



THIRTY-ONE DAILY READINGS TO HELP YOU  
BE GOSPEL-SATURATED ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

gospel  
MEDITATIONS  
*for*  
MISSIONS

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# INTRODUCTION

I've often thought of myself as an observer of Christian missions. As a child, a college student, and finally a pastor, I appreciated commando-type Christians who took the Gospel to unreached places. But I didn't think of it as normal Christianity—and certainly not as a part of my life.

I was wrong. Missions is a normal part of every Christian's life. Over the last several years, the Lord has graciously and relentlessly opened my eyes to the Bible's almost constant missionary emphasis. He's used sermons. He's used books like Piper's *Let the Nations Be Glad*, Doran and Johnson's *For the Sake of His Name*, Platt's *Radical*, Peters' *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, and numerous biographies. He's used the highly-acclaimed video series *Dispatches from the Front* by Tim Keese. He's used real-life missionaries, including those supported by my church, my brother Dan (director of Brazil Gospel Fellowship Mission), my father-in-law Jack Leeds (who retired early to go to the field), JD Crowley, and David Hosaflook—all modern missionary heroes. Most of all, He's used the Scriptures to show me the “normalcy” of missions.

Christians must be confronted with missions on a regular, even daily basis. It's toward that end that we publish *Gospel Meditations for Missions*. I pray they will inform and inspire college students, church members, pastors, and even missionaries for the grand cause of world evangelization. As with *Gospel Meditations for Men* and *Gospel Meditations for Women*, I urge you to immerse yourself in the Scriptures prior to studying our comments. As you read the book, capture the passion of the writers, especially those who write *about* the mission field *from* the mission field. And respond with prayerful, audacious obedience: “Here am I, Lord. Send me.”

For the sake of His name,

Chris Anderson, *editor*

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**JD Crowley** has lived in Asian cultures all his life. After 12 years of pastoring in Hawaii, he went to Cambodia in 1994 to do linguistic and mission work among the indigenous minorities there. He is the author of *The Tampuan/Khmer/English Dictionary* and Khmer commentaries on Matthew and Romans.

**David Hosaflook** went to Albania in 1992 on a short-term mission trip. Almost two decades later, he's still there, helping to evangelize people and plant churches in the wake of what was the most oppressive communist regime in eastern Europe. He loves Albanian history and will soon publish *The Siege of Shkodra*, a work on the Ottoman/Christian struggle in Albania.

**Tim Keese** is the director of Frontline Missions International, an organization committed to advancing the Gospel in the world's difficult places by developing sustainable platforms for work and witness. He is the executive producer of the missions documentary series *Dispatches from the Front*. He has authored numerous books and articles on history, politics, and missions.

**Joe Tyrpak** is the assistant pastor at Tri-County Bible Church. He is a gifted artist (responsible for this book's design) and an insightful teacher. He has composed several metrical psalms and co-authored the *Gospel Meditations* series, all available from *churchworksmmedia.com*.

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# GOD IS THE GREAT MISSIONARY

*For the Father is seeking such people to worship him.* JOHN 4:23

Missions isn't an addendum that was stapled onto normal Christianity. It's at the heart of Christianity because it's at the heart of God Himself. God is the Great Missionary of the Scriptures. We see His missionary heart from the beginning of time, when He sought out our lost and evasive parents in Eden. We see it when He promised Abraham that all the nations of the world will be blessed through his (and His) seed. We see it when He promised to make the Messiah the King of an unending Kingdom and the Light of the darkened Gentiles. We certainly see it in John 4. Jesus' interaction with the spiritually thirsty woman at the well is a microcosm of God's work in the world. Again and again through the conversation with her, with the disciples, and with a village of Samaritan converts, God's heart for missions is shown in all its glory.

***The Great Missionary is seeking worshipers.*** In the middle of His discussion with the Samaritan woman, Jesus makes a startling and apparently random comment in verse 23: "The Father is seeking ... people to worship Him." That's one of the most important statements in Scripture. *God is seeking worshipers.* It's amazing. It's life-shaping. It's the plotline of the whole Bible. God *made* us for His glory. Though we rebelled, God planned to *save* us for His glory, and He carried out that plan through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of His Son. God is the Great Missionary. He's not distant and ambivalent, perhaps willing to forgive sinners should we decide to seek after Him. On the contrary, He's the *Planner* of salvation. The *Initiator*. The *Accomplisher*. The *Goal*. In the memorable first words of John Piper's *Let the Nations Be Glad*, "Missions exists because worship doesn't." God is seeking worshipers in order to display His glorious grace (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14).

