



8-Lesson Bible Study

GOD'S HEART FOR THE NATIONS

Jeff Lewis

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FOREWORD

Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in all the earth!
Psalm 46:10

If I were asked to choose one verse to summarize the essence of the Bible, it would be Psalm 46:10. Many Christians know the first part but don't realize—there is more to the verse. We love the personal benefits of, “Be still, and know that I am God,” but we consciously or unconsciously disconnect that truth from its global implications and develop an evangelical theology that places man at the center and neglects God's purpose in the world.

The major focus of American Christian thought and practice may seem to be, What can God do for me? Our lives reflect a belief that God's global priority is to make His disciples more comfortable. Don't get me wrong: I believe that God desires to bless us and that God's desire to bless His people is a major theme of the Bible. But if we focus on the theme of blessing alone, we distort the truth and lose the context in which God's blessings are given.

The purpose of this study is to help create an awareness of one of the most ignored themes of the Bible—God's global purpose: His desire and activity of redeeming mankind, the nations, to Himself. It involves the active pursuit of worshipers from all the peoples of the earth who will give Him the glory due His name. God's blessings and His global purpose are beautifully woven together in the Bible. My conviction is that in order to correctly interpret and apply Scripture, it is essential to understand the connection between these two themes. To ignore either one leads to misinterpretation and faulty application. Ultimately, lives will be misdirected.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to the truth of His Word as you progress through this study, and that you will respond to His guidance in applying His truth.

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INTRODUCTION

Before You Get Started

There are a few things that you need to know in order to get the most from this study. I have deliberately added little commentary to each lesson. This is not because I couldn't think of anything to say. My personal tendency is to say too much, but you have a Teacher who will guide you in all the truth.

1. The Holy Spirit will teach and lead you in the truth.

“These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.” 1 Corinthians 2:10–13

Every time you come into contact with God's Word through study, reading, hearing, memorization, and meditation, ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and understanding. As you interact with the Word of God, be faithfully interacting with the Spirit of God.

2. The Word of God is living, powerful, and transformative.

“Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” Jeremiah 23:29

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16–17

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

Too often I approach my time in God's Word as a duty that I mindlessly plod through. I walk through the corridors of the Bible like a self-absorbed teenager walking through a mall. I need to be reminded of the words of Proverbs 2:1–5:

“My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”

Don't rush through this study or any other time you interact with God's Word. Come and drink deeply from the revelation of His mind and pull up your chair to feed from the lavish banquet table of His Word.

“Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.” Jeremiah 15:16

3. Memorization and meditation will advance you beyond interpreting the Bible through your biases and needs.

During your journey through this study you will have the opportunity to fix your attention on specific aspects of scriptural truth. Faithful memorization and meditation on God's Word will play a key role in the discovery process.

In each lesson I have selected a passage to memorize that captures a key element in the study. For consistency, all scriptures quoted in this booklet are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible. You are, however, encouraged to use the translation of your choice both for the study and the memorization. As you memorize and meditate on a verse, the Holy Spirit will begin to turn His floodlight of illumination and understanding on the meaning. My prayer is that God would “open [your] eyes, that [you] may behold wondrous things out of [His] law” (Psalm 119:18).

Many of us haven't memorized Scripture since we were children (if then), but it is not as hard as it may seem.

1. Start with the reference: the book, chapter, and verse(s).
2. Then add the first phrase of the verse, and say the reference again.
3. Each time you say the passage, add one more phrase. Start and end with the reference each time so that you will remember it and so that you will bring the verse to mind whenever you see or hear the reference.
4. Many also find it helpful to copy the verse out by hand and put it someplace where they will see it regularly throughout the week.

What is meditation? John Piper defines meditation as follows:

The word “meditation” in Hebrew means basically to speak or to mutter. When this is done in the heart it is called musing or meditation. So meditating on the Word of God day and night means to speak to yourself the Word of God day and night and to speak to yourself about it.¹

I would describe my personal practice of mediation as a prayerful conversation with God about His Word. I come with wonder, questions, issues, and a longing to understand and obey.

As you are memorizing the selected scripture for each lesson, I would ask that you commit to the following:

1. Choose a phrase or verse to focus on for the day.
2. Select specific times throughout the day for brief meditation retreats of about three to five minutes each. Choose times during natural daily transitions: before meals, between classes, during break times, etc. Until it becomes a natural movement of your life, you could also set alerts on your phone to remind you.
3. Ponder each word or phrase of the text and prayerfully capture as many insights as you can. Visualize the text and concepts in your mind.
4. Approach God’s Word as if you were sitting at the feet of Christ and listening to His teaching. Respond to what you read by praying the Scripture back to God.
5. No matter how your day has gone, choose to meditate on the text as you lay down for the night.

All this takes time. It means we have to slow down. By now you should understand that it will be difficult to get the most out of this study if you do it quickly.

4. The role of fellowship with other believers

You may work through this study with a group or on your own, but even if you are studying by yourself, please remember that the Christian life is not a solo act. Share what you are learning with others who are part of your fellowship. They may be able to correct or provide balance for any questionable interpretations or faulty conclusions.

Fellow followers of Christ may also be intrigued or challenged by what you learn and want to join your journey of discovery. “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). We are to exhort, comfort, and encourage one another and promote growth in Christian wisdom and devotion. To live this out, don’t keep what God shows you to yourself.

5. Basic elements to the study

- A. Memory Verses** – I have selected a passage each week that communicates the very essence of that week’s study. Don’t blow it off or just memorize it to fulfill your duty. Treasure God’s Word in your heart and ask the Spirit to illumine its truths and give you greater understanding.
- B. Bible Passages** – Read the verses listed. Take your time and read through the verses a few times. Read them in the context of a conversation with God. When appropriate, personalize the verse. Take the time to write out your response in the space provided.
- C. Comments and Questions** – These are meant to guide you in the discovery process. The questions will be used to provoke responses or create more questions. I have no illusions that this study will satisfy all your questions. My prayer is that it will create more questions and motivate you to develop an investigative lifestyle in relation to God’s Word.
- D. Quotations** – I have included quotations from the “great cloud of witnesses” that have gone before us. These are brothers and sisters in the faith who have lived for the glory of God and responded to His global call, and they have spoken from the heart about their journey of obedience.

The words they spoke reflect their passion for God and for His purposes in the world. Interacting with their words is your brief opportunity to walk with them.

- E. Prayer Focus** – Each week you will be given information about an unreached people group. Throughout the week you are to become an intercessor before the throne of grace on their behalf.
- F. Pauses** – Have you noticed the word *Selah* when reading through the Psalms? *Selah* is a technical musical term that was likely used to indicate an accentuation and/or a pause. As you read, take the psalmist's advice and pause to reflect and meditate on what God is communicating through His Word. Watch for the word *Selah* through the study; it will be used to remind you to pause.

The term will also be used to indicate the natural pauses in each lesson. You can complete each study in one sitting or extend your study throughout the week. I recommend that you not hurry but rather use the natural pauses to remind yourself of the need to stay spiritually and mentally engaged with the Word.

SELAH



LESSON ONE
***FOR THE GLORY
OF GOD***

TO MEMORIZE AND MEDITATE ON:

*Oh sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth!
Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!*
Psalm 96:1-3

1

“With Thee, O my God, is no
disappointment. I shall never have to
regret that I have loved Thee too well.”
*Henry Martyn, British missionary
to India and Persia²*

GETTING STARTED

Why did God create the heavens and the earth? Why did God create men and women? What is His ultimate goal in all that He has made?

In the early years of my walk with Jesus Christ, I lived under the illusion that Christianity was about me. I thought that I (man) was the center of God’s world, that my needs were the basis for His actions. I believed that the ultimate purpose of God was to grant me salvation and enjoy me forever. This perspective naturally led me to believe that the ultimate objective of missions was man.

As you study this lesson, I challenge you not to bring your own template of understanding to the Bible, but rather to look afresh with the knowledge that the Holy Spirit will grant you. As you read the following verses, reflect on these questions: What does the Bible say is the ultimate goal of God? What is the ultimate purpose of His activity in the world?

