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EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF LAKEWOOD BAPTIST
CHURCH IN GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA, TO
REACH UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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May 2022

APPROVAL SHEET

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CHURCH IN GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA, TO
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For the glory of God.

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PREFACE

I am grateful for the opportunity to complete this ministry project at Lakewood Baptist Church. By God's grace, he brought me to Lakewood and blessed me with the opportunity to serve this wonderful church family as a pastor. To this end, I am grateful that the Lord uniquely paired my background, education, and church family in his timing for the implementation of this project. It has been a great blessing to see this ministry project truly meet a need for my church family.

This ministry project was a joy to develop and implement, and I have learned a great deal through this experience. This season has not been the easiest, but the Lord has sustained me. It seems as though the COVID-19 pandemic impacted life in several unexpected ways, but by God's grace he has enabled me to accomplish this project despite unexpected circumstances. I am so very grateful to the Lord for his mercy, kindness, and patience with me. He has helped me to persevere through many years of education and to balance my education with responsibilities at work and time with my family. None of this would have been possible apart from the grace and kindness of the Lord.

Second only to the Lord is my gratitude for my bride, Emily. Emily, My Love, has been an amazing encouragement over the course of my education. She is my best friend and truly an amazing partner in life that the Lord has blessed me with. My Love, thank you for encouraging me to keep moving forward. Thank you for being such a wonderful wife and mother. Words fail to express how truly grateful I am for you. To our children Levi and Lucy, I am so grateful for you. Words fail to express my love for you both. You are gifts of grace from the Lord. Thank you, Levi and Lucy, for encouraging and spurring me on during this project.

Additionally, I am thankful for Southern Seminary and the excellent institution that it is. I have been challenged and encouraged during my time in Southern's professional doctoral program. I have learned a great deal from my professor and supervisor, Dr. John Klaassen. Dr. Klaassen, I have been so very encouraged by your brotherly kindness with your students during our seminars. I have not only learned from the great biblical content you have taught, but also from your pastoral heart and approach in your classes. This is one reason why I can honestly say my experience at Southern during this program has been the best in all my seminary years.

I am hopeful this ministry project serves to impact the members of Lakewood Baptist Church for years come. I pray that the members of Lakewood would continually be equipped to reach unreached peoples with the gospel for God's glory. I pray the Lord will raise up men, women, and families from our church family to be sent into his harvest for the sake of his name among all nations.

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Gainesville, Georgia

May 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Matthew’s Gospel, the Lord’s Great Commission is recorded. Before ascending to the right hand of the Father, Jesus commissioned the church to “go, make disciples of all nations” (28:19).¹ The Great Commission is not a call to disciple all geopolitical countries but is rather a call to disciple all the “ethne” or people groups. This mission continues today as there are still roughly 7,000 unreached people groups remaining in the world. Unfortunately, many Christians today are unaware of the concept of unreached people groups and the responsibility of the church to corporately reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the mission continues, equipping the saints for the work of ministry is vital, particularly in regard to their understanding of and engagement with unreached people groups.

Context

This ministry project took place in the context of Lakewood Baptist Church (LBC) in Gainesville, Georgia. LBC is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention and has a congregation of 1,865 active members. LBC is a dynamic church with many varying strengths, including leadership, support staff, finances, and a broad array of ministries. While LBC has a number of strengths, perhaps among the greatest is LBC’s engagement in missions.

Lakewood is a church that prioritizes local, national, and global missions. Locally, Lakewood is engaged in a variety of outreach ministries to the Gainesville area, including church planting, adoption and foster care ministry, poverty ministry, and

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

international student ministry, to name a few. Nationally, the primary missions focuses of LBC are church planting and disaster relief. Cor. 3:6 is LBC's church planting network, which currently consists of over twenty church plant partnerships in places such as Florida, Vermont, and Colorado. In addition to church planting, LBC is involved in national missions through a disaster relief ministry in which LBC partners with Samaritan's Purse to assist if and when natural disasters occur throughout the continental United States.

Internationally, Lakewood has long-term mission work in both Guatemala and Croatia. For nearly twenty years LBC has been partnering with local churches in Guatemala City to help plant churches, minister to impoverished families, and establish a school that serves students from kindergarten through sixth grade. In Croatia, LBC has partnered with Campus Crusade also for nearly twenty years, during which time LBC has assisted in establishing national (Croat) leadership, supporting the leadership financially, and supplementing the leadership via annual evangelistic trips. In addition to LBC's partnership in both Croatia and Guatemala, LBC supports several missionaries throughout the world.

While missions is greatly prioritized at Lakewood, there are still areas in which LBC has opportunity for growth. Perhaps the greatest weakness of LBC missions is the lack of participation by the majority of LBC members in regard to reaching unreached people groups (UPGs) with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This lack involvement is evidenced by the lack of member participation regarding their going to, praying for, and giving toward reaching the unreached with the gospel. Lack of LBC member participation in reaching UPGs is most likely due to a lack of understanding what unreached peoples groups are specifically and, more generally, of the mission of God.

Many are well aware of the Great Commission, but often view it only as a general command to discipleship rather than a specific call to reach and disciple distinct people groups. Generalizing the specificity of the Great Commission can lead Christians to overlook or underemphasize the necessity of taking the gospel to specific nations or

“people groups” who are currently unreached with the gospel. The majority of LBC members have little understanding of people groups and the ongoing need to take the gospel to those lacking access. Sadly, some members even assume that people in remote places who never hear of Jesus will somehow be saved because of God’s goodness.

At some point, LBC’s mission stopped short of Jesus’s commissioning to make disciples of all the “ethne.” LBC members need to be equipped with a biblical vision of Jesus as the worthy lamb slain to purchase people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. They are in need of understanding who these tribes and peoples are, as well as the ongoing mission of the church to reach them with the gospel. LBC members need a bridge to be built connecting their American Christian lives to seeing UPGs on the other side of the world as their neighbors who they are called to love as themselves. Finally, LBC members also need to see the mission of God as an “all hands on deck” effort, as opposed to only being for a specific segment of the church.

Rationale

In light of the emphasis on missions at LBC it seemed that members were ready to grow in their understanding of the Great Commission to more fully participate in it. The above-mentioned factors indicated that LBC would benefit from being equipped to reach unreached people groups. This project is relevant, first, because the Bible teaches that the gospel must reach the ends of the earth and that all the nations must be discipled. Church members will benefit from growing in their understanding of the many biblical imperatives regarding the church’s global mission. For example, members will benefit from understanding further that the call of Christ to disciple all the nations is not a generic command, but a specific one indicating that each “nation” or ethne in the world should be reached with the gospel and discipled without any excluded.

Second, because no one can be saved apart from trusting Christ, every people group must be reached and taught about Christ. Church members will benefit from the theological understanding that all humans are fallen, and none can be saved apart from

hearing and believing the gospel. Understanding that none will be acquitted on the basis of their lack of proximity to the gospel will enable church members to consider the theological implications for people groups lacking access to the gospel. As a result of understanding these theological implications, church members will be equipped to respond to the great spiritual need of their neighbors.

Third, because believers are called to be disciples of Jesus, they should follow Jesus in all respects, including his mission to seek and save the lost. Reaching unreached people groups must not be a compartmentalized niche ministry of the church only applicable to a small percentage of members. As disciples of Jesus, all believers should be aware of and, in some regard, be a participant in Christ's mission to reach and disciple all people groups. As part of discipleship, church members will benefit from being equipped to reach unreached people groups to grow as wholehearted followers of Jesus.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip members of Lakewood Baptist Church to obediently participate in God's mission of reconciling the unreached to himself through the gospel.

Goals

To ensure the success of this ministry project, certain necessary goals needed to be accomplished. These goals are listed in chronological order to reflect the progression of steps toward equipping Lakewood Baptist Church members to obediently participate in reaching unreached people groups with the gospel.

1. The first goal was to assess the current understanding of unreached people groups among members of Lakewood Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-session curriculum for members of Lakewood Baptist Church on ministry to unreached people groups.
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of God's mission to the unreached among members of Lakewood Baptist Church through implementing the developed six-session curriculum.

4. The fourth goal was to establish a three-year calendar of training for the ongoing equipping of Lakewood Baptist Church members to reach unreached people groups.

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project was to assess the current understanding of unreached people groups among members of Lakewood Baptist Church. This goal was measured by administering the Unreached People Groups Knowledge Assessment Survey² to a select group of twenty to fifty Lakewood Baptist Church members ranging in age from twenty to seventy. The group was selected by a panel of five LBC pastors who extended personal invitation to members they know to have little to no international missions experience. This goal was considered successfully met when this group completed the Unreached People Groups Knowledge Assessment Survey, conveying an accurate representation of their understanding of unreached people groups.

The second goal was to develop a six-session curriculum that will equip members of Lakewood Baptist Church for ministry to unreached people groups. This goal was measured by a panel of Lakewood Baptist Church pastors who utilized a rubric to assess the curriculum's biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, and overall applicability to the members of Lakewood Baptist Church.³ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, then the material will be revised until it meets the standard.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of God's mission to the unreached among members of Lakewood Baptist Church through implementing the developed six-session curriculum. This goal was measured by administering the Unreached People Groups Knowledge Assessment Survey before and after the six-session curriculum, which

² See appendix 1. All the research instruments used in his project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

³ See appendix 2.

was used to measure any change in knowledge regarding unreached people groups. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test demonstrated a positive and statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-curriculum survey of 75 percent of the sample group.

The fourth goal was to establish a three-year calendar of training for the ongoing equipping of LBC members to reach unreached people groups. This goal was measured by a panel of LBC pastors who evaluated the feasibility of the training calendar's incorporation into the preexisting LBC ministry calendar. This goal was considered successfully met when LBC executive staff reviewed and approved the three-year training calendar's implementation.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

People group. The definition of *people group* used for this project is taken from the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization:

A significantly large group of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these. For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.⁴

Unreached people group. The definition of *unreached people group* used for this project is taken from Joshua Project: "A people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside assistance."⁵

⁴ Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 67.

⁵ Joshua Project, "Definitions," accessed January 14, 2020, <https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions>.

Unengaged unreached people group. The definition of *unengaged unreached people group* used for this project is taken from People Groups: “A people group is unengaged when there is no church planting strategy, consistent with Evangelical faith and practice, under implementation.”⁶

10/40 window. The definition of *10/40 window* used for this project is taken from Joshua Project: “The 10/40 window is the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia approximately 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude often called ‘the Resistant Belt’ and includes the majority of the world’s Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists.”⁷

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the Unreached People Groups Knowledge Assessment Surveys was dependent upon the willingness of the participants to be honest about their understanding of unreached people groups. To mitigate this limitation, the participants were promised that their names and answers would not be shared publicly. Second, the implementation of the curriculum was limited by the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the possible length of implementation. If the participants could not attend multiple weeks of training for curriculum implementation (due to COVID-19), then it would be difficult to measure how beneficial the curriculum had been. To mitigate this limitation, the implementation of the project curriculum was accomplished in an all-day training to ensure all participants were present for each curriculum session as well as both the pre- and post- tests.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project only addressed members ranging in age from twenty to seventy. This age range was sufficient to provide an accurate picture of LBC’s understanding of unreached people groups. Second, the

⁶ People Groups, “Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed November 26, 2021, <https://www.peoplegroups.org/294.aspx#307>.

⁷ Joshua Project, “What Is the 10/40 Window,” accessed January 14, 2020, https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/10_40_window.

project was confined to a fifteen-week time frame. This gave adequate time to develop the curriculum, evaluate the curriculum, plan the day conference, execute the conference, and develop the three-year training calendar.

Conclusion

LBC is a church ready for growth in their participation in the Great Commission. Due to the emphasis on missions at LBC, the ground is fertile for being equipped to reach unreached people groups with the gospel. Equipping the members of LBC for this task was essential and was accomplished through the implementation of this project. What follows is the biblical and historical grounding for this project, a detailed description of the project and its implementation and, finally, a comprehensive evaluation of the project.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR REACHING UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

Three passages from the Bible, among others, display God's intention to reconcile all people groups to himself and thus teach that reaching unreached people groups with the gospel is essential to the church's mission. These passages are foundational to the ministry-equipping project at Lakewood Baptist Church. Members of Lakewood Baptist Church must recognize God's desire for the salvation of all people groups, understand his ordained means for accomplishing this end, and thus take hold of their God-given role to participate in his mission.

The End: God's Purchase of All People Groups (Rev 5:9-10)

Revelation 5:9-10 depicts God's ordained end for all people groups via the death of Christ. In this passage, Jesus is praised as worthy for his sacrifice to purchase people for God from every tribe, tongue, and nation. As a purchased people, the church is identified as a kingdom of priests and therefore inherently participates in his mission. An exploration of Revelation 5:9 will show that because Christ's death accomplished both the church's salvation and identity, the church must reach unreached peoples with the gospel.

The Lamb Slain for All Peoples

The scene portrayed in Revelation 5:9-10 underscores the necessity to reach unreached peoples with the gospel. In this passage, John describes heaven's throne room in which a heavenly host of elders and seraphim break out in song, worshipping Jesus. Commenting on the focus of the elder's praise, Robert Mounce explains in his

commentary, “They direct their praise to the lamb for his work of redemption.”¹

Redemptive history reached its climax in Christ’s death on the cross for the sake of his people. Therefore, as Thomas Schreiner comments, “A new song is sung because God has done a new work for those who belong to him. . . . Indeed, Christ’s work on the cross is God’s decisive work of salvation; the cross of Christ is the center of history.”² Due to Adam’s sin in the garden, Scripture states that the world sinned with him. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul points out in Romans 5:12, “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned.”³ There is no person or people unaffected by sin, but rather, all men are born enslaved to sin due to the fall. Therefore, the reality of sin’s effect propels the exuberant song in Revelation 5 in light of Christ’s accomplishment and is conveyed by an allusion to the Old Testament.

In Revelation 5:9, Jesus is depicted as a slain lamb harkening back to the Passover lamb of Exodus as the centerpiece of the deliverance of God’s people from Egyptian slavery. This image usage conveys the fulfillment of what the Exodus and Passover meal foreshadow; namely, the deliverance of God’s people from sin through the shed blood of the Savior. In his commentary on Revelation, G. K. Beale helpfully connects the allusion in Revelation 5:9 to what is made explicit of Jesus in John’s introduction to Revelation. John writes, “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God” (Rev 1:5-6). Beale explains, “Rev. 5:9b-10 is also a reworking of Rev. 1:5c-6a in the light of Exod. 19:6 and the Passover idea of the slain lamb.”⁴ As noted, the worth ascribed to Jesus in Revelation 5’s heavenly song is

¹ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 134.

² Thomas R. Schreiner, *Revelation*, ESV Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 609.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 361.

oriented explicitly toward his work in redemption, which extends as far as sin's effect is found. Schreiner explains, "It is because he is the slain lamb, and the next line explains the reason he was slain: because man was enslaved to sin (1:5), Jesus 'ransomed' . . . with his blood people from every ethnic group."⁵

A Purchased People from All Nations

An integral component of this passage is John's elaboration regarding those to whom the work of Christ is applied. John records the heavenly host's exclamation that Jesus had ransomed people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation. This four-fold identification of the redeemed reveals the extent of the atonement and the scope of the church's mission.

At first glance, it seems curious that the heavenly host notes the distinctions of tribe, language, people, and nation. However, a closer look reveals an allusion to an earlier biblical text to connote the extent of Christ's redeeming work. Beale comments, "The general consensus is that this phrase is to be traced back to the almost identical expression repeated in Daniel."⁶ Beale explains further that Daniel's use of the same phrase appears to generally refer to all the world's inhabitants.⁷ Mounce agrees with Beale that using the four-fold phrase is meant to convey the entirety of the world's inhabitants. Mounce explains, "It is fruitless to attempt a distinction between these terms as ethnic, linguistic, political, and so on. . . . The Seer is stressing the universal nature of the church and for this purpose piles up phrases for their rhetorical impact."⁸ However, commenting on the same text in *The King in His Beauty*, Thomas Schreiner seems to observe the distinctions between the terms through the lens of the concept of people groups. Commenting on

⁵ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 609.

⁶ Beale, *Revelation*, 359.

⁷ Beale, *Revelation*, 359.

⁸ Mounce, *Revelation*, 136.

Revelation 5:9, he states, “The seals were opened only because the lamb was slain and has purchased some from every people group for God (5:6, 9).”⁹

The list of distinctions described in Revelation 5:9 seems rather expansive; however, it does not communicate universalism. The four-fold description does not convey the idea that the extent of the atonement or scope of the church’s mission extends to every individual on earth. Instead, this passage conveys a guarantee of all people groups represented in the eschatological church. Schreiner explains, “Jesus didn’t redeem every person without exception, but some from every people group without distinction.”¹⁰

In part, the point of the four-fold phrase seems to highlight the inclusion of the gentile nations into the people of God. Formerly, Israel understood itself to be the exclusive people of God; however, this new multi-ethnic multitude conveys a contrast to this former reality. Mounce explains, “In contrast with the exclusivism of Judaism that prided itself on having been chosen out from among the nations, the church was genuinely ecumenical, recognizing no national, political, cultural, or racial boundaries.”¹¹ Though, the inclusion of the gentiles into God’s people is not a novel concept of the New Testament but instead is rooted firmly in the Abrahamic covenant. In Genesis 12:3, God promised Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed in him. The way of salvation was not to belong solely to Israel but was to be passed on and through Israel.¹² Commenting on the same multi-ethnic multitude in Revelation 7, Beale explains, “The multitudes in Rev. 7:9 are the consummate fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise.”¹³ John’s vision of the scene

⁹ Thomas Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 625.

¹⁰ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 609.

¹¹ Mounce, *Revelation*, 136.

¹² Barnabe Assohoto and Samuel Ngewa, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WorldAlive, 2006), 29.

¹³ Beale, *Revelation*, 427.

in Revelation 5:9-10 and likewise Revelation 7:9-10 depicts the realization of all the families of the earth blessed through the offspring of Abraham.

The continuity between the Abrahamic promise and the multi-ethnic multitude in Revelation 5 is found in John's insinuation of the Exodus story. As mentioned, the scene described in Revelation 5:9-10 harkens back to the Exodus. In addition to the image of the lamb, John's mention of "priests" in verse 10 is an allusion to God's words through Moses in Exodus 19:6: "You shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples."¹⁴ In his commentary on Revelation, Richard Bauckham explains, "John has taken it to mean that members have been drawn from all nations to constitute the church."¹⁵ Whereas the Old Testament emphasized God's people, Israel, being set apart from among the nations, now in the New Testament the emphasis was on God's people, the church, being comprised of all nations. Bauckham continues, "In revelation this statement is applied to the church as the eschatological people of God, the people of the new Exodus, who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, the eschatological Passover lamb."¹⁶ The fact that the eschatological people of God are comprised of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation highlights the necessity of reaching unreached people groups with the gospel. If the eschatological people of God will be comprised of all people groups, then necessarily the gospel must reach all people groups, which underscores the church's missional identity.

