

NORTH AMERICAN MISSION STUDY FOR ADULTS

United: Called to Be One

“If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” (Philippians 2:1-2, CSB).

Study Overview

The theme for the 2023 Week of Prayer for North American Missions is “United: Called to Be One.” The focal Scripture verses are Philippians 2:1-2, where Paul is addressing the new church in Philippi. He is encouraging them to work together in spiritual unity toward the same goal of loving people and introducing them to Christ.

We are working in spiritual unity with missionaries across North America when we support them through prayer and giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®. Our gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering provide the funds missionaries need as they train and serve all over North America.

Through this mission study, adults will learn how important it is to work together as one united force to fight the tragedy of human trafficking. They will learn how important it is to give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and to pray for all missionaries in North America.

Perhaps your church or some in your group will become actively involved in ministry for the homeless and/ or victims of sex trafficking as they learn about the ministry of Kay Bennett in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Prepare for the Study

- For overall promotion of the North American Missions Emphasis to your entire church, order the free North American Missions Emphasis print resources including the theme poster, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering envelopes, prayer guides and promotion guides from your state convention office. Ordering information can be found at AnnieArmstrong.com/stateconventions.
- Work with missions leaders and other church leaders to plan aspects of the study, such as scheduling, scope and promotion. Encourage these leaders to enlist other church members to take ownership by helping in the planning and implementation of the study. You may choose to do the study as a special event or incorporate it into an existing meeting or group setting.
- Publicize the study through church bulletins, social media, churchwide announcements, newsletters and so forth.
- Ask small groups and church members to pray for the study outcome. Pray that individuals will be inspired as they learn about missions efforts in North America and will eagerly support those who are serving as missionaries and chaplains with the North American Mission Board (NAMB).
- Consider enlisting an outside speaker, such as a North American missionary, to address the church before beginning the study or as part of it.

- Explore the website, AnnieArmstrong.com/resources, for resources that will enhance the learning experience for your church.
- Download the study materials and video segment, “People for Sale,” from the website, AnnieArmstrong.com/resource/adult-study. Make sure you have a way to show the video.
- Other segments on the website can be used for study purposes or for the Week of Prayer and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering emphases. The video segment for adults features Kay Bennett who is serving in New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Order or download and print enough *2023 Week of Prayer* bookmarks and prayer guides for each participant or family to have one of each. Bookmarks can be ordered from NAMB at AnnieArmstrong.com/resources. Connect with your pastor to receive clear understanding of how your church supports the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. Be prepared to share that with your class.
- Have on hand index cards or paper and pencils or pens for each participant.

Note: You can download videos and other resources at AnnieArmstrong.com. Downloads are free. To order DVDs free of charge, call 1-800-634-2462 or email AAEO@namb.net. You can also check out NAMB’s Facebook page at facebook.com/aaeo.sbc

If you would like to share more about who Annie was and why the offering is named after her, go to AnnieArmstrong.com/who-is-annie. There you will find lots of information and a video.

Lead the Study

Before the Lesson

1. Learn facts about human trafficking and the resources available from the following websites:
 - SendRelief.org/focus-areas/fight-human-trafficking
 - BaptistFriendshipHouse.org
 - PolarisProject.org
2. Learn some statistics about human trafficking for your area and state or province.
3. Learn about compassion ministries in your area that deal with homelessness, substance addictions and trafficking of humans. Those without homes and those addicted to substances are vulnerable to being trafficked.

Introduction

Welcome participants and introduce yourself to those who may not know you. Introduce the study using the information in the study overview. Explain what the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering is and how your church participates. Note that all donations to the offering go directly to support missionaries in North America and their ministries.

Scripture Focus

The theme for this year's study is "United: Called to Be One," and the focal verses are Philippians 2:1-2. In this passage, Paul, while imprisoned in Rome, is addressing the members of the church in Philippi, which was a diverse community. Paul wrote to thank them for a gift they had sent and to encourage them to work in unity with Christ and with each other.

When we work together as the body of Christ, having in mind to accomplish the mission He has given us and yielding to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we are a force to be reckoned with.

This truth is evidenced in the lives of missionaries who are serving throughout North America, such as Kay Bennett in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Transition to the missions lesson/video.

Missions Lesson and/or Video

If you can, show the video for the adult mission study about Kay and have a time of discussion using the suggested discussion points. Download or stream the video, "People for Sale," from here: [AnnieArmstrong.com/resource/adult-study](https://anniearmstrong.com/resource/adult-study).

