

NORTH AMERICAN MISSION STUDY FOR YOUTH

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.

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

Students will learn about the ministry of missionary Matt Hadden and his wife, Amanda. Matt and Amanda serve as the executive directors of the Čharjkú Wašté Ranch, which is located on the Pine Ridge Reservation in Porcupine, South Dakota. Their ministry is to members of the Oglala Lakota Native American tribe who live on the reservation.

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 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, “The Good Road,” from the website, AnnieArmstrong.com/resources. Make sure you have a way to show the video.
- The video segment for students features Matt and Amanda Hadden in Porcupine, South Dakota. Download the video from AnnieArmstrong.com/resource/youth-study. If you don’t have a way to show the video, share the story provided with the lesson plan.
- 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.
- The featured missionaries for this lesson are Matt and Amanda Hadden. They serve the Oglala Lakota on the Pine Ridge Reservation in Porcupine South Dakota.
- To conduct the lesson, you will need either a two-sided whiteboard and markers or blank index cards and pens or pencils, and a stopwatch. The clock app on a smart phone has a stopwatch feature.
- Acquire a map of North America that includes the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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

Lead the Study

Introduction and Icebreaker Activity

Welcome students and introduce yourself in case you have students who don’t already 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.

Show them on the map that North America includes the United States and Canada, as well as the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

During the Week of Prayer for North American Missions, we pray for missionaries, and we collect an offering for them named the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

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 even a video.

Tell the students the theme for the 2023 Week of Prayer for North American Missions is “United: Called to Be One.”

Read Philippians 2:1-2 from either a printed Bible or a Bible app. Or ask a student to read the passage. Explain that Paul was encouraging the new church in Philippi that though they might be very different individually, they should all work together in Christian love toward the same goal. Big goals can be accomplished when we work together.

Illustrate the point by playing the icebreaker game below called “United We Stand.”

Icebreaker: United We Stand

Divide the group into pairs. If you have an odd number of students, enlist a teacher or helper. Ask each pair to sit on the floor with their partners, backs together, arms linked. Their task is to stand up together. The goal is not to be in *competition* with each other but to be in *cooperation* with each other.

Once each pair has accomplished standing, join two pairs together so there are four in each group. Start over from the seated position and repeat the task with four in the group.

After each group succeeds, add another pair and do it again.

Keep adding pairs until your whole group is trying to stand together as one. Encourage group members to help any who might struggle.

Tell students that this is how God wants us to operate—all working together toward the same goal while helping others who may be struggling.

Our specific job as Christians is to help bring new believers into God's kingdom. One way to do that is to help missionaries as they minister to people who don't know Jesus.

Transition to the video presentation of Matt Hadden. If you don't plan to show the video, read the story below. Note that there is information in the story that is not in the video, so you may want to do both.

Tell students to listen attentively or even take notes. They will need to remember some of the facts presented for the recap activity that follows the lesson.

Lesson

Spanning 2.8 million acres of rolling prairie in southwest South Dakota lies the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, home to the Oglala Lakota. Pine Ridge is among the largest reservations in the United States and one of the poorest. Families there are at least six times more likely to be on food stamps than most other U.S. residents. The unemployment rate is 80%, and the life expectancy of the average man is only 50 years old.

The Oglala Lakota also suffer from spiritual poverty as fewer than 3% of them claim to know the Lord, even after decades of evangelism. The people are very distrustful of people from the outside, especially Christians, because beginning more than 100 years ago, missionaries made them feel they needed to change who they were to be acceptable to God. They were told they had to abandon their native culture, cut their hair, change the way they dressed and even change their names. Because of that, generations of the Oglala Lakota have rejected Jesus.

The people on the reservation feel defeated and that there is no path to a better life. This has resulted in high rates of depression, alcoholism, drug abuse and even suicide. Life at home for the children is not good because there is much turmoil. Tragically, the suicide rate among teens and even pre-teens on the reservation is 300 times the national average. January through March is called suicide season.

This is the heartbreaking situation Matt and his wife, Amanda, encountered when they came to the Pine Ridge Reservation in March 2012. Though the government promised to take care of the Lakota, many needs still go unmet. Matt and Amanda knew the best way to help the people on the reservation and develop trust was to meet those needs. They began a three-lane ministry approach starting with the

Čhaŋkú Wašté (pronounced Chon-coo Wash-tay) summer camp for kids, a wellness ministry to help with medical needs and a construction ministry to help repair and rebuild homes on the reservation.

