



# EXPLORE

**DISCOVER**

GOD'S WORD, GOD'S WORLD, AND GOD'S WORK



A circular compass rose icon with a green border and a white center. The cardinal directions are labeled: 'N' at the top, 'S' at the bottom, 'W' on the left, and 'E' on the right. A black needle points towards the top-right.

# **X**PLORE

**DISCOVER**

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**Xplore**

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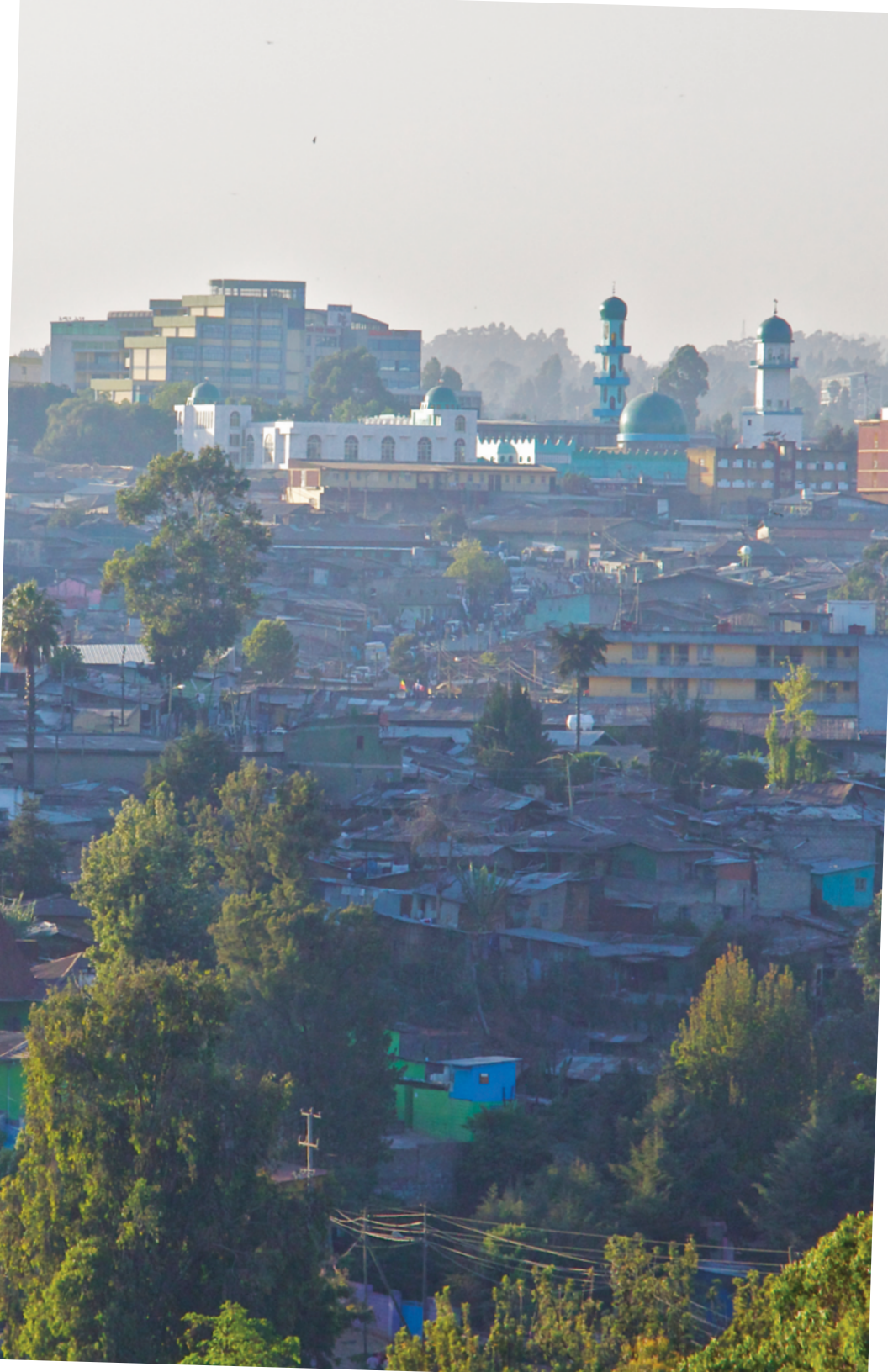
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# INTRODUCTION



## HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED ...

- What is the Bible really about anyway?
- Is God still at work in the world today?
- Is my life meant to be part of something bigger?

## WHAT IS *XPLORE* ABOUT?

- It is about God's promise to Abraham.
- It is about the passion of Jesus.
- It is about the purpose of the church.
- It is about a movement that is rapidly growing throughout the world.

It is about the very heart of God—His heart for the knowledge of His glory to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14).

## BEGIN *XPLORING*!

This study is designed to help you begin exploring God's Word, world, and work. So get together with some friends and talk about what you are learning on this journey!

### HERE IS WHAT'S INVOLVED IN EACH OF THE SEVEN LESSONS:

- PREP** Evaluate your view of God's Word, world, and work.
- READ** Gain insight into what God is doing and how you can join Him.
- DISCUSS** Prep with these questions, study the verses, and express your thoughts in discussion with your *Xplore* study group.
- LIVE** Examine new ways to live out your convictions.
- PRAY** Enter into God's presence and intercede for people groups who have not yet come to know and love Jesus.





