSTICE FULLY RESTORED.**

The whole of the Bible bears testimony to the living God's concern for justice in His world, and we continue to work for justice because of His love. It is equally clear that full justice will only come in the future rule of God that He brings forth. The Church's engagement in social justice and acts of compassion gives witness to the gospel of the Kingdom and the beautiful future that will come in its fullness when Jesus returns.

# Discussion

1. Last week, you prepared a two-minute testimony of something Jesus has done in your life. From what you learned this week, add to your testimony truths about who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. Get in pairs and take turns sharing your testimony with each other.

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2. We are to tell the world about the good news of what God has done in Jesus, yet many people find it difficult to talk about their faith openly with others. What makes you uncomfortable about sharing the message of Jesus with others? Discuss why.

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3. How do you and your local church demonstrate the gospel to others?

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4. What in this lesson helps you bring together the ideas of serving others and talking about what Jesus has done? What happens if you serve others but don't also tell the story of Jesus? What happens if you tell the story of Jesus without serving others?

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# Prayer

**PEOPLE GROUP:** The Shuar Nation - Ecuador

**POPULATION:** 95,000

**EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN:** Less than 5%

## PRAYER POINTS

1. Open doors for the gospel.
2. More laborers in the harvest, laborers who are patient.
3. Resources to keep showing up, even when the fruit does not appear rapidly.
4. Unity among pastors, unity among missionaries.

# Disciplines

## PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

Take time to reflect: What do you find the most difficult: serving your community in some way or sharing your faith verbally?

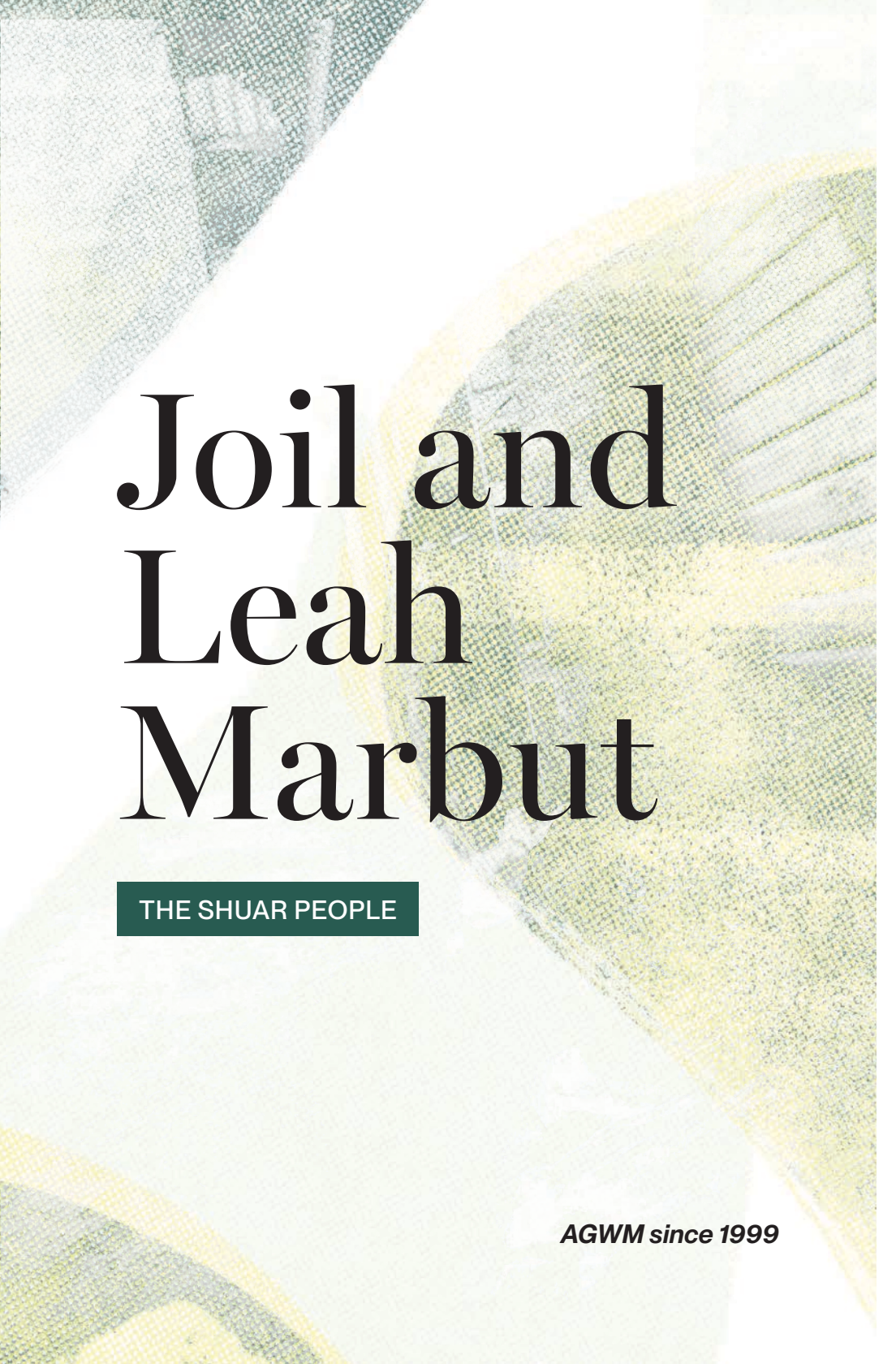
Pray for opportunities to share with others this week.

