

**PRACTICAL**  
**MINI-THEOLOGIES**  
**FOR PIONEERS**  
**BEFORE GOING**  
**TO THE**  
**MISSION FIELD**

**BY J.T. HUTTS**



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Practical Mini-Theologies for Pioneers

Before Going to the Mission Field

First Edition

Learn more about J.T. Hutts

[www.spreadingthefame.com](http://www.spreadingthefame.com)

[www.africanhutts.com](http://www.africanhutts.com)

Contact the author at [jthutts@gmail.com](mailto:jthutts@gmail.com)

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# PREFACE

Before going to the field, I had 8 years of Bible College and Seminary training. I also served as an assistant pastor in a church that would become our sending church. With all this experience and knowledge, there were still somethings that I wish I had knew or learned more deeply before going to the mission field.

We come to the mission field with our thoughts and beliefs. Often times, as events happen on the field, we are wrestling with those thoughts and beliefs in real time.

This book explores some of the key theologies that make more sense to cultivate before living on the mission field. It's not that you have to have it all figured out and be one-hundred percent certain before going to the field, but that you're on the path and have put some thought into it.

The book came together as a conversation with other laborers on the field. We discussed what we wished we had given more thought to before arriving. The actual development of the book was more of a devotional exercise.

Each chapter has four or five main focuses:

**Biblical Reflection.** Scan the Bible from cover to cover on a particular topic. This is not meant to be an exhaustive study, but it will be sufficient to get one digging.

**Importance.** Explore "Why" this topic needs the focus or attention for a pioneer missionary on the field.

**Prayer Action.** Take the topic to the Lord in prayer. Every thread of Scripture is meant to draw us to the Lord and make us more like Him.

**Building a Practical Mini-Theology.** Take what you have learned and personalize it for the kind of pioneer you want to be on the field. This is important work for practical theologians and ambassadors of God's kingdom.

**Ways...** it looks on the field. See some of the common ways this topic of theology is exercised on the field.

At the end of each study there will be a short list of resources to dig even deeper into the topic of theology.

My hope is that this book will first spark intentional and deeper thinking about some core beliefs and theology before going to the mission field. These topics have been worker vetted and tested.

Second, I hope it stirs fruitful conversations between co-laborers, mentors, and team members. Theology cultivated in isolation will miss helpful pollination that happens when done with others.

Third, I hope the outcome of these studies will anchor mission laborers to the powerful Word of God and a joyful connection with their Father. Especially, in the crucible that is the mission field.

Coming back to these topics from time to time even while on the field has been so rich for my soul. It has also cultivated hearty conversations with other laborers and local believers in the field.

# INTRODUCTION

So you're passionate and ready to go to the mission field as a pioneer. But what happens when your theological frameworks are tested daily in ways you never imagined?

## **What it's not.**

We live in a day of minis—mini-pizzas, mini-skirts, mini-golf, mini-fridges, mini-buses. We want what is bite-sized, itsy-bitsy, and cutesy. Humans have an innate attraction to tiny things.

“Mini” theologies are not making small the things of God. There is nothing mini about theology or the study of God. There is nothing small about the mission task. Our task, which is often referred to as the Great Commission, is a global task that can't be tackled in human strength.

## **What it is.**

A mini-theology takes a smaller thread or theme of Scripture and seeks to make sense of it. It is theology made practical, memorable, and livable. This isn't meant to be exhaustive systematic theology, but a guide to dig deeper into topics of biblical theology that are practical for laborers who are heading to or already living on the mission field.

The various mini-theologies are topics that many laborers wish they had learned and chewed on more before going to the field. No one will be 100% ready, however a lack of attention to these areas of theology have caused pain and pushed many off of the field prematurely.

## **When is the best timing?**

The order of studies is just a suggestion. They can be done in any order or stand-alone. The first half is suggested to be

completed before going to the field. The second half is suggested to be completed within the laborer's first term on the field.

Some might even find value in revisiting these theological topics periodically throughout their life on the field. Your views may morph with time, experience, and maturity. While your theological framework will likely remain the same some practical aspects of that theology will shift and get shaped by life on the field. That's why it's important to work through these mini-theologies more than once.

### **With someone else.**

These mini-theological studies are not meant to be done in isolation but with someone other than just yourself. We learn best within a community. Remember, these are practical mini-theologies. To get practical, one must practice among a community or team.

It is suggested that before being on the field you walk through the first half of the guide with a pastor, team leader, mentor, or pre-field coach. It is then suggested that after arriving on the field with a co-laborer, team leader, or mission mentor.

### **What to expect.**

Expect to be connected with God. Theology is ultimately the study of God. Expect to get to know God better. Expect to be intimacy with him. As you prepare to go to the nation; go with God and a greater understanding how to go and stay well.

Each study will be simple, short, and hopefully memorable. Each study will include a short story from the field, biblical reflection, the Why, prayer action, interactive questions to build a mini-theology, and recommended resources for digging deeper. Now get going!



# WHO IS A PIONEER MISSIONARY?

How did you hear the gospel? Likely someone brought the gospel to you, where you lived. Since the first century, the church has sent out missionaries to various places on the globe. These were ordinary humans who obeyed the command to “go” to the ends of the earth and preach the gospel. Many of those missionaries were pioneers.

While the hope of the gospel has been spreading for thousands of years, billions of people have not yet had an opportunity to hear it. These are the unreached, members of ethnic groups without a self-sustaining witness to the gospel in their own culture.

*Who is a pioneer missionary?* Pioneer missionaries are those who go to regions of the world where no other previous Christians had gone before. They use innovative and creative means to bring the gospel to the world’s unreached people groups. Pioneers go to some of the hardest and darkest places on earth to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to those who had never heard.

The apostle Paul was a pioneer missionary. He said, **“I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation”** (Romans 15:20).

Many other pioneer missionaries have inspired us through the centuries (e.g. Brainerd, Carey, Judson, Paton, Taylor, Slessor, Elliot, Bruchko, Andrew). These people were by no means perfect, fully prepared, or fully equipped for the life they would live. Their faith was tested and tried countless times through endurance and suffering, and many were on the verge of giving up. Yet because of their obedience to God, their stories continue to motivate us to go today.

**“THE JOB OF CARRYING THE GOSPEL TO REMOTE TRIBES HIDDEN IN STRANGE AND DANGEROUS PLACES OFTEN REQUIRES A COURAGE AND DARING EQUAL TO THAT DISPLAYED BY THE EXPLORER IN SEARCH OF A NEW RIVER OR THE SOLDIER IN THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS DUTIES.” — A.W. TOZER**

# PRE-FLIGHT CHECKLIST

Welcome, future pioneer! As you prepare to embark on the challenging and deeply rewarding journey of mission, it's vital to assess the strength of your theological foundations. This checklist is designed to help you identify areas where your understanding and practical application of key biblical truths might benefit from deeper cultivation *before* you step onto the field.

This isn't a test, but a personal guide for where to focus growth. Be honest with yourself. For each statement, rate your current understanding and practical application on a scale of 1 to 5:

- 1 = Just beginning / Rarely applies
- 2 = Limited understanding / Inconsistent application
- 3 = Moderate understanding / Some application
- 4 = Good understanding / Often applies
- 5 = Deep understanding / Consistently applies

Mini-Theology	Focus	Check-In Application	Rating (1-5)
1. Awe	Why fan into flame a passion for God	I consistently cultivate a profound reverence, wonder, and respect for God's infinite majesty, power, holiness, and love, allowing it to fuel my dependence on Him.	
2. Dwell	Where God is and where you want to be	I have a deep, practical understanding that God truly dwells <i>with</i> me and <i>in</i> me, providing an unshakeable sense of His presence, especially when facing isolation.	

<b>3. Sabbath</b>	<b>When we are limited and God is not</b>	I regularly practice intentional Sabbath rest, recognizing my God-given limits and trusting God's sovereignty to work even when I cease from my labor.	
<b>4. Feast</b>	<b>When we hunger and thirst</b>	I consistently feast on God's Word as my essential spiritual nourishment, delighting in it and allowing it to transform my life and equip me to feed others.	
<b>5. Dependence</b>	<b>Who makes things happen</b>	I fundamentally understand that God alone makes things happen in mission, leading me to a life of humble, moment-by-moment dependence on Him through persistent prayer.	
<b>6. Battle</b>	<b>When the unseen realm is fierce</b>	I have a clear, biblical understanding of spiritual warfare and actively engage in prayer, stand firm in Christ's victory, and use the armor of God daily.	
<b>7. Excellence</b>	<b>When it's all for God's glory</b>	I consistently strive for excellence in all areas of my life and ministry, recognizing that my diligence, integrity, and quality of work are acts of worship that glorify God.	
<b>8. Call</b>	<b>Who above where and what</b>	My primary understanding of my calling is to Jesus Christ Himself, knowing that my identity is rooted in Him, which provides an unshakeable anchor regardless of changing circumstances.	
<b>9. Self</b>	<b>Who am I, and why should I care</b>	I confidently know my true identity as a new creation in Christ, and I practice biblical self-care as stewardship of God's temple for sustained health and effective ministry.	

<b>10. Others</b>	<b>Why we are better together</b>	I actively live out the "one another" commands (love, bond, serve, build up) with fellow believers and future teammates, understanding that healthy community is a powerful witness.	
<b>11. Good News</b>	<b>What is our central message</b>	I can clearly articulate the essential elements of the Gospel, and I recognize it as the transforming power of God that I need daily for my own life and for those I will serve.	
<b>12. Success</b>	<b>What God asks of us and makes of us</b>	My definition of "success" aligns with God's: primarily faithfulness, obedience, and character transformation, trusting Him for the ultimate fruit, rather than worldly metrics.	

## Reflection and Next Steps:

- ☐ **Review your scores:** Which areas received lower ratings (1s, 2s, 3s)? These are likely areas where the corresponding chapters in this book will be most impactful for you.
- ☐ **Prioritize:** Based on your self-assessment, which 2-3 mini-theologies do you feel most compelled to dive into first?
- ☐ **Discuss:** Share your reflections and chosen priorities with your pastor, mentor, or pre-field coach. Engage in conversation about why these areas feel challenging or exciting.
- ☐ **Commit to the Journey:** Remember, this book is a guide to dig deeper, not a test to pass. Embrace the process of cultivating these vital theological foundations for your life and ministry among the unreached.

# **BEFORE GOING**

What makes more sense to cultivate  
before living on the mission field.

# 1. AWE

## WHY FAN INTO FLAME A PASSION FOR GOD

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**W**hen I walked into the sultan's courtyard it was my first time visiting someone who would be considered a king. We were welcomed by his assistant who led us to a waiting area where we'd get to meet his excellence. Before we stepped up towards the veranda of the sultan's palace, we removed our shoes. As we entered the room where the sultan sat, we bowed our heads and continually faced his direction. Even though we were in rural and dusty Chad, Africa there was a regality and reverence to the occasion that I will never forget.

It is way too easy to forget that I am consistently in the presence of royalty. God is King. The King's Spirit resides in His people. My body is more than a sultan's palace, it is a holy temple. Wherever I go, He goes too. When I think about what drew me to the nations, it was a sense of wanting to spread the fame of God's name to places and people where He was not yet named or worshiped.

Human's are hardwired for awe. We can awe people, money, power, and stuff. You can have it all and miss awe. We can become awe forgetful, awe discouraged, awe empty, awe seduced, awe kidnapped, awe numb, and awe weary.

God is truly the most awesome. To awe is to have a passion for God. A passion for God is not merely a fleeting emotion; it's a deep-seated, all-consuming devotion that permeates every aspect of a believer's life. It's an active, vibrant love for God that expresses itself in various ways. It is a *Soli Deo* lifestyle that seeks to live unto *God alone*.

In essence, a passion for God is the heartbeat of a living faith. It's a spiritual fire that needs tending and spreading, and the benefits of doing so are immeasurable, for your own good, for the good of others, and most importantly, for the glory of God.

Fanning a passion for God into flame is not about striving to earn His love or perform for Him. It's about experiencing the fullness of life He offers and being an instrument in His hands who passes that awe down to the generation that follows.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION OF AWE

Pioneer mission work is inherently challenging, often characterized by isolation, resistance, and a constant need for resilience. In such demanding contexts, a deep-seated awe of God is not merely a pleasant sentiment but a foundational necessity. It provides perspective, fuels endurance, and empowers effective ministry. This brief theology explores the biblical concept of awe and its practical implications for those pioneering God's kingdom.

**Awe defined:** Biblical awe (aka: "fear of the Lord") isn't a cowering dread, but a profound reverence, wonder, and respect for God's infinite majesty, power, holiness, and love. It's a recognition of God's utter transcendence and



immanence, His absolute otherness, and His intimate presence. This awe transforms the way we understand of ourselves, the world, and the mission. (Psalm 33:8; 66:5; 89:7; Hebrews 12:28)

**God's Transcendence:** Awe grasps the vastness of God's being, His uncreated nature, His eternity, and His sovereign control over all things. This understanding humbles us, reminding us that our plans and efforts are ultimately dependent on Him. For the pioneer, this means trusting God's overarching plan even when immediate results are unseen or obstacles seem insurmountable. (Psalm 33:8-9; Isaiah 40:12-17; Job 37:22-24; Revelation 15:3-4)

**God's Immanence:** While transcendent, God is also intimately involved in His creation and the lives of His people. Awe acknowledges His presence, His unwavering faithfulness, and His active working in and through us. This encourages the pioneer, assuring them that they are never truly alone and that God is at work even in the most barren of lands. (Isaiah 57:15; Acts 17:27-28; Matthew 1:23)

**God's Holiness and Righteousness:** Awe recognizes God's absolute purity and perfection. This prompts repentance, confession, and a desire to live lives that honor Him. For the pioneer, this means a commitment to personal integrity and ethical conduct, understanding that their lives are a testimony. (Leviticus 10:3; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 99:3-5)

**God's Love and Mercy:** Perhaps the most profound aspect of biblical awe is the wonder at God's boundless love and mercy, especially as revealed in the cross of Christ. This love, extended to undeserving humanity, evokes deep gratitude and motivates compassionate service. For the pioneer, this fuels a self-giving love for the unreached, mirroring God's own heart. (Psalm 103:8-14; John 3:16; Romans 5:8)

Cultivating a deep, abiding awe of God is not an optional extra. It aligns our hearts with God's, empowers us to overcome adversity, and transforms us into vibrant witnesses of His awesome reality to the unreached peoples of the nations.