# LESSON 1

## GOD'S WORD: GOD'S HEART

YOU CAN DO SOMETHING OTHER THAN WORKING WITH GOD IN HIS PURPOSE, BUT IT WILL ALWAYS BE SOMETHING LESSER, AND YOU COULDN'T COME UP WITH SOMETHING BETTER. — STEVE HAWTHORNE

## PREP

### FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

Many of us have grown up learning the Bible one story at a time, with each story applied directly to our personal lives in some way. How do you view and read the Bible?

- ① **Rule book:** It tells me what to do and warns me about what not to do.
- ② **Spiritual protection:** A verse a day keeps the devil away.
- ③ **Crystal ball:** It helps me know God's plans for my future, spouse, job, etc.
- ④ **Spiritual cup of coffee:** It helps me wake up and get the day started right.
- ⑤ **Family doctor:** I turn to it when I need something to make me feel better.
- ⑥ **Treasure map:** It reveals God's promises to bless me with health and wealth.

These are not all bad views, but the result is that many of us see the Bible as a random assortment of spiritual stories with no overriding theme or purpose. The reality is that the Bible is much more about God and His passion to be worshiped by all peoples than it is about us.

There are more than 1,600 verses throughout the Bible that show God's passion for His glory to be enjoyed by all peoples of the earth. This lesson highlights just a few of those verses. (For more verses, see the Biblical Basis of Missions section on page 60.)

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#### [ NATIONS ]

In the Bible, this word most often refers to ethnic people groups. The words "peoples" or "Gentiles" are also used to convey the same idea.

#### [ WORLD CHRISTIANS ]

People who understand God's heart for the world and strategically live their lives in such a way that wherever they are and whatever they do, they are working to see Him glorified among all nations.

## GOD'S HEART FOR THE WORLD

BY TODD AHREND

What verses come to mind when you think of the word, “missions?” Most of us are hard pressed to name more than the old faithful Great Commission. For years our church culture has singled out this passage to be the theme of our missions conferences and the motivation for those who go. It's no wonder that our obedience is slow—who wants to hang their future on one verse?

The Bible has a lot more to say on this subject than just the Great Commission. We need to understand the concept of a biblical basis for missions. Maybe you're saying, “The biblical basis—is there one?” Yes! In fact, God's desire for His glory to cover the earth permeates every book of the Bible. If you don't believe that all 66 books can be reduced to one theme, keep

reading. You will see that missions is not your pastor's idea, or your campus minister's idea, or even your idea—it is God's. Since creation, God has been intent on redeeming all peoples to Himself.

As Christians, it is vital that we see the world as He sees it. Let's look at the Bible in light of God's heart for the world, and we will see that from Genesis to Revelation, He is beckoning you, me, and all of His people to join Him in bringing every people group to His throne. The Bible is not a collection of separate books with no common theme or story. It is one book with one theme.



# DISCUSS

## GOD'S GLOBAL PASSION AND PURPOSE

*The following verses are a sample of well known stories or passages with important global implications that are often missed. Once we are aware of God's global purpose, we start seeing the global thread throughout the Old and New Testaments. As you discuss, pay careful attention to the phrases and concepts that reveal God's global purpose. When you can, try to first answer the questions with phrases straight from the Scripture before adding your own commentary.*

*Our prayer is that these few verses will excite you to seek out more of the hundreds of passages in the global thread, as well as empower you to recognize and be convinced of this foundational biblical theme.*

### [ OVERVIEW ]

#### A FOUNDATIONAL PROMISE—GENESIS 12:1–3 & GALATIANS 3:8

- 1 Discuss what God promised to Abram (soon to be called Abraham), God's intentions for Abraham and his descendants, and Paul's understanding of the gospel.

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#### AN INCREDIBLE PURCHASE—REVELATION 5:9–10

#### AN END PICTURE—REVELATION 7:9–10

- 2 What do these verses reveal about God's overall purpose and passion?

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- 3 How do these verses inspire and encourage us?

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## [ OLD TESTAMENT ]

*Though the Old Testament primarily deals with Israel, it is also filled with references about God's heart for all nations, and how His desire has always been for all nations.*

### ① 1 SAMUEL 17:45–47

What was David's motivation for challenging Goliath?

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### ② 1 KINGS 8:41–43

As Solomon prayed to dedicate the temple, what was his expectation of the Lord's fame and his desire for foreigners?

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### ③ DANIEL 6:25–27

Right after Daniel was delivered from the lions, what was the result of his unyielding devotion to God?

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### ④ PSALM 67

One third of all the Psalms have a direct reference to the nations and God's relationship with them. In this example, what stands out to you?

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### ⑤ ISAIAH 49:6 (For further reference, see this verse quoted in Luke 2:25–32, referring to Jesus as the Messiah; and also Acts 13:46–48 as a command to Paul and Barnabas.)

Israel thought that their Messiah was only for them and their benefit, but what does this verse teach us about the mission of the Messiah?

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[ NEW TESTAMENT ]

- ① **MATTHEW 28:18–20** (For further reference, see the other four commissioning statements: Mark 16:15, Luke 24:45–47, John 20:21, and Acts 1:8)

This verse is referred to as The Great Commission. Of all the things Jesus said and taught, why do you think He ended with this statement? How does this reflect God's global passion?

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- ② **ACTS 17:26–27**

What do you learn in these verses about God's actions and desires toward all peoples throughout history?

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- ③ **ROMANS 15:20–21** (Verse 21 is a quote from Isaiah 52:15)

Where did Paul seek to preach the gospel? Why did he have this ambition, and how did it fit in with God's desire for all the nations?

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- ① How has this lesson impacted the way you see God's Word and His global purpose and passion?