Čhaŋkú Wašté means “the good road in the badlands.” This summer camp was started so the kids could be fed healthy meals and connect with local churches. The camp is a safe place for kids ages 4–17 to learn about Jesus and His love and to just be kids free from whatever problems they may have at home.

There is also a wellness center that currently provides access to a dentist. Future expansion will include counseling, help with alcohol and drug addictions and a pregnancy center.

Matt’s background is in construction. Many homes on the reservation are unsafe and in disrepair. Some have 12–15 people living in them. Some are without electricity or running water. Matt and his team create safe living spaces by repairing and restoring homes, building additional rooms and even building tiny new homes.

Amanda is the executive secretary for the ministry center and the director of the summer camp. She also is a friend to women and girls of all ages. She spends a lot of time talking with girls who have attempted suicide or are contemplating it. She is a friend to them as they go through seasons of depression, anxiety and panic attacks.

Matt believes that whatever God wants done, He provides for. That includes providing money, equipment, people, time, energy and enthusiasm.

Matt says, “Whatever it is, whatever God is ordering, He pays for. So, I’m just grateful I get a front-row seat to see the provision of God through the offerings and gifts of people sitting somewhere who have never been here before.”

Recap

The group will be working in two teams to recall facts about the situation on the Pine Ridge Reservation and what is being done about it.

Items needed:

- 2-sided whiteboard or blank index cards
- 2 whiteboard or other markers

Divide the group into two teams. If using a whiteboard, have teams stand on either side of it in their group. If using index cards, have the teams sit in their groups.

Allow each team to choose one person to write answers to the questions on either the whiteboard or the index cards. Answers should be numbered as the questions are asked so there is no mix-up.

Questions:

1. What are names of the missionaries we are studying? *Matt and Amanda Hadden*
2. In which state are they serving? *South Dakota*
3. What is the name of the reservation? *Pine Ridge*
4. Are the members of the Oglala Lakota rich or poor? *Poor*

5. Fill in the blank: In Pine Ridge, there are high rates of depression, alcoholism, drug abuse and even _____. *Suicide*
6. What did the missionaries start for kids? *Summer camp*
7. What do the missionaries do to the homes of the people? *Repair them, add to them, etc.*
8. How do they help the people with their health needs? *Wellness center with dental care*
9. Who does Amanda help when they are having a hard time and thinking of hurting themselves? *Girls and women*
10. Who does Matt trust to provide for their ministry? *God*

Go through the questions and tally the correct answers. Make sure to discuss the questions and answers, especially 5–10. Emphasize that we are partners with the ministry to the Oglala Lakota when we pray and give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

If you are leading a mature group of students, you can move to the optional discussion below about teen suicide. If that discussion is too disturbing for your group, move to the prayer activity.

Optional Discussion About Teen Suicide

Within a three-month period in 2015, 26 young people living on the Pine Ridge Reservation were in such a despairing state of hopelessness that they completed suicide. One girl was only 12 years old. Suicide has become so commonplace there that it barely even makes the news anymore. The months of January through March are even nicknamed suicide season.

Students may be surprised to know that suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people ages 15 to 24 in the U.S. According to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), nearly 20% of high school students report serious thoughts of suicide, and 9% have made an attempt to take their lives. This reflects the hopelessness people who are living without Jesus can feel.

Open the floor for honest discussion on students' thoughts on the causes of these dire statistics. Discuss what they can do about it as individuals and as a group.

Students and adults can help by recognizing warning signs and taking action. The information below is taken from the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. The number for the national suicide prevention hotline is 988. *Calling or texting 988 will connect anyone to immediate help.*

Warning Signs

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs

- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Extreme mood swings

Encourage your students to let an adult know if they have a concern about someone they know. Encourage them to come alongside as a friend who is ready to listen. They need not fear making the problem worse by talking about it. Encourage your students to bring that person into your youth group and to help him or her fit in. Every person is valuable to Jesus, and He loves them more than they know. He sees them and knows them.

Encourage your students to pray for all the young people who feel purposeless, worthless and hopeless.

Who knows? —they may save a life.

Pray

Pray for Matt and Amanda Hadden and the other Week of Prayer 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. We emphasize the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering during the Easter season, but donations are accepted year-round.

Encourage students 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 students 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 unified prayer.