A New Identity

As briefly mentioned, an important term in Revelation 5 is John's use of "kingdom and priests." Again, through John's use of this phrase he alludes to Exodus 19 regarding God ascribing this title to Israel. In this eschatological vision, however, the term

¹⁴ Richard Bauckham, *New Testament Theology: The Book of Revelation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 327.

¹⁵ Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 327.

¹⁶ Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 327.

was now applied to the church and sheds light on her missional identity. Schreiner comments, “The role appointed for Israel has been granted to the church of Jesus Christ, composed of both Jews and Gentiles.”¹⁷ As God’s people, the nation of Israel was comprised priest-kings tasked with being a light to the nations.¹⁸ Israel was to reveal the one true God to the world through their national identity. However, this Old Testament identity of God’s people was a foretaste of the future reality regarding the mission of the New Testament church. Mounce explains, “What was promised to the Israelites at Sinai (You shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Exod 19:6) is fulfilled in the establishment of the church through the death of Christ.”¹⁹ This promise, Mounce continues, “is that the church is to share in the eschatological reign of Christ and all that it will involve.”²⁰

The work of Christ on the cross not only accomplished the church’s redemption but also established her missional identity. Schreiner comments, “The lamb ransomed his people for a purpose, fulfilling the original mandate given to Adam and Eve to rule the world for God.”²¹ John records that the lamb had made the multi-ethnic multitude a kingdom and priests to God who would reign on the earth. Implicit in John’s description is essentially the mission strategy through which all peoples would be redeemed. Bauckham explains, “The sacrificial death of the lamb and the prophetic witness of his followers are God’s strategy for winning all the nations of the world from the dominion

¹⁷ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 609.

¹⁸ G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells among Us* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 128.

¹⁹ Mounce, *Revelation*, 136.

²⁰ Mounce, *Revelation*, 137.

²¹ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 609.

of the beast to his own kingdom.”²² Interestingly enough, inherent to being redeemed by God is the call to be engaged in his mission in the world.

Expounding on the idea of being identified as a priest, Professor Grant Osborne comments, “As priests they serve him in worship and witness. . . . The saints belong to God and thus serve him by participating in the universal mission to the nations.”²³ Mounce agrees with Osborne, likewise explaining that Christ’s death “has transformed men and women from every part of the universe into priests in the service of God.”²⁴ In light of Osborne and Mounce’s comments, it seems evident that Christ’s work constituted a sort of perpetual mission. Christ died to save men, and to be saved is to be identified as a priest. As a priest, one is to serve Christ, and to serve Christ is to be a mediator of the salvific message. Therefore, inherent in the church’s identity, as a kingdom and priests, is the call to take the gospel to all people groups whom Christ purchased. Schreiner comments, “The Church exercises priesthood, so access to God is mediated through the message proclaimed by the church.”²⁵

As the church exercises its role in proclaiming salvation to all people without distinction, Revelation 5:9-10 provides undergirding confidence regarding the mission’s success. Revelation 5:9-10 and the similar scene of the same multitude in Revelation 7:9-10 do not depict possibilities or hypotheticals but rather assured realities. Christ died for and effectively purchased people for God from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. Therefore, as Schreiner comments, “We can be assured when evangelizing every people group that God has ordained some to believe and put their trust in him.”²⁶

²² Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 337.

²³ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 449, Scribd.

²⁴ Mounce, *Revelation*, 138.

²⁵ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 610.

²⁶ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 610.

The Means: God's Method for All People Groups (Rom 10:14-17)

In the same way God ordained that all people groups be reconciled with himself in Christ, God also ordained the means through which reconciliation in Christ could be applied. Romans 10:14-17 conveys the means through which God ordained his people to be saved. Through Paul's direct address of Israel's unbelief, he indirectly explains the means through which any person or people is to be reconciled to God. An examination of this passage will display the necessity of hearing and believing the gospel for salvation, highlighting the church's critical need to reach unreached people groups.

The Context of Romans 10:14-17

Romans 10:14-17 can be viewed as one coin with two sides. On the first side of the coin, the context and flow of Paul's argument convey an indictment against Israel for failing to obtain salvation through Christ. In his commentary on Romans, Tom Schreiner explains, "The overarching purpose in the paragraph is to say that Israel has heard the gospel and hence should put their faith in Jesus as Lord."²⁷ However, also implied in this passage are the means of salvation for any person. The two sides of the coin will be discussed in turn.

First, from chapter 9, Paul has been addressing the failure of Israel to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. The thrust of Paul's argument in chapter 10 surrounds the issue of salvation. In verses 1-3, Paul explains that he desires that Israel be saved; however, they had rejected God's righteousness offered to them through faith in Christ and instead attempted to establish their own. Although Israel rejected Christ, Paul anticipated Israel excusing their accountability due to lack of witness. Therefore, throughout Paul's argument in chapters 9 and 10, he effectively dismantles any excuse Israel could assert as the reason they failed to place their faith in Christ. The South Asia Bible Commentary states,

²⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1139, Scribd.

“The Jews cannot make the excuse that they have not heard the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.”²⁸

Throughout his argument, Paul explains that everything necessary for Israel’s salvation had already occurred from the testimony of nature to the testimony of Jesus and the apostles. For example, in his commentary on Romans, Robert Yarbrough points to Paul’s use of Psalm 19:4 in verse 18. Yarbrough remarks, “All people have heard enough to make them accountable through their observation of nature if they care to see God’s voice and words that go out ‘to all the ends of the world’ through what he has made.”²⁹ However, Israel is all the more accountable because they were also given the law and the prophets. Yarbrough points out that Paul quotes Moses in Deuteronomy regarding his warning against Israel turning from God.³⁰ Additionally, Paul alluded through his argument that Christ himself and later his apostles had come specifically to Israel. The South Asia Bible Commentary states, “Indeed, Jesus himself preached to the Jews [T]he first apostles, who were themselves Jewish, followed his example.”³¹

All had been done that was necessary for Israel to have sufficient witness to be saved.³² The missing element for Israel was faith in Christ. Yarbrough explains, “By rejecting Christ the Jews were rejecting God and the saving righteousness only he can provide.”³³ However, as the thrust of Paul’s argument was focused on Israel, it also contained profound implications for the rest of the world, most notably those unreached with the gospel.

²⁸ Ramesh Khatri, *South Asia Bible Commentary* (Rajasthan, India: Open Door, 2015), 1538.

²⁹ Robert W. Yarbrough, *Romans*, ESV Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 160.

³⁰ Yarbrough, *Romans*, 160.

³¹ Wintle, *South Asia Bible Commentary*, 1538.

³² Kasali, *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1392.

³³ Yarbrough, *Romans*, 155.

The Implied Salvific Means

The thrust of Paul's argument is focused on Israel's failure to attain salvation despite receiving necessary witness. However, implied within his argument are the necessary means for any person or people to be saved. Through an initial statement followed by a series of rhetorical questions, Paul communicates the essential steps required for any person to be reconciled to God.

In John 14:6, Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." God ordained that salvation for anyone could only be obtained through faith in his Son Jesus. The testimony of nature nor the general revelation of God's character is sufficient for one's salvation. Schreiner contends, "The saving message cannot be confined to a general statement about the goodness of God and his salvific purposes. . . . It centers on Jesus the Messiah and his saving work on the cross and the truth that he now is the exalted Lord, who saves both Jews and gentiles."³⁴

Therefore, In Romans 10:13, Paul makes an initial salvific statement by quoting the prophet Joel: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." In his commentary, Douglas Moo explains that the verbiage of "call upon" is derived from Greek culture connoting the need to ask the gods for help or assistance.³⁵ Early Christians adopted this verbiage to reflect the necessity of asking for assistance from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.³⁶ Commenting on Paul's use of Joel, Moo explains, "The quotation asserts that salvation is a matter of calling on the Lord."³⁷ In light of this fact, Paul then establishes what is necessary for one to "call on" the Lord through asking a series of

³⁴ Schreiner, *Romans*, 1142.

³⁵ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1996), 660.

³⁶ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 660.

³⁷ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 662.

rhetorical questions. Osborne explains, “Paul now traces the process of conversion in reverse order (vv. 14-15), unpacking what it means to ‘call on’ Jesus in faith by moving from effect back to cause.”³⁸

Summarily, for either Jew or Gentiles to call upon Jesus for salvation, they must hear and believe the gospel. However, there is a God-ordained process for hearing and believing to occur. Schreiner explains, “What is communicated in Rom. 10:14-15 and 17 is a principle that applies equally to both Jews and gentiles. . . . The steps of the chain must be realized if people are going to call on the Lord and be saved.”³⁹ In Romans 10:14 Paul first asks, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?” Naturally, one cannot ask for salvific assistance from God if he or she does not believe God exists. As Hebrews 11:6 states, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Second, in 10:14 Paul asks, “And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?” Certainly, people cannot believe in the Savior if they have never heard of him nor heard of the need of him. Third, in 10:14 Paul asks, “And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” Logically, one can hear the message of saving faith through Christ unless someone else shares or proclaims it. Finally, in 10:15 Paul asks, “And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” No one will be proclaiming the gospel’s good news unless messengers are sent out into the world.

The salvific steps articulated through Paul’s questions are summarized well in verse 17.⁴⁰ Here Paul explains that faith comes by hearing and hearing comes through the word about Christ. The intended result of sending out preachers with the message of Christ is for unreached sinners to be saved through faith in Christ and his work. Elaborating on

³⁸ Grant Osborne, *Romans: Verse-by-Verse* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 520, Scribd.

³⁹ Schreiner, *Romans*, 1142.

⁴⁰ Schreiner, *Romans*, 1140.

verse 17, Osborne comments, “Paul is emphasizing the proclaimed gospel regarding what Christ has done: providing salvation through his blood sacrifice on the cross.”⁴¹ No person or people group can be saved but through faith in Christ. This fact has profound implications for the mission of the contemporary church regarding unreached people groups.

The Necessity of Reaching the Unreached

Exploring Romans 10:14-17 reveals great implications for the mission of the contemporary church. This passage makes abundantly clear that unless one hears the gospel, he or she cannot be saved. This fact helps the contemporary church more fully grasp its mission given by Jesus in Matthew 28’s Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. Paul, Yarbrough remarks, “understands the gospel as a message to be heard, heeded, and spread, not merely parsed, perhaps defended, and at the end idly affirmed.”⁴² The means that what Paul articulates in Romans 10:14-17 is the same means by which the church today must carry out its mission. The salvific steps are the same. The *Africa Bible Commentary* states, “These steps show that those who have already confessed Christ and believed in him will be used by God to help others hear the same message.”⁴³

With an abundance of unreached people groups existing globally, Paul’s argument in Romans 10 clarifies the necessity of reaching the unreached with the gospel. The church cannot assume people unreached with the gospel will somehow be reconciled to God through other means. The testimony of nature is not sufficient. In fact, Paul’s argument in this passage clarifies that nothing is sufficient for one’s salvation apart from hearing of and believing in Christ Jesus. Echoing this notion, Schreiner remarks, “It

⁴¹ Osborne, *Romans*, 526.

⁴² Yarbrough, *Romans*, 158.

⁴³ Kasali, *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1392.

excludes the idea that salvation can be obtained apart from hearing the gospel.”⁴⁴ Today, unreached people groups by their very designation are not saved. Therefore, the church must send preachers out into the world with the gospel. Preachers must proclaim the gospel so that the unreached can hear, believe, and call upon the name of Jesus for salvation

The Mission: God’s Plan to Reach All People Groups (Matt 28:18-20)

In light of God’s ordained end and means for reconciling all people groups to himself in Christ, the church’s mission is made explicit through Christ’s final words before his ascension. The Great Commission of Matthew 28 reveals God’s plan for how he intends to reconcile all people groups to himself through the church’s ministry. Jesus’s commission gives specificity to the church’s global mission, which is to disciple every nation. A close look at Matthew 28:18-20 will show that Jesus both commissioned and empowered the church specifically to reach all people groups in order to baptize and disciple them.

The Church Commissioned

Perhaps a natural question to ask when considering the Great Commission is whether it is applicable to believers today. More specifically, is the Great Commission truly the church’s mission today, or was it only for the original eleven apostles? It is necessary to consider both the context and implications of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 to arrive at an answer.

Matthew states, “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them” (Matt 28:16). Galilee was the prearranged location for the setting of the Great Commission, as shown by Matthew 26:32 and Matthew 28:10. It is clear from verse 16 that at least the eleven disciples were present during the giving of the Great Commission, but D. A. Carson notes, “Plausibly, the command is given to a

⁴⁴ Schreiner, *Romans*, 1142.

larger gathering of disciples.”⁴⁵ Carson argues that Matthew incidentally alludes to a larger crowd of disciples present based on verse 17’s “but some doubted.” Carson explains that the usage of *hoi de* in verse 17 means “but some” and is meant to communicate a contrast with the eleven already mentioned.⁴⁶ Leon Morris, similarly to Carson, contends that more than only the eleven disciples were present at this commissioning scene and that those who doubted were outside of the eleven disciples. Morris comments, “It is difficult to think that the hesitation was coming from the eleven, considering all that had happened to them during the recent past.”⁴⁷ However, R. T. France disagrees, suggesting that those who doubted were part of the eleven disciples instead of another group outside the eleven. France explains, “Matthew has very specifically limited the number of people present to eleven, and has mentioned no additional group whose reaction may be contrasted with that of the eleven.”⁴⁸

It is perhaps difficult to conclude whether others were present at the giving of the Great Commission in addition to the eleven. Some have thought the Great Commission was given specifically to the eleven apostles and is therefore not necessarily the marching order of the church today.⁴⁹ However, perhaps the implications of the commission itself provide more clarity regarding its application to the contemporary church than does the precise understanding of its original recipients. Carson explains that the Great Commission was given to at least the eleven but precisely in their own role as disciples.⁵⁰ In other

⁴⁵ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 666.

⁴⁶ Carson, *Matthew*, 663.

⁴⁷ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 745.

⁴⁸ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2007), 1111.

⁴⁹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 626.

⁵⁰ Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

words, the Great Commission was given as a paradigm for every and all disciples.⁵¹ Carson comments, “It is binding on all Jesus’ disciples to make others what they themselves are—disciples of Jesus Christ.⁵² All disciples are to declare the gospel to all peoples without exception.⁵³ France explains that the agents of the ingathering of God’s people are to be Jesus’s disciples.⁵⁴ These agents may have originally only been the eleven, but as France explains, “as their numbers are increased . . . the mission will be extended more widely until ‘all the nations’ are included in its scope.”⁵⁵

Therefore, regardless of who and how many original recipients were present when Jesus gave the Great Commission, by implication the Great Commission is applicable to every Christian individually and thus the church corporately. Even if Jesus only commanded the eleven to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to obey all that he commanded, by implication, those whom the eleven disciplined (being taught all that Jesus commanded the eleven) would likewise be taught to go and make disciples of all nations. Inherent in being a disciple of Jesus is the calling to make disciples, and thus the Great Commission is the mission given to the church.

Authority for the Mission

Before he gave the specifics of his church’s commission, Jesus helpfully grounds the future mission in his sovereign power. Jesus had been crucified, buried, raised to life, and now stood before the disciples victorious as he gave them their marching orders. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

⁵¹ Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

⁵² Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

⁵³ Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 454.

⁵⁴ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1114.

⁵⁵ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1114.

Formerly, during Jesus's earthly ministry, he condescended to take the form of a servant although he was God. However, the time of condescension was over now that Jesus was raised from the dead and given all authority. Carson comments, "This well-defined exercise of authority is given as the climactic vindication of his humiliation and it marks a turning point in redemptive history, for Messiah's 'kingdom' . . . has dawned in new power."⁵⁶ Jesus informed his disciples that he had received the fullest possible authority. Morris explains, "The limitations that applied throughout the incarnation no longer apply to him. . . . He has supreme authority throughout the universe."⁵⁷

Jesus's assertion of having all authority in heaven and on earth indicates his divine status.⁵⁸ Osborne comments, "The major message here and in v.20 is that Jesus as the Risen One has the authority of Yahweh, uniting the two spheres."⁵⁹ As a result of Jesus's authority, there are at least two pertinent implications regarding the Great Commission. One implication of Jesus's universal authority is that he has the right to commission the disciples. Morris explains, "Because he is who he is and because he has the full authority he has, they are commissioned to 'go.'"⁶⁰ As their master and King, Jesus had the absolute right to command the disciples to go and do his will.

The second implication of Jesus's authority is that, in addition to having the right, Jesus also has the ability to assist his disciples in accomplishing this mission.⁶¹ The mission of discipling the nations would undoubtedly be an arduous if not impossible task,

⁵⁶ Carson, *Matthew*, 665.

⁵⁷ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 746.

⁵⁸ Grant Osborne, *Matthew, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 1079, Scribd.

⁵⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1079.

⁶⁰ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

⁶¹ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew, The New American Commentary*, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 431.

particularly in light of the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Nevertheless, what greater encouragement could there be for these disciples and the church today than to know that the one who commissioned them is sovereign over all things. Carson explains that, because of Jesus's authority, "his followers may go in the confidence that their Lord is in sovereign control of 'everything in heaven and on earth.'"⁶² Therefore, in light of Jesus grounding his commission in his sovereign authority, it is evident that he empowered the church to accomplish the Great Commission.

The Church's Mission

After asserting his universal authority, Jesus then gave the disciples the particulars of their mission. Jesus says in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." The central command of the Great Commission is "go and make disciples." Jesus's command was not simply a call to make converts but rather a call for the disciples to make others what they themselves were. Perhaps today, the command to make disciples is sometimes misconstrued as merely a command to secure professions of faith, but this is not the case. While the command to make disciples is not less than seeing conversions, it goes much farther, i.e., teaching others to obey all Jesus commanded. As Craig Blomberg comments, "The verb 'make disciples' also commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith."⁶³ Therefore, to avoid stopping short in its mission as the church, it is essential to understand what it means to be and make disciples.

According to Morris, a disciple is a learner and a follower: "In the first century, a disciple did not enroll with a particular school but rather with a particular teacher."⁶⁴

⁶² Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

⁶³ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

⁶⁴ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

Expounding on this idea, Carson quotes John Broadus: “To disciple a person to Christ is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher, ‘taking his yoke,’ of authoritative instruction, accepting what he says as true because he says it, and submitting to his requirements as right because he makes them.”⁶⁵ Understanding the student and teacher relationship in discipleship is helpful to assuage the inclination to merely secure professions of faith. Osborne believes that Matthew’s record of the Great Commission is intended to lead the church to emulate Jesus’s approach to discipleship displayed in the Gospel of Matthew: “They must be brought to understanding and to that deep ethical commitment patterned in the sermon on the mount and the community discourse; then they will become ‘trained as disciples in the kingdom’ (John 13:52).”⁶⁶

The church’s goal is not only to proclaim the gospel but to make wholehearted followers of Christ. France explains, “It is not enough that the nations hear the message; they must also respond with the same wholehearted commitment which was required of those who became disciples of Jesus during his ministry.”⁶⁷ Jesus’s Great Commission was not intended merely to garner nominal adherence but to secure wholehearted commitment to Jesus.⁶⁸ The aim of the disciples was to go and make others what they themselves already were.