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## IDEAS FOR LIVING IT OUT

- ① Memorize three verses from this lesson that really impacted you.
- ② To dig into more verses on God's global passion and purpose, take the 30-Day or 7-Day Challenge on the biblical basis of mission. You can find them at the bottom of page 61 in the resources section.
- ③ See if you can share this biblical basis of missions with another person or a group of people.

## TRUE STORY

I really started growing spiritually in college. During my first summer, I attended a discipleship project, and we had a missions conference. I heard the guy up front say, "God's Word is not just a bunch of separate books. It's one book with one common theme throughout. God's glory will go out to all peoples on earth, and He wants you to be a part of it!" So I took the next couple of years and started diving into God's Word to truly see His heart for the world. I realized I needed to jump on board with what God is doing and is going to do. Soon after, I found out about an opportunity to go to India and share the gospel with high caste Hindus ... so I went! — JOHN

- ① What is one thing you want to do this week because of what you learned?

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- ② Who will keep you accountable?

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# PRAY

Prayer is the privilege of every follower of Jesus Christ, no matter how old they are, where they live, or what they do for a job. Unfortunately, few believers pray the way Jesus taught us to pray. In Matthew 6:9–10, Jesus taught His followers to pray, “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Steve Hawthorne, global author and mobilizer, says about the Lord’s Prayer:<sup>1</sup>

This prayer is not a statement of praise. It is explicitly a request in the original language: “Father . . . sanctify your name!” To paraphrase, “Father lift up, single out, exalt, manifest, and reveal Your name to the people of earth. Become famous for who You really are. Cause the people of earth to know and adore You!” The prayer can be prayed most thoroughly in the global dimension that Jesus taught: “on earth as it is in heaven.”

How exciting to know that even right now we can join God in seeing His singular purpose and passion brought to fulfillment. In this section, we will pray for God’s name to be hallowed among peoples of the earth who have little to no access to the gospel apart from a dream or vision.

## INTERCEDE

- ① Father, we pray that you would indeed make your name holy and exalted among all the peoples of the earth. That your kingdom would come and your desires would happen on earth, among all peoples, the same way they happen in heaven.
- ② God of heaven and earth, just like Abraham, David, Daniel, and Paul caught the vision for all the nations to know you, help me and all of your church to catch that same vision and live it out the way you want us to.
- ③ Father, you say that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; so we pray to you, the Lord of the Harvest, to send out laborers into your harvest fields!





# LESSON 2

## GOD'S WORLD: THUMB

AND THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM WILL BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD AS A TESTIMONY TO ALL NATIONS, AND THEN THE END WILL COME. — JESUS

### PREP

#### THE STATE OF THE WORLD

In the last lesson, we saw God's promise to bless all ethnic peoples through Abraham and his descendants (us), and we saw the fulfillment of this promise in Revelation 7:9–10. Some natural questions would then be: "How close are we to seeing this promise fulfilled? What is left to do?"

#### FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, CIRCLE EITHER TRUE OR FALSE.<sup>2</sup>

- T or F** In 100 AD, the worldwide ratio of unbelievers to believers was 360 to one. Today, one out of every 14 people are evangelical Christians.
- T or F** Evangelical Christianity is the fastest growing religious movement in the world.
- T or F** There are more evangelicals in Africa than in all of North America and Europe combined.
- T or F** Worldwide, the Gideons hand out one million Scriptures every 4.5 days.
- T or F** Many Muslims around the world are having dreams and visions of Jesus Christ.
- T or F** In Islamic Indonesia, believers are nearing 15 percent of the population.
- T or F** Between 85 and 95 percent of all believers who are serving as cross-cultural goers serve in already reached areas.
- T or F** More than 30 percent of the world's 6,900+ languages need a written translation of the Bible.
- T or F** There are more than 2.9 billion people in the world who have little or no access to the gospel.
- T or F** About  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the world call themselves Christians,  $\frac{1}{3}$  are non-believers living in reached people groups, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  live in unreached people groups.

Answers: Page 65

#### [ PEOPLE GROUP / ETHNIC GROUP ]

The largest group of people within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement, without hitting barriers of understanding or acceptance (such as language, ethnicity, religion, culture, history, etc). Referred to as "peoples" or "nations" in the Bible.

#### [ REACHED PEOPLES ]

People groups with a population of more than 2% indigenous (local) evangelical believers to evangelize and disciple the remaining non-believers.

#### [ UNREACHED PEOPLES ]

There is no indigenous community of Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their own people (less than 2% evangelical).

# READ

## THOSE WITH NO ACCESS

ADAPTED FROM "THE 10/40 WINDOW" BY BRYAN LEE

If the command given by Jesus is to make disciples of all nations, then common sense tells us our job is to find those nations, or ethnic groups,<sup>3</sup> that have not been disciplined (taught to be followers of Christ). If we want to fulfill the Great Commission, we need to know where these unreached groups of people are so that our efforts in completing the task will not just be busy, but productive.

The vast majority of these unreached people live in an area of the world nicknamed the "10/40 Window." The 10/40 Window is simply a term used to describe a region of the world within 10 and 40 degrees latitude from Western Africa to Eastern Asia. Of the more than 2.9 billion unreached people in the world today, about 97 percent live in the 10/40 Window. Less than 1 percent of these unreached people live in North and South America combined!<sup>4</sup>

The 10/40 Window is a simple way to remember where the majority of the world's unreached people groups live. But it's important to remember that being unreached is less about a people group's location and more about their lack of access to the gospel.