■ **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider an awe for God? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**

**“AWE MEANS THAT YOU WILL LOOK AT EVERYTHING IN YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF GOD’S EXISTENCE AND GLORY, AND YOU WILL SURRENDER ALL YOUR LIFE TO HIS PURPOSE.” — PAUL TRIPP, *AWE***

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF AWE**

Nothing but awe of God will sustain someone on the field. If it is not awe of God, then the heart will gravitate towards substitute awes. When awe of self or something else

supplants awe of God, God ceases to be King and He is reduced to being your servant. When the mission doesn't produce vertical awe of God, something is amiss. When an awe of God fuels the pioneer in the mission field several outcomes emerge:

**Humility and Dependence:** Awe reminds me of my smallness and God's greatness, fostering a spirit of complete dependence on Him for wisdom, strength, and guidance. This counters self-reliance and burnout.

**Courage and Boldness:** When God is seen in His awesomeness, fear of humans diminishes. The pioneer, filled with awe for God, can face persecution, opposition, and daunting challenges with supernatural courage. They will even pray for boldness (Acts 4:23-31).

**Resilience and Endurance:** Awe provides a deep well of motivation that sustains through hardship and discouragement. Knowing the awesome God is with them, pioneers can persevere even when the fruit is slow in coming.

**Worship and Joy:** Awe naturally leads to worship, even in difficult circumstances. This worship fuels joy, which is a source of strength and a vital witness to others (Matthew 9:8).

**Effective Witness:** A life lived in awe of God is a contagious and compelling testimony. One's awe and connections with God can be more effective than words alone.

**Spiritual Discernment:** Awe cultivates a sensitivity to God's presence and leading, enabling pioneers to discern His will and walk in obedience amid complex cultural and spiritual landscapes.

# PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider your awe of God. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be who fans into flame a passion of God in yourself and others.**

## BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF AWE

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “awe” by responding to these questions:

- **What is awe and/or a passion for God? Why is this needed to go to hard places?**

*example: God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

■ **What does it look like to live a *Soli Deo* lifestyle?** How does this kind of lifestyle relate to surrender?

■ **Why not just fan your flame for God, but start mini fires wherever you go?** What does it look like to fan into flame a passion for God?

■ **Once you finish share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

**Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**

- *Awe*, Paul David Tripp
- *The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer
- *The Heart of Pioneers*, Steve Richardson

# 2.

# DWELL

## WHERE GOD IS & WHERE YOU WANT TO BE

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**O**ne day I was invited to visit the family village of a good friend, I drove a few kilometers outside the city on what was nothing more than a bumpy dirt path for donkeys. In the middle of nowhere, we came upon a cluster of small African huts. The dwellings were made of mud bricks and thatched roofs.

As I approached one of the huts, I could hear the hum of a small diesel generator. When I stepped inside the abode there was a group of men who were all watching WWE. I never expected to be in one of the remotest places on earth and see that. It was surreal. One of the young men proceeded to turn to me and ask, “How do these wrestlers not get hurt?” It wasn’t the place to explain (spoiler alert!) that those wrestlers were part of an act and it was not real.

There is something even more amazing that sometimes feels unreal: God dwells among us and abides in us! Where God is, is where we want to be. We often wrestle with this reality.

# BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON DWELLING

The story of the Bible reveals a progressive unfolding of God's desire to dwell with His people. This theme culminates in the New Testament reality that believers themselves, individually and corporately, are His dwelling place. However, let's back up the story a bit.

**God dwelled in the Garden.** God has always been. When He created the world and breathed life in Adam and Eve, He walked among them. He was present and actively connecting with them. When they sinned it severed their connection with God and mankind who have been longing for intimacy with God like Eden ever since. (Genesis 2:8-15; Isaiah 51:3, Ezekiel 36:35)

**God dwelled in a pillar and tent.** In the Old Testament, God chose to dwell among His people in the Tabernacle and later the Temple. The sign of his presence was a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. These physical structures symbolized God's presence, holiness, and accessibility (albeit with limitations). This established the foundational truth that God desired to be with His people. (Exodus 13: 21-22; 25:8-9; 29:45-46; Numbers 9:15-23; 1 Kings 8:27)

**God dwells among us.** Jesus Himself is the ultimate "tabernacling" of God among humanity. In Him, the fullness of God dwelt bodily, making God intimately knowable and accessible. (John 1:1-5; 1:14; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25)

**God dwells in us.** Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, individual believers become temples of the Holy Spirit, and the collective body of believers—the church—becomes a spiritual house and God's dwelling place on earth. This means that wherever pioneer workers go, and as they gather believers, they are carrying and establishing God's presence.

(John 14:15-17; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:19-22)

**God dwells in His city.** The future dwelling place of God with humanity is depicted in Revelation 21, where the new heaven and new earth are seen as the temple, and God will fully dwell with His redeemed people. This provides enduring hope for the pioneer, reminding them of the glorious end goal of their work. (Revelation 21:1-3; Colossians 3:1-2)

**God calls us to spread His dwelling around the world.** As new believers are gathered and discipled, forming new communities in Christ, they are literally building God's dwelling place in new lands. This transforms a remote outpost into a spiritual epicenter.

■ **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider an abiding in Christ and God's dwelling place? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**



**“AND I HEARD A LOUD VOICE FROM THE THRONE SAYING, “LOOK! GOD’S DWELLING PLACE IS NOW AMONG THE PEOPLE, AND HE WILL DWELL WITH THEM. THEY WILL BE HIS PEOPLE, AND GOD HIMSELF WILL BE WITH THEM AND BE THEIR GOD.” — REVELATION 21:3-4**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF ABIDING**

When you have confidence and comfort that God is with you and that you are near to Him, then you have indescribable joy. Connection with God is an utter delight. Pioneer mission work can be lonely, demanding, and often discouraging. In environments where spiritual support is scarce and visible fruit is slow to appear, the temptation to rely on one's own strength or strategies is great. There are two foundational truths for each pioneer: the need to abide with Christ and the reality of God's dwelling place. These truths are lifelines that sustain, empower, and bear fruit in the most challenging mission fields.

**Abiding Defined:** The word "abide" (Greek: *meno*) signifies remaining, dwelling, staying, or continuing in a close, intimate, and dependent relationship. Jesus Himself uses the powerful metaphor of the vine and branches to illustrate this vital connection. (John 15:1-11)

**Necessity for Life and Connection:** Just as a branch cannot produce fruit apart from the vine, a mission worker cannot truly live or be fruitful apart from Christ. This isn't merely

about occasional connection, but a continuous, moment-by-moment reliance. Pioneer contexts often strip away human comforts and resources, making the need for divine life even more stark. (1 John 2:24-28; Galatians 2:20)

**Source of Nourishment and Direction:** Abiding in Christ means drawing all our spiritual nourishment, strength, wisdom, and direction directly from Him. It frees us from the burden of self-sufficiency and the exhaustion that comes from trying to accomplish God's work in our own strength. (Colossians 2:6-7)

**Fruitfulness:** True, lasting fruit in mission— gospel seed scattering, discipleship, church planting, transformation— flows from Christ's life through us, not from our own efforts. Abiding ensures that our work is Spirit-led and God-honoring. This is crucial for pioneers who may see little "visible" fruit and need to trust God for the deeper, unseen work.

**Peace Amid Chaos:** A deep, abiding relationship with Christ provides an unshakable inner peace, even when external circumstances are chaotic, dangerous, or discouraging. This peace is a powerful witness in its own right.

**Accepting the Invitation to Abide:** In isolated and challenging fields, the pioneer is never truly alone. The God who dwells *in them* is present, providing comfort, guidance, and power. More than any strategy or skill, simply abiding with Christ is non-negotiable.

**Expanding Mission:** The central storyline of the entire Bible revolves around God's purpose to dwell with his people, and this dwelling place is meant to expand to fill the entire earth. God's presence with us is a comforting and empowering as we pioneer the gospel among the nations and unreached. As we go, even if it be the most challenging location, He goes with us. (Matthew 28:18-20)



# PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider the dwelling place of God. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be who abides with Christ and spreads His dwelling place among the unreached and unengaged.**

## BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY ABIDING WITH GOD

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “God’s dwelling” by responding to these questions:

- **Where is God’s dwelling place?** Why does this matter for me and the mission?

example: *God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

- **What does it mean to abide with Christ?** What can it look like to abide with the Lord anywhere, even in isolated locations?

- **Once you finish share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

**Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**

- *God Dwells Among Us*, G.K. Beale
- *The Presence of God*, Ryan Lister
- *InDwell* — 7 Day Devotional

# 3.

# CALL

## WHO ABOVE WHERE AND WHAT

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**A** crisis unexpectedly hit the region. Foreigners were being kicked out. Many didn't know if they would ever get to return. One pioneer who had been serving in the field among the Fulani was devastated.

"But my calling is to the Fulani!" she argued, her voice tightened with a mixture of frustration and despair. "God called *me* here, *for them*! How can I abandon that?" The thought of starting over with a new language, new culture, and new relationships felt like an unbearable weight. Her zeal, once a roaring fire, had dwindled to a flickering ember. She felt disoriented and utterly unfulfilled.

If her calling was to a specific people in a specific place, and that was now changing, did that mean her calling was a mistake? Was God's plan for her failing? She knew deep down that her identity wasn't "missionary to the Fulani"; it was "one called by Christ to a holy life."

This realization didn't instantly make the new assignment easy, nor did it erase her heartache for the Fulani. But it shifted her foundation. Her calling wasn't dependent on a

place or a people group's response, but on the unchanging purpose of making Christ known. The "where" and "what" might shift, but the "Who" remained constant, providing an unshakeable anchor in the shifting sands of the mission field.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON CALLING

**God is the One who calls.** Throughout biblical history and modern missions, calling was demonstrated as a personal encounter with God that led to specific assignments: Abraham was called to trust and go (Genesis 12:1-4); Paul was called to a new identity and to proclaim the good news to the Gentiles (Acts 9:1-19, Romans 1:1) Everyone called is called by God's sovereign initiative and grace, not from human merit, ambition, or even a deep desire for service alone. A call is an act of God setting an individual apart for His purposes.

**Called to Jesus first and foremost.** At its deepest level, biblical calling is fundamentally an invitation into a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ Himself—a call to salvation, relationship, and discipleship. It is primarily a call *to* Him, which then leads to a call *from* Him for His purposes. Your identity as a "called one" is rooted in your being *in Christ*, not in your location, title, or specific ministry task. (John 15:5; Philippians 3:7-8; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 12:2-3)

**Called to be like Jesus.** Every follower of Jesus is called to live a holy life and to walk worthy. Calling is most often in Scripture a word used to describe *who we are to be* rather than *what we do*. We are called to be more and more like Jesus. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Ephesians 4:1-3)

**Called to spread Jesus' name and kingdom.** Every follower of Jesus is called to be an ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20). We represent Jesus to our neighbors and to the world. The ultimate aim of any calling is the glory of God and the expansion of His Kingdom. Mission pioneers are instruments

in God's hand to make His name known, spread His salvation, and establish His will among all peoples. (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

Jesus had a two-fold calling—to proclaim the gospel and to heal. For Him, there was never a tension or dichotomy between evangelism (preaching) and social ministry (healing). Jesus modeled, commanded, and empowered His disciples to engage in both preaching the Kingdom of God and healing the sick. (Luke 9:2, Matthew 10:7-8, Mark 6:7, 12-13)

**Called where you are before being called elsewhere.** Before God sends you to serve somewhere else, He calls you to serve faithfully where you are. The present context is often God's training ground for future assignments. Consider Paul's Macedonian call. He was called to do what he had always been doing, just somewhere else. Faithfulness in your local community prepares you for responsibilities beyond your comfort zone and boundaries. (Luke 16:10; 16:9-10; Romans 1:6)

**Call is affirmed by the church.** A call is affirmed when the church sends someone who is willing, capable, and tested to proclaim the gospel and establish the church in another culture. When that happens, a missionary can be confident in God's direction not only because of his subjective desire but also because of the affirmation of God's people in the church. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-27)

**God equips all who are called.** A calling comes with God's enablement. It is sustained not by human strength or skill alone, but by the Holy Spirit's power, providing the necessary gifts, wisdom, and endurance. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Romans 12:6-8)

A missionary's journey often begins with a deep, personal conviction of God's love and a desire to follow Christ wholeheartedly. This leads to a burden for the lost, which

then, through prayer and discernment, may narrow to a specific people group or type of ministry. The "Who" (Jesus) remains the driving force that sustains them through the challenges of the "where" and "what."

Your calling to the mission field is a sacred trust. By rooting it firmly in your relationship with Jesus Christ, embracing faithfulness in your current context, and understanding that your ultimate identity is found in Him, you will be equipped to endure, thrive, and effectively advance His Kingdom among the unreached.

■ **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider “calling”? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**

**“HE HAS SAVED US AND CALLED US TO A HOLY LIFE—NOT BECAUSE OF ANYTHING WE HAVE DONE BUT BECAUSE OF HIS OWN PURPOSE AND GRACE. THIS GRACE WAS GIVEN US IN CHRIST JESUS BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF TIME.” — 2 TIMOTHY 1:9**



# THE IMPORTANCE OF CALLING

Understanding your calling is not merely an abstract spiritual concept but the very bedrock of your endurance, identity, and effectiveness. In the face of immense challenges, cultural complexities, and spiritual opposition, a clear grasp of God's call will anchor your soul and propel your ministry forward.

**Supernatural Empowerment:** Recognizing that the call is from God reminds you that He also provides the power to fulfill it, guarding against self-reliance. This means that your calling is not primarily defined by the country you serve in, the people group you target, or the specific type of ministry you do (e.g., church planting, medical work, community development). These are important *expressions* of your calling, but the core is your personal, intimate connection with the Caller Himself.

**Provides Unwavering Purpose and Direction:** A clear calling gives you a divine "why" for your work, extending far beyond personal ambition or fleeting enthusiasm. When you have been affirmed that God has called you, it provides an unshakeable sense of purpose that guides your decisions and keeps you focused on His agenda, not your own.

**Identity Beyond Performance:** In contexts where "results" are slow or hard to measure, your identity remains secure in who you are in Christ, not in what you accomplish. This guards against burnout, self-condemnation, and the temptation to "prove" your work.

**Clarity in Confusion and Resilience in Hardship:** When faced with loneliness, cultural shock, slow progress, or spiritual attacks, your calling to Jesus Himself provides an unshakeable anchor. You are not there because of a program, place, or people, but because of Him. When ministry directions are unclear or unexpected challenges arise,

returning to the core call to Jesus helps you discern His will and remain faithful.

**Facilitates Healthy Accountability and Partnership:** A clearly understood calling, especially when affirmed by the local church, fosters healthy accountability relationships. It allows sending churches and fellow workers to understand your purpose and support you effectively, preventing "lone ranger" ministry.

Understanding your calling is the spiritual compass that keeps mission workers oriented towards God's will, resilient through trials, secure in their identity, and empowered for effective, God-glorifying service in the harvest field.



## PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider calling. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be for the call.**

# BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF THE CALL

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “the call” by responding to these questions:

- **What is the call of God?** How do you know if you’re called? How are we called to a Person above a place, people group, title, or ministry?

example: *God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

- **What was Jesus called to do?** And how does this inform your call?

- **What does God call us to do/be?** How does God prepare you for your call, where you’re at before sending you somewhere else?

- **Once you finish, share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

### **Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**

- *The Call*, by Os Guinness
- *Preach and Heal*, by Charles Fielding
- *Calling, A Biblical Perspective*, by [TheologyofWork.org](http://TheologyofWork.org)
- *Understanding Your Calling*, by J.T. Hutts
- *The Antioch Journey*, 31-day Devotional
- *On Being a Missionary*, by Thomas Hale
- *The Missionary Call: A Biblical and Practical Appraisal*

# 4.

# SABBATH

## WHEN I AM LIMITED & GOD IS NOT

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**S**pending myself for God is how I went to the field. It was also one of the main causes that I had to leave the field for some time. I was serious on giving, but scanty on receiving. I felt like I should do everything (e.g. language learning, passionate evangelism, intentional discipleship, homeschooling kids, managing a home off-grid, raising a family, regularly visiting neighbors, being hospitable, updating supporters, saying yes to opportunities, etc.) and do everything 100%. This led to burnout because I wasn't balancing my output with my input.

Spending yourself, even for God, might be a means for getting you to the field, kickstarting work on the field, but it is not the means for sustaining you on the field. To ensure long and fruitful work on the mission field, pioneers need to learn the value of rest.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON SABBATH

Pioneering people by nature passionate about seeing the Gospel advance where it has never been before, and their

commitment often leads to intense, unrelenting labor. While this zeal is commendable and necessary, it also carries the inherent risk of burnout, spiritual depletion, and ultimately, diminished effectiveness. This brief biblical theology explores the crucial concept of Sabbath rest, presenting it not as a legalistic burden, but as a divine gift and rhythm for sustainable, Spirit-empowered ministry.

**Sabbath as a Divine Pattern.** The concept of Sabbath begins not with a command for Israel, but with God Himself. After six days of creation, God rested on the seventh day. This isn't because God was tired, but because He was establishing a pattern for creation, demonstrating that rest is an integral part of flourishing and completion. (Genesis 2:2-3; Leviticus 25:1-7)

Work and rest are not antithetical but complementary. Work is productive, but rest validates and sanctifies the work, marking it as complete and good. By resting, God demonstrated His sovereignty and completeness. For us, resting is an act of trust, acknowledging that the world doesn't depend solely on our efforts and that God is ultimately at work.

**Sabbath as a Gift for Humanity.** The Sabbath commandment is embedded within the Ten Commandments, signifying its fundamental importance. The Sabbath is "holy" – set apart for God's purposes. It's a time for ceasing from normal work and intentionally focusing on God, His provision, and His presence. It's not merely a cultural tradition but a moral imperative rooted in God's character and His design for humanity. God, knowing our limits, hardwired the need for regular rest into our very being. (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Psalm 23:2-3)

In Deuteronomy, the Sabbath is linked to Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It was a reminder that they were no longer slaves driven by relentless toil, but free people in covenant with a God who provides and cares for their well-

being. For the pioneer, this speaks to freedom from the tyranny of unending tasks and performance-driven ministry.

**Christ as our Rest and Restoration.** Jesus' approach to the Sabbath was revolutionary. He upheld its divine principle but challenged the rigid legalism that had become associated with it.

Jesus declared Himself Lord of the Sabbath, signifying His authority over it and His true intent for it. He consistently used the Sabbath to do good, to heal, and to restore, demonstrating that the Sabbath is "made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28; Isaiah 30:15).

Beyond a day of rest, Jesus offers ultimate spiritual rest for the weary and burdened. This doesn't negate the need for physical rest but rather grounds it in a deeper spiritual reality. The physical Sabbath becomes an outward expression and reminder of the soul's rest in Christ. (Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:1-11)

In summary, Sabbath rest is not a luxury or an optional add-on; it is a foundational spiritual discipline that enables long-term health, sustained spiritual passion, and ultimately, greater fruitfulness in fulfilling the Great Commission. It is an act of obedience, trust, and self-care, acknowledging that God is the ultimate worker and provider, and that our participation in His mission flows from life in Christ, not solely from our tireless efforts.

■ **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider Sabbath rest? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**

**“COME TO ME, ALL WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU, AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. FOR MY YOKE IS EASY, AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.” — MATTHEW 11:28-30**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF SABBATH REST**

Pioneer mission workers need Sabbath rest to deepen their spiritual vitality, model healthy discipleship, and prevent burnout. Rest is a discipline that attunes one with their limits and turns one's heart to God's limitless power and provision. Ultimately, Sabbath rest allows one to receive renewal from God, enabling them to continue His work with fresh strength and perspective.

Highly ambitious, driven, and capable people often struggle with Sabbath rest because they equate productivity with worth, or fear that a pause will hinder progress. Everyone has God-given limits in physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual



currency. Once that is spent, one needs to recoup and restore. Sabbath is an essential and strategic practice.

**Spiritual Recharge and Intimacy with God:** Unceasing work chokes off intimacy with God. Sabbath provides time and space to be with God, which deepens and reinforces the need for "Being with God" versus "Doing for God". Sabbath helps reorient our heart to simply *be* with God, reminding us that our identity is in Him, not in our output.

**Growing Perspective and Trust in God's Sovereignty:** Stepping away from work forces us to acknowledge that God is God, and we are not. We are not indispensable. It's an act of humility and faith that believes God can work even when we are not working. This counters the "savior complex" and the lie that says, "If I don't do it, it won't get done."

**Warding Off Burnout and Prolonging Service:** Pioneer work is a marathon, not a sprint. The work often involves long hours, constant learning, spiritual warfare, dealing with trauma, and limited support systems. The need to "be always on" can quickly lead to exhaustion. Regular, intentional rest replenishes physical, mental, and emotional reserves, extending the potential longevity of ministry.

**Modeling Healthy Discipleship:** If pioneer workers are constantly working, what message does that send to the believers they are discipling? Practicing Sabbath models a holistic, sustainable Christian life, teaching the importance of rest and trust.

**Curbing Compassion Fatigue:** Missionaries are constantly encountering human suffering. Without intentional rest, they can become emotionally numb or overwhelmed, unable to truly empathize or minister effectively.

**Discernment and Wisdom:** Stepping away from the immediate demands of ministry allows for clearer thinking,

prayer, and listening to God's voice. This is crucial for navigating complex cultural and ministry challenges.

**Giving and Receiving from Relationships:** Overwork often strains relationships. Sabbath provides purposeful time to give and receive from one another, for spouses to connect, for parents to be present with their children, and for team members to foster healthy fellowship, for local relationships to be more than just about work, all of which are crucial for long-term effectiveness on the field.



## PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider the Sabbath. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be who rests in God.**

## BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF SABBATH REST

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “God’s dwelling” by responding to these questions:

- **Why did God rest?** What is the Sabbath? Why did God create the Sabbath day? What was the Hebrew's view of the Sabbath?

example: *God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

- **Why do God's servants need to rest?** Why did God make you with limitations? Why wasting time with God is okay?

- **What are some practical rhythms of rest that you can implement now that you could continue with you to the field?** (See ideas on the next page) What does it look like for you to "pour yourself out" for others (Philippians 2:17) in a way that is sustainable and glorifies God, without leading to burnout? What is essential and non-negotiable? What is flexible or changeable?

- **Once you finish share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

### **Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**

- *The Rest Giver*, Timothy Keller
- 7 Types of Rest Every Missionary Needs
- Balancing Rhythms of Rest and Work, by [TheologyofWork.org](http://TheologyofWork.org)
- *Sabbath: A Family Worship Guide*, by J.T. Hutto

## **WAYS TO SABBATH ON THE FIELD**

Consider some of these practical ideas for what rest could look like on the mission field. Sabbath rest is not rigid formula (which Jesus spoke against), but a principle to be applied wisely and flexibly based on one's context. It's about a *spirit* of rest, worship, and refocusing on God, adapted to the realities of pioneer life.

*Designated Day (or part of a day):*

**Ceasing from "Work":** No language study, no intense evangelism meetings, no administrative tasks, no strategizing for the unreached.

**Focus on Worship and Scripture:** Dedicate time for personal devotion, prayer, and deep intimacy with God and His Word. If possible, a small gathering with other believers for mutual worship and fellowship.

**Recreational Activities:** Engage in activities that bring rest and joy—reading non-ministry books, listening to music, pursuing a hobby, light exercise, and enjoying nature.

**Relational Time:** Intentional *witness* with family (if applicable), teammates, or local friends for fellowship and encouragement.

**Meals:** Enjoy a special, unhurried meal.

*Adaptations for Extreme Pioneer Contexts:*

**Flexibility with the Day:** While Sunday is traditional, the *principle* is one day in seven. It might be a Tuesday if that's the only day free from local activities.

**Mini-Sabbaths:** In exceptional situations where a full day is impossible, practicing “mini-Sabbaths”—several hours of intentional disengagement and spiritual focus—can still be profoundly beneficial. Consider taking a 'Safari Sabbath' by taking a few hours to observe creation or even just a quiet spot.

**Silent Retreats (short):** If an opportunity arises to go to a slightly less intense location, a short overnight or day-long retreat for solitude and reflection can be invaluable.

**Creative Worship:** Using music, art, or natural settings for worship if traditional church gatherings are not possible.

**Prioritizing Sleep:** Simple, but often neglected. Deliberately getting adequate sleep is a foundational act of rest. Taking a nap can be a good use of the Sabbath.

The key is intentionality: deliberately setting aside time to cease normal work, to rest, to reconnect with God, and to be refreshed. It's not about being unproductive, but about being renewedly productive in God's presence.

# 5.

# FEAST

## WHEN WE HUNGER AND THIRST

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**A**t a wedding feast on the mission field, you can be asked to eat things that you'd never expect. It's on these special occasions that the locals serve all kinds of delicacies.

When I attended my first wedding feast in the middle of Chad, I was trying to gulp down sheep's lungs and braided intestines. I went to the ends of the earth and this was part of the cost. It was undoubtedly difficult and disgusting, but now more than a decade later it has become something that I enjoy.

Most people will eat two or three times a day. This is important to have a healthy and balanced diet. Our spiritual health isn't much different. Feasting on God's Word, fasting, and praying are crucial parts of our diet and quench our spiritual hunger and thirst.

Before going to the field, I was in a Bible-saturated environment that was like an all-you-can-eat buffet for my soul. However, when I went the field, not only was I responsible to feed others, but options to feed myself were

sparse or not the same. This actually led to a soul-craving hunger and thirst.

# BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON FEASTING

Global mission workers, especially pioneers among the unreached, face unique challenges that demand deep spiritual resilience and profound nourishment. This brief biblical theology explores the vital concept of feasting on God's Word—a consistent, joyful, and transformative engagement with Scripture—and its direct correlation with feeding oneself and others. Feasting on God's Word is a lifeline for sustained effectiveness and spiritual health especially in demanding mission contexts.

**Feast on God's Word because it is The Bread of Life.** The Bible consistently portrays God's Word as essential nourishment for the soul, vital for spiritual life, growth, and discernment. It's more than just reading; it's savoring, digesting, internalizing, and sharing. Scripture is a feast, not fast food (Psalm 1:2; Jeremiah 15:16)

Scripture is not just ancient text, rather it is the living, active, and authoritative voice of God speaking to us. Feasting on it means seeking to hear and respond to His direct communication. (Hebrews 4:12)

Just as physical food sustains the body, God's Word sustains the spirit. It is described as bread, honey, and milk—all nourishing elements that provide strength, wisdom, and delight. For the pioneer who is isolated and facing spiritual warfare, this daily spiritual meal is a non-negotiable sustenance. (Deuteronomy 8:3, Psalm 19:7-11; 119:103)

Consistent engagement with the Word renews the mind, transforms character, and equips believers for every good work. (Romans 12:2, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

In complex, unfamiliar cultures, and amid spiritual opposition, God's Word provides light for our path, guiding us in truth and protecting us from deception (Psalm 119:105).

**Feed Yourself and Others.** The analogy of food extends beyond personal consumption. Those who truly feast on God's Word are then equipped and compelled to share that spiritual nourishment with others. (Matthew 4:4)

A well-fed soul naturally overflows with the life of Christ. This personal abundance is what enables effective ministry. You cannot feed others what you haven't chewed on yourself.

God's Word makes us "competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). This includes evangelism, discipleship, teaching, and leading new disciples. Pioneer workers must be self-feeders to then become effective feeders of others.

In pioneer contexts, new disciples often have little to no understanding of the Bible. Those in the field are primarily responsible for feeding those who are hungry and thirsty "milk" initially and then solid food, nurturing their spiritual growth. (1 Corinthians 3:2; 1 Peter 2:2-3, Hebrews 5:12-14)

Healthy disciples and churches are built on the foundation of God's Word. Feeding others the Word is essential for sound doctrine, spiritual maturity, and the multiplication of disciples and churches. (Acts 20:32; Colossians 1:28)

■ **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider "feasting"? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**



**“COME, EVERYONE WHO THIRSTS, COME TO THE WATERS; AND HE WHO HAS NO MONEY, COME, BUY AND EAT! COME, BUY WINE AND MILK WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE. WHY DO YOU SPEND YOUR MONEY FOR THAT WHICH IS NOT BREAD, AND YOUR LABOR FOR THAT WHICH DOES NOT SATISFY? LISTEN DILIGENTLY TO ME, AND EAT WHAT IS GOOD, AND DELIGHT YOURSELVES IN RICH FOOD.” — ISAIAH 55:1-2**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF FEASTING**

When we truly "eat" His words, especially with others, we find not only necessary sustenance but also profound joy, transformative power, and an ever-deepening relationship with the One who speaks.

Feasting on God's Word is not meant to be a mere tasting or spiritual exercise, but a meal and strategic imperative. Your spiritual appetite reveals whether you're on a trajectory of maturation, stagnation, or devolving back into infancy.

**Sustaining Spiritual Life in Isolation:** Pioneer workers often lack the regular corporate spiritual input of established churches. Their personal, deep engagement with Scripture is a lifeline preventing spiritual drought.

**Maintaining Doctrinal Soundness:** In contexts where theological resources are limited and syncretism is a danger, a deep grounding in God's Word is paramount to bolster truth and combat error, for both the missionary and new disciples.

**Empowering Effective Witness:** A missionary who is personally transformed by God's Word speaks with authenticity, conviction, and divine authority. Their life itself becomes a living sermon.

**Resilience in Spiritual Warfare:** Knowing and applying God's Word is crucial for standing firm against the schemes of the enemy (Ephesians 6:17). Counter lies with the Sword of Truth.