This aim of making disciples or wholehearted followers of Jesus is characterized by baptism and teaching.⁶⁹ Carson writes, “Envisaged is that proclamation of the gospel that will result in repentance and faith, for *matheteuo* (I disciple) entails both preaching

⁶⁵ Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

⁶⁶ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1080.

⁶⁷ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1115.

⁶⁸ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

⁶⁹ Carson, *Matthew*, 668.

and response. . . . The response of discipleship is baptism and instruction.”⁷⁰ Baptizing and teaching are the two essential characteristics of making disciples that connote both initiation into the church and a life-long learning process.

Jesus commanded the disciples to baptize others in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Baptism, as Blomberg states, is “a once-for-all, decisive initiation into Christian community.”⁷¹ It is a sign of entrance into the church, and one’s pledged submission to the Lordship of Jesus.⁷² Additionally, as France explains, baptism marks “the point of enrollment into a process of learning which is never complete; the Christian community is a school of learners at various stages of development rather than divided into the baptized (who have ‘arrived’) and those who are ‘not yet ready.’”⁷³ France’s comment is an excellent segue to a second characteristic of making disciples, which is teaching.

In addition to baptizing, Jesus commanded his disciples to teach their disciples to observe all he commanded. Blomberg comments, “Teaching obedience to all of Jesus’ commands forms the heart of disciple making.”⁷⁴ The disciples were to disseminate the Lordship of Jesus in the world through the proclamation of his commands.⁷⁵ Jesus’s command was not aimed at garnering mere intellectual assent but rather at shaping the way his people are to live. He intended that what he taught during his ministry, as reflected in Matthew, was to be lived. Osborne states, “The emphasis on obeying ‘everything I

⁷⁰ Carson, *Matthew*, 668.

⁷¹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

⁷² Carson, *Matthew*, 668.

⁷³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1116.

⁷⁴ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 433.

⁷⁵ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1082.

have commanded you’ shows that the discourse sections are not really didactic material to be learned but more importantly practical injunctions to be lived.”⁷⁶

All People Groups

In the Great Commission, Jesus makes the means of his mission clear. As previously discussed, it is in light of the universal authority of Christ that the disciples were to go and make more disciples—a goal which would be characterized by baptism and teaching obedience to Christ’s commands. However, another element of the mission which Jesus makes clear is who the church is to disciple. Jesus commanded them, “Go and make disciples of all nations.”

The phrase used by Matthew, “all nations,” translates as *panta ta ethne*. *Panta* clearly means “all,” as in every or each. Blomberg asserts that the two options for interpreting the meaning of *ethne* are “Gentiles” and “peoples.”⁷⁷ Matthew’s use of “all nations” conveys at least one of two ideas regarding the mission of the church. First, the usage of *panta ta ethne* conveys that the church’s mission is not focused solely on Jews but is also includes gentiles. “Nations” was often used to reference gentiles generally as distinct from Jews. Therefore, the emphasis of Jesus’s command to disciple the nations is on the inclusion of gentiles into the people of God. Part of Israel’s calling had always been to be a light to the nations. They were the people of God and were to live distinct from the world that the nations might see and even be drawn in. Israel’s previous witness was centripetal in nature, somewhat of a “come and see” approach.⁷⁸ Now, however, the mission of the church was to be centrifugal.⁷⁹ Emphasizing the reaching of the nations, Jesus shifted the disciples thinking from come and see to “go and tell.” The church was to

⁷⁶ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1082.

⁷⁷ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

⁷⁸ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1079.

⁷⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1079.

reach and disciple all nations, Jew, and gentile. Carson comments, “The aim of Jesus’s disciples, therefore, is to make disciples of all people everywhere, without distinction.”⁸⁰

A second idea conveyed by Matthew’s use of *panta ta ethne* harkens back to a promise made in the Old Testament. The opening lines of Matthew’s Gospel attach the life and mission of Jesus to the patriarch Abraham. Matthew begins his gospel record with the genealogy of Christ but only goes back as far as Abraham in order to communicate that God’s promise to bless all nations through Abraham is fulfilled in Christ.⁸¹ Where Matthew started his Gospel, he now concludes by attaching the fulfillment of the promise in Christ to the church’s ongoing mission. The Greek phrase used here in Matthew 28 (*panta ta ethne*) is the same used in the Septuagint concerning God’s promise to Abraham. Expounding on the connection between the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 and the Great Commission, Carson explains, “When that covenant promise is reiterated in Genesis 18:18, 22:18, the LXX uses the same words found here: *panta ta ethne*.”⁸²

Given Matthew’s intentional connection of the Abrahamic covenant to the Great Commission, more specificity is meant in the usage “all nations” than simply the inclusion of gentiles generally. In his book *Let the Nations Be Glad*, pastor and theologian John Piper looked at every use of the combination of the Greek words *pas* and *ethnos* (from which *panta ta ethne* comes) and their various forms to ascertain the meaning a *panta ta ethne* in the Great Commission. Piper concludes that the New Testament usage of *panta ta ethne* refers only once to gentile individuals, but nine times refers to ethnic people groups distinct from Jews.⁸³ Similarly, Piper found in the Old Testament that *panta ta ethne* is used nearly one hundred times and virtually every usage refers to ethnic people

⁸⁰ Carson, *Matthew*, 667.

⁸¹ Carson, *Matthew*, 667.

⁸² Carson, *Matthew*, 667.

⁸³ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 166.

groups outside of Israel.⁸⁴ This interpretation certainly fits with God’s promise to Abraham to bless all the “families” of the earth. This interpretation also fits with Revelation’s eschatological view of all distinct people groups worshiping God in heaven (Rev 5:9; 7:9).

The church is commissioned and empowered by Christ to reach and disciple every ethnic people group. In his book *Sojourners and Strangers*, Greg Allison concisely articulates this aim of the church’s disciple making efforts: “The divine goal for the church in terms of extension is that one day it will exist among all people groups throughout the entire world.”⁸⁵ Therefore, the church must emphasize reaching and discipling groups that may be unreached with the gospel.

Conclusion

Though one could survey many texts to see the need of reaching unreached people groups, it is not possible to explore them all within the limitations of this chapter. However, the three passages discussed in this chapter provide sufficient proof to establish the need of the church to reach the unreached with the gospel. Christ died to purchase a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, and ordained that salvation be applied through hearing the gospel with faith. Therefore, the mission of the church, as established in the Great Commission, is to reach all nations to teach them the gospel.

⁸⁴ Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, 167.

⁸⁵ Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 145.

CHAPTER 3
THE THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL
ISSUES RELATED TO REACHING
UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

In addition to the testimony of Scripture, both church history and contemporary scholarship validate the need for the church today to reach unreached people groups with the gospel. An exploration of church history reveals that the church has historically been propelled to evangelize un-evangelized people to the ends of the earth. Similarly, contemporary missions research and contemporary theological scholarship both undergird the continuation of this mission today from history past. The focus of this chapter is to substantiate the need to reach unreached people groups through a brief survey of historical, missiological, and theological scholarship.

Reaching the Unreached throughout History

Examining church history reveals that the church has understood and acted upon the biblical idea that the gospel must reach unreached peoples. Although the terminology of *unreached* and even *people groups* developed much later, the church's mission has historically focused on reaching people who have yet to be evangelized. A close look at church history from the ministry of the apostles through the first few hundred years of the church displays continuity between the contemporary focus on unreached people groups and the early church's ministry.

The Mission in Acts

In the book of Acts, Luke records the beginnings of the New Testament church's mission to make disciples of all nations. What began as a group of disciples fearfully huddled in an upper room ended with churches planted among unreached peoples in

unreached places. Today, the same mission continues as many peoples remain in need of hearing the truth of the gospel. As the mission continues, the contemporary church can be encouraged and challenged in its aim by looking to the early days of the church's mission. Within Acts, one reads how the early church implemented the Lord's commission to make disciples of all nations. Two characteristics of their implementation in particular are worth noting: constant gospel proclamation and a pan-ethnic focus.

Gospel Proclamation

When the book of Acts opened, the small fledgling church consisted of Jewish men and women and was relegated to the area of Jerusalem. However, in only thirty years, Christianity became a world religion.¹ Due to the church's mission, people outside Jerusalem who were formerly unreached and unaware of the gospel heard and believed. In *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission*, J. Herbert Kane comments, "When the book of Acts closes the gospel had been preached as far west as Rome; and there was a thriving Christian church in almost every city of significance in the eastern part of the empire."² The church's growth occurred through the church living on mission to advance the gospel to every nation, starting in Jerusalem. In *Introduction to Global Missions*, Zane Pratt, David Sills, and Jeff Walters explain, "In the earliest days of the church, believers faithfully proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ to those around them."³ Likewise, in *A History of Christian Mission*, missiologist Stephen Neill states, "The church of the first Christian generation was a genuinely missionary church."⁴

¹ J. Herbert Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 7.

² Kane, *A Concise History*, 7.

³ Zane Pratt, M. David Sills, and Jeff K. Walters, *Introduction to Global Mission* (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 97.

⁴ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 21.

Although there existed special ministry offices within the church, such as the apostles, a great deal of the mission was carried out by anonymous church members as they lived on mission. Neill points out that some of the earliest and most significant churches were not planted by the apostles themselves but by anonymous missional Christians: “Few, if any, of the great churches were really founded by apostles.”⁵ The churches at Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria were planted by unknown Christians engaging in the Great Commission to disciples the nations. Neill continues, “Nothing is more notable than the anonymity of these early missionaries.”⁶ The anonymity of these first church planters is exemplary of the mission focus of the early church. The aim of advancing and proclaiming the gospel was not a task relegated to a niche few but was the corporate aim of the church, including apostles as well as laypeople. Kane remarks, “We know that Christian laymen, many of them displaced persons, carried the good news of the gospel wherever they went.”⁷ Zeal for broad gospel proclamation was commonplace in the early church despite serious opposition. Pratt, Sills, and Walters explain that even though Christianity was illegal in the Roman empire for over two hundred years, Christians still freely shared the gospel.⁸

Pan-Ethnic Focus

In addition to constant gospel proclamation, the book of Acts also conveys a consistent theme of the gospel going to distinct ethnic people groups. Almost immediately within the first few chapters of Acts, one reads of the multi-ethnic focus of the mission. Although the Jewish population was the initial focus of the church’s mission, notably,

⁵ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 22.

⁶ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 22.

⁷ Kane, *A Concise History*, 9.

⁸ Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Mission*, 99.

many churches planted within the first thirty years from the giving of the Great Commission were of different ethnic people groups who, in large part, were not Jewish.

The concept of reaching distinct unreached people groups is present within the pages of Acts however is often overlooked. In *From Every People and Nation*, J. Daniel Hays explains how readers of the New Testament often overlook the ethnic diversity of the New Testament world. Hays notes that typically, within biblical scholarship, “discussions generally cover the Greco-Roman culture and the Jewish diaspora, assuming subconsciously that the New Testament world consisted of only two ethnic groups: Jews and Greco-Roman Gentiles.”⁹ Though, a closer look at New Testament passages reveals multiple distinct ethnic groups who, prior to Christian missionaries arriving with the gospel, would have been classified as unreached people groups by today’s missiologists. For example, Hays points out that the book of Acts mentions distinct peoples such as the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Cretans, Arab, and people from Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and Cyrene.¹⁰

The ethnic or nation’s focus of the church’s mission is undoubtedly rooted in Jesus’s Great Commission but is manifested through scenes in Acts such as Pentecost, Peter’s interaction with Cornelius, Philip, and the Ethiopian eunuch, and Paul’s broader ministry to the Gentiles. In each instance, the general call to disciple all the nations is revealed in very specific ways. The same missionary zeal for reaching distinct nations is recorded in other historical documents as well. Early church historian Eusebius notes that the apostle Thomas went to Parthia, Andrew went to Scythia, and John went to Asia.¹¹ Additionally, Pratt, Sills and Walter state, “Tradition places Thomas in India and other

⁹ J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 141.

¹⁰ Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 142.

¹¹ Eusebius, *The Church History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 116.

apostles as far as Spain and the British Isles.”¹² The emphasis of the early church on constant gospel proclamation and specifically to nations or people groups unreached by the gospel is apparent in the book of Acts. It would only continue in the future years of the church’s mission.

The Early Church and Beyond

The marriage of gospel proclamation and the inclination to advance into areas without gospel witness remained very much intact throughout the church’s life. For centuries beyond the book of Acts, the church’s mission continued to propel Christians into new areas where inevitably new believers would be added to their number. What started in Jerusalem in the book of Acts steadily moved into the surrounding areas over time. For example, in the third century the gospel moved from Cappadocia into Armenia, which impacted the area to such an extent that it became entirely Christian.¹³ Kane explains, “As a result of a mass movement led by the great missionary, Gregory the Illuminator, and sparked by the conversion of King Tiridates, Armenia became a Christian kingdom.”¹⁴

Neill points out that by the end of the third century “there was no area in the Roman Empire which had not been penetrated to some extent by the Gospel.”¹⁵ The gospel was advancing to tribal groups like the Visigoths, Burgundians, and Franks who lived on the peripheries of the Roman empire.¹⁶ However, when the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity during his reign, it could be said that missional zeal waned to an extent. Constantine ended the persecution of Christians, which enabled the

¹² Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Mission*, 100.

¹³ Kane, *A Concise History*, 12.

¹⁴ Kane, *A Concise History*, 12.

¹⁵ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 35.

¹⁶ Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Mission*, 101.

church to worship and work out the finer points of Christianity freely. In *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, Ruth Tucker comments, “Theologians hammered out creeds, and the church councils argued about everything from the deity of Christ to the date of Easter.”¹⁷ However, it would not be long before the zeal for advancing the gospel to unreached areas would resume. For example, in the fifth century, a missionary named Patrick left Britain to bring the gospel to Ireland. Patrick experienced a Macedonian-like calling through which he was burdened for the people of Ireland—who he considered were at the ends of the earth and a nation beyond the reach of everyone.¹⁸

Although there existed complex and often negative governmental influence and effect on the church’s mission during the Middle Ages, sincere missionary endeavors to unreached people continued. Christian groups such as the Celts, Roman Catholics, and Benedictines were active in evangelistic endeavors, advancing the gospel among barbarians and into remote areas.¹⁹ In the early twelfth century, laypersons and clergy advanced the gospel to peoples in Central Asia, the Pacific Rim, and even into Southeast Asia.²⁰

Although there were regular setbacks and diversions along the way, the church’s mission continued advancing to peoples without gospel witness through the centuries. This evident passion of the church could perhaps be seen no more apparent than through the mission efforts of the Moravians in the 1700s. The Moravians were compelled to reach the unreached for Christ’s sake. Tucker states, “Their all-consuming purpose was to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.”²¹ The Moravians strategically worked together as a community toward global evangelization. In *Introducing World Missions*, Scott

¹⁷ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 17.

¹⁸ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 39.

¹⁹ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 18.

²⁰ A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 111.

²¹ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 99.

Moreau, Gary Corwin, and Gary McGee comment, “The Moravians became devoted to mission and were far ahead of their time in strategy and conception of Christian unity.”²² Famous missionary William Carey came along not long after the Moravian mission movement began. In 1792, Carey published a tract entitled “An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens.”²³ Moreau, Corwin and McGee explain that this publication “justified overseas evangelism and became the first manifesto of the modern missionary movement.”²⁴ After reminding the church of its role in reaching the unreached, Carey spent the rest of his life reaching unreached peoples in India and became an encouraging example to the church, even in the present.

Although tattered with clear examples of imperfection, such as the Crusades, the overarching history of the church’s mission reveals a steady inclination of Christians to advance the gospel toward people and places without gospel witness. Starting in Jerusalem, the church has consistently sought to proclaim the gospel to the unreached. The parameters of the current chapter only allow for a cursory look at the history of the church’s mission; however, a cursory look at history is sufficient to observe the consistent compelling of the church throughout history to advance the gospel to unreached places and people, thereby informing the church’s mission today.

Missiological Research

In addition to the historical witness, modern missiological research has sought to undergird, understand, and advance the church’s missional aim. While the Bible is sufficient to communicate the aim of the church’s mission, missiology seeks to further understand the details of what the Bible teaches pertaining to mission as well as the

²² Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 123.

²³ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 124.

²⁴ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 124.

implications and necessary applications for the church today. When considering the biblical call to disciple all the nations, the church is helped by contemporary missiological research. Over the last several decades missiologists have attempted to further understand the call to disciple the nations to faithfully fulfill the mission given to the church by Jesus. To this end, missiological research has helped shape the contemporary understanding of unreached people groups as the church's target in global missions.

What Is a People Group?

In his article "People Groups and the Bible," Dave Datema suggests that the concept of distinct people groupings is not a novel idea but rather one conveyed in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, Datema explains how the Old Testament distinguishes between people groupings using words such as *goy* for nations or peoples, and *mishpachah* for clans or tribes.²⁵ He points to the story of Achan in Joshua 7:14-18 to show how distinctions between groups of people were made even within the nation of Israel. In the story, as Datema notes how God distinguishes between tribes (*shebet*), then families (*mishpachah*), then households (*bayit*), and then finally names Achan himself.²⁶ He comments, "The people of Israel in the Bible are thus presented in segmented groupings and the references to such (tribes, families, households) in the OT are numerous." Datema likewise notes how the New Testament distinguishes between groups of people with words such as *oikos* (household), *ethnos* (nations), and *phyle* (tribes).²⁷

It is clear, as Datema points out, that the Bible speaks to different categories of people groupings. In other words, the biblical references to different people groupings oftentimes mean to convey specific distinctions between peoples, as in the case of Achan,

²⁵ Dave Earl Datema, "People Groups and the Bible," *Mission Frontiers* 44, no. 1 (January/February 2022): 21.

²⁶ Datema, "People Groups and the Bible," 21.

²⁷ Datema, "People Groups and the Bible," 22.

rather than only broad generalities. Datema comments, “Biblical authors understood these human groupings in all their variety and complexity; a mosaic of nations/peoples, languages, tribes, clans and households.”²⁸

Understanding this biblical concept of people groupings is helpful when considering the mission of the church today to disciple all the nations. The New Testament church understood the concept of nations distinct from Israel who were in need of the gospel. Perhaps the greatest ministry barrier for the early church was the eye-opening directive to make disciples of people outside of Israel, namely Gentile nations. Though, once this barrier was crossed, the aim of the mission seemed to be to advance the gospel to any and every unreached people without distinction.

Contemporary research has assisted the church in understanding the scope of the mission to disciple all nations by defining that a nation is, in contemporary vernacular, a people group. As missiologists have focused on, defined, and refined the idea of people groups, the church has been greatly helped in its mission. In “Defining Unreached: A Short History,” Dave Datema comments, “The concept of seeing the world as people groups is arguably the most significant thought innovation in twentieth century missiology.”²⁹

Joshua Project is a missions research website used broadly by many today. Joshua Project defines a people group as “the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.”³⁰ This definition is derived from the extended definition developed in the

²⁸ Datema, “People Groups and the Bible,” 23.

²⁹ Dave Datema, “Defining Unreached: A Short History,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 45.

³⁰ Joshua Project, “Definitions,” accessed August 20, 2021, <https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions#unreached>.