## COMMUNAL DISCIPLINE

Many people today do not trust large institutions. That includes the church. The only ways to break through this are by loving, serving, and telling our story about Jesus and what He has done.

- Make a list of possible ways to serve in your community. (If there are none, create one!) Pick one of these and volunteer to serve together.

Be sensitive to the guidance of the Spirit as you look for opportunities to share the truth of God's big story and your story.



# Joil and Leah Marbut

THE SHUAR PEOPLE

*AGWM since 1999*

**I**n the last 25 years, many memories have been seared in our hearts: amazing miracles of healing and salvation- and even a few that can only be considered resurrections. We have seen churches planted, built, and multiplied. We have seen girls rescued, educated, and given hope. We have witnessed miracles of timely provision, sometimes with thousands of dollars appearing from the least expected places. Yet, this past month, we were allowed to participate in the most memorable act of God to date.

We were working in the small jungle village of Utunkus Sur, located just outside of Sucúa, with our Jungle Missionary Team and a volunteer team from Maryland. We were doing community outreach and lending a hand to one of our most faithful pastors, who happens to be a widow with six children. At the end of the week, there was a group of new believers who wanted to make their faith proclamation public.

Dozens of witnesses joined us at the river, and 27 formed a line, excitedly anticipating their baptism. Each of them has a story, each of them has faith, and all of them are living witnesses to the promise found in Titus 3:5: “He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (ESV).

Yet it was the last young man who is the center of this story. We have known Alexander since his birth, and we have watched him struggle with the reality of cerebral palsy. As a result of his condition, he has never been able to take a step, stand up, or sit up straight. Thanks be to God, we are not saved “because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” Over the last few months, he had made his confession of faith, and now he wanted to make his public proclamation through baptism.

As we gathered together, the new believers passed by us one by one. We knew Alexander would need to be lifted from his permanent spot in the tattered wheelchair. Yet this determined young man would have it no other way. As we navigated the challenging river current to carry him to the spot we had chosen in the cold and clear jungle water, the entire village held its breath. What happened next as we collectively emerged from that water was more than could possibly be put into words. The cold water and pulling current were forgotten, and the sigh of relief was replaced by shouts of joy as Alexander almost jumped for joy right out of our arms. We believe when people look at Alexander, they cannot help but see the glory of God; in all our lives, we have never seen someone more fully alive.









LESSON FOUR

God's  
Launching  
Pad: *The  
Local  
Church*

# Bible Reading Plan

**DAY 1** Acts 1-2

**DAY 2** Acts 3-4

**DAY 3** Acts 5:12-42, 8:3-8

**DAY 4** Acts 10-11, 13:1-4

**DAY 5** Acts 13:46-14:15

Questions to consider as you read:

- How did the believers in Jesus partner with the Holy Spirit to share the good news?
- How does God speak to the new communities of faith?
- What is the role of prayer in the Acts 13 church?
- What are some practices local churches can develop to better participate in cross-cultural mission?

Lesson One Big Takeaway: Paradise was lost through human rebellion, but God has a plan to put things right.

Lesson Two Big Takeaway: God's people are God's sent ones to all peoples everywhere.

Lesson Three Big Takeaway: Jesus is the good news that we as Christians take into this world.

### **LESSON FOUR BIG TAKEAWAY:**

**Together we are God's launching pad to send cross-cultural-workers to the ends of the earth.**

## **REVIEW: GOD'S PLAN, AND HOW WE AND THE CHURCH FIT INTO IT.**

We've learned how God created a good world for humanity where we could live and love and be connected to Him. Humans chose to go their own way, and God responded in love with a plan to reconcile our relationship with Him. Jesus is God's answer for us and our broken world. In this lesson, we will look at how the Church in Acts shared the gospel within their communities and across cultures. Then we will discuss ways your church can join God in His work around the world.

