

# Building the International Body of Believers



## MISSION OBJECTIVES

- A. I will do my part to improve the quality of my church group by applying more of the biblical principles for becoming a Spirit-filled church.
- B. I will either start a Discovery Group that includes non-Christians or support a church plant among a specific language group.



## TEAM CARE AND ACCOUNTABILITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Tell us with whom you discussed cultural practices in light of the Bible and what you learned through the process.
2. What other experiences have you had in following up on your international contacts. (Keep updating and referring to your *Contact Log* or *Disciple Log*).
3. What did you learn from study #10 in *My Favorite Missionary*?
4. What needs or challenges are you facing that we can pray for?
5. Pray together especially for each other and the people of other cultures you have met.



## PRESENTATION (27:33 MINUTES)

**WATCH:** *Building the International Body of Believers*



## DISCOVERY AND DISCUSSION (25 MINUTES)

1. **Read Acts 2:40-47.** List the various activities and attitudes of the early church and its members.
2. What church or small group experience in your life has been the closest to this type of body of believers?
3. What did you learn from the various individuals in the video presentation about encouraging the planting of an ethnic church?
4. Read this quote: *Upon all who believe, God has placed the burden of raising up churches.... Our churches, large and small, are not to be treated in such a way that they will be helplessly dependent upon ministerial aid. The members are to be so established in the faith that they will have an intelligent knowledge of medical missionary work. They are to follow Christ's example, ministering to those around them. Faithfully they are to fulfill the vows made at their baptism, the vow that they will practice the lessons taught in the life of Christ* (White 1932, 315). How would your local church and your personal life be different if we followed this counsel?
5. Discuss what you and your team should do in order to help build up the body of believers, especially among unreached ethnic groups.  
If your team thinks that you would like to do a Discovery Group use these questions to help you move forward.
  - A. Which of our international, non-Christian friends would we like to invite?

- B. Who of our team should lead the group? (Should we have more than one leader or group?)
  - C. Where could we meet?
  - D. How long should the meeting last each week?
  - E. When will we start and how many weeks should it last?
  - F. Should we serve any refreshments and who should be in charge of them?
  - G. What costs might we have and how shall we cover them?
  - H. What Bible stories will we cover that match the needs and background of the non-Christians attending? (Consider options at [reachtheworldnextdoor.com/resources](http://reachtheworldnextdoor.com/resources)).
6. What have you learned today and how will you use it this week?



### TEAM PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Pray for God to raise up a new group of believers through you; pray for many more groups and churches to be planted.

#### Promises to Claim:

- ✔ How will the temple be built? *"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of hosts (Zechariah 4:6).*
- ✔ *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).*

- ✔ *The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers also (White 1946, 115).*
- ✔ *We need the vitalizing power of the Spirit—the strong cry of a church traveling to bring forth souls. There is need of more earnest wrestling with God for the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Eager, earnest, importunate prayer is needed. There is efficiency in prayer. In answer to fervent prayer God can turn the thoughts and hearts of men as he turns the waters of the sea (White 1902).*



## ASSIGNMENTS (5 MINUTES)

1. What do you plan to do to follow up on any of the friendships you have developed? Use the *Disciple Log* to keep track of important areas of growth. You can now use this to replace the *Contact Log* or staple them together and use both.
2. Review *Lesson 11 Field Activity: Discovery Group Outline*
3. Review *Lesson 11 Field Activity: Discovery Group Outline*. Use it with at least one group this week whether in your family worship, with a friend, or in a church small group.
4. Mobilize and Multiply. Share with a friend or family member what you learned about being a Spirit-filled church. Send him or her the *Lesson 11 Field Activity: Discovery Group Outline* and encourage him or her to start a group either with you or with others.
5. Complete *Lesson 11 Assigned Reading: Growing Refugee and Immigrant Churches*
6. Complete study #11 in *My Favorite Missionary* and focus your prayers on people in religions that are “New, Very Old, or Unusual” in *Praying for the World Next Door*.
7. Watch at least one of the following video clips to learn more about how to build God’s church:
  - A. Elder Dan Serns, Mr. Fabian Reid, and Elder Scott Griswold share their experiences in starting home groups and ethnic churches.
  - B. Dr. Anthony WagenerSmith passionately shares the importance of church planting and the basic steps.
8. Complete the form: *Field Report #11*.

