

FIRST BAPTIST ARLINGTON



2022 Missions Month Lessons







## **2022 Missions Month Lessons**

developed by the Great Commission Council

### **Overview**

by Ashley Berryhill, Cross-Cultural Ministries Director

Missions Month at FBCA is a celebration of what God is doing in the world. It's a time to consider how we are witnesses - individually and collectively - and helps us realize the impact of our generous giving.

We also are formed spiritually during the month as we reflect on Scripture and the ways of Jesus so that we will be transformed by the renewing of our mind and live as "sent ones."

To promote the unifying theme of Missions Month... that God is reclaiming the world through the witness of His church... the Great Commission Council is providing these 3 Bible study lessons for our people.

### **Objectives**

- To encourage global awareness and understanding of FBCA's sending efforts
- To promote and celebrate FBCA's missiological strategies and Global Centers
- To mobilize FBCA to "Live Sent" through praying, giving, going, and welcoming the world at our door

NOTE: Please encourage your group to stop by the Hamill Welcome Center in November to experience the Live Sent "**Immerse Yourself in Missions**" display. You can see much of that content on this link... <https://linktr.ee/fbcamissions>.

# Lesson 1

## Reaching Unreached Peoples from the Inside

by Cindy Wiles

### Main Text

John 4:1-42

### Summary

Jesus “crossed cultures” and engaged a Samaritan woman on “her turf” with the Good News. As a result, many people in that town believed in him because of her testimony.

### Key Concepts

Unreached People Group (UPG): A group of people distinguished by a distinct culture, language, or social class who lack an able community of Christians within to evangelize the rest of the people group without outside help (<2% Christians present within the populations).

Insider Witness: A Christian member of an Unreached People Group who utilizes their commonality of identity, language, culture, community, religious understanding, and natural access to bear witness of Christ within their native culture regardless of location.

Gospel Bridges: Connections and commonalities between the worldview of the Gospel witness and those receiving a Gospel witness that enhance relationship and increase understanding of Gospel truths.

### Introduction

Unreached people are unreached for a reason. In most cases, strong barriers have been created that prevent the Gospel from being planted. Sometimes those barriers are geographic. The people group may be physically remote and difficult to access due to geographic challenges. But most times, unreached-ness is a result of cultural, national, religious, social, or political barriers that prevent those within from hearing the Gospel or being willing to listen.

Global Frontiers Mission estimates that of the 7.75 billion people alive in the world today, 3.23 billion live in unreached people groups with little or no access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This means that more than 1 out of 3 people worldwide do not know Jesus or have access to the Gospel.

God has called FBCA to reach unreached peoples. Our first step of obedience toward UPGs began in 2004 when our church adopted the Fulani People Group as the focus of our mission efforts. As the largest nomadic/semi-nomadic tribe on the African continent, the Fulani have many barriers to the Gospel. Not only are the Fulani often difficult to locate and access, but they are also highly resistant to the Gospel due to their passionate commitment to Islam, viewing themselves as the torch-carriers, defenders, and propagators of Islam throughout the African continent.

The adoption of the Fulani was just the beginning of FBCA’s work among UPGs. Our church currently supports and partners with witnesses of Christ among 13 unreached peoples. Some of these UPGs are living in their land of origin. Others are a part of the diaspora (scattering, migration), living in other nations including the U.S. One of the ways FBCA seeks to proclaim the Gospel among these UPGs is through the utilization of inside witnesses. By reducing resistance created by an outsider, God uses these insiders to take His Good News of love to unreached peoples in ways that they can hear and understand.

Today’s Bible lesson considers the story of Jesus saving an “insider” and utilizing her witness to lead her antagonistic community to embrace the Good News.

## Examination

God reveals the breadth of His redemptive plan for all peoples throughout the Old Testament. Speaking through the prophet, Isaiah, God informs Israel...

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

We hear mention of God’s love for all the peoples of the world throughout Scripture (i.e., Genesis 12:3b; Psalm 86:9; Psalm 96; Isaiah 2:2; Daniel 7:14, Revelation 7:9). So, it is no surprise that Jesus would choose to take a path through the region of Samaria as he departs from Judea to head back to Galilee after the Pharisees become aware of his rising popularity and following.

While one could argue that Jesus’ choice of path was based upon expediency, the significance of this story, in terms of its prophetic fulfillment and development of the universal breadth of Jesus’ ministry, suggests that Jesus fully intended to engage in conversation with an unlikely target of grace. By virtue of her ethnic identity, her gender, and her questionable past, this woman is both a real and symbolic expression of God’s heart for all people.

Ill will between Jews and Samaritans was rooted in a long history. The barriers constructed between Jesus’ culture and the culture of this woman were thick and strong. The Word in Life Bible Study describes the history of feelings between Jews and Samaritans like this:

Hatred between Jews and Samaritans was fierce and long-standing. In some ways, it dated all the way back to the days of the patriarchs. Jacob (or Israel) had twelve sons, whose descendants became twelve tribes. Joseph, his favorite, was despised by the other brothers (Genesis 37:3-4), and they attempted to do away with him.