## **BECOMING AN ACTS 13 CHURCH**

In Acts 13:1-4, we are invited to observe a prayer meeting in Antioch. In this prayer meeting two things are clear:

1. The church sensed a burden of some kind.

2. The Spirit's answer to that burden was to send a team of people who would go for them. Saul and Barnabas, pillars in the Antioch church, were chosen to form a mobile apostolic band which is a group released by the local church to move across geographic and cultural boundaries to proclaim the gospel and plant the Church (body of Christ, not a particular church).

In the rest of this lesson, we will explore five practices that will help your church impact the world like the Antioch church did in Acts 13.

## FIVE PRACTICES TO BECOMING AN ACTS 13 CHURCH

1. **Build a biblical identity as the people of God sent into the world.**

When we embrace our identity as God's people sent into the world, it changes what we see when we look across the street and beyond to the broader world. When we truly see ourselves as the people of God sent into the world, the Spirit moves us to grow in spiritual disciplines that shape us so that God can use us in His redemptive plan.

2. **Engage in passionate prayer for the world Jesus has sent us into.**

Every church needs many Acts 13 moments that bring them to the place in the Spirit where they are convinced that they cannot fulfill the Commission of Jesus to His people on their own and with their own structure. The Acts 13 moment for a church puts the goal of boots-on-the-ground global workers at the forefront of their prayer life and their participation in God's mission.

- 3. Develop a spiritual environment in your church that the Holy Spirit can use to raise up career cross-cultural workers who will go out from your congregation.**

Local churches respond to the global mandate from Jesus and the burden of the Spirit by developing a dynamic spiritual environment. Every missionary has come out of a local community of believers. Churches share God's burden for the lost world, so they pray for the Spirit to send workers and are willing to give their very best leaders, their most promising youth, and even their sons and daughters.

- 4. Sacrificially steward our resources in order to send cross-cultural workers.**

The missional discipline of stewarding our entire life (time, resources, friendships, finances) as a gift from God to make it all available for His redemptive task is a natural part of our participation in God's family. When we talk of stewardship, we often think of money, but our missional stewardship is about so much more than money.

- 5. Participate with Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) to send trained and equipped cross-cultural workers.**

Cross-cultural missions is complex; local churches that want to have global impact do so by partnering with long-term cross-cultural workers who are competent in the language and culture. As a missions agency, AGWM follows the Pauline model of seeking the neglected regions and peoples in order to establish the Church where it does not exist. Workers need special biblical, linguistic, and cultural development as well as a deep spiritual maturity. A responsible missions sending agency will provide this training over and above the discipleship already developed in your local church.

# Discussion

1. As you have spent time in the book of Acts this week, what have you seen that has encouraged or inspired you to become an Acts 13 church?

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2. Which of the five practices do you find the most difficult to follow in your life? Or in the church?

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3. Brainstorm some actions that would increase your church's participation in God's global mission.

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4. What department or activity in the church are you involved in where you can inspire others to be involved in praying and living sacrificially for the sake of missions?

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# Prayer

**PEOPLE GROUP:** Sudanese Arabs

**POPULATION:** 14,912,000

**EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN:** 0.1%

## PRAYER POINTS

1. More missionaries. Sudanese Arabs desperately need more workers to share the gospel.
2. For open doors in the various platforms we use to spread the gospel. For Sudanese Arabs to see Jesus and the Holy Spirit in all our endeavors.
3. For new partners and investors willing to support our projects in Sudan. We are confident that we have a window of opportunity to proclaim the gospel through business as a mission.



# Disciplines

## PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

Spend time in prayer going through these five practices. Ask the Lord to show you where you need to be intentional about changing your own personal disciplines.

## COMMUNAL DISCIPLINE

Organize with your group, Sunday school class or entire church a month that emphasizes missions. Spell out how the five practices in this lesson can be put into action in this month.

Here are some examples of what you could do:

- Pray along with Operation World daily ([operationworld.org/prayer-calendar](http://operationworld.org/prayer-calendar)), asking God to show you and the church how to be involved.
- Invite missionaries to your church to share their calling.
- Prepare materials for children's church and youth group. Check on the programs to make sure that missions is part of their regular teaching
- Gather funds that you usually would spend at a coffee shop in a month.
- Have your small group plan a potluck or picnic and invite new friends from another people group in your area who are not Christians.