***The Great Missionary is making worshipers.*** Here's the thing. When God looks throughout the earth, He doesn't find a bunch of good-hearted people just waiting to be assembled into a heavenly choir. Rather, He finds rebels. He sees only our backs as we defiantly run our own way (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10-11). Yes, God is seeking worshipers, but He doesn't *find* them. He *makes* them! From what? From Samaritan women, for starters! From sinners like us. That's why the context of John 4:23 is so crucial. The statement that God is seeking people to worship Him in spirit and in truth isn't coming in a treatise about music or liturgy. It's coming in the midst of one of the great evangelistic conversations in history. Jesus is telling a disreputable and broken woman that God is seeking worshipers—and making them out of people like her! The location of worship (about which she had asked in 4:20) wasn't the issue. Her sinful past wasn't the issue (4:16-19). Faith in Him as the saving Messiah was (4:25-26). Thus, God is seeking *worshipers* (4:23) as Jesus seeks and saves *the lost* (Luke 19:10). Those two statements are essentially the same!

***The Great Missionary is calling us into His great missionary work.*** Christ's agenda included much more than this unnamed Samaritan woman. In His missionary zeal, He next focused on His disciples, urging them to emulate His missionary heart (4:27-38). Though all they could see in the Samaritan people was rivalry and race, Jesus told them to open their eyes and see a spiritual harvest (4:35). An entire village of lost people was in the process of becoming worshipers of "the Savior of the world" (4:42). The disciples needed to get with Christ's program. They needed to learn the joy of doing the Father's will—*missions* (4:34). They needed to pray for laborers who would participate with God in the execution of His eternal, doxological rescue mission. They needed to devote their lives to bringing that harvest in. And they would. Will you?

*Let the Gospel open your eyes to the harvest of worshipers around the world.* —CHRIS

## IS YOUR SPIRIT STIRRED?

*While Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred.* ACTS 17:16

In Acts 17 Paul, Silas, and Timothy are in Thessalonica facing heavy persecution from a rabble gang thrown together by antagonistic Jews (v. 5). At night, some concerned brothers smuggle the small squad away to the nearby town of Berea (v. 10). There the team does what it always did: it finds people to tell about Jesus. The Bereans turn out to be a hungry-hearted, Scripture-searching bunch (v. 11). But for the Thessalonian Jews, Berea is threateningly close, so they mobilize their mob to unleash mayhem there, too (v. 13). Again some brothers whisk Paul away, this time to Athens, but for some reason—probably logistical—Silas and Timothy get left behind (v. 14). (Sorry, fellas.)

Now Paul finds himself alone in Athens, waiting for his team to rejoin him. What a perfect chance for some “down time,” for sightseeing or finding an Internet café to tweet about the *tzatziki*. Can you imagine Paul’s social networking update? “Whew! Back-to-back escapes. Those Thessalonians have *issues*.”

Don’t think so. Paul’s only notion of “working a net” was fishing for souls—preaching Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23, Galatians 6:14). Yes, he saw some sights in Athens, but everything he saw was filtered through his worldview as a man crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Mysteriously and magnificently, Christ was “in him” (Colossians 1:27-29), so he grew to love what Christ loves and lament what Christ laments. When Paul “saw the city wholly given to idolatry,” something both awful and wonderful happened within him. *His spirit was stirred* (v. 16). His gut was wrenched. A lump of grief knotted his throat. A surge of holy jealousy flushed his face because God—*his* God, the only *true* God—was being ... *maligned*? ... No, that wasn’t it ... *Rejected*? ... No, that wasn’t quite it either. Alas, his God was ... totally ... *unknown* (v. 23)!

The lump in Paul’s throat swiftly morphed into a leap in his step. See him at the synagogue engaging the potential Jehovah-fearers (v. 17a). Now he’s in the marketplace preaching—and will be there tomorrow, and the next day, and the next (v. 17b). His message is gaining steam (v. 18). He’s now heading to Athens’ Supreme Court, the Areopagus, which once met on the hill of the Greek god Ares—Mars Hill (v. 19). Paul’s adrenalin must be surging now. He’s a volcano ready to erupt. Go, Paul! Knock Ares & Friends off their pedestals, for Jesus is King of the hill, Supreme Justice of the world!

Paul’s spiritual psychology is instructive. He’s not a reluctant “missionary” on assignment. He’s what I call a “passionary.” There’s a huge difference between mission and passion. Mission is required; passion is acquired. Mission is duty; passion is delight. Mission says, “I *have to* witness”; passion says, “I *get to* witness!” If all you have is mission, that’s okay—It’s not hypocrisy to obey orders despite a deficiency of passion. But the more you “mish,” the more you will acquire the inner fire that Paul showed in Athens.

Soon after I arrived in Albania, I was begging God to help me love as He loves and grieve as He grieves. A *muezzin* began to howl from one of our city’s many mosques. Then another. And another. The cacophony was beckoning thousands to embrace a faith that cannot save. Most tourists think “the call to prayer” is novel and culturally inspiring. But tears were streaming down my face. Why? Because God’s compassion had come to my breast. You know of what I speak. You have felt powerful pangs of compassion for your hurting neighbors, for sinning co-workers, and for lost tribes in faraway lands. Those are passionary pangs. God put them in your heart. He is stirring your spirit.

Meditating on missions is meaningless without movement. When God stirs your spirit, He also loosens your tongue, rattles your routine, and gets you off the couch.

*Let the Gospel stir you—inside and out.* —DAVID