**Wisdom for Complex Situations:** Pioneer contexts present unique ethical, cultural, and ministry dilemmas. Feasting on the Word allows God to speak into these situations, providing divine wisdom where mere human experience falls short.

**Fueling Prayer and Fasting:** These spiritual disciplines complement each other. When one truly feasts on the Word, it ignites specific prayers and provides clear direction for targeted fasting, making these practices more fruitful. The Word reveals God's heart, which then shapes what we ask.

**Reproducing Disciples:** You cannot share what you do not know. To train local leaders and reproduce multiplying disciples, the pioneers must be deeply rooted in the Word themselves.



# PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider feasting. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be who feasts on God's Word and shares it with others.**

## BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF FEASTING

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “feasting” by responding to these questions:

- **What does it mean to “eat this Book” or feast on God's Word?** Why is Bible intake insufficient? What makes Bible intake more complete?

example: *God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

- **How do we grow a hunger and thirst for God and His Word?** How do fasting and prayer complement the feast?

- **What does it look like to feed yourself?** (See ideas on the next page) **What does it look like to feed others?** **What does it mean to be a doer of the Word?**

- **Once you finish share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

#### **Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**

- *Eat this Book*, by Eugene Peterson
- *Feast on the Word, Fast from the World*
- *Feasting & Fasting*, Bible Project
- *Feast: 5 Prayers for Daily Bible Reading*

# WAYS TO FEAST ON THE FIELD

"Feasting" implies more than a quick bite; it suggests a prolonged, deliberate, and satisfying meal. Consider these ideas for feasting for the field:

**Daily Dives:** Not just a quick read, but unrushed time for reading, meditation, prayer, and journaling. This might involve specific Bible reading plans, deep dives into particular books, or topical studies.

**Memorization:** Intentional memorization of key verses, passages, and stories to internalize truth, especially valuable in contexts where physical Bibles may be scarce or difficult to carry openly. Memorization also gives the Holy Spirit something to bring up again at opportune times for your benefit and the benefit of others. (Psalm 19:9-11)

**Discovery Groups:** Studying the Bible with others, especially seekers is a great way for them to get to know the Truth and be convinced by the Word and the best teacher—the Holy Spirit. Create opportunities to discover the Word.

**Reading Aloud:** Reading the Bible aloud, either to oneself or to a small group of believers, can enhance understanding and engagement, especially in oral cultures.

**Listen:** When reading is difficult (e.g., during travel, or in low-literacy settings), listening to the Bible can be a helpful way to "feast." Learning to internalize and re-tell Bible stories in culturally relevant ways to new oral learners, deepening personal understanding as you prepare to share.

**Apply:** Constantly ask, "How does this truth apply to life, challenges, and work right now?" and then act on it.

**Sharing and Discussing:** Engage regularly with teammates or local believers in deep discussions about Scripture, sharing insights, and wrestling with difficult passages together. This is a form of mutual feeding.

**Get Creative:** Using art, music, or storytelling to internalize and express biblical truths. This can be particularly effective in oral cultures.

Feasting on God's Word is the spiritual oxygen for the pioneer missionary that gives life and nourishment. It fuels their soul, equips them for the arduous task, and provides the spiritual food necessary to feed new believers and establish vibrant, multiplying churches among the unreached.

# 6.

# DEPENDENCE

## WHO MAKES THINGS HAPPEN

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**W**hen I first went to the mission field, I had studied the Bible in seminary, strategies, and training in disciple-making, ambition, and readiness to share the good news. While important before going into the field, I was quite confident and relied heavily on what I knew to make things happen, so I didn't resort to prayer other than asking God to bless my laborers. Little did I know, it didn't work that way. God wanted me to depend on Him daily and walk with Him during every part of the process.

As an infant, I needed my parents. I was utterly dependent on them for everything. I didn't realize this fully until I had children of my own. Even as a boy, I needed my mother and father, but something changed in adolescence when we thought I could do everything on my own or I wanted to prove that I could.

Relationally and spiritually speaking, I am still a child who is growing in daily dependence on my Father. I find that I need to depend on God more on the field than my home country where things are easier and familiar. The mission field

constantly causes my faith to be stirred and tethered to One who ultimately makes things happen.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON DEPENDENCE

The mission is a divine undertaking, and your greatest asset is not your skill, but your utter dependence on the Almighty God who sends you through unceasing prayer.

**God designed us to be dependent.** Dependence on God is not an option. God created every human to be dependent by design, not as a flaw, but as an integral part of our relationship with Him. He formed us from the dust of the ground and breathed His very breath into us (Genesis 2:7), signifying that our life and existence originate entirely from Him. Furthermore, we were made in His image (Genesis 1:27), implying a relational capacity and an inherent need to reflect and rely on our Creator. Our dependence is foundational to our being, as Acts 17:28 affirms: "For in him we live and move and have our being." We are not self-sufficient, but designed to thrive in constant reliance on the One who made us and sustains us.

**God as the ultimate agent of mission.** Who really makes things happen? Before we speak of our actions, we must establish God's. The Bible consistently teaches that God alone is the primary mover, initiator, and sustainer of His mission. He is sovereign, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He doesn't need us, yet He graciously chooses to involve us.

- It is God who calls and sends. (Isaiah 6:8, Matthew 28:18-20)
- It is God who empowers our witness. (Acts 1:8)
- It is God who opens doors and prepares hearts to respond to the good news. (Acts 16:14, Colossians 4:3)
- It is God who gives the growth. (1 Corinthians 3:6-7)



- It is God who overcomes spiritual strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

Your work is not about your strength, cleverness, or resourcefulness, but about God's power working through you. This truth is both humbling and incredibly freeing.

**Prayer as the engine of God's work.** If God is the One who makes things happen, what then is the role of prayer? Prayer is not a last resort, but a first response. Prayer is not a way to get God to do our will, but a way to align our will with His and participate in His divine activity. Prayer makes things happen because it is the human channel through which we can call upon the One who does make things happen.

- Through prayer, we invite God's intervention in situations beyond our control.
  - Through prayer, spiritual battles are won. (Ephesians 6:12, 18)
  - Through prayer, God's kingdom advances, and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)
  - Through prayer, God's people are aligned with God's heart and sustained and empowered by Him for the work He has called us to participate with Him. (Philippians 4:6-7, Hebrews 4:16)
- **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider “dependence on God”? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**

**“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU, FOR MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.’ THEREFORE I WILL BOAST ALL THE MORE GLADLY ABOUT MY WEAKNESSES, SO THAT CHRIST’S POWER MAY REST ON ME.” — 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF DEPENDENCE**

Charles Spurgeon once made this remark: “I would rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach.” Prayer is not compartmentalized as one duty of ministry; it shapes every aspect of every ministry. Our part in the mission depends upon prayer.

Dependence on God is vital for pioneering people in the mission field because it's where their limitedness meets God's limitlessness. Prayer is the intersection between our inability and God's ability. When facing overwhelming challenges like persecution or lack of resources, relying on God means trusting Him to provide what we cannot, ensuring that any breakthrough or success is seen as His work, not ours. Dependence on God is truly leaning on God to make the impossible possible.

**Spiritual Fruitfulness:** True, lasting fruit in ministry comes from abiding in Christ, not from human effort. Our natural inclination is to rely on familiarities or our abilities. Dependence on God strips away pride and self-sufficiency,

reminding us that apart from God, we can do nothing of eternal value (John 15:5).

**Resilience and Endurance:** The mission field is fraught with challenges, disappointments, and spiritual attacks. Dependence on God provides the peace, strength, and perseverance needed to continue and thrive (Isaiah 40:31).

**Authentic Witness:** A life lived in visible dependence on God is a powerful testimony to the unreached. It demonstrates that the God you proclaim is real, active, and trustworthy.

**Sharing the Load:** Carrying the weight of ministry on your shoulders leads to exhaustion. Casting your anxieties on the Lord and relying on His provision prevents burnout and despair (1 Peter 5:7).

**Divine Guidance:** Living and serving in a foreign place continually takes us out of our comfort zone and wheelhouse. We need divine guidance to shape our daily decisions, interactions, and very survival. Dependence means constantly seeking God's wisdom and direction in complex and unfamiliar contexts (Proverbs 3:5-6).

**Changing Hearts:** We cannot change another person's heart. Our role is to faithfully share the Good News, but it is the Holy Spirit who ultimately convicts and changes a soul.

**Aligning Wills:** When we pray, we aren't approaching God as a mere "cosmic vending machine" for Him to dispense a simple answer to prayer in the field. We approach God who made heaven and earth, who is sovereign, whose precious providence reaches far beyond our comprehension. We aren't aligning God's will to ours; we are seeking God to align our will to His will when reaching the lost. (Matthew 6:10)

**Reveal God's Glory and Power:** When we are weak, we get to see firsthand Christ's power (2 Corinthians 12:9). The

mission to the unreached is often overwhelming. God deliberately places us in situations where our human limitations become evident so that when breakthroughs occur, it is clear that He is at work. When we face impossible situations and God provides, His glory is unmistakably displayed, not ours.

**Foster Intimacy:** Dependence is meant to draw us closer to God. Just as a child relies on a parent, our reliance on God builds trust, deepens our relationship, and creates a bond of love and joy. (Hebrews 7:24–25)

**Cultivate Faith and Humility:** We are prayerless people because we are prideful people. Dependence requires humble faith that says to God, “We need Your help!” As we lean on God and see Him act, our faith grows fuller, enabling us to trust Him more in future situations. If we do not pray in humble faith, then we will be ensnared by pride.

Timothy Keller said, “To pray is to accept that we are, and always will be, wholly dependent on God for everything... The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 am for a glass of water is a child.” Pioneers are children who serve in challenging environments and experience moment-by-moment dependence on God in ways that are often tangible and immediate.

# PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider dependence. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be who is dependent on God and others.**

## BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF DEPENDENCE

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “dependence” by responding to these questions:

■ **Why did God make us dependent? Interdependent?**

example: *God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

■ **What does it look like to lean on God?** Talk to God?  
Listen to God?

■ **How does prayer make things happen?** What happens  
when we don't pray?

■ **Once you finish share your responses with your mentor.  
Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

**Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**

- A Prayer Life That Nourishes Your Relationship to God
- The Delusion of Independence, by Paul Tripp
- Lead with Prayer, by Ryan Scoog
- Creative Prayer & Intercession, by Tricia Blackford
- George Müller of Bristol, by Authur T. Pierson
- A Praying Life, Paul E Miller

# WAYS WE DEPEND ON GOD IN THE FIELD

In the Muslim culture of the city where I live, prayer is not an anomaly. The mosques call people to pray five times a day. Men and women talk about prayer and perform prayer. The relationship I seek to have with God through Jesus Christ opens the door to a kind of prayer that causes neighbors to wonder. I talk to God like I know Him intimately. I call Him my Father. I bring the little details of my day before Him. I trust him to act in my life. And I can bring Him into any conversation—anytime, anywhere.

Once, while praying, I was struggling with the grammar of my new language. The person that I was praying for kept finishing my sentences for me. Two things were happening simultaneously, I was depending on God to God for help to be understood in prayer and I was praying for my friend who needed to depend on the Lord who sees and hears. When I looked up, I could see that my friend was visibly moved, despite having corrected my poor grammar.

Consider these practical scenarios where dependence on God through prayer is vital in the field:

**Language Acquisition:** When the local language seems insurmountable, dependence means praying for divine help in learning, for open doors to practice, and for the ability to communicate the gospel. Workers in the mission field pray for "ears to hear" and "tongues to speak" in a new way.

**Making Disciples:** Dependence means praying specifically for God to reveal and connect you with individuals or families whose hearts He has prepared to receive the Gospel (Luke 10:5-6). When faced with hardened hearts or seemingly unfruitful efforts, missionaries depend on God for spiritual breakthroughs. They pray for conviction of sin, open eyes to truth, and the Holy Spirit's power to transform lives, knowing this is only something God can do.

**Spiritual Opposition:** Encountering spiritual darkness, witchcraft, or deep-seated idolatry requires absolute dependence on God's power to break spiritual strongholds through persistent, fervent prayer (Mark 9:29).

**Provision of Resources:** Whether it's financial support, housing, visas, or essential supplies, dependence means trusting God to provide for every need, often in surprising ways like unexpected donations, local generosity, or creative means that only He could arrange. (Philippians 4:19)

**Safety and Protection:** Operating in volatile or hostile environments necessitates constant prayer for divine protection for yourself, your family, and your local contacts. One also depends on God for physical protection from harm, health in challenging climates, and spiritual shielding against unseen forces. (Psalm 91:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 3:2).

**Discernment and Wisdom:** When making critical decisions about strategy, partnerships, or personal conduct in culturally complex situations, dependence means seeking God's wisdom above all else (James 1:5). Consider praying the Bible, especially the Psalms and the many prayers scattered through the New Testament letters. These can give the words needed and confidence to pray according to God's will.



# 7. BATTLE

## WHEN THE UNSEEN REALM IS FIERCE

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**O**ur neighbors in a remote village in Northern Africa had paid a local *marabou* (witchdoctor) to throw a curse on our family and home. We felt an oppressive weight and our kids began experiencing night terrors. We had little teaching or frame of reference for this type of spiritual battle.

Before going to the mission field, I was aware that I had an enemy who would mess with the mission and the workers. However, I naively put those thoughts into a spiritual attic afraid to touch them. So they collected dust until I went to the field, and I was confronted by the battle from the frontlines. It wasn't too late to learn, but I wished that I had known more about my spiritual armor and the spiritual battle that my family would plunge into.

Most soldiers undergo boot camp before deploying to the field. When we go to the mission field, we can expect the spiritual battle to be fierce and the enemy to use a variety of tactics to inflict fear, distraction, discouragement, or defeat.

# BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON THE BATTLE

Pioneer mission workers on the frontlines among the unreached understand that the spiritual battle is not an abstract theological concept, but a reality of daily ministry. They are not merely engaging with people and cultures; they are confronting unseen forces that resist the advance of God's Kingdom.

**God oversees an active unseen realm.** The Bible unequivocally teaches that there is an unseen realm populated by spiritual beings, both good and evil. This realm has existed since before the creation of man. While God is sovereign and supreme, He allows a real, active, and fierce foe to operate in this world—Satan and his demonic forces. These entities are not mere metaphors for evil; they are intelligent, malevolent beings dedicated to opposing God and His redemptive purposes.

