

Soaring to the Heights



Mission

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Soaring to the Heights – Mission

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Introduction to devotional series "Soaring to the Heights".

I have been asked to develop a series of devotionals related to becoming involved in missions. The premise of this material is what we can learn by looking at what is involved in soaring in the heavens and applying that to God's call to mission.

Why this idea? It is because no matter what actual form of transport we use, whether we walk, ride in a boat, car, or plane we need to keep our eyes on God. In a sense to soar so that we can keep our focus on God and on the mission we have been called to participate in.

There are many ways to reach those people. We can walk or maybe ride a horse or donkey. We can ride in a cart or in a boat. These were the primary avenues of reaching people for so many years. More recently we can now ride in a vehicle and can fly. Options that have increased our ability to reach people. In all of these a critical factor has been a vision of going where God calls. And an ability to soar, to let God open our eyes and hearts to all that is possible when our focus is heavenward.

There will be five sets of devotionals in this series. Here is the list and the focus of each. The overall theme for them is taken from the process of entering air or space, which in many ways is not much different from entering a remote location on the planet.

Here is a description of each of the five sets of devotionals.

Soaring to the Heights: Motivate— In any endeavor a key element is motivation. What motivates our choice to become involved.

This series of devotionals is to provide time to focus on, think through, and review all that will be or has been part of the process to encourage a person to choose to heed God's call to missions and its related ministries as an avenue of service in the kingdom of God.

The scriptures for this section are drawn from the Pentateuch and the Books of History

Soaring to the Heights: Mobilize – At some point is time to commit ourselves. It is time to take all we have learned and put it into action. It is a scary exciting moment. It is filled with all kinds of emotions, fears, worries, and hopes. It is like the moment when you are accepted into school. It is like the moment when you sign a contract for a job. It is like the moment when a bride and groom say “I DO.” It is about the moment when you say YES to the Lord’s call on your life.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of reflecting on those decisions, whether taken in the past or being taken now. It is about reviewing the consequences of such a decision and the reality that, once the decision has been made, life will never be the same. It is about facing the fear and the joy of choosing.

The texts for this section are drawn from the books of Poetry

Soaring to the Heights: Function – The idea of soaring is about learning to live at a new level spiritually. In some ways it is similar to what a plane deals with when taking off. There are several factors that come into play and need to be dealt with. These have to do with weight, amount of fuel, and final destination. If we do not care for them properly then we will fail. As in all endeavors in life our actions involve choices and how they will affect our plans and our ability to function. When we handle all those choices correctly then we will be able to soar, able to carry out the work that we are given. These choices also affect how long it takes to arrive at our destination. We choose to go to school after secondary school. We choose an occupation. We choose a place to live and so on. The choice of marriage and kids - depending on the person. The choice of hobbies and activities. I can go on. All are part of how I function in the role God has given me.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of allowing time to reflect on past choices, current decisions, and thinking about the impact of any other choices that may be necessary. Learning to make wise choices is critical as we move from one phase of life and enter into the next phase of life – or, in this context, as we move forward in the mission of God

The texts for this section are drawn from the Prophets

Soaring to the Heights: Validation – We all want to know that all we have done has a point and will bring about the desired results. It is when we begin to see the fruit of all that has been done and being able to accomplish the goals that have been set.

In life, all the choices have this focus, they are designed to bring us to the point of carrying out specific goals and accomplishing key responsibilities. In life it is finding employment or raising a family. In the church it is becoming engaged in the mission of God.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of, as before, reflecting on what happens when you have found the place where God wants you to serve. It is about reflecting on what it means to use the lessons learned, the skills obtained, and the relationships developed in carrying out what God has called you to do.

The texts for this section are drawn from the New Testament

Soaring to the Heights: Mission – Consider this. Every rocket sent into space has a mission. Some are for communication. There are exploratory satellites. There are manned missions, like the space station and moon. There are military satellites. There are weather satellites. So many kinds and each designed to carry out a mission. There is also often a set time and location for the mission. Some satellites have a short-term purpose and limited location. Some, like voyager, are sent off on long journeys with a vast purpose. Some study the earth, and others study the beyond.

It is the same in life. We all have a mission. We all have a time and place of service. The goal is that all of us, in carrying out our portion of the mission, can work together to accomplish a greater mission, the call of God to proclaim the good news to all tribes and nations.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of reflecting on how you fit into that greater mission. It is about thinking through the value of what you do, no matter how small or unseen, in making the mission possible. We often don't realize how important everyone is to the work being done. In mission aviation, it is the same. We need each other. We need people who keep things functioning. We need people to communicate; we need people to explore. We need people to carry out specific work at specific times. We need people who commit to long arduous efforts and we need everyone in between.

The texts for this section are from references to the heavens found in all of scripture.

May God use this series of devotionals to encourage and inspire you as you play your part in carrying out the great commission. May God richly bless you as you spend time in meditation and reflection. May you sense, over and over, the truth that God has called and that when God calls, He provides all you need to do what He has called you to do in His service.

Mission 1 Genesis 2:4

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens

As I read this, I thought of the fact that there are two different definitions that are often used for the word account.

The first meaning is here: A report or record of the events that occurred at a specific time and location. Much of the Bible contains this type of information. God is taking the time to tell us the story of His involvement in our history. He also takes time to include many of our stories. Some of them are not pretty. Everything about God is perfect. Very little of our story is perfect. Sometimes good, but never perfect.

The other meaning has to do with a registry that records how finances or resources are received and used. They are usually quite detailed. Yet people try to alter those records, so there are auditors and laws to make sure the books are honest, and that there are not two sets of books.

We are told that there will be an accounting at the judgment. Our life story will be reviewed. And our use of the resources we have been given will also be reviewed. This is part of the parable of the talents.

There will not be any chance to hide the records or doctor the video record, like we see happening all too often. There will not be a chance for two opinions or interpretations of the facts. This is a bit scary. It is not what people want to hear. They don't want to face the fact that exactly what they did and why they did it will be revealed with no possibility of hiding the truth.

Good news. Those of us who are forgiven will have already dealt with that. We have a different story, and Jesus is our storyteller.

Mission 2 Genesis 11:4

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

Making a name for oneself is a big deal. We want to be remembered. I am no different. I want my children to remember me. I take time to review my ancestors. I want to know what they did that led to who I am and what I do. My heritage. What will be my heritage for the generations to come?

Now, consider the religions of the world. Many of them are built around a person. Islam – Mohammed; Buddhism – Guatama Buddha; Confucianism – Confucius; Taoism – Zhuang Zhou; Hinduism – Saptarishi

We have a penchant for creating religious structures and then seeking people to follow us. None of these started their system of belief just for themselves. They sought followers who would then perpetuate their belief. The same thing is true of the Christian Cults.

This is a key difference with our faith. We did not originate it. It came directly from God, in the case of Jesus. God came down to dwell among us and teach us firsthand what it meant to follow Him. Even more significant is the fact that all of those names above are now dead. They made a name for themselves but could not overcome death.

Jesus overcame death. He proved without a shadow of a doubt why one should follow Him. Why He is the only way, the only truth, and the only life. We don't need to build towers or special religious structures to reach God. That is because God came to us.

That is what we are called to proclaim. That is the focus of making disciples. Helping people meet God incarnate and have a heritage that is eternal.

