

mission:world

NEWS

THE UNSEEN REALITIES OF SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE ON THE MISSION FIELD

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Welcome to a series of articles exploring the often-unseen realities of life on the mission field. Inherent difficulties and expectations of suffering are always intertwined with the call to global mission. We will draw insights from scripture and the experiences of those who have lived the reality of suffering on the mission field.

The concept of suffering as a normal part of the Christian life, and particularly in the context of mission, is a recurring theme throughout scripture. The apostle Peter addresses believers as “foreigners” facing trials, reminding them that even amidst suffering, there is “wonderful joy ahead” and that these trials serve to prove the genuineness of their faith, which is more precious than gold. He emphasizes that suffering for doing good is pleasing to God, echoing the example of Christ who suffered for us, leaving us a pattern to follow. This perspective reframes suffering not merely as an unfortunate circumstance, but as a potential pathway to deeper faith and partnership with Christ in His suffering.

Jesus himself spoke of the necessity of death for new life, comparing it to a kernel of wheat that must die to produce a harvest. He also stated that those who cling to their earthly lives will lose them, while those who lose their lives for His sake will save them. This demands a complete commitment, a willingness to embrace hardship for the sake of the mission. Paul exhorted Timothy to “endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus,” highlighting the disciplined and sacrificial nature of this calling, where involvement in civilian affairs can distract from pleasing the one who enlisted them. This military analogy underscores the idea of a focused dedication that may require setting aside personal comforts and desires.

The book of Acts provides numerous historical accounts of the difficulties faced by early Christians and missionaries. The apostles encountered opposition from religious and political authorities, faced imprisonment, threats, and even physical violence like stoning. These experiences illustrate that the advancement of the gospel often occurs in the face of significant adversity. Paul’s own testimony in 2 Timothy details the persecutions and sufferings he endured in various cities, yet he affirms that the Lord rescued him from them all. He further states that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”. These precedents establish a clear expectation that those engaged in spreading the gospel may encounter various forms of opposition and hardship.

BMA Global, a mission organization, explicitly acknowledges the “inherently high levels of risk” involved in the work of Christians and missionaries, citing examples such as crime, politics, terrorism, health issues, and natural disasters. Our theology of risk is rooted in the Great Commission and the New Testament method of missions, which inherently involves going into challenging contexts. They point to Jesus’ suffering as an example and the expectation for followers of Christ. The “incarnational life,” as described by BMA Global, involves self-denial and a commitment to exalting God, potentially

even leading to death. We acknowledge the legacy of missionaries who have faced death, health issues, imprisonment, and impoverished conditions for the sake of the gospel.

While acknowledging the risks, BMA Global emphasizes the urgency of the mission and the need to not back down from spreading the gospel. Scripture presents examples of both fleeing and facing persecution, suggesting that the decision is often a matter of discernment and faith based on the specific circumstances. The apostles sometimes fled to continue their ministry elsewhere, while at other times they remained in dangerous situations because of the need for people to hear the gospel. BMA Global aims to provide missionaries with the best possible risk assessments to inform their decisions.

In conclusion, the sources paint a consistent picture of the mission field as an arena where difficulties and suffering are often normative. These challenges can manifest in various forms, ranging from external opposition and persecution to internal struggles and the sacrifice of personal comforts. However, within this framework, there is also the promise of God’s presence and the potential for spiritual growth and eternal reward. Understanding this inherent aspect of the mission is crucial for those who are considering or currently engaged in this vital work. The contributions from BMA Global missionaries in following weeks will delve deeper into specific experiences of difficulties which serve to remind us that the gospel always advances in a context of suffering.





WINNING THE WAR FOR SOULS

By Michael Strong
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Souls matter to God. Scripture is clear on this. I don't think anyone in our association of churches would argue otherwise. What I want to argue today is that since souls matter, cities matter. Let me explain why.

Census.gov says, per the 2020 census, that 80% of Americans live in urban areas despite raising the minimum requirement of population to twice its previous number. They also found that urban areas are becoming more densely populated. And housing - if we zoom out to look at the world as of 2023 - approximately 4.6 billion people (57% of the world's total population) live in urban areas. That is a lot of souls.

Also, the diversity in urban areas presents us with unique opportunities to fulfill our mission and overcome to do so. If it is true that God has tasked us with the responsibility of making disciples of all peoples everywhere, which He has, then we will have to be very intentional about the way we address urban missions throughout the world.

The best way to do that is by planting churches in urban areas.