Be sure to include possible action steps your church can take to be united in bringing the gospel to people in your community who don't have a relationship with Jesus, especially the homeless and most vulnerable.

Note: If you don't have a way to show the video, you can teach from the section below about missionary Kay Bennett. Use the discussion points listed at the end of this section or create your own to suit your class.

Human trafficking is a \$32.6 billion industry. Human trafficking can be defined as: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for sex trafficking or labor through the use of force, fraud or coercion. Trafficking is very profitable for traffickers because human beings can be sold many times over.

Victims of human trafficking are just like you. They are daughters and sons. They can be highly educated or illiterate. They are in your community and around the world. Traffickers will even infiltrate church youth groups and schools. Victims are often hidden in plain sight. The Enemy is indiscriminate and preys on the strong and vulnerable alike.

Kay Bennett is a missionary serving as the executive director of the Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans, Louisiana. She has served as a missionary in New Orleans for 30 years and has seen and helped many victims of human trafficking.

Kay says, "New Orleans has a festival for everything you can imagine. It is a party city, and anytime there's an event or something where large numbers of people come in, more trafficking victims will be brought in because there are more people to buy them."

Baptist Friendship House is a ministry center that helps those who are impoverished, unhoused or are trafficking survivors. If a person is trafficked to Louisiana or New Orleans, they can call the National Human Trafficking Hotline who will call Kay so she can make sure that person is safe and taken care of. Often, she brings them back to the Friendship House. There they experience the love, acceptance and healing power of Jesus.

Kay and the rest of the staff at the Baptist Friendship House partner with many outside agencies, but she knows the greatest weapon against trafficking is God. She says, “If human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world, it stands to reason it is probably one of Satan’s strongest strongholds. So, who better to fight against human trafficking than the Church?”

How can we, the Church, fight? We fight with weapons of spiritual warfare. The devil will not like it when we encroach in his territory, so we must be prepared for the fight. We lean on God’s Word, His armor, His strength and His power.

We pray for victims, their traffickers and those who buy people—yes, even them. We advocate for the victims. We partner with existing ministries and even start new ones.

We work as a united front. When Christians are united in the fight against evil and are on God’s page, evil will not win.

Discussion and Action

1. Ask the class members, what about this story or video impacted them the most?
2. Assign class members to go to BaptistFriendshipHouse.org/human-trafficking, SendRelief.org, and PolarisProject.org. Invite them to share information from those websites.
3. Discuss what you learned from your research about human trafficking statistics in your area.
4. The homeless and the addicted are especially vulnerable to traffickers. Discuss local ministry opportunities in either of these areas of compassion ministry.
5. Develop a plan of action to fight the evil of human trafficking in your area. Information and resources, such as prayer guides, webinars, educational materials, videos and phone numbers can be found at SendRelief.org and BaptistFriendshipHouse.org.
6. Sign up to receive updates and newsletters at SendRelief.org or email EndTrafficking@sendrelief.org for help and advice.
7. The National Human Trafficking Hotline is operated by the Polaris Project (PolarisProject.org). Encourage class members to put the phone number for the National Human Trafficking Hotline in their contacts list: 1-888-373-7888. They can also text 233733 (BeFree) to chat with someone who can help. *For immediate help, call 911.*

Close

Maybe we can’t all do hands-on work with the homeless or trafficked like Kay, but we can all give something to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. This offering helps to fund missionaries all over North America. Most are ministering to hard-to-reach people in hard-to-reach places to see lives miraculously changed as people discover a new life in Christ. That’s something worth investing in. And we can pray for these missionaries.

Distribute the prayer guides and bookmarks you downloaded or ordered from AnnieArmstrong.com/resources.

Using the prayer guide, verbally review the ministries and prayer needs of all the missionaries featured during the Week of Prayer for North American Missions.

Note that every dollar given to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering goes directly to resourcing the mission and ministry of these missionaries and more across North America and not to administrative costs. We emphasize the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering during the Easter season, but donations are accepted year-round.

Encourage participants to make it a family goal to set aside a designated sum of money year-round. Decorate a jar or box in which to put the funds and celebrate as God blesses and multiplies the amount.

Ask for volunteers to pray aloud for the needs of a specific missionary listed in the prayer guide. Encourage participants to use the bookmarks as reminders to pray for these and all missionaries in North America throughout the year. The future of North America rests in the power of prayer and in Christians working together as a powerful, united force.

Dismiss the class.