- Man's battle is physical and spiritual. (Ephesians 6:12)
- Satan is a cunning and predatory adversary. (1 Peter 5:8)
- Satan's main strategies are isolation (Genesis 3:1), lies (John 8:44), temptation (2 Thessalonians 3:5), and accusation (Revelation 12:10),
- Spiritual enemies don't just play around with us, they seek to deceive and destroy us (John 8:44)
- Satan is not the sole problem. Our world and our flesh are also part of the problem. (Ephesians 2:1-3)
- God is more powerful than any enemy. God has all enemies on a tight leash. (Genesis 3:15; Colossians 2:15)

**God's enemy is always actively trying to thwart God's plan and people.** The enemy doesn't sleep. He is relentless. He is powerful and effective as he has been at his craft for a very long time. This foe actively blinds the minds of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:4), sows discord, tempts believers (1 Thessalonians 3:5), and seeks to hinder the Gospel (1 Peter

5:8). In unreached areas, where the Gospel has not yet penetrated, these forces often hold significant sway, manifesting in various forms of spiritual darkness. As evil as these forces are, God uses them ultimately for His purposes.

**God gives victory for today and ultimately.** Despite the fierceness of the foe, the overwhelming truth of Scripture is that God has already secured victory through Jesus Christ. Our role is not to achieve victory, but to enforce the victory already won.

- Christ's death and resurrection were the decisive blow against Satan's scheme. (Colossians 2:15)
- Jesus came specifically to undo the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)
- Believers participate in Christ's victory through His atoning work and their faithful witness. (Revelation 12:11; Romans 16:20)

Our confidence amid spiritual warfare comes from Christ's finished work, not from our own ability to fight. We engage from a position of victory, not striving for it.

**God gives spiritual armor for protection and defense.** God gives each believer everything they need to defend and fight well. Since the enemy is relentless, we must put on the armor of God every day. (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; James 4:7; Luke 10:19) We do not engage in spiritual warfare in our own strength but rely on the authority and power of Christ who lives in us. Our role involves:

*Putting on the Full Armor of God:* This is not defensive gear to ward off attacks, but offensive equipment for standing firm in Christ's victory. Each piece represents a spiritual truth and discipline (Ephesians 6:13-18).

*Wielding the Sword of the Spirit (God's Word):* The truth of Scripture is powerful and active, capable of discerning

thoughts and intentions, and is our primary offensive weapon (Hebrews 4:12, Ephesians 6:17).

*Engaging in Strategic Prayer:* Prayer is how we access and apply God's power in the spiritual realm, binding demonic activity and releasing God's will (Ephesians 6:18, Matthew 18:18).

*Standing Firm in Faith:* Our faith in Christ's finished work is our shield against the enemy's fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16).

*Proclaiming the Gospel:* The Gospel itself is the ultimate weapon against the kingdom of darkness, bringing light where there is blindness and freedom where there is bondage (Romans 1:16).

*Actively Fighting Sin and the Sark.* Sometimes we are the biggest problem in the battle. We fight against the remnants of our flesh. We fight against the remnants of our flesh (sark) and old sinful self while seeking to be a new creation in Christ. I need Christ's power to help me to live like Him. (Galatians 5:17-21; Romans 7:18; Ephesians 4:22-24)

■ **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider the “spiritual battle”? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**

**“BE ALERT AND OF SOBER MIND. YOUR ENEMY THE DEVIL PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO DEVOUR. RESIST HIM, STANDING FIRM IN THE FAITH, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT THE FAMILY OF BELIEVERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD IS UNDERGOING THE SAME KIND OF SUFFERINGS.”  
—1PETER 5:8**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF READINESS FOR THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE**

Awareness of the spiritual battle is not meant to induce fear but to foster vigilance, strategic prayer, standing firm, and reliance on God. It is important for several key reasons:

**Proper Diagnosis of Obstacles and Strongholds:** Not every challenge is spiritual, but many are. Awareness helps you discern when opposition, apathy, or unusual difficulties are rooted in spiritual resistance, preventing you from misattributing them to purely human factors or personal failings.

**Strategic Prayer:** Knowing you face a spiritual foe shifts your prayer from general requests to targeted, fervent intercession for breakthroughs, protection, binding of demonic activity, and calling on the powerful name of Christ.

**Reliance on God's Power:** It humbles you, reminding you that you cannot fight this battle in your own strength. This awareness drives you to depend entirely on God's power, which is infinitely greater than any demonic force.

**Protection and Vigilance:** It encourages you to "put on the full armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11-18) and to remain sober-minded, guarding against the enemy's schemes.

**Understanding the "Why":** It helps make sense of the intense resistance, apathy, or even direct hostility often encountered when proclaiming the Gospel in unreached areas.

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## PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider the battle. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be in the spiritual battle.**

# BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF THE BATTLE

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “dependence” by responding to these questions:

- **What is the unseen realm?** What about the unseen realm to you need to remove from the attic and dust off? Is it true that what you can't see can hurt you? Why is the battle fierce especially among UPGs?

*example: God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

- **What is a spiritual stronghold?** What spiritual strongholds are present where you are going? What might freedom for them look like?

- **How do you have victory and freedom in Christ?** What will bring you daily freedom in the battle? What does it look like to put on the Armor of God?

- **Once you finish share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

### **Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**

- Unseen Realm, by Michael Heiser
- Deeper Walk International, Tools & Training
- Freedom in Christ, Neil Anderson
- Liberty to the Captives, by Mark Durie
- Praying the Armor of God, by Maryann Marti
- Theology of Standing Firm, by J.T. Hutts
- Spiritual Warfare Doesn't Have to Creep You Out
- Spiritual Warfare and Missions, by Jerry Rankin



# WAYS THE FIELD IS A BATTLEFIELD

Spiritual warfare manifests in various ways, often subtly, but sometimes overtly, in unreached contexts.

**Intense Resistance to the Gospel:** People may seem utterly uninterested in spiritual truth, even when their lives are clearly broken. People may express unusual apathy, hostility, or irrational fear towards the message, even when it's presented. This can be a demonic blinding of minds (2 Corinthians 4:4).

**Unexplained Opposition and Obstacles:** Repeated visa denials, sudden health crises, chronic team conflict, or inexplicable logistical breakdowns that seem to specifically hinder ministry progress.

**Dreams and Visions:** In some cultures, people report disturbing dreams or visions, or conversely, God uses dreams to draw people to Himself, prompting a spiritual battle for their understanding and faith.

**Occult Practices and Idolatry:** Direct encounters with witchcraft, animistic practices, ancestor worship, or overt demonic oppression where the spiritual forces are clearly at play.

**Exacerbated Personal Sin and Temptation:** A heightened struggle with pre-existing sinful patterns (e.g., anger, lust, pride, self-pity) or new, intense temptations, especially when tired, "joy tank" is low, or isolated.

**Discouragement and Despair:** Missionaries themselves may face intense, irrational waves of discouragement, self-doubt, despair, hopelessness, worthlessness, loneliness, or a desire to give up, designed to make them abandon their calling (1 Peter 5:8).

**Relational discord.** Uncharacteristic friction, misunderstandings, bitterness, or unresolved conflict. Small disagreements escalate into major rifts, threatening unity and effectiveness. The enemy has long pitted people against one another. He will try to bring discord between spouses, families, colleagues, neighbors, local disciples, and others. The enemy wants believers to go into *enemy mode* with one another.

**Physical Ailments and Accidents:** While not every illness is spiritual, some can be direct attacks designed to incapacitate or distract missionaries from their work.

**False Teachings and Syncretism:** The enemy seeks to distort the gospel or blend it with existing beliefs, creating a counterfeit that lacks saving power.

The spiritual battle is not always a loud, dramatic event, but often a persistent, multi-faceted assault on the missionary's spirit, mind, relationships, and ministry effectiveness. Recognizing these patterns is the first step in engaging the battle with God's victory.

# 8.

# EXCELLENCE

## WHEN IT'S ALL FOR GOD'S GLORY

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It was in the third year when the novelty of field life had long worn off, that the temptation to "just get by" became a daily whisper. The local language was still a struggle, and the pioneer thought to herself, "Why spend an extra hour on grammar when I could just use simpler phrases and hope to be understood?" The community project that Mary was overseeing was functional, but far from the gleaming "It works, doesn't it?" her mind would rationalize. "It's better than nothing. God will bless the effort, even if it's not perfect."

Mary found herself cutting corners on administrative tasks, monthly prayer updates, and sometimes, letting her quiet times become hurried or slipped altogether. The fatiguing heat, the constant demands, the slow pace of everything, and the seemingly impenetrable spiritual apathy of some villagers chipped away at her resolve. She saw other workers, some who seemed to thrive, and others who were enduring. The line between "faithful perseverance" and "bare minimum survival" blurred.

One sweltering afternoon, after a particularly frustrating attempt to explain a Bible story to a local friend, Mary

slumped against a mud-brick wall, feeling weary. "What's the point?" she muttered. "I'm not good at anything here. I'm just... getting by. And who am I doing this for, anyway? Is it really for God, or just to keep my support going?"

The pursuit of excellence can become more about performance and less about devotion, a daily act of worship. The pioneer realized that excellence wasn't about the outcome, which was God's to give, but about the *heart* she brought to the task. It wasn't about being perfect, but about offering her very best—her diligent effort in language, her care for her project, her patient presence with a curious neighbor—as an act of worship to an excellent God.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON EXCELLENCE

God is the ground of all true excellence. He is the one who fills any definition of excellence with meaning, and he is the reason why we cannot be content with lackluster mediocrity, halfhearted effort, or substandard service.

**God is excellent in every way.** God's excellence is not merely one of His attributes; it's an overarching quality that permeates and defines all of who He is and everything He does. It signifies His supreme and inherent superiority, perfection, and unparalleled quality in every aspect of His being and character. (Psalm 8:1; 145:3; Deuteronomy 32:4; Hebrews 1:3; 2 Peter 1:3-11)

**Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him.** We are created to reflect God's image and to declare His praises. When we live in obedience, worship Him, and make Him known, we participate in the unfolding of His glory. (Psalm 73:25-26; Isaiah 43:7; Romans 11:36; John 15:11)

"Doing all for the glory of God" is a central, transformative principle of any follower's life. It means that every single

aspect of our existence—our thoughts, words, actions, relationships, work, mundane tasks, and even our leisure—is intentionally directed towards magnifying God's inherent worth, character, and splendor. It's not about adding to God's glory (as He is already infinitely glorious), but about reflecting, displaying, and acknowledging His supreme value to the world. (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17; Matthew 5:16)

**God deserves the first and best.** We should strive for excellence, knowing that our best only happens when God does it with us. When Abel brought his first and best, God was pleased. In the Psalms, King David asks musicians to employ their highest skill as they make sacred music. The prophet Malachi demands that the priests and people alike bring their finest offerings to worship. Jesus praises the woman who anoints him with rare and expensive oil. Excellence insists that we bring our first and best because when we do that it honors and pleases God. (2 Timothy 2:15; Philippians 1:9-10; Romans 12:6-8)

**Excellence is fueled by grace not fear.** Perfection is the idea of being without flaw or error. It often implies an unattainable or idealized standard—one that, if we are not careful, becomes more about *appearance* than substance. Perfection often produces fear. Excellence, on the other hand, is about *doing your best with what you have*. Excellence is grace-based. It is rooted in intentionality, care, and growth—not in being flawless, but in being *faithful*. We aim for excellence not to win applause or check every box—but to honour God, serve others well, and steward our callings with care. (Colossians 3:23; Ecclesiastes 9:10)

Biblical excellence is not a self-serving ambition but a God-centered devotion. It is the practical outworking of a heart committed to glorifying God in all things. By striving for diligence, integrity, and quality in every facet of our lives—from the most public ministry in the field to the most private thought—we become living testimonies to the character of

our excellent God, drawing others to Him and fulfilling the very purpose for which we were created.

- **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider “excellence”? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**

**“LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.” — MATTHEW 5:16**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF EXCELLENCE**

In contexts where people have little to no knowledge of Christ, missionaries are often the primary, if not sole, visible representation of God. If a missionary's life or work is characterized by mediocrity, inconsistency, or a lack of integrity, it can inadvertently communicate that the God they serve is likewise unremarkable, unreliable, or not truly worthy of devotion.

Pursuing excellence for God's glory on the mission field isn't about personal achievement; it's about making God look as

good as He truly is, drawing people to Him, and ensuring that His name is honored among those who have never heard.

**Honors God's Character:** God Himself is a God of excellence, order, and beauty. Our striving for excellence in our work and character reflects His nature and pleases Him.

**Dignity of God's Work:** The mission is God's mission, and it deserves our utmost effort. The label of “Christian” is not an excuse for poor workmanship—in fact, it is the exact opposite. Because we report to a higher authority, we seek to serve Him with the highest-quality work possible. God asks us for our best work, not the best “Christian” version of our work. Our commitment to excellence reflects the infinite worth and majesty of the One we serve. (Titus 2:7-8; 2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 12:6-8)

**Credibility and Witness:** In contexts where the gospel is unfamiliar or misunderstood, the quality of your life and work speaks volumes. Shoddy work, inconsistency, or a lack of diligence can undermine your message and discredit the God you represent. Excellence builds trust and demonstrates the transformative power of Christ. Our "good deeds" lead others to "glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

**Stewardship of Gifts and Resources:** God has entrusted each pioneer with unique gifts, skills, time, and financial resources. Excellence is about being a faithful steward, maximizing the impact of what God has given you for His Kingdom purposes (Matthew 25:14-30).

**Love for Neighbor:** Doing things poorly can actually harm those you serve. Excellence, conversely, is an expression of genuine love and respect for the people you are ministering to, ensuring they receive the best possible care, teaching, and service. We don't patronize those around us. As children of the King, we don't give scraps and leftovers, but we honor one another as princes and princesses of the High King.

**Combating Misconceptions:** In some cultures, "Christian" might be associated with laziness or inefficiency due to past negative examples. Your excellence can challenge these stereotypes and present a counter-narrative. Excellence in your work inevitably leads to greater influence and that influence can create a significant impact for the Kingdom.

The call to excellence is not about seeking perfection or striving for accolades, but about reflecting the character of our God in every facet of your life and ministry. It is an act of worship, a powerful witness, and an essential component of an effective mission.

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## PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider excellence. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be for the glory of God.**



# BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF EXCELLENCE

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “excellence” by responding to these questions:

- **What does it mean to live for the glory of God?** How can this become one’s deepest motivation?

*example: God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

- **Why do excellence and giving your best matter?** What does it look like to give your best or your all for God? How would you want someone from the local community to describe your life and work?

- Consider areas of ministry or daily life (e.g., language learning, platform ministry, outreach, discipleship, team, servant leadership). **How do you ensure that the quality**

of your work, whether visible or behind the scenes, reflects the excellence of the God you serve? How do you ensure that your "good deeds" are truly seen as an overflow of God's love through you, rather than just human effort or a means to an end?

- Once you finish share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.