1982 Lausanne Committee Chicago meeting, which states that an unreached people group is

a significantly large group of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these. For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.³¹

The International Mission Board's (IMB) mission research website (peoplegroups.org) provides a bit more concision in its definition, stating, "A 'people group' is an ethnolinguistic group with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members."³² The IMB's definition points to two primary factors in differentiating or defining people groups: language and ethnicity.³³

The main purpose of seeking clarity on the definition of a people group is to understand the aim of the church's mission. As noted in Joshua Project's definition, the focus is on the potential of a church planting movement within a group. The IMB likewise comments, "For gospel strategy purposes, a key principle is to define a strategy for the largest ethnolinguistic segment or affinity group within which the gospel can spread through 'natural' social networks."³⁴ In part, missiologists differentiate people groups by noting potential barriers to the gospel effectively spreading. If a particular barrier, such as language, obstructs the movement of the gospel from one side of a town to another, then this dynamic serves as an indicator of the presence of separate people groups. The IMB explains, "Where barriers are identified which would hinder or prevent the further spread

³¹ Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 67.

³² PeopleGroups, "Frequently Asked Questions," accessed November 26, 2021, <https://www.peoplegroups.org/understand/294.aspx#309>.

³³ PeopleGroups, "Frequently Asked Questions."

³⁴ PeopleGroups, "Frequently Asked Questions."

of the gospel, we have identified the effective boundary of the ethno-linguistic segment, or people group.”³⁵

While identifiers such as language and ethnicity are certainly helpful to distinguish one people group from another, contemporary missiological research can become far more complex. The complexity of missiological research is apparent through perusing various mission groups attempts to arrive at an appropriate definition of what an unreached people group is. For example, Datema notes fourteen variations of definition for the idea of unreached people groups developed between 1968 and 1983.³⁶ In each definition are slight variations pertaining to what a people group is and what it means to be unreached.

Beyond language and culture, various sociological factors have been considered regarding the differentiation of people groups. Socio-political, socio-geographical, socio-economical, socio-occupational, and socio-religious subgroupings are examples of the further differentiation considered in the discussion of identifying unreached people groups.³⁷ Even today, new ways of defining a people group are being put forward for consideration. In his article “Reimagining and Re-Envisioning People Groups,” Leonard Bartlotti aims to “reimagine people groups through an upgraded understanding of the concept itself and suggest steps to re-envision the UPG approach in order to maximize efforts to reach all peoples.”³⁸ Bartlotti suggests a new flexible, multi-level model of people groups that works in various contexts.³⁹ One step of Bartlotti’s proposed model is viewing

³⁵ PeopleGroups, “What Is a People Group?,” accessed November 26, 2021, <https://www.peoplegroups.org/understand/313.aspx>.

³⁶ Datema, “Defining Unreached,” 46.

³⁷ Datema, “Defining Unreached,” 58.

³⁸ Leonard N. Bartlotti, “Reimagining and Re-Envisioning People Groups,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 37, nos. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2020): 133.

³⁹ Bartlotti, “Reimagining and Re-Envisioning People Groups,” 135.

the concept of ethnic identity through a triangular field of meaning including ethnicity issues seen “in the heart,” “in the head,” and “in the context.”⁴⁰

Suffice to say, contemporary missiological research offers much to the conversation pertaining to how people groups are defined. However, while there exist many facets to the definitions of unreached people groups, for the sake of the current ministry project directed toward the context of a local church, a broader and less complex definition of *unreached people group* is most helpful. Therefore, the definition of people group articulated by the Lausanne Tradition will be used for this project. The definition, as mentioned previously, is “a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another. From the viewpoint of evangelization this is the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.”⁴¹

How to Determine Reached/Unreached

Beyond determining what a people group is, missiological research has also been helpful in attempting to determine the extent of gospel need within each people group. Over the course of the last several decades, the term “unreached” has been used to describe people groups who have limited to no gospel resources or access. The aim of determining what it means to be “unreached” is to help the church remain faithful to its mission to disciple all the nations. How, though, are these gospel needs determined?

Today, many churches and mission organizations look to Joshua Project’s criterion for determining whether a people group should be considered “unreached.” Joshua Project uses the criteria of “less than or equal to 2% Evangelical Christian and less than or equal to 5% Professing Christians.”⁴² People Groups’ criterion is similar, but

⁴⁰ Bartlotti, “Reimagining and Re-Envisioning People Groups,” 135.

⁴¹ Datema, “Defining Unreached,” 54.

⁴² Joshua Project, “Definitions.”

it focuses solely on the percentage of evangelical Christians. The People Groups website states, “An Unreached People Group is a people group in which less than 2% of the population are Evangelical Christians.”⁴³ In other words, if a people group statistically has fewer than 2 percent evangelical Christians in its population, or fewer than 5 percent professing Christians in its population, then it is thought this people group has insufficient gospel resources for evangelization without outside assistance. Datema comments, “The idea here was that once a people group contained a specified percentage of believers, they would be more likely to hit the tipping point, having obtained the critical mass needed to evangelize their own people.”⁴⁴

The percentages used to deem a people group unreached have been refined and changed over time. The first percentage used in this conversation was as large as 20 percent.⁴⁵ However, this percentage was whittled down to the 2 percent mark where it remains today. In consideration of this criterion, there are thousands of unreached people groups in the world today upon which the church should fix its gaze for mission.

How Should the Church Utilize UPG Statistics?

One may wonder if some of the conversations or insights surrounding UPG definitions are unnecessarily complex or needlessly tangential. Neither the apostle Paul nor the early church seemed to give as much consideration to what specific characteristics differentiate one people group from another for the sake of contextualization or the identification of gospel barriers. However, missiological research today can and does certainly benefit the church pertaining to its mission so long as it is considered with appropriate perspective.

⁴³ PeopleGroups, “Frequently Asked Questions.”

⁴⁴ Datema, “Defining Unreached,” 50.

⁴⁵ Datema, “Defining Unreached,” 50.

Having percentages to guide the church toward people groups in need of the gospel is certainly helpful, but the church must look to the percentages somewhat circumspectly. Caution and discernment are required to avoid overemphasizing statistics that are admittedly arbitrary.⁴⁶ An inclination toward pragmatism can potentially lead Christians in the West to focus on merely moving percentage points and thus assuming a people group to be “reached” prematurely. Similarly, some look to these percentages in respect to ushering in the return of the Lord.⁴⁷ Being overly motivated by arbitrary percentages can also lead to focusing solely on reaching the greatest quantity of people groups at the fastest rate, to the neglect of ongoing discipleship toward maturity in Christ.⁴⁸

In his article “Rethinking Unreached Peoples,” David Platt argues for the removal of the 2 percent threshold. He argues that the 2 percent evangelical designation alone is not a sufficient indicator for directing the mission efforts of the church: “The reason this threshold can be problematic is because there are so many other factors at work when it comes to analyzing the state of gospel advance among a particular people group or place.”⁴⁹ Two factors to which Platt points are the direction and rate of the increase or decrease of evangelicals among a people group, as well as the health or unhealth of the church among a people group.⁵⁰ Platt does not disregard the need to

⁴⁶ Paul Akin, “There’s More to Missions than Unreached People Groups,” The Gospel Coalition, October 24, 2019, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/missions-unreached-people-groups/>.

⁴⁷ Brooks Bucer and Chad Vegas, “Why Unreached People Groups Still Matter in Missions,” The Gospel Coalition, January 10, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-unreached-people-groups-still-matter-in-missions/>.

⁴⁸ David M. Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 149.

⁴⁹ David Platt, “Rethinking Unreached Peoples,” *Desiring God*, February 19, 2019, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/rethinking-unreached-peoples>.

⁵⁰ Platt, “Rethinking Unreached Peoples.”

understand the percentage of evangelicals among a people group altogether, he simply contends that other factors should be considered as well: “It is valuable to identify the percentage of evangelicals in a particular place or among a particular people group, and then to couple that percentage with research regarding a number of other factors in order to accurately identify the state of the church and the access to the gospel among that people or in that place.”⁵¹

In the same way that UPG statistics should not be overemphasized for the sake of pragmatically moving percentage points of “reached-ness,” they should also not be the only consideration for the direction of missionary efforts. Recently, the concept of unreached places has been asserted as an additional needed and necessary component when considering ministry to unreached people groups.

Reaching the Unreached in Contemporary Scholarship

In addition to the witness of history and missiological research, contemporary scholarship further validates the need for the church today to reach unreached people groups with the gospel. Much has been contributed to contemporary theological scholarship to undergird the continuation of the church’s mission to advance the gospel to peoples and places it has not yet been. Three categories are particularly relevant to this project to which current scholarship speaks: the biblical metanarrative of God’s mission to redeem the world, the concept of unreached people groups, and the role of the church in God’s mission.

A Biblical Metanarrative

Contemporary scholarship has emphasized in recent years the grand metanarrative of God’s mission in the Bible to redeem a fallen and sinful world. Understanding that this mission is not a periphery element of the Bible but rather is quite

⁵¹ Platt, “Rethinking Unreached Peoples.”

central is important for the church to grasp today. Christians, particularly in the West, sometimes tend to have niche biblical foci in study or even in preaching. An abundance of available books and study materials conveying a plethora of biblical topics make it possible for Christians to appreciate the diversity of the Bible but perhaps at the expense of noticing and understanding its unifying theme. While it is a blessing to see and appreciate the many and diverse topics to which the Bible speaks, it is vitally important that Christians do not miss the forest for the trees. Thankfully, much has been done in contemporary scholarship to help the church see the overarching storyline of the Bible centered around God's mission to redeem all nations to himself through Christ.

The biblical metanarrative of mission was perhaps best popularized by Christopher Wright in his book *The Mission of God*. Wright essentially argues that mission is not simply an element expressed in the Bible but is in fact what the Bible is centrally about. In the introduction Wright states, "Mission is not just one of a list of things that the Bible happens to talk about, only a bit more urgently than some . . . mission is, in that much-abused phrase, 'what it's all about.'"⁵² He conveys throughout his book that the mission of God essentially constitutes everything he does for the redemption of the world. Many scholars today have likewise taken up Wright's missional hermeneutic and have produced works through which the church can see the overarching biblical narrative of God's mission to save sinners.

In *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, Andreas Köstenberger and Desmond Alexander agree with Wright and see the central theme or grand narrative of the Bible as God's mission to redeem sinners. Köstenberger and Alexander see the collection of the biblical books, from Genesis to Revelation, as a diverse yet unified and coherent account of God's mission to redeem sinners: "At the heart of this story is the grace-inspired, missional activity of God, focused on both restoring the broken relationship between

⁵² Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 22.

himself and wayward humanity and renewing creation.”⁵³ Köstenberger and Alexander articulate a biblical theology of mission through which they show that few biblical topics are as important as mission. They point to the central focus of mission in the Bible by highlighting the early introduced, ever present, and pervasive reality of human sinfulness. Köstenberger and Alexander explain that mission is centrally important because “it is inextricably linked to human sinfulness and need for redemption and God’s provision of salvation in the person and work of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵⁴

Another contemporary work that conveys the biblical metanarrative of God’s mission to save the world is Bruce Riley Ashford’s *Theology and Practice of Mission*. Ashford and his contributing authors help their readers see the central theme of the Bible is God’s mission to redeem all the nations, which is communicated through the overarching narrative of the Bible.⁵⁵ To this end, Ashford’s book provides a helpful four-fold lens through which to see this overarching narrative of this mission. Ashford explains, “In order to build a biblical-theological framework for understanding God’s mission, the church’s mission, and the church’s mission to the nations, one must first understand the unified biblical narrative, including its four major plot movements—creation, fall, redemption and restoration.”⁵⁶ Through these four plot movements Ashford explains that the central idea of God’s mission is to redeem from the fallen and sinful world a people

⁵³ Andreas J. Köstenberger and T. Desmond Alexander, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020), 11.

⁵⁴ Köstenberger and Alexander, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 1.

⁵⁵ Bruce Riley Ashford, ed., *Theology and Practice of Mission* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 1.

⁵⁶ Bruce Riley Ashford, “The Story of Mission: The Grand Biblical Narrative,” in Ashford, *Theology and Practice of Mission*, 6.

for himself.⁵⁷ This central idea is the unifying theme of the Bible. Ashford comments, “The Bible unfolds this grand redemptive narrative from Genesis to Revelation.”⁵⁸

Unreached Peoples

Within the broader context of the biblical metanarrative of God’s mission to redeem a fallen and sinful world is the finer point of reaching unreached people groups. In light of the unifying biblical theme of God’s mission to save the sinful world, the church must also be aware of further mission particulars. The church must not only be aware of the need to take the gospel into the world generally, but also be aware of and give attention to the narrowed aim of reaching particularly unreached people groups.

In their article “Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge,” Ralph Winter and Bruce Koch highlight this fact from Jesus’s call to take the gospel to all nations. Commenting on the use of “nations” in Matthew 24:14, they explain that Jesus was not referring to nation-states but rather ethnic people groups: “The wording he chose (the Greek word *ethne*) points to the ethnicities, the languages, and the extended families which constitute the peoples of the earth.”⁵⁹ Similarly scholars in recent years have highlighted the use of “all nations” (*ta ethne*) in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19. Formerly, some viewed the command to disciple all nations through a geo-political lens; however, in the mid-twentieth century the focus shifted to ethnic people groups.⁶⁰ In his book *Pressure Points*, J. D. Payne comments, “When such understandings of the biblical text began to be embraced, suddenly the *ta ethne* of Matthew 28:19 did not refer to the

⁵⁷ Ashford, “The Story of Mission,” 13.

⁵⁸ Ashford, “The Story of Mission,” 13.

⁵⁹ Ralph D. Winter and Bruce D. Koch, “Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 533.

⁶⁰ J. D. Payne, *Pressure Points: Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 2.

independent countries recognized by the United Nations in the 1950s but to thousands of ethnic groups speaking thousands of different languages and dialects.”⁶¹

Scholars today have argued the mission focus of unreached people groups from both the Old and New Testaments. In *Let the Nations Be Glad*, John Piper also argues from Scripture that the missionary task to take the gospel into the world is not generally focused on gentile individuals but on ethnic people groups specifically. Piper comments,

God’s will for missions is that every people group be reached with the testimony of Christ and that a people be called out for his name from all the nations. . . . The task of missions may not be merely to win as many individuals as possible from the most responsive people groups of the world but rather to win individuals from *all* people groups of the world.⁶²

Piper effectively argues from both the Old and New Testaments that the biblical focus for the redemption of sinful man is particularly oriented toward all ethnic people groups of the world. For example, Piper specifically surveys the Old and New Testament references to God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3: “What we conclude from the wording of Genesis 12:3 and its use in the New Testament is that God’s purpose for the world is that the blessing of Abraham, namely, the salvation achieved through Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham, would reach to all the ethnic people groups of the world.”⁶³ Although he makes no mention specifically of unreached people groups, Wright also connects the promise of Abraham to the eschatological salvation of distinct groups of people seen in Revelation 7:9-10: “The closing vision of the canon, with people of every tribe and nation and language worshipping the living God (Rev 7:9-10), clearly echoes the promise of Genesis 12:3 and binds the whole story together.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Payne, *Pressure Points*, 3.

⁶² John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, 157.

⁶³ Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, 169.

⁶⁴ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 195.

Other scholars today agree with the assertion that the unreached are a biblical focus of God's mission. In Ashford's *Theology and Practice of Mission*, Philip Hopkins further underscores the church's missional aim to reach unreached people groups. Hopkins contends, like Piper and others, that the aim of reaching the unreached is not a new concept but an old one derived from Scripture and carried along throughout history. Hopkins comments, "Missions to the unreached is not a new phenomena; it started in the Old Testament; continued with the various degrees of emphasis through the New Testament, early church, Middle Ages, Reformation, and Enlightenment; and grew tremendously with renewed urgency in the modern missions movement."⁶⁵ Though terminologies have developed over time, including the phrase "unreached people groups," the aim of the church's mission has focused on reaching those not yet reached with the gospel since the days of the New Testament.

The Church to the Unreached

In addition to asserting the biblical metanarrative of God's mission to redeem all nations and the concept of reaching unreached ethnic peoples, contemporary scholarship also naturally underscores the role of the church in this mission. God intends to carry out his mission to redeem all the ethnic peoples of the world through the ministry of the church. In *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, Köstenberger and Alexander draw attention to the vital role the church is to play in making the gospel known among nations. Evaluating Jesus's commission to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20, they comment, "Jesus's followers are called not merely to disciple individuals, but entire nations, indeed, all nations."⁶⁶ As mentioned, this ongoing mission to disciple all the nations can be traced from this point in the book of Matthew, throughout church history, and up to the present

⁶⁵ Philip Hopkins, "Mission and Unreached People Groups," in Ashford, *Theology and Practice of Mission*, 185.

⁶⁶ Köstenberger and Alexander, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 62.

day where it continues. Köstenberger and Alexander also underscore the church's role in this mission by reflecting on the "witness" trope in the book of Revelation. Köstenberger and Alexander state, "Believers' witness is the quintessential prerequisite for the conversion of the nations."⁶⁷

The church is the biblical means or vehicle through which God intends to reconcile all nations to himself in Christ. The church is tasked to bear witness to the news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin to every nation. However, the concept of the church's mission can become ambiguous to some as various niche foci exist, such as social responsibility or creation care. In *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, Kevin Deyoung and Greg Gilbert attempt to clarify the church's mission to the nations: "The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit, and gathering these disciples into churches that they might worship and obey Jesus Christ now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father."⁶⁸ Deyoung and Gilbert particularly help to bring attention the finer point of reaching the unreached through their evaluation of the various biblical Great Commission texts: "The church should make disciples of all the nations . . . we must go to every people group, proclaiming the good news to the ends of the earth."⁶⁹

It is vital that the church understands its mission to take the gospel to all nations, particularly unreached nations. If the church does not understand or participate in this mission, then the those unreached with the gospel cannot be saved. Hopkins comments, "Unbelievers will not call on Christ until they believe, and they will not believe unless they hear, and they will not hear unless someone shares with them the beauty of the good

⁶⁷ Köstenberger and Alexander, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 233.

⁶⁸ Kevin Deyoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 241.

⁶⁹ Deyoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 59.

news.”⁷⁰ Thankfully, Scripture clearly teaches the church both the means and ends of God’s mission to redeem all nations. The means is the gospel of Christ proclaimed to all nations by the church. The end is a people from every nation one day surrounding the throne of God, praising him for salvation (Rev 7:9-10). This end seen in Revelation 7:9-10 serves as both a guidepost as well as a motivator for the church as it participates in God’s mission to redeem the world. Köstenberger and Alexander convey this idea well: “This mission of God’s people within the world is to be understood within an eschatological perspective; that is it is grounded in the saving events of the gospel and keeps an eye on the final goal—the gathering of men and women from every nation, tribe, people and language before the throne of God and the Lamb.”⁷¹

Conclusion

A brief survey of history, missiological research, and contemporary scholarship substantiates the need for the church today to reach unreached people groups with the gospel. It is clear the church has historically understood that its mission is to take the gospel to all nations, particularly those where Christ has not been named. While terminologies have evolved and developed overtime, the essential task remains the same.