## LESSON 11 FIELD ACTIVITY: DISCOVERY GROUP OUTLINE

1. What are you thankful for?
2. What has stressed you out this week?
3. What else would you like us to pray about? (We share so we can praise God, care for each other, and pray for each other). (The leader can pray or everyone who wants to).
4. What did we talk about last week?
5. Did you change anything in your life as a result of last week's teaching?
6. Who did you share the story with?
7. We identified several needs last week and planned to meet those needs. How did it go? (We learn so we can grow, obey, and honor God. We learn so we can bless others).
8. Let's see what the Bible teaches us this week.
  - A. Please read the following passage (choose prayerfully which story or passage can help the group grow):
  - B. Could someone please retell the passage in your own words?
  - C. Are there any details we can add that our friend left out or any corrections to help us have the Bible passage clear in our minds? (Reread if necessary to include the important details).
  - D. (If someone says something that is incorrect we should correct it through the passage itself by kindly asking "Where did you find that in this passage?" This will help them to look to the scriptures rather than their own ideas for truth).
  - E. What does this passage teach us about God?
  - F. What does this passage teach about how we should live? Is there a command to obey, a good example to follow, or a bad example to reject?

- G.** Are there any promises of what God will do to help us?
  
  - H.** If we believe this passage is from God, how must we change? (We study the Bible because we believe God gave it to us so we could know and honor Him and receive His blessings on our health, family, finances, and find salvation from sin leading to eternal life).
- 9.** Who do you know that needs to hear what we have learned before we meet again?
- 10.** Do you know anyone in your community that needs our help or who we can pray for? (Pray).  
(We are blessed so we can be a blessing to others).

# LESSON 11 ASSIGNED READING: GROWING REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT CHURCHES IN THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

By Terri Saelee

## Introduction

The world has come to North America. Government statistics, demographic studies, and the faces we see around us all call our attention to the fact that, as Ellen White summarized years ago, “God in His providence has brought men to our very doors and thrust them, as it were, into our arms, that they might learn the truth, and be qualified to do a work we could not do in getting the light before men of other tongues.” Inspired counsel emphasizes the significance of this migration of people groups, particularly from countries that are especially difficult to reach with missionaries, as “a divinely appointed means of rapidly extending the third angel’s message into all the nations of the earth” (White 1914, par. 17).

The concept introduced in the inspired counsel above is now known in missiological circles as diaspora missions, and its field of study is called Diaspora Missiology, as presented in the book *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*, by Enoch Wan. There is an urgency in this work because the longer these international guests are here, the more settled and busy they become, and the less open they are to the message of salvation God has entrusted to us to share. We must reach them when they are most open to the gospel—when they first arrive. White expressed this urgency when she wrote: “Wake up, wake up, my brethren and sisters, and enter the fields in America that have never been worked. After you have given something for foreign fields, do not think your duty done. There is a work to be done in foreign fields, but there is a work to be done in America that is just as important. In the cities of America there are people of almost every language. These need the light that God has given to his church” (1914, par. 12).

This document introduces three main categories of diaspora in North America that need specialized support for optimum growth and recommends ways that church members can facilitate growth among each.

## Definitions

To effectively work with each language group, it is important to first understand the level at which that group has been reached by the gospel. The following definitions can be helpful:

- 1. People Group:** An ethno-linguistic group with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members. For strategic purposes it is the largest group within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance (People Groups 2020).
- 2. Unreached/Least-Reached:** (These terms are used interchangeably.) According to *The Joshua Project*, “an unreached or least-reached people is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside assistance” (2020, “Unreached/Least Reached”). Unreached/least-reached people groups can only be reached cross-culturally.
- 3. Unengaged:** “An unengaged unreached people group (UUPG) [is an unreached people group that] has no known active church planting underway” (Joshua Project 2020, “Unengaged”). A people group is not considered “engaged” when it has merely been adopted, is the object of focused prayer, or is part of an advocacy strategy. “At least four essential elements constitute effective engagement:

- Apostolic effort in residence.
- Commitment to work in the local language and culture.
- Commitment to long-term ministry.
- Sowing in a manner consistent with the goal of seeing a Church Planting Movement (CPM) emerge (Joshua Project 2020, “Unengaged”).

“All unengaged unreached people groups (UUPGs) are by definition unreached people groups (UPGs) . . . UUPGs are a subset of UPGs” (Joshua Project 2020, “Unengaged”).

- 4. Unestablished:** Unestablished language groups may be considered reached, but their faith communities have been disrupted, and they have been scattered, often due to persecution, political unrest, and/or war, and need assistance reconnecting and establishing faith communities in their new context. This is most often the case among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and especially refugees. The term unestablished language groups is not generally in the literature, but the author of this article has found it useful to specify this significant category.

### **Primary People Group Categories in the North American Division (NAD)**

Most language groups in the NAD needing specialized support fall into one of three categories. A unique approach is needed for each category.

