

## ***THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE***

File Name: MISSIONS

**BIG IDEA: GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO TAKE THE GOSPEL TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.**

**PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD LEAVE THIS STUDY EXCITED ABOUT THE CHALLENGE OF WORLD EVANGELIZATION, AND KNOWLEDGEABLE OF SPECIFIC WAYS THEY CAN PARTICIPATE.**

**Note:** Before giving this message, think of any opportunities your youth will have to participate in ministry over the coming year. It is always better to give youth specific opportunities to put a message into action. Have a sign-up sheet ready for various evangelism opportunities, including inviting lost youth to camps, special evangelist events, and cross-cultural mission opportunities.

You might also have literature available on mission experiences that your church or denomination may sponsor. If some youth have participated in a past mission project, they could share highlights of the project with the group. If none of yours have experienced, look for a vibrant youth from another youth group who could share.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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***ILLUSTRATION:** In the aftermath of a car accident, a man lay trapped and bleeding beneath his car. Realizing that death was imminent, he asked a bystander for a pen and paper to write some final words to his family. I don't know exactly what he wrote. But I can tell you a few things he did not write: 1) "Did you hear that Red Hot Chili Peppers (name a currently popular group) finally came out with their new CD?" 2) "Make sure you don't vote for \_\_\_\_\_ at the next election." 3) "Could you stop by McDonald's and get me a large fries and a Coke?"*

When a man has only a few words left to say, he chooses his subject and his wording very carefully, avoiding trivialities and sharing only the most urgent message that He wants others to remember. In this light, Jesus' last words to us should hold special significance. He could have told His disciples "Do good deeds, go to church every Sunday, and stay out of trouble till I return." This would sum up the idea most Christians seem to have about their purpose in life. But instead of encouraging us to hold down the fort, Jesus challenged us to storm the heights. Let's look at three passages which contain the last words spoken by Jesus before His ascension. Have 3 youth read the following passages:

Matthew 28:18-20

Luke 24:45-47

Acts 1:8

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Jesus has given His marching orders to the church. Don't retreat! March forward! And don't stop until the whole world knows. Let's pray that God will give us wisdom as we try to discover our part in this global challenge. (Time for prayer.)

(Note to teachers: Taking the gospel to all the nations was not a new concept. Reaching other nations was frequently mentioned in the Old Testament: Gen. 22:18; I Kings 8:41-43; Ps. 72:8-11;87; Isa. 2:3; 45:14, 22-25; 49:23; 54:1-3; 60:1-3; 65:1; Mal. 1:11.)

## 1. I'm to take the gospel where?

Jesus' commission to the church was very specific:

- "...make disciples of all the nations..."
- "...should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations."
- "...and even to the remotest part of the earth."

So we can't pull out the hammock and sleep just because we are growing as a youth group. It's got to start here; but it can't end here.

## 2. Why me?

### a. To follow Jesus' example.

*"Then Jesus told them this parable: Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (Luke 15:3-7)*

Jesus was willing to leave the 99 secure sheep to search for 1 lost sheep. Our tendency is to let the needs of the 99 consume our time so that we forget the lost sheep. To change the analogy, in Jesus' mind, the sick needed a physician, not the healthy. What kind of physician would refuse to see sick people?

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\* Written by Steve Miller. Copywrite August, 1997, by Reach Out Ministries. Copies can be made only within your own local ministry. Not for resale.

b. The joy of sharing good news. (Lk. 15:3-7)

*“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”*(Lk. 15:7)

What is the greatest thing that ever happened to you? What is the greatest thing you could share with someone else (New hair style? The latest tape of your favorite group? Or good news about Jesus?) Share your new music CD and your friend will be grateful all week. Lead him to Jesus and he will be grateful for eternity. Nothing tops the fulfillment of knowing that your efforts helped bring a lost person to Jesus.

c. Obedience to Jesus' command. (Note Commission passages above. “Go....”)

Not all are gifted preachers or Bible translators. But God has given all of us gifts and talents that we should mobilize for the ultimate challenge. Missions requires organizers, computer programmers, writers, builders, secretaries, boarding school teachers, etc.

### 3. But what can I do?

#### 1. Pray (Matthew 9:37,38)

*“Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

Quickly, give me the names of all the musicians and athletes you know, as well as what team or group they play for. (List a bunch on a blackboard and count the number.) Now, quickly, give me the names of all the missionaries (to other countries) you know and the specific work they do. Isn't it amazing how familiar we are with things that make no difference for eternity, but relatively clueless about the things that make a difference?

Isolated missionaries in pagan cultures desperately need prayer cover for their spiritual invasion into enemy territory. Could you find one missionary to pray for regularly? If the missionary sends out a regular prayer letter, get on the mailing list. (Teacher, come prepared with addresses of a few missionaries who are gathering prayer support.)

#### 2. Give

It takes money to fund missionary efforts, print Bibles, and distribute literature. (You may wish to explain how a portion of your church offering goes

into missions.