At the beginning of the story of scripture we see "paradise lost." God has completed His work of creation and crowned it with mankind. Once man sins, we see God come

and begin a new plan, a new mission, to seek and save the lost. He is dead set on re-establishing His kingdom and conquering His enemies. As the story unfolds, we learn God



is going to come Himself to do what we cannot do. He is going to seek and save the lost. But we also learn He has a place for us in that plan.

We aren't supposed to just sit on the sidelines and watch. Instead, He has decided to live within His people and to work through them to accomplish His marvelous, mysterious plan to overcome the sin and brokenness mankind brought to His good world. As Christ followers, we are sent (commissioned) by God to embark on a massive rescue mission. Our charge is to seek out and gather all of His people, His lost sheep, who are caught in the middle of a spiritual war that spans the globe. There is no place that can be left in the dark or untouched.

We have to go to all the peoples of the world and share the good news of Jesus Christ. That is our mission. That is our privilege. In light of the fact that so many people live in urban areas, cities have to be a part of that mission. That means churches should have a place in their missions strategy that involves actively engaging in major urban areas.

I feel an especially strong conviction about this because God moved me to

Minneapolis in 2012 and opened my eyes to the reality I hadn't seen back home in Little Rock, Arkansas. Though Little Rock is an urban area, Minneapolis and the Twin Cities metro was something much larger. I want to use my current city to help share what God exposed me to before we broaden our view and look at much larger cities.

Currently there are over 262 racial or ethnic groups and 778 native tribes that reside here. The religious background is just as diverse with a large number of Wiccans, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, New Age spiritualists, and Scientologists, among other pagan groups who call the Twin Cities home. Not only that, but these ethnic and religious groups have different languages. My Ethiopian neighbor speaks Amharic, but many of the Ethiopians here do not. Ethiopians speak somewhere between 89 to 109 different languages in their home country. We have a large number of Ethiopians here as well as a large population of Somalians. Many times they work in the same places with the same jobs like the taxi station by the airport. Just like in Ethiopia and Somalia, these peoples have issues with each other. They are at war and unreconciled.

Somalians are also known for speaking one or two major languages, but as Somali populations move here, we are faced with the reality that many of them speak a tribal or minority people group's language. That means you could meet a Somalian that speaks Bajuni Swahili and an Ethiopian that speaks Oromo on the same block or at lunch in the same taxi station playing chess. But it would be hard to reach both sides of those populations for a number of reasons beyond language and cultural barriers.

In spite of that, Jesus has made it our task to reach people of every nation, tribe, and tongue. And when He said it, He declared it would be accomplished. It is guaranteed because He will do it through the Church. That is exciting to me. It's worth embracing the challenge and diligently seeking to work with God to fulfill His commission.

Strategically speaking, the diversity of a metro area like the Twin Cities will require many different missionaries committed to reach these varied groups. Fortunately, we can raise up missionaries right here as we plant biblically faithful churches who make disciples the way Jesus commanded. We can raise up and fund missionaries to all the people groups here. But the work has to start with someone.

The work has to plant a missionary minded church. If we do that, we can make a global impact. That's a significant opportunity for a metro area that ranks 16th in the United States population-wise at roughly 3.7 million people. Arguably, the potential for similar sized urban areas around the world should be just as profitable to invest in sending and raising up missionaries focused on planting biblically faithful churches. There are then 15 more larger and denser populated metro areas right here in the United States. Let's broaden that scope a bit.

The Twin Cities are often cited as the 100th largest metro area worldwide, so consider this with me: That means there are areas in our country and around the world that missionaries could target strategically to put soldiers on the ground where even higher opportunities and challenges exist. And it's worth doing to see souls rescued and added to the Kingdom from all kinds of ethnic and religious backgrounds, souls that will turn rebels into worshippers and servants of the living God. Please join me in praying for God to raise up and commission urban missionaries who will dedicate their lives to loving the people of these cities enough to plant biblically faithful churches around the world.

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REACHING THE UNREACHED IN ZAMBIA

By Mickeal Quillman
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Nestled deep in the southern province of Zambia, Africa, lies the chiefdom of Sekute — one of the 72 tribal chiefdoms in the region. Sekute is home to several tribal communities, including the Tonga, Lozi, and Tokaleya people, many of whom have yet to hear the Gospel of Christ. This remote region, formerly known as Northern Rhodesia, has become not only our home but also our passion. The people here are now our family.

For the past three years, we have been dedicated to bringing the Good News to these secluded villages. Within Sekute, named after the chief and his family, there are over 550 villages. The chief defines a village as a settlement with at least 10 families. However, many smaller villages with just 50-75 people may not be officially recognized, but they are still part of this vast area in need of the Gospel.