But God intervened and not only preserved Joseph’s life but used him to preserve the lives of the entire clan. Before his death, Jacob gave Joseph a blessing in which he called him a “fruitful bough by a well” (Genesis 49:22). The blessing was fulfilled, as the territory allotted to the tribes of Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim (“doubly fruitful”) and Manasseh, was the fertile land that eventually became Samaria.

Later, Israel divided into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom, called Israel, established its capital first at Shechem, a revered site in Jewish history, and later at the hilltop city of Samaria. In 722 B.C., Assyria conquered Israel and took most of its people into captivity. The invaders then brought in Gentile colonists “from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim” (2 Kings 17:24) to resettle the land. The foreigners brought with them their pagan idols, which the remaining Jews began to worship alongside the God of Israel (2 Kings 17:29-41). Inter marriages also took place (Ezra 9:1-10:44; Nehemiah 13:23-28).

Meanwhile, the southern kingdom of Judah fell to Babylon in 600 B.C. Its people, too, were carried off into captivity. But 70 years later, a remnant of 43,000 was permitted to return and rebuild Jerusalem. The people who now inhabited the former northern kingdom—the Samaritans—vigorously opposed the repatriation and tried to undermine the attempt to reestablish the nation. For their part, the full-blooded, monotheistic Jews detested the mixed marriages and worship of their northern cousins. So, walls of bitterness were established on both sides and did nothing but solidify for the next 550 years.

There are countless modern parallels to the Jewish-Samaritan enmity; indeed, wherever peoples are divided by racial and ethnic barriers. Perhaps that’s why the Gospels and Acts provide so many instances of Samaritans encountering the message of Jesus. It is not the person from the radically different culture on the other side of the world that is hardest to love, but the nearby neighbor whose skin color, language, rituals, values, ancestry, history, and customs are different from one’s own.

## John 4:1-9

Jesus chooses an unlikely place and an unlikely time to hold an unlikely conversation with an unlikely person. Everything about this encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman seemed “wrong” from a cultural perspective.

A God-fearing Jew would never intentionally travel through Samaria, running the risk of defilement through an association with “half-breeds” or “dogs” who intermarried with Gentiles (to include both pagan tribes and Assyrians) and who were viewed as defectors of the original faith. Not only did the Samaritans establish their own worship site outside of Jerusalem, but they also denied the validity of the Hebrew Scriptures beyond the Torah (5 books of Moses).

In addition to being a Samaritan, the target of Jesus’ encounter was also a woman. It would be an additional defilement for a Jewish man to receive a drink from a Samaritan woman. Even speaking with her was considered “out of bounds” (see verse 27).

Thirdly, we must consider all the reasons why a woman would be drawing water at this unlikely hour of the day. See Bible Study Tools for further insights on this issue:

[www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/who-is-the-woman-at-the-well.html](http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/who-is-the-woman-at-the-well.html).

## John 4:10-26

Jesus uses bridges from the woman’s own worldview, understanding, and belief system to reveal his identity as Messiah and to offer her the “living water” of a saving relationship with himself.

**Wells and Water...** This woman understood the value and importance of water for life. The acquisition of water was a daily task for her as it is for many people around the world even today. Cooking, drinking, bathing, washing, cleaning... her task of obtaining water was essential for her own life and for those in her household. Jesus connects with her through a reality that she fully grasps. Water is essential for life. He offers her Living Water and eternal life.

**Common Heritage...** The woman recognizes the common heritage of the Jew and the Samaritan that is rooted in “our father Jacob” (vs 12). Jesus uses this commonality of heritage to engage in conversations about faith and worship that in most cases would have been volatile between a Jew and a Samaritan. In this conversation he is able to discuss “true worship” which is rooted in spirit and truth – not centered in geographic landmarks like temples and mountains. Jesus exhibits in this statement God’s universal Gospel for all people from all places.

**Messianic Expectation...** Both the Jew and the Samaritan had an expectation of the coming Messiah who would establish God’s Kingdom on earth and establish an age of peace. Jesus uses this common belief to clarify his identity as that Messiah... “I who speak to you am he.”

## John 4:27-30; 39-42

Jesus uses an “insider” to open doors for gospel proclamation among a resistant people. Was Jesus’ journey to the well meant for the salvation of this one woman or was it Jesus’ intention to open the door of salvation to an entire Samaritan community?

I think the answer to that question is simply “yes.” Jesus cared about this woman who’s past, culture, and worldview had created barriers between herself and God. But Jesus also utilized this unlikely witness to proclaim his salvation to this community of natural enemies. The woman’s mustard seed of faith results in proclamation to her own village. Because of her testimony, the door is open for Jesus to declare the Gospel to the Samaritan community. Not only the woman, but many more became believers because of the testimony of this insider witness.

## Case Study

Farsi is the language of the Persian people. Most Farsi speakers live in countries that are resistant or closed to the gospel such as Iran, Afghanistan, and the Central Asian Republic of Tajikistan. However, many Farsi speakers have migrated from their homelands because of governmental and religious oppression, wars, instability, and economic or educational opportunities. Many flee to neighboring nations. Some find paths to Western nations – even to the U.S.

As these Farsi-speaking people relocate, many are hearing the Gospel and becoming followers of Jesus. As a result, these Farsi-speaking “insiders” have many connections into the lives of Farsi-speakers both inside and outside their lands of origin. Consequently, the growth of Christianity among Iranians is considered to be the fastest growing evangelical movement.

