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FBC Arlington
November 2023

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

A Plan for First Baptist Arlington

2023

BIBLICAL CONTEXT: The Gospel of John

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

-John 20:30-31

Missions 2023

November 5 – December 2, 2023

Religion: Why Does It Matter?

Core Text: John 13:1-17; 21

The world is no stranger to religion. In fact, religion is a universal reality. Every civilization ever discovered by archaeologists and studied by anthropologists has some sort of religion. There is a universal human impulse to worship. Altars are all over the world and appear throughout history.

As Christians, we have been instructed by Jesus to go to all the nations of the world to make disciples, baptize believers, and teach them how to follow Him. This means we will inevitably encounter other religions in the places where we go to evangelize. In many places, these religions are deeply seated and established in the culture.

So – in other words, ***religion matters!*** In fact, India just replaced China as the most populous country on the earth. And India is the most religious nation in the world! Religion—the commitment to core beliefs, the accompanying behaviors, and the groups to which believers belong—remains a powerful force across the world.

So, why do we proselytize? Why do we evangelize? Why do we share the message of Jesus Christ with other religious people in the hopes they will accept our message?

On the one hand, the answer is a simple one and yet, it is also a very complex one! First, we believe in what theologians call *the scandal of particularity*. This means we believe that Jesus Christ is the only One who can offer eternal life to everyone. We believe His Words and His Way. We believe He is the only way, the only truth, and the only life. We believe His claims are both revolutionary and exclusionary. The message of the Gospel is good news, but it rules out all other options.

This is bold and controversial. We know that.

Our missiology is grounded in this core conviction. We support Gospel mission work across the world through various missional partners. We train and send cross-cultural workers from our church to live long-term in various places across the world to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We study the belief systems and practices of other religions. First, this practice helps us understand the behaviors and the places of belonging exhibited by adherents of other religions. Further, it helps us to find bridges of commonalities that offer us opportunities to share the truths of Christianity in ways that others can best relate. For example, we know that Muslims, in general, are offended by the phrase, “Son of God.” Consequently, we don’t begin with that declaration when visiting with Muslims about their faith or when we are sharing ours.

Much of the world continues to be shaped by religious beliefs and practices. There are physical wars that occur entirely because of such deep religious conflicts. There is no doubt that religion is a major factor in family systems, cultural realities, and even commercial economies.

As missiologically committed Christians, we are not called to simply establish a new “religion” across the world. We have been called to lead people into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ that is personal, powerful, and eternal. As followers of Jesus mature, they begin to embrace certain core, orthodox beliefs. These beliefs shape behaviors and create pathways of belonging. All of this is rooted in the Person of Jesus.

So, we are on a sacred, sacramental journey as Christians. This journey involves communicating the truths about Jesus to others wherever we go, regardless of the religious climate we encounter. The message of Jesus is good news everywhere!

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November 5, 2023: *Sacred Beliefs – Sacred Lives*

John 12:37-50

At the heart of every religion is some sort of belief system. Embracing a set of beliefs leads to emerging behaviors. As Christians, our core belief is our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Once we accept Him, we embark on a sacred journey that is marked by a deepening relationship with the God Who created us. This is eternal life. Our missiology is rooted in our firm belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Daily Bible Readings

November 6: John 12:1-11

November 7: Ephesians 1:1-14

November 8: John 12:12-19

November 9: Ephesians 1:15-23

November 10: John 12:37-50

November 11: Reflection

November 12, 2023: *Sacred Lives – Sacred Servants*

John 13:1-17

As followers of Jesus, we place our faith in Him, and our eternity is now secure. As sacred believers. Our lives are marked by acts of sacred service. Just as Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He has called us to a life of service. Our missiology includes a thread of sacred service to the peoples of the world, in the hopes that they might meet the Savior whose example we follow.

Daily Bible Readings

November 13: John 13:1-17

November 14: Matthew 5:1-12

November 15: Matthew 6:1-15

November 16: Matthew 25:31-46

November 17: Luke 10:1-16

November 18: Reflection

November 19, 2023: *Sacred Servants – Sacred Shepherds*

John 21:15-25

The redemptive work of Christ in our lives truly transforms us. We are led beyond our natural inclinations, desires, and limited perspectives. In fact, we are guided by our Good Shepherd. In turn, we engage in the ministry of shepherding others on their journey of faith. Our missiology includes a path of discipleship and spiritual formation for those who choose to accept the message of eternal life.

Daily Bible Readings

November 20: John 10:1-21

November 21: John 21:15-25

November 22: 1 Peter 4:1-11

November 23: Galatians 5:13-26

November 24: Galatians 6:1-10

November 25: Reflection

November 26, 2023: *Sacred Shepherds – Sacred Sharers*

John 21:1-14

Jesus is the supreme object of our faith. He is our Lord and Master. He is our Good Shepherd. He has commissioned us to become fishers of human beings. We have received the Good News. Our lives have become sacred because of His redemptive work in our lives. Now, we must share this Good News with a desperate and hungry world. Our missiology is guided by the Great Commission.

Daily Bible Readings

November 27: Matthew 5:13-16

November 28: Ephesians 2:1-10

November 29: 1 Peter 2:1-10

November 30: Acts 1:1-11

December 1: Matthew 28

December 2: Reflection