Mission 3 Deuteronomy 4:32

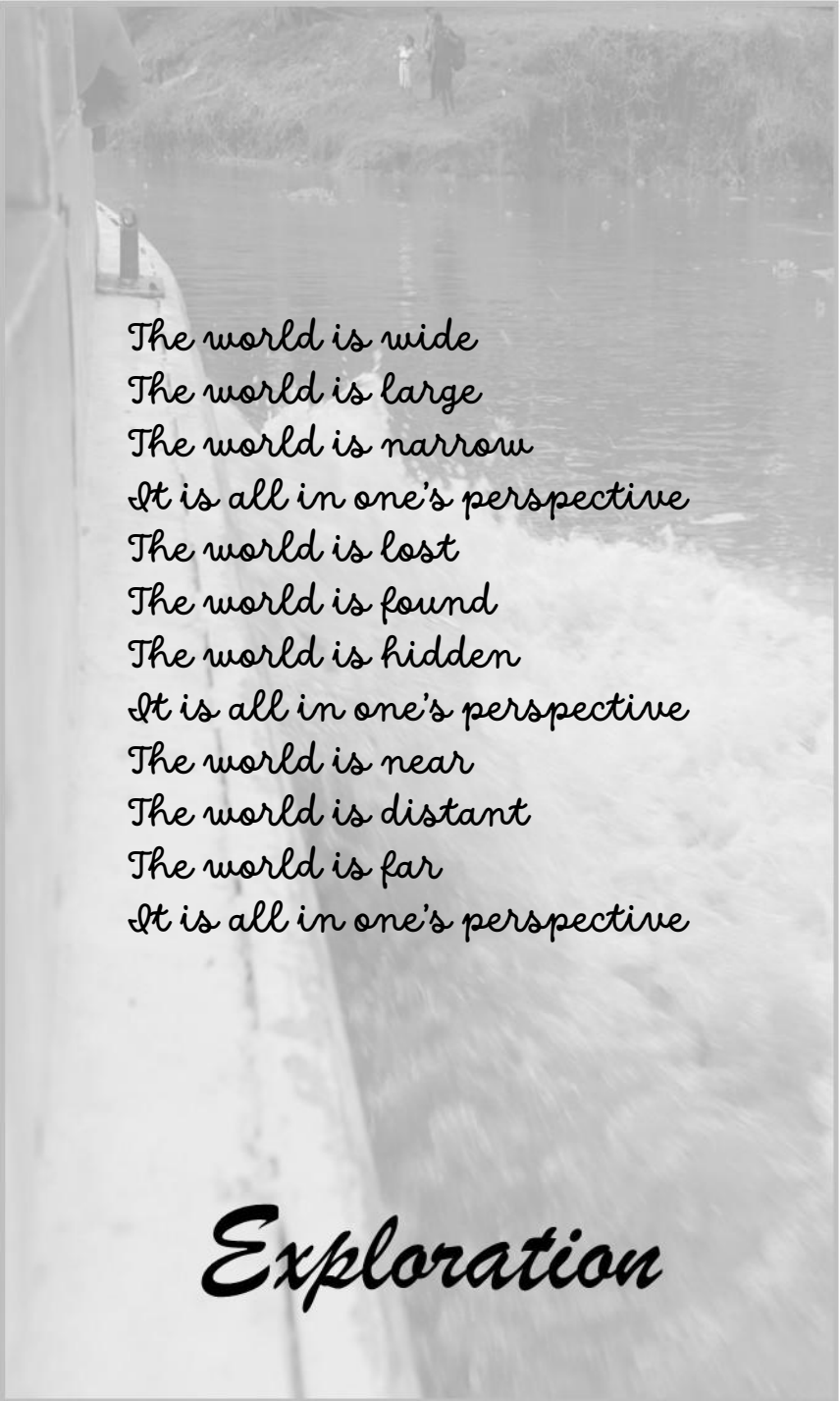
Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created man on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of?

So what was it that had never been heard of before? Why was this an important piece of history that we should learn and study? It was the fact that God had chosen a specific people to use to carry out His plan. He had chosen Israel and had spoken to them. They had seen this and heard the voice of God when they were children. It terrified them, and they cried out, asking that God not speak again but speak to them through Moses.

We stand at the other end of this history. God has spoken again, but not in thunderous power. This time, he spoke to us tenderly and lovingly. Now He has made it possible for each of us to hear His voice without the overwhelming fear. He speaks as a father to his child.

Has the God of the mountain faded into the forgotten spaces of history? Thankfully no. While we are privileged to enjoy His loving and tender voice, we must never forget that He is, in fact, the God of the universe. That all nations, all creation must bow, cannot help but bow before him.

So, just how important are the histories of the past? They help us keep things in perspective. They remind us of an important truth. They help us keep the future in focus while we live in the present. They teach us critical truths so that we do not make the mistake of becoming careless in how we present God to the world and incapable of revealing the importance of worshipping the God who loves us. Never forget the power of the One who saved you, and never forget how much He loves you.

A black and white photograph of a river or stream. In the foreground, the water is turbulent with white foam. A person is standing on the grassy bank in the distance. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The world is wide
The world is large
The world is narrow
It is all in one's perspective
The world is lost
The world is found
The world is hidden
It is all in one's perspective
The world is near
The world is distant
The world is far
It is all in one's perspective

Exploration

Mission 4 1 Kings 8:27

"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"

We get this. It makes sense. The God who created the universe. The God who exists outside of time and space. This God cannot be contained by any structure we can create or imagine.

But Paul tells us another truth in 1 Co 3:16 that we are the temple of God and that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. He repeats this in 1 Co 6:19 and 2 Co 6:16. How is this possible?

First, remember I said that God is not bound by time and space. Also, remember that He is fully present in all of our time and space. Also, consider again that we were created specifically to have fellowship with God. God intended in some way to dwell with us and created in us the need for His presence. We are told this over and over. Whether within us or with us, we can count on the presence of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is imminent. He can be fully present everywhere. He can be uniquely present at any time.

This is a lot of theology, but it is so important. It is not that Jesus, as the Son of God, came down to dwell among us. He came down to dwell in us. The fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in us is proof of who we are.

We don't have to go on a pilgrimage. We don't have to fulfill a list of required labors like Hercules. We simply have to walk with God and let Him dwell in us so that others can see Him in our everyday lives.

The answer is yes, God will dwell on earth, and we are the temple.

Mission 5 2 Kings 7:2

The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, "Look, even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?" "You will see it with your own eyes," answered Elisha, "but you will not eat any of it!"

The question here is, 'Can God really do anything?' The question is the same for us today. When do we believe that 'God can do anything'?

One of the great dangers of serving in remote and difficult places is that we can easily be trapped into believing we are the ones doing the work. We know in our hearts that God is the supplier. We know in our hearts that God is able to do.

The question is, do we believe as Paul did that God could "do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work in us."

The problem is that we too often are on the same side of the question as the man above. We see what we can do and do what we can. We see what must be done and forget that God can take care of that.

Faith is not a word. Sadly, that is how we treat it. Faith is an action. It is believing something will be even before we can imagine it will be. It is realizing that if God so chooses, the floodgates of heaven will be opened. They will be open to providing what we ask for and then more.

Why more? It is simple. We never see the whole picture. God does. He sees it and far beyond. That is why what we ask for is not always exactly what we get. Does that make sense?

It should. Remember, God sees beyond this moment and sees the entire need, not just the need of the moment. So, do we believe there are floodgates in heaven and that God has control of them to provide what we need?

Mission 6 1 Chronicles 16:26

For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

Do you know what a wannabee is? It's slang for a person who wants to be like someone else or to attain some status or condition.

All those gods out there are wannabees. They want to be God or appear like God in some way. Satan is a wannabe. He tried to take God's place and status. That didn't go so well. The concern is that he continues to strive to be God, and he uses his following of demons and people to perpetuate his wannabe goal on all who will listen.

As a result, we have a multitude of religions, cults, and false teachings. That is because the wannabe attitude isn't limited to Satan and the fallen angels. The world is filled with people with a god complex. People who believe they are the answer to whatever your question is. People who believe that you have to follow their ideas and philosophy if you want to succeed, etc.