# Jeffrey W

EAST AFRICA

*AGWM since 2010*

**O**ur team lives in a completely Muslim nation in Africa. The main people group here is .24% evangelical. There is no church. After eight years of learning language, sharing truth, identifying strongholds, praying, and doing just about everything we could to see the church planted, the team decided to slow down and ask the Lord again for His help. The team joined in on a 40-day fast for the Muslim world, specifically for our little nation. We stepped back from normal and good work activities and increased our time, individually and corporately, with Jesus. During this time, six Muslims came to our door wanting to know the gospel, something that has never happened to us before. One of those individuals was a young man named Zamil.

Zamil showed up one day asking about the gospel, but he got busy with life after a few weeks, and his interest waned. However, while Zamil's interest in God waned, God's interest in Zamil did not. In March, Zamil went to bed one evening just like normal, but he woke up a different person. That night Zamil had a dream in which Jesus visited him with a desire to make him and his family clean from sin. Jesus told Zamil that when he woke up, he needed to find the people who knew about Jesus, and they would explain how he could be cleansed.

Zamil woke up that morning and immediately went to the house of one of the missionaries. When he showed up, the worker knew something had happened. Zamil entered the house, sat down, and shared the dream. The worker explained the gospel, and Zamil was in. He gave his life to the Lord that morning and has not looked back. Zamil immediately had a passion for reaching others, sharing his faith often with those closest to him.

Last month, the police came looking for Zamil because of his faith, but he didn't waver. He is confident that Jesus is with him. He keeps telling us that everyone here needs to hear the good news.

Zamil already led a few of his friends to the Lord and continues to meet with them and others who are interested. Through Zamil, this nation is about to see its first church planted.

Zamil has been a believer for only two years, yet he deeply understands the missionary heart of the Father. He has told us the gospel needs to be told to everyone on the island, that every village in the nation needs its own Christian community, and that as the church here is formed, it needs to be thinking immediately about where among the nations it can send its own missionaries. For Zamil, one of the first jobs of the church is the Great Commission, specifically sending its own missionaries to other nations. Zamil loves his people group, but he knows the gospel must keep going around the world and never stop.





God's  
Promise  
Fulfilled:  
*Through  
Sent Ones*

# Bible Reading Plan

**DAY 1** Acts 13:13-52

**DAY 2** Acts 14-15

**DAY 3** Acts 17-19

**DAY 4** Acts 20, 22, 26

**DAY 5** Romans 15:7-24, 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

Questions to consider as you read:

- In what primary ways do missionaries strive to be like Jesus?
- How did Paul adapt to the different cultures in which he found himself? How can modern missionaries do the same?
- What is the missionary's goal in planting a church?



Lesson One Big Takeaway: Paradise was lost through human rebellion, but God has a plan to put things right.

Lesson Two Big Takeaway: God's people are God's sent ones to all peoples everywhere.

Lesson Three Big Takeaway: Jesus is the good news that we as Christians take into this world.

Lesson Four Big Takeaway: Together we are God's launching pad to send cross-cultural workers to the ends of the earth.

### LESSON FIVE BIG TAKEAWAY:

**Missionaries embed themselves in another culture to establish the Church.**

## REVIEW: THE CHURCH IS PART OF GOD'S PLAN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL PEOPLE

Last week we talked about our missional responsibility as a local congregation and explored the idea of an apostolic band being released by the church in Antioch to reach the far corners of their world with the gospel.

God's promise is fulfilled because God sends people to plant the church where it does not exist—and He does that through you. We have talked about how all of God's people are "sent ones"; the root of the verb *send* in Greek is where we get our word *apostle*, and in Latin, it is where we get our word *missionary*. Historically, missionary referred to sent ones specifically called by the Holy Spirit to take the gospel across cultural and geographic borders to establish the church of Jesus Christ where it was not present.

In this lesson, we will look at three critical markers that should characterize cross-cultural workers with a lifelong calling.

## WHAT ARE THE MARKS OF A MISSIONARY?

### 1 – MISSIONARIES STRIVE TO LIVE AN INCARNATIONAL LIFE TO SHOW IN WORD AND DEED WHO JESUS IS

Global workers follow Jesus in abandoning all to do God's will, leaving their home culture and embedding themselves in a people group. They learn the language of that people and enter into their fears, tears, joys, and celebrations so they can show them who Jesus is.

### 2 – MISSIONARIES STRIVE TO DO ALL THEIR MINISTRY PRACTICES IN A WAY THAT IS SENSITIVE TO THE LOCAL CULTURAL CONTEXT AND TRUE TO THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Global workers learn language and culture in order to communicate the message of Jesus and live the Christian life so that what people see and hear makes sense and fits the people to whom God sends them. A missionary must be so knowledgeable of God's story and of the culture and worldview of their new home that they can make the gospel of Jesus known to the people and also help new believers live as Spirit-filled witnesses in their own context.