The apostle John’s vision of heaven in Revelation 7:9-10 is an appropriate place to conclude. John articulates his heavenly vision this way:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

One day people from every people group will surround the throne of God, praising him for salvation. This scene is a promise of God that will come to fruition as the church participates in God’s mission to redeem all nations, particularly among the unreached.

⁷⁰ Hopkins, “Mission and Unreached People Groups,” 173.

⁷¹ Köstenberger and Alexander, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 261.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter describes the project preparation and discusses the completion of the four project goals along with their associated results. The purpose of this project was to equip members of Lakewood Baptist Church to participate in God's mission of reconciling the unreached to himself through the gospel. This project consisted of four goals. The first goal was to assess the current understanding of unreached people groups among members of Lakewood Baptist Church. The second goal was to develop a six-session curriculum for members of Lakewood Baptist Church on ministry to unreached people groups. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of God's mission to the unreached among members of Lakewood Baptist Church through implementing the developed six-session curriculum. Finally, the fourth goal was to establish a three-year calendar of training for the ongoing equipping of Lakewood Baptist Church members to reach unreached people groups. In consideration of the Covid-19 pandemic and the likelihood of maintaining a consistent test group over several weeks, the decision was made to compress the six-session curriculum into an all-day conference. The teaching conference took place on January 8, 2021.

Project Promotion

To gather the test group for my project, I consulted five LBC pastors representing five different areas of ministry. I wanted a test group that did not have much background in missions and ministry. I also wanted the test group to represent the broad spectrum of ages and life stages at LBC. Therefore, I consulted with LBC's Adult Discipleship Pastor, Associate Pastor, College Pastor, Next Generation Pastor, and

Executive Pastor. Each pastor recommended at least ten members who they knew did not have extensive experience in missions ministry. Through this approach I garnered a good sampling of the congregation to be represented in the test group. Each LBC member recommended to me was emailed a personal invitation to the training workshop.

Project Implementation

The first goal of the project was to assess the current understanding and knowledge of needed ministry to unreached people groups among members of Lakewood Baptist Church. This goal succeeded when LBC members completed the Unreached People Groups Knowledge Assessment Survey (UPGKAS).¹ The UPGKAS provided helpful insight into the general knowledge base of LBC members pertaining to the concept of reaching unreached people groups. All participants of the test group completed the UPGKAS. The results of the survey provided a good picture of the average member's general conception of unreached people groups.

The survey was administered as a pre-test at the beginning of the day conference just after I welcomed the group and gave an introduction of what they were to expect over the course of the day. Of the more than fifty LBC members invited to participate in the training, twenty-seven agreed to participate and were present for the entire event. Each of the twenty-seven participants who were present completed the pre-test. To allow participants to respond anonymously, each participant was given an identification number at random which they were to place on their pre-test and post-test instead of using their name.

Gaining insight into the knowledge base of the average Lakewood member pertaining to unreached people was essential. Missions, generally, has been a strong focus of LBC for many years; however the concept of unreached people groups is relatively new to our context. As LBC is a large church with many different ministry foci, it is easy

¹ See appendix 1.

for members to stay in their niche or bubble of ministry and then remain only vaguely familiar with new ministry foci. Therefore, the information gleaned from the UPGKAS was vital. The results of the UPGKAS confirmed my sense of a lack of familiarity with unreached people groups.

For the first goal, the UPGKAS was given as a pre-test to the entire group in attendance. Using the UPGKAS, participants responded to statements on a five-point Likert Scale pertaining to the subject of unreached people groups. For each statement, participants indicated one of five possible responses: strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, or strongly agree. The tests were scored by assigning a value of 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for uncertain, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree. Statements 1-7, 9-10, and 12-18 were written in such a way that a higher score reflected a greater desired knowledge outcome. However, statements 8 and 11 were written in such a way that a lower score reflected a greater desired knowledge outcome; therefore, reverse scoring was utilized for statements 8 and 11.² I scored each test and found the results to confirm the need of the current ministry project. Three pre-test findings were notable.

First, most participants displayed a general understanding of the biblical means of salvation; namely, that hearing and believing the gospel is necessary. Table 1 represents pre-test participant response averages to statements 8 and 11 which were designed to ascertain understanding of the need for the gospel to reach the unreached.

Table 1. Pre-test participant response averages to statements 8 and 11

Statement	Response AVG
8. A good person who is “in the middle of nowhere” without gospel witness will still go to heaven.	1.88 (reverse score: 4.11)
11. The testimony of nature is a sufficient witness for the salvation of UPG who have no true gospel witness.	2.11 (reverse score: 3.88)

² Statements 8 and 11 were reversed scored for the pre-test, post-test, and *t*-test.

Most participants indicated they understood that apart from hearing and believing the gospel, an individual cannot be saved. Participants had a sufficient understanding that every individual on earth is a sinner in need of salvation. They also indicated the understanding that the testimony of nature is not a sufficient witness for salvation. These responses suggest a good biblical understanding of the biblical means of salvation.

A second notable pre-test finding came from participant responses to statements 3 and 12. These statements were designed to ascertain participant understanding of God’s redemptive plan revealed through the biblical narrative. Table 2 represents pre-test participant response averages to these two statements.

Table 2. Pre-test participant response averages to statements 3 and 12

Statement	Response AVG
3. I can accurately explain the biblical means through which the Great Commission will be accomplished.	3.07
12. I am familiar with specific passages from Genesis through Revelation that convey the biblical narrative of God's plan to redeem all nations.	3.03

Most participants indicated a lack of confidence in their understanding of God’s redemptive plan to redeem all nations conveyed throughout the narrative of the Bible. They also indicated a lack of confidence in their understanding of the biblical means through which the Great Commission will be accomplished. These findings further underscore the need for the project’s implementation, particularly regarding its teaching curriculum.

Perhaps the most notable finding of the pre-test was derived from participant responses to statements 2, 6, 9, 13, 14, 17, and 18. Each of these statements were designed to ascertain participant understanding of unreached people groups. Table 3 represents participant responses to these seven pre-test statements:

Table 3. Pre-test participant response averages to statements 2, 6, 9, 13, 14, 17, and 18

Statement	Response AVG
2. I am familiar with the number of UPG in the world.	1.62
6. I can accurately define the term UUPG.	1.66
9. I can accurately define the term "10/40 window."	1.92
13. I can name 6 UPG.	1.37
14. I am familiar with the number of UUPG in the world.	1.33
17. I can name 5 geopolitical countries in which three or more UPG reside.	1.85
18. I can accurately define the term "people group."	2.88

Most participants indicated they lacked understanding regarding the concept of unreached people groups. Pre-test responses to statements 2, 6, 9, 13, 14, 17, and 18 indicated a lack of knowledge specifically regarding definitions and statistics pertaining to unreached people groups. These responses not only suggest a lack of knowledge regarding the concept of unreached people groups but also necessarily imply a lack of participant engagement in reaching unreached people groups.

For the purpose of the second goal, I developed a six-session curriculum to equip LBC members to participate in reaching unreached people groups. The curriculum was designed with a generic individual in mind who lacks knowledge of the concept of unreached people groups. My hope was to take such an individual from a place of ignorance regarding unreached people groups to a level of knowledge through which he or she could appropriately participate in God’s mission to reach the unreached. With this end in mind, the curriculum was developed to focus on six key areas: “A Biblical Metanarrative,” “The Concept of People Groups and the Unreached,” “Soteriology: How One is Saved,” “The Role of the Church in Missions,” “Mission Definitions and Statistics,” “Our Personal Participation Today.”

The curriculum was developed over multiple weeks as I researched for and wrote chapters 2 and 3. The second goal met expectations when the curriculum was complete and had been successfully evaluated by an expert panel of LBC pastors. An evaluation panel of five pastors was assembled to assess the biblical faithfulness of the

curriculum as well as the ability of the curriculum to accomplish its intended goal of equipping members of LBC to reach unreached people groups. The evaluation panel was comprised of LBC’s Worship Pastor, Adult Discipleship Pastor, Executive Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Missions Associate. The evaluation panel used the Reaching Unreached People Groups Curriculum Evaluation Tool as a rubric to assess the curriculum’s biblical accuracy, scope, pedagogy, and practicality.³ The goal required a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion to meet or exceed the sufficient level. After evaluating the curriculum, the panel of LBC pastors determined the curriculum was both biblically faithful and accomplished its intended end. For each area being evaluated, the panel determined that 100 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Table 4 represents a compilation of the results of the Unreached People Groups Curriculum Evaluation Tool.

Table 4. Results of the Unreached People Groups Curriculum evaluation tool

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Avg Rating
Biblical Accuracy	# of Times Given Rating				
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.			1	4	3.8
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.			1	4	3.8
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.			3	2	3.4
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.			3	2	3.4
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.			1	4	3.8
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.			3	2	3.4
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to engage in reaching UPGs.			2	3	3.6
At the end of the course, participants will be equipped to reach UPGs.			2	3	3.6

Note: 5 pastors submitted evaluations

³ See appendix 2.

The third goal of the project was to increase the knowledge of unreached people groups among the test group through teaching the project curriculum. The third goal succeeded when the training was finished and a *t*-test for dependent variables demonstrated a positive relationship in participants' knowledge of unreached people groups. The UPGKAS was administered a second time to serve as the post-test in addition to having served as the pre-test.

I designed the curriculum to include six-sessions. The goal of increasing knowledge of unreached people groups and the need to reach them among LBC members drove the development of the lessons. Lesson 1 was entitled "A Biblical Metanarrative," and had the primary objective of helping members see the central story line of God's redemptive purpose from Genesis to Revelation. Lesson 2 was entitled "The Concept of People Groups and the Unreached," and had the primary objective of showing members the idea of people groups from Scripture and how the concept plays into God's redemptive purposes. Lesson 3 was entitled "Soteriology: How One is Saved," and had the primary purpose of helping members understand the biblical means of salvation, which necessitate reaching unreached people groups. Lesson 4 was entitled "The Role of the Church in Missions," and had the primary purpose of helping members understand the biblical basis for the church to engage in spreading the gospel and discipling all nations. Lesson 5 was entitled "Mission Definitions and Statistics," and had the primary purpose of helping members understand contemporary missiological terms, the state of the unreached today, and how to use this information in biblical informed ways. Lesson 6 was entitled "Our Personal Participation Today," and had the primary purpose of helping members understand specific and practical ways through which they can act on the information they learned in order to actively participate in reaching the unreached with the gospel.

As previously mentioned, the curriculum was taught in the context of a day-long conference. The conference began at 9 a.m. and ended around 4 p.m. All six sessions

of the curriculum were taught during this timeframe as each session lasted roughly one hour.

Survey Results

At the end of the sixth and final session of the curriculum, the UPGKAS was utilized to serve as a post-test, just as it was used for the pre-test. The results of the post-test were significant in comparison to those of the pre-test. The average pre-test score of the twenty-seven participants was 44.55 while the average post-test score was 81.29. These results reflect an average positive growth of 36.74 after the teaching curriculum was implemented.

The results of the pre-test and post-test were assessed through the use of a *t*-test for dependent variables, which provided a statistical evaluation of the curriculum's effectiveness. The results of the pre-test and post-test as well as the *t*-test for dependent variables are shown in table 5.

Table 5. UPGKAS pre- and post-test comparison results

	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	44.55555556	81.2962963
Variance	78.25641026	33.67806268
Observations	27	27
Pearson Correlation	0.132274013	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	26	
t Stat	-19.25020568	
P(T<=t) one-tail	3.30659E-17	
t Critical one-tail	1.70561792	
P(T<=t) two-tail	6.61318E-17	
t Critical two-tail	2.055529439	

The results of the *t*-test reflect that teaching the project curriculum to the select group of participants made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of

their doctrinal knowledge ($t(9) = 19.25, p < 6.61318E-17$). Table 5 displays that there was a significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores among the participants.

Therefore, the goal of increasing the knowledge of unreached people groups among project participants was achieved and the teaching made a difference.

Pre- and Post- UPGKAS Data Analysis

Evaluating the results from the *t*-test was an encouraging endeavor as they conveyed a significant effect of the teaching curriculum on project participants. The results suggest the curriculum is effective and particularly suited to address the specific need at LBC for members to be equipped to reach unreached people groups. The greatest difference between the pre-test and post-test is displayed through participant responses to statements 2, 6, and 14. Each of these three statements pertained to definitions and statistics regarding unreached people groups. The statements as well as the change between the pre-test and post-test response are represented in table 6.

Table 6. Pre- and post-test participant response averages to statements 2, 6, and 14

Statement	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
2. I am familiar with the number of UPG in the world.	1.62	4.66	3.04
6. I can accurately define the term UPG.	1.66	4.70	3.04
14. I am familiar with the number of UUPG in the world.	1.33	4.37	3.04

These results reflect the fact that prior to the implementation of the curriculum, most participants could not define an unengaged unreached people group. Similarly, most participants were not familiar with the number of unreached people groups or unengaged unreached people groups in the world prior to the implementation of the curriculum.

However, as a result of the curriculum, most participants showed a significant gain of knowledge in these areas. On the post-test, most participants indicated they could now

define the term unengaged unreached people group and indicated they were now familiar with the number of UUPG and UPG in the world.

Another significant change between the pre-test and post-test is shown through participant responses to statements 9, 13 and 17. Each of these statements pertained to the ability to identify the location of unreached people groups in the world. The statements as well as the change between the pre-test and post-test are represented in table 7.

Table 7. Pre- and post-test participant response averages to statements 9, 13, and 17

Statement	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
9. I can accurately define the term "10/40 window."	1.92	4.77	2.85
13. I can name 6 UPG.	1.37	4.22	2.85
17. I can name 5 geographical countries in which three or more UPG reside.	1.85	4.70	2.85

These results clearly reflect that, prior to the project curriculum, most participants could not accurately define the 10/40 window, nor could they name six specific unreached people groups or five countries in which unreached people groups reside. However, after the project curriculum was implemented, most participants indicated a significant gain of knowledge in these areas. As a result of the curriculum, most participants indicated they can now define the 10/40 window, name six unreached people groups, and name five countries in which unreached people groups reside.

Another significant finding is displayed through the change in participant responses to statements 3 and 12. Both statements pertained to the biblical narrative of God's plan and means to redeem all nations. The statements as well as the change between the pre-test and post-test are represented in table 8.

Table 8. Pre- and post-test participant response averages to statements 3 and 12

Statement	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
3. I can accurately explain the biblical means through which the Great Commission will be accomplished.	3.07	4.40	1.33
12. I am familiar with specific passages from Genesis through Revelation that convey the biblical narrative of God's plan to redeem all nations.	3.03	4.37	1.34

Before the implementation of the project curriculum, most participants indicated a lack of confidence pertaining to their understanding of the biblical narrative of God's plan to redeem all nations. The pre-test indicated that most participants were uncertain as to whether they could explain the biblical means through which God will accomplish the Great Commission. Likewise, most participants indicated they were uncertain as to whether they were familiar with specific biblical passages that convey the biblical narrative of God's plan to redeem all nations. However, after the project curriculum was implemented, most participants indicated growth in both of these areas on the post-test. As a result of the curriculum, most participants indicated on the post-test a change from uncertain to either agree or strongly agree regarding statements 3 and 12.

Two additional significant findings are displayed through the change in participant responses from the pre-test to the post-test pertaining to statements 7 and 10. Prior to the curriculum, most participants indicated they did not know where to find missions statistics or how to use them in biblically informed ways. Likewise, prior to the curriculum, most participants indicated they were not familiar with contextual components that may pose obstacles to gospel dissemination from Western missionaries to an unengaged unreached people group. These statements as well as the change in response from pre-test to post-test are represented in table 9.

Table 9. Pre- and post-test participant response averages to statements 7 and 10

Statement	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
7. I know where to find mission statistics and how to use them in biblically informed ways.	1.74	4.62	2.88
10. I am familiar with specific contextual components that can pose obstacles to gospel dissemination from Western missionaries to UUPG.	1.37	4.25	2.88

The results of the post-test indicate growth in knowledge as a result of the project curriculum. After the curriculum was implemented, most participants indicated they now know where to find missions statistics and how to use them in biblically informed ways. Likewise, most participants indicated they are now familiar with contextual components that could pose obstacles to gospel decimation from Western missionaries to an unengaged unreached people group. These changes between pre-test results and post-test results underscore the efficacy of the project curriculum.

The third goal of the ministry project was to increase the knowledge of unreached people groups among the test group through teaching the project curriculum. It is encouraging to see the curriculum was effective and clearly achieved its intended end. The proven efficacy of the project curriculum gives me a great deal of confidence for its ongoing use at LBC to equip members to reach unreached people groups.

The final goal of this project was to establish a three-year calendar of training for the ongoing equipping of Lakewood Baptist Church members to reach unreached people groups. This goal was measured by a panel of LBC pastors who evaluated the feasibility of the training calendar's incorporation into the typical annual LBC ministry calendar. The same panel of pastors who evaluated the project curriculum also evaluated the training calendar. The panel of pastor's reviewed the typical rhythms of LBC's annual calendar in light of the proposed training and determined the new training calendar would fit well into LBC's calendar. This goal was considered successfully met after LBC pastor panel reviewed and approved the three-year training calendar's implementation.

I designed the three-year training calendar to consist of the project teaching curriculum, selected readings, and field experience trips.⁴ Each year of the training calendar is comprised of the six-session curriculum implemented over six weeks in the fall, a four-week book study in the spring, and a field experience trip in the summer. The year 1 fall study implements the content of sessions 1-6 from the project teaching curriculum. The year 1 spring book study is assigned readings from Bruce Riley Ashford's *Theology and Practice of Mission* with group discussion. The year 1 field experience summer trip is a weekend trip visiting a ministry serving UPGs in Clarkston, Georgia. The year 2 fall study implements the content of sessions 1-6 from the project teaching curriculum. The year 2 spring book study is assigned readings from John Piper's *Let the Nations Be Glad!* with group discussion. The year 2 field experience summer trip is a week-long trip to visit LBC missionaries in Kazakhstan. The year 3 fall study implements the content of sessions 1-6 from the project teaching curriculum. The year 3 spring book study is assigned readings from Andreas Kostenberger's *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* with group discussion. The year 3 field experience trip is a two-day church partnership forum at Pioneers.

The trainings will be promoted churchwide and offered to any who would attend. However, the summer field experience trips will likely have a limited number of spaces available and be filled on a first come, first served basis.