This very brief passage is a reminder of this as well as a warning. It is not difficult to fall into the god complex attitude when serving on the mission field. You have more resources, more education, more knowledge (not of their world but of things they desire), and the freedom to leave and go where all of that is readily available. It is easy to fall into the trap of believing you can be what they need.

The warning is that whatever you think you have to offer is false. Everything originally came from God. Is that clear? Everything came from God. We are simply the beneficiaries of all God created. We are his creation. Our ability to use what he created comes from him. Do I need to say more?

Always those who stand are the ones who go
Always those who look beyond the horizon go
Always those who find a way to move go
Always those who are ready to move go

How we go depends on the where

How we go depends on the what

How we go depends on the when

How we go depends on the why

Answer the why and the rest
follows

Answer the when and there will
be no delay

Answer the what and you will
find a way

Answer the where and you will
find the lost

Transportation

Mission 7 Ezra 9:6

and prayed: "O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens."

Do you remember Paul's comment that creation is groaning because of what has happened? Because of man's sin, it has been subjected to frustration, which has caused bondage and decay in its existence. It is groaning, waiting for freedom to come and once again enjoy being what God created it to be.

Sometimes we do not understand the real impact of sin. We too often think only in terms of our small world. The world of me. Sin is insidious in its ability to spread. Sin cannot be contained to one place, one person. Once sin occurs, it spreads. Like a disease, it moves, airborne, waterborne, through food, and whatever medium it can find.

Like a virus, it is constantly adapting and spreading. The description here is that it multiplies until it is like a flood that overwhelms us. That and the guilt it produces is such that it reaches to the heavens. It is an uncontrollable force.

We need to learn this lesson, and we need to learn it well. We need to learn so that we do not add to the flood of sin around us. For this to happen, we need to confess our sin and our part in the suffering of the world and those around us. Though we may not contribute directly, we are still part of the problem. Until we learn true confession, this will not change.

Thankfully, God has opened a way for us to confess and for that confession to bear fruit. A fruit that one day will bring liberation to all who choose to enjoy it, reproduce it in their lives, and help others do the same.

One day we will be with the one who created us and loves us.

Mission 8 Nehemiah 9:6

You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

The multitudes of heaven worship you. Have you ever wondered how many angels God created? Do we know much about them? Actually, entire books have been written on the topic. Yet they remain in many ways a mystery to us.

They have direct access to God. They are fully aware of God's presence. They know what is expected of them, and they (except for Satan and his followers) gladly serve their creator.

They are also very aware of what is happening here on earth and have been observers of the plan of God. They have seen it in all of its parts, from its beginning, even in the garden, to the selection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They have watched God call and teach Moses the law, and as he led the chosen people.

They have seen the process of selecting judges and kings. Especially those like Samuel and David. They have listened as he spoke to the prophets and gave them messages for many people as the plan proceeded.

They rejoiced and made themselves visible at the birth of the Messiah, the son of God. They watch over and serve, at God's direction, those proclaiming the gospel. They will be there at the final judgment and play a role in gathering the elect to heaven.

They worship in ways we can barely conceive. What a day it will be when we know as we have been known and join them in worshipping the creator of the universe and our Savior.

Mission 9 Job 11:7-8

"Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens — what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave—what can you know?"

Have you ever thought you were smarter than someone else or knew more than they did about anything? All of us have probably been in this position. What we do next once we have this thought is important.

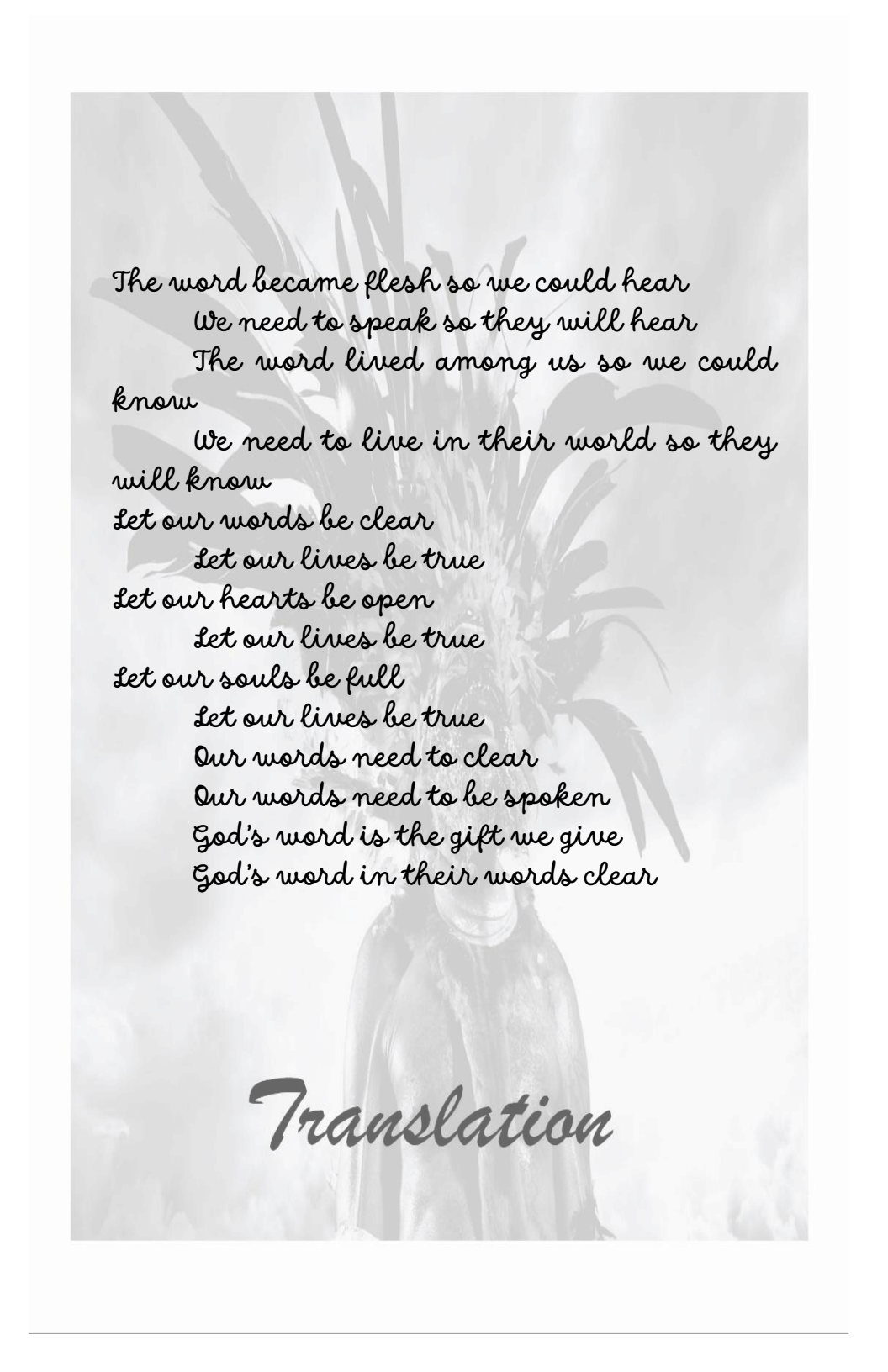
In some situations, our response is one of superiority. I know more, and so I need to let others know this fact. Usually, people don't respond well to this. Not because you do know more, but because of your attitude of superiority.

In some situations, our response is one of impatience and frustration. We know we know more, but they don't. Instead of being helpful, we either ignore them and go about our business or attempt to take over and replace them. This doesn't go well because we are insensitive to others and have little concern about helping them learn and grow.

In some situations, we listen and make suggestions. We allow room for them to grow and learn. We allow them to ask questions and help them discover the answers. This often goes well if the person wants to learn and grow in their knowledge and ability.

Another situation is when we assume we know more than we really do and try to give the impression we are experts when we aren't. This goes well until people discover the truth, and then we lose more than we hoped to gain.