### 3 – MISSIONARIES STRIVE TO PLANT THE CHURCH AND STRENGTHEN IT SO THAT THE CHURCH CAN EVANGELIZE ITS OWN PEOPLE AND EVENTUALLY SEND CROSS-CULTURAL WORKERS TO OTHER PEOPLES

Global workers participate in many different aspects of planting and establishing the Church.

As part of AGWM's vision to take the gospel to the whole world and bring gospel access to every people, lifelong missionaries have planted churches and then strengthened them by ongoing partnership. They have trained pastors, teachers, and leaders through formal Bible school programs and informal church-based programs. These churches and national councils grow and mature in the faith, and they reach their neighbors with the gospel and care for people in need out of their own resources and in partnership with the global network of World Assemblies of God Fellowship churches. Best of all, many are now sending missionaries themselves. Today, just over one hundred national councils that are part of the WAGF have established their own missionary-sending structure.

Do you sense a need for the Holy Spirit to help your group and church participate in God's mission? Next week, we will focus on His enabling power. Take time to pray for the Lord to help you embrace the challenge and partner with Him.

# Discussion

1. In what ways do the three marks of a missionary recalibrate your thinking in terms of what a missionary is and what they do? How does it transform your thinking in terms of how a church should be involved in missions?

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2. Becoming a part of a new culture and contextualizing the gospel involves the whole life of a missionary. List some of the areas of life a missionary might need to change to successfully do that.

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3. Think of someone you have tried to share the gospel with. How do you feel about your experience? When you try to share the gospel, do you find it easy or difficult to make it understandable to the other person? Why would this be harder across cultures?

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4. What are some practical steps the church should take to prepare and send missionaries?

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5. Why is it important for a missionary to plant and establish the Church?

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# Prayer

**PEOPLE GROUP:** Rajput Garhwal

**POPULATION:** 661,000

**EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN:** 0%

## PRAYER POINTS

1. The people need a revelation of the power of God through prayer.
2. Pray for pastors in the mountains who are heavily persecuted.
3. Pray that young people who are attending university will find their purpose in Jesus.
4. Pray for those on pilgrimage to Hindu temples and holy sites to have dreams and revelations of Jesus.

# Disciplines

## PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

We hope you can get a taste of what it is like to embed your life in a cross-cultural setting and communicate the gospel in a different culture. Although it takes years to do this (and includes language study and much more), here is an exercise to get you started in your own hometown:

Hopefully, you have made a friend from another culture in the last five weeks. Over coffee or tea, ask your friend to tell a story from his or her life:

- Tell me about your best friend from your home culture.
- How do you make friends there?
- What is friendship like there?
- What are some of the most memorable family occasions in your life?
- Tell me more about what happened and why those were special to you.
- From these stories, you will discover more about how to be a friend with someone from this culture, and you'll also know how to celebrate special occasions with this new friend.
- How would you share your stories about your best friend or your most memorable family occasion?
- Does your story tie in with the gospel story?

Make it a practice to listen to people's stories. As you listen, ask Jesus to help you connect their stories to the gospel.

## COMMUNAL DISCIPLINE

As a group, choose a story from one of the Gospels (the Good Samaritan or the Lost Son, for example). Print it out. As you develop friendships with people of other cultures, ask someone who is not a follower of Jesus to read it with you. Ask that person what he or she understands is happening in the story.

When you come together as a group next week, share what you have heard. How does the person's understanding differ from yours? What does this tell you about the importance of making the gospel understood to people of other cultures?

This week, prepare a devotional for your family, youth group, or children's ministry to prepare young people to take on the task of being a missionary if the Spirit calls them.







# Dan Isaac

SOUTHEAST ASIA

*AGWM since 2017*

**T**here's a farmer who comes to my house every week and has become a friend. He climbs the two miles from his village with his mule and brings everything from oranges and broccoli to pinecones and pumpkins. He is considered wealthy in his village because he has a lot of land and a handful of animals. The fruit and vegetables he brings are high quality, and we always sit and have tea together before he leaves.

Reading the story of the man and the four types of soil in Matthew 13:1-9 reminds me of my friend. Of all the types of soil, the one that brings the best produce is the one he has a relationship with. He spends time turning up the dirt, removing the rocks and weeds, and placing the good seed. My friend does the same, and he sees great results because of it.

While the yield represents people growing in Christ, the soil reminds me of the culture where they are growing. Learning a language, trying new foods, adjusting to transportation norms, and settling into a home all require that we dig in and build relationships. Sometimes, it naturally occurs, but usually learning a different culture requires uncomfortable situations and challenging lessons.

