

Session 6: God's World

Objective:

- Learn the difference between country/nation and reached/unreached people group
- Understand beliefs of unreached peoples and the priority of sending global workers and resources to them
- See the increasing opportunities for the Church in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the opportunity for this generation of children to complete the Great Commission

Teaching Time: 1 hour 20 minutes, 2 hours with translation

Materials:

- Bible
- Session 6 handout for each participant
- Unreached Activity bag filled with the following items: another Bible, phone or iPod, picture or simple drawing of a church, mirror
- Colored marker
- Squeeze ball/soft sponge
- Five World Beliefs signs from Teaching Aids folder
- Large rock
- Bell
- Belt that buckles or ties
- Mirror (same item from Unreached bag)
- One heavy book and one lightweight book
- Bowl of water and towel
- Empty clear jar or bottle
- Prayer Cards from the Teaching Aids folder
- An envelope
- Bag and string/rope
- Two helmets
- Flashlight
- Cell phone
- World map

Getting Ready:

1. Using a colored marker, write the word "unreached" on the outside of the bag filled with items for the Unreached Activity.
2. Tape the World Beliefs Signs across the front of your teaching area or lay them on the floor. Put the matching props near each sign: Animist-rock; Hindu-bell, belt; Atheist-mirror; Muslim-heavy and light books, bowl of water and towel; and Buddhist-empty jar/bottle.
Note: You will need to use the mirror from the "unreached" bag when you talk about Atheist beliefs.
3. Make multiple copies of the unreached people prayer cards and cut them apart. Make sure you have one card for every 4-5 participants.
4. Write "Help!" on an envelope. Put the prayer cards inside the envelope. Place the envelope in a bag. Tie a string/rope to the bag.

5. Hide the prayer card bag somewhere in the room before participants arrive. Make sure that the end of the string/rope is visible.
6. Set your cell phone timer to a phone ringtone. Make sure your cell phone is on or near you for the Rescue Activity. If you are using a translator, let him or her know ahead of time that your phone will go off as part of the lesson.
7. Hang a world map on a wall or whiteboard in the front teaching area.
8. Pass out the Session 6 handout to participants before the session begins.

Introduction

This session is about God's world. Today, we encounter people from other cultures and religions on a daily basis, some face-to-face and others via media like television or the Internet.

As parents, we can help shape our children's view of these peoples to align with God's view of them as:

- peoples that God created and loves
- peoples that Jesus died to redeem
- peoples from whom God is worthy to receive worship
- peoples who are like lost sheep without a shepherd

We can teach our children that God has blessed them so that they can be a blessing to the peoples of the world, especially those who are still waiting to hear about Jesus for the first time.

State of the World Today

Through every generation of believers, God has worked to advance His kingdom on earth. Now it is time for our families, including our children, to join with God in the part of His story that is unfolding today.

As our families step into the role that God has for this generation, we need to know the current state of world.

World Population

Our world population is a little more than 7 billion. Let us think about this huge number in a way we can understand.

Suppose you wanted to shake hands with 100 people. If you shook one person's hand every second, it would take you about two minutes.

Suppose you wanted to shake hands with 7 billion people, every person on the planet. If you shook one person's hand every second, it would take 220 years!^[1]

Now that is a lot of people!

Believers and Unbelievers

Remember our 10 people who represented the world?

(Cross both of your hand over your heart.) Who was this one? (Allow responses. Answer: a committed follower of Jesus)

(Put only one hand over your heart.) Who were these two? (Allow responses. Answer: believers in name only, the lost, unsaved)

(Put your hands out in front of you as if you are pushing away the message.) Who were these three? (Allow responses. Answer: People who had heard about Jesus, but rejected the message, the lost, unsaved)

How many had never heard the gospel message? (Allow responses. Answer: 4) They represent about 1/3 of the world.

Can you show me the hand signal for them? (Wait for the participant to cover their ears with their hands.)

Discipling the Nations

Let's learn more about who these people (cover your ears) are.

Nations and People Groups

To begin thinking about this question, let us review one of Jesus' commands that focused on the peoples of the earth. Look at Matthew 28:19-20.

(Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 28:19-20 aloud.)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Nations--we often associate this word with countries, like the nation of ____ [insert name of host country].

What does Jesus mean by *nations*? Let us look at Revelation 7:9. This scene in heaven gives us a clue.

(Ask a volunteer to read Revelation 7:9 aloud.)

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. (Revelation 7:9)

How does this verse add to your understanding of what Jesus meant when He commissioned His followers to "make disciples of all nations?"

(Allow some feedback from the group.)

Jesus was not referring to political nations, countries like Kenya, China, Brazil, or Canada.

The Greek word Jesus used for nations is "ethne" from which we get the word "ethnic." Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples from every ethnic group.

An ethnic group who shares the same language, history, traditions, beliefs, and way of life is called a "people group."^[ii]

The same country may have many different people groups. For example, India is one country with more than 2,500 people groups.^[iii]

Although every country has some followers of Jesus, certain people groups within those countries have little to no followers of Jesus or Christian resources to evangelize their own culture.

These people groups are called "unreached."^[iv]

What would it be like to live in an *unreached* people group? How is it different from being a part of a *reached* people group? Let us do a demonstration to find out.

Reached versus Unreached Demonstration

Individuals living in reached people groups can learn about God if they want to. They have access to churches, Bibles, Christian media, and other believers. It is very different for unreached peoples.

(Show participants the bag labeled "unreached." As you talk, remove the matching item from the bag, show it, and lay it on the table or floor behind you.)

(Remove the Bible.) Unreached peoples do not have access to even one Bible, God's revelation of Himself to us.

God's Word may not be translated into their language or they may be part of an oral culture that needs to learn about God in a different way.

(Remove a phone or iPod.) Many unreached peoples do not have access to media resources that depict what God does or how He relates to people. Not on their radios, iPods, computers, TVs, or phones.

In some cases, people live in areas that are so isolated that they do not have phones or electronic devices.

In other cases, governments that are hostile towards Christianity block transmissions of any presentations about God. North Korea is an example of this.

(Remove a picture of a church.) Unreached peoples live in places where it is almost impossible to attend a church where God's Word is taught in a language they understand or in a way that is relevant to their culture or background.

In some cases, there are no churches at all. If you walked in an American neighborhood, you could see many Christian churches within five miles/eight kilometers.

In Pakistan, you could walk across neighborhoods, large cities, and entire provinces without finding even one community of believers.

In other cases, there may be churches in the area where unreached peoples live, but not with preaching or Bibles in their language.

(Remove the mirror.) Unreached people do not know anyone who reflects God in their culture and no one who can show them what it looks like to follow Jesus in daily life. Their families, friends, coworkers, and neighbors are unreached, too.

(Turn the empty bag upside-down and shake it.) Unreached people do not know anyone who can share the gospel with them, and they have little hope of seeing the gospel lived out in their culture.

When we talk about reached and unreached, it is a matter of *access* to the gospel, not the willingness to believe.

There are about 7,000 unreached people groups in the world today, cut off from Christian witness by barriers of language, religion, government, or geographic isolation.^[iv]

Partner Discussion

Find the partner discussion question at the beginning of your handout. Get with a partner and discuss it.

Reflect on the demonstration you just saw. Compare the lost in reached and unreached cultures?

How are they the same? How are they different?

(After about five minutes, invite a few pairs to share their ideas.)

Introducing Children to the Unreached

Imagine how God could use our children's generation to advance His mission if they knew who unreached people groups were, where they lived, their current state, and God's plan for them!

As parents, how can we begin to introduce our children to the unreached? Start with God's Word.

What Does God's Word Say about Unreached Peoples?

Use Scripture to explain what God's desire and plan is for unreached peoples. Use Scripture to describe their current situation and guide your children's prayers. Here are a few examples.

1. John 3:16 does not say, for God so loved *me*, or for God so loved ____ [insert your country name].

It says for God so loved the *world*. Jesus came to die for the sins of people in *every* culture.

We can invite our children to pray that unreached peoples will come to know the God who loves them and sent His Son Jesus to die for their sins.