1. The God Who Delivers

Of all the events in the Bible, God's deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian captors would seem to be rooted in God's responding to the desperate need of His people (Exodus 3:9). But Ezekiel 20:5–14 and other passage put the event in a larger context.

- a. What was God's offer to Israel? (Ezekiel 20:6)
- b. What was their response to His offer? (Ezekiel 20:8)
- c. Why does God say He acted this way? (Ezekiel 20:9, 14)
- d. Why did God deliver Israel from captivity? (2 Samuel 7:22–23)
- e. When the Egyptian chariots attacked the Israelites and trapped them by the Red Sea, what was the people's reaction? (Psalm 106:7–12)
- f. Why did God rescue them? (Psalm 106:8; Isaiah 63:12–14)

2. For the Sake of His Name

Read the following passages and record what God does for the “sake of His name.”

- a. Isaiah 43:25; 1 John 2:12
- b. Psalm 143:11
- c. Psalm 31:3

d. Daniel 9:17–19

e. Philippians 1:29

God is jealous for His name and for His glory. We were created to be the image-bearers of God, to reflect and manifest His glory in the world (Genesis 1:26–28; Isaiah 43:7). I used to treat phrases like “for the glory of God” as religious tack-on phrases, but phrases like this are not to give emphasis to the main point—they *are* the main point.

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3. To the Glory of God the Father

Record how Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension relate to the glory of God.

a. John 13:31–32; 17:4

b. John 12:27–28

c. Romans 6:4

d. Philippians 2:9–11

4. Do It All for the Glory of God

Notice some of the different ways that followers of Jesus Christ are called to glorify God.

a. 1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31

b. 1 Peter 4:11

c. 1 Peter 4:16

d. John 21:18–19

e. Psalm 96:1–3

f. Matthew 5:13–16

Glory. Throughout the ages books have been written to declare the meaning of this word. It seems so transcendent to me that I cower from trying to understand it. Consider the following: It is the splendor, majesty, honor, and reputation of God. Glory is used to describe the power of God. The Hebrew word most often translated “glory” in the Old Testament is *kabod*, and it can refer to the weightiness, honor, and/or splendor of the holy and majestic God of Scripture. God makes His glory known to the world as He manifests His character, attributes, and actions. On another level, the term speaks of our delight, boasting, and praise of God. We glorify God as God manifests Himself in us through our words and actions. We glorify God as we recognize Him in our obedience, confession, praise, delight, and service in the world.

God's passion for His name and His glory is the supreme reason for His actions in the world. That's the foundational concept this Bible study is built upon. God's passion for His own glory does not lessen the fact that He loves us; in fact, it strengthens the concept of His love for us. God's passion for

His name should be our central motivation for world evangelization. God is not receiving the worship that is due His name; therefore, God is calling out worshippers from among the nations, and He's doing it through the witness of the church. Every church and every follower of Jesus Christ is called to participate in this global activity.

As pastor and author John Piper puts it in his book *Let the Nations Be Glad*,

God is pursuing with omnipotent passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshippers for Himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. He has an inexhaustible enthusiasm for the supremacy of His name among the nations. Therefore, let us bring our affections into line with His, and, for the sake of His name, let us renounce the quest for worldly comforts, and join His global purpose.³

5. Meditation

- a. Stop and reflect on what God is teaching you.

- b. Begin a habit of praying for unreached peoples by reading the profile at the end of each lesson.

"The presence of God became unutterably real and blessed, and I remember ... stretching myself on the ground and lying there before Him with unspeakable awe and unspeakable joy. For what service I was accepted I knew not, but a deep consciousness that I was not my own took possession of me which has never since been effaced."

J. Hudson Taylor, missionary to China

SELAH

People Group Prayer Focus: Uighur in China

As many as 15 million Uighur live in China, yet only 1 in 1,000 follow Christ. They are 99% Sunni Muslim. In the 9th century A.D., this Turkic people group was forced out of Central Asia into what is today northwest China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. The World Uighur Congress estimates that another 1.0–1.6 million Uighurs live outside of China, predominantly in Central Asia, with smaller communities in the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

A prominent, highly-respected Uighur leader living in the U.S. describes his people as very relational, community-oriented, and family-honoring. He also emphasizes how the Uighurs struggle for the survival of their culture, language, and religion in China due to severe and systematic oppression by the Chinese authorities. Indeed, recent reports indicate that as many as one million Uighurs are imprisoned in Chinese “re-education” camps.

The Bible, the JESUS Film, and various gospel audio/visual resources exist in the Uighur language. However, most of China's Uighurs live in rural, village communities, where the large majority maintain strong Islamic values. In China's cities where there is more Chinese and Western influence, the young Uighurs tend not to be religious.

Ask God to soften the hearts of Uighur family and religious leaders to Christ and to facilitate a gospel breakthrough in the Uighur communities. Pray for freedom from the brutal oppression of the Chinese authorities. Ask God to use the witness of Christians so that multiplying discipling communities of Jesus might be planted among the Uighur. (Global Prayer Digest, May 9, 2019)

To learn more about how to pray for the Uighur in China, go to

- https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15755/CH
- <https://prayercast.com/uyghur.html>⁴





LESSON TWO

***GOD'S BLESSING
AND PURPOSE***

TO MEMORIZE AND MEDITATE ON:

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 12:1-3

2

"While vast continents are shrouded in darkness ... the burden of proof lies upon you to show that the circumstances in which God has placed you were meant by God to keep you out of the foreign mission field."
Ion Keith-Falconer, Scottish missionary and Arabic scholar

GETTING STARTED

In this study we will approach the Bible not as sixty-six books that happen to be bound by one cover, but as one book. The Bible has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction is the first eleven chapters of Genesis, the body starts with Genesis chapter 12 and runs through Jude, and the conclusion is Revelation.

An author will begin to surface major themes in the introduction. One of the keys to the correct interpretation of the Bible is to detect these themes and track how the author develops them throughout the book. It is foolish to try to interpret the Bible without some idea of its emphasis and purpose. This lesson looks at two basic themes that first appear in Genesis 1:28:

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

The first theme is that God desires to bless His creation. In the context of blessing we discover the second theme, which deals with God's purpose and man's responsibility. The two themes are restated in Genesis 9:1 and further defined in Genesis 12:1–3. Before we look at Genesis 12 in greater depth, let's summarize what happens in the introduction of the Bible.

1. God has created the heavens and the earth and all living things, the crown of His creation being Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve sinned and destroyed their relationship with God; God pursued them, judged them and the serpent, and then sacrificed animals, revealing that the shedding of blood is necessary for the covering of sin.
2. Man continued to multiply, and his rebellion against God reached such an extent that God brought judgment with a flood. We continue to see God's redemptive character revealed in His deliverance of Noah's family through the flood.
3. The generations after Noah continued to reject God's authority. In the land of Shinar, the people sought to make a name for themselves by building a city and a tower whose top reached to the heavens, in order not to be "dispersed over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). This was an act of disobedience to God's first command to fill and subdue the earth.
4. With a catastrophic judgment, God confused their language and "dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:8). The result of God's judgment was the creation of approximately seventy distinct family groups listed in Genesis 10.

This is the backdrop from which God calls Abraham (originally Abram) to leave his country and then declares His covenant to him.

1. The Covenant with Abraham

Read Genesis 12:1–3. List the three ways God said He would bless Abraham.

- a.

b.

c.

What do verses 2 and 3 tell us about God's purposes in this covenant?

a.

b.

Notice that the two statements about purpose reveal why God has chosen to bless Abraham and they give further definition to the theme of purpose/responsibility.

a. Why has God blessed Abraham?

b. Who are the families to which Abraham is to be a blessing? (See Genesis 11:1–9)

c. Read Galatians 3:7–9 and see how Paul explains Genesis 12:3. How does this help you grasp the global scope of the gospel?