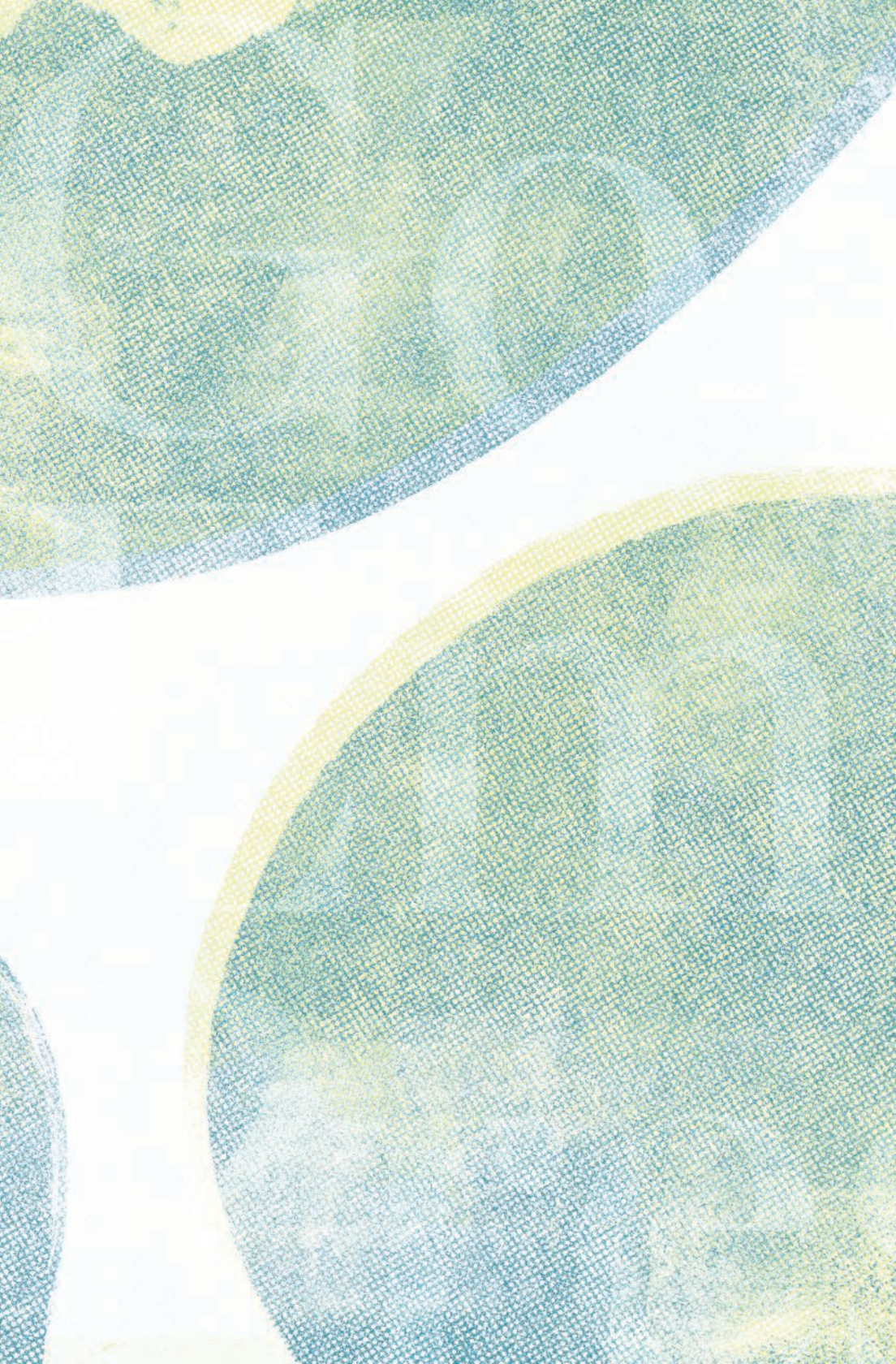
Jesus was in His own culture for 30 years before He began to share Kingdom truths. He could speak to carpenters, farmers, shepherds, religious leaders, fishermen, tax collectors, soldiers, and everyone in between because He got His hands dirty in the culture. We see the need and think it will take a couple months of fundraising and a 10-day trip. However, Jesus is calling us to give our lives.

What would life look like if we pursued people instead of pursuing a result? I have learned so much from my teatime with my farming friend. He has shared about family life, the history of our area, and

the background of his religious pursuits. His Hindu worldview teaches me not just what is important to him personally, but it also helps me read the Bible with new understanding. Now I see clearer who my neighbor is. He doesn't look like me or think like me, but he certainly likes good food, and I can identify with that!

