

Neighbors & Nations |

Week 5

Jake Potter, author

Day 1: Why World Missions?

Read the Word

Psalm 67:1-7 (ESV)

- ¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
² that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
³ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.
⁵ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.
⁷ God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!*

Reflect

One question that I often get when I teach on missions is simply, “Why?” An easy answer would be to quote the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20) and say, “Because Jesus told us to.” But I work with our students, and many of them are going through a period in their life where they really question everything about what they believe and why. For Gen-Z, telling them “because the Bible tells us so” is an unsatisfactory answer, not because they don’t trust God’s Word, but because they want to know the big picture. They don’t just want a job description; they want to know what caused that job to be necessary in the first place.

This notion isn't only true for our students. As adults, especially those of us raised in church, it can be all too easy to simply become accustomed to common church phrases like the Great Commission and take it at face value without really unpacking it.

That's where the above scripture comes in. Even in the Old Testament, long before Jesus was born, we see that God's desire was for all the people and nations of the earth to know and worship him. Nearly a thousand years later, the apostle John echoed this same sentiment in the most well-known Bible verse of all time, John 3:16 that begins: "For God so loved the world." God created all the people of the world, and he loves them. What he desires is for all the people of the world to worship and love him in return, or as Psalm 67 says specifically—to praise him, to rejoice in him, to be guided by him, and to fear him.

God desires for us to partake in his mission to bring the gospel to the world, and thus missions is an act of worshipful obedience on our part. But even beyond that, worship is the goal of missions. What I mean by that is that when we partake in missions, the goal is for other people to find and follow Christ, or rather, that other people would worship Christ who had not worshiped him before.

This is the heart of Psalm 67. The psalmist asks God to make his way and saving power known throughout the nations of the world, and then moves into a call for the nations of the world to praise God. The goal of missions then is not only that the people of the world would have knowledge of God, but that they would worship him. Pastor and author John Piper puts it this way:

"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever."¹

So why world missions? Because God loves the world, and because God desires to be worshiped and loved—not just by us, or by people like us, but by all people of the world.

Respond

What do you think of the assertion that "missions exists because worship doesn't"? How does that help us understand why world missions matter to God?

Mission Trip Highlights

In this section, we will be highlighting Christ Fellowship's short term mission trips for 2021. There will be a [mission trip meeting](#) to hear about all our trips on November 15 at the McKinney campus. Below, we're including links for you to go and read more about each trip

¹ Piper, John. "Let The Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions, Third Edition", Baker Academic, (Grand Rapids, MI.) 2010., pg. 35

and pray about whether or not you feel God calling you to participate either by going or by helping send someone else.

CUBA – February 5-10, 2021: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/18812/cuba-trip>

We will equip you to serve as we partner with Proclaim Cuba to come alongside pastors and their house church congregations, joining them in light construction, children's ministry, Bible teaching, and even training pastors.

GUATEMALA – March 6-13, 2021: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/18805/guatemala-spring-break-family-mission-trip>

The family trip is during Spring Break and includes compassion outreaches and dental clinics. Designed with children in mind. We'll work in a Mayan village. We host dental clinics and various outreaches with the village mothers and children.

To see info on all trips, click here: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/>

Day 2: The End of World Missions

Jake Potter, author

Read the Word

Revelation 5:9-10

9 And they sang a new song, saying,

*“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,*

10

*and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”*

Revelation 7:9-10

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number,
from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before
the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in*

their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Reflect

The verses above demonstrate the ultimate goal of missions. In Revelation 5, we see how Jesus ransomed people from every tribe, language, people group, and nation with the blood that he spilled on the cross. Then in Revelation 7, we see a great multitude worshipping God in heaven, comprised of every tribe, language, people group, and nation. This prophecy of the great multitude, whom Christ has ransomed will be fulfilled. As we discussed yesterday, missions will have achieved its purpose at this point, because a great multitude from the whole world will be worshipping God.