2. A Covenant for All Peoples

a. In Genesis 17:1–8 we see God change Abram's name to Abraham. The name Abram means "exalted father." What does Abraham mean? (See 17:5)

b. In Genesis 12:2, what had God promised Abraham in relation to a nation?

- c. What does God promise Abraham in Genesis 17:5–6?

 - d. As God continues to define His covenant with Abraham, we discover His redemptive mission—that individuals from all nations and peoples will become children of Abraham. How does Paul interpret this declaration of the covenant? (See Romans 4:16–17 and Galatians 3:29.)
-

3. Restating the Covenant

God later confirms His covenant with Abraham and then repeats it to Isaac and Jacob, clarifying the themes. Read the following verses and write down your reflections. Notice the analogies used to communicate Israel's role in God's global purpose.

- a. Genesis 22:16–18

- b. Genesis 26:3–5

- c. Genesis 28:14

As we journey through the Bible, we will discover the parallel nature of the two themes of blessing and God's purpose/man's responsibility. The pitfall is failing to see the close connection between these two themes. Our tendency is to see God's blessings disconnected from His purpose. That perspective will create an egocentric faith.

4. More Narratives of Blessing and Purpose

Consider what God was doing in each of these Old Testament stories. You can

either answer these questions by reflecting on what you've been taught in the past or based on what we've learned from the first two lessons. We'll look more closely at these questions in the next lesson.

- a. Why did God part the Red Sea?
- b. Why did God give Solomon wisdom?
- c. Why did God give Israel His commandments?
- d. Why did God deliver Daniel from the lion's den?
- e. Finish the following verse from memory. "Be still ..."

Reflect on your answers and determine which of the two themes your answers relate to. Put a "B" next to the answers that relate to the theme of blessing and a "P" next to the answers that relate to God's purpose. Which theme was most prominent in your answers?

5. Meditation

- a. Write down what God has been teaching you through meditation on Genesis 12:1–3.
- b. Summarize what you have learned from this lesson.
- c. Pray for the nations using the people group profile on the next page.

"I have seen, at different times, the smoke of a thousand villages—villages whose people are without Christ, without God, and without hope in the world."

Robert Moffat

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People Group Prayer Focus: Central Tibetan People in China

The Tibetan librarian walked down the corridor. Out of curiosity he pulled out a book that contained strange teachings about God. The librarian read about a man named Jesus. The stories about Jesus were brought to Tibet by men from far away, around 800 A.D. They'd been sent to Tibet by a church leader in the East. Then the librarian put the strange book back on the shelf and proceeded to the next shelf; he now had many questions about Jesus but didn't know who to ask.

Over the centuries there have been sporadic efforts to take Christ to the Central Tibetans. Tibet is a remote land of high mountains, but Buddhist missionaries were once willing to climb them. Christian missionaries, probably from India, took the message of salvation to Tibet around 800 A.D. A church leader from that period mentioned the existence of a small group of believers among this people group. In 1892 Hudson Taylor took the gospel to the Central Tibetans and won a few people to Christ. Over the years, opposition from Buddhist monks has discouraged missionaries from working among them. Most Central Tibetans worship Buddha or an idol named Chenrezig.

Pray that Central Tibetans would be receptive to the gospel. Pray for a peace between the Han Chinese and the Tibetan peoples that will give glory to God. Pray that His kingdom will come and that His will will be done among every Central Tibetan family. (Global Prayer Digest, July 8, 2019)

To learn more about how to pray for Central Tibetan People in China, go to

- https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15468/CH



LESSON THREE

***GOD IMPACTS THE
NATIONS AS HE
BLESSES HIS PEOPLE***



TO MEMORIZE AND MEDITATE ON:

*“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”
Psalm 46:10*

3

“How often do we attempt work for God to the limit of our incompetency rather than to the limit of God’s omnipotency.”
J. Hudson Taylor, missionary to China

GETTING STARTED

In this lesson you will study portions of the Bible that reveal how the two themes of God’s blessing and His purpose interface. As God blessed the people of Israel, He would reveal Himself to the nations and draw Gentiles to Himself.

1. Revisiting Familiar Stories

While working through the following passages, pay attention to how both themes are woven together in Bible stories that you may know well. Notice how God’s blessings are used to impact the nations and how individuals respond. Also, take some time to reflect on why you think the second theme of God’s purpose and man’s responsibility is usually ignored when these stories are discussed. Make note of your observations.

- a. God's judgment of Egypt with ten plagues (Exodus 5:1–2; 7:5, 17; 8:10, 19; 9:13–17, 29; 12:38)
 - b. The parting of the Red Sea (Joshua 4:23–24; 2:8–11)
 - c. The commands and statutes that God gave Israel (Deuteronomy 4:5–8)
 - d. God blessing Solomon with wisdom (1 Kings 4:29–34; 10:1–9)
 - e. God delivering Daniel from the lions' den (Daniel 6:16–28)
 - f. God blessing Esther and Mordecai (Esther 8:15–18)
-

2. Write out Psalm 46:10.

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3. Understanding God's Global Purpose

One question that needs to be asked is whether any of the Old Testament characters understood both of these themes. Did their actions or prayers

reveal their understanding of the connection between God's desire to bless His people and His purpose of declaring Himself to the nations? Did they understand their responsibility in God's global purpose? In the following verses, is there anything that would indicate to you that these men understood the two themes that we are studying?

a. Abraham interceding for Sodom (Genesis 18:16–33)

- Why does the Lord consider telling Abraham what He is about to do? (16–19)
- Which themes are mentioned?
- What is Abraham's response to the Lord's announcement of His pending judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah?
- Abraham's response indicates his understanding of what theme?

b. Moses interceding for Israel (Numbers 14:11–19)

- The first part of his prayer relates to which theme? (13–16)
- In your own words, express what Moses is saying in the first part of his intercession.
- On what theme is the second part of Moses' prayer based? (17–19)

c. David's song of thanks (1 Chronicles 16:7–36). David proclaims a psalm of thanksgiving after the ark of the covenant is returned to the city of David. Throughout this psalm, David reveals his understanding of God's global purpose. Record the five verses that indicate David's understanding of this theme.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

- d. Solomon's dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:22–43). After the temple is completed, Solomon prays a prayer of dedication. Find the portion of the prayer that indicates Solomon's understanding of God's global purpose and explain what Solomon is asking.
-

4. Meditation

- a. Take some time to reflect on what you have discovered in the verses you have studied this week. What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you? Write those insights down and consider how you might apply them in your daily walk with Jesus Christ. Include any insights from your meditation on Psalm 46:10.
- b. Pray for the nations using the people group profile for this lesson.

"If I had not felt certain that every additional trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated sufferings."
Adoniram Judson, American missionary to Burma

SELAH

People Group Prayer Focus: Somali of Somalia

Do you know which country has the largest population of camels? Somalia! There is 1 camel for every 2.5 humans. The camel is a Somali's "car," his "bank account," and his "food pantry." Camel milk is a major source of nutrition, and herdsmen may drink up to ten quarts a day. Camel meat is savored at celebrations, and the fatty hump is the most prized portion. Interestingly, the name Somali comes from "so maal," which is an expression of hospitality meaning "Go milk a beast for yourself!"

In Somalia, the largest ethnic group is the Somalis, making up 85% of the population. They range from well-to-do, educated urbanites to nomads struggling for basic necessities, such as water. The majority of the population is on the lower end of the economic spectrum and very few children go to school. Since the language did not have a written script until 1972, many adults are illiterate.

Somalis are Muslims who believe that their religious leaders have the power to bless and curse. This power lingers around tombs and helps cure illness upon a visit to the tomb. Less than 1% of Somalis follow Christ, and these believers are despised by their countrymen.