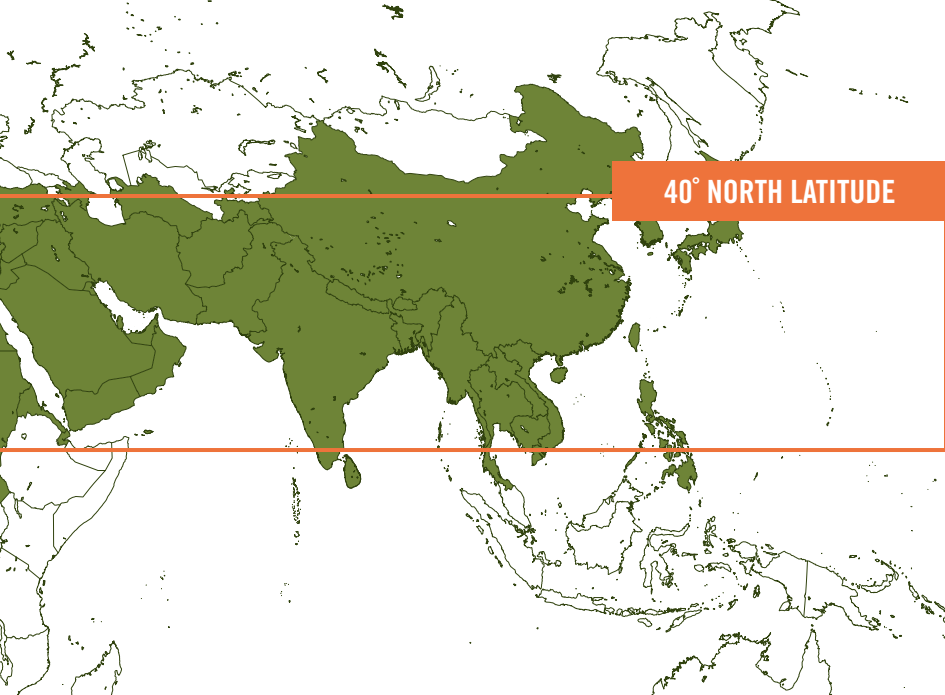
Unreached people are not "more lost" than your neighbor or family member who does not know Christ. But, they are unreached in the



sense that they do not have an opportunity to hear the gospel. The issue is not their "lostness," but their access to the gospel. People can be unevangelized without being unreached. There are people in the United States who have not heard the gospel, but they could if they wanted to. Most people living in the 10/40 Window couldn't find out about Jesus even if they wanted to!

Just imagine yourself as one of these people. There is no church you can attend on Sunday morning to hear the gospel. There are no bookstores where you can go to purchase a Bible. There are no Christians that you can go to and ask about their hope in Christ. In fact, you will

# THE ISSUE IS NOT LOSTNESS BUT ACCESS TO THE GOSPEL.



live and die and never meet a Christian. And there is no mission effort focused on reaching you. You are living in a sea of people, as one among millions. You are utterly unengaged with the gospel. You have no access.

This area of the world remains unreached for several reasons. First, these people do not live in a spiritual vacuum. The world's major religions began in this part of the world and are firmly entrenched there. In the 10/40 Window, there are about 1.3 billion Muslims, 860 million Hindus, and 275 million Buddhists.<sup>5</sup> Along with that, many of the countries in this region are oppressive to the spread of the gospel. However, Jesus declared that "the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." The biggest reason this part of the world is so unreached is because there is a lack of believers willing to go to these places.

It is estimated that less than 10 percent of foreign missionaries today are working to reach these unreached peoples. The other 90 percent are working in unevangelized, but not unreached, areas.<sup>5</sup> According to the World Christian Encyclopedia, of all the money

designated for "missions" in the United States, only two cents of every dollar is spent on reaching the unreached. The rest goes toward efforts to further evangelize reached people.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance," and that proves true in our global strategies for advancing God's kingdom. We must take the time to educate ourselves on the state of the world and evaluate our efforts in line with God's command to make disciples of all people groups. We should celebrate all the advances that have been made in proclaiming the gospel throughout the world, while also taking on the challenge of reaching the people groups who are currently without access. Certainly this is a daunting challenge, but with God nothing is impossible, because this is what God has commissioned His church to do!

# DISCUSS

## THUMB: RELIGIONS OF THE UNREACHED

As you have just read, most of the world's unreached people groups live in the 10/40 Window. An easy way to remember the major blocs of unreached peoples is the acronym THUMB (we'll explore each bloc further in the PRAY sections).<sup>5</sup>

<b>T</b>	<b>TRIBAL</b>	161 million unreached people in 704 people groups 60 cross-cultural workers for every 1 million tribal people
<b>H</b>	<b>HINDU</b>	860 million unreached people in 1,843 people groups 2 workers for every 1 million Hindus
<b>U</b>	<b>UNRELIGIOUS</b>	121 million unreached people in 15 people groups 12 workers for every 1 million unreligious
<b>M</b>	<b>MUSLIM</b>	1.3 billion unreached people in 1,344 people groups 6 workers for every 1 million Muslims
<b>B</b>	<b>BUDDHIST</b>	275 million unreached people in 227 people groups 13 workers for every 1 million Buddhists

① What is your reaction to these statistics?

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② **JOHN 4:35 & MATTHEW 9:37–38 (Also reference Luke 10:2)**  
How does God view the world's potential to come to Him? What is His solution?

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③ **JOHN 3:16–18, 2 THESSALONIANS 1:6–10, ROMANS 6:23, & JOHN 14:6**  
What do these verses say about the reality of people living and dying without turning to Jesus? What will be your response to their situation?