Several years ago, a Farsi-speaking family entered the church doors of FBCA after a long journey as refugees/asylum-seekers due to their faith in Christ. By the time they reached FBCA, the parents in the family had committed themselves to full-time Christian witness and church planting among Farsi speakers both locally and globally. They had planted a growing Farsi language church in Turkey as refugees and were involved in online evangelism and leadership training in multiple nations that are closed to Gospel witness. Over time, FBCA leaders were drawn by the Spirit of God to come alongside this family in the development of local and global ministry among Farsi speakers. They began the path of becoming commissioned “insider witnesses” sent by FBCA.

As this family was already engaged in active ministry among Farsi speakers, Restore Hope employed the father in the family while FBCA worked with the parents to develop strategies for engagement among Farsi speakers both in Arlington and in the Middle East/West Asia. As Afghan refugees fled under Taliban re-entry and persecution of Christians, they assisted FBCA in the movement of endangered Christians to places of safety in Brazil. Through their online ministry, many Farsi speakers have come to Christ and are being disciplined and trained for church-planting and leadership.

Through the leadership of the Spirit, FBCA leaders have worked with the father of the family to visit open countries where large populations of Farsi speakers seek refuge. They have access through these open nations to bear witness to Christ among Iranians and Afghans and to establish partnerships with other inside believers who join them in these Gospel efforts.

FBCA has an opportunity to reach Farsi speakers both locally and globally by supporting inside workers.

## Application

1. God often uses “insiders” to reach people who are resistant to an outside Gospel witness. Mission sending does not always imply the sending of North Americans to fly over salt water and serve in other nations. Mission sending also includes the mobilization of insiders who have the advantages of language, cultural understanding, and access. FBCA joins God by supporting the work of inside witnesses among UPGs such as Farsi speakers in Western Asia/Middle East and Arlington. FBCA sends a Fulani named Adam to work among the Western Fulani. We also come alongside partners like S.E.N.T. Ministries in Sierra Leone as they mobilize church planters among 12 Unreached People Groups. How can we identify and come along insiders as a church? How can you support insider witnesses?
2. Identifying “bridges” for Gospel sharing is an effective means of witness. Bridges almost always exist, but sometimes we must study, listen, reflect, and learn to be able to identify them. Most often bridges are identified when we spend time with people who are not like us. What are some ways you can identify bridges to reach someone lost whom God has placed in your life? How have you done that in the past?

## Live Sent

Here are ways FBCA members can participate with insiders who are working among UPGs in Arlington:

**Pray.** Specifically pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of those who do not know Jesus, that they would be drawn to Jesus and transformed by the Gospel. Pray that these people will experience the power of the name of Jesus and His love through our witness. Ask God to make clear your role in coming alongside insiders and grant courage to be obedient to opportunities that arise despite inconveniences. Pray for the protection of insiders and their families against spiritual warfare. Ask the Holy Spirit to quicken your spirit when prayer and petition is needed.

**Give.** While FBCA's commissioned Insider Witnesses receive an annual grant from FBCA that supports a portion of their work, they are required to raise their own support to be full-time workers among Farsi speakers. Contact the Cross-Cultural Ministries office at FBCA to learn how to become a monthly supporter of their ministry budget or give directly to Restore Hope online at [tinyurl.com/farsihope](http://tinyurl.com/farsihope).

**Go.** Get involved with FBCA events led by insiders among South Asians, Farsi speakers, and East Asians. Each of these people groups has on-going FBCA ministries. Make friends with our international community by serving in FBCA's International Friends ministry which assists internationals with conversational English acquisition and cultural adaptation.

**Welcome.** Be open to receive your international neighbor and welcome them into your life. Insiders often need practical help and assistance in welcoming international neighbors. The way to do this is to eat a meal together; invite your new friend to your home for coffee or tea; or include your new friend in holiday celebrations in which you can share culture and faith (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter). Be authentic in conversations and show genuine interest in your friend's well-being. Living as a person who is hospitable opens many doors for the Gospel through this witness.

## Resources

Barclay's Daily Bible Studies: John 4

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb/john-4.html>

Matthew Henry Bible Commentary (Complete): John 4

<https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary/matthew-henry-complete/john/4>

Burge, Gary M. The NIV Application Commentary: John. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

## Lesson 2

### Joining Christ in Crossing Cultures

by Peggy Kulesz

#### Main Text

Acts 11:1-25; Acts 13:1-3; Acts 16:6-10

#### Summary

We must let go of our personal prejudices and preconceived notions – and experience discomfort, sacrifice, and inconvenience – in order to be used by God in advancing his worldwide plan of redemption.

#### Key Concepts

Cross-Cultural Ministry: Intentionally reaching across language, ethnic, and socioeconomic barriers to engage people with the Good News about Jesus.

Cross-Cultural Worker (CCW): Missionary; one who reaches across language, ethnic, and socioeconomic barriers to fulfill the Great Commission.

Global Centers: Locations where FBCA sends cross-cultural workers in service to global communities. Global communities may be local or international.