Pray that the struggling, persecuted church in Somalia would continue to bear faithful witness to Christ among their own people. Pray for the Christian Somalis to stay faithful. Pray that God would soften the hearts of Somalis and draw them to Himself through the message of the gospel." (Global Prayer Digest, January 15, 2019)

To learn more about how to pray for the Somalis of Somalia, go to

- https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14983/SO
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXjAvRe7rQk>



An aerial, black and white photograph of a coastal city, likely San Francisco, viewed from a high vantage point. The city's dense urban landscape is visible in the foreground and middle ground, leading down to a large body of water. The sky is filled with dramatic, layered clouds, creating a moody atmosphere. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

LESSON FOUR

***THE PSALMS AND
PROPHETS REVEAL
GOD'S HEART
FOR THE NATIONS***

TO MEMORIZE AND MEDITATE ON:

*May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah
that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
Psalm 67:1-3*

4

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot
keep to gain what he cannot lose.”
Jim Elliot

GETTING STARTED

We do not worship a tribal deity or the god of a region, a people, or a country. We worship the God of all nations. This truth is reflected in the psalms of Israel. The book of Psalms reveals God’s heart for the nations, God’s call for the nations to worship Him, and the declaration of praise among the nations by His people.

1. Ruler of the Nations

Take your time and meditate on the following psalms and write down your reflections. Note that when the psalmists use the word “peoples,” they are referring to the nations. Consider the following questions: What is God telling the nations to do? What is God telling us to do among the nations? What is God saying to the nations? What is God teaching you about worship and the nations?

a. Psalm 2:1–12

b. Psalm 22:25–31

c. Psalm 57:7–11

d. Psalm 66:1–8

e. Psalm 72:8–20

f. Psalm 96:1–13

g. Psalm 98:1–9

SELAH

2. Prophets to the Nations

The prophets were continually proclaiming God's desire to be known, worshiped, and served by the nations. They also revealed the future fulfillment of the nations coming to God. You know the drill ... now go dig for treasures.

a. According to Isaiah 19:18–25, what will happen to the enemies of Israel?

b. What does Isaiah 42:6–13 say that the light of the nations will accomplish?

- c. Take a look at Jeremiah's calling (Jeremiah 1:5) and one of his proclamations (16:19–21). What do you notice?
- d. What does Ezekiel 36:16–23 say is God's motivation for scattering and restoring Israel?
- e. Why does Daniel 7:13–14 say the "son of man" was presented to the "Ancient of Days"?
- f. What does Micah 4:1–5 say will happen when the nations come to the mountain of the Lord?
- g. In Malachi 1:11, what does God declare about His name?
-

3. Israel's Response, Our Response

The four lessons that you have completed are in no way exhaustive of Old Testament passages that speak of God's global purpose. Pause for a moment.

- b. Why do you think that most of Israel seemed to miss the connection between God's blessings and His purpose, as well as Israel's responsibility in that purpose?
- c. Have we missed it? If your answer is yes, why do you think we have missed it?

Father, release me from the slavery of an egocentric faith. Awaken me to the reality that Christ's death on the cross delivered me from the slavery of living for myself. (See 2 Corinthians 5:15.)

SELAH

4. Meditation

- a. What has God been teaching you from Psalm 67? Take some time and consider how God has blessed you. How have you connected His blessings with His desire to reach the nations?

- b Pray for the nations using the people group profile on the next page.

In the next lesson you will begin to study the New Testament, where the focus will be on how the themes of blessing and purpose come together in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the incomparable blessing promised to Abraham and his children (Israel) and through them to the nations. Through His life, ministry, and teachings, Jesus also clarifies for us God's global purpose.

*"Proclaim the Word more and argue about it less."
William Cameron Townsend, pioneer of Bible translation*

SELAH

People Group Prayer Focus: Hindu Yadavs in Nepal

Yadav people can be easily identified: if you ask them their name, they will tell you their first name followed by their title, Yadav. For example, in 2008, Nepal elected a Yadav named Ram Baran Yadav as president.

Just over 1 million Yadav people live in southern Nepal, mainly in four provinces. Almost all of Nepal's Yadavs speak one of three languages: Maithili, Bhojpuri, or Nepali. Maithili is their primary language. Living mainly in villages, the Yadav caste consists of milkmen, cow herders, cattle breeders, cultivators, and laborers. Though some have become businessmen, professionals, or political leaders, Yadavs traditionally have practiced animal husbandry and sold animal products. Because they are associated with cattle, which are considered holy by the Hindus, they have high prestige.

The Yadavs believe they are connected to lord Krishna, whom they worship along with Vishnu and many local gods. They also worship cows. In Nepal, the

Yadav people are considered 99.7% Hindu. The New Testament, The JESUS Film, and other audio-visual biblical resources are available in all three of their languages.

Ask for God to effectively spread His Word to every Yadav community in Nepal, whether in villages, towns, or cities. Pray that Yadav house fellowships will transform and bless their communities as they worship and witness of the deeds of Jesus Christ. Ask for churches and prayer groups to commit to pray for the Yadav people. Pray for churches to be planted among the Yadav community so that they might know the blessing of Christ's salvation. Pray for the effective use of storytelling, audio Bibles, and media to reach this oral culture. Ask God to move mightily upon family and community leaders, sparking disciple-making movements that will powerfully bless Nepal's Yadav people. (Global Prayer Digest, July 14, 2019)

To learn more about how to pray for Hindu Yadavs in Nepal, go to

- https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/16187/NP





LESSON FIVE

***SAVIOR OF
THE WORLD***

TO MEMORIZE AND MEDITATE ON:

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

John 4:39-42

5

"Nobody can force a single soul ... to turn to Christ. All that [we] ... can do, is to lift up Christ before the world, bring him into dingy corners and dark places of the earth where he is unknown, introduce him to strangers, talk about him to everyone, and live so closely with and in him that others may see that there really is such a person as Jesus."

Betty Scott Stam, missionary martyred in China

GETTING STARTED

One of the greatest challenges Jesus faced in His earthly ministry was breaking His disciples of their cultural biases. Even though the Old Testament clearly communicated God's heart for the nations and the truth that the Messiah was coming to be a light to the nations, most Jews were looking for a national savior who would establish his reign among the nations. The disciples were the first echelon in Jesus' strategy of taking the gospel to all nations. Yet His disciples were extremely nationalistic in their perspective of who the Messiah was and what He came to do. Through His teaching, His ministry to Gentiles, His use of non-Jews as spiritual object lessons, and His mandates, Jesus was intentionally and systematically reshaping their worldview.

You will be studying verses that you are familiar with. My natural tendency would be to quickly read over the verses I think I know and jot down a few thoughts. Resist that urge and take your time to discover some new insights.

1. Whose Savior?

Read the prophetic statements about the Messiah. What will He come to do and for whom has He come?

- a. Isaiah 42:5–7

- b. Isaiah 49:6

- c. Matthew 4:12–16

- d. Luke 2:25–32

Jesus is the Savior of the world, not the personal possession of Israel.

2. Fulfilling the Scriptures

Read Luke 4:14–30.

- a. What is the people's attitude towards Jesus' teaching? (4:14–15)

- b. They handed the book of Isaiah to Jesus, but He intentionally locates the passage that He reads. To what does this prophecy, found in Isaiah 61, relate? (4:16–19)

- c. What does Jesus do after He reads the passage? What is the people's reaction to His silence? What do you think is going through their minds? (4:20)
- d. What does Jesus proclaim? (4:21)
- e. How do the people respond? (4:22)
- f. Why do you think Jesus made this statement? (After all, He had them where every preacher wants His audience—in the palm of His hand, so to speak.) (4:23–27)
- g. What was their response to His explanation? (4:28–29)

Jesus had just proclaimed that He was the Messiah, the One spoken of by the prophets, the One for whom generations of Jews had been praying. He knew that they had a nationalistic perspective of the Messiah and that they believed the Messiah had come (exclusively) to deliver them. But Jesus had not come to be the personal possession of Israel; He had come to be the Savior of the world. He states that “no prophet is accepted in his hometown” (Luke 4:24). Initially it seems as if they are welcoming Him. He then gives two illustrations to make His point, using two of their favorite prophets to reveal how God had extended His grace in a special way to Gentiles.