My prayer is that God would continue to speak to his heart as we pray together and that the Holy Spirit would help me share God's love in a culturally appropriate way with him.





LESSON SIX

God's  
Empowering  
Presence:  
*The Holy  
Spirit*

# Bible Reading Plan

**DAY 1** John 14-16

**DAY 2** John 21, Acts 1:1-11

**DAY 3** Acts 2, Acts 9-10

**DAY 4** Acts 13:1-12, Acts 16

**DAY 5** 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Galatians 5

Questions to consider as you read; think about how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies:

- How does the Holy Spirit guide and direct the followers of Jesus?
- In what ways does the Holy Spirit empower believers?
- What are the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit that make ministry possible?



Lesson One Big Takeaway: Paradise was lost through human rebellion, but God has a plan to put things right.

Lesson Two Big Takeaway: God's people are God's sent ones to all peoples everywhere.

Lesson Three Big Takeaway: Jesus is the good news that we as Christians take into this world.

Lesson Four Big Takeaway: Together we are God's launching pad to send cross-cultural workers to the ends of the earth.

Lesson Five Big Takeaway: Missionaries embed themselves in another culture to establish the Church.

### **LESSON SIX BIG TAKEAWAY:**

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit are essential to responding to the Great Commission.

## **REVIEW: MISSIONARIES SENT OUT BY THE LOCAL CHURCH ARE GOD'S PLAN TO TAKE THE GOSPEL TO ALL PEOPLE.**

In the last two weeks, we've discussed the role of the local church in missions and identified key markers that distinguish a missionary. In this lesson, we turn our attention to look at the power source of missions, the Holy Spirit, who works in and through us to accomplish God's redemptive plan. Our focus is on the work of the Holy Spirit for power in mission and why it matters.

### **JESUS' LAST WORDS**

Jesus' last words prepared His followers to expect the Holy Spirit. Let's look at three gifts the Spirit brings to us.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS US TO PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S MISSION.

The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. The central purpose for the Spirit's coming is found in Jesus' words in John 20:21-22: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you," and then "he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (ESV).

## THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS AND EMPOWERS.

The Holy Spirit gives power for mission, and He also calls, sends, and guides the missionary. He makes us bold in witness and in drawing people to Jesus.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GIFTS AND FRUIT MAKE MINISTRY POSSIBLE.

The Spirit gives His workers abilities to serve. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Galatians 5:22-23 ESV

## THE HOLY SPIRIT PUSHES HIS FOLLOWERS OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONE IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES.

We like to think of the Holy Spirit as our protector, guide, and comforter, and He is all of those, but often we miss the fact that the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is not for our comfort or safety; rather, He empowers us to witness and to build His church. As C. S. Lewis reminds us about Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, "Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you" (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*).

The Holy Spirit makes Christ's mission possible. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers, who prepares people to receive the good news, and who enables us to live a purposeful life.

For all of these reasons, the Holy Spirit's role in missions is indispensable. Jesus' last words are still our first priority.

# Discussion

1. What are the comfort zones where we tend to hide?

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2. Make a list of what the Holy Spirit does to help and encourage us.

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3. Make another list of ways in the Holy Spirit challenges us to leave our Christian bubble and engage our lost and broken world.

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4. Can you give an example of how the Holy Spirit's empowerment has given you more courage to share Jesus, who is the good news?

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5. In what ways would you partner with the Holy Spirit to send someone you love if he or she were called to lifelong cross-cultural work?

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6. Discuss ways you and/or your small group can help your church prepare people to be filled with the Spirit so that they will be ready to obey and go when the Lord calls them.

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# Prayer

**PEOPLE GROUP:** Uzbek

**POPULATION:** 31,979,900

**EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN:** 0.01%

## PRAYER POINTS

1. Pray for Uzbek believers to have joy in suffering for the sake of the gospel. Uzbeks who convert to Christianity encounter extreme persecution. They often are ostracized from their families, kicked out of homes and villages, and sometimes even denied work.
2. Pray for the president and Uzbek government to be more open to Uzbek churches forming and welcoming in foreign workers (missionaries) to live in Uzbekistan.
3. Pray for both local believers and missionaries to proclaim the gospel boldly without fear and for the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of those who will hear the good news.

# Disciplines

## PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

If you have not yet received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, pray and ask God for this gift. Ask others in your group to pray with and for you.

As you are praying for unreached people groups and missionaries, allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you about them. If you sense a particular urgency to pray for a specific missionary, write and tell them.

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about your responsibility in missions. Is He directing you to share the gospel with someone in your neighborhood or social circle? Is He encouraging you to give financially to the missionary program of your local church? Is He perhaps asking you to consider going as a career global worker to another nation or culture?