#### Introduction

In this lesson, the emphasis is on cross-cultural ministry. We are a sending church that embraces cross-cultural ministry both internationally and here at home. The big question for all of us is “What is our part in cross-cultural ministry?”

The Apostle Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 3:6-8 that the previously unknown “mystery” of the Gospel is that in Christ Jesus both Jews and non-Jews together are the people of God... joint-heirs, a joint-body, and joint-partakers in the promise of God. The Good News is that salvation is available to everyone who believes!

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gives the “Great Commission” to his disciples. Clearly, these marching orders indicate that the Gospel is for everyone and everywhere, even places the disciples didn’t know existed. The admonition to “go and make disciples of all nations” shows us how Jesus’ redemptive message has no geographical boundaries.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus amplifies the Great Commission when he tells his Apostles, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Later in Acts 2, we see how the Holy Spirit empowered these followers to communicate “the wonders of God” in the languages of all those gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost.

Jesus gave orders to spread the Gospel everywhere and sent the Holy Spirit to equip and empower the Apostles to carry out the task by giving them the ability to communicate to people from many different places in their heart languages.

Despite Jesus’s clear message to go to all nations and the miracle at Pentecost, the book of Acts shows us that the Apostles experienced some early hesitation and even faced criticism when figuring out ways to take the Gospel beyond the confines of their Jewish audiences.

NOTE: Acts 10 sets the scene for the passages we will focus on. Reviewing chapter 10 would be good preparation for teaching this lesson. In Acts 10, we see how God used a Roman Centurion (a non-Jew) to open Peter’s heart and mind to Great Commission thinking. Peter had been hungry and had a vision where a sheet came down from heaven with all kinds of animals, including reptiles and birds. A voice told him “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” But Peter

replied that has never eaten any unclean or impure food, referring to the strict dietary laws followed by devout Jews. However, the voice implored Peter three different times to eat the food and not to “call anything unclean that God has made clean.”

This vision confused Peter, and it isn't until he answers a summons to visit Cornelius that Peter understands the vision as a clear message from God to cross barriers set in place by custom and culture to spread the message of salvation and redemption. Peter's understanding is recorded in Acts 10:34, “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.”

Even though Peter had traveled with Jesus and observed numerous occasions where Jesus himself worked outside of Jewish culture to heal, comfort, and forgive, Peter needed more confirmation from God about the expansive nature of missional activities. Ask your group to provide examples of Jesus stepping across cultural and religious boundaries. Here are some suggestions:

- He uses a Samaritan man as an example of neighborly love (Luke 10)
- He heals the servant of a Roman Centurion (Luke 7)
- He honors the faith of a Greek woman who had been born in Syrian Phoenicia by ridding her daughter of a demon (Mark 7)
- He journeys through Samaria and gives living water to a woman at a well (John 4)

### Examination

Acts 11:1-25; 13:1-3; 16:6-10

### Key Points

- Overcoming prejudice to love people of other cultures and customs
- Breaking down barriers that divide people
- Unlearning religious practices that block God's calling
- Opening hearts and minds to God's vision
- Sending workers to evangelize and disciple
- Equipping mission congregations toward independence
- Responding to physical needs with generosity

Acts 11:1-25

### Discerning God's will for mission efforts by waiting on the Holy Spirit to lead

Peter's vision and his experience with Cornelius prepare him to mediate the criticism he will encounter when he returns to Jerusalem and must explain why he shared a meal in a Gentile's home! When he testifies how God opened his eyes to the notion that the Gospel is for everyone, those who had questioned and criticized agreed that “even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18).

The missionary zeal of the early church to send out workers beyond Jerusalem and into Gentile spaces hinges on God's revelation to Peter. Primarily, the leaders in Jerusalem had to overcome prejudice and their own cultural rigidity to follow the commands of the Great Commission.

It is important to note how teachable these leaders turned out to be when hearing Peter's powerful testimony. Their grumbling changed to praise for God's abundant love that reaches across any human boundaries. News about the great number of new believers in Antioch could now be received with thanksgiving, leading the Jerusalem church to send Barnabas to the new believers. Jerusalem, as the mother church - the first sending church - knew the importance of

discipleship and accountability. Barnabas acted as both missionary and reporter to keep the sending church informed of the happenings in Antioch.

The Intervarsity Press New Testament Commentary notes four main distinctives of the Antioch Church:

- Inclusive Evangelism (11:19-21)
- Authentic Growth (11:22-24)
- Doctrinally Sound Nurture (11:25-26)
- Holistic Liberality (11:27-30)

NOTE: A link to this commentary is included in the “Resources” section and provides good discussion of each characteristic.

### Acts 13:1-3

The church at Antioch was a multicultural congregation which welcomed both Jews and Gentiles. The DNA of the church was cross-cultural acceptance and ministry which was reflected in its membership. This fabric of inclusivity lays the foundation for missional sending: seeing and loving others through God’s eyes.

The members in Antioch were discipled in their faith by Barnabas and Saul who taught and nurtured the believers (Jews and Gentiles) for a year. By emphasizing discipleship and the maturing of new believers, the Jerusalem church modeled effective leadership and placed an emphasis on spiritual formation. Thus, the church at Antioch was equipped to act independently by leading, giving, and sending. Consequently, when the Christians in Antioch heard of an impending famine, they responded immediately by sending help to their “brothers and sisters in Judea.”