To explain the significance of these verses, I want to share a personal story. For those who don't know me, I serve on staff with our student ministry team. But in addition to being passionate about students, I am also passionate about world missions, specifically missions in Japan. Since 2016, I have been regularly serving on mission trips to Japan as well as partnering with missionaries who are currently living over there long term. Japan is an open country – at least, legally. But despite its open borders, Japan remains the second largest unreached people group in the world, with a mere 0.5% of its population being Christian.

On my first mission trip to Tokyo, I went on a prayer walk with my missions team. On our walk, we came across one of the largest graveyards in Japan, Yanaka Cemetery. As far as the eye could see, there was nothing but a sea of Buddhist graves. There must have been hundreds of thousands. As I walked the rows of graves lined with wooden sticks adorned with Buddhist writings in symbols most cannot read, it struck me that all of these people died without knowing Jesus. But as we continued walking, I came across a single tombstone that was in the shape of a cross. I was struck by the significance of a Christian grave in the middle of hundreds of thousands of Buddhist graves, and I felt the Holy Spirit speaking to me that this is what my life should look like—a life lived in faithful worship of the One True God, in the midst of a world that does not know him.

As we continued walking in the graveyard, we got lost, and as we tried to find a way out, we found a section that was pushed to the far outskirts of the graveyard that was entirely Christian graves. It was relatively small compared to the rest, but its testimony was huge. At first, I was saddened, because despite the testimony of these Christian lives, Japan is still by and large not receptive to the gospel. But then I remembered the words of church father, Tertullian that "the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church." Looking at numbers, it would seem that these seeds have fallen on hard soil. But in that moment, I was reminded that God always fulfills his promises. As it says in Revelation 5, the blood of Jesus purchased people from every tribe, every tongue, every people, and every nation. The seed that has been sown in Japan WILL bear fruit, for God is calling the Japanese people to himself.

And this isn't just true for the nation of Japan. God is calling the people of the world back to himself, and the seeds that have been sown will bear fruit. The image of the great multitude in Revelation will come to pass, and on that day, missions will be no more. But in its place,

people of every tribe, every language, every people group, and every nation, will worship God forever and ever. With that end goal in mind, we should be motivated to push forward and get involved in world missions.

Respond

How does the vision given to us in Revelation 5 and 7 demonstrate God's heart for the world? How should it motivate us as believers?

Mission Trip Highlights

In this section, we will be highlighting our mission trips. There will be a [mission trip meeting](#) to hear about all our trips on November 15. We're also including a link so you can go and read more about each trip and pray about whether or not you feel God calling you to participate. He may be calling you to go, or enable someone else to go by contributing financially to their trip.

CZECH REPUBLIC – March 6-13, 2021: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/18995/czech-republic-esl-spring-break-trip>

We will serve at schools in Prague, Czech Republic alongside missionaries, Matt and Patty Schonhoff. Participants will teach English lessons (you do NOT have to be a teacher to do this) and engage in English conversation with all levels of students to form relationships and share the Gospel. Patty serves at the Christian International School of Prague (CISP) teaching English/Language Arts to middle school students from all over the world. Matt serves at Evangelická akademie (EA) teaching English Conversation to Czech high school students. While both schools have their origins as Christian schools, most of the students are not Christian and many don't believe in God. During the week, time will be spent forming relationships allowing ample opportunities to share your faith and the Gospel.

MOROCCO – June 11-18, 2021: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/18807/morocco-n-africa-medical-training-church-planting-evangelism>

Using Medicine to Plant Churches - This trip is open to all adults. Medical training is a huge plus, but not necessary, as we will train all trip participants here to train the nationals over there. We will partner with "Teach To Train" (TTT) an outreach of East-West Ministries to equip the countries experienced church planters and evangelists to do basic medical care and to use TTT's medical backpacks. These medical backpacks give them access to unreached Muslim villages that we could never get access to as Americans, and because our trainees are Christians, they cannot get access to without this medical equipment. Once in the unreached villages, they will evangelize and plant churches.

To see info on all trips, click here: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/>

Day 3: Contextualization

Jake Potter, author

Read the Word

Acts 17:16-34

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. 18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." 21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for

"In him we live and move and have our being";

as even some of your own poets have said,

"For we are indeed his offspring."