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④ **HABAKKUK 2:14 & MATTHEW 24:14**  
In light of the previous statistics about the unreached, what hope do these verses give us?

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- ① How do these statistics compare with what you learned in Lesson 1 about God's heart for the nations?

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- ② How has this lesson caused you to see God's world in new ways?

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## IDEAS FOR LIVING IT OUT

- ① Check out websites focused on the unreached like [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net), [operationworld.org](http://operationworld.org), [peoplegroups.org](http://peoplegroups.org), and [prayercast.com](http://prayercast.com). Specifically look at the THUMB prayer videos at [joshuaproject.net/resources/prayer\\_videos](http://joshuaproject.net/resources/prayer_videos).
- ② Start including prayer for the unreached as a regular part of your day—perhaps before meals, before bed, or at 10:40 every morning.
- ③ Share the THUMB with three of your friends.

## TRUE STORY

When I was 9, God placed the Mongolian peoples on my heart. While researching their country for a school project, I learned there were fewer than ten known believers in the entire country. I began to intercede daily, offering up simple prayers based on what I'd learned about the people and what I believed about God ... for Bibles to replace the Buddhist altars inside their tent homes ... for God to send believers to share the gospel with the three million Mongolians who had never heard the name of Jesus.

After two years of praying, a "Hope for Mongolia" article caught my eye. It described a movement of God in which 500 Mongolians came to know Jesus. I think this was God's way of telling me He was answering my prayers. — HOPE

- ① What is one thing you want to do this week because of what you learned?

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- ② Who will keep you accountable?

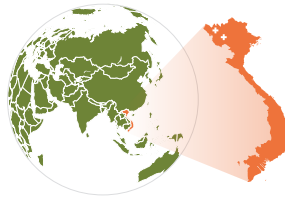
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## THUMB – TRIBAL

Tribal people live mostly in Africa, China, Southeast Asia, and Papua New Guinea.

### BELIEFS OF TRIBAL PEOPLES

- They have animistic and superstitious beliefs (everything has a spirit, such as water, rocks, trees, animals).
- They must be careful not to offend these spirits and must appease them with sacrifices.
- They often worship idols and ancestors and visit witch doctors.



### TAI DAM (BLACK TAI) OF VIETNAM

825,000 PEOPLE / 0.9% EVANGELICAL

The Black Tai live along the banks of the Red and Black Rivers in northern Vietnam and are named for the color of the women's clothing. They are unusually polite, respectful, and hospitable. They are very sympathetic and full of humor, seeking any opportunity for feasting. The farming of wet rice dominates the economy. It is grown both as a dietary staple and for cash sales. Both the women and men plow, hoe, fish, cook, tend babies, clean house, and wash clothes.

The vast majority of the Black Tai practice ethnic religions. Theravada Buddhism is mixed with folk animism, meaning that the people often seek help through supernatural spirits and objects. They practice ancestor worship (praying to deceased ancestors for guidance), and believe that there are spirits within every object and person. They also believe in "guardian spirits" and "locality spirits," which must be appeased so that they might avoid curses and receive blessings.



## INTERCEDE

- ① God Most High, we pray that the Black Tai people would encounter your Holy Spirit and you would set them free from their bondage to all these other evil spirits.
- ② Father, we pray blessing on the Black Tai's crops so they will seek you, the giver of all blessings. Also, we pray that they would find you as the true source of their compassion, joy, and hospitality.
- ③ Lord, in light of the statistics we read and the great need among the unreached, we pray for new funding and new missionaries to be raised up to focus on these precious people!





# LESSON 3

## GOD'S WORK: PRAYING

THE MAN WHO MOBILIZES THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO PRAY WILL MAKE THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD EVANGELIZATION IN HISTORY.

— ANDREW MURRAY

### PREP

#### JOINING GOD'S GLOBAL MISSION THROUGH PRAYER

Our Father God has given us an amazing gift: intercessory prayer. Did you ever stop to think that your prayers work together with God's purposes to accomplish God's will? The Bible is full of stories of people who knew God's heart, prayed to God, and saw God move in powerful and dramatic ways! Let's join in God's mission and enjoy the adventure of intercessory prayer.

**FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, CIRCLE EITHER TRUE OR FALSE. AFTER YOU CHECK YOUR ANSWERS, READ THE VERSES THAT GO ALONG WITH THEM.**

**T or F** As Christians, our struggle is primarily against people on this planet (Eph 6:12).

**T or F** God will give us what we need as we ask according to God's will (1 John 5:14–15).

**T or F** God desires all Christians to intercede for all people because He wants all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:1–4).

**T or F** It delights your Father to give you His kingdom (Luke 12:32).

**T or F** Jesus often got away from the crowds and His disciples so he could go pray (Luke 5:16).

**T or F** Jesus, right now, is praying for us (Heb 7:25).

**T or F** Prayer that truly effects change in circumstances is really only for the spiritual elite (James 5:16–18).

**T or F** We are invited to come boldly before the throne of grace so we can find mercy and grace in our time of need (Heb 4:16).

**T or F** Prayer is a significant response once we see the opportunity for mission and the current need (Matt 9:36–38, Luke 10:2)

**What comes to mind when you think of prayer? What has your experience been with prayer?**

Answers: Page 65

#### [ INTERCEDING ]

Praying to God on behalf of another person; taking up the cause and joining in the struggle of another by advocating for and pleading on their behalf.

## PRAYING GOD'S WILL AND SEEING CHANGE

BY TITUS H.