#### Additional Resources for Going Deeper:

- *Excellence*, by Andreas Köstenberg
- *Recovering Perfectionist*, by Alysha Clark
- *Pursuit of Excellence*, by The High Calling
- *Let the Nations Be Glad*, by John Piper

## WAYS WE DEMONSTRATE EXCELLENCE

Excellence in the mission field permeates every area, often in ways that are deeply practical and relational:

**Language Learning:** Committing to the study of the language, striving for fluency, not just basic communication. This shows respect for the local people, enables deeper connection, minimizes misunderstandings, and more precise gospel proclamation in people's heart language.

**Cultural Engagement & Gospel Proclamation:** Carefully studying the local worldview to understand points of connection and barriers to the gospel, developing culturally appropriate ways to share the message, and patiently answering questions. It means being prepared to articulate

the hope you have (1 Peter 3:15). It ensures the gospel is being understood, minimizes unnecessary offense, and maximizes its impact by presenting truth in a way that resonates with the local culture. This involves humility and a willingness to learn, demonstrating genuine love.

**Stewardship of Resources:** Exercising care, integrity, trustworthiness, and transparency with financial resources, property, and people. It honors God's provision, builds trust with both supporters and local communities, and removes any potential stumbling block that could discredit the gospel.

**Intentional Discipleship and Leadership Development:** Not just leading people to Christ, but diligently investing in their spiritual growth, equipping them to understand Scripture, training them to lead, and empowering them to take ownership of the local church and mission. It fulfills the call to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19-20) and ensures the long-term sustainability and indigenous growth of the church.

**Practical Skills and Community Development:** If involved in medical work, agriculture, education, or other community projects, performing these tasks with high standards of quality, reliability, and sustainability, reflects God's order and care.

**Personal Character and Habits:** Maintaining personal integrity, humility, emotional resilience, physical hygiene, and a strong work ethic. This includes keeping commitments and demonstrating self-control in all areas of life.

**Prayer Life:** Cultivating a consistent, fervent, and strategic prayer life, recognizing that this is the most excellent way to partner with God.

In every act, from the mundane to the miraculous, the pioneer mission worker's pursuit of excellence is a living sermon, declaring the glory of the God who is Himself excellent in all

His ways. It is a commitment to honor Him by giving nothing less than their very best.

# 9.

# SELF

## WHO AM I, AND WHY SHOULD I CARE

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**T**ough, isolated, off-grid, among some of the most unreachable people on earth. Going where no one has gone before. Building on no man's foundation. This is the ideal location for a pioneer mission worker.

Tom lived in a remote village of a significant tribe on the southern fringe of the Sahara alone for months. He was in the throes of learning his third language, partnering part-time on a community development project, and traveling away from his wife and small kids who were homeschooling and fielding neighbors' demands. He was clocking 60-80 hours of work per week and still not feeling like he was doing enough. His family was struggling, and his health was diminishing. He felt anxious, weary, and guilty, but couldn't see an alternative.

Tom's identity was tied tightly to the place, platform, and people group around him. To be connected to the Person of Christ or his God-given roles as husband and father seemed less fulfilling or urgent. This led to deep disappointment and an identity crash, especially when the work was pulled out from underneath him and he was forced to leave the field as his wife became severely unwell. Instead of offering her

compassion, he stewed angrily because he wasn't where he wanted to be, even though it was a perfect moment to reset. Up until then, Tom had thought to himself, "I am a hardworking and faithful missionary. I am giving myself to the mission. Self-care is selfish. It can't be biblical. Isn't it the opposite of living by faith? I'm called to be a living sacrifice."

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON IDENTITY

Our true self and identity are fundamentally defined by God, not by our accomplishments, failures, feelings, or the opinions of others. This identity is established in two primary ways:

**Created in God's Image (Imago Dei):** From the very beginning, humanity was uniquely fashioned in the likeness of God, endowing every person with inherent dignity, worth, and a capacity for relationship with Him. This is the foundational truth of who we are. (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:13-14)

**True Identity as a new creation in Christ:** For believers, our identity is radically transformed through salvation. God gives us a new identity. We are no longer defined by sin or our past, but by our connection with Christ. We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, reconciled with God, and regenerated to new life. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22-24)

**Beware of false or secondary identities:** In contrast to true identity in Christ, humans can take on "false" or "secondary" identities. These are derived from other sources, human performance, lies from the enemy, or sinful patterns, and they ultimately fail to provide lasting security, worth, or fulfillment. They become problematic when they replace or overshadow one's primary identity in Christ. False identities can include:

*Performance/Achievement:* Defining oneself by success, career, ministry results, or status. (Example: "I am a [adjective]

[title].”) This identity is fragile, especially when success wanes, career ends, or ministry doesn't produce visible fruit. It leads to pride in success and despair in failure. (Galatians 6:14)

*Possessions/Sensations:* Defining oneself by what one has or doesn't have. (Example: "I am wealthy," "I am comfortable," "I am secure.") Stuff is fleeting and cannot provide ultimate security or satisfaction. (Luke 12:15)

*Relationships/Approval:* Defining oneself by what others think, by eye-service, or by one's role in a relationship. (Example: "I am accepted/rejected," "I am important to this person/group.") Human approval is fickle and unreliable. It leads to people-pleasing, fear of rejection, and a constant striving for external validation. (Galatians 1:10)

*Suffering/Victimhood:* Defining oneself primarily by past hurts, trauma, or perceived injustices. While acknowledging pain is important for healing, allowing it to become one's core identity can hinder growth, forgiveness, peace, and restoration. (Romans 8:1; Philippians 3:13-14)

*Nationality/Ethnicity:* While cultural identity is God-given and good, it becomes a danger when it defines one's worth or creates division within the Body of Christ. It can lead to pride, prejudice, and a failure to see all people as equally made in God's image and equally in need of Christ. (Galatians 3:28)

These false identities are menacing because they are unstable, prone to collapse, and ultimately distract us from the true, secure, and eternally satisfying identity found only in Christ. This means your worth is not tied to the number of disciples, the success of a project, or how well you navigate cultural complexities in the field. Your identity is securely established in who God says you are in Christ.

- What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider “identity and self”? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.

**“THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, THE NEW CREATION HAS COME: THE OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW IS HERE!” — 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF CARING FOR SELF**

Pioneers navigating the unique demands of serving among the unreached, understanding your "self" and anchoring your "identity" is not a luxury, but a spiritual imperative. The mission field, with its intense pressures, cultural dislocations, and spiritual battles, can profoundly challenge one's sense of self. True identity and self-care are essential for long-term health and effectiveness.

**What God says about who you are.** If you are in Christ, you are adopted as God's children, heirs with Christ, and citizens of His Kingdom. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 4:22-24; Romans 8:15-17; John 1:12; 1 John 3:1) You are forgiven, righteous, and holy in Christ. (Ephesians 1:7; 2



Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:22) You are chosen, beloved, and called by God. (Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 2:9; Romans 8:28)

**Self-care as stewardship.** Caring for oneself is not inherently selfish, but a biblical principle rooted in stewardship and sustainability for God's glory. Our bodies, minds, and spirits are temples of the Holy Spirit, entrusted to us by God. Essentially, self-care is about stewarding your life and heart through the intentional pursuit of healthy, life-giving, and restorative practices and rhythms that strengthen our love for God and others. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Mark 6:31; Matthew 22:39; Psalm 23:2-3; Psalm 90)

**Care for self increases care for others.** Pioneers, like any Christian, care for themselves not just for their good, but so that they can also care for others. We do not serve others at the expense of our health and joy. The Scripture says, “love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as you love yourself.” Many times, we either miss the last word “yourself” or overvalue it.

**Care for whole self.** God designed us as complex, whole persons (Psalm 139:13–16). We do not—like a computer or machine—consist of parts, but encompass spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, psychological, and relational aspects in our intricate design. When we take care of ourselves, we mustn't target one aspect of ourselves. We need to take a holistic approach to self-care. When we care for ourselves, we express worship and gratitude to God. He gave us our ears, brains, smiles, tears, hearts, and lungs (Romans 11:36). We don't treat our bodies as worthless and useless, but we treat ourselves with kindness as an act of gratitude to God, like the psalmist who said, “I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well.”

**Jesus' invitation to take care.** In John 7:37, Jesus invites those who are thirsty to come to him and drink. This is not passive but active on behalf of the one who thirsts. In John 1, Jesus calls the disciples to 'come' so that they could see. In Matthew 11:28-30, the disciples are asked, 'Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace...I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.' These are invitations to care for oneself by meeting with God. Even Jesus gave himself time and encouraged His disciples to rest and pray amid a life of self-sacrifice (Matthew 14:13; Mark 6:30-32).

Neglecting self-care or losing sight of one's identity in Christ can have harmful consequences for missionaries and their ministry. However, practicing care for self in a healthy way:

*Maintains Holistic Health:* A healthy sense of self and consistent self-care practices guard against depression, anxiety, bitterness, and spiritual dryness, enabling sustained intimacy with God.

*Enhances Effectiveness and Authenticity:* A well-cared-for missionary is more resilient, joyful, empathetic, and capable of serving effectively. Authenticity in sharing struggles (when appropriate) and modeling healthy Christian living is a powerful witness.

*Applies One-Anothering:* We put into practice the "one anothers" by not only taking care of them but also taking care of ourselves. When we take care of ourselves, we can better serve our spouse, child, neighbors, co-workers, and local disciples.

*Defends the Enemy's Arrows:* The enemy often targets a missionary's identity and well-being through lies,

discouragement, and temptation. Standing firm in one's identity in Christ and practicing self-care are vital defenses.

*Models Discipleship:* New believers need to see what healthy, sustainable Christian living looks like, especially in demanding contexts. Missionaries.

*Mitigates Burnout and Attrition:* The relentless demands of cross-cultural ministry, spiritual warfare, and isolation can quickly lead to weariness, cynicism, and departure from the field. Self-care is a preventative measure for long-term endurance.

If we don't live out our true identity as blood-bought beloved children of God, we will live out some other inferior identity. This will cheat us out of the fullness of life.



## PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider your identity. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be, who lives in their true identity.**

# BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF SELF

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “self” by responding to these questions:

- **Who am I in Christ? What is my true identity?** What identities are primary or secondary? Why should I be concerned about false identities?

*example: God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

- **What is the proper view of self?** What is an improper view of self?

- **Why should I care about self?** What is biblical self-care amid the tension of self-sacrifice?

- Once you finish, share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.

### Additional Resources for Going Deeper:

- *The Believer's Identity in Christ*, by IBCC
- *Father's Love Letter*
- *Identity Theft*, by Melissa Kruger
- *Light Wheel Bible Studies*, by TearFund
- *Biblical Self-Care*, by City to City
- *Reevaluating Self-Care*, by Wanjiru Ng'ang'a
- *Known by God*, by Brian Rosner
- *True Identity*, training by ThriveToday

## WAYS WE CARE FOR SELF ON THE FIELD

Self-care on the mission field is often intentional, disciplined, and sometimes creative, adapting to local realities:

**Preach the Gospel to Self:** Preaching the gospel to yourself daily is vital because it continually grounds your identity in Christ, fuels your spiritual resilience, and motivates grace-driven obedience, reminding you of God's unwavering love and forgiveness amid life's challenges.

**Develop Identity Statements:** Reflect on who you/we are in Christ often with yourself and your people. It is good to remind one another who you/we are frequently.

**Prioritize Regular Sabbath/Rest:** Intentionally set aside a day for rest, worship, and non-ministry activities, even if it means saying "no" to perceived opportunities.

**Maintain Connection with God:** Ensure consistent, unhurried time in prayer, in Scripture, and in worship, distinct from ministry preparation.

**Create Healthy Spaces:** Establish clear boundaries between work and rest, ministry, family, and personal space. Communicate these to team members and local contacts.

**Physical Well-being:** Be intentional to eat nutritious food (even if limited options), get adequate sleep, and engage in regular physical activity (e.g., walking, stretching, sport).

**Process Stress and Trauma:** Actively seek out trusted mentors, supervisors, debriefers, or counselors (remotely or in person) to process the emotional and spiritual toll of ministry and cultural living.

**Pursue Hobbies and Recreation:** Engage in activities that bring joy and refreshment, whether it's reading, painting, playing music, hiking, or connecting with nature. (See *Many Beautiful Things*)

**Maintain Home Connections:** Strategically connect with family and a sending church for encouragement, prayer, and a reminder of their broader support network.

**Schedule Breaks:** Take planned retreats on the field and periods away from the field for rest, debriefing, and reconnecting with God and people outside your normal context.

Caring for yourself and securing your identity in Christ is not a selfish indulgence, but a sacred responsibility. It is the stewardship of God's precious temple within you, enabling you to glorify Him personally and serve effectively for the long haul among the unreached.

# 10.

# OTHERS

## WHY ARE WE BETTER TOGETHER

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**T**he small mission team in Northern Africa was a microcosm of the "one another" challenge. Amy, the meticulous planner, grew frustrated with Abe's spontaneous, often chaotic, approach to ministry. Abe, in turn, found Amy's rigidity stifling, feeling judged and rejected, and he often retreated. Their unspoken tensions, fueled by weariness and cultural stress, created a subtle but palpable chill that affected their joint work. They were physically together, but relationally drifting.

This internal friction inevitably bled into their interactions with locals. When a new disciple, Ahmed, struggled with consistency due to complex family obligations, Amy saw it as a lack of discipline; her "God-sight" was clouded by her own unmet expectations. Abe, while more empathetic, sometimes over-identified, failing to offer the gentle admonishment Ahmed needed. The team's inability to fully "one another" internally made it harder to extend that same when discipling Ahmed, who sensed something was off.

Forming, storming, norming, and performing are the common stages of team development. Oftentimes, God puts together

people who wouldn't normally be friends and calls them to work together in the same field on the same mission. One anothering, maintaining peace, unity, and servant-heartedness become work in itself.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON COMMUNITY

The summons to "one another" is not merely a suggestion for harmonious living, but a divine imperative and a powerful witness. In the unique pressures of cross-cultural ministry, your relationships with teammates and local contacts are both your greatest resource and a crucial battleground. Understanding and actively living out the "one another" commands is essential for flourishing and effective ministry.