#### **1. Reached Abroad but Unestablished Here**

Language groups that have been reached by missionaries abroad but have not yet been able to establish faith communities in their new country of resettlement are at risk of losing their faith. They need to be able to worship and reach their friends and relatives in their heart language. The level of risk for these language groups is directly proportionate to the language group’s (1) fluency in English, or lack thereof, (2) majority religious background, as well as, (3) the degree to which the religious background and culture differs from Christianity and the culture in the new country, (4) the level of importance the culture places on maintaining their own language and culture versus adapting to a new one, (5) average educational level, (6) socioeconomic level, and (7) whether or not they came as refugees and the length of time spent in the refugee experience, especially during formative years, prior to arriving in the country of resettlement.

Examples of recently arriving language groups that fit this category upon arrival in the US, Canada, Australia, France, and other countries of resettlement include Kinyarwanda/Kirundi-speaking refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Karen and Zomi refugees from Burma, Mizo refugees from Burma and Mizo immigrants from the Mizoram State in India.

The most effective way to grow the work among these language groups is to empower them to work among their own people. Here are some effective ways to facilitate growth among these groups who come with a long history of Adventism back home:

- A.** Facilitate fellowship within the language group:
- Help believers secure a place where they can worship in their heart language.

- B.** Empower indigenous leaders
  - Dialogue with these leaders. Listen to their dreams and visions. Pray with them and find ways to empower them to do what God is calling them to do.
  - Connect the group leader with the local Conference leadership and with the Division-wide network for the language group for resources, events, training, and mentoring in their heart language. (See [refugeeministries.org](http://refugeeministries.org).)
  - Find funding to assist them in their initiatives, resource development, growth strategies, and especially to support the self-sacrificing leaders.
- C.** Find ways to help make Adventist education accessible to them.
- D.** Inspire these language groups with the vision of reaching other related language groups (or find ways to facilitate such efforts, as these groups are almost always a step ahead of us in this area).

## 2. Unreached but Engaged

Unreached but Engaged people groups are those in which most of the population is unreached, but there are some converts and/or workers within the language group who are capable of sharing the everlasting gospel with their people in their native language. They can share the gospel more effectively within their culture than we who are from outside their culture, but they need support.

Examples of language groups in North America that are Unreached but beginning to be Engaged include Tigrinya-speaking refugees from Eritrea, Nuer-speaking refugees from South Sudan, and Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees.

These groups are more fragile than the “reached but unestablished” groups, as the work among these groups is usually relatively new, and the reputation of the gospel among these groups depends on a very few key individuals, often recent converts. The enemy knows when a people group without the light of the gospel is beginning to receive the wonderful light of salvation and he does not allow the light of salvation into the group without a fight. It is not uncommon to see unusual and daunting obstacles arise seemingly out of nowhere with these groups. The few individuals in these language groups who know and can share the truth are often the targets of unexpected and almost unbelievable physical, social, financial, and/or spiritual attacks. Much earnest prayer, empathy, and perseverance is needed to support these individuals and their families who are pioneering the work among their people group.

The best ways to support the crucial but fragile new work among these language groups is to support the work already begun, especially the individuals doing it, and to extend the reach of their ministry.

Here are some specific ways:

- A.** Pray for the unreached among the language group and for the new converts and workers seeking to share their faith within the language group. Invite others to pray.
- B.** Find ways to support the work financially. This is very crucial for the work at this stage.
  - Support dedicated workers needing education for the ministry.

- Support church planters.
- Support resource development.

While it may seem daunting, many hands make light work, and in this case, collaboration and partnerships between various entities can lighten the load for everyone and give the language group the jump start it needs to grow rapidly.

- C. Extend the ministry with similar methods as those employed in reaching unreached and unengaged people groups, except with the addition of added resources and in close collaboration with the early converts, workers, and others already working for and in the language group.

### 3. Unreached/Least Reached/Unreached Unengaged Groups

An unreached or least-reached people is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize the people group without outside assistance. Joshua Project uses the terms “unreached” and “least-reached” synonymously. Some entities use the term “unreached, unengaged groups (UUGs).” Typically, a group is considered unreached if less than 2% of the population is Christian (Joshua Project 2020, “Unreached/Least Reached”).

There are various lists of unreached people groups in North America. J.D. Payne estimates around 348 unreached unengaged language groups (Payne 2017). However, even the longest lists are missing some refugee groups identified by *Adventist Refugee & Immigrant Ministries* (ARIM).