29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the

world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” 33 So Paul went out from their midst. 34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Reflect

A huge issue in world missions today is the process of contextualization. The basic idea of contextualization is taking the gospel to a new context and finding biblically faithful and culturally appropriate ways to communicate it so that it is understandable to those in that new context. This process is crucial, because symbols, including language, can take on different meanings in different contexts. On top of that, finding ways to communicate the gospel in a new cultural context is important so that we can both communicate clearly and effectively. We want to communicate the gospel in a way that allows people to both understand and experience the power of the gospel.

This process of contextualization has actually been practiced since the time of the New Testament and before. The most prominent example of contextualization is found in Acts 17, where Paul goes to Athens and addresses the Areopagus. Paul’s speech begins with citing their own altar to an unknown god, and later quotes from current, non-Christian authors (Epimenides of Crete and Aratus’s poem *Phainomena*) when telling the gospel message. In fact, Paul only cites Greek sources when sharing the Gospel here, and never once mentioned Old Testament scriptures. Dean Flemming makes several key observations about Paul’s presentation of the Gospel here:

“Paul’s ministry in Athens is a model of cultural sensitivity and adjustment to his audience. Paul demonstrates an awareness of Athenian culture that gains credibility and earns him the right to be heard. He keenly observes their religious beliefs and shows familiarity with their ancient literary and philosophical traditions. He uses this insight to respectfully engage their worldview, drawing upon indigenous language, images, and concepts to communicate the gospel in culturally relevant forms... At the same time, Paul refuses to syncretize his message or to compromise its truth claims. Paul engages Athenian culture with the goal of its transformation. There are non-negotiables to Paul’s message that confront the prevailing assumptions of his audience.”²

In Paul’s speech, he demonstrates cultural sensitivity and establishes his credibility. Paul understands the aesthetic and medium of the works he quotes, he understands the message and values of the works, but the core of his message stems from what he understands about how the works seek to define who we are and what we love. He pays particular attention to the

² Flemming, Dean. *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns For Theology and Mission*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005. Pg 82

altar to the unknown god not because it is an idol, or because of the theological message it sends to its worshipers, but because of what the altar implies about who they are and what they desire. He notes that the altar shows that they define themselves as very religious and that they have an innate desire know the God whom they do not yet know.

Once Paul has thoroughly understood and analyzed the cultural works, he selects key works to weave the message of the Gospel into the Athenian context, and moves from the starting point of a cultural work into the message of the Gospel, while continuing to cite other cultural works to support his message. Flemming describes this approach as a balance between “an identifying approach that proclaims the gospel in ways the audience can understand and... a transforming approach that resists compromising the gospel’s integrity in a pluralistic world.”³

This issue in world missions is something that I am particularly passionate about, because I have seen its impact in both my life and in the lives of people I have ministered to. When I came back from my first mission trip to Tokyo, I wanted to be intentional about making friends with some Japanese international students here in Texas. One of the students I befriended was a girl named Yuka. Yuka had never met a Christian before while living in Japan. As we became closer friends, she began to open up to me more and would share about deeper things going on in her life.

As I continued to spend time with Yuka, we would also talk about things in Japanese pop-culture. She asked me about a Japanese anime show called Neon Genesis Evangelion, which she didn’t understand. That show just so happens to be one of my favorite shows, and is littered with Christian symbolism and themes. We discussed the show, which eventually led to us opening up the Bible to discuss what the show was talking about. We sat down and read parts of the first three chapters of Genesis, reading about the fall of man and how sin entered the world, which lead us to talking about suffering and pain, and eventually led to what Jesus came and died on the cross for. By the end of our conversation, Yuka was in tears. God was working in her heart, and revealing the truth to her through his word—all because of a conversation that started by talking about an anime.

This is contextualization in action. When we minister to people outside of our own cultural context, we need to understand things in their culture and start the conversation on common ground. Just like Paul in Athens, we can demonstrate cultural sensitivity and credibility, build trust and understanding, and then move into a place where the person is more receptive to hearing about the gospel.