2. John 14:6 does not say there are *many* paths to God. It says Jesus is the *only* way; no one comes to the Father except through *Him*.

This means that without Jesus, the unreached cannot have a relationship with God.

We can use this reality to direct our children's prayers for unreached peoples to come to know Jesus, the only way to God the Father.

3. Revelation 7:9 gives our children a peek into the future and a view of heaven.

Earlier we read that people from every tribe, people, and language are worshipping Jesus.

Every people group will be represented in heaven. Knowing this, we can invite our children to pray in hope, to pray expectantly.

God is not going to stop His work on earth until every people group is included in His family!

Prayer

After you use Scripture to share about unreached peoples, encourage your children with what their prayers can do. Here is an activity you can try.

(Change your trainer voice to that of a parent talking to their children.) You might think that your individual prayer will not make much difference in other places around the world, for people that you have never even met. But your prayer can have a big effect because God's power is behind it.

(Show the squeeze ball/soft sponge.)

This stands for our world. What happens when I squeeze this? (Squeeze and wait for responses.)

It changes shape, does it not? When we pray, God hears us and begins to act to change things in the world so that more people can learn about Him.

Unreached peoples really need our prayers.

(Shift back to trainer voice.) Parents, you probably already pray with your children. Expand your prayers to include people without access to the good news of Jesus.

Hang a world map in your home and let it be central to your family prayer times. (Point to world map on wall.)

With younger children, pray for the unreached on each continent.

Older children can pray for the unreached in specific countries, for global workers, and for other global issues and current events that interest them.

Even if your family spends a short time in prayer for the unreached each week, you are developing a lifetime habit in your children of looking outside of themselves and bringing the needs of others to the throne room of heaven.

Beliefs of Unreached Peoples

For our children to pray for the unreached in specific ways, they need to know something about their beliefs and how these contrast with what God's Word says.

If they have never heard of Jesus, what do they believe?

Almost all follow one of these five major belief systems: Animistic, Hindu, Atheistic, Muslim, or Buddhist.

Let us look at each belief system. (Be sure to continually draw participant's eyes to the prop that you are using.)

(Note: You need the following items for this part of the lesson: large rock, belt that buckles or can be tied, bell, mirror, one heavy and one light book, large bowl filled with water and towel; and an empty, clear jar/bottle. (Place the five world religion signs and matching props across the front of your teaching area.)

Animist:

(Hold up the Animist sign. You will need the rock.)

Animistic people believe in a creator who made the world, but they do not believe that God can be known in a personal way or that He is interested in their everyday lives.

(Hold up the rock.) They believe that powerful spirits control what happens in their daily lives. These spirits live in natural objects like rocks, trees, water, mountains, and sometimes animals.

Animists fear these spirits and spend a lot of time trying to please them through sacrifices and rituals.

Animistic peoples do not understand that their Creator loves them and has made a way for them to have a personal relationship with Him.

God longs for animists to worship Him, the Creator of the universe, instead of spirits.

Hindu:

(Hold up the Hindu sign. You will need the bell and belt.)

Most Hindus live in Asia. They believe in many different gods.

(Ring the bell.) When Hindus enter the temple, they ring a bell to wake up any of their gods who might be sleeping.

They worship and pray to idols, or statues, of these gods.

They also burn incense and set gifts of flowers, food, or drinks in front of the idols.

(Stretch the belt into a straight line.) Hindus do not believe that they have one life on earth that has a beginning (point to one end of the belt) and an end (point to the other end of the belt).

(Shape the belt into a circle and buckle or tie it.) Instead, Hindus believe in reincarnation, a continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. They believe that a person's actions in this life will determine the quality of his next life.

For example, when a person who does good things dies, he will come back to earth as something better – like a rich or important person.

A person who behaves badly will be punished in his next life. He will come back to earth like a poor person, an animal, or an insect.

They do not understand that Jesus is unique. They do not understand that Jesus died on the cross to free them from the power and penalty of sin.

God longs for Hindus to turn from idols and worship Him, the true and living God who never sleeps and always hears our prayers.