Some examples of groups unreached by the Adventist message in North America include the Mienh, Khamu, and Lahu from Laos and the Karenni, Falam, and Haka from Myanmar. There are also groups from China, India, Africa, the Middle East, and throughout the 10/40 Window.

Unreached language groups must be reached cross-culturally. The least-reached groups are the ones we most need to reach, and yet it is these groups that we are least likely to feel called to reach, merely because they are often not even on our radar. They are not coming to our churches asking for a place to worship because they are usually as unaware of us and the message of hope and wholeness we have to share, as we are of them, and their languages, backgrounds, cultures, and needs, as well as their skills, gifts, values, and strengths. For this reason, this category is the one that needs the most personal effort and time invested in preparation and incarnational ministry by cross-cultural missionaries.

To connect with unreached people groups and rightly represent the Savior and the everlasting gospel to people from backgrounds vastly different from our own demands that we be abiding in Christ, in tune with the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. White says, “Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good” (1898, 362). But this is no reason to draw back in fear (Heb 10:38-39). “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7). He is more willing to give us the Holy Spirit than we are to ask. So, “ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

One of the most important keys to successful cross-cultural ministry is to realize that God is already at work in every culture (Psalm 19). This will help us to connect with respect. With this perspective, our knowledge of the Bible can help us to aid unreached cultures in recognizing God’s leading in their culture. When we affirm the values within their culture that are from God, their hearts and ours will be more open to additional humbly shared truths revealed in the Bible. And God may even use these “unreached” people to give us deeper insights into biblical truths.

We should keep in mind the inspired counsel that when people from unreached cultures embrace Bible truth, they can “be qualified to do a work we could not do in getting the light before men of other tongues” (White 1914, par. 17). Thus, we should focus more on quality than quantity of relationships and seek divine guidance to discern who God may be preparing to share the message with their own culture, and cooperate with Him in qualifying these individuals/families for this high calling.

Then, as God begins using these individuals/families, we should be willing to take a back seat and say, like John the Baptist did of Christ, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Of course, we should always be seeking to transfer people’s loyalty from ourselves to Christ, but we should also be willing to encourage our “following” to support the leadership of those within the culture that God calls to lead. This transition into a more supportive background role is best done gradually and prayerfully.

Another lesson we have learned in diaspora missions among refugees and immigrants in North America is to avoid the temptation to make a big splash. Broad announcements of large plans tend to excite suspicion and trigger resistance. Here the example of Jesus is priceless. “He shunned all outward display” (White 1898, 43). By far the most effective way to reach and grow the work among all three categories of diaspora populations described above is to follow the example of Jesus who quietly “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). Nature and the life of Christ are both replete with this lesson. “The Sun of Righteousness did not burst upon the world in splendor, to dazzle the senses with His glory. It is written of Christ, ‘His going forth is prepared as the morning.’ Quietly and gently the daylight breaks upon the earth, dispelling the shadow of darkness, and waking the world to life. So did the Sun of Righteousness arise, ‘with healing in His wings’” (White 1898, 261). So should we work, like the sap quietly infusing life into every branch and twig of the dormant fruit trees in late winter, until by the time the casual observer notices any difference in the seemingly dead tree, the whole tree bursts into bloom. Thus, we should quietly infuse the love of Jesus into refugee and immigrant communities, leading them to abide in the True Vine until they cannot help but share Him with those nearest and dearest to them. With this mindset and these methods, we may be surprised by the rate at which God arranges divine appointments for us to connect with unreached people.

Here are some practical steps: (However, the order in which God leads may vary)

- A.** Prayerfully identify unreached people groups in your area.
- B.** Learn how to best connect with them, by taking time to research their religious background, history, and cultural values, and socio-demographic data. (This step is often most effective when done simultaneously with our interactions with people from the unreached culture, as long as we are following Christ’s method.
  - For assistance connecting with individuals from other cultures please see the addendum for contact information to ministry leaders.
- C.** Watch and pray for divine appointments.
- D.** Find places and ways to meet and mingle with unreached people groups. For example:
  - Shop/eat at ethnic stores/restaurants, prayerfully making friends with owners/managers of the businesses.
  - Offer to volunteer for a local literacy council.
  - The *Reach the World Next Door* training program contains excellent ideas in this area.