Jesus cut to the heart of their narrow, ethnocentric perspective of the promised Messiah. He opened their eyes to the fact that they were not the only ones who needed a deliverer. His proclamation of release of the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom was a message of hope for both Jews and Gentiles.

Sometimes I shake up people by saying, “Jesus is not your personal Savior.” We live in a culture where personal means *mine*. You don't get a personal pan pizza to share it, or hire a personal trainer to share with others, and you don't want everyone using your personal computer. Now, don't get me wrong, I believe

that you must receive Jesus personally and that one of the benefits of salvation is that we can have a personal and intimate relationship with the living God. But Jesus is not our personal possession; He is the Savior of the world.

SELAH

3. Savior of the World

The passages below declare the global perspective of Jesus' mission. Reflect and comment on them, and be sure to take your time. There is more to each of these verses than you might think.

a. John 3:16–17

b. John 6:33

c. John 8:12, 12:45–47

d. John 12:30–32

e. 1 John 4:14

4. Disciples of the Savior

If Jesus is Savior of the world, this means that you are a disciple of the Savior of the world. Begin to think through how this fact should impact your daily walk with Christ. (Example: “It means that I should integrate a global perspective in my daily prayer time.”)

5. Meditation

- a. What is God teaching you through John 4:39–42?

- b. Pray for the nations using the people group profile for this lesson.

“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.” *C.T. Studd, British missionary to China, India, and Africa*

SELAH

People Group Prayer Focus: Northern Yemeni Arabs

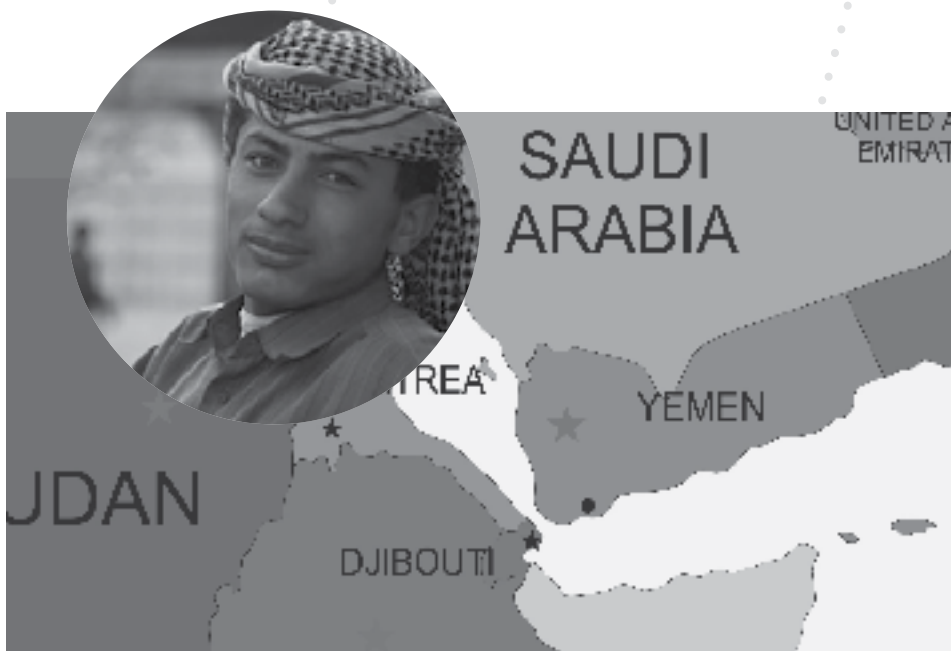
In 2014, Shi'ite Houthi rebels from Northern Yemen captured the capital city of Sanaa and began their campaign to take over the entire country. Neighboring Saudi Arabia formed a military coalition with other Sunni Muslim countries to defeat the Houthis. After three years of continuous aerial bombardment, the Saudi coalition has failed to stop the rebels. Instead, they have produced one of the most devastating man-made famines known in world history.

The bombardment of Hodeida, one of the main ports of entry for humanitarian supplies, has left some 17.8 million people at risk of starvation. Lack of clean water has resulted in an unprecedented cholera outbreak, with over 1 million cases reported. Each day Yemeni children are at risk of death and injury. Some of Yemen's boys are recruited to fight, and their young girls are sold as child brides so their families will have money. Very few children go to school. Problems ranging from terrorist cell groups like Al-Qaeda to drug abuse (from qat) add to the suffering of Yemenis. Yemen is one of the most unreached countries in the world.

Pray that Northern Yemenis will come to faith and show grace, mercy, and compassion to those less fortunate. Pray that the Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims will finally realize that their fighting only leads to more division and suffering. Pray that they will understand that the only way to lasting peace is by following Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Pray that God's Word would transform entire Yemeni families as they hear and respond to it in faith. (Global Prayer Digest, May 4, 2019)

To learn more about how to pray for Northern Yemeni Arabs, go to

- https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14715/YM
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLoG77PpiFw>





LESSON SIX

***HIS CALL TO
THE NATIONS***

TO MEMORIZE AND MEDITATE ON:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

6

"I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us."

David Livingston, Scottish missionary to Africa

GETTING STARTED

Early in His ministry, Jesus clearly communicated that He was the Messiah and that He had come to be the Savior of the world. He was repeatedly confronting His disciples' nationalistic and cultural biases. It was vital for the disciples to realize that the gospel of the kingdom is for all peoples and that Christ's mandate was to the nations, not to *a* nation. He used the events and stories listed below to strip away the cultural biases of His followers. This week you will continue to study how Jesus awakened His disciples to His global purpose, a purpose with deep, personal implications for Christians today.

1. Jesus and the Nations

As you study the following passages, notice what is significant about each event, what Jesus is conveying, and who His audience is.

a. Jesus ministers to non-Jews.

- Ministry to the crowds (Matthew 4:23–25).
- The faith of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21–28). Be careful how you interpret this event. In Matthew 15:1–20, Jesus had just taught on the subject of what is clean and unclean. Then notice where He took the disciples. Remember what Matthew 4:24 reveals about Jesus' ministry to Gentiles. Who is Jesus speaking to in Matthew 15:24?
- Jesus and the ministry in Sychar (John 4:39–42). Notice how the villagers describe what they've discovered about Jesus after their two days together.

b. Jesus uses stories and events as object lessons for the disciples.

Note that interaction with Gentiles and Samaritans and stories about them are also used by Jesus to shake up the cultural bias of the Jews.

- The centurion's faith (Matthew 8:5–13).
 - The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37).
 - Jesus cleanses ten lepers (Luke 17:11–19).
- c. Jesus opens the eyes of His disciples to His global purpose through His teaching.
- Salt and light (Matthew 5:13–14).
 - Signs of the end of the age (Matthew 24:1–14).
 - The narrow door (Luke 13:22–30).

2. Call to the Nations

After the resurrection, as Jesus moved closer to His ascension to the right hand of the Father, He made it clear that His purpose was global; His

mandates were catapulting His followers to the nations. The passages listed below collectively comprise the “Great Commission,” and they represent the means by which the Abrahamic blessing reaches “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 12:3).

Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God blessing the families of the earth through Abraham (Galatians 3:14). His mandate to His followers will never be understood if their only grasp of the “Great Commission” is gained from Matthew 28:19–20. Full understanding is achieved when we study all of Jesus’ commissioning statements given after the resurrection.

As you study each statement, notice the similar and different emphases.⁵

a. Commissioning statements: Note how the task is defined and what the command is in each statement.

- Matthew 28:18–20. Two hints: The imperative verb is “make disciples.” “Nations” does not mean a political entity or geographical boundary of a country. “Nations” comes from the Greek word *ethne*. Identify the three participles (words formed from verbs) that help us define what is involved in discipling the nations.
- Luke 24:44–49.
- John 20:21–23. John’s account of Jesus’ commissioning statement will take on new meaning if you take the time to read the Gospel of John and focus on Jesus’ use of the word “sent” or “send.” (Examples: John 5:36–38; 6:38–39; 12:44–49.)