God does, in fact, know everything. He understands all mysteries, and he himself is a mystery to us. Consider how God treats us as we learn about him. How should that guide you in how to tell others about the God of mystery?



The word became flesh so we could hear
We need to speak so they will hear
The word lived among us so we could
know

We need to live in their world so they
will know

Let our words be clear

Let our lives be true

Let our hearts be open

Let our lives be true

Let our souls be full

Let our lives be true

Our words need to clear

Our words need to be spoken

God's word is the gift we give

God's word in their words clear

Translation

Mission 10 Job 38:33

Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth?

So, what law do you live by? Do you believe you are in control? Consider how many systems of law govern your life.

Laws of science – gravity, chemical reaction, and other laws create systems that control what we can and cannot do.

Laws of nature – cold and heat, wind and rain all control our lives and our ability to live, even survive.

Laws of human nature – reproduction, human relationships, and culture, laws that govern how we function as groups of people, such as families and clans.

Laws of Government – Social structures and guidelines are developed to govern and protect the members of a society.

Laws of emotions – how we are expected to respond to events and situations.

Laws of me – the rules and guidelines I establish to govern my life.

So I ask again, do you believe you are in control? Keep in mind that over all these systems of law are the laws of heaven. Those laws that exist to align our hearts, lives, and actions with God.

Once more, I ask, do you believe you are in control?

Sadly, in pride, too often we act like we are in control, and when we fail to have control, we blame others. Or for some, we blame fate. What happened was out of our control.

Whether we like it or not, we are actually in control in that we choose which levels or levels of law will have authority in our lives. So now the question is, who is in control?

Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens?

We often get too focused on numbers. How many of these, those, and the others? How many saved, baptized, discipled, and trained? Those are important numbers, so don't get me wrong. But if all we are doing is about numbers, we miss the point. It is about souls. It is not about how many do this or that. It is about how many become true followers of Jesus.

It is a human thing. We just like to have a way to measure how we are doing. Numbers are critical to us and affect so many areas of our lives. How old we are determines our value to many. The number of years of experience we have will affect the type of job we can get and the level of responsibility and respect that will be assigned to us in that job. How tall you are can affect things like sports and entry into military service. Too tall, too short. How many pounds you weigh. How many years you have been married. How many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren do you have? We do love numbers. In missions, it can be things like financial supporters, prayer partners, and coworkers. How long did it take you to learn the language? How long before you are able to function in the culture? How many new converts, churches planted, pastors trained, and other areas become numbers.

We are sometimes too quick to look at the numbers. Keep in mind that Jesus invested his life in 12 men and more profoundly in three of those. There were more who were discipled, but he focused on a small number. They became the basis of the future growth of the church. And it grew quickly.

So, what is your goal? Numbers, or well-trained disciple makers?

Mission 12 Psalms 89:29

I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure.

What would it be like to be the founding father of something? The person who planted a church? The person who established a bible school? The person who was first and is the one people remember?

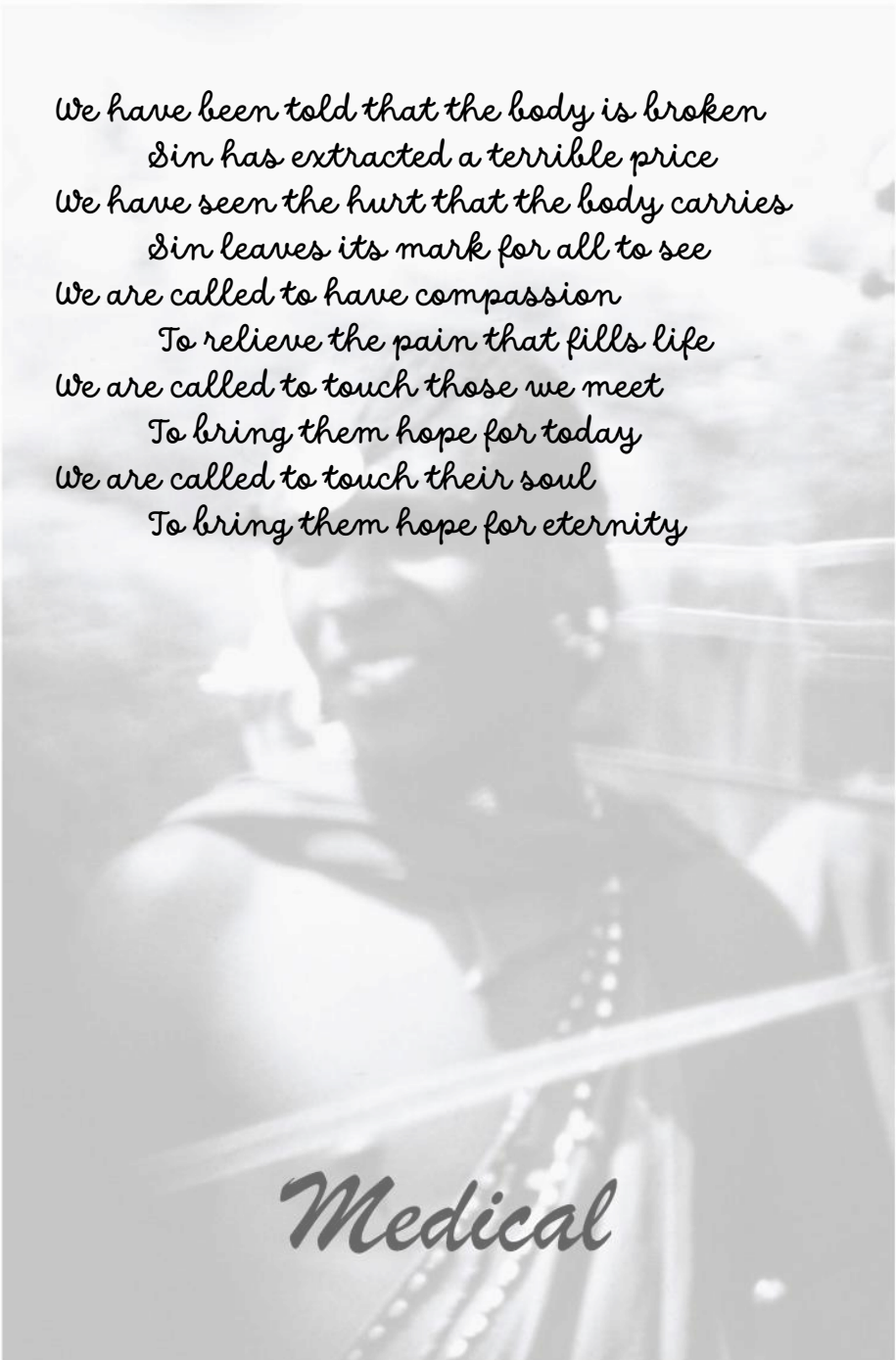
That sounds like an incredible goal. It is not an impossible goal, and there are many examples of this. Thomas founded the Thomite church of India. Luther founded the Lutheran church. The Methodist church was founded by the Wesley brothers. Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission (OMF). The list is extensive. We study these people, we honor these people, and we seek to emulate these people.

This sounds like an admirable objective: to become the founder and be remembered. Pause with me and consider all the people who are not remembered. All the people who worked alongside the founders, and either laid the foundations they needed or kept the work going afterwards.

They, in turn, inspired others to follow and continue the work. They added day by day to what had been started. They had the same call, the same desire, the same servant heart. Without them, the work of the founder would not have survived.

The truth is that it is not about the founder of a given ministry. One person is not enough. Just like a match, with no kindling and wood, will die out. That is the key. Enough people who are willing to obey God so that, when the spark is lit, the fire catches and grows.

We can't all be the spark. But we all have to be fuel for the fire so that the truth will be able to burn bright for all to see.