These verses record how the Antioch church, formerly a mission church, now is prepared to send out workers. The Antioch church sets apart and sends Barnabas and Saul (Paul) to the work for which God had called them. (It is important to note that FBCA follows this model of a local congregation that sends and supports cross-cultural ministry like this biblical example.)

### Acts 16:6-10

Later we read in Acts 16:6-10 that Paul clearly had a plan for his second mission journey, but the Holy Spirit was closing doors right and left. Instead of barging in anyway, Paul is sensitive to the leading of the Spirit and waits. In a vision, Paul receives “the Macedonian call,” and he and his team rightly discern God’s hand in both closing and opening doors. The IVP Commentary asks an important question to consider as a church strives to follow God’s leadership in cross-cultural ministry: How does God guide his church to the right place for mission?

There will be “closed” as well as “open” doors. There will be guidance addressed to individuals as well as to the entire team. There will be guidance via circumstances, sometimes extraordinary, as well as through the use of reason in evaluating circumstances in the light of God’s Word. And specific guidance will come only to those who are already on the road, living out their general obedience to the Great Commission. Being able to say, “God sent me; I come with the wind at my back,” is a strong witness to one’s hearers that one’s message is from God and true (IVP New Testament Commentary, “The Right Place Divinely Chosen”).

### **Case Study**

In 2007, FBCA made the commitment to become a sending church. Our sending process is unique in that we send to Global Centers so that churches are planted and transformative communities are formed. When the church sends, the worker and ministry are supported in the following ways:

- Financial partnership through individual donors and grants provided from gifts to the World

Mission Offering and the general church budget

- Church participation through short-term teams, prayer groups, and ongoing member care
- Direction, leadership, and spiritual oversight by the Cross-Cultural Ministries Director
- Strategy and budget development by the Great Commission Council
- Services and legal governance by Restore Hope

### How is God working through cross-cultural ministry in Sierra Leone, West Africa?

Sierra Leone became FBCA's first Global Center over 13 years ago. This country continues rebuilding itself after civil war and an Ebola pandemic. First Baptist Church members continue to invest in healthcare initiatives, church-planting, and orphan sponsorship, each with its own fruitful ministry.

In 2009, FBCA sent Dr. Gabriel (Gabe) and Sada Herrera as representatives to Sierra Leone. As a dentist and a nurse, Gabe and Sada set out to share the gospel and provide a much-needed dental clinic in the country. Gabe serves as one of twelve registered dentists in the nation of 8 million people, and he invests in the nation's healthcare by raising up and employing two Dental Nurse Practitioners.

Additionally, Gabe and Sada partner with a local church, S.E.N.T. Ministries (Salvation Enters New Territories), by investing in its church planters and utilizing their knowledge and gift for healthcare to take the Gospel to unreached rural areas in Sierra Leone. These 200 bi-vocational, volunteer church planters drive, walk, or use motorbikes to journey into remote villages, often using GPS for directions in the absence of roads.

One of the most effective tools of evangelism is the distribution of pocket-sized audio Bibles to people in the villages. These solar-charged devices cost about \$35 and are loaded with the New Testament and some Old Testament Bible stories translated into the dialects spoken by the people. The traveling church planters take the audio Bibles, or as some call them, "the talking Bibles," to believers in the rural villages.

Since almost 60% of the country is illiterate, most of the people hear the Gospel in their own language for the first time. One man who came to faith after hearing the stories on the Talking Bible, said, "Your God speaks my language." When an audio Bible is taken to a village, the people come to hear the stories and stay to discuss what the passages mean and how the message can impact their lives. One woman invited her neighbors to hear the stories and upon hearing the Word of God, 10 people came to faith in Christ.

The church planters have passion for spreading the Gospel, but since most have no formal Bible training, investing in these nationals is another important piece of the partnership with S.E.N.T. Ministries. Gabe and Sada work alongside Pastor Emmanuel, General Overseer of S.E.N.T. Ministries, and other Christian leaders to equip the volunteer pastors with evangelistic tools, to teach them Bible storying, and to care for their spiritual and physical needs.

### Yousef's Story

As Gabe serves the people of Sierra Leone in the clinic, he watches for ways to share the Gospel with his patients. One such patient came to the clinic through a chance encounter on the way to work. Gabe was stopped at an intersection when a man crossed the street in front of him. He could tell that the man had a very serious abscessed tooth, as he could see a tremendously swollen neck and infection in the area. Gabe got out of his car and approached the man, introducing himself as a dentist and inviting the man to come for treatment at the clinic. The man, Yousef, told Gabe he had been suffering from his infected tooth for over a year, but that he had no money for treatment. Assured that the clinic was free, Yousef asked, "When can I come?" "How about now?" Gabe invited.

Gabe determined that Yousef's infection was so severe that it warranted a series of strong antibiotic injections before the tooth could be pulled. Yousef came to the clinic every other

day during a two-week period to receive medication. At each visit, Gabe and his staff treated Yousef with kindness, dignity, and love. When enough healing had occurred, the tooth was finally extracted.