Jesus commissioned His followers to “make disciples of all nations,” and gave them the ministry of reconciliation. He said, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Matt 28:19, 2 Cor 5:18, Acts 1:8). Jesus knew that not all of us would be able to physically go to the ends of the earth and make disciples; however, He did expect us all to play our part. God empowered every believer with an amazing ability to join God in directly and dramatically effecting real change for “the ends of the earth.” We call it prayer.

Most of the time, praying for God's kingdom to come in all the earth doesn't even cross our minds. If it does, it is often our last resort, something we pray out of obligation, or as a brief addition to our list of requests. All of these responses betray the fact that we do not really understand prayer or the power in our prayers that makes a specific and practical difference.

James tells us that “the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” and gives us an example, saying that “Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops” (James 5:16–18). Now that is power! He was an ordinary human being, but he knew God's will, prayed earnestly, and God answered in power for all of Israel to see and give glory to God! How much more should prayer be the foundation of our relationship with God, since we have Jesus and the Holy Spirit living inside of us! Certainly James seems to think that this kind of prayer life should be more the norm than the exception for those who follow Jesus.

Paul tells us in Romans 8 that “the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God,” and that Christ Jesus “is at the right hand of God and is also interceding



# WE ARE PRAYING TO OUR ABBA FATHER WHO LOVES US, WHO WANTS A RELATIONSHIP WITH US.

for [His children]" (Rom 8:26, 34; also see Heb 7:25). Since part of Jesus and the Holy Spirit's work is to intercede for believers, let's join with them in praying specifically for missionaries and God's work to reach the unreached. If we, like Elijah, learn to listen to God and learn to pray in agreement with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, then we will certainly be a vital part of bringing God's kingdom on earth "as it is in Heaven" (Matt 6:10).

Prayer also changes us. As we learn more of God's heart through prayer, He changes how we think and act. We learn to love the things He loves, hate the things He hates, and see things the way He sees them. For example, God significantly changed Peter through prayer. Acts 10:9 says, "about noon . . . Peter went up to the roof to pray." God spoke to Peter as he prayed, and Peter soon realized God's message—that "in every nation, anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him" (Acts 10:35). This radically changed Peter's perspective and effectively changed the perspective of many in the church (Acts 10:45, 11:18, 15:14–19).

When we take a glimpse into the past, we see that prayer and missions movements are linked throughout history. The American mission movement was born in 1806 after five college students held a prayer meeting under a haystack while taking refuge from a thunderstorm. They discussed the spiritual darkness in Asia, every Christian's responsibility to do something, and then they prayed. As a result of that moment, those men dedicated themselves to

the Great Commission and the "Haystack Prayer Movement" spread, sparking the creation of mission agencies which sent many Americans overseas to preach the gospel.

Jesus established this direct link between praying and going when He said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2). We must never disregard the power of this prayer or its need to continually be prayed. One could argue that so few have gone to the unreached because so few have obeyed Jesus' commandment to pray for laborers.

Lastly, we must remember who we are praying to and what we are praying for. This will give us confidence as we pray. We are praying to our Abba Father who loves us, who wants a relationship with us. He desires that no one be separated from Him, and sent His only son Jesus to purchase, with His own blood, a people for God (Rom 8:15, 2 Peter 3:9, John 3:16, Rev 5:9–10)! Our Father is passionate about reaching the lost and He loves to listen to and answer His children's prayers. Jesus tells us that if evil human beings know how to give good gifts to their kids, how much more does our Heavenly Father give "good gifts" and the Holy Spirit to His children when they ask (Matt 7:9–11, Luke 11:11–13)! "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened" (Luke 11:9–10). This is how the kingdom of God works; this is the way of our Abba Father, our King!

# DISCUSS

Paul truly believed that the prayers of Christians would change the current realities in his ministry. In each passage, what words, phrases, and concepts does Paul use in regard to people praying for him? What is Paul wholeheartedly relying on his supporters' prayers to do? Comment on anything else that jumps out to you.

① **ROMANS 15:30–31**

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② **2 CORINTHIANS 1:8–11**

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③ **EPHESIANS 6:18–20**

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④ **PHILIPPIANS 1:19**

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⑤ **COLOSSIANS 4:3–4**

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⑥ **2 THESSALONIANS 3:1–2**

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In light of Paul's requests, if these things aren't happening with the Christian workers you or your church supports, perhaps the responsibility rests more on those who pray and send than on the workers.

- ① What verses mentioned in this lesson (prep, read, and discuss sections) stood out to you? Are there other Bible verses on prayer that have impacted your thinking?

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- ② We all pray, but how often do we stop to listen to God impressing on us specific things to pray? Does this sound exciting or daunting?

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## IDEAS FOR LIVING IT OUT

- ① Pray daily for these great needs in reaching the unreached: more laborers going to the field, more resources focused on the unreached, and spiritual strongholds to be torn down among these groups (Luke 10:2, Eph 6:10).
- ② Get one or all of these resources and use them to inform and guide you as you pray: *Global Prayer Digest*, Joshua Project app, [prayercast.com](http://prayercast.com) videos, *Operation World*, or *Window on the World*.
- ③ Gather around a world map with photos and information about unreached people groups. Then find their location on the map and start praying. "To know the will of God we need an open Bible and an open map." —William Carey, pioneer missionary to India

## TRUE STORY

While I was ministering in a country that was hostile to Christianity, I became frustrated because one of my local friends was very closed-off to hearing about Jesus. I emailed my home church just before their Sunday service to pray for this person. The very next day, I saw my friend again and as we talked, I sensed a radical change had happened in her. She was not only open to talking about spiritual things, but really wanted to hear about Jesus. It was obvious that the dramatic change came as a direct result of my home church's prayers! — TIM

- ① How will you begin serving through prayer?