Conclusion

All the project goals either met or exceeded expectations and therefore the overall project was successful. The *t*-test for dependent variables clearly conveyed the participants grew in their knowledge of unreached people groups from where they were prior to the teaching curriculum. The success of the project teaching curriculum also gives credibility to the continued success of the three-year training calendar as the same content will be utilized. As the project curriculum is regularly implemented over the course of a

⁴ See appendix 4.

three-year cycle, the concept of reaching unreached peoples will regularly be before the members of LBC. The regularly occurring use of the proven curriculum will enable more and more members to be equipped to reach unreached people groups. Hopefully, over the course of time, understanding the concept of unreached people groups will become more and more pervasive among members of LBC. I look forward to seeing more and more members participate in the mission to reach the unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter provides my evaluation of the ministry project. In this concluding chapter I evaluate the ministry project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Additionally, now that the project is concluded, I will evaluate what I would do differently if I were to do the project again. This chapter also includes theological and personal reflections upon what I learned over the course of researching for and implementing this ministry project.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of this ministry project was to equip members of Lakewood Baptist Church to obediently participate in God's mission of reconciling the unreached to himself through the gospel. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he gave the church what is famously known as the Great Commission. The church was commissioned to make disciples of all the nations. It is through this discipleship and gospel proclamation that the nations are saved. The purpose for this project arose from a realization that while LBC has a strong emphasis on missions generally, the concept of unreached people groups is relatively underdeveloped among members. As LBC is a large church with multiple ministries, members are sometimes prone to compartmentalize their involvement in one ministry focus at the expense of others. The idea of reaching unreached people groups has recently only been a niche focus of a small number of members, but generally unknown to the broader LBC community.

When Jesus commissioned the church to disciple the nations, he was not referring to geopolitical countries, but rather ethnic people groups. The biblical picture

for the end result of the Great Commission can be seen in John's vision of heaven in Revelation 7:9-10 which depicts every tribe, tongue, people, and nation surrounding God's throne in celebration of their salvation. God intends to have a people for himself from all the peoples of the world. The biblical metanarrative reveals God's plan to redeem people from all nations. These biblical facets should be known to every Christian particularly as they think about their biblically prescribed role to play in God's mission to redeem the nations. The concept of reaching unreached people groups with the gospel should not be a niche focus of only a few members but should be understood and participated in by all members. Therefore, the purpose of the ministry project was well directed and served the members of LBC by equipping them to further follow the command of Jesus to disciple the nations.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

The ministry project goals fit well with the project's purpose to equip LBC members to reach unreached people groups and were effective. The project's four goals, will be evaluated in this section.

Goal 1: Unreached People Group Knowledge Assessment Survey

The first goal of the ministry project was to assess the current understanding of needed ministry to unreached people groups among members of Lakewood Baptist Church. The UPGKAS intended to measure the current level of LBC church members' understanding of the concept of unreached people groups and the necessity of reaching them with the gospel. This goal was achieved and essentially confirmed my initial suspicions regarding the average member's understanding of unreached people groups. My overarching response to the results of the survey was a sense of validation that the ministry project was certainly needed.

Based upon participant responses on the pre-test, an overall lack of understanding of unreached people groups among participants was evident. Most

participants were unable to define terms such as people group, UPG, UUPG, or 10/40 Window. Similarly, most participants indicated they were neither able to identify specific unreached people groups nor their locations. The general lack of knowledge of unreached people groups among participants ensured me of the need for this project.

The pre-test assessment also confirmed my suspicions that LBC members have a good biblical foundation; however, they needed to be equipped further in order to reach unreached people groups. For example, most participants indicated on the pre-test that they did not believe the testimony of nature is a sufficient witness for one's salvation. They further indicated that they did not believe that anyone can be saved apart from believing the gospel. These responses suggest a solid biblical background. Though, participant responses also conveyed a lack of understanding pertaining to the biblical narrative of God's plan to redeem all the nations, as well as the biblical means through which the Great Commission will be accomplished. These responses validated the need for the project curriculum to be taught to LBC members. The UPGKAS sufficiently enabled me to effectively assess the knowledge of unreached people groups among the participants; therefore, the first goal was achieved.

Goal 2: Curriculum Development and Evaluation

The second goal of the ministry project was to develop a six-session curriculum for members of Lakewood Baptist Church focused on ministry to unreached people groups. This goal was achieved after the curriculum was developed and then evaluated by a panel of LBC pastors. The panel of pastors reviewed each lesson of the curriculum and determined that each lesson was biblically faithful and achieved its intended goal.

Developing the curriculum was both entertaining as well as helpful to me. As I developed the curriculum, I was further encouraged about the need of this ministry project. During the curriculum development I had in mind a generic Christian who was simply ignorant of the concept of unreached people groups and the biblical necessity to reach

them with the gospel. I broke the sessions up into topics I felt would be most helpful to give such a person a very biblical and simple understanding of the need to reach unreached peoples. I wanted LBC members to see this concept from Scripture first, but then also understand contemporary missiological statistics and terminology and how to use them. Additionally, I wanted members to know practically how they could engage in reaching the unreached in light of all that they learned.

Researching for chapters 2 and 3 was helpful and encouraging as I wrote the project curriculum. The research helped to further ground my personal views regarding unreached people groups more and more in the biblical metanarrative of God's mission to redeem the sinful world. Additionally, the panel of pastors tasked with reviewing the curriculum gave me further confidence that the curriculum was biblically informed and would be beneficial to the members of LBC.

The panel of five pastors evaluated the curriculum and offered helpful suggestions. The panel helped me to better articulate some of the questions in the curriculum to be clearer. The panel also encouraged me that the curriculum would be good for our church and accomplish its end. They appreciated how the curriculum built upon itself with each lesson. Based upon the evaluation curriculum tool, the panel indicated that 100 percent of the curriculum achieved the sufficient level in each area evaluated, which gave me confidence in the curriculum's potential effectiveness. Overall, the curriculum was well developed and achieved its intended goal.

Goal 3: Curriculum Implementation and Evaluation

The third goal of the ministry project was to increase the knowledge of God's mission to the unreached among members of Lakewood Baptist Church through implementing the developed six-session curriculum. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the implementation of the curriculum needed to be condensed into a short time frame. I considered facilitating the training over the course of a weekend, but after discussing the

training logistics and convenience for participants with LBC staff I decided to proceed with an all-day training on a Saturday. I found this shorter time frame helpful to all the participants involved. This goal was achieved through the all-day training workshop implemented on January 8, 2022.

At first, I was apprehensive that participants might find it difficult to volunteer an entire Saturday of their time to receive instruction. However, I was pleasantly surprised that many who were invited were enthusiastic to participate. LBC was gracious to provide childcare, coffee, and food for the training which made it an enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

The implementation of the curriculum went extremely well. I used PowerPoint as the vehicle to deliver the content of each lesson. For each lesson I mixed didactic instruction with Socratic group-based discussion, which I found helped participants stay engaged throughout the day. The group-based discussion also proved to assist participants in processing the content being taught along the way in order to grasp a deeper understanding. A “Q&A” time was provided at the end of each of the six sessions to give participants an opportunity to have anything information clarified or expounded upon. I found this “Q&A” time was essential to the training even though group-based discussion was also utilized. Many participants made use of the “Q&A” time which provided me with confidence that participants were engaged and understanding the content all along the way as we worked through the curriculum in its entirety.

Upon completion of the session 6 training, the UPGKAS was administered a second time to serve as the post-test for participants. Using the UPGKAS before and after the training was the best way to determine the effect of the curriculum being implemented. The results of the post-test were extremely encouraging as they conveyed true gains in knowledge of unreached people groups among participants. Observing that most training participants displayed increase in knowledge from the beginning of the training to the end confirmed the legitimacy of the survey used and the curriculum taught.

The average total score of the pre-test was 44.55 while the average total score of the post-test was 81.29, which displays an average increase of 36.74 points between the two tests. These results are extremely encouraging that the content of the curriculum was effective. These results also validate the aim of the pre-test and post-test. The statements participants were asked to respond to were effectively targeted to assess previous knowledge of unreached people groups as well as the extent to which they grew in knowledge as a result of the curriculum.

Responses to statements 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15 and 17 reflected a positive change of 2.4 points or higher on the five-point Likert scale. This significant result indicates substantial growth in knowledge. Equally as encouraging is the fact that test responses to statements 1, 3, 4, 5, 12, 16 and 18 each reflected a positive change of at least one point on the five-point Likert scale. Test responses to statements 8 and 11 reflected a slight negative change of -0.44 and -0.19 respectively. However, these statements were designed as false statements to which participants should have disagreed with; therefore, reverse scoring was utilized reflecting a positive change of 0.44 and 0.19 respectively. Upon reverse scoring, the change in response to these statements displayed a slightly positive effect of the curriculum's impact on participant knowledge.

The UPGKAS, which served as the pre-test and post-test, was comprised of eighteen statements oriented toward unreached people groups and the need to reach them with the gospel. Participant responses to all eighteen statements between the pre-test and post-test reflected growth in knowledge. Therefore, the goal of the curriculum's implementation was achieved and proven to be effective for equipping the members of LBC to reach unreached people groups.

Goal 4: Development and Evaluation of Three-Year Training Calendar

The final goal of this project was to create a three-year training calendar that could be used consistently over time to continually equip members of Lakewood Baptist

Church to reach unreached people groups. I felt it would be important to have a plan in place to keep this project's content in front of LBC members; otherwise, it risked the possibility of being a flash-in-the-pan niche ministry of LBC as others have in the past. Throughout the project, I grew further in the conviction that equipping LBC members to reach unreached people groups would be a long-term endeavor that would require stick-to-itiveness.

Initially I was concerned the training calendar may add one too many items to Lakewood's ministry calendar as it consistently remains very full. Considering the typically full calendar, I spread the training out in such a way that I could implement portions of training (including the curriculum, book study, and field experience) consistently throughout the year. The panel of LBC pastors reviewed the training calendar and unanimously felt it would accomplish its intended goal particularly as it fit nicely into the annual ministry calendar. Overall, I feel encouraged by how the training calendar is organized. I am also excited to see its impact on LBC member's understanding of our mission to reach the unreached over the course of time.

Strengths of the Project

There were several strengths of this ministry project. Overall, the purpose of the project was a great strength as it truly met a weakness in a context ripe for growth in this particular ministry focus area. LBC's long-standing emphasis on missions was the perfect incubator for birthing a focus on equipping members to reach unreached people groups. The timing for this ministry project in life of Lakewood Baptist LBC was just right. This project effectively helped the church take the next step in growing the already established missions emphasis at LBC.

Each of the four stated goals were also strengths of this ministry project. Each goal was clear, measurable, and applicable for LBC. The UPGKAS was a great tool that effectively measured gains in the knowledge of unreached people groups among LBC

members from the point just before the curriculum was implemented to the point just after implementation. The UPGKAS was well developed.

Additionally, the developed and implemented curriculum was simple, biblical, clear, and equipped members to reach the unreached. Each lesson within the curriculum served to achieve the overall goal. The lessons themselves were thoroughly biblical, practical, and assessable to LBC members. The lessons covered the needed topics to effectively help members understand and then actively participate in the mission to reach the unreached with the gospel. Additionally, the training calendar was well organized and seemed to fit well into the LBC annual ministry calendar. The calendar is a simple trellis to help keep ministry to UPGs before the members of the church.

The overarching strength of the ministry project was its applicability and practicality. LBC members were able to immediately make use of the information they received. The content of the sixth session of the curriculum seemed to greatly assist the participants to know practically how they can use all of what they learned. The actions such as prayer, financial giving, missionary visitation, launching to the mission field, and others proved to be helpful handholds for the participants. In other words, the group was given specific ways to participate in reaching the unreached in light of all they learned.

Weaknesses of the Project

One weakness of the project, which is expressed elsewhere, was the timing of the COVID-19 pandemic. The entirety of this project took place in the midst of the ever-changing implications of the pandemic. Therefore, implications of the virus required continual assessment and adaptation throughout the course of the project's development and implementation to avoid as much negative affect as possible. For example, COVID-19 led to the delay of implementation as well as condensed timeframe of implementing the curriculum. However, while the timing of the pandemic was not ideal, the purpose of the project was not hindered nor were any of its stated goals.

Considering COVID-19's impact on implementation, it is possible the all-day conference was a weakness regarding content retention among participants. Implementing the curriculum over a longer period of time could provide opportunity to review with participants previously taught content. The ability to review and remind of what is being taught over a longer period of time may better facilitate long-term retention of the content among participants. Implementing the curriculum over the course of one day obviously allowed participants to have the information fresh in their minds as they took the post-test. However, it would be interesting to test participants again perhaps two months after the training in order to observe content retention.

In hindsight, another potential weakness of the project is the Socratic approach to teaching the project curriculum. The Socratic/group-based discussion approach to teaching the material is my preferred method and was enjoyed by and effective for project participants. However, perhaps a weakness of the curriculum is the potential of its use by other teachers who do not have significant background in the content area. Could more be added to the curriculum to better enable a teacher without background in the content area to effectively teach the curriculum? Based upon my background, I was able to answer various questions as they arose from participants that were not explicitly stated in the curriculum. Therefore, perhaps a teacher's guide could be added to the project curriculum to assist teachers without background in the content area.

What I Would Do Differently

I am encouraged by the way the project was approached and by how each stage of the project went. However, if I were to do this ministry project again, I would like to implement it during a time when there is not a global pandemic afoot. The pandemic certainly affected the planning and implementation of this project. The pandemic also affected other areas of life and ministry that indirectly impacted my enjoyment of the project. Stress and distractions were certainly multiplied due to COVID-19's impact on myself, my family, and the church as a whole.

In a more typical scenario, I would attempt to implement the training over a slightly longer period of time. Unfortunately, considering COVID-19 I lacked confidence that I could maintain my test group over an extended period of time, so I therefore planned the implementation to take place in a day-long training. If I were to do the project again during a time void of a global pandemic, I would implement over the course of a few weeks. However, I do not believe or see any indication that the day conference negatively impacted the results of the project. Fortunately, I will be using the same content as part of the three-year training calendar and will be able to observe the impact of this curriculum implemented over a longer period of time.

Additionally, if I were to do this ministry project again, I would like to have a larger test group. There were twenty-seven participants in the test group, which was a sufficient sample of the members of Lakewood Baptist Church; however, given the large number of LBC members, I would have enjoyed a larger test group of perhaps of fifty or even one hundred members. Fifty LBC members were invited and of that number twenty-seven chose to participate. In hindsight, I would ask for recommendations for one hundred or more members to invite into the test group.

Theological Reflections

This ministry project encouraged me a great deal spiritually. Reflecting upon the project as a whole, two particular theological takeaways immediately come to the forefront. First, I learned more about the steadfast nature of God over the course of the research process. I was encouraged to reflect upon the fact that God has always remained steadfast in carrying out his plan to redeem the world. Over thousands of years, God has steadfastly worked to bring about the salvation of man through Christ. He has not changed his mind and he cannot be thwarted. God has not grown impatient with man. It is amazing to me to see how God has remained steadfast in his salvific purpose, even while choosing to use flawed human beings as part of his mission. From Genesis through Revelation, it is clear that God will save a people for himself from all the peoples of the earth. As I have

reflected on the steadfastness of God in this mission, I have personally become more encouraged to join him in his mission as his Word prescribes.

Second, through this project I have grown deeper in my understanding of how vitally essential the Bible is for the church. The fact that Scripture is vitally essential to the church perhaps goes without saying, but I personally grew in my appreciation of that fact. I have always had the conviction that the Bible is of the utmost importance for Christians, but through this ministry project this conviction has deepened. Without the entire counsel of God's Word, the church can easily wander or at least be ignorant of its purpose in the world. As I read the entire counsel of God's Word, I come to a greater understanding of the Triune God's character, purposes, and will for his people. For example, one would be hard pressed to read the entire counsel of God's Word and yet not observe God's steadfast mission to redeem all the nations of the earth and his purpose for the church in that mission. However, I have observed many Christians in my context specifically, and in the West generally, only read portions of Scripture and often out of context. As a result, the Bible is prone to be viewed as merely a guidebook of life principles. However, Christians must remember that the Bible is far more than life principles. The Christian lives by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4).

Personal Reflections

In reflection on this ministry project, I learned three things regarding my role as a minister. The first lesson I learned through this project is that I should not assume that church members have a strong understanding of various biblical doctrines. While every participant involved in the project believed that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, some were initially unsure if it was still possible for one to be saved who had no access to the gospel. As a minister, this taught me that I should never assume a certain knowledge base on a particular biblical subject but always

be intentional to articulate and clarify what we believe as Christians, even basic biblical doctrines.

A second lesson I learned through this project is the necessity of teaching the entire counsel of God's Word. In preparation of this project, I was aware of niche ministry focuses of Christians serving in LBC, which is why I felt this project was needed. Though, this project underscored even more how essential it is for ministers to always teach the entire counsel of God's Word and to avoid only emphasizing certain areas of personal conviction or interest. As this occurs, church members become deficient in their understanding of the Bible and their role as Christians in a world. Pastors must faithfully teach all of God's Word so that believers can reach a full level of spiritual maturity.

A third lesson I learned through this project is the intentionality required to equip members of my church to reach the unreached with the gospel. To properly equip all members of LBC to participate in God's mission to reach those not yet reached with the gospel, patience and intentional instruction is essential. The goal of every LBC member being equipped to reach the unreached will not occur quickly but will certainly take time. I have learned through this project that the developed curriculum is effective and needed. To implement the content of the curriculum among all members of LBC, as well as new members added, I must be patient and intentional to carry out the three-year training calendar on a cyclical basis. Patient, consistent, and intentional instruction will be needed to help all LBC members be equipped to reach unreached people groups, as opposed to a niche few.

Conclusion

My concluding assessment is that this ministry project succeeded in its purpose of equipping members of Lakewood Baptist Church to reach unreached people groups. Each of the project goals were achieved as well. I pray this project serves as the first step in the ongoing process of continually equipping LBC members to participate in God's mission to redeem the nations. I am grateful for the ways I have personally been

encouraged throughout this project's implementation. I have been even more encouraged by the way the test group participants grew in their understanding of the mission to reach unreached people groups and by the way they were personally encouraged. I look forward to the impact of this project's curriculum and training calendar on our church for years to come. As more and more LBC members are equipped to reach the unreached, our church will surely grow in our corporate longing for the day we are included in the great multitude in Revelation 7:9-10, praising God for our salvation along with brothers and sisters from all the nations.

APPENDIX 1

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT SURVEY

The Unreached People Groups Knowledge Assessment Survey was used to assess LBC member's knowledge of unreached people groups. This survey was used to ascertain growth in the knowledge of LBC members by being administered as both a pre-test as well as a post-test.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS KNOWLEDGE
ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the needs of equipping members at Lakewood to participate in the ministry of reaching unreached people groups with the gospel. This research is being conducted by Benji Lavender for purposes of a doctoral research project. In this research, you will respond to statements pertaining to unreached people groups by indicating your level of agreement with each statement. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Directions: Based on the following scale, circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:

- SD = Strongly Disagree,
- D = Disagree,
- U = Uncertain,
- A = Agree,
- SA = Strongly Agree.

Statement	Response				
	SD	D	U	A	SA
1. I can accurately define the term UPG.					
2. I am familiar with the number of UPG in the world.					
3. I can accurately explain the biblical means through which the Great Commission will be accomplished.					
4. I can explain specific ways the local church can participate in reaching the nations with the gospel.					
5. I can explain from Scripture how to determine when the work of missions is completed.					
6. I can accurately define the term UUPG.					
7. I know where to find mission statistics and how to use them in biblically informed ways.					
8. A good person who is “in the middle of nowhere” without gospel witness will still go to heaven.					
9. I can accurately define the term “10/40 window.”					
10. I am familiar with specific contextual components that can pose obstacles to gospel dissemination from Western missionaries to UUPG.					
11. The testimony of nature is a sufficient witness for the salvation of UPG who have no true gospel witness.					
12. I am familiar with specific passages from Genesis through Revelation that convey the biblical narrative of God’s plan to redeem all nations.					