We have been told that the body is broken
Sin has extracted a terrible price
We have seen the hurt that the body carries
Sin leaves its mark for all to see
We are called to have compassion
To relieve the pain that fills life
We are called to touch those we meet
To bring them hope for today
We are called to touch their soul
To bring them hope for eternity

Medical

Mission 13 Psalms 139:8

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

God knows. God sees. God hears. God feels.

These facts are stated over and over in the Word. We are reminded of these truths throughout its text and see the evidence of its reality.

Still, those days come when I feel hopelessly alone, like when Jezebel threatened Elijah. Days like when Jeremiah was thrown in the cistern and left for dead. Days when our friends betray us or aren't there when we need them.

Worse is when the world actively attacks. Daniel's friends in the fiery furnace. Daniel in the lion's den. Paul being stoned, jailed, beaten, and on it goes. Those are the ones we commonly think of, but there are others.

When we feel lost and depressed. When we are disillusioned and discouraged it is good to remember that wherever I am and whatever is happening God is there. More than that is the fact that Jesus truly understands what we are facing and dealing with and knows what we need.

The beauty is how often he is putting things in place before we are in the midst of the struggle. He anticipates our need for reminders of his presence and love. He anticipates our need for fellowship and encouragement. He is able to do so because he is always there, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

Take a moment to remind yourself of this truth. To be reminded of the image of him carrying you. To be reminded of his love for you. To be reminded of all that God has done and all the promises he has fulfilled. To be reminded that God, the creator, is at your side.

Mission 14 Isaiah 38:14

I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid!"

What is your experience with the dead?

That is not a typical question. Yet it is an important one. For in all honesty, we are the walking dead. Each day brings us one day closer to that inevitable reality of this physical body that we occupy.

We deal with people who are in the same reality, walking dead. I am not trying to be morbid, just trying to clear the air because talking about death, and our own death, are not popular topics.

We cannot escape dealing with it. We will have people die who are friends, family, and have a place in our lives. They will die in a way we expect after a long life. They will die unexpectedly from disease or accident. Sometimes we will be prepared and sometimes not. Either way, it affects us and makes us wonder about when our day will come.

But there is a worse death event out there waiting. The Bible calls it the second death, eternal separation from God. The descriptions of this are terrifying. For us who have come to God for forgiveness, it is no longer a dark threat.

For those without God, it is hard to imagine.

So, what is your experience with death? Are you preoccupied with yours as Hezekiah was? Or do you take a different approach? Do you cry for those who will face the second death without the hope you have?

Death has lost its sting for us, but not for them.

Mission 15 Isaiah 40:22

He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

I am not sure I like being compared to a grasshopper. Would you?

It suggests that I am an innocuous creature with little value. I am one among the clouds of grasshoppers. I am basically indistinguishable from all the other grasshoppers. I am just nothing, something nobody wants.

Set that aside for a minute.

Though I am a grasshopper, something of little value in the eyes of others, God takes the time to create a safe place for me to live. For all of us to live. That is the word canopy, a covering that provides protection. More than that, it is ornamental. Something special, a place to rest.

The other is that God creates this special space in a place where we can live and have the freedom to move about as needed. He creates a tent, protection against wind, rain, sun, and cold.

You don't do that for something that is innocuous or of little value. You don't do that for grasshoppers. Though we may look like grasshoppers and be indistinguishable from one another, God knows each one of us and cares for us.

It is a lesson for us on how we perceive the multitude of people that surround us each day. It is a lesson about how we need to be an extension of what God is doing. We need to be a canopy for those we meet. We need to be a place where they can come, a refuge from the world. A place where they can know they are cared for and find peace.

A tower falls and people are broken

A famine strikes and people are
hungry

A plague attacks and people are unwell

A war breaks out and people are
destroyed

A fallen world brings all to an end

What will we do when people are hurt

What will we do when there is no food

What will we do when all are sick

What will we do when anger erupts

A risen Lord brings life

We are called to console the lost

We are called to feed their souls

We are called to touch their body

We are called to bring peace

We are called to show them love

Disaster Relief

Mission 16 Isaiah 40:26

Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

Have you ever found yourself reading through the lists of names? You know the lists. The genealogies in Genesis. The lists of people in the first chapters of 1 Chronicles. The list of people who returned from exile in Ezra. The lists. Name after name with no explanation of who they were or what they did or didn't do. Just name after name.

Why did God include these lists of unknown people, unknown to us, in his word?

Here is my thought. While God knows the names of all the stars, he also knows each of our names. More importantly, he knows where we fit in history. He knows who we are related to. He knows when we lived and where we lived. Those lists of names tell me so much about my God and his attention to detail. Those lists tell me that God is truly aware of each of us. He knows our needs. He knows how we lived. He knows our relationship to him and where we fit in the overall picture of his plan.

It is such a comfort that I am not just another grasshopper. I have a name, and God knows my name. I am not simply part of a multitude, and God can see me in the midst of the multitude and, because of that, can respond to me and my needs when I call on him.

God knows everyone. He knows their names. He knows their need to know him. He knows this and asks us to join him in revealing this truth to each person so they, too, will know the God who knows their name.

Mission 17 Isaiah 44:24

"This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,

God didn't just form the universe. He formed the processes that created who you are. Think about patents and copyrights. They often have time limits. Until the time limit runs out, the creator of what has been copyrighted has total control of what has been created. After that, it becomes public domain and anyone can duplicate it and profit from that item. from

Question: Is there a copyright or patent on what God has done? Silly question, but it is interesting how many people think that God does not have the right to control them or their world. They think that God has no right to judge us and set up any rules to control our behavior.

While it is true that God does allow a lot of freedom in the use of what he has created. There are warnings about the consequences of the misuse of what he created. It is his universe, and we have been given the privilege of living in it.

Copyrights exist to protect the rights and investment of those who created what is being copyrighted, at least for a while. So who protects God's rights? Is that a valid question?

So much of the bible is about God's rights. His right to be worshipped. His right to be honored. Over and over, the writers talk about the stars, the earth, and so on, lifting their voices in praise.

Don't we do the same? We honor and praise the creativity of others. Do we honor God's creation in us?

Mission 18 Isaiah 45:8

"You heavens above, rain down righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it; I, the Lord, have created it.

How can the heavens rain down righteousness? What does this mean?