**God models community and togetherness.** Woven into the very fabric of God's nature is a design for relational living over isolation. Community is a reflection of God Himself. God is not a solitary being but a communion of three co-equal Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who exist in perfect, eternal relationship, love, and unity. This divine "togetherness" is the ultimate blueprint for all created community. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 17:21)

**Man was created for relationships.** From the beginning, God designed humanity for interdependence, declaring "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). This foundational truth extends profoundly into the Christian life, where believers are called into a spiritual family, the Body of Christ. We are not meant to operate as isolated units; our collective strength, wisdom, and witness are found in our unity and mutual service. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Romans 12:4-5; John 13:35)

**The Church is God's redeemed community.** The Church, the Body of Christ, is God's primary means of demonstrating restored community on earth. It is a diverse assembly of



individuals, united by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ, called to live in active interdependence and mutual love. This spiritual family is meant to be a multiplying and living testament to the power of the gospel to reconcile and unite. (Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:1-3; Acts 2:42-47)

**God sends people together to demonstrate His heart.** We believe that God calls us into His mission together, never alone. Biblical community is not an end in itself, but a means to flourishing and a powerful witness to the world. Jesus Himself, the ultimate missionary, consistently modeled team ministry. He didn't send His disciples out alone, but in pairs. This was not merely a practical strategy but a reflection of God's relational nature and the power found in unity. (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1) The early church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, continued this pattern. The first recorded missionary sending from a local church involved a team, not an individual. (Acts 13:1-3; Philippians 4:3; 2 Corinthians 8:23)

**Man is commanded to “one another.”** The numerous "one another" commands in the New Testament provide a practical framework for Christian community and discipleship. They can be broadly summarized into four interconnected categories, each essential for healthy relationships and a powerful witness.

*Love One Another.* This is the overarching command that underpins all others. It is the defining characteristic of Christ's disciples and the ultimate expression of our transformed lives. (John 13:34-35; Romans 13:8; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 4:7)

*Bond with One Another.* God calls His people to strive for unity, even amid divinely designed diversity in the Body. These commands emphasize the importance of maintaining peace, harmony, and a shared purpose within the Body of Christ, reflecting the unity of the Trinity. (Romans 15:7; Ephesians 4:2-3; Romans 14:19; Philippians 2:3)

*Serve One Another in Humility.* To need someone else is humbling. To ask for help is humbling. Not being able to do something alone is humbling. These commands call for a posture of lowliness, deference, and active servanthood towards each other, mirroring Christ's example. (Galatians 5:13; Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 5:5; John 13:14)

*Build Up One Another.* The opposite would be to tear down and destroy, which is the strategy of the enemy. These commands focus on actively strengthening, supporting, and spurring each other on in faith and good works. (Hebrews 10:24-25; Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:16)

**Seek to See One Another as God Sees.** To truly "one another," we must cultivate "God-sight"—the ability to see fellow believers, even the unreached, as God sees them: as people created in His image, fallen yet redeemable, and deeply loved. This perspective moves beyond superficial judgments, cultural biases, or past offenses to recognize one's inherent dignity and potential in Christ. It means looking beyond the "flesh" (their outward behavior or unrenewed nature) to the "spirit" (their created value and God's handiwork). (1 Samuel 16:7; 2 Corinthians 5:16; Ephesians 2:10)

■ **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider “others”? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**

**“A NEW COMMAND I GIVE YOU: LOVE ONE ANOTHER. AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, SO YOU MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER. BY THIS EVERYONE WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER.” — JOHN 13:34-35**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE ANOTHERING**

Actively practicing the "one another" commands is not optional; it is vital for the health of the missionary, the team, the nascent church, and the integrity of the gospel message.

**Glorifying God:** When believers live in unity and love, it brings glory to God, reflecting His own relational nature.

**Witness a Redeemed Community:** A loving, unified community is the most compelling argument for the gospel in a fragmented world. It demonstrates the transformative power of Christ in relationships.

**Effective Discipleship:** New believers learn how to live out their faith by observing and participating in healthy "one anothering." It's how the church matures and reproduces.

**Overcoming Cultural Barriers:** Intentional "one anothering" helps missionaries bridge cultural divides, fostering genuine understanding and empathy rather than judgment or isolation.

**Spiritual Health and Resilience:** Mutual encouragement, burden-bearing, and forgiveness within the team are

essential for preventing disunity, combating spiritual warfare, and fostering long-term endurance.

## PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider the “one another” texts. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be for who considers others.**

## BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF ONE ANOTHERING

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “others” by responding to these questions:

- **How am I to view others?** What does it look like to have God-sight?

example: *God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

■ **How am I to relate to my spiritual siblings and co-laborers?** What does it mean to “one another”?

■ **Why are we better together than alone?** Why send out mission teams? Why is the way that a team loves, bonds, serves, and builds up a vital part of their work?

■ **Once you finish, share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

**Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**

- *Think Diversity*, by Tracey West
- *What the One-Anothers Do*, by Matt Ng
- *Escaping Enemy Mode*, Jim Wilder
- *Why We Need Teams for the Missionary Task*
- *The Critical Role of Relationships in Missions*

# WAYS WE “ONE ANOTHER” ON THE FIELD

**"Checking In" with God:** Throughout your day, practice briefly pausing and "checking in" with God about your current relationships, situation, feelings, or interactions. Ask Him, "How do You see this/them?" or "What is Your perspective?" or "What needs to change in me to “one another” better?"

**Scripture as Lens:** Immerse yourself in the Bible, not just for information, but to understand God's character, His ways, and His perspective on life and people. This grows God-sight. The more you know Him, the more your thoughts will "rhyme" with His. This is contrasted with "earth's eyes," which tend to focus on agitation, blame, and a limited human perspective.

**Make One Anothering Who You Are.** “One anothering” is not hypothetical, but to be actual in our family, team life, local relationships, and discipleship. Here are some ways:

*Among a Team:*

**Encourage One Another** (Hebrews 10:24-25): Regularly affirm teammates' efforts, celebrate small victories, and speak words of life.

**Bear One Another's Burdens** (Galatians 6:2): Actively listen to struggles, offer practical help (e.g., childcare, errands, covering duties during illness), and pray specifically for each other's challenges.

**Forgive One Another** (Colossians 3:13): Humbly address conflicts, extend grace quickly, and refuse to hold grudges, understanding that living in close quarters will inevitably lead to offenses.

**Serve One Another** (Galatians 5:13): Look for opportunities to help out, share responsibilities, and put teammates' needs before your own, even in mundane tasks.

**Be Patient with One Another** (Ephesians 4:2): Recognize that everyone is under pressure and adapting, extend grace for cultural missteps, language struggles, or personality quirks.

*Among Local Contacts and New Believers:*

**Accept One Another** (Romans 15:7): Embrace new believers and seekers from diverse backgrounds, welcome them into fellowship without imposing unnecessary cultural or social barriers.

**Teach and Admonish One Another** (Colossians 3:16): Share biblical truth, disciple patiently, and offer gentle correction, allowing God's Word to shape their lives.

**Serve One Another** (Galatians 5:13): Model Christ's servant heart by meeting practical needs in the community, demonstrating love through action, and empowering local believers to serve their own people or you too.

**Pray for One Another** (James 5:16): Regularly pray with and for local contacts, demonstrating dependence on God and sharing the burden of their spiritual and physical needs.

**Show Hospitality to One Another** (1 Peter 4:9): Open homes and lives to share meals, stories, and fellowship, building genuine relationships that transcend cultural differences.

By diligently practicing these "one another" commands, pioneer mission workers not only build healthy teams and healthy churches but also powerfully display the transformative love of Christ to a world desperately in need of true community.

# 11.

# GOSPEL

## WHAT IS OUR CENTRAL MESSAGE

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**E**lias arrived in the remote mountain village, his heart burning with the urgency of the gospel. For years, his focus had been singular: bring the good news of salvation to those who had never heard. His days were consumed with pouring out, convinced that his own spiritual well was perpetually full simply by being the messenger.

However, in his relentless pursuit of the lost, Elias began to subtly neglect the gospel's daily relevance for himself. His personal quiet times became hurried, duty-bound checks rather than genuine encounters with grace. He proclaimed forgiveness and new life but found himself increasingly cynical about the slow pace of change, quick to judge the villagers' shortcomings, and privately battling waves of discouragement and spiritual dryness. The gospel, for Elias, had become a powerful tool for *them*—a one-off transaction for salvation, rather than the lifelong bread he himself needed to feast on daily. He was giving out living water but forgetting to drink from the well himself.



# BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL

**The gospel is good news.** The central message of the gospel is the “good news” of what God has done through Jesus Christ to rescue people from sin and reconcile us to Himself, for His glory. It is the declaration that God, in His forever love and holiness, has provided the way for broken people to be made right with Him, to receive forgiveness, new life, and eternal fellowship. (Romans 3:23-24; John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

**The gospel is authored by God.** The gospel is a message that God wrote to mankind. The gospel is God's initiative, His plan, and His power at work. It is not a human invention or philosophy. Not only is God the author, but He is also the main character in His own story. (Romans 1:1-2; Ephesians 2:8-9)

*Essential elements of the gospel message:*

*God created.* God is the sovereign Creator of all things. He is the author of life and the universe, establishing His perfect plan and glory. Humans were created in His image, designed for a relationship with Him, and to reflect His glory. (Genesis 1:1; 1:27; Psalm 19:1)

*Man separated.* This perfect relationship was broken by sin. All people have rebelled against God, falling short of His glory. This sin creates a profound separation between God and humanity, leading to spiritual death and a state of lostness. (Romans 3:23; 6:23a; Isaiah 59:2)

*Jesus redeemed.* Because humanity could not bridge this gap on its own, God, in His forever love and holiness, intervened. Jesus Christ, God's one and only Son, came to redeem humanity. He lived a perfect life, died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was

resurrected from the dead on the third day, conquering sin and death. This act of redemption by Jesus was God's powerful initiative to make us right with Him. (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

*Man must respond.* The gospel is not just a passive story; it requires a response. Any response must be initiated and empowered by God. The response is to repent of sin, believe in Jesus Christ, and receive His redemption by grace through faith. This response leads to salvation, forgiveness of sins, new life, and a lifelong journey of transformation where we continue to live our lives rooted and built up in Him, overflowing with thankfulness. (Acts 16:31; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9-10; John 1:12)

**The gospel is for everyone (even missionaries).** The gospel is universally applicable, breaking down all barriers of ethnicity, social status, or perceived spiritual standing. No one is exempt from its daily need. (Galatians 3:28; Romans 3:22)

**The gospel isn't just a message we need as a one-off, but lifelong.** The Gospel is not just the message that saves us once; it is the truth that continues to sanctify, sustain, and motivate us daily. We preach the gospel to ourselves every day. (Philippians 1:6; Colossians 2:6-7)

**The gospel affects all of life all the time.** The gospel transforms not just our eternal destiny but every facet of our present existence—our identity, relationships, motivations, thoughts, and actions. As Timothy Keller described, “The gospel is not just the ABCs but the A to Z of the Christian life.” It is not confined to a “spiritual” compartment but permeates all of life. (Romans 12:2; Colossians 3:17)

**The gospel is meant to be spread.** The good news is primarily spread through proclamation and demonstration, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and carried out by God's people in various contexts around the world. The gospel is

not just a message to be heard, but a life to be seen. When people are genuinely transformed by the gospel, their changed character and actions become a compelling witness. (Romans 10:14-15; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:14, 22-24, 36-41; Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12; 2 Corinthians 3:2-3)

■ **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider “the gospel”? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**

**“FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES.” — ROMANS 1:16-17**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GOSPEL**

The Gospel message is of paramount importance for several critical reasons, impacting both individual lives and the world at large. It's not merely one truth among many, but the central, life-giving message. It is the power of God for salvation and ongoing life transformation.

**God's Command:** The Great Commission is a direct mandate from Christ to His followers. (Matthew 28:19-20)

**Only Hope for Humanity:** Apart from the gospel, people remain lost in sin, separated from God, and without eternal hope. (Acts 4:12)

**Brings God Glory:** As people are saved and transformed, God's power, love, and wisdom are displayed, bringing Him the praise and worship He deserves. (2 Thessalonians 1:12)

The gospel is not just a message proclaimed; it is a reality lived, impacting both the messenger and the receiver.

*Impact on the Messenger:*

**Sustains Identity:** Reminds the missionary that their worth is in Christ, not their performance or perceived success in the field (2 Corinthians 5:17).

**Fuels Perseverance:** In the face of spiritual warfare, loneliness, or slow progress, the gospel's truth about Christ's victory and God's faithfulness provides the fuel needed to stay longer and healthier (Hebrews 12:2-3).

**Promotes Humility:** The gospel reminds missionaries that salvation is by grace, preventing pride in their own efforts and fostering dependence on God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

*Impact on the Receiver (Individuals & Communities):*

**Radical Life Transformation:** Individuals are freed from the power of sin, idolatry, and spiritual darkness, leading to new behaviors, worldviews, and desires (Acts 26:18, Colossians 1:13-14).

**Reconciliation and Unity:** The gospel breaks down ethnic, social, and relational barriers, fostering genuine community

and "one anothering" among diverse people (Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:14-16).

**Holistic Flourishing:** As hearts are transformed, it often leads to fruitful changes in families, ethics, education, health, and social justice within the community, demonstrating the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5:16).

**Indigenous Church Growth:** Transformed individuals become disciples who make disciples, leading to the organic growth and multiplication of local, self-sustaining churches.

The Gospel is the dynamic, living power of God. As pioneer mission workers, you are privileged to carry this message, knowing that it is not merely words, but the very breath of God bringing life and transformation to the ends of the earth.



## PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider the gospel. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be who lives the gospel.**

# BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF GOOD NEWS

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “the gospel” by responding to these questions:

- **What is the gospel?** Why is it important to articulate the gospel clearly and simply?

*example: God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

- **How is the gospel more than a message?** What other parts of life does the gospel affect?

- **How is the gospel for unbelievers, new disciples, and long-time followers?** How is the gospel more than the ABCs of our faith, but the A-Zs?

- **Once you finish, share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

### **Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**

- What is the Gospel, by Greg Gilbert
- Why Missionaries Need the Gospel Too, Jared Wilson
- Marks of the Messenger, by J. Mack Stiles
- The Gospel is for Christians, by Mitchell Chase
- Persevere in Preaching the Gospel to Yourself
- Gospel Theology, by Tim Keller
- Becoming the Gospel, by Michael Gorman
- The Great Omission, by Dallas Willard

# 12.

# SUCCESS

## WHAT GOD ASKS OF US AND MAKES OF US

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There came an insidious temptation—a *striving for success*. Mark found himself subtly crafting his prayer letters to highlight the few, dramatic breakthroughs, downplaying the years of quiet, unseen labor. He shared photos of large gatherings, even if only a handful were genuinely interested in the gospel. He found himself subtly comparing his "fruit" to other missionaries, feeling a pang of pride when he had a "good story" and a sense of guilt when he didn't. He wanted his supporters and colleagues to be impressed, to see him as "successful," the one who was truly "making a difference." And for a time, it worked. The numbers looked good on paper, the photos told a convincing story. But the focus subtly shifted from God being glorified through *his* faithfulness to Mark being praised through *his* results. He started to believe that if he could just show enough "success," the gnawing pressure would finally ease, and he could finally feel approved, productive... and perhaps, even at peace. But that peace never came.