- E.** Follow up on divine appointments and carefully nurture friendships made.
  - Value each cross-cultural friendship and avoid seeing people as short-term projects, but rather as friends.
  - Follow Christ’s method (White 1905, 143).
  - Don’t hesitate to share what God means to you personally and ask to pray for your new friends. If they decline, respect their wishes and continue to care.
- F.** Find others with a burden for reaching the language group(s) and include key individuals and leaders in an advisory/support team for the leading convert(s)/worker(s) for the language group, and to begin to strategize together with them for the growth of the ministry, realizing that believers, within the culture, “can do a work we cannot do” among these language groups. They are the experts on the culture. We are there to empower them to do what God is calling them to do among their people.
- G.** Prioritize the personal and professional development of the new converts, especially promising young people, both male and female. (Experience has taught us that when we only educate young men for ministry, the lack of educated young women from the culture can become a significant dilemma.)
- H.** Connect these converts/new workers with as many leaders and resources as possible.
- I.** Keep the local Conference, Union, and Division leadership, including Multilingual/Ethnic and/or Refugee & Immigrant Ministries coordinators abreast of developments within the language group, as they may be able to facilitate its growth and suggest helpful resources and connections
- J.** Prayerfully, in consultation with the local conference and NAD ARIM, work toward taking the unreached group to the next level—engagement:
  - Apostolic effort (a pioneer) in residence (location, proximity is important.)
  - Commitment to work in the local language and culture
    - Recruiting promising young people as translators and mentoring them can speed the process of reaching the people group in their language and culture.
  - Commitment to long-term ministry.
  - Sowing in a manner consistent with the goal of seeing a Church Planting Movement (CPM) emerge (Joshua Project 2020, “Church Planting Movement/Kingdom Movement”).
    - A Church Planting Movement is defined as “a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment” (Garrison 2004, 21).

At this stage, proceed with the approach recommended for growing the work among Unreached but Engaged groups.

Another key to effectively connecting with unreached cultures is to respect the leaders and leadership structure within the culture. We should follow the example of Jesus, who first went to the Jewish leaders as a child humbly asking questions. He later taught his disciples, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him

the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" (John 10:1).

Of course, the main lesson in these words of Jesus is that He is the true Shepherd; however, these words also hold clues to effective cross-cultural mission efforts. The spiritual leaders are the gatekeepers of various people groups. God inspired His servant to write, "Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations" (White 1900, 78). Faith leaders are often the best able to connect with other faith leaders, including those of other world religions. Specific methods are outlined. "Pray for and with these men [women], for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ's messengers, we should manifest a deep earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock" (78). "Our ministers are to make it their special work to labor for ministers [other faith leaders]. They are not to get into controversy with them, but, with their Bible in their hand, urge them to study the Word. If this is done, there are many ministers now preaching error, who will preach the truth for this time" (White 1946, 562). "It requires much wisdom to reach ministers and men [women] of influence. But why should they be neglected...?" (562). "First reach the high classes if possible, but there should be no neglect of the lower classes.... Plan to reach the best classes, and you will not fail to reach the lower classes" (553).

While typically leaders can best be reached by other leaders, it is also important to remember that the most important qualification is the infilling of the Holy Spirit. "Even the great men are more easily drawn by the simplicity of the gospel than by any effort made in human power. We need more of God and far less of self. God will work through the weakest human agent who is charged with His Spirit" (557).

## Summary

The essence of who we are as Seventh-day Adventist Christians is bound up in the great commission and the everlasting gospel, which is to go, with a loud voice, to every nation (ethnos), kindred, tongue, and people. We, here in North America, have abundant opportunities to impact unreached cultures around the world in preparation for Jesus' soon return by prayerful, intentional efforts to share the distinctive Christ-centered Seventh-day Adventist message of hope and wholeness with the language groups that are unreached, unengaged, and/or unestablished here and supporting them in doing "a work we could not do" within and beyond their cultures. May God help us to be faithful to this trust.

## Contact Information for North American Division Ministries

Adventist Refugee and Immigrant Ministries:

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Adventist-Muslim Relations:

Gabriela de Phillips, Coordinator

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FIELD REPORT #11



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date Due \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Church \_\_\_\_\_ Team Number \_\_\_\_\_

## BUILDING THE INTERNATIONAL BODY OF BELIEVERS

1. Here is where I led a Discovery Group and what I learned from the experience:
2. These are the people I spent time with this last week and what we did (keep updating a *Contact Log* or *Disciple Log* for each person or family and keep the sheets in a binder):
3. What I plan to do this next week to disciple my contacts from other cultures:
4. The friend or family member with whom I shared what I learned and invited to do the same:
5. What I learned and/or what I want to be involved in after reading *Lesson 11 Assigned Reading: Growing Refugee and Immigrant Churches*:
6. Someone or something I would like us to be praying about:
7. Things I want to remember or share with my team from the video clips, my completion of study #11 in *My Favorite Missionary*, and my focus on prayers for those following religions that are "New, Very Old, or Unusual" in *Praying for the World Next Door*.