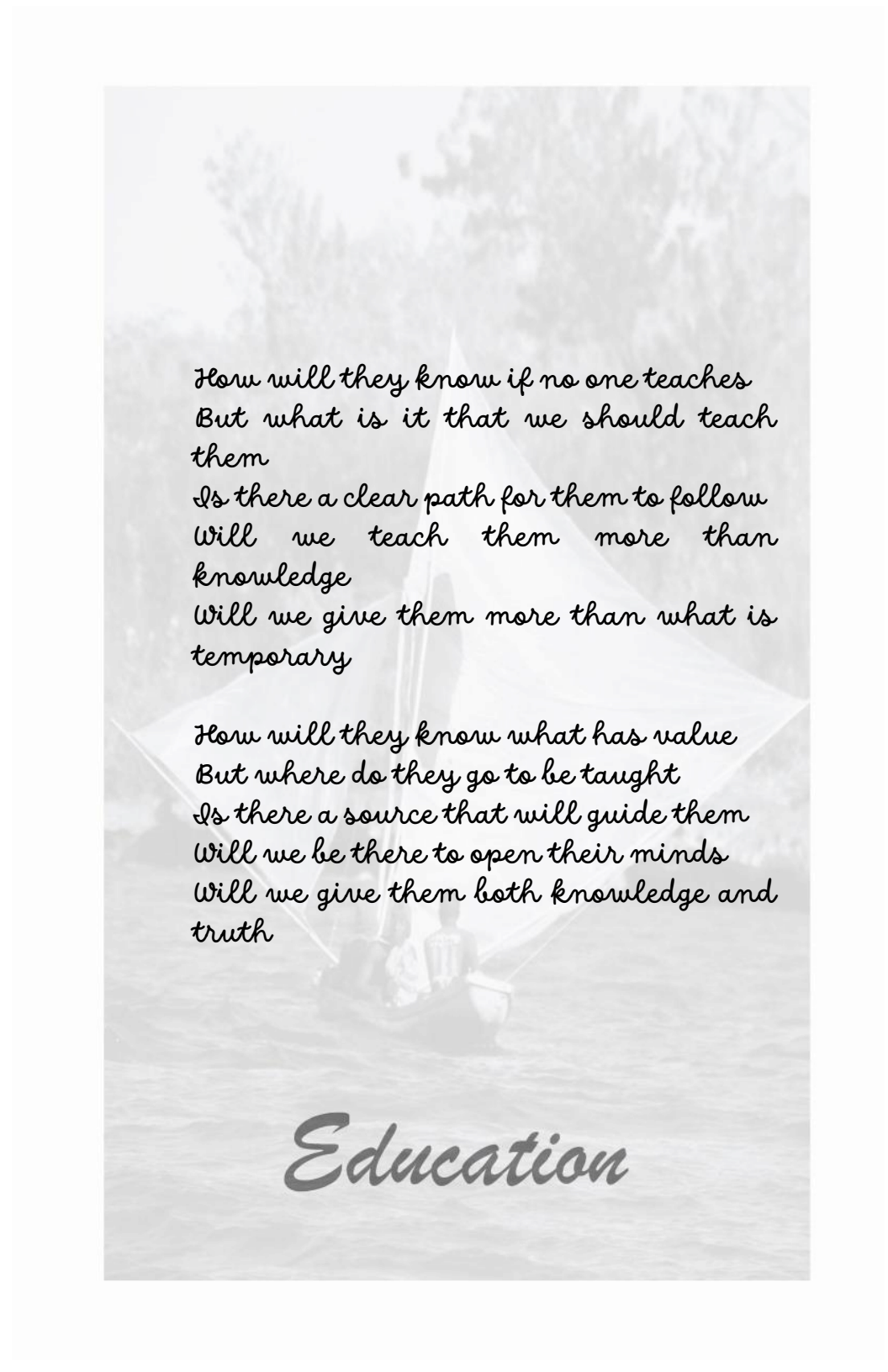
To understand this is to understand the broad plan of God. God has a plan to pour out his Spirit on all who believe. This is the prophecy of Joel, which Peter quotes in Acts. It is also about the work of the Holy Spirit to convict man of sin. This has a product which is righteousness,

Does this sound a bit too theological? So let the skies pour down righteousness. Let God come down to man, as the Son of God, and then as the Holy Spirit. Let the earth bring forth salvation. Let all those who hear and respond bring to life the salvation that God has for them. Let the blood that was shed prepare the ground so that from it will spring up a church, a body of believers that is the evidence that God has come down, that the Holy Spirit has been given.

Finally, let righteousness spring up together as evidence that God has created. This is the fruit of the spirit, which is the proof that God has come down, that the soil is revealing the evidence of His salvation. It is also about people becoming disciples who make disciples.

This is an incredible summary of God's great plan of salvation. His plan to restore all who desire this restoration. God planned to come down. God planned to make it possible for salvation to be a reality. God planned for us to become healthy and reproduce.

Now consider the parable of the sower. Which type of ground are you? Are you stone, stony, weedy, or fertile?



How will they know if no one teaches
But what is it that we should teach
them

Is there a clear path for them to follow
Will we teach them more than
knowledge

Will we give them more than what is
temporary

How will they know what has value
But where do they go to be taught

Is there a source that will guide them

Will we be there to open their minds

Will we give them both knowledge and
truth

Education

Mission 19 Isaiah 45:18

For this is what the Lord says — he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited — he says: "I am the Lord, and there is no other.

Why is it possible for man to live everywhere on this earth? Well, almost everywhere. Only the most extreme places have not been conquered. Antarctica, the Arctic, the tops of the mountains, and the depths of the ocean. Well, we do have people living in Antarctica. We do have people who live almost on the Arctic ice cap. People have entered the depths of the ocean and lived at certain depths. Why?

We are the most unique of God's creations. We have the ability to adapt, the capacity to do two things. First, we alter the environment or a piece of it so that we can live in that place. We build houses, tools, and other items to support our ability to live there. Second, we adapt ourselves to that environment by changing our diet, our clothing, and so on. No other animal has been able to make such adaptations.

Some may say others have, but they are able to do so only because man is present to make that possible. Without the presence of man, they would not survive.

So why? The Bible tells us that it is one of the first things God told man to do. He was to inhabit the earth and subdue it. You cannot do that from a remote spot. You have to go to all those places to do so. If it is possible for us to inhabit all these places, then it is also possible to reach all of those places with the gospel. Anywhere man has gone, the gospel can go.

The call is to go to the ends of the earth, where people have already gone.

Mission 20 Isaiah 51:6

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.

Nothing seems to last. The latest technology gets replaced by the newer technology, and that by even newer technology. We cannot seem to be satisfied.

In all of that, human nature has not changed, just the way we express it. Different clothes, different music, different housing, but the person inside or behind all of that has the same emotional realities.

Nothing seems to last. If it is not replaced by the latest fad, technology, or version, it will wear out. Clothes don't last. The food in the pantry has expiration dates. The tools, though built to last, don't. The parts wear out, break, or rust. Even if you can repair them, there is a limit to how many times they can be repaired and what can be repaired.

Again, the person using that doesn't change. I am not talking about the changes brought about by age, or maybe I am. We do replace parts of the body. We do do maintenance-type things. Eventually, we wear out, run down, and need to be replaced. But again, the person inside all of that deals with the same emotional realities. Bottom line, we still love/hate, laugh/cry, share/hoard, are greedy/generous, and more. We still sin and still need to be forgiven.

The good news is that God doesn't change, nor do his rules change. That means his gift doesn't change, nor the manner in which it is presented. It is presented through human representatives. It doesn't matter the methodology involved, it still requires us to share the unchanging love of God for all of us.

God will never wear out. His love and forgiveness will never wear out.