John 20:21–23 is the only commissioning statement that doesn’t focus on the task but rather the relationship from which the task flows. The phrase “as the Father sent me” would seem to relate to the task as it is stated in John 3:17, “...that the world might be saved through Him.” The portrait of Christ that John paints is of the Word becoming flesh, accomplishing His mission through His intimate submission to the Father’s will and direction.

Consider the following passages as examples of Jesus' intimate submission to the Father: John 4:34; 5:19–20; 5:30; 6:38; 10:17–18; and 14:9–11. What is Jesus communicating in these verses?

Pay attention to the way in which Jesus prays for us in John 17:17–23, noting especially what He requests for us from the Father and why.

- Acts 1:3–8.

Jesus not only gives us the mission of taking His message to the nations, He also empowers us to accomplish it.

- b. Taking into consideration the verses you just read, write a summary statement that describes Jesus' global mandate.

3. Meditation

- a. What has God taught you through your meditation on Matthew 28:18–20 this week?
- b. Pray for the nations using the people group profile that accompanies this lesson.

“Would that God would make hell so real to us that we cannot rest; heaven so real that we must have men there; Christ so real that our supreme motive and aim shall be to make the Man of Sorrows the Man of Joy by the conversion to Him of many.”
J. Hudson Taylor, missionary to China

SELAH

People Group Prayer Focus: Turks of Turkey

Turkey is one of the places where the apostle Paul first planted churches, but things have certainly changed since then! Today 97% of the Turks are Sunni Muslim. They are becoming more hostile to the gospel that Paul preached there 2,000 years ago, especially since President Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power.

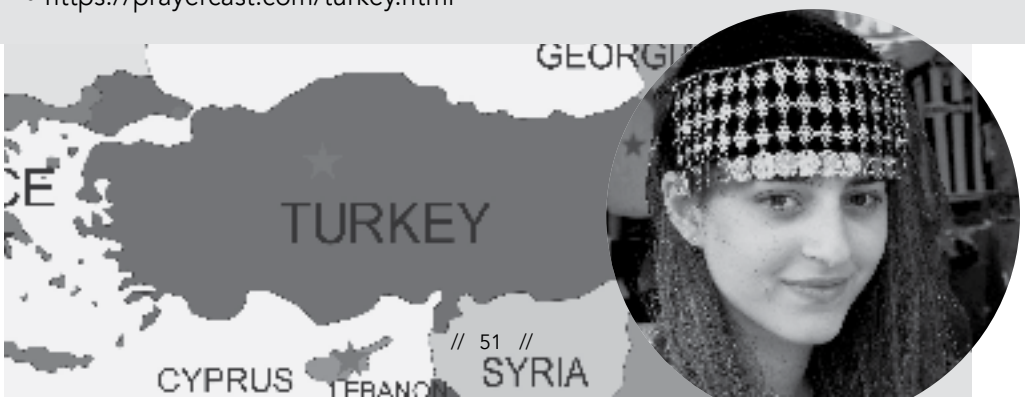
After a dubious failed coup in October 2016, Erdogan ordered the arrests of thousands, including American Pastor Andrew Brunson. According to Open Doors, converts from Islam, while not legally prosecuted, face “increasing pressure from their families and communities to return to Islam. As a result, Christians sometimes lead a double life and hide their conversion. If discovered, they may be threatened with divorce and loss of inheritance. Christians also have no access to state jobs and often experience discrimination in private employment.”⁶

What would happen if believers made efforts to reach entire Turkish families rather than individuals? It is very possible that if families worshipped Christ together, social pressure to remain in the Islamic religious system would be weakened.

Pray for Turkish Muslim families to experience the saving power of God’s Word. Pray for believers in Turkey to be strengthened in the Holy Spirit as they face persecution from many fronts. Pray for God’s favor and protection for Christ’s ambassadors as the Muslim majority is evangelized to believe the good news that Jesus Christ offers the gift of salvation to those who believe. Pray for the Holy Spirit to do something in the hearts of Turkish believers that only He can do, namely, give them forgiveness and love for those who persecute them. (Global Prayer Digest, May 6, 2019)

To learn more about how to pray for the Turks of Turkey, go to

- https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/18274/TU
- <https://prayercast.com/turkey.html>



A grayscale landscape photograph showing a series of layered mountain ranges. The mountains in the foreground are dark and silhouetted, while the ranges in the distance become progressively lighter and more hazy, creating a sense of depth and vastness. The sky is filled with soft, diffused light, suggesting an overcast day or a misty atmosphere.

LESSON SEVEN

*TO THE ENDS
OF THE EARTH*

TO MEMORIZE AND MEDITATE ON:

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!"
Revelation 7:9-10

7

"Obedience to God's will is the secret of spiritual knowledge and insight. It is not willingness to know, but willingness to DO God's will that brings certainty."
Eric Liddell, Scottish gold-medal Olympian and missionary to China

GETTING STARTED

The book of Acts records the fulfillment of Christ's global mandate through the church's proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Spirit. It wasn't immediate obedience, however. In fact, Don Richardson calls it "reluctant obedience."⁷ The disciples were hesitant to move beyond their cultural bias, but God would be proactive to thrust the church out to accomplish His purpose voluntarily or involuntarily.

1. The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Read Acts 2:1–13.

- a. What happened when the Holy Spirit rested on the disciples? (4, 11)

- b. What was the significance of the disciples speaking languages from different regions?
- c. The church is born at Pentecost. What are the global implications at its birth?
- d. See Acts 5:28 and 6:7. At this point, how are the disciples doing in fulfilling Jesus' instructions in Acts 1:8?

2. The Ministry of the Scattered Believers

Acts 1:8 makes it clear that God empowers His church to accomplish His global mandate, but sometimes He must intervene to awaken followers when they ignore it (Acts 8:1).

- a. In what ways did God work through His disciples to fulfill Christ's global mandate?
 - Among Samaritans (Acts 8:4–8; 25).
 - The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40).
 - Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile (Acts 10:1–48).
 - The Hellenists (Greeks) of Antioch (Acts 11:19–21). See also Acts 13:1–3, where we see the church in Antioch (rather than the church in Jerusalem) leading the way in sending out missionaries.
 - Notice what else God does through the church in Antioch. (Acts 13:1–3).
- b. How did God persuade Peter to take the “good news” to the Gentiles? (See Acts 10:1–29)
- c. How was God's purpose advanced after Peter spoke up? (See Acts 10:34–48)

3. The Jerusalem Council

The Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15:1–21 was a turning point. Read the story to discover why.

- a. What was the false teaching that had entered the church? What was being added to the gospel?

- b. What did Paul and Barnabas do as they traveled to Jerusalem?

- c. Describe the essence of Peter’s argument.

- d. What was James’s conclusion?

The decision made at the Jerusalem Council liberated the church’s proclamation of the gospel from a single cultural expression. In writing about this event, M.R. Thomas refers to the issue facing the council as the “greatest crisis” of the church.⁸ The question facing the leaders of the church was, “Is this new movement just another sect of Judaism, or the dynamic church of Jesus Christ finding faithful cultural expression in all the *ethne* (peoples) of the earth?” Take a moment and record your thoughts about how this question impacts the church today both locally and globally.

4. Hope for both Jews and Gentiles

- a. What is Paul’s understanding of his role in the mission of Christ? (Romans 15:8–21)

- b. What does Revelation show us about the fulfillment of this mission? (Revelation 7:9–10)

The question of the ages is not whether God's promise to Abraham will be fulfilled and disciples will be made from all nations. The Bible reveals that God's global purpose will be accomplished.

The question is this: Will our generation of the church be obedient to the mandate of Jesus Christ and participate in completing the task? And will I walk with Him, obey His mandate, and be strategically involved in His global purpose?

5. The Church Then, The Church Now

- a. As you consider the passages you have studied from the story of the New Testament church, what are your observations?
- b. What correlations do you see between the early church and your own church? How can you help your church rediscover its responsibility in Jesus' global mandate?