13. I can name 6 UPG.					
14. I am familiar with the number of UUPG in the world.					
15. I am familiar with the legal and cultural components that hinder gospel access in unreached contexts.					
16. People from every people group will definitely be saved.					
17. I can name 5 geopolitical countries in which three or more UPG reside.					
18. I can accurately define the term “people group”					

APPENDIX 2

REACHING UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

The Reaching Unreached People Groups Curriculum Evaluation Tool was used to evaluate the curriculum's biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, and overall applicability to the members of Lakewood Baptist Church. The evaluation of the curriculum was completed by a select panel of LBC pastors who utilized this tool.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Reaching UPG's Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to engage in reaching UPG's.					
At the end of the course, participants will be equipped to reach UPG's.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3
REACHING UNREACHED PEOPLE
GROUPS CURRICULUM

The following curriculum is to equip members of Lakewood Baptist Church to reach unreached people groups with the gospel. The curriculum was derived predominantly from Scripture in hope of helping LBC members rely most heavily on the Bible for their faith and practice as it pertains to this project. However, in addition to the Bible, information from www.joshuproject.net and www.peoplegroups.org was also utilized for the development of this curriculum. The curriculum is comprised of six sessions, each of which is designed to last roughly an hour. Within each session Socratic teaching method through group-based discussion will be primarily utilized to employ the curriculum content. Each group discussion has a trajectory labeled as “teaching” to which the teacher will seek to guide the conversation.

LESSON 1: A BIBLICAL METANARRATIVE

>>> **LESSON OBJECTIVE:** To help LBC members see the common thread of God's mission to redeem sinners from all nations from Genesis through Revelation. Equipping LBC members to reach UPG's is best done within the context of the broader narrative of God's mission. Therefore, the teacher will emphasize passages of Scripture from both the Old and New Testaments to convey the consistent salvific end that God is bringing to fruition over the course of the Bible's storyline. The teacher will also assist LBC members to see the relevance for understanding the Bible's missional storyline for personal application today.

>>> **LEAD-IN QUESTION:** How would you explain to someone what the storyline of the Bible is?

INTRODUCTION

We likely all know the idiom, "don't miss the forest for the trees." This idiom is an encouragement that we not miss the bigger picture as we are too focused in on the particular details of a given topic. This idiom is very applicable to Christians in the West as we come to the Bible. We have so many books, studies, conferences, and other resources all derived from the Bible which focus on a plethora of various distinct topics. Because of this dynamic, Christians in the West can be prone to focus in on certain details of Scripture for life application while missing the broader narrative. However, we must be aware that there is continuity between the sixty-six books of the Bible through which the Bible tells the story of God's plan for mankind and the world. Over the course of thousands of years and dozens of authors, the Bible tells the story of God reconciling a sinful world to himself through his Son Jesus Christ. As God's people today, it is important that we understand God's purposes and plans as he has revealed them to us

through his word, particularly as we are learning about the idea of unreached people groups. God intends we know the metanarrative of the Bible.

Read Genesis 1:26-28 & 3:13-21 and discuss the following questions:

What do you observe regarding God's original purpose for mankind?

- Teaching: *God's plan for man was to image-forth who God is and to join him in spreading his glory to the ends of the earth. Man was to fill the earth with God's image. Man and God were to dwell together in perfect relationship as man was given the role of a to exercise dominion, to rule and subdue.*

How/Why was the relationship between God & man disrupted?

- Teaching: *Man's relationship with God was broken by sin. Man disobeyed God's command which inevitably broke God and man's perfect relationship. Man's mission to rule and fill the earth as God's image-bearers was marred by man's sinfulness and man was removed from God's dwelling place, the garden.*

What do you observe about God's plan to restore what was lost?

- Teaching: *Immediately after the fall, God communicated his redemptive heart in word and deed. God covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve with skins perhaps alluding to a sacrifice made. More notably however, is God's promise to bring about the Seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. This is often referred to as the protoevangelium or first gospel. This promise, alluding to Christ, is kept and traced throughout the entire biblical narrative. God intends to redeem what was lost through Christ.*

>>>**TAKEAWAY:** God made man in his image to dwell with him in perfect relationship. He gave man the mission of filling the earth to rule and subdue within the

context of this worshipful relationship. However, because of sin, God and man's relationship was broken. But in his mercy God promised to redeem what was lost and restore what was broken through Christ.

Read Genesis 12:3, 26:4-5, & 28:14 and discuss the following questions:

What is the connection between the promise made in Genesis 3:15 and 12:3?

- Teaching: *The promise of the woman's Seed in Genesis 3:15 is picked up in the verbiage of God's promise to Abraham. God is keeping his promise to bring about the foretold Seed of the woman, who is Christ, through Abraham's lineage. The promise to Abraham is part of the outworking of God's redemptive plan revealed in Genesis 3. Additionally, this promise is repeated to Isaac and Jacob which helps us to see God's faithfulness to keep this promise.*

Who did God promise would be blessed through Abraham's offspring?

- Teaching: *God promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed. This allusion to Christ (as Abraham's offspring) has implications for all nations. In other words, there is no people that God was not referring to. God's promise to Abraham is specifically inclusive of all the nations. This promise to Abraham is in continuity with God's promise in Genesis 3:15. As Adam is man's representative who sinned and therefore all sinned, so Christ (Abraham's offspring) would be a redemptive blessing to all nations (mankind).*

Read 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and Luke 1:31-33 and discuss the following questions:

How might God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob relate to God's promise to David?

- Teaching: *These texts are mere snap shots of the many texts from the Old Testament which convey God's plan to redeem mankind. These texts reveal to us that God's promised Seed in Genesis 3:15 is alluded to in God's promised offspring to Abraham and is also alluded to in God's promised offspring to David. God promised that the woman's Seed would crush the serpents head. God promised that Abraham's offspring would bless all the nations. God promised that David's offspring would rule God's people eternally (with implications for all nations). Each text adds an additional layer to God's plan to redeem mankind through Christ. The nations would be blessed through Christ the King. People from all nations would be included in the people of God, over whom Christ is King.*

What connection is there between Luke 1:31-33 and 2 Samuel 7:12-16?

- Teaching: *God's promise to David in 2 Samuel is fulfilled in Christ which is clearly communicated in Luke 1. David's offspring was to sit on his throne and rule God's people eternally (with implications for all nations). This promise is picked up by Luke and applied to Christ. Christ is David's offspring who will sit on the throne and rule God's people eternally, who will be comprised of all nations. Christ's kingdom would not only be comprised of ethnic Israel (as David's) but would be comprised of "children of Abraham" in other words, all the families of the earth or all the nations.*

What do these texts reveal to us regarding God's redemptive plan?

- Teaching: *These texts help us see the metanarrative of God's mission to redeem mankind from sin. These OT snap shots help us to see the continuity between what God is doing consistently over the course of thousands of years. He is bringing about his plan to redeem sinful man through Christ. All nations were derived from Adam and all nations sinned in Adam. But, through God's promise of a Savior, all nations would be redeemed through Christ.*

>>>**TAKEAWAY:** A snapshot of the Old Testament reveals that God is faithful to keep his promise made in Genesis 3:15. He intends to redeem all nations (mankind) through Christ and brings about this promise over the course of time using imperfect men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

Read Galatians 3:7-9,16, Luke 24:44-48, & Revelation 7:9-10 and discuss the following questions:

How might Galatians 3:7-9,17 and Luke 24:44-48 shed light on the previously discussed OT texts?

- Teaching: *This text sheds light on previously discussed OT texts by providing the sharpened point of the whole story. The true seed of the woman, the true offspring of Abraham, the true heir to David's throne, would be Christ. Christ would be a blessing to all nations by crushing the head of the serpent through his cross. Christ's kingdom would be established forever and comprised of people from all nations (or all families of earth) who put their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sin.*

How does Revelation 7:9-10 relate to God's promise in Genesis 3:15 and his promise to Abraham?

- Teaching: *The scene in Revelation 7:9-10 shows us the fulfilment of God's promise. The serpent has been crushed by the Seed of the woman who is Christ, therefore mankind praises God and the Lamb for their salvation. In this scene we see a multitude that no one could count, like the sand on the shore, who have been blessed in Abraham's offspring who is Christ. The multitude represents every tribe, tongue, people and nations. In other words, all the families of the earth have been blessed.*

>>>**TAKEAWAY:** In the same way that God was faithful to keep his promise to redeem throughout the Old Testament, he also showed himself faithful to bring this promise to fruition in the New Testament. A snapshot of the New Testament reveals the continuity between what God was doing in the OT and into the NT. God's plan to redeem all nations was fully revealed in Christ's atoning death and resurrection. Now Christ, must be preached to and believed on by all nations.

>>> **QUESTION & ANSWER**

LESSON 2: THE CONCEPT OF PEOPLE GROUPS AND THE UNREACHED

>>> **LESSON OBJECTIVE:** To help LBC members see the concept of people groups throughout the redemptive narrative of the Bible. Also, to help LBC members connect the biblical idea of people groups to the contemporary missiological focus of reaching the unreached. The teacher will underscore the nations emphasis in both OT and NT texts specifically in regard to the missionary focus of the early church and the apostle Paul.

>>> **LEAD-IN QUESTION:** When you think about the word “nation” what ideas come to mind?

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps many of us are generally familiar with what is referred to as the Great Commission. We may know that we are called to make disciples of all the nations, however we must recognize that the task is not focused on contemporary geopolitical countries as we know them today. God’s redemptive plan to redeem all the nations is a theme rooted in the Bible dating back to Genesis, far before anyone knew countries like the United States or Morocco. As we think about the call to disciple all the nations, it is important that we have a biblical view of what or who the nations are in order for us to be faithful in our God-given task. Today, many have come to understand that our task to disciple the nations is not one focused on geopolitical countries, but rather one that is focused on ethnic people groups. The concept of people groups is one that is derived from the Bible. Within the topic or concept of people groups is the concept of people groups who have not yet been reached by the gospel. As the church we might understand this concept as we consider our role in the Great Commission.

Read Genesis 10:1-32 and Revelation 5:9 and discuss the following questions:

What observations do you make regarding the concept of people groupings derived from these texts?

- Teaching: *In Genesis 10 we see specific distinctions made between peoples such as lands, languages, clans, and nations. In Revelation 5 we see that Christ purchased people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. Through these texts we see biblical groupings of people based upon differing distinctions; i.e. languages, tribes, clans, nations, etc. Through texts such as these we see that the idea of people groups based upon certain barriers is a biblically rooted concept. These texts also help us to think more critically or intentionally about our mission as the church to disciple all the nations. These biblical subgroupings help us see more clearly that our aim is not simply at geo-political countries.*

How might these texts and the people groupings described therein relate to God's redemptive plan?

- Teaching: *In Genesis 10 we see the origination of the various nations from Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. After the flood, all these various nations are said to have spread abroad all over the earth. In Revelation 5 we see that Christ purchased a people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. These texts certainly relate to God's promise to Abraham to bless all nations. As various clans, languages, and peoples developed and spread across the world, these are groupings God had in mind for redemption. None would be overlooked or excluded. Christ's sacrifice atoned for the sin of people from each people group.*

>>> **ACTIVITY 1:** Working with those at your table, scan through the Old & New Testaments and list as many names of peoples/nations that you can find (i.e. the Hittites and Amorites).

- What do you suppose make a people, a people?

>>> **ACTIVITY 2:** Working with those at your table, first read through the Hui people group profile.¹ Then read through the Pashtun people group profile.² Finally, read through the Madhiban people group profile.³ List as many distinctions as you can and then answer the following questions:

- What do these groups have in common? What barriers might prevent these groups from living in the same neighborhood? What specifically would be required for these groups to overcome these barriers? Do you suppose the differences between these groups could cause conflict?

>>> **TAKEAWAY:** People groups are a biblical concept which is necessary for the church to understand when considering God’s redemptive plan for the world. God plans to redeem a people from all people groups, not geo-political countries as we might think today. As the church we must begin to have a people group perspective as we think about the Great Commission.

>>> **QUESTION & ANSWER**

¹ Joshua Project, “Hui in China,” accessed December 27, 2021, https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12140/CH.

² Joshua Project, “Northern Pashtun in Afghanistan,” accessed December 27, 2021, https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14256/AF.

³ Joshua Project, “Madhiban in Somalia,” accessed December 27, 2021, https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/19170/SO.

LESSON 3: SOTERIOLOGY: HOW ONE IS SAVED

>>> **LESSON OBJECTIVE:** To help LBC members understand the biblical means through which anyone is saved. The teacher will underscore the biblical notion of sin, sins consequence and the solution of the atonement for sin through Christ. The teacher will also emphasize the biblical means of the application of Christ's atonement through hearing and believing the gospel message with faith. Finally, the teacher will further underscore the lack of alternative means of redemption and the resulting necessity of gospel proclamation to all nations.

>>> **LEAD-IN QUESTION:** Imagine there was a good person on an island by himself who just so happen to die without ever hearing the gospel. Would or could this person be saved?

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps many have considered the imaginary scenario of a person in the middle of nowhere dying without having opportunity to hear the gospel. Perhaps some of our natural inclinations lead us to hope that such a person would somehow be saved as it perhaps seems unfair they would suffer eternally without ever having purposefully rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ. Perhaps we might assume that the testimony of nature is enough to give people the opportunity to be saved? Or, perhaps we wonder if miraculous appearances of Christ or of angels would enable such a person lacking gospel access to hear and by saved. However, in this scenario much can be wrongly assumed on our part which may negatively impact the focus of our ministry. As the church it is essential that we understand the pervasiveness of sin and its effect as well as the only means through which forgiveness of sin can be accomplished and applied, namely through Christ. It is only when we understand these essential biblical concepts that we can faithfully participate in and fulfill our mission to disciple all nations.

Read Romans 1:18-23, Romans 3:9-12, and Romans 5:12 and discuss the following questions:

What do these texts convey regarding the universal spread of sin?

- Teaching: *In Romans 5:12 Paul is essentially saying that through the sin of Adam, all men sinned. When Adam sinned, in God's view, all mankind sinned. In other words, Adam was man's representative in the Garden and when he sinned all those who would come from Adam (all mankind) would be included in Adam's sin. In Romans 3 it is again made clear that no one is righteous but that all have sinned against God. Through these texts we see that no individual on earth is unaffected by sin but is in fact a sinner and in need of forgiveness. Therefore, there is no innocent person who exists. There is no good person on an island without gospel access who would somehow be saved apart from Christ.*

What do these texts convey regarding sins impact on man?

- Teaching: *These texts convey that the result of sin is death. Certainly this is a physical death which all man will experience, but this is also referring to a spiritual death alluding to the eternal break in our relationship with God. We see from these texts that God's wrath is revealed against sin and that judgement will be stored up for a day of wrath (Rom. 2:5). Because of sin, man's relationship with God is broken and he is under God's judgement.*

How might these texts relate to any texts discussed in previous lessons?

- Teaching: *These texts communicate the problem of mankind which began in the Garden of Eden. Because of sin in the Garden, all mankind has been affected and is in need of salvation. As people groups/nations developed, each was fully comprised of sinful individuals. God's plan to redeem the nations is*

necessitated by the sinfulness of the nations. Over the course of Scripture, God's plan to redeem the nations through Christ is unpacked.

>>>**TAKEAWAY** : In Adam, all mankind “fell” in sin. Every individual is a sinner and in need of salvation through Christ. There is no one innocent or lacking the need of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

Read Romans 3:23-25 and 6:23 and discuss the following questions:

What do these texts communicate regarding sin's consequence?

- Teaching: *As mentioned earlier, the consequence of sin is death. Physically and spiritually, sin brings death to every individual. Because every person is a sinner, every person who dies in sin will eternally be separated from God.*

What do these texts communicate regarding the solution to sin?

- Teaching: *These texts communicate that the only solution to sin is Christ's atoning sacrifice. Jesus is the propitiation for our sin. He is the one who turns away the wrath of God from us. It is through Jesus that we are made right or justified in God's sight, whereas apart from him we are condemned as sinners. It is through Jesus that we are given eternal life instead of death. Eternal life is a free gift given to us in Christ. Jesus is the only solution to sin.*

>>>**TAKEAWAY**: The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ. Jesus is man's only hope. Jesus's atoning sacrifice is the only solution to man's sin.

Read Romans 10:13-17 and discuss the following questions:

What are the necessary steps involved in anyone receiving salvation?

- Teaching: *Through this text we see that all who call on the name of Jesus will be saved. But to call on the name of Jesus, one must hear his name and his gospel. In order for one to hear the gospel, one must have someone preaching to them. In order for preachers to preach, other must send the preachers out. As messengers go out with the gospel they proclaim the message of Christ. When people hear the message of Christ with faith, they call upon Christ for salvation. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.*

How does this text inform our mission as the church today?

- Teaching: *This text informs our mission by underscoring the practical steps we must take in order for the unreached to be reached with the gospel. We must understand the impact of sin and the absolute necessity that anyone must hear the gospel in order to be saved. Considering this fact, we must send out messengers to preach the gospel. As we preach the gospel we must invite others to call upon the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin so that they can be saved and receive life in his name. We must practically implement these steps as we consider the task of our mission today, specifically among the unreached.*

>>>**TAKEAWAY:** In order for anyone to be saved, they must place their faith in Christ. In order for anyone to put their faith in Christ, they must hear about him and his gospel. In order for anyone to hear, other must preach the gospel and still others must send the preachers.

>>> **QUESTION & ANSWER**

LESSON 4: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN MISSIONS

>>> **LESSON OBJECTIVE:** To help LBC members understand the ongoing nature of the Great Commission and the church as the vehicle through which the mission is accomplished. The teacher will emphasize the components of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, specifically that of discipling all the nations. The teacher will also relate the Great Commission to Paul's ministry outlook and model, while underscoring the necessary continuity between Paul's ministry and that of the contemporary church.

>>> **LEAD-IN QUESTION:** How would you explain to someone what the mission of the church is?

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the United States where Christianity has historically been advantageous, many different niche ministries have formed. There are campus ministries, foster care ministries, homeless ministries, and divorce care ministries just to name a few. In the abundance of church based ministries it is easy to get sidetracked from what our basic or first ministry is as the church. Our role as the church is to make disciples of all the nations, not individually, but in and through the context of the local church. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, he gave it to the church. He intended we participate in this mission together. Together as the church we are to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, discipling all the nations. We are to reach, baptize and teach the nations.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 and review the Joshua Project Handout⁴ and discuss the following questions:

What did Jesus mean when he called us to disciple the nations?

⁴ Joshua Project, "Why People Groups?," accessed December 27, 2021, <https://joshuaproject.net/assets/media/handouts/why-people-groups.pdf>.