After a final checkup, Yousef stopped by Gabe's office to thank him. "I'm glad you are well," Gabe told him. "Before you leave, may I tell you a story?" Agreeing, Yousef sat and Gabe shared the story of Jesus, the paralyzed man, and his four friends. "Before Jesus healed the man, he said to him, 'your sins are forgiven.' Yousef, you are physically well now, but no one can guarantee your life. You might get malaria; you might suffer an accident; there is no way to tell. But Jesus can forgive your sins, and he promises an everlasting life if you follow him."

Reflecting on the story and his experience with the people of the clinic, the lovingkindness and grace shown to him during his treatment, Yousef told Gabe, "I want that. I want to follow Jesus."

What a wonderful story! A "chance" encounter at an intersection, coupled with the obedient and observant eyes of a Christian medical professional, not only healed a man physically, but also provided the soul-saving grace of Jesus.

When asked what they want FBCA members to know about the ministry, Gabe and Sada emphasize how important it is for us to understand the work in Sierra Leone because it is an extension of FBCA in another part of the world. The Herrera's were sent from our church. They are connected to us and they want us to be connected to them!

Gabe and Sada want us to know that God is changing lives in Sierra Leone. The Spirit is active and, as Gabe said, "We are joining God where he is already working!" Through their efforts with partners from S.E.N.T. Ministries, the message of God's love and the story of redemption are being carried to some of the most remote and unreached places in this country.

### Application

In *The King Jesus Gospel*, Scot McKnight writes that we are to "embrace the gospel to create a gospel culture by serving others in love and compassion... As our God is a sending God, so we are a sent people... The gospel propels us into mission, into the holistic mission of loving God, loving self, loving others, and loving the world" (page 176).

1. How can members of FBCA be involved in cross-cultural ministry?
  - o Support our cross-cultural workers by learning about the ministries, assisting them financially, and praying for them specifically
  - o Follow CCW's through their newsletters and on Facebook
  - o Become involved in cross-cultural connections at FBCA
2. What keeps us from making connections with people from other cultures?
  - o Awareness
  - o Opportunity
  - o Associating only with people just like us
  - o Fear, prejudice, shyness
3. In everyday life, where do you meet people of other cultures and language groups that could lead to friendship?
  - o Work and school
  - o Other parents at child's school
  - o Volunteering
  - o Library

o Exercise Class

o Church

## Live Sent

Here are some ways FBCA members can join Christ in crossing cultures:

**Pray.** Peter and the leaders of the church in Jerusalem had to overcome cultural prejudices and barriers before they could follow Jesus' command to go and make disciples of all nations. Are there barriers we must repent of before we can see others as created in God's image? (This could be a question to answer silently as some members may not feel comfortable talking about this. Nevertheless, this question is essential to ponder if we are to move forward in cross-cultural situations.)

**Give.** Let's reach the 2022-2023 World Mission Offering (WMO) goal of \$300,000. Continue (and perhaps consider increasing) your faithful giving to the FBCA budget, a percentage of which goes to our Direct Missions Sending and Volunteer Missions Teams, to the World Mission Offering, and to other missional endeavors.

**Go.** There are multiple ways to go: 1) Be sent to deepen the impact at a Global Center through short-term impact trips; 2) Apply for an Internship in a Global Center (new opportunities added each year); 3) Help to plant churches for 2+ years in a Global Center. For more information go to [www.fbca.org/ministries/cross-cultural/go/](http://www.fbca.org/ministries/cross-cultural/go/).

**Welcome.** According to U.S. Census data, 1 in 5 people in Arlington, Texas are born outside of the United States. In Arlington ISD, students speak over 68 languages and come from 92 different countries. As Great Commission Christians, we have received the command to go and tell, but we can "go" to the world without leaving Tarrant County. Prayerfully consider your own social circle. Do you have friendships with people of other cultures, customs, religions, and language groups? How can you begin to make connections or strengthen the cross-cultural connections you already have? Building relationships with others lays a foundation of trust and friendship, and friends share stories. We have the greatest story ever told: Jesus of Nazareth!

## Resources

IVP Commentary series - The Gentile Mission at Antioch (11:19-30)

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/ivp-nt/Gentile-Mission-Antioch>

The Bible Journey: The Gentile Church at Antioch (with map)

<https://www.thebiblejourney.org/the-bible-journey/7-journeys-of-jesus-followers/the-gentile-church-at-antioch/>

The Bible Journey: Paul's Vision or The Macedonian Call (with map)

<https://www.thebiblejourney.org/the-bible-journey/10-pauls-journey-to-phrygia-macedonia/paul-sails-across-to-europe/>

Acts 13 Commentary and Questions from University Bible Fellowship (which began as a cross-cultural student movement in Korea)

<https://ubf.org/resourcedetail/10221>

Evangelism: Made for Mission by Rick Warren

<https://www1.cbn.com/churchandministry/evangelism-made-for-a-mission>

Videos: Jesus in All of Acts (Four-minute videos from Right Now Media)

<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/494335>

## Lesson 3

# Joining Christ Among the Diaspora

by Rebecca Dark

### Main Text

Acts 2:1-41

### Summary

God is always at work orchestrating world events – often in counterintuitive ways – to accomplish His divine purposes. The Kingdom of God is multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, ever expanding, now and not yet, eternal, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and all about Jesus.