SELAH

6. Meditation

The option of ignoring God's global purpose is not granted in the Bible. He requires obedience. The only unknowns are the details of our future involvement.

In Lesson Two, I introduced the concept of studying the Bible as one book and searching for the major themes and tracking the development of those themes throughout. During the past six lessons, I have tried to guide you through the development of the theme of God's global purpose and how that purpose is connected with the theme of God blessing His people.

- a. As you have worked through the study, list some of the things that you have learned and how you will apply them to your walk with Jesus.

- b. Record your thoughts from your meditation on Revelation 7:9–10.
- c. Pray for the nations using the people group profile associated with this lesson.

“Yes, but God had first claim on my life, and since the two conflicted, there could be no question about the result.” *Lottie Moon, American missionary to China, when asked if she ever considered marriage*

SELAH

People Group Prayer Focus: Bania in India

“Bania” or “Baniya” is a Sanskrit word that means “trader.” *The Startup Journal*, a secular Indian paper, reports that the Bania are experts in number-crunching and trading. They have the business gene and know-how to take financial risks. They are meticulous bookkeepers and they never miss opportunities to make money. They can splurge when necessary, always marry inside their clan, and can adapt to today’s fast-changing circumstances. The India Times complains that many Indians are “leaving” their centuries-old castes in an effort to emulate the Banias and make money. In addition to the business world, Banias also have a powerful presence in Indian politics.

The Bania are in the third tier of the four-tiered Hindu caste system. Most speak Hindi as well as the regional language of the state in which they reside. They worship the main Hindu gods and, appropriately, Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of prosperity. About 10% are part of the Jain religion. There are no known followers of Christ among the 25 million Bania. There are numerous resources where they can find out about Christ, but these are unlikely to be on the Bania’s radar screen.

Pray that despite all distractions, Bania leaders will be filled with a desire for the true righteousness that only Jesus offers. Pray for workers to be sent to the Bania and for the Lord to prepare the hearts of the people to receive Christ. Pray that Banias will pay attention to the spiritual resources available on the internet. Ask God to bring a strong movement that will bring whole families and communities into a rich experience of God's blessing through Jesus. (Global Prayer Digest, May 12, 2019)

To learn more about how to pray for the Bania in India, go to

- https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/16318/IN





LESSON EIGHT
***PERSONAL
APPLICATION***

TO MEMORIZE AND MEDITATE ON:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9

8

*"All my friends are but One, but He is all sufficient."
William Carey, British missionary to India*

GETTING STARTED

Every disciple of the Savior of the world should be committed to the process of developing a lifestyle that reflects and daily participates in the mission of God. One of the blessings of our salvation is that we have been liberated from the slavery of living for self so that we might live engaged in His mission (2 Corinthians 5:15). Our natural inclination is to develop an egocentric and ethnocentric faith. It is essential that all followers of Christ develop themselves biblically, spiritually, and practically in relation to the global mission of God.

1. Intimacy and Mobilization

Conventional wisdom says the way you mobilize people toward missions is to get them on a mission trip. If that is the *foundational* motivation for missions, it may suggest that our primary motive is man's need and that we are persuaded to be involved through experiences. Notice, though, how God's mission relates to His call to intimacy.

- a. Go back to Psalm 46:10. What is God's invitation? How do you think the invitation is related to the declaration?
- b. Consider the profound nature, privilege, and priority of the invitation as it is reflected in the passages below.
 - Jeremiah 9:23–24
 - Hosea 6:6
 - John 17:3, 20–23
 - Philippians 3:7–11
- c. Notice how emphatically God repeats the declaration of Psalm 46:10 in these passages.
 - Psalm 22:27–28
 - Habakkuk 2:14
 - Malachi 1:11, 14

A biblically-based pursuit of knowing God will result in a life committed to His mission. As you passionately pursue the knowledge of God, He will infuse His heart, purpose, perspective, and mission into your life.

In the first lesson of this study, you discovered that God does all things for His name, renown, and glory. This is God's mission. He is the one who motivates, directs, and empowers His people to accomplish His mission. Ask the Father to imprint on your heart a passion for Him that is consistent with the passion He has for His name. When this passion becomes the driving force in your life, then mission trip experiences and information about the needs of the nations can lead you to make wise decisions, not decisions based on guilt or momentary excitement.

Take a moment to consider what the Father is saying to you through His Word.

SELAH

2. Mobilization Defined

To mobilize may be defined as “to assemble or marshal into readiness for active service.” In the missions community, the term is often confused with missions recruitment. For those who are unable to travel globally (at that moment), we try to sign them up as senders, pray-ers, etc., as if those titles and roles fulfill our responsibility in Christ’s global mission. But our readiness for active service is not about selecting a title or role in the missions subculture created by the church. Rather, our “readiness for active service” is demonstrated by a biblical lifestyle transformation. We have been liberated from the slavery of living for ourselves. We are mobilized when Christ is the passion of our lives and the cause of Christ guides our life decisions.

How might the following verses relate to this kind of mobilization?

a. 2 Corinthians 5:17

b. Romans 12:1–2

c. Galatians 2:20

3. Spiritual Disciplines

Mobilization flows from who we are in Christ. Spiritual disciplines are the spiritual exercises we do in order to walk by faith in the reality of our new life in Christ. One of the first steps in developing a global context of this new life in Christ is to integrate a global perspective in these spiritual disciplines. Take time to consider and record how you will begin to practically integrate these concepts into your daily walk with Christ.

a. Discipline of awareness

- Biblical awareness

Through this study you have either started or continued the process of developing a biblical understanding of God's global purpose. This process should be a lifelong journey of biblical discovery, not a one-time event. As you read the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to continue to make you attentive to His global purpose.

- Historical awareness

Read Hebrews 11:32–12:3. The great cloud of witnesses is not limited to Old Testament characters but includes those who in the last two thousand years have been faithful to the global mandate of Christ. They have manifested the power of his resurrection and participated in the fellowship of His sufferings. We can learn much from their lives. Consider how you can develop an historical awareness of the last two thousand years of God's activity of accomplishing His global mission.

- Contemporary awareness

We live in a day and age when God is fulfilling His global purposes in unprecedented ways. The problem is that most Christians don't know what's going on. Consider how you can begin to connect with the "stealth" activity of the kingdom around the world. Discover what God is doing among all the peoples of the earth.

b. Discipline of intercession

- Interceding for the front-line workers

Read Romans 15:30–31, Ephesians 6:19–20, Colossians 4:2–4, 1 Thessalonians 5:25, and 2 Thessalonians 3:1–2. If Paul needed the prayers of the saints, what do you think about our missionaries? Make note of the specific things that Paul asked them to pray about. This is not a bad place to start in our prayers for those on the frontlines, instead of a blanket request like "be with our missionaries today and bless them."

- Interceding for our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world

Read Ephesians 6:18. You will one day be worshipping with them before the throne of God and the Lamb. Are you praying for them? Are you praying

specifically for the followers of Jesus Christ in specific areas of the world where witnessing for Christ is an issue of great consequence, many times resulting in death?

- Interceding for the unreached

Read Ezekiel 22:30 and 1 Timothy 2:1–4. There are thousands of people groups, totaling more than 3.1 billion people, who have not heard the gospel.⁹ Are you praying regularly and specifically for any of them?

- Interceding for local and global events

Read Nehemiah 1:1–4. What prompted Nehemiah's prayer and fasting? What would be the possible avenues today that would relate to what prompted Nehemiah to fast and pray and that could lead you to do the same? As you listen, read, or watch, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in how to respond to the things that are brought to your attention.

c. Discipline of choice

As a steward of God's possessions, how do the choices you make reflect God's global purpose? Consider how the truth of each of the following passages would relate to the broader biblical context of God's global purpose.