Respond

You don’t necessarily have to leave the United States to share Jesus with the world. Like Yuka, people from all over are living in Collin County. Do you know someone that’s from a different

³ Ibid, pg 86

part of the world? How could you be intentional about having a meaningful conversation with them? Could you discover a point of connection that might help you share Christ?

Mission Trip Highlights

In this section, we're be highlighting Christ Fellowship's short term mission trips. There will be a [mission trip meeting](#) to hear about all our trips on November 15. Use the links below to read more about each trip and pray about whether or not you feel God calling you to participate by going or sending.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (2 Trips)

June 30- July 7, 2021: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/14117/dominican-republic-trip-1-june-30-july-7>

July 7-14, 2021: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/18893/dominican-republic-trip-2-july-7-14>

Work teams will travel to rural villages for medical, dental, vision clinics. We will have various construction projects that are ongoing and children's ministry (VBS) opportunities. This team will bring the gospel to small villages through medical outreaches. Skilled medical/dental / vision personnel are needed, but the trip is open to all. We will train all participants for all support ministry roles.

To see info on all trips, click here: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/>

Day 4: Christ, the Model for Missions

Jake Potter, author

Read the Word

Philippians 2:5-8

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Reflect

The incarnation of Christ is the model for all mission work. Just as God came and took on flesh to dwell among us and present himself in a way we could understand, so too does the missionary go and take the gospel to people of other cultures and present it in flesh and bones—in ways that become understandable and real in the lives of the hearers. Darrell L. Whiteman describes the missiological implications of the incarnation beautifully:

“The incarnation tells us something important about God. God chose an imperfect culture with its limitations for making known God’s supreme revelation. From the beginning of humanity God has been reaching out to human beings embedded in their different cultures. And God’s plan for the salvation of the world has been to use ordinary human beings, like ourselves, to reach others who are immersed in a culture different from our own. The incarnation tells us that God is not afraid of using culture to communicate with us.”⁴

The incarnation of John 1:14 described in Philippians 2 then becomes not only our model for missions as a whole, but specifically as a model for world missions and cross cultural communication. As Whiteman puts it, “God did not become a generic human being. God became Jesus the Jew, shaped and molded by first century Roman occupied, Palestinian Jewish culture. This meant that Jesus spoke Aramaic with the low prestige accent spoken around Galilee. He avoided eating pork and other foods prohibited by the Torah.” In his incarnation, Christ shows us that God entered into a specific culture so that people could know God more personally and intimately than before. While this does show that God uses cultural forms to speak to us in ways we understand, it also shows Jesus’s humility.

I want us to think about Philippians 2 in light of this. Even though Jesus is God, he chose to humble himself and take on the form of man, and more specifically, a servant. Servanthood is essential in every missional context because being a missionary is being a servant. The same is true with all of ministry, and all of us can minister to others wherever we are. For example, although in a certain sense I “work” at my church, the reality is that I “serve” at my church. I don’t just teach teenagers, I serve them. This servant’s mentality of ministry not only describes the actions, but also defines the type of leadership ministers need to practice: servant leadership. It is not the leadership that demands the spotlight, nor is it the leadership that demands obedience. Rather it is the leadership that begins on the knees of one who washes the feet of the other with the love of God in even the toughest of circumstances.

This is the model that Jesus demonstrated for us. He humbled himself and took on the form that would speak to those he came to serve, and chose to lead as a servant rather than one who should be served. As we are called to go out and preach the gospel to the whole world, we should be reminded that we are called to servanthood. Whether our mission field is on the other side of the world or right here in our back yard, Christ showed us that the model of our mission begins on our knees.

⁴ Whiteman, Darrel L. “Anthropology and Mission: The Incarnational Connection”, pg 31

Respond

How is Jesus our model for missions? What could you do to emulate him in how you interact with others, particularly those who are different from you? How could you serve others in your mission field?

Mission Trip Highlights

In this section, we will be highlighting our mission trips, There will be a [mission trip meeting](#) to hear about all our trips on November 15. Use the links below to go and read more about each trip and pray about whether or not you feel God calling you to participate.