Navigating Traditional Leadership

One of the greatest challenges we face is the complex web of traditional leadership in the chiefdom. Before we can share the gospel with the villagers, we must first gain the approval and support of the chief, his council, and the senior headmen, along with the local village headmen and elders. These leaders are the gatekeepers of their communities. Without their blessing, it is nearly impossible to minister effectively.

In Sekute, all the land belongs to the chief, including the individual villages. This territory is considered part of his ancestral homeland, and the title of chief is typically passed down through the bloodline, usually to the firstborn son, though there are exceptions.

Over the past few years, we've invested countless hours building relationships with these local leaders, learning their customs, and showing deep respect for their authority. Our goal has also been to share the gospel with them, praying for their personal transformation. We are encouraged to see God at work in the hearts of these leaders. Several have begun to show interest in the gospel, and currently, we have seven local headmen who have professed faith in Jesus Christ. We pray that they will soon become champions of the faith, guiding their communities to know Christ.

A Heart for the People

Among the key leaders we've been working with is Chief Sekute himself. He has shown openness to our ministry, even inviting us to share the gospel at his home. We've met with Chief Sekute many times, and he is eager to see his people reached and discipled. Chief Sekute professes belief in the One True God — a term we use specifically, as witchcraft is widespread throughout many of the villages. In these areas, worshipping multiple gods, led by local witchdoctors, is common.

These witchdoctors wield power over their followers through fear, demanding monetary compensation for their services. Part of their worship involves praying to the spirits of deceased ancestors. Their belief system closely mirrors the question posed to Jesus in John 9 about the blind man: any illness, death, or misfortune is attributed to a curse brought on by wrongdoings in the family. These curses, they teach, can only be lifted by the witchdoctor in exchange for payment.

As we share the gospel, we emphasize that accepting the One True God requires



rejecting all other gods. For some of our people, this conversion process involves burning the idols and totems they have received from witchdoctors. It is a powerful and transformative act, symbolizing their commitment to Christ alone.

Fruit of the Labor

As we continue our ministry within the Sekute chiefdom, we are beginning to see the fruit of our labor. Villagers are coming to faith, and we've planted our first church in a central location that serves 24 surrounding villages. We are also training local leaders to disciple and pastor these new believers. Currently, six men are being trained and discipled to become pastors, who will go on to disciple others and plant churches within their own villages.

The greatest joy of our ministry is witnessing the lost come to faith and watching them grow in their relationship with Christ. Our passion is not only to reach the lost but also to equip new believers to become disciple-makers who will multiply the Kingdom. It is a privilege to be a part of God's work in the Sekute chiefdom, and we are excited to see what the future holds as local villagers begin to plant their own churches and spread the Gospel among their people.



OUR DIGITAL MISSION FIELD

By Emily Brantley
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At Lifeword, we recognize the internet as one of the most expansive and dynamic mission fields available today. The digital revolution has transformed the way people interact, learn, and seek truth. Every day, billions turn to the internet for guidance, community, and meaning. While it can be a place of distraction and misinformation, it also presents an extraordinary opportunity for evangelism—a field ripe for the harvest.

Jesus commanded His followers, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19-20). Never before has reaching the nations been so accessible. Through digital media, Lifeword is sharing the Gospel in ways that were once unimaginable. The rise of social media, streaming services, and AI-driven engagement has connected the world like never before—and we are leveraging these tools to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ.

Did You Know?

- As of February 2025, 5.56 billion people—67.9% of the global population—are internet users. Of those, 5.24 billion (63.9%) engage on social media.
- Lifeword has cultivated a global audience, with over 2.5 million followers across 15 Facebook pages.
- We currently broadcast in 170 languages, reaching a potential listening audience

of 2 billion people.

- Every \$1 spent on social media advertising allows us to share the message of Jesus Christ with over 100,000 Facebook users.
- In 2024 alone, Lifeword reached 236 million Facebook accounts with Gospel-centered programming.

Lifeword’s Online Impact

Lifeword’s mission extends beyond simply sharing the message of salvation. Through our new online discipleship platform, FOLLOW, individuals can deepen their understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ and find connection with local churches.

The Lord is using media ministry in new and transformative ways, and we are grateful to be part of this movement. Our partnership with BMA churches ensures that the message of Jesus reaches the nations through the digital mission field. We acknowledge that the internet can be a challenging space for those who proclaim Christ, yet it remains a place where God’s people can have a profound and lasting impact.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support. Lifeword is your media ministry, uniquely positioned to help your church fulfill the Great Commission. Together, we are making Jesus known to the world.