Mission 21 Isaiah 55:9

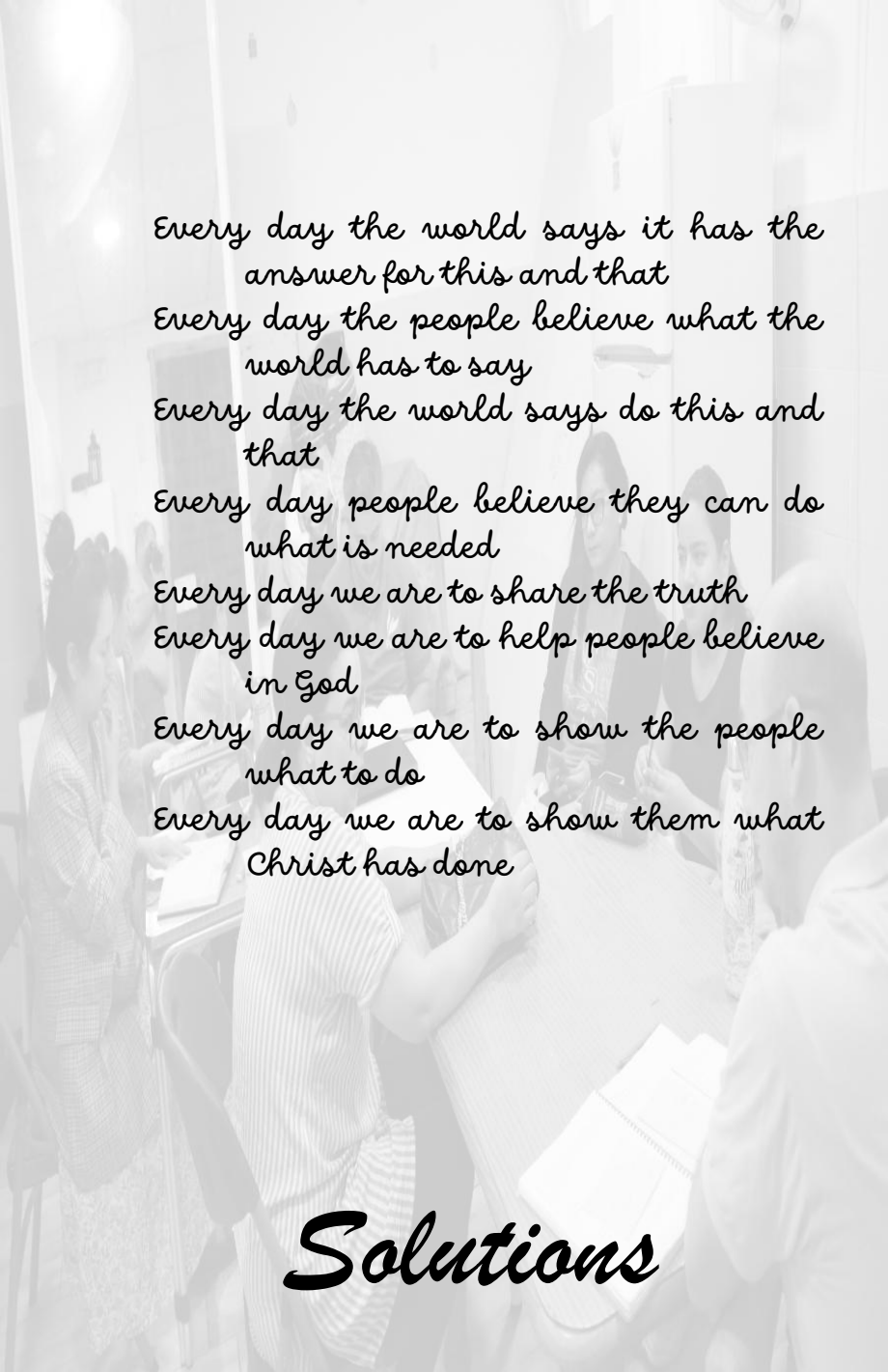
"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

May I ask you some complicated questions? Never mind, I will ask them anyway.

- Explain to me infinity?
- Explain to me what it means to exist outside of time?
- Explain to me how it is possible to be everywhere at one time?
- Explain to me how God knows everything all at the same time?
- Explain to me how God can be three identities but one?
- Explain to me

Have you had enough? These are all critical questions, and no matter how smart we think we are, we cannot answer them. Oh, we try, but even our best answers always come up short. That is why there is always a new philosophy working to replace an old one. There are always holes and deficiencies in all of our attempts to answer any question related to who God is and how God exists.

But that is also good news for us. Meditate on that for a moment. What would happen if you could answer any of those questions and define God? If we did, then God would no longer be God. He would be just another god, or worse, a creation of an overactive mind. To be God, he must be beyond our ability to comprehend. It also means we can depend on him to do everything he has promised.



Every day the world says it has the
answer for this and that
Every day the people believe what the
world has to say
Every day the world says do this and
that
Every day people believe they can do
what is needed
Every day we are to share the truth
Every day we are to help people believe
in God
Every day we are to show the people
what to do
Every day we are to show them what
Christ has done

Solutions

Mission 22 Isaiah 65:17

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

I like the sound of new heavens and a new earth. We have truly done some serious damage to this one. It will be nice to live where there is no pollution, no animals going extinct. I wonder if those that have become extinct will be revived and included? Not important. It will be all God intended it to be, and we will get to see it as it was before sin came and we basically ruined it. Thankfully, there are a few pristine places where we can imagine a little of what that might be like.

New Heaven is great too. We will finally be able to enter into that unique place where angels dwell. A place where God is always evident. Best of all, there is no need to sacrifice to be given permission to enter. That is done, and so no need to remember, and nothing but God present to keep our memories focused.

That the past will not be remembered is a bit of a concern. We want to believe that not everything from the past will be forgotten or lost. We want to believe that we will know our loved ones. Yet that is such a small thing when you consider that we will have the ability to know everyone who is welcomed into heaven. Our concept of loved ones is so small when one realizes that all those who have chosen to follow Jesus are our loved ones, our heavenly family.

That we will not remember our sorrows and pain; I like that thought. I like the fact that this new heaven and earth will be so incredible, so filled with God's presence that our focus will experience a major shift. A shift from all we think it will be to all that it is.

A place to live and experience all the wonders of God. That is what we have to offer this fallen world.

Mission 23 Jeremiah 10:11

"Tell them this: 'These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.'"

These gods refer to a number of false gods and goddesses during the time of Jeremiah. The message is pretty clear. They are false. What they do or claim to do is a fabrication. Their claims to power are a deception. They are little more than smoke and mirrors. They will perish from the earth and be expelled from heaven and earth.

Let's modernize this a little bit. Not because there are no false gods and goddesses, but because there is another type of god and goddess that exists now. It is science. So let's restate this scripture in that context.

Jeremiah tells them this. This science you believe in did not create the heavens and the earth. A day will come when all it has to say will be revealed as foolishness and no longer necessary.

How can science be foolish and unnecessary? The same way those gods are. What they teach and give is empty and filled with lies. Science is empty and filled with lies. It promises a better life, a better way to do things, and freedom from whatever you want to be free from. Very vague, yep, you are right.

The gods do the same thing. But in the end, both are dependent on one key factor. Man. Without a man to bow to them or serve them, they are nothing. The gods and science are totally dependent on man for their existence. If man doesn't worship and serve the gods or science, then they have no power. They need man to validate their existence.

God, though, doesn't need man to validate his existence. Instead, we need God to validate our existence.

Mission 24 Jeremiah 32:17

"Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

Do you believe this?

Do you believe that man can fly? Do you think humans can live on the ocean floor? Do you believe that man can harness the power of the sun? Do you believe that man can walk on the moon? Do you believe that man....?

If you had asked these same questions at the end of the 19th century, everyone would have laughed at you. They would have said all of these things were impossible.

Yet each day we tell God that any number of things are impossible. Miracles are not possible. People changing from enemies to friends is not possible. Why?

The why is easy. It is because we use ourselves as the standard for what is possible and what is impossible. If we can't do it, then God can't do it. We believe that, for someone else, maybe God will perform a miracle, but for me, that is impossible. We are a long line of doubters who, like Thomas, will not believe until we see it with our own eyes and touch it with our own fingers.

We so easily forget the miracle that we live in each day. A universe created from nothing. Living creatures, of which we are one, are capable of life. More than that, capable of reproducing that life. The list of the incredible things that we enjoy, the miracles that science cannot explain, is without end.

Yet when asked if we believe in miracles, that God can do anything, we lose our voice. Oh yes, communication is another miracle. Open your eyes to see. Open your heart to believe.

We are the ones who are truly
connected

We are the ones who can be the bridge

We are the ones who can guide others

We are the ones

People are lost and seeking a connection

People are lost and don't know path

People are lost and need to be guided

People are lost

It is our task to connect them to the
truth

It is our task to connect them to truth
hope

It is our task to connect them to the
lord

It is our task

Connections

Mission 25 Daniel 6:27

He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

We all want to know if we are successful in our proclamation of the good news. We all want to be able to point to something that tells us and those who support us that people are responding to the truth. We want confirmation that they are not just mimicking our words and telling us what they think we want to hear, so we will feel good.

The hope is that someday those we have come to reach will reveal in some way that they see, that they hear, and that they now believe.