- Teaching: *The word for nation that Jesus used was ethne, referring to ethnic people groups rather than geopolitical countries. We are called to go, in light of the authority of Christ, to disciple all the nations. We are to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. We are also, to teach them all that Jesus has commanded us. In other words, we are called to disciple all the ethnic people groups of the world.*

What is the difference between a political perspective and an ethne perspective on nations?

- Teaching: *There are many ethnic people groups within various geopolitical countries. If we are focused on discipling the ethne, then we will see the multiple fields within each country that we must seek to bring the gospel message. With an ethne perspective we will acknowledge the need to learn different languages and cultures within the same geopolitical boundaries, rather than assuming all things are the same due to being within the same political borders.*

How many ethne/nations are within the geopolitical “nation” of Nigeria?

- Teaching: *According to the handout there are 540 distinct ethnic people groups within the country of Nigeria.*

What potential barriers could you image might exist between the nations of Nigeria?

- Trajectory: *Likely between the 540 distinct people groups, there are multiple languages and cultural differences. The way they view the world could be different. They may have different religions. They may have different traditions and priorities. They have different cultural norms and signs of*

respect. There is abundance of potential barriers for the gospel to move from one people to another that must be understood and overcome.

How does Matt. 28:18-20 relate to the idea of reaching unreached people groups with the gospel?

- Teaching: *We must understand that there are distinct people groups in the world with very little to no access to the gospel. Some of these unreached people groups may even be within the context of a geopolitical country that has many Christians. We must ascertain who these peoples are and where they reside so that we can focus on reaching them to disciple them.*

>>>**TAKEAWAY:** The task of discipling the nations is not focused on geopolitical countries, but rather on ethnic people groups. The church is called to disciple all ethnic people groups, including those not yet reached with the gospel. To this end, the church must reach, baptize and teach all ethnic people groups what Jesus commanded.

Read Acts 14:21-23, Acts 15:36,41, Romans 15:20 and discuss the following questions:

What elements of the Great Commission do you see played out in Paul's ministry?

- Teaching: *Observing a brief sketch of Paul's ministry we can see his emphasis on taking the gospel to the unreached. He was focused on discipling the nations and particularly in the context of planting churches. Paul went to the unreached nations. He taught and baptized them. Everywhere Paul ministered, he planted churches and appointed elders to pastor the churches. Also, Paul was sent out by and returned to the church. In Paul's ministry we see the corporate nature of the Great Commission and the role of the church in all that Paul was doing.*

Did Paul focus both on reaching the unreached and the ongoing teaching of the church?

- Teaching: *In Paul's ministry we see both the emphasis on reaching the unreached as well as the ongoing need to teach the church. Paul's ambition was to take the gospel where it had not been. Yet, we also see Paul's consistent desire to return to previously planted churches for the ongoing teaching of the believers there. In Paul's ministry we see the need not only to reach the unreached but also the ongoing need to continuously teach them all that Jesus commanded.*

How does Paul's implementation of the Great Commission inform us today?

- Teaching: *Paul's implementation of the Great Commission is a great example for the church today. Like Paul, we should have an emphasis on taking the gospel to the nations and particularly those that are unreached. We also see the need to carry out the Great Commission in the context of the local church. We should be sent by the church and then plant churches. We should return to the church and report all that God has done.*

>>>**TAKEAWAY:** Paul's ministry serves as a great example for the church today. Like Paul, the church today must continue to advance the gospel and plant churches among unreached peoples and places.

>>> **QUESTION & ANSWER**

LESSON 5: MISSION DEFINITIONS AND STATISTICS

>>> **LESSON OBJECTIVE:** To help LBC members learn helpful missiological terms and statistics that will aid their ability to participate in reaching the unreached with the gospel. The teacher will list and define several missiological terms while explaining how each term and statistic can be helpful to our mission as the church. The teacher will also emphasize how the mission terms and statistics must be used in biblical informed ways in order to avoid an unhealthy and overly pragmatic view of reaching the unreached.

>>> **LEAD-IN QUESTION:** Can we reach every unreached people group with the gospel by the year 2030?

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of time, missiologists have developed helpful terminology that assists us in our engagement in God's mission to reach all the nations with the gospel. Additionally, missiologists have developed statistical data to guide the church in discerning the progress of the gospel in a particular area of the world or among a particular people group. Understanding some of the general terminology is helpful and gives us, as the church, specific hand-holds to understand various details of our mission. Also, understanding some missiological statistical data can enable us to make informed decisions regarding our ministry efforts. While missions terminology and statistics are helpful for us to know, we must be diligent to use this information in biblically informed ways.

Read Matthew 24:14 & Revelation 7:9-10 and discuss the following questions:

Is the Lord delayed in his return based upon the progress of the church?

- Teaching: *Some are tempted to look at Matthew 24:14 and assume that we can speed or delay Christ's return by our progress in reaching each UPG.*

However, we should permit ourselves to become overly pragmatic. The early church assumed Christ's return was near, and we should as well. God knows the day and hour, we do not. God has been fulfilling this end since the beginning, with no help from us. All we know is that when all the nations are reached, the end will come. Until then, our mission continues.

How does the Revelation 7:9-10 give us confidence and patience in our mission?

- *Teaching: The scene in Revelation shows us the end result of the Great Commission. One day people from every people group will be in heaven praising God for their salvation. This will happen because those people groups will hear and believe the gospel. This is a promise. Therefore, this scene gives us confidence in our mission to proceed even into difficult contexts because we are assured success. Also, this scene gives us patience as we know that God will complete this mission.*

Review and discuss the following mission terms and definitions:

- People Group - An A significantly large group of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these. For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.⁵

⁵ Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 67.

- UPG - (Unreached People Group) An Unreached People Group is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside assistance.”⁶
- UUPG - (Unengaged Unreached People Group) A people group is unengaged when there is no church planting strategy, consistent with Evangelical faith and practice, under implementation.⁷
- 10/40 Window - The 10/40 Window is the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia approximately between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude often called "The Resistant Belt" and includes the majority of the world's Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists.⁸
- Number of people groups - 11,948⁹
- Number of UPGs - 7,325¹⁰
- Number of UUPGs - 3,172¹¹

⁶ Joshua Project, “Definitions,” accessed January 14, 2020, <https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions>.

⁷ People Groups, “Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed November 26, 2021, <https://www.peoplegroups.org/294.aspx#307>.

⁸ Joshua Project, “What Is the 10/40 Window,” accessed January 14, 2020 https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/10_40_window.

⁹ People Groups, “What Is a People Group?,” accessed November 26, 2021, <https://peoplegroups.org/Default.aspx>

¹⁰ PeopleGroups, “Why Are They Unreached?,” accessed November 26, 2021, <https://peoplegroups.org/294.aspx#307>

¹¹ Peoplegroups, “Who Are the Unengaged?,” accessed November 26, 2021, <https://peoplegroups.org/Default.aspx>

Review and discuss the following mission resources:

>>> **WWW.JOSHUAPROJECT.NET** - A free website with an abundance of helpful information regarding the task of reaching unreached people groups. On this site one can find articles, maps, graphics, and videos all of which assist the church in reaching UPG's.

>>> **WWW.PEOPLEGROUPS.ORG** - A free website organized by the International Mission Board that contains helpful resources pertaining to people groups and the unreached. Much like Joshua project, this site provides article, statistics, graphics, and research to assist readers with reaching UPG's.

>>> **PIONEERS USA** - A missions agency based in Orlando, Florida that focuses on sending missionaries to unreached people groups. Pioneers partners with local churches in order to fulfill its mission. More information about Pioneers can be found on their website at www.pioneers.org

>>> **IMB** - The International Mission Board is the missions arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. The IMB partners with the churches of the SBC to reach the nations by sending missionaries to proclaim the gospel. Much of the IMB's focus is on unreached people groups and places. More information about the International Mission Board can be found on their website at www.imb.org

>>> **ACTIVITY:** Working with those at your table, develop a list of 5 geopolitical countries that contain 3 or more UPG's. Also, develop a list of 6 UPG's specifically from the country of China. From the list of China UPG's develop a list of 3 barriers that may hinder gospel transmission from Western missionaries to members of those people groups.

>>> **QUESTION & ANSWER**

LESSON 6: OUR PERSONAL PARTICIPATION TODAY

>>> **LESSON OBJECTIVE:** To help LBC members understand practical ways they can participate in God's mission to reach the unreached with the gospel. The teacher will emphasize three categories of participation: prayer, sending, and going. The teacher will expound upon each category of participation, giving specific biblical precedence for each category while also providing guidance for practical application today.

>>> **LEAD-IN QUESTION:** Imagine you had a time machine that took you back in time to Paul's ministry. Can you picture yourself joining Paul on one of his missionary journeys? Why or why not?

INTRODUCTION

As we have seen over the last several sessions, God's mission is to redeem for himself a people from all nations or people groups, and we have a role to play. The corporate church is to engage in this mission, not merely a niche few. So how can we get involved today? Some of us are business owners. Some of us are electricians. Some of us are elderly. Some of us are young. But all of us are called to play a role in this mission. But how? Are we all to move across the ocean and learn a new language? Are we all to quit our jobs and start support raising? How can we personally participate in God's mission to reach the unreached with the gospel? We are going to look at three ways from Scripture that we can all actively engage in God's mission.

Read Luke 10:2, John 15:5-8, & Colossians 4:2-4 and discuss the following questions:

What do these three texts have in common?

- Teaching: *Each of these texts revolve around the concept of prayer's role in ministry. Each text is an example of what God intends his people to pray for.*

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus commanded us to pray "your kingdom come, your will be done." These texts each reflect specific examples of how the church is to engage in this portion of the Lord's prayer. Each text reflects elements of God's will which he intends that we pray.

What are we told to ask for?

- *Teaching: In Luke 10, we are told to ask God for workers (i.e. pastors, missionaries, etc) to go into metaphorical fields of ministry. In light of the need for people to be saved, we are to ask God to send out messengers with the gospel. In John 15, we are told to pray essentially for God's will to be done. As we are shaped by God's word, then we ask in accordance with Jesus's will or name. In Colossians 4, we are told to ask for opportunities for others to share the gospel. We are also told to ask that they would have the ability to make the gospel message clear.*

How do texts like these inform our participation in reaching the unreached?

- *Teaching: Texts like these help us to see the efficacy of prayer in reaching the unreached and why it is necessary that the church participates in this way. We see clearly from Scripture that prayer is powerful and effective. We see that prayer is an ordained means through which God brings about his plans and purposes. Therefore, we can pray in these ways and truly join in God's mission to reach those who are unreached with the gospel.*

> > > **TAKEAWAY:** Each of us today can participate in reaching the unreached through prayer. Prayer is a God-given tool at believers' disposal to join in what God is doing. God has ordained that the prayer of his people is a means through which he accomplishes his purposes.

Read 3 John 5-8 and discuss the following questions:

What observations can you make from this passage?

- Teaching: *Participating financially in missions is being faithful. It enables us to be fellow workers with missionaries. We are called to support missionaries in a way that is honoring to God. Stinginess in supporting missionaries surely would not be pleasing to God. Missionaries go out for the sake of God's name. As they go, they do not desire to be a burden to the nations they serve therefore financial support may be required.*

What means of sending is John referring to?

- Teaching: *In the context of this passage, John is referring primarily to financial support of these missionaries. These missionaries wanted to take the gospel message to the nations free of charge, similar to Paul's approach. In order to do this, their ministry required funding. They certainly needed food, lodging and any needed supplies along the way. The financial need is evident in this missionary example.*

How might this passage inform our participation in reaching the unreached?

- Teaching: *Texts like this help us to understand how we can practically participate in reaching the unreached. Our financial giving is a true and biblical way through which we can be a part of the gospel going forth to unreached people groups. John speaks of these givers as being fellow workers even though they themselves were not physically going on the trip. We can truly be co-laborers with missionaries who are proclaiming the gospel among the unreached through our financial support. We should realize the importance of our involvement in this way.*

>>>**TAKEAWAY:** Christians can participate in reaching the unreached through supporting missionaries financially. Finances can easily become a barrier to the gospel being proclaimed, but senders can be co-laborers with goers through their generosity in helping to overcome this financial barrier.

Read Acts 13:1-3 & Romans 15:20 and discuss the following questions:

What was a focus of Paul's ministry?

- Teaching: *Certainly one of the aims of Paul's ministry was to take the gospel to people who had never heard it. He was very compelled to preach where Christ had not yet been named. Elsewhere it is stated that Paul's focus was also on the Gentiles specifically. This gentile focus goes hand in hand with his inclination to preach to those without the gospel message.*

What can we observe about differing roles in God's mission from these texts?

- Teaching: *From these texts we can observe that some go out to the mission field while others send. The two groups have the same mission but different roles to play. The goers and the senders both acknowledge God's will for the gospel to be preached to all nations throughout the earth and participate accordingly. From these texts we observe the certain need for some to go into unreached areas in order to preach the gospel to unreached peoples.*

How do these passages relate to Paul's questions in Romans 10:14-15?

- Teaching: *These texts serve as examples of the outworking of Paul's rhetorical questions in Romans 10. Unless someone goes, the unreached will not hear the gospel. But the goers cannot go unless they are sent. These passages relate to Paul's questions by showing us the necessary steps through which the gospel goes to unreached people groups. Some need to send so that*

others may go in order for the unreached to hear the gospel message and be saved.

>>>**TAKEAWAY:** Christians today can participate in reaching the unreached through going out as missionaries. Some, like Paul and Barnabas, will be called to go where Christ has not been named and to proclaim the gospel.

>>> **QUESTION & ANSWER**

APPENDIX 4
THREE-YEAR TRAINING CALENDAR

Year 1: 2022-2023

Fall Curriculum:

- Wednesday, October 5 - A Biblical Metanarrative
- Wednesday, October 12 - The Concept of People Groups/Unreached
- Wednesday, October 19 - Soteriology: How One is Saved
- Wednesday, October 26 - The Role of the Church in Mission
- Wednesday, November 2 - Missions Definitions & Statistics
- Wednesday, November 9 - Our Personal Participation Today

Spring Book Study:

- Wednesday, March 1 - *Theology & Practice of Mission* ch. 1
- Wednesday, March 8 - *Theology & Practice of Mission* ch. 4
- Wednesday, March 15 - *Theology & Practice of Mission* ch. 5
- Wednesday, March 22 - *Theology & Practice of Mission* ch. 12

Summer Field Experience:

- Sat. June 25- Sun. June 26 - Trip to Clarkston, Georgia

Year 2: 2023-2024

Fall Curriculum:

- Wednesday, October 4 - A Biblical Metanarrative
- Wednesday, October 11 - The Concept of People Groups/Unreached
- Wednesday, October 18 - Soteriology: How One is Saved
- Wednesday, October 25 - The Role of the Church in Missions
- Wednesday, November 1 - Missions Definitions & Statistics
- Wednesday, November 8 - Our Personal Participation Today

Spring Book Study:

- Wednesday, March 6 - *Let the Nations Be Glad* ch. 1
- Wednesday, March 13 - *Let the Nations Be Glad* ch. 2
- Wednesday, March 20 - *Let the Nations Be Glad* ch. 4
- Wednesday, March 27 - *Let the Nations Be Glad* ch. 5

Summer Field Experience:

- June 18-24 - Trip to Almaty, Kazakhstan

Year 3: 2024-2025

Fall Curriculum:

- Wednesday, October 2 - A Biblical Metanarrative
- Wednesday, October 9 - The Concept of People Groups/Unreached
- Wednesday, October 16 - Soteriology: How One is Saved
- Wednesday, October 23 - The Role of the Church in Missions
- Wednesday, October 30 - Missions Definitions & Statistics
- Wednesday, November 6 - Our Personal Participation Today

Spring Book Study:

Wednesday, March 5 - *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* ch. 2

Wednesday, March 12 - *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* ch. 5

Wednesday, March 19 - *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* ch. 6

Wednesday, March 26 - *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* ch. 7

Summer Field Experience:

Date TBD

Pioneers Church Partner Forum

APPENDIX 5

PRE- AND POST-TEST RESULTS

Table A1. Pre- and post- UPGKAS results

UPGKAS Statements 1-18	Pre-test Mean Score	Post-test Mean Score	Mean Difference
1. I can accurately define the term UPG.	3.29	4.88	1.59
2. I am familiar with the number of UPG in the world.	1.62	4.66	3.04
3. I can accurately explain the biblical means through which the Great Commission will be accomplished.	3.07	4.40	1.33
4. I can explain specific ways the local church can participate in reaching the nations with the gospel.	3.44	4.62	1.18
5. I can explain from Scripture how to determine when the work of missions is completed.	2.40	4.22	1.82
6. I can accurately define the term UUPG.	1.66	4.70	3.04
7. I know where to find mission statistics and how to use them in biblically informed ways.	1.74	4.62	2.88
8. A good person who is “in the middle of nowhere” without gospel witness will still go to heaven.	1.88 (reverse score: 4.11)	1.44 (reverse score: 4.55)	-0.44 (reverse score: 0.44)
9. I can accurately define the term “10/40 window.”	1.92	4.77	2.85
10. I am familiar with specific contextual components that can pose obstacles to gospel dissemination from Western missionaries to UUPG.	1.37	4.25	2.88
11. The testimony of nature is a sufficient witness for the salvation of UPG who have no true gospel witness.	2.11 (reverse score: 3.88)	1.92 (reverse score: 4.07)	-0.19 (reverse score: 0.19)
12. I am familiar with specific passages from Genesis through Revelation that convey the biblical narrative of God’s plan to redeem all nations.	3.03	4.37	1.34
13. I can name 6 UPG.	1.37	4.22	2.85
14. I am familiar with the number of UUPG in the world.	1.33	4.37	3.04
15. I am familiar with the legal and cultural components that hinder gospel access in unreached contexts.	2.03	4.51	2.48
16. People from every people group will definitely be saved.	3.48	4.51	1.03
17. I can name 5 geopolitical countries in which three or more UPG reside.	1.85	4.70	2.85
18. I can accurately define the term “people group”	2.88	4.77	1.89

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF LAKEWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH IN GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA, TO REACH UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
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The purpose of this project was to equip members of Lakewood Baptist Church to obediently participate in God's mission of reconciling the unreached to himself through the gospel.

Chapter 1 explores the context of ministry at Lakewood Baptist Church and evaluates the need for the ministry project. This chapter also determines the goals and methodology required to achieve this project's success.

Chapter 2 provides biblical and theological foundations for reaching unreached people groups. This is accomplished through an exploration of Revelation 5:9-10, Romans 10:14-17, and Matthew 28:19-20.

Chapter 3 examines theoretical, practical, and historical issues related to reaching unreached people groups. Specifically, this chapter explores the history of the church's involvement in reaching the unreached, as well as contemporary missiological concepts, terms, and definitions pertaining to unreached people groups.

Chapter 4 describes how the ministry project was implemented and the statistical data resulting from the project's implementation. This chapter also includes an interpretation of the statistical results of the project.

Chapter 5 provides an assessment of the entire project including its purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. This chapter also provides both theological and personal reflections reached upon the conclusion of this project.

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BS, Georgia College & State University, 2006
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