There can be a temptation to prove our work, embellish the stories, highlight “wins” or numbers, and show more than we are doing. We can minimize the often long, slow, and seemingly unproductive periods – the unglamorous, messy realities where true growth often happens. This can lead to zeroing in on exciting stories rather than the grinding, unglamorous path of faithfulness and obedience that God asks of us, which, paradoxically, leads to His kind of fruitfulness within the mess.

## **BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON SUCCESS**

"Success" can be a profound source of motivation or, if misunderstood, deep disillusionment. The world's metrics often clash with God's. A biblical theology of success can help pioneers maintain joy, perseverance, and a healthy perspective amid the demands of cross-cultural ministry.

**God defines and empowers success.** From a biblical perspective, success is ultimately tied to God's faithfulness and promises, not solely human effort. (Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 36:5; 1 Corinthians 1:9) When God gives a command and a mission, His definition of success involves faithfulness and obedience to the task according to His will and by His enablement. (Isaiah 55:11; Philippians 1:6; John 15:5)

**God asks of us faithfulness and obedience.** While God accomplishes the outcome, our role is clear: to be faithful and obedient. Our "success" in God's eyes is primarily measured by our diligent, obedient response to His commands and our faithful stewardship of the gifts and opportunities He provides, regardless of the visible “results.” (Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 4:2; Luke 16:10)

**God has a different metric for success.** Often the world measures by visible results, numbers (disciples, churches), financial gain, power, recognition, influence, comfort, or rapid

growth. Failure is seen as the absence of these. The pioneer views success primarily by faithfulness to God's call, obedience to His commands, and conformity to Christ's character, irrespective of immediate or visible outcomes. God's metric is internal (heart), not external (appearance or worldly status). How often do we forget this in our own lives, caught in the world's endless tallying? Biblical "success" can even involve apparent "failure" or death, leading to greater long-term fruit. (1 Samuel 16:7; Galatians 1:10; John 12:24)

**God makes us fruitful.** God gives the capacity for fruitfulness by creating the potential for life, growth, and productivity within creation and by empowering people to fulfill His purposes. This includes the physical world, where God designed land to produce plants, animals to multiply, and humanity to be fruitful. Furthermore, God's provision extends to spiritual fruitfulness, enabling believers to live out their faith and make an impact on the world and His kingdom. (Genesis 1:28; 2:15-20; Deuteronomy 28:1-4; John 15:5, 16; Galatians 5:22-23; Psalm 1:1-3)

*Abiding is the source of fruitfulness:* Jesus explicitly states, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). True fruitfulness is not something we conjure up through our own effort or genius, but it is the overflow of Christ's life flowing through us as we remain intimately connected to Him.

*Producing fruit of character:* The first and most fundamental kind of fruit is the transformation of our inner character to be more like Christ. Galatians 5:22-23 lists the "fruit of the Spirit": love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This character fruit is evidence of God's work *in* us.

*Growing in the fruit of righteousness:* As our character is transformed, it naturally expresses itself in actions that honor

God and bless others. These are "good works" that God has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). This includes acts of service, compassion, and justice.

*Fruit of the harvest:* As we abide in Christ and live out His character, the Holy Spirit works through us to draw others to Him, leading to disciples and the formation of new communities of faith (John 4:35-36, Romans 1:13). This is the harvest fruit that pioneers long to see. Ultimately, all fruitfulness redounds to the glory of God. Jesus said, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:8). Our fruitfulness points to His power and goodness, not our own.

**God redeems failure.** God's view of "failure" is profoundly redemptive and gracious, not condemning. When we stumble, when our plans crumble, God doesn't abandon us. Instead, He steps into that very space, saying 'But God...' He doesn't see setbacks as final defeats but as opportunities for growth, learning, and verifying His power. God's response to our shortcomings and sins is always grace and forgiveness when we repent. He doesn't hold our failures against us when we are in Christ. (Romans 8:1; 1 John 1:9) Failures that aren't sinful often serve as powerful teachers, revealing our weaknesses, increasing our dependence on God, and refining our character. (Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; John 21)

■ **What other Scriptures or biblical aspects come to mind when you consider "success"? Take a few moments to look up 1-2 of these verses and journal what the Lord highlights for you.**

**“YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME, BUT I CHOSE YOU  
AND APPOINTED YOU SO THAT YOU MIGHT GO  
AND BEAR FRUIT—FRUIT THAT WILL LAST.” —  
JOHN 15:16**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING FAITHFUL, BEING OBEDIENT, AND BEARING FRUIT**

While many will define success by visible results, performance, and numbers, God defines success by inward faithfulness, obedience, and fruitfulness, which cannot be seen as clearly as numbers of disciples, churches planted, or movements launched. Yet what may be invisible to human eyes pleases the Lord, and that's what matters most. To be successful, then, we must be faithful to Him, be obedient to Him, and bear His fruit.

*Faithfulness as a Foundation:*

**Commitment to God's Word:** Faithfulness begins with a deep commitment to God's Word and His revealed will. Pioneer missionaries must be grounded in Scripture, seek to understand God's commands, and intently live out the truth.

**Character of Dependability and Trustworthiness:** Faithfulness is rooted in the unchanging faithfulness of God

Himself. He is utterly reliable, true to His promises, and consistent in His character. Faithfulness implies being dependable and trustworthy in all aspects of life and ministry. This includes fulfilling commitments, maintaining integrity, and being honest in interactions with others.

**Growing Perseverance:** Faithfulness enables pioneers to walk through challenges, setbacks, and discouragements, remaining steadfast to the mission. Focusing on external results (which are mainly beyond our control) in difficult fields leads to exhaustion and departing the field prematurely. Faithfulness, however, is always attainable by God's grace. This enables missionaries to endure seasons of apparent "failure" or slow growth, knowing their labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

*Obedience as a Pathway:*

**Don't do nothing.** Sometimes there is just so much to be done that we don't know where to start obeying. It can be tough to do anything. Some will freeze by the fear of failing and think their job is so big they'd rather do nothing than do something wrong. Don't forget, missions is not about missionaries, it is about God. He can do everything Himself. He chooses to use missionaries. Submit to God, just do something, don't fear failing, learn, improve, and glorify God.

**Don't do everything.** One of the fastest paths to burnout and short-lived mission experiences is the pioneer who can't say no to those they serve, supporting churches, or fellow missionaries. They try to "earn" the favor of their financial partners by working long days without rest. Every missionary wants to be a good investment, but working themselves sick or crazy is bad for everyone. To stop thinking God can't do it without them obeying takes humility.

**Risk-Taking:** Obedience may involve taking risks and stepping outside of comfort zones, trusting that God will guide and provide for them.

## *Fruitfulness as a Result:*

**Glorifies God:** Fruitfulness is ultimately God demonstrating His power and grace through the lives of missionaries. Faithfulness and obedience attribute all true fruit and transformation to God, joyfully giving Him the glory He deserves. God is the fruit giver. We are the fruit bearers.

**Joy and Reward:** God always blesses obedience. While fruitfulness is not the primary motivation, it brings joy and a sense of reward as we see the impact of our work in us or around us. Fruitfulness is the result of connecting and abiding with Jesus. (John 15:4–5)

**Produces Tangible Results:** Fruitfulness is the natural outcome of faithfulness and obedience. It manifests in the sanctification of the pioneer, the transformation of believers, and the establishment of healthy churches. Jesus used the analogy that “you will know them by their fruit.” (Matthew 7:16-20) Inward transformation leads to outward results. In other words, a pioneer or disciple’s true character and faith will be revealed and identified by their actions, behaviors, and the consistent outcomes of their life.

## *Interconnectedness unto Success:*

**Faithfulness as a Means to Fruitfulness:** Faithfulness how missionaries pursue fruitfulness. By remaining faithful to God’s Word and His leading, they create an environment where fruitfulness can flourish.

**Obedience as the Foundation for Faithfulness:** Obedience is the foundation upon which faithfulness is built. Without obedience, faithfulness becomes inconsistent and unreliable.

**Fruitfulness as a Validation of Faithfulness and Obedience:** Fruitfulness provides a tangible confirmation that the

missionary is on the right path and is effectively fulfilling God's purposes.

A right view of success, rooted in God's faithfulness and the pioneer's obedience, liberates the missionary to serve with joy, seeing that God alone gives the increase and fruit.

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## PRAYER ACTION

Consider the Scriptures you cling to above. Consider success. **Write a prayer for the kind of person you want to be.**

## BUILDING A PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGY OF SUCCESS

Take some time to prayerfully draft your practical mini-theology of “success” by responding to these questions:

- **What is success in God's eyes?** How is that different than the world's view of success?

example: *God is... We are the kind of people who... It is most like us/me to... We/I will... We/I hold to...*

- **How does God measure success?** What does faithfulness and obedience look like? How does God use failure?

- **How does God provide fruitfulness?** What does fruit look like?

- **Once you finish, share your responses with your mentor. Ask for feedback. Adjust your draft as needed.**

**Additional Resources for Going Deeper:**



- *Livingstone's Failure and Christ's Success*, by 1517
- *The Insufficient Missionary*, by MTW
- *No Shortcuts to Success*, by Matt Rhodes
- *The Need for a New Paradigm*, by Sarita Hartz
- *A Biblical Interrogation of Success and Failure*
- *Focus on Fruit*, Encounter Training
- *On Golden Shore*, by Courtney Anderson
- *Escaping the Missionary Productivity Trap*, Amy Young

## WAYS SUCCESS IS SEEN ON THE FIELD

For a pioneer missionary, faithfulness, obedience, and fruitfulness are not separate entities but rather interconnected aspects of a holistic approach to ministry. Faithfulness and obedience are essential for a fruitful life and effective ministry, and they are how missionaries bring glory to God.

**Christ-likeness (Fruit of the Spirit):** A pioneer's patience, love, joy, and peace in difficult circumstances (isolation, cultural stress, persecution) are a powerful testimony. Their character becomes a living testament to Christ.

**Steady Witness:** A missionary who is genuinely faithful and obedient, even amidst hardship, is more credible than one who only boasts of numbers. When "success" is measured by God's faithfulness, it prevents pride in visible achievements and fosters humility.

**Honesty and Transparency:** Exaggerating numbers or fabricating stories in reports to maintain support or impress others is a form of lying and dishonesty. A faithful pioneer will genuinely be okay with seasons of fruitlessness, even failure, seeing that God is the One who brings breakthrough.

**Faithful Seed Sowing:** Sharing the Gospel, discipling individuals (even if only one or two), translating Scripture, building relationships, and praying for breakthroughs, even if immediate "fruit" is not evident.

**Deeper-Level Discipleship:** Pressure to produce numbers can lead to "conversions" without genuine repentance or discipleship. Local disciples may adopt a similar false view of success, leading to legalism, comparison, and a lack of grace-driven living.

**Healthy Church Growth:** Churches built on human-driven metrics rather than Spirit-led faithfulness may lack true spiritual vitality and long-term sustainability. Servant-based approaches garner greater and deeper growth.

# AFTERWARD

You've journeyed through these pages, wrestled with the "mini-theologies," and perhaps, if you're like me, felt a few knots unravel in your own heart as you considered God's perspective on awe, abiding, rest, and the sacred everyday. My hope is that this isn't just a book you've read, but a conversation you've had with the Lord and, perhaps, with yourself.

Before we say goodbye – or rather, until we meet again on this wild, grace-filled path – I want to share a final thought, one that often settles over me when I think of new pioneers like you, on the cusp of stepping into the unknown.

The mission field, particularly among the unreached, is a crucible. It's a place where faith is tested, where theories meet reality, and where the depths of God's sufficiency are often revealed in the starkest terms. The mini-theologies you've explored here aren't academic exercises to be checked off a list. They are lifelines for your soul, anchors for your identity, and fuel for your perseverance.

Remember this: God isn't sending you to simply *do* a job; He's inviting you into a profound, transforming *relationship* with Him. Your ability to flourish, to endure, and to truly be fruitful will flow from who you are in Him, not just what you accomplish for Him. Lean into His awe, find your rest in His Sabbath, feast on His Word, and depend utterly on His power. These aren't just good ideas; they are the very rhythms of a sustainable, joyful, and deeply effective life for His glory.

As you step out, whether to a remote village or a bustling unreached city, know that you don't go alone. God's presence dwells in you, and His Spirit will guide you. My prayer is that these practical mini-theologies will continue to be a source of strength and wisdom, anchoring you to the powerful Word of

God and a joyful connection with your Father, especially when the path gets tough.

May your journey be marked by His abundant grace and unwavering faithfulness.

J.T. Hutts

**“NO ONE WILL BE 100% READY, HOWEVER A LACK OF ATTENTION TO THESE AREAS OF THEOLOGY HAVE CAUSED PAIN AND PUSHED MANY OFF OF THE MISSION FIELD PREMATURELY.” — J.T. HUTTS**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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J.T. Hutts brings a unique blend of theological depth and hands-on experience to the world of global missions. After eight formative years in pastoral ministry, including serving as an assistant pastor in his sending church, J.T. and his family embarked on a new adventure in Northern Africa in 2011. There, they have since dedicated their lives to pioneering ministry among the unreached.

The insights within this guide are deeply rooted in J.T.'s own journey of learning and adaptation on the mission field. He candidly shares that despite years of seminary training, "the field itself became my most profound classroom. These mini-theologies emerged from wrestling with God's Word while

navigating language barriers, spiritual opposition, and the sheer everyday complexities of cross-cultural life. They are the truths that consistently re-anchored my soul when external circumstances felt overwhelming.”

Driven by a passion to see other laborers thrive, J.T. is known for his tender shepherd's heart and his commitment to providing practical, biblically-grounded resources. His aim is to equip pioneers with the foundational wisdom needed to not just survive, but to truly flourish in their going to the ends of the earth.

If you enjoyed this book, consider: *Practical Mini-Theologies for Pioneers After Arriving to the Mission Field*.

Learn more about J.T. Hutts

[www.spreadingthefame.com](http://www.spreadingthefame.com) / [www.africanhutts.com](http://www.africanhutts.com)

# **PRACTICAL MINI-THEOLOGIES FOR PIONEERS BEFORE GOING TO THE MISSION FIELD**



**W**e come to the mission field with our thoughts and beliefs. Often times, as events happen on the field, we are wrestling with those thoughts and beliefs in real time. This book explores some of the key theologies that make more sense to cultivate before living on the mission field. It's not that you have to have it all figured out and be one-hundred percent certain before going to the field, but that you're on the path and have put some thought into it.

**"A MINI-THEOLOGY TAKES A SMALLER THREAD OR THEME OF SCRIPTURE AND SEEKS TO MAKE SENSE OF IT. IT IS THEOLOGY MADE PRACTICAL, MEMORABLE, AND LIVABLE."**



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