### Key Concepts

Diaspora: The word diaspora comes from Greek and means “disperse or scatter.” Perhaps its earliest appearance is in the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 28:25, God warns the people of Israel that if they do not keep His commandments, they will flee, or scatter, in seven directions before their enemies, and the Greek word diaspora is used to describe this chaotic flight.

The most common use of the word diaspora in English for hundreds of years was as a name for the Jews who were scattered across the globe after the Babylonian exile and, later, the destruction of the second temple. In contemporary cultural anthropology, however, the word diaspora has come to refer to any people group displaced from their homeland by war, economic pressures, or religious persecution, but retaining their cultural identity, sense of community, and contact with their home country.

Frontier People Groups: Huge swaths of the contemporary diaspora have come to Europe and the United States from what are called “frontier people groups.” Frontier people groups are a subset of Unreached People Group defined by the Joshua Project as “estimated Christian adherents less than or equal to 0.1%.”

One reason these people remain unreached is the great danger and difficulty of sending workers into their home countries. Arabic-speaking Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Farsi-speaking Muslims from Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkey, and Muslims throughout West Africa who speak a variety of tribal languages are all frontier people groups.

### Introduction

Acts 13-17

Sometime after their initial mission effort through Galatia, which was commissioned by the church in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas prepared for another expedition. On that first trip, God had made it clear that both Jew and Gentile alike are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

During that 1st missionary journey, John Mark had left the team at Perga to return to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). We don't know the exact reason for his departure, but it clearly did not set well with Paul. When it came time for the next trip, Barnabas wanted to take his cousin, John Mark, again. Paul adamantly refused, so they split up into two teams.

On Paul's 2nd missionary journey, he took Silas along as his partner. Eventually, Luke joined them as well. While the group was in Asia, Paul had a vision of a man saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” So, the team crossed the Aegean Sea and Paul ended up in Athens... a center of art, literature, philosophy, and Greek pagan religion.

Paul was distressed to see so much idolatry in Athens. He began speaking to those he encountered in the synagogue and marketplace, and was soon given the opportunity to address a group of city leaders at the Areopagus on Mars Hill. As Paul shared the Good News about Jesus with the people of Athens, he explained that God's purpose is for people of all nations to have the opportunity to seek and find him. God commands all people everywhere to repent and believe in him.

### Examination

Acts 2:1-41

One of the main ways God has provided access to Himself for the peoples of the world is through diaspora. The second chapter of Acts tells the story of the first international/cross-cultural witness by the Apostles, and it came about because the Jews had been scattered.

While it can be argued that the Jewish diaspora began in the 8th century B.C. under the Assyrians and continued in the 6th century B.C. with the Babylonians, it went on for hundreds of years after that.

Jewish communities began springing up in Italy and North Africa. Many Jews looking for work and economic opportunity migrated West to new Greek settlements that grew up around the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. Some Jews went South to Egypt. Others had remained in the East in the Parthian Empire. At the end of the 3rd century B.C., Antiochus III issued a command to transfer 2,000 Jewish families from Babylonia to Asia Minor.

The expanse of the Roman Empire, and specifically the Pax Romana under Caesar Augustus, made it possible for “God fearing Jews from every nation under heaven” to come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost that year (Acts 2:5). This celebration was an annual thanksgiving for the firstfruits of the wheat harvest and took place 50 days after Passover.

There must have been quite a crowd in the Holy City that day. Every Jewish man who was able would have made the trip to Jerusalem. The town was full of energy, noise, activity, and excitement. But no one – including the disciples – could have anticipated what was about to happen.

As a continuation of all that Jesus had accomplished through his life, death, and resurrection... as a further fulfillment of what had been promised through the Old Testament prophecies... as another powerful, tangible example of “the fullness of time” in God’s great plan of redemption (Galatians 4:4)... the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on God’s new covenant people.

The 120 or so who constituted that first “church” were about to experience something promised, but unprecedented. Jesus had told his disciples that it was good that he was going away because the Father would send the Holy Spirit in his place. It was an abstract concept that was about to become incredibly real and personal for them!

As these followers of Jesus were filled with the Spirit, they began to declare the wonders of God in languages they had never learned. It was a miracle of communication! The crowds were captivated and confused. “Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’”

As was so often the case, Peter became the spokesperson for the others. And it’s clear that the Spirit of God not only gave the disciples the ability to speak in other languages, he gave Peter divine insight into the meaning of this phenomenon.

Peter confidently declared to the crowd that this was the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. God is pouring out his Spirit on all people and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved! After preaching a short sermon, Peter concludes with the statement: “God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Only the Holy Spirit can bring true understanding and sincere conviction... and he did. The people heard, understood, and were repentant. They asked: “What must we do to be saved?” Peter’s reply is further confirmation that the Good News is for everyone. “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Luke tells us that about 3,000 people believed the Gospel that day. They were baptized and became part of the “family of God.” And that was just the beginning.

Interestingly, only a few chapters later, it’s the followers of Jesus who experience a diaspora. After Stephen’s martyrdom, a great persecution broke out against the Christians in Jerusalem and everyone except the Apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1).