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- ② Who will keep you accountable?

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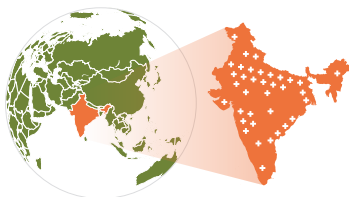
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## THUMB – HINDU

Hindus live mostly in India and Nepal.

### BELIEFS OF HINDU PEOPLES

- They believe in millions of gods.
- They worship idols of their gods by giving them food, flowers, and money.
- They believe they are caught in a cycle of birth-death-rebirth called reincarnation.



### HINDU BRAHMINS OF INDIA

58,346,000 PEOPLE / 0% EVANGELICAL

A boy becomes a man today! The Brahmin guru gives him a sacred thread, the symbol of his initiation. He whispers a special mantra to the boy. For the first time, the father addresses his son as a man instead of as a child. Now he is “twice-born.”

These are the Brahmins—the holders of the sacred teachings of Hinduism.

Brahmins stand at the top of the Hindu social ladder. This adds to the challenge they have in accepting Jesus as Lord, since He has been closely linked with the Dalits (Hinduism’s Untouchables). Brahmins have many barriers to the gospel of Jesus. Christ has a fellowship of all believers, but the Brahmin refuses to associate with an Untouchable. God offers eternal life, but a Brahmin believes he is on the verge of enlightenment, the perfect state of bliss that only comes after many reincarnations. In his mind, to accept Christ would mean losing it all.



## INTERCEDE

- ① Father God, lead believers who can have influence in Brahmins' lives to reach out to them in all parts of the world. Holy Spirit, humble Brahmins so that they can receive your grace and your guidance.
- ② Father of Lights, as the Brahmins seek enlightenment, open their eyes to the true light of the world, who is Jesus.
- ③ Father, you are willing that none should perish; give your church power to join you in praying for those who have never heard your Good News.





# LESSON 5

## GOD'S WORK: WELCOMING

I AM READY TO BURN OUT FOR GOD. I AM READY TO ENDURE ANY HARDSHIP, IF BY ANY MEANS I MIGHT SAVE SOME. THE LONGING OF MY HEART IS TO MAKE KNOWN MY GLORIOUS REDEEMER TO THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD. — WILLIAM BURNS

### PREP

#### IN OUR BACKYARD

God is bringing college students, professionals, and families to the U.S. from people groups with little or no direct access to the gospel. Many of these internationals are the best and brightest from their countries, and many of them are living right in our dorms and neighborhoods. However, some are refugees who have been permanently displaced and relocated to our country, often in need of great help. In this lesson we will see God's heart for those who are away from their homelands and how He wants us to extend His love in tangible ways.

**FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, CIRCLE EITHER TRUE OR FALSE.<sup>6</sup>**

**T or F** Welcoming internationals is only for people who have the gift of hospitality.

**T or F** There are more than 1 million international students who study and live in the United States each year.

**T or F** Many internationals believe that all Americans are Christians.

**T or F** Most internationals don't even really have time to be friends with Americans.

**T or F** The majority of internationals will never be invited into an American home.

**T or F** 60 percent of international students come from the 10/40 Window.

**T or F** Many internationals will return to their home countries to be leaders in business, education, and politics.

**T or F** To really be an effective welcomer to internationals, you have to have a lot of time, money, personal charm, and discussion topics ready at hand.

**What comes to mind when you think of internationals? What scares you the most about reaching out to students or families from other countries?**

Answers: Page 65

#### [ WELCOMER ]

One who welcomes internationals into the culture by initiating relationships with them, showing hospitality, and sharing the love of Christ.

#### [ INTERNATIONALS ]

Students, professionals, refugees, and families who are living in a country other than their homeland.

## THE NATIONS AMONG US

BY MIKE K.

We live in a far different world than our parents or grandparents did. Globalization has ushered in a new era in which people across the world are increasingly mobile and interconnected. As the church, we cannot ignore these trends as we work to carry out Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations. It forces us to evaluate the most strategic way to move forward in reaching all nations with the gospel. In light of current global trends, an increasingly effective way to reach the nations is by welcoming internationals, or engaging them through friendship and hospitality to share the love of Christ.

In the past, students rarely left their home countries to study abroad. That was a privilege

reserved only for the wealthy. But this is no longer the case. Students now cross oceans to seek out educational and vocational opportunities in dozens of fields. While more than 1 million international students are studying in the United States alone, this is not just a western phenomenon. When I was living in Russia, I was surprised at the number of Chinese, Turkish, and African students who migrated to Russia for their education.

This is an unparalleled moment in history. More than half of the internationals who come to study in the U.S. are from countries in the 10/40 Window, and many are from unreached people groups. The nations we pray for and endeavor



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME ISOLATED FROM THEIR HOST CULTURE. THIS IS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CHURCH.

to reach with the hope of the gospel are now among us in astounding numbers.

Whether they travel to New York City, Beijing, or Nairobi, international students spend anywhere from six months to six years studying abroad at a university. After this, many return to their home countries to begin their professional careers. What if they could be won to Jesus Christ and trained as disciples during their college years? They would then return to their homes—back to China, India, or the Middle East—not just with an education, but as ambassadors for Christ.