### 3. Go (See Acts 1:8)

#### **\*To Your "Jerusalem"**

There are many of opportunities to get outside the church walls and reach the unchurched in our own home town. Remember, God didn't give us one standard way to reach lost people. Instead, the apostle Paul said that he used all possible means (I Corinthians 9:22) to see people saved.

**Brainstorm:** What are some ways we could reach our Jerusalem with the gospel? (Let them share, perhaps in small groups.) **Ideas:** Christian music groups, neighborhood or home bible studies, inviting non-Christians to evangelistic events, giving a Christian book to a friend and asking for their evaluation, etc. What have you heard of other churches and Christians doing to reach the unchurched?

Now, let's narrow down our best ideas and put some on the calendar!

**Caution:** Don't think that your plans must look big and complicated. Your goal may be simply to build relationships with some neighborhood children or some lost relatives and begin influencing them toward Jesus.

**Action Points:** What will you do to reach your "Jerusalem?"

#### **\*To Your "Judea/Samaria"**

Some people cross cultural barriers to reach out to different groups in their own country, like reaching out to international students, inner city kids, nursing home residents or Indians on a reservation.

"But wait!", someone will object, "We haven't finished reaching our Jerusalem." True, but if the original disciples had waited for all of Jerusalem to be reached, the gospel may have never spread outside of the city. The Bible never says to go to these other places only when the job has been completed at home. The church should be reaching Judea/Samaria at the same time that we are ministering in our Jerusalem.

**Action Points:** What opportunities exist in your "Judea/Samaria"? How can you minister there?

#### **\*To The Remotest Part of the Earth**

**ACTIVITY!** Let's take a quick break. I'll pass out a bag of candy for whoever wants some. After you give a piece to the first few closest youth, rather than spread it out evenly, go back and give the first few more, and then more, only occasionally throwing a piece to someone further back. Then tell them that is all you have.

Someone will probably say, "Hey, what about us?" If not, ask if that bothered them that I only gave the candy to the nearby folks. When we see injustice, something inside screams out, "That's not fair!" (Now redistribute the candy evenly to offset a riot!) Perhaps this same feeling will grip you as you look at the unequal distribution of the gospel in the world today. We make the gospel available to our own country, while leaving out much of the world.

If you're not using an overhead or student hand-outs, put these figures up on a blackboard or poster paper so that they will sink in.

**Here's how the current distribution of Christian workers looks:**

*In the USA there is one Christian worker for every 200 people.*

*In India there is one worker for every 200,000 people.*

*In Nigeria there is one worker for every 2,000,000 people.*

**Even worse than with the candy scam, something inside should cry out, "That's not fair!"**

*Ninety percent of the Christian workers work with 10% of the world's population. That leaves just 10% of the Christian workers to work with the other 90%. And there are still 3000 to 4000 cultural groups that have never been penetrated by the gospel. Over a billion people in the world have not only never heard the gospel, but don't even have a church nearby to tell them.*

**Something inside should cry out, "That's not fair!" What right have I to hear the gospel over and over, when many have not had the opportunity to hear it once?**

**The bottom line: if someone doesn't decide to cross a cultural barrier and become a missionary to these unreached people groups, they will never hear the gospel. And although the plight of the heathen raises worthy theological questions, the logic of Romans 10:14,15 fuels the missionary's zeal:**

*"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they*

*believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?"*

But don't despair! This century has seen an unprecedented expansion of the gospel. Never before in history has such a high percentage of the world's population been exposed to the gospel. Christians are going. Christians are cooperating. We can now talk meaningfully of exposing every cultural group to the gospel within this generation. And just think, this could be the generation that completes the task! But much more needs to be done. Could it be that God is laying on your heart a specific place you can fill in this task?

**Action Points:** What opportunities exist in the remotest places? **Ideas:** Bible translation (The Bible still needs to be translated into over 700 languages), church starting, general evangelism, literature evangelism. What part could you have?

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## CONCLUSION

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We're talking about commitment, challenge, sacrifice. But people make great sacrifices daily to gain material wealth, which will never last past the grave. Jim Elliott, contemporary missionary and martyr, once said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

What part will you play in fulfilling the Great Commission in this generation? (Leave time for silent prayer.)

If this message sparks questions and special interest among your youth, you may wish to develop the following material next week. If not, this might be helpful as you counsel youth who are interested in mission work.

## ***DOES GOD WANT ME TO GO TO THE REMOTEST PLACES?***

**I. Pray for God's guidance. (James 1:5)**

**II. Bear fruit where you are planted. (I Peter 4:10,11)**

Crossing a cultural barrier won't make a powerful evangelist out of someone who did no evangelism back home. Participating in a broad range of ministries in your home town will help you and others discern your gifts, your burdens, your loves.

**III. Get wise counsel (Proverbs 15:22) from your parents, church leaders, and Christian friends.**

Sometimes a desire for adventure, for achieving God's acceptance (God already

accepts you through Jesus' work), for leaving a poor home life, for acceptance by church peers, can be confused with the leading of God. Wise counsel can keep you from making a poor decision. Note the place of the local church in sending missionaries (Acts 13:1-3; 15:40) on a short term journey.

