

THE MISSION NEXT DOOR

UPG Study Week Three:

God's Sovereignty, our obedience.

Introduction

In Acts 17, Paul walked into Athens, looked around and saw an opportunity. The opportunity Paul visualized and embraced, was God's sovereign movement of people to this global city. This opportunity brought people groups who needed God and emphasized an urgency for the Gospel to be preached to them. Fast forward to today. The same opportunity Paul saw and embraced in Athens has come to North America's global cities. In God's sovereignty, people from all over the world, many unreached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, have come here. These people need to hear about Jesus. The opportunity we have been given to reach them calls on us to be obedient to share the Gospel, make disciples and plant churches in their heart language.

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

1. God's Sovereignty in the movement of people groups.
2. How the global movement of people groups opens a Great Commission opportunity in global gateway cities.
3. A strategic Great Commission response to the reality of unreached and least reached peoples coming to North American.

1. God's Sovereignty in the movement of people groups.

Key verse: **Acts 17:26**

Biblical Foundation:

Acts 17:22-23 – The unknown god

Paul walked into Athens and immediately we can see his missionary mind working. Paul observed the religious practices of the people which were unavoidable. Notice the lens through which Paul viewed the people. Paul saw an opening with the people in their polytheism (the worship of multiple gods). In one of these alters built for worshipping their gods, Paul noticed one built "to the unknown god." It is this opening that Paul used to bring the Gospel to light to these unreached people.

Acts 17:24-26 – The Sovereign God

Paul moved quickly from “the unknown god” to making the Sovereign God known. He described God as creator, Lord of all the heaven and earth and One who created, not One who was created. Paul explained not only was this formally “unknown god” the one true God, but God determined when and where nations would be established and where people groups would find their dwelling place. Whether they appreciated it at the time or not, Paul was revealing to them nothing about this moment in time was random or by accident. This movement in time, just like the time we are in, was determined by God’s Sovereignty.

The urbanization reality of the world population:

- In 2024, it is estimated by the United Nations that 55% of the world population will live in urban areas.
- It is estimated by the United Nations that by 2050, 68% of the world population will live in urban areas.
- According to the Population Reference Bureau, 83% of the population in the United States and Canada are living in urban areas.
- According to Joshua Project, there are currently 180 unreached people groups living in North America. This percentage represents close to 18 million people.

Questions to consider:

- Paul acknowledges the reality of the pluralistic nature of the people in Athens. What did Paul teach the people about God in response to their religious beliefs and practices?
 - *The creative nature of God. (The God who made the world and everything in it).*
 - *Paul gave a simple, short, doctrinal understanding of who God is and how He contrasts with the gods the people groups in Athens had created and worshipped. (...being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by men, nor is he served by human hands)*
 - *Paul lays the foundation for how the people were created, how they arrived in the city and what the purpose of those two things were.*
 - *He made from one man every nation.*
 - *Having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.*
 - *That they should seek God.*
- After establishing the creative nature of God, Paul then proclaims the Sovereignty of God. According to Paul, who ultimately determines the movement of people groups throughout time?
 - *Paul makes it clear; it was God who determined the times and the places where people would dwell on this earth. In other words, the reality of the make-up of Athens did not catch God off guard, nor does the urbanization of the world today.*
- What does Paul say was the ultimate purpose in God’s Sovereignty of determining the times and places where people would live?
 - *“That they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him.”*

2. The Opportunity in global gateway cities

When unreached people groups move to North American cities, an incredible opportunity exist for Christians to share the Gospel of Jesus. People groups that otherwise would be extremely difficult to get to are now at our backdoor. The barriers that once prevented many from going are removed as God has brought the nations here. Watch this video about what God is doing and the Great Commission opportunity before us.

Video: What If?

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

To recap from our previous study, there are five 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** – 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:

- In what ways has God bringing the unreached here removed some of these barriers?
 - *Geographic barriers removed – People are not one or two days away by multiple modes of transportation. They can be reached by a walk in our neighborhood, a visit at a local market, a short drive, or a short plane ride.*
 - *Cultural and Religious barriers lowered – While barriers in this area still exist here in North America, people who move here are often more open to new ideas and have greater availability to hear the Gospel.*

- *Political barriers are removed – In North America we are free to share the Gospel openly and do not have to worry about laws preventing sharing the Gospel in homes, the street or in the marketplace.*
 - *Priority barriers are lessened – The cost of reaching the unreached in hard-to-reach locations is a real issue for many. By prioritizing the unreached here, the financial cost can often be lessened allowing more people to be sent to be a part of God's mission to the unreached.*
 - *Awareness barrier can be overcome – Exposure trips offered by Global Gates such as prayer walking and sifting weeks allow people to see first-hand the unreached people God has brought to North America and often to our city or town.*
 - What barriers might still exist that will require help or resources?
 - *Language, cultural understanding, effective evangelism tools, and proven strategies to reach the unreached from various religious backgrounds.*
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3. A Great Commission Response

In God's Sovereignty, we have access to unreached people groups. The great news is that when people come here and are reached with the Gospel, the gospel finds its way back to their country of birth. Because of ongoing communication back to their country of origin, the Gospel has the opportunity to travel back to some of the hardest places to reach as well. This short video will unpack the full circle opportunity for the Gospel of Jesus to get to the ends of the earth.

Video: Full Circle Strategy

[Click here](#) to watch the video, or access it on the "Week Three" webpage.

The Full Circle Strategy:

- Unreached peoples move to global gateway cities having never heard the name of Jesus.
- Global Gates strategically places missionaries in gateway cities as mission catalysts.
- Missionaries share the Gospel and unreached peoples are saved, trained and equipped.
- New believers share the Gospel in their own language to their communities.
- Communities who were once far from God come to faith in Jesus.
- Churches and discipleship groups are planted among unreached people groups in global gateway cities.

- While remaining connected through technology back to the unreached people group's country of origin, families hear the gospel and believe.
- Repeat – Full Circle.

Questions to consider:

- How does the reality of God's Sovereignty in the movement of people, and the opportunity now available, help create a Great Commission response from you? From your church?
 - What are some ways I or my church can begin to commit to take advantage of the opportunity God has given us to reach the unreached?
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4. Next Step: What can I do right now?

The unreached are coming to North America and give us unprecedented opportunity to make the name of Jesus known to these people groups. Would you consider the following commitments as a result of this opportunity:

1. Commit to praying that God would open your eyes to the people around you. Ask God to show you the unreached you encounter where you live, where you shop and where you travel.
2. Commit to supporting the work of taking the Gospel to the unreached both here in North America and around the world. Many missionaries need monthly support to continue to catalyze the work in the city where they are strategically placed.
3. Commit to going on an Unreached People Groups prayer walk or Sifting week trip with Global Gates to see, learn and experience what God is doing in and among the most unreached people groups right here in North America.