## COMMUNAL DISCIPLINE

In your small group or class, pray together for the Holy Spirit to use each of you as a bold witness during your upcoming week. Share with each other how the Holy Spirit directed your steps in a specific situation this week.

Seek out a story about how God spoke to someone to prepare his or her heart to hear the gospel. Share this story with the group.

Ask visiting missionaries to share a story with your group about how the Holy Spirit directed them in a specific situation.

# Charisse

CENTRAL ASIA

*AGWM since 2021*



**E**ach week on our team, we go “sowing” in pairs. Just like in the parable of the sower, we set aside time to go out and scatter the seeds of the gospel throughout our city. Sowing can be exhausting, frustrating, and discouraging. You’re learning language and culture, trying again and again to share the gospel with locals, only to have the door closed, see the conversation shift, or hit a wall with language and not be able to share any further. The weight of rejection or fear of failure was sometimes so heavy, I would wake up sick on the day we were going out sowing.

About a year went by, and our team realized we were operating under the assumption that the Holy Spirit was guiding our actions, even though we weren’t explicitly asking for His direction. We repented and refocused our efforts on the Holy Spirit, not on our language, strategies, or apologetic skills. It became team practice to spend the first 30 minutes or more in prayer with a partner and seek the Holy Spirit. We would ask for empowerment and for discernment about where to go, who to talk with, and what to say. As we began inviting the Spirit into our work, we began to see major change.

One day, I was praying with my teammate, who had only been in the country for a couple months, and she shared with me a vision the Lord gave her just then of a woman sitting with a purple scarf. We didn’t know where to go to find this woman, so after praying some more, we hopped on a bus to a major station and headed toward a large mall. On our way from the station toward the mall, we walked through an underground section, and coming up the stairs on the other side, there was the woman! Just as Carla saw in her vision.

Another day, I was praying with two visiting college interns, and one girl saw a vision of flowers. I suggested we try the plant bazaar, so we walked around and tried getting into gospel-

based conversations with several ladies. After a couple different conversations, a man walked up to us in the middle of the bazaar and began speaking English with us. After a few minutes, we discovered he was a Christian. He left encouraged, and we walked away amazed that the Holy Spirit led us to that place, at that time, to meet one of the few handfuls of believers in the country.

A different afternoon, while praying, my teammate saw a vision of a woman wearing a blue headscarf sitting on a bench in a specific park. We headed to the park, walked all around, and didn't see anyone wearing a blue headscarf. However, we began chatting with Nuriza, a woman who was sitting on a bench in the park. My teammate shared the entire gospel with her, and at the end of our conversation, Nuriza showed us a picture of herself at work. In the photo, Nuriza was wearing the blue scarf my teammate Danielle saw in the vision from the Holy Spirit.





I'll Go

I was only 20 years old when I spent eight weeks in an East African country, an island nation where 99.9% of locals follow Islam. Although I was raised in the church and had been on many missions trips before, I had never before spoken with a Muslim, visited an Islamic nation, or even heard of the term UPG (unreached people group).

Every day that summer, I would walk outside and greet my neighbors one by one and practice the local greetings I was learning in language class. I would visit the African ladies in the outdoor market and chat with them as they picked out the best fruits and vegetables for my home. I would walk across town and greet friends and strangers, and each person would light up as they heard this foreigner attempt to speak their language. Every day, however, the truth weighed on my heart that every single person I talked to had never heard the good news of Jesus. I was living among a people group that was virtually shut off from the gospel. All of this was beginning to change, however, because of the small team of missionaries forming on this island.

About a month later, I was invited to go with a local friend to her home village on the other side of the island. After a weekend of drinking chai, eating delicious food, and listening to all the women chat around the kitchen fires, I walked Zob. A man in his mid-thirties, Zob had been studying abroad and had just returned home to his village that weekend. As I was introduced to him, I said in my broken sentences in the local language: "Hello! My name is Charisse. I am a follower of Jesus."

Suddenly, Zob's eyes got wide. He said in great excitement, "Jesus? I have so many questions about Jesus! I have always wanted to know about Jesus! You are the first person to come to my village to tell me about Him."

For the next two hours, Zob asked me question after question about Jesus. As I was doing my best to answer all his theological questions, a thought kept swirling through my mind: “This man has waited his whole life for this moment, for someone like me to tell him the good news of the gospel! Why has no one else come? Why has he had to wait so long?” It was at this point the injustice of unreached people groups became real to me. And so I said to God, “Lord, I don’t know if You’ve called me, but if You’ll have me, I’ll go.”

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