- Money (Matthew 6:19–24; Luke 16:1–13)
- Time (Psalm 90:12)
- Relationships (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- Lifestyle (Matthew 6:25–34)
- Location (Mark 16:15; Hebrews 11:8–10)

d. Discipline of obedience

Read John 14:15, 21, 23–24, 31; 15:9–10, 14. Reflect on these verses in the context of Jesus' global mandate.

e. Discipline of worship

Read Psalm 96. Does your worship reflect the praise of your tribal deity or the God of all nations? When you read through the psalms, notice how intentional the psalmist is in declaring that God is not merely the God of Israel but the God of all creation.

f. Discipline of fasting

Read Isaiah 58:3–12. Jesus never commanded us to fast; He assumed that we would fast (Matthew 6:16, “when you fast ...”). Does your fasting connect with God’s global purpose? To what should our fasting lead us?

g. Discipline of fellowship

Read Hebrews 10:24–25. How do these truths relate to God’s global purpose and our responsibility in the church?

h. Discipline of involvement

Read Matthew 25:31–46. Take your time in writing your thoughts in the context of what you have studied in the last eight lessons.

i. Discipline of cross-cultural evangelism

Read Acts 1:8. Sharing your faith cross-culturally is not just for a select few; it is the responsibility of all who receive the Holy Spirit.

4. Meditation

Feeling overwhelmed? I have thrown a lot of stuff at you in this lesson. Please do not try to do everything that you have studied. If you do, you will get tired quickly and probably quit. As you pray through what you have just studied, select one or two disciplines and receive from God the grace to be faithful in those, then add another discipline, and so on. Develop faithfulness in the process. This is a lifelong journey.

- a. Record what you think the Lord might be guiding you to focus on next.
- b. What has God been teaching you through your meditation on 1 Peter 2:9?

“The spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions. The nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we become.” —*Henry Martyn*

SELAH

People Group Prayer Focus: Moroccan Arabs

There is a thin line between “Arab” and Berber in the North African country of Morocco. The indigenous peoples are Berber, and they have their own language and culture, but the dominant people are the Arabs, who migrated there from the Arabian Peninsula soon after the time of Mohammed (the prophet of Islam). These Arabs speak a dialect that would be hard for Arabs elsewhere to understand since it is blended with the Berber languages and with French.

The Arab Moroccans can usually be found living in the cities where many are successful in business or other professional jobs. An important part of their identity is being Sunni Muslim. Some records indicate that the estimated number of Moroccan Arab followers of Christ has grown. Although the Moroccan constitution guarantees its people freedom of religion, it has laws against anyone who “employs incitements to shake the faith of Islam or convert a Muslim to another religion.” Breaking this law can result in imprisonment, a fine, or dismissal from the country. If a Muslim decides to follow Christ, the penalty is particularly harsh. For security reasons, Moroccan believers often cannot meet together.

Pray for Moroccan Arab believers to be encouraged by their faith in God and by their salvation. Pray for entire Moroccan families to accept Christ and follow Him together. May they disciple others from a Muslim background, who will in turn disciple others, until Morocco is transformed by Christ. (Global Prayer Digest, May 3, 2019)

To learn more about how to pray for Moroccan Arabs, go to

- https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/13819/MO



GOING DEEPER

If you're interested in further study of the concepts covered in this study, the resources and organizations listed below are a good place to start.

RESOURCES

Books

- *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, John Piper
- *Discovering the Mission of God*, Mike Barnett, editor
- *Invitation to World Missions*, Timothy C. Tennent
- *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O'Brien
- *Something Needs to Change*, David Platt
- *Radical*, David Platt
- *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God*, David Platt
- *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches that Send*, J.D. Greear
- *A Holy Ambition*, John Piper
- *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, Fourth Edition, Ralph E. Winter and Steve C. Hawthorne, editors
- *Tentmaking*, Patrick Lai
- *Business for Transformation: Getting Started*, Patrick Lai
- *Western Christians in Global Mission: What's the Role of the North American Church?* Paul Borthwick
- *A Wind in the House of Islam*, David Garrison
- *Operation World*, Jason Mandryk
- *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, Ruth A. Tucker
- *When Everything is Missions*, Denny Spitters and Matthew Ellison

If you are only going to read one book I would recommend *Let the Nations Be Glad*. The second book would be *Discovering the Mission of God*.

Periodicals and News

- *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, thoughtful articles on missions issues, emqonline.org.

- *Mission Frontiers*, a bulletin of the U.S. Center for World Mission, missionfrontiers.org.
- *Global Prayer Digest*, highlighting unreached peoples, globalprayerdigest.org.
- *Missions Catalyst*, weekly digest of mission news and resources, missionscatalyst.org.

Get Connected

- Radical, a global missions organization, radical.net.
- The Traveling Team, challenging students to reach the nations, thetravelingteam.org.
- Joshua Project, with profiles and data about unreached peoples, joshuaproject.net.
- The GO Fund, eliminating the barrier of student debt for qualified missionaries, thegofund.com.
- Go Corps, go for two years, gocorps.org.
- Pioneers, church planting among the unreached, pioneers.org.
- International Mission Board, connecting churches with unreached peoples, imb.org.

END NOTES

¹John Piper, "Meditate on the Word of the Lord Day and Night." Accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/meditate-on-the-word-of-the-lord-day-and-night>.

²The quotations cited at the beginning of each lesson are taken from the book *World Shapers*, compiled by Vinita Hampton and Carol Plueddemann (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishing, 2000).

³John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 40.

⁴The content for these People Group Prayer profiles has been provided by Global Prayer Digest and can be found at <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/guides>. For more resources on praying for unreached people groups, go to <https://joshuaproject.net/resources/prayer>.

⁵Mark 16:15–16 contains a commissioning statement that is consistent with the others mentioned in this section. However, most Bibles put Mark 16:9–15 in brackets because many of the earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not include these verses in Mark's Gospel. This section is likely a later addition and therefore not part of Scripture. Mark 16:15–16 says, "And he [Jesus] said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'"

⁶Accessed at Open Doors website (<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/turkey/>). Open Doors is a ministry that supports persecuted Christians around the world.

⁷Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1981), 246.

⁸M.R. Thomas, "The Turning Point: Setting the Gospel Free," 143; taken from *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, Eds. Ralph D. Winters and Steven C. Hawthorne, 4th ed. (William Carey Library, 2013).

⁹Taken from Joshua Project (<https://joshuaproject.net>).

GOD'S HEART FOR THE NATIONS TAKES YOU FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION IN ORDER TO SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TWO CRITICALLY IMPORTANT THEMES THAT ARE WOVEN TOGETHER THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE—GOD'S BLESSING AND GOD'S GLOBAL PURPOSE. IN THIS 8-WEEK STUDY, YOU'LL BE CHALLENGED TO CONSIDER YOUR ROLE IN GOD'S PLAN OF REDEMPTION, A PLAN THAT INVOLVES MAKING DISCIPLES AMONG ALL NATIONS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

JEFF LEWIS serves as the Discipleship Director for Radical. For the last 31 years Jeff has been mobilizing the church through multiple organizations and positions. He has ministered in 56 countries, working with field personnel and indigenous church leaders in the development of mobilization strategies, but his greatest passion is the mobilization of the church, with a particular focus on university students. Before coming to Radical, Jeff spent 20 years as a professor, discipler, and mobilizer at California Baptist University. He lives Redlands, CA, with his wife Elaine, and they have 7 children and 17 grandchildren.

"The first time I ever remember being exposed to God's heart for the nations in Scripture was through Jeff Lewis. It changed the trajectory of my life. Not because of anything Jeff had said, but because of what God has said so clearly in His Word. Consequently, I pray boldly and hopefully that this Bible study will be an instrument in God's hands to change the trajectory of your life."

David Platt
Pastor, McLean Bible Church, Washington D.C.
President, Radical

God's Heart for the Nations is a clear, concise, user-friendly study that is thoroughly biblical. It is an excellent resource for small groups and a brilliant tool for personal study or one-on-one discipleship. The reader will come away with a motivated understanding that we exist to make much of Jesus for the joy of all peoples.

Chase Bowers
Teaching Pastor, Temple Bible Church,
Temple, TX