In a very real way, this suffering served to quickly expand the Gospel message throughout that part of the world. It was an initial fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

### Case Study

FBCA is committed to sending and reaching frontier people groups, and some of our sending is making a direct impact on the contemporary Arabic-speaking diaspora. When our church first encountered Arab Ministries in Spain (AMiS), we found our hearts joined to a team who had been working among the Arabic-speaking diaspora in Europe for many years.

Civil wars and economic instability have led to a huge number of immigrants throughout Europe who are Arabic-speaking Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa. A recent study found that there are more than 6 million native Arabic speakers across the continent. In Spain, a country that was ruled in whole or in part by Arabic-speaking Muslims for 700 years, there are an estimated 2.1 million Muslims, and the vast majority of these are Arabic-speaking immigrants from North Africa, primarily Morocco.

In 1993, a family of Egyptian missionaries began evangelical outreach among the North-African Arabic-speaking diaspora in the Barcelona area. This ministry grew into the entity known as Arab Ministries in Spain.

In 2010, Morocco expelled Christian missionaries and forced the extremely tiny and persecuted Church in that country even deeper underground, making outreach to the diaspora from North Africa even more vital than it had been before.

For Moroccan immigrants and others served by AMiS, the impact of diaspora outreach goes far beyond the immediate location. The fact that contemporary diasporic communities maintain close ties and identity with their home countries means that seeds planted among them in their new context can make their way back through contact with family and friends, spreading the Gospel there even though the country itself is inhospitable to Sent Workers.

Arab Ministries in Spain has spent the last 30 years engaging the approximately 790,000 people who make up the continuously growing diaspora of North African Muslims in Spain. They have been joined in this ministry by short-, medium-, and long-term ministry partners from at least 10 other countries. In 2011, FBCA began to support this work through Volunteer Missions Teams and, in 2017, we sent long-term cross-cultural workers to be an integral part of what God is doing there.

The outreach efforts of **Arab Ministries in Spain** take a variety of forms.

Puente: One of the most important means of meeting, forming relationships, and ultimately sharing the Gospel with the North African diaspora are AMiS's cultural centers that operate under the name Puente, which means "bridge" in Spanish.

At these centers, one of which is directed by our FBCA Cross-Cultural Workers, Spanish and English language classes, women's literacy classes, children's homework clubs, soccer clubs, and other activities provide opportunities for trust to be built while community is formed. As gospel transformation takes root, people who encounter Jesus are invited into relationship with native Arabic-speaking workers to begin discipleship.

Kanisa: The Arabic-language church run by AMiS is called Kanisa and provides the ongoing discipleship and pastoral care for seekers and believers in their heart language. Kanisa holds a retreat each summer for Arabic-speaking Muslim background believers and seekers from all over Europe and North Africa. FBCA Volunteer Missions Teams support and participate in this diaspora outreach each year.

Global Wave: Global Wave, a media production entity, is the newest arm of AMiS. Global Wave has produced more than a hundred Arabic-language videos that are available on YouTube, Facebook, and other platforms. The videos provide pre-evangelistic interest generators, discipleship, and Bible teaching, and have reached thousands of viewers all over Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. In addition, Global Wave has produced an app for outreach to the Arabic-speaking diaspora that is free to Spanish-speaking churches who have an interest in starting their own outreach to the diaspora in their communities.

### Application

1. Why do you think God uses diaspora to advance His kingdom?
2. What are some of the direct ways God makes Himself known to people across the world?
3. What methods has the Church traditionally used to spread the knowledge of God in the world?
4. Why are there so many people groups that remain unreached?
5. How can we be more strategic and intentional about engaging the FPG and diaspora here in Arlington?

FBCA is committed to being a sending church, but we don't have to send to reach frontier peoples of the diaspora. God has brought the world to our doorstep. In 2021, nearly 5,000 international students, many from areas with no or limited Gospel access, enrolled at UTA. We also have many frontier people groups who are permanent residents of our city. You drive by their mosques and temples, see them in the grocery store, in your neighborhood, and when you vote. Your children and grandchildren go to school with their children and grandchildren.

## Live Sent

The opportunity to engage the diaspora with the Gospel is right in front of you. Here are some specific things you can do:

**Pray.** Pray that the Holy Spirit softens the hearts of those who represent frontier peoples in Arlington and need to hear the Gospel. Pray for opportunities to reach out with the love of Jesus and share the Good News. Pray for workers to rise up who speak the heart languages of these people and for churches to send them out, so they can share the wonders of God in their native tongues.

**Give.** Let's reach the 2022-2023 World Mission Offering (WMO) goal of \$300,000. Continue (and perhaps consider increasing) your faithful giving to the FBCA budget, a percentage of which goes to our Direct Missions Sending and Volunteer Missions Teams, to the World Mission Offering, and to other efforts to reach frontier people groups.

**Go.** Join a short-term trip to support outreach from our church to frontier people groups.

**Welcome.** Welcome the local diaspora. Participate in outreach events sponsored by our church.

## Resources

Enduring Word Commentary

<https://www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/acts-2/>

Alexander, David. "The Historical and Political Background of the New Testament." Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible, 1973, Lion Publishing.

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