

NORTH AMERICAN MISSION STUDY FOR ADULTS

Make Jesus Known

“Then he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation’”
(Mark 16:15, CSB).

Study Overview

The theme for the 2024 Week of Prayer for North American Missions is “Make Jesus Known.” The focal Scripture verse is Mark 16:15, where Jesus gives His apostles final instructions before His ascension into heaven. These instructions are known as “The Great Commission.” Jesus commissions all His followers to tell the world about Him. He wants everyone, everywhere to embrace Him as Lord and Savior.

We can’t all go into all creation, so we send missionaries. Our gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® provide the funds missionaries need as they train and serve all over North America, making the name of Jesus known. We are helping missionaries across North America when we support them through both our prayers and our giving.

Through this study, adults will learn about the ministry of missionary Josh Glymph and his wife, Beth. Josh and Beth planted Refuge Church in the urban core of Jacksonville, Florida, in the diverse community of Ortega, which is near Naval Air Station Jacksonville.

Josh and Beth are also foster/adoptive parents. Of their five children, three are adopted. Little did they know when they planted Refuge Church that it would lead to ministering to and creating a community for other foster/adoptive families, which grew the church.

Ministering to adoptive and foster families is the heart of Refuge Church. Through their Seek Refuge ministry, they provide resources, guidance and support. Because of this ministry, the church grew from two to 225 within two years, and they are preparing to send out a church planter of their own. One-quarter to one-third of Refuge Church is made of families who are either actively fostering, adopting or who want to help.

Prepare for the Study

- For the promotion of the North American mission emphasis to your entire church, download resources at AnnieArmstrong.com/resources or order the free North American mission emphasis printed resources, including a theme poster, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering envelopes, a promotion guide and prayer 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 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.

- 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 mission 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 for adults from the website, AnnieArmstrong.com/resource/adult-study. The video segment for adults features Josh and Beth Glymph in Jacksonville, Florida. If you don't have a way to show the video, share the story provided with the lesson plan.
- Other segments found online can be used anytime for study purposes or during the Week of Prayer and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering emphases.
- Order or download and print enough 2024 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.

Note: Your church has permission to download videos and other resources from 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

Before the Lesson

1. Learn some statistics about the number of children in the foster care system in your area, state or province.
2. Learn about compassion ministries in your area that deal with foster care and adoption. Sometimes this information is available on your state convention website. Think of things your church or group can do to contribute.
3. Consider coming alongside foster and adoptive parents in your church.

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 "Make Jesus Known," and the focal verse is Mark 16:15, where Jesus is giving His apostles final instructions before His ascension into heaven. These instructions are known as "The Great Commission."

Have a participant read Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:18-20. Point out that both of these passages are called the Great Commission. Jesus commissions all Christians to tell everyone, everywhere about Jesus.

For the Glymphs, this rings true for the hundreds of thousands of orphans in the world who might never know about Jesus without a family bringing them into their home to present Jesus to them and bring them to the church where they will be loved.

Transition to the missions lesson/video.

Missions Lesson and/or Video

Show the video for the adult mission study about the Glymphs and have a time of discussion using the suggested discussion points. Download or stream the video from here: AnnieArmstrong.com/resource/adult-study.

Be sure to include possible action steps your church or group can take to help foster and adoptive parents. Suggestions can be found in the "Discussion and Action" section of this study.

Note: If you don't have a way to show the video, you can teach from the section below about the Glymph family and their ministry in Jacksonville. Use the discussion points listed at the end of this section or create your own to suit your class.

Josh and Beth Glymph didn't set out to plant a church in Jacksonville, Florida, that would provide a community for foster and adoptive parents, but that is what happened. The Glymphs are foster/adoptive parents. Three of their five children are adopted. This is how Refuge Church began.

Josh says, "One of the unique and interesting things about Refuge is, when we began to have services and start this church, we were a foster family. We were active in foster care. And we didn't necessarily platform that, but as people found out, they said, 'Hey, there's a pastor who's doing what we're doing.' I think there's something to Christians seeing a pastor who's joining them in the fight."

And now, as the Lord brought foster and adoptive families to the church—so many that one-quarter to one-third make up the church—the church has grown from two to 225 within two years. The heart of Refuge Church is to care for fostered and adopted children and their parents.

Josh says, "We have met a lot of people via social media because they have heard that we are active with foster and adoptive families. They see that and come here to have a need met. Through that, we build a relationship. Next thing we know, they're coming to our monthly support meeting. Then they are in our church on Sunday."

The Glymphs learned that many of the new families didn't have a church home before coming to Refuge because they hadn't found a place where they thought they fit in. Their family didn't look like most families, but the Glymph family looked like theirs, and they felt they could fit in.

Josh says, "If you looked at a picture of our family, we certainly look different. You see brown hair, you see dark skin and you see blonde hair. We look like a diverse family in some ways."

Refuge Church has a unique ministry called Seek Refuge, which has brought many new families to the church and fulfilled a great need in the community. The ministry has a support group, who meets monthly, and a meal and childcare are provided. Seek Refuge offers an opportunity to build community, stay connected and share resources.

Beyond that is a closet full of diapers, shoes, strollers, clothes and car seats. If a family gets a foster placement, they can get these items for free. The church also does a big toy drive every Christmas and sponsors events such as a cookout and a closet cleanout. They work hard to get as many diapers, clothing sets and shoes as possible into the hands of the people who need them.

None of this would be possible without the partnership of Refuge's Sending Church, Fruit Cove Church. Fruit Cove Church has adopted Refuge Church and the Ortega community. Josh defines a Sending Church as a church who sees the need and sees the call and is willing to give up resources—including human resources— and send them out. They see the kingdom impact of sending out is bigger than growing their little kingdom.

Our gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering enable the work of Refuge Church and Seek Refuge ministry. Through the offering, needs are met, and people are brought into the kingdom.

Josh says, "Ultimately, adoption is a picture of our salvation. Through Jesus, we have been brought into God's family, and so, how can the message of the church not be that God celebrates and has a heart for adoption? If He's adopted us, certainly, He's putting a desire inside of us to see others adopted as well."

Discussion and Action

1. Ask the class members, what about this story or video impacted them the most.
2. Ask participants what they believe could be the hard parts of fostering or adopting. *Dealing with red tape, possibly dealing with birth parents, trauma in the child, lack of resources, etc.*
3. Offer ways your church or group can help foster and adoptive parents with the issues mentioned above and others that may have been mentioned.
4. Brainstorm ways to help and encourage a foster or adoptive family in your church or community. Here are some suggestions, and you can find more information from Send Relief at SendRelief.org/projects/family-advocacy-ministry.
 - a. Bring food.
 - b. Offer to babysit.
 - c. Organize a parents' night out.

- d. Develop a ministry similar to Seek Refuge, keeping on hand supplies such as diapers, car seats, shoes and clothing.
- e. Stuff backpacks with hygiene items, toys and personal items for the children. Many foster children arrive at their foster homes with their few belongings in a trash bag.

Close

Maybe all of us can't do hands-on work with foster or adoptive families like Josh and Beth Glymph, but we can all give something to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering to support missionaries who have this type of compassion ministry. This offering helps to fund missionaries all over North America. The goal is to see lives miraculously changed as people discover a new life in Christ. That's something worth investing in.

We can also 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 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 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 as they make Jesus known.