This story is about such an event. A king likes Daniel but is trapped into complying with the wishes of others. A very typical response. When they are with us, they act in a certain way. When they are with their homies, so to speak, then they follow the crowd.

The king is trapped and caves in to them and his own rules. He caves in and throws Daniel to the lions. That is what people do when they are not yet ready to shift.

The following day comes, and the king finds Daniel still alive. He now declares himself and acts in defiance of his rules and his friend's preferences, and declares who is really in control.

It will happen someday. It probably won't be as dramatic, but it will have the same indicators. A challenge to one's beliefs posed by friends, family, or others. At first, a caving in to them, and then one day, because of something - it can be big or small - but it represents your complete trust in God, they see the truth and declare they know who God is.

Be patient, like Daniel, and the day will come.

Mission 26 Daniel 12:3

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

What is the reward we will receive? Please don't deny that you would like an answer to this question. Please don't deny that you would love to receive something now and in this place. The disciples asked the question about what they had received. They did so in the context of reviewing all they had sacrificed.

Paul talked about a crown. Jesus mentioned that they would receive a hundredfold. Truth be told, what they did receive was not what one might expect. Not something that many of us would desire. The apostles were beaten for their faith and considered it a blessing. Paul lists all the awful things he suffered and yet saw it as a blessing and the evidence of something far more valuable. The honor of representing Jesus in this world.

Here we are told that the wise will shine like stars. They will be known and all will see them. Why? Because they are leading people to righteousness, to God, and their reward is that all will see their service to God and be illuminated by it. That is an incredible reward that God would use our lives to give light to others. Light for others to follow and be led to God. Light for others to see and learn to duplicate in their lives.

The question is, are you wise? Do you know how to be wise? Do you know how to be the light that is displayed for all to see and that reveals the path to God? The scripture says let your light shine before men so they can see your good deeds and praise the Father in heaven (Mt 5:16).

Mission 27 Amos 9:2

Though they dig down to the depths of the grave, from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the heavens, from there I will bring them down.

You know the phrase, ‘leave no stone unturned’?

Have you ever misplaced something? It doesn’t have to be something valuable, just something you want or need. You realize it is missing and then begin the search. You know what I mean by the search. And depending on how important it is, each moment you don’t find it increases your desperation to find it. You become frantic in the search. You rack your brain trying to remember the last time you saw it or used it. You go over and over your steps and then do it all again. And with all that frantic search, you find nothing.

Now it becomes the center of all your thoughts. Even when you go to do something else, your thoughts come back to what is missing. Finally, in frustration, you give up, well, not give up, but move on to something else. But I guarantee you will come back to the search until at last you figure out what has happened or you find it.

This passage is not about that but has the same concept. In this passage, people are trying to hide from God. It is not possible. But the same kind of search will happen. It will be relentless. There will be no place to hide from this search. All will be found.

Sadly, there won’t be joy in being found. There won’t be a sense of relief in being found. There won’t be any restoration to their proper place. This search is about finding those who are seeking to flee God and his judgment.

Oh, that we would understand this and find them before God does. Are we as relentless in finding the lost so they can be saved as God will be in bringing them to justice?

What do we really need to carry out the mission

A car - but it needs fuel and maintenance

A boat - but it needs fuel and maintenance

And water

A plane - but it needs fuel and maintenance

And a place to operate

All of which depend on a key resources

What do we really need to carry out the mission

Feet - willing to carry us where they are

Heart - willing to make us care so we go

And share

Soul - willing to hear the need to respond

And go to them

All of which depend on God the resource

Resources

Mission 28 Mark 13:27

And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

Have you ever been to the ends of the earth? Do you know where they are?

Most of the time, we think of faraway places. Places deep in the most inaccessible of places.

This is the writing on the wall. God expects us to succeed in going to the ends of the earth. It may take time, but when we are faithful, we will get there.

I have been to those places. Places so remote that the only way to reach them is on foot over mountains and rivers. But you want to know the sad thing. Coca-Cola got there before me. In fact, I can't think of a place I have been where I have not found that it was there as well. It is a sad comment on our readiness to make the sacrifice to go.

Companies like Coca-Cola make the sacrifices for the sake of profits. Something that won't last. They do it to provide something that won't last, forcing the people to spend more and more in order to enjoy it. They send it in plastic bottles and cans, which must be disposed of and bring ruin to the environment.

We have something of eternal value. Something that once they receive is unending in its benefits and blessings. We have something that will dwell within and will restore and create a new way of life that is a benefit to the person and to those they meet and share life with.

God expects us to succeed. We have something of eternal value, and so many have yet to receive this gift. God expects us to succeed. The angels are waiting to reap the harvest.

Mission 29 Ephesians 4:10

He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.

There is no place that God cannot go to reach one in need. This is an important truth. It is not just about the location of the person on a map but also the location of the person in their heart.

It is about the Samaritans. Places we don't feel comfortable going to. People we don't feel comfortable being around. People we want to believe are unreachable, too far gone in their sin and self-absorption to have any possibility of hearing and responding to anything, much less the truth.

This verse comes after the statement that he did all of this to lead captives out of the depths. That is where every soul is. There are captives in the depths of sin. None of them is reachable. It is only because of God's love, Jesus' sacrifice, and the work of the Holy Spirit that anyone is reachable.

I said anyone, including you and me. Without all that God has done, we would be without hope, unreachable, in the world of the Samaritans. This is something we all must learn. It will keep us humble and open our eyes to the world around us. It will open our hearts to the people and the possibility that everyone can be reached.

We have to be like Jesus and decide that we must go through Samaria. There he met a woman of ill repute, and she was led out from the depths of her prison. He walked the roads and met the demon-possessed and freed them from their prison. He forgave the harlot who washed his feet and freed her from her prison. On the list goes.

We too must go and lead out the captives into the light.

Mission 30 Hebrews 4:14

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

Let's consider a concept that may appear a bit strange and yet could be helpful in understanding how important this passage is.

Have you ever considered what makes a good butler? You may be surprised that it is much more than just meeting the needs of the one they are hired to work for. Consider this list of qualities.

- Excellent communication skills
- Active listening skills
- Service skills
- Sensitivity and understanding
- Leadership skills
- Patience and the ability to remain calm in stressful situations
- Ability to work well with others
- Concentration skills.

Now I am not advocating that we treat Jesus as a butler. He is much more than that. Yet this list is helpful in understanding what it means to have a high priest, an advocate for us with the Father.

Jesus came as a servant. One who serves has all of the above skills. Jesus took that one step further and sacrificed himself so that his service could restore our relationship with the Father.

While we cannot serve as the high priest we can serve in a way that opens the way for them to encounter the one who is our high priest. This list gives us a good place to begin.

Take time and evaluate your service based on this list.

Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

You will deal with opposition.

Isa 53:4-5 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

2 Cor 6:4-10 Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; 5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; 6 in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; 7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; 8 through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; 9 known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; 10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Why all this suffering? It is because we are fighting an intractable enemy for the most valuable item in the universe. Jesus asked What will you give in exchange for a soul. His answer, my life.

We are called to face this opposition with joy. This was Paul's view of the work. There will be suffering and opposition, but the goal of a soul is worth it all.

Mission 31 Revelation 12:12

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Shout it from the hills
 Shout it from the valleys
Shout it from the byways
 Shout it from the town
Shout it in the morning when the sun shines
bright
 Shout it in the evening when darkness
reigns
Shout it from your lips
 Shout it from your heart
Shout it from near
 Shout it from afar
Shout it in the morning to bring new life to
all
 Shout it in the evening to overcome all
fear
Shout the message
 Shout the truth
Shout the Saviour's name
 Shout the source of hope
Shout it in the morning so there will hope
 Shout it in the evening so they will
have faith

Derque nada hay
Proclamation
Justo es Dios
Agos 1-37