#### **IV. Listen to your heart (Ps. 37:4)**

Sometimes God tugs at our hearts by giving us desires or burdens that others don't have. **Caution:** don't let your desires be your sole determinate of God's will! Feelings and desires can be ignited by many sources, not all being from God.

#### **V. Grow wise in missions. (Proverbs 8:10,11,17)**

Get to know missionaries. Read missions literature. Communicate with missions agencies.

#### **VI. Go on a short term missions trip.**

This can help you find God's will, as you consider a long term commitment. Any committed Christian should consider taking a short term mission trip, even if you aren't considering career missions.

#### **VII. When you must make a decision, go where you could make the greatest impact with your special blend of gifts, unless God specifically leads otherwise.**

Some people assume God wants them to sit until He gives them specific direction. But He has already commissioned us to reach the world. So, the apostle Paul didn't wait on a vision before embarking on each journey. Rather, God had called him to reach the Gentiles. So he would head the most logical direction and assumed that God would redirect as needed (See Romans 15:20; Acts 15:36; 16:6,7).

*ILLUSTRATION:* Someone put it to me this way: if you saw 10 people carrying a telephone pole, with 1 person struggling to carry one end and 9 carrying the other end, which end would you offer to help? Unless God leads otherwise, I would pursue the end with the greatest need. Missionary C.T. Studd shared this approach as he wrote:

*"Some want to live within the sound  
Of church or chapel bell.  
I want to run a rescue shop  
Within a yard of hell."*

**May God use us to fulfill the Great Commission in our generation!**

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## SHARPENING YOUR AX

### *Timing Your Messages*

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I have a long attention span. I can read or write for hours on end. But it takes a powerful speaker to keep me on the edge of my seat for 45 minutes. Perhaps it's a cultural thing. After 30 minutes, I'm usually ready for a commercial. And remember, I'm motivated to learn. But often I've heard a powerful 30 minute sermon lose its punch, simply by dragging out 15 more minutes. By then, I've often forgotten what I was so excited about.

Sometimes we work against how God made our students. Most small children seem to have some hormone that commands: "Squirm and Wiggle!" every few minutes. The wiggle hormone is still active in adolescence, more active in some than in others. Those who ignore this urge, ignore it to their own ruin. A few hints:

- Give some thought to just how much your youth can take. How long can you talk before their minds turn you off? (Face it, Tony Campolo can *probably* hold them a little longer than you.) Take an anonymous survey, including questions such as, "Are my messages generally too long, too short, or about right?" I generally shoot for 30 minutes.
- By spacing meaningful discussions and activities throughout your message, you can get away with a longer message. They have a chance to actively get involved, talking, interacting and thinking for themselves. Remember, kids can talk for hours on the phone without getting bored!
- Practice your messages with a timer before you. This keeps you from having to rush through important material, or drag out the lesson and lose your punch. Also, by getting an idea of the length of your message, you can leave enough time to clinch your conclusion, and have them reflect on their action points.
- Don't be ruled by the curriculum! Many teachers believe in an 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment: "Thou shalt always finish the entire lesson. And woe to him who departs from the curriculum." Sometimes it's okay to cover only one or two points. Really. And there's always next week. They're more likely to return if you don't burn them out this week. Leave them charged up and eager for more!



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### INTRODUCTION

#### “The Importance of Last Words”

*Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:45-47; Acts 1:8*

**I. I'M TO TAKE THE GOSPEL WHERE?**

**II. WHY ME?**

A. To follow Jesus' example. (Luke 15:3-7)

B. The joy of sharing good news. (Luke 15:7)

C. Obedience to Jesus' command. (Mt. 28:18-20)

**III. BUT WHAT CAN I DO?**

A. Pray (Mt. 9:37,38)

B. Give

C. Go (Acts 1:8)

*...to your Jerusalem*

**ACTION POINTS:**

*...to your Judea/Samaria*

**ACTION POINTS:**

*...to the remotest part of the earth*

*In the U.S.A., there is one Christian worker for every 200 people.*

*In India there is one worker for every 200,000 people.*

*In Nigeria there is one worker for every 2,000,000 people.*

*Over a billion people in the world have not only never heard the gospel, but don't even have a church close enough to reach them.*

**ACTION POINTS:**

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#### “The Importance of Last Words”

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**IV. I'M TO TAKE THE GOSPEL \_\_\_\_\_?**

**V. WHY ME?**

**D. To follow Jesus' \_\_\_\_\_.** (Luke 15:3-7)

**E. The \_\_\_\_\_ of sharing good news.** (Luke 15:7)

**F. \_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus' command.** (Mt. 28:18-20)

**VI. BUT WHAT CAN \_\_\_ DO?**

**D. \_\_\_\_\_** (Mt. 9:37,38)

**E. \_\_\_\_\_**

**F. \_\_\_\_\_** (Acts 1:8)

*...to your \_\_\_\_\_*

**ACTION POINTS:**

*...to your \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_*

**ACTION POINTS:**

*...to the \_\_\_\_\_ part of the earth*

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