We might call this strategy “missions in reverse.” Internationals already know their language and culture. When they return home, they re-enter established social and relational networks. They have existing spheres of influence waiting for them in their country. We can help reach the nations by equipping these students to reach their own people.

Unfortunately, statistics show that most international students spend their time abroad almost completely isolated from their host culture. Few are invited into our homes as guests. One survey showed that 80 percent of international students in the U.S. never see the inside of an American's home—the very experience they

wish for most. I suspect this trend remains true in other cities around the world where foreign students study. This is a missed opportunity for the Christian church today!

Though it might not initially seem so, internationals are really just like us. They miss their homes and their families. They experience loneliness, culture shock, and sometimes depression. It makes all the difference when believers step out to initiate relationships with them. One of their greatest needs is for friendship and someone to help them navigate through a foreign culture.

There is nothing complicated about being a welcomer. It starts with just making a friend. Imagine a wave of indigenous ambassadors of Jesus Christ flowing back to their nations from universities across the world—it all starts when the church welcomes them.

The nations are here. The opportunity to impact the world for Jesus Christ is waiting right outside our doors. Let's embrace the opportunity to welcome them into our homes and churches.

# DISCUSS

① **LEVITICUS 19:34 & DEUTERONOMY 10:18–20**

What do these verses reveal about God's heart for internationals? What would it look like to "love them as yourself?"

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② **1 KINGS 8:41–43, ISAIAH 56:6–7, & MARK 11:17**

How does God feel about the prayers of "foreigners?" How can we see internationals as precious people created in the image of God, and not as projects?

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③ **ACTS 1:8, 8:27–31, 35–39**

In light of Jesus' commands here, how could it be strategic to reach out to internationals who are in our country?

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④ **MARK 5:14–20 & JOHN 4:39–42**

What can we learn from these passages about Jesus' attitude toward foreigners? How did one person's encounter with Jesus impact the entire community?

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⑤ **1 THESSALONIANS 2:7–8**

What can we learn from Paul's example of sharing not only the gospel with others, but also his life? How might this relate to our outreach to internationals?

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- 1 How have your thoughts about internationals changed after examining God's Word on the topic?
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## IDEAS FOR LIVING IT OUT

- 1 Initiate a conversation with the next international you see (this will likely be more awkward for you than for them). Introduce yourself and ask questions about their culture. After your conversation, ask if they would like to get together to talk more. Get their number and you are on your way.
- 2 Go to the university recreation facility, international restaurants, or grocery stores to meet new international friends.
- 3 Invite your new friend(s) into whatever you are doing (laundry, shopping, studying, going home for a holiday break).

## TRUE STORY

I met Samuel, a Chinese international student, after I came back from a short-term trip to China. We started getting together to play basketball and eat meals. One day over lunch, Samuel asked if he could go to church with me. I excitedly agreed. Samuel started asking me questions about the Bible, and I tried my best to answer him and show him God's Word.

One day while we were hanging out, I felt God leading me to explicitly share the gospel with him. Samuel understood and accepted Christ that night!

All it took for me to welcome an international was to be available and obedient. I didn't do anything. I was just along for the ride while God was accomplishing His purpose through me! — HUDSON

Hudson was great! It was really his attitude and personality that drew me to Christ. I remember him inviting me to hang out all the time. Almost every night we did something. And every time I had a question about the Bible or Jesus, Hudson always helped me find an answer. I'm really thankful Hudson is my friend. — SAMUEL

- 1 How will you begin to serve as a welcomer?
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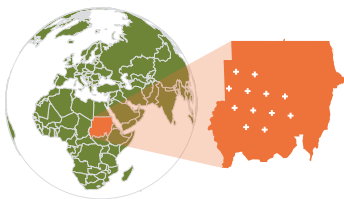
- 2 Who will keep you accountable?
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## THUMB – MUSLIM

Muslims live mostly in North Africa, the Middle East, and Indonesia.

### BELIEFS OF MUSLIM PEOPLES

- They believe in one god, named Allah, and that Muhammad was his final prophet.
- They believe if the good deeds done in life outweigh the bad deeds when they die, they go to paradise.
- They respect Jesus as a good prophet, but do not believe He is God.



### BAGGARA, MESSIRIA OF SUDAN

609,000 PEOPLE / 0% EVANGELICAL

Most of the Baggara are nomadic herdsmen in northern Sudan and the surrounding region. The Baggara live in simple dome-shaped tents that are arranged in a circle, which the cattle are brought into for the night. The Baggara tribes are almost completely Muslim, faithfully observing the “five pillars of Islam.” Many of the men and some of the women are able to make pilgrimages to Mecca.

In each village, a council of men are the decision makers, and all men are involved with caring for the herds. The minority that live in farm communities also plant and harvest the crops. The Baggara are somewhat unusual in that the women work to provide the income needed to maintain the households. They earn cash by milking the cows and selling the milk or milk products. A married woman owns the tent, as well as all of its housekeeping contents.

Very little evangelization has been done among the Baggara tribes. The New Testament has been



translated into their language, and some Christian broadcasts are also available to them. However, because the people are so devoted to the Islamic faith, very few Baggara have converted to follow Jesus. In addition, the nomadic lifestyle of many of the Baggara makes it difficult for missionaries to reach them.

## INTERCEDE

- ① Though the Baggara people are nomadic, may they find their spiritual home and rest in you, Father. We pray for them to know you as the Good Shepherd and follow your voice.
- ② Lord, please open my eyes and connect me to international students who are searching for truth and are eager to learn about you.
- ③ Father, give me courage to be intentional in welcoming and building relationships with the internationals I meet.



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