

THE MISSION NEXT DOOR

UPG Study Week One:

Understanding Unreached People Groups

Introduction

Many people worldwide still have no access to the gospel. While this might seem hard to believe, there are thousands of Unreached People Groups (UPGs), who have little to no Christian presence and no resources to spread the gospel among their own people. As followers of Christ, we are called to care about the unreached and play a role in fulfilling the Great Commission.

This study is designed to help you understand three key realities:

1. What is an unreached people group?
 2. Why do unreached people groups still exist?
 3. Why should we care about unreached people groups?
-

Video: What is an Unreached People Group?

[Click here](#) to watch the video, or access it on the “Week One” webpage.

1. What is an Unreached People Group?

Key verses: **Romans 10:13-15**

Biblical Foundation:

Romans 10:13-15

Paul declares the beautiful Truth, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” What an incredible promise! However, the challenge comes in four rhetorical questions Paul will ask. These questions raise the urgency for us all!

1. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?
2. How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?
3. How are they to hear without someone preaching?
4. How are they to preach unless they are sent?

Definition/Statistics of Unreached People Groups: (Joshua Project)

- A UPG is a group with **less than 2% evangelical Christians** and **less than 5% Christian adherents**.
- Over **3.2 billion people** belong to unreached groups, making up more than **40% of the world's population**.
- There are over **7,000 Unreached People Groups** in the world.
- Currently, there are **180 Unreached People Groups** living in North America.
- The difference between the lost and the unreached is **access**—UPGs often have no churches, Bibles, or Christians nearby or who speak their language.

Questions to consider:

- Paul declares that everyone who calls upon the Lord will be saved. In this passage what is keeping people from calling upon the Lord and thus being saved?
 - *The people cannot call upon the one of whom they have not heard, and they cannot hear unless someone tells them. This is the urgency of taking the gospel to those who are unreached.*
 - *Two realities are present in this verse. People have not heard, and no one is telling them. This gives us our mission!*
- How does the gospel get to those who have not heard according to Paul?
 - *Believers with the gospel must be sent to those who have not yet heard it. Christians must go to the unreached to proclaim the gospel.*
 - *Paul identifies two essential actions in God's mission: sending and proclaiming. There must be those who are sent to those who have not heard and the "sent ones" must proclaim the gospel.*
 - *Our churches must prioritize sending believers to proclaim the gospel to those who have not heard, so that people can call upon the Lord and be saved.*

2. Why do Unreached People Groups still exist?

Key Verses: **2 Corinthians 11:16-33**

Paul recounts all the trials, persecutions and barriers he has faced in proclaiming the gospel. Paul's work was not without tremendous difficulty and danger. Yet Paul, obedient to God's mission, remained faithful.

There are many reasons why some people groups remain unreached. The following are five key barriers that often prevent the gospel from getting to the unreached:

1. **Geographic Barriers** – As one missionary friend once told me, "Some people can only be reached by plane, train, boat, horseback and then a hike." Many people groups live in difficult to reach places by traditional means of transportation.
2. **Cultural and Religious Barriers** – Many live in countries dominated by Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, where conversion to Christianity is discouraged or forbidden.

3. **Political Barriers** – Along the same lines as above, government restrictions often prevent evangelism and persecute Christians who obediently share the gospel. This makes gospel proclamation in the country of origin of many people groups extremely difficult.
4. **Priority Barriers** – Lausanne Movement estimates that only 1.7% of Christian giving goes to reaching the unreached. Only 3% of missionaries go to the unreached.
5. **Awareness Barriers** – Many Christians and many churches are unaware there are so many people groups who have little access to the Gospel. This is the key motivation behind this study.

Questions to consider:

- What adversities did Paul experience as he was sent to proclaim the gospel?
 - *He was whipped, beaten, stoned and shipwrecked. He faced rough terrain, betrayal, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, cold, and more.*
 - *Paul kept his eyes on the mission and not on the barriers that continued to come his way.*
- What do you notice about Paul's resolve in this passage?
 - *Paul trusted God, loved the people and stayed focused on the mission.*

3. Why Should We Care About the Unreached?

Key Verses: **Matthew 28:19; Revelation 7:9; Romans 10:14-15**

If we understand what unreached people groups are and why they exist, the next question to consider is why should we care? It is easy to think our mission just around our church is so big, why would I move out beyond “my Jerusalem”? As with all things, we must be informed by God's Word. Here are three reasons we should care about the unreached:

1. **Matthew 28:19:** Jesus Commands It – Jesus told His followers to make disciples of ALL nations. This command we know as the Great Commission does not afford us the convenience of only making disciples around our church, our state or our nation, it requires us to make disciples of all people groups.
2. **Revelation 7:9:** God's Plan for Redemption – One day, people from every nation, tribe, language will worship Jesus. EVERY nation requires us to go beyond our people group to the ends of the earth to proclaim the gospel of Jesus.
3. **Romans 10:14-15:** Without the Gospel, there is No Salvation – The unreached will only hear about Jesus if someone goes to them. Knowing that salvation is found in Christ alone—and that many have yet to hear His name—should stir within us an urgent desire to go and share the gospel.

Questions to consider:

- What is preventing me from being a part of taking the gospel to the unreached people groups of the world?

- What do I need to change based on my current prayers, giving and obedience versus the commands of Scripture to be more faithful to God's mission to take the gospel to the unreached?
-

4. Next Step: What can I do right now?

Jesus' heart is for all nations to know Him. The task is urgent, and we are part of the solution. To begin this journey of obedience would you consider taking these three next steps:

1. Commit to all 4 weeks of this study.
2. Commit to reading the 31 days of the *God's Mission through the Bible* guide.
3. Commit to praying specifically each day for an unreached people group using the *Unreached People Groups Prayer Calendar*.