COSTA RICA – July 11-16, 2021: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/18796/costa-rica-2021>

On the Missions in Costa Rica – House Build trip, your group will have the incredible opportunity to witness this as you help build a home for a family in need in one of the neighboring marginal communities of San Jose. These memorable days will leave a lasting impact on your heart forever!

MISSION ARLINGTON – August 1-5, 2021:
<https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/18797/mission-arlington-2021>

Mission Arlington exists to take church to the people. Consisting of a massive assortment of ministries such as apartment churches, emergency assistance, health care, a food pantry, after school programs, and more, Mission Arlington stands as a reminder that there are many big needs here in our own DFW Metroplex. With this trip, we will be leading two VBS groups at two of the apartment complexes Mission Arlington works with. We will also be working to collect donations (like food, clothing, and/or school supplies) to bring to Mission Arlington that they can redistribute to those in need.

To see info on all trips, click here: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/>

Day 5: Get Involved in World Missions

Jake Potter, author

Read the Word

Romans 10:13-15a

13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

Reflect

With much having been said this week about world missions, I would like to end this week with an invitation. All of us can be involved in world missions in one way or another. As the above verses indicate, how can someone believe if there hasn't been someone to share Christ with them? And how can people share Christ with the world if they are not first sent out? Just as the verses above indicate that there are preachers who are sent, there are also those who do the sending. Of course, you can sign up to go on one of the trips, but you may also feel called to come alongside and partner with the trips and serve as a sender even if you don't physically go on the trips.

If you cannot go on a mission trip, you can partner with the trips in two ways: First, these trips need people to partner with them in prayer. Missions is the battleground of spiritual warfare, and these missions teams will need people praying for them as well as the people they are going to share Christ with. If missions is a car, then prayer is the fuel.

Secondly, you can partner with the trips financially. Because God has called, he will provide. And one of the ways that God provides is through the partnership of fellow believers. Our church is going on these mission trips because we believe that God will be at work in the hearts of the people we will be ministering to, preparing the way for the Gospel to be proclaimed through all the earth. But in order to see that happen, there are tangible, financial needs that need to be met for the trips to happen.

Regardless of your involvement in the trips, I would invite you to check out the link below and pray about how God may be calling you to get involved! When you click the link, you can see each of our 10 mission trips, along with all of the details on the trips.

To see info on all trips, click here: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/!#/>

Mission Trip Highlights

In this section, we will be highlighting our mission trips. There will be a [mission trip meeting](#) to hear about all our trips on November 15. We're also including a link for you to go and read more about each trip and pray about whether or not you feel God calling you to participate in one of the trips.

SRI LANKA – August 5-12, 2021: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/18809/sri-lanka-medical-outreach>

Using Medicine to Plant Churches - This trip is open to all adults. Medical training is a huge plus, but not necessary, as we will train all trip participants here to train the nationals over there. We will partner with "Teach To Train" (TTT) an outreach of East-West Ministries to equip the countries experienced church planters and evangelists to do basic medical care and to use TTT's medical backpacks. These medical backpacks give them access to unreached Muslim villages that we could never get access to as Americans, and because our trainees are Christians, they cannot get access to without this medical equipment. Once in the unreached villages, they will evangelize and plant churches.

BANGLADESH – September 11-18, 2021:
<https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/18810/bangladesh-medical-church-planting-evangelism>

Using Medicine to Plant Churches - This trip is open to all adults. Medical training is a huge plus, but not necessary, as we will train all trip participants here to train the nationals over there. We will partner with "Teach To Train" (TTT) an outreach of East-West Ministries to equip the countries experienced church planters and evangelists to do basic medical care and to use TTT's medical backpacks. These medical backpacks give them access to unreached Muslim villages that we could never get access to as Americans, and because our trainees are Christians, they cannot get access to without this medical equipment. Once in the unreached villages, they will evangelize and plant churches.

To see info on all trips, click here: <https://cfhome.focusmissions.com/#!/>

Respond

How will you respond to what you've learned this week? How will you participate in world missions? Will you commit to praying? Will you consider going? Will you help in sending?