Atheist:

(Hold up the Atheist sign. You will need the mirror.)

Atheists do not believe God exists. Most live in China, North Korea, and Russia.

(Hold up the mirror.) When you look in a mirror, you see your own reflection. Atheistic people put their faith in themselves and other human beings.

They trust in their education, their careers, their finances, and their government leaders. Some people trust in their dead ancestors.

They trust in science to explain how our world began and where people come from.

God longs for atheistic people to see Him as their Creator and come to know Jesus as their Savior.

Muslim:

(Hold up the Muslim sign. You will need a heavy book, a lightweight book, a large bowl filled with water, and a towel.)

Muslims follow the religion of Islam. Many Muslims live in the Middle East, North Africa, and all across Asia.

Muslims believe in one God – Allah. They try to please Allah by their actions.

(Hold up a heavy book in one hand and a lightweight book in the other hand.) Muslims believe they must earn their way to heaven. If their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, they hope that Allah will allow them to enter heaven.

Muslims do not understand that Jesus has already made a way for their hearts to become right before God. They face daily life without the hope of eternal life that trusting in Jesus provides.

Muslims go to the mosque to pray and worship. Before going inside, they must wash their hands, feet, and face. (Wash and dry your hands.) This shows their desire to have a clean heart before God.

God longs for Muslims to understand that their hearts can be washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

Buddhist:

(Hold up the Buddhist sign. You will need an empty jar/bottle.)

Buddhists live in Southeast Asia in countries like Thailand and Cambodia.

Buddhists believe that suffering in the world is a result of selfish desires – wanting what they cannot have or wanting things that are bad for them.

(Show the empty jar/bottle.) This is empty. Buddhists attempt to empty their minds of evil desires that cause suffering.

Buddhists try to control their thoughts through meditation. They also follow a set of rules to help them achieve right thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Their ultimate goal is to achieve peace.

Buddhists do not understand that true peace comes from a relationship with Jesus, the one who forgives sin and breaks the power that sin holds over us.

God longs for Buddhists to trust in Jesus to remove their sin and provide the peace they desire.

Animists, Hindus, atheists, Muslims, and Buddhists represent the majority of unreached people in our world today.

Parents, you can teach your family about these five religious groups. You could use simple objects found around your home to help your children understand and remember the ideas you share.

Church leaders, you could teach the parents of families in your church in the same way.

Priority of the Unreached

Why is it important to give our children a heart for unreached animists, Hindus, atheists, Muslims, and Buddhists? Currently, few believers are working to reach and disciple them.

About 90 percent of global workers concentrate their efforts in areas of our world where people already have access to the gospel. Less than 10 percent of global workers serve in unreached cultures.^[v]

In some cases there are one or two workers per million people.

What about financial resources? Of all money given to support missions, how much goes to global work among the unreached? What do you think? (Allow a few guesses.)

About two percent is used for global work among the unreached.^[vi]

[Use money from your culture to demonstrate this ratio. Here is an example: For every dollar given in US churches, less than two pennies goes to support work among unreached peoples.]

To advance God's kingdom among the unreached, more believers will need to:

- Become global workers among the unreached
- Leverage their resources to send others to the unreached
- Intercede in fervent prayer for the unreached
- Mobilize others to take up their part in advancing God's kingdom among the unreached.

Our Part

Who will take up the challenge of seeing the unreached peoples come to faith in Christ? It just might be the children in our homes, churches, and community — and here are some reasons why.

Unreached People Groups Decreasing

Today there are about 7,000 unreached people groups. Back in 1990, there were 12,000 unreached people groups.^[vii]

In the past 25 years, the number of unreached people groups has been cut in half. Think about the next 25 years. With all the advances in travel and technology, could we possibly complete the task Jesus gave in the Great Commission?

If this is the case, it is likely that our children may be part of the generation of believers who reaches the remaining people groups with the gospel.

(Point to the participants and yourself.) *Our* children!

Global Vision among Believers Increasing

Historically, mission has been seen as the role of the Western church. However, this is no longer the case.

