

Many years ago, one of the district leaders in the county where I attended high school reportedly told others that he made his decisions about weather-related closures largely depended upon conditions in his backyard. According to the story, regardless of what the weather report might be in other areas of the county, if he saw clearing skies or snowless ground, he assumed the same was true across the area. This “backyard view” created numerous problems with decisions and priorities and resulted in delays often and reversals on occasion.

When our view of God’s purpose, mission and glory becomes inward-focused, we risk seeing all of God’s intent and work from a “backyard view.” In other words, if things are going well in our personal lives and in relation to whom and what we care about the most, we have little concern for the rest. We might be tempted to limit our “backyard” to our families, our churches, our cities, or our nation. Though all these areas need continued, passionate prayer and the gospel to be shared, we must not forget the grand scale of the mission given to us: *“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’”* (Matthew 28:18-20). The mission has not changed.

The world population is approximately 7.75 billion people. Of that number, 3 billion of them (about 40%) are considered “unreached.” The term “unreached” does not just mean these people are lost, but that they are lost and do not have ready access to the gospel and the name of Jesus is largely or completely unknown. Though it may be hard for some of us to imagine, there are places with no Christians, no presence of the gospel, no Bible, no church gatherings, no missionaries...at all.

The Kendrick brothers explain the urgency of our mission well in their book “The Battle Plan for Prayer”:

*We in America, where the message of Christ seems so prevalent, cannot be lulled into forgetting all the nations where his name is unknown. To put it in perspective: the U.S. population is around 330 million. The world population is around 8 billion. America represents less than 5 percent of the globe today. The United State may see like the center of the universe to many, but heaven will be a vast collection of souls from the world over. “My house,” the Lord says, “shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7). God’s heart is for the nations. Our heart should be along with his heart for the nations as well, “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). So “lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest,” Jesus said (John 4:35), and “pray to the Lord of the harvest to send our workers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:38), that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).*

**Prayer prompt: Take some time today to visit one of the websites listed below. At each one, you will find a people group of the day for which to pray. Ask God to give you his heart for the nations as you pray for the unreached.**

**International Mission Board • Operation World • Joshua Project**

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” - Acts 1:8*

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made **for all people**, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires **all people to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth. - 1 Timothy 2:1-4*

*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... - Revelation 7:9*