Almost half of the world's largest missionary sending countries today are located in places other than North America and Europe- countries like Brazil, India, South Korea, Nigeria, and South Africa.^[viii]

Today, believers on every continent are joining with God in His mission. Increasing numbers of local churches are sending workers to the unreached.

Areas that were once mission fields are becoming mission forces. Completing the Great Commission is not the job of the western church, nor the ____ (insert participants' country) church. It is the job of the *global* church.

To see the task complete, we need every believer in every region of the world embracing their role in God's mission.

If God is using the entire global church, then the children growing up in believing families around the world today will play a huge role in finishing the task of reaching the unreached around them. This includes your sons and daughters.

Each of you, point to yourself and say, "My children!" (Allow participants to do this.)

Are Our Children Ready?

The numbers of unreached people groups are decreasing. The methods to reach the remaining groups are advancing. The mission force is shifting to include new laborers. But are the hearts of our children prepared for the task?

"If tomorrow's world of unreached people were waiting for MY kids, would MY kids have a heart to reach them based on what I am giving them?"

As parents, are we giving our children the full picture, that God

- Created all peoples and their cultures
- Loves all peoples
- Sent Jesus to die for the sins of all peoples
- Desires worship from all peoples
- Sends us to all peoples
- And has reserved a place in heaven for peoples from every tribe, tongue, and nation?

Think about the unreached peoples living in or near ____ [insert participants' country]. Have you considered that God wants to use your children as a rescue team to bring them out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His Son?

Rescue Activity

Let us look at Colossians 1:13-14.

(Ask a volunteer to read Colossians 1:13-14 aloud.)

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

(Colossians 1:13-14)

Turn to a partner and discuss the following question: How does this passage relate to our responsibility towards the unreached?

(As participants are discussing, set the clock timer on your cell phone for 15 seconds. Use a phone ringtone for the timer if possible. If you are using a translator, let him or her know ahead of time that your phone will go off as a part of the lesson.)

(Start the time on your phone and begin calling the group back to attention. The timer should go off as everyone is finishing turning their attention back to you. When your timer goes off, pretend like you are answering your phone. Signal for the participants to wait. Nod and comment with a sense of urgency like you are responding to a real emergency caller. Then pretend to hang up.)

(Say with enthusiasm.) We have an emergency! That was a call for help. Somewhere nearby there are people trapped in a dark place. They need to be rescued.

I need two volunteers. (Choose two volunteers to come to the front. Give them helmets and a flashlight.)

The person on the phone said to look for a tiny rope near the location where the people are stuck. Begin your search.

(Have the two volunteers search the room for the bag, bring it to you, and sit down.)

I wonder what is in here. (Open the bag and pull out the envelope. Read the word “Help!” on the envelope. Open the envelope, remove prayer request card, and hold it up.)

Each of these cards represents an unreached people group. All of them are living in darkness. These are the very groups that our children may be called to rescue.

(Hand out the prayer cards to partners or small groups.)

I would like you to pray for two things:

1. Pray for the unreached people group on your card.
2. Pray for the children you are raising and discipling. Pray that they would reflect God’s heart and purposes.

(After about five minutes, close the time of prayer with a prayer of your own for the unreached and children of the host country.)

Conclusion

God desires to use the children of this generation. God invites your sons and daughters to step into their part in God’s story. Are we preparing them well?

Let us help our children become partners in ministry who long for the day when God will be known and worshipped by all peoples and who join with God in making it so.

[i] “The People God Loves” by Chris Maynard. YouTube. Online video clip, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HW6o1gLarvo>.

[ii] Joshua Project (joshuaproject.net).

- [iii] Joshua Project (joshuaproject.net).
- [iv] Joshua Project (joshuaproject.net).
- [v] *Xplore: Discover God's Word, God's World, and God's Work* by the Center for Mission Mobilization.
- [vi] *Xplore: Discover God's Word, God's World, and God's Work* by the Center for Mission Mobilization.
- [vii] Frontier Ventures (frontierventures.org).
- [viii] "Christianity in Its Global Context: 1970-2020" by Center for the Study of Global Christianity. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, June 2013.