

God Glorified: A Foundation for Missions

by Dick Brogden

God's heart for his own glory is the foundation of missions, and abiding in Jesus is necessary for fruitfulness and making many disciples.

Duration: 37:07

Scripture: John 15:1

Topics: "Missions"

Description

The video discusses the importance of understanding and empathizing with Arab Muslims as individuals with fears and hopes. It emphasizes the need to recognize that they are mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters, just like anyone else. The speaker also mentions the significance of the Bible as a missionary text, highlighting how missions is the organizing theme of the Bible. The video concludes by mentioning the story of Eric Liddell, a missionary who dedicated his life to Jesus Christ and ultimately died for his faith.

Transcript

Hey River Valley Church, I just want to talk to you real quick about our guest speaker today. He's one of my favorite people in the whole world. Our first missionary that we supported as a church.

He's out there risking his life, really pioneering the way and trying to be a light of the gospel to those that have a Muslim belief. And we're trying to share Christianity with them. And Dick Brockman is out there pioneering the trail, just doing an amazing work.

I was going to be on vacation today and wanted to be here so bad to hear him preach. So I even came back. I want you to open up your hearts.

I believe he's anointed. I believe he's a man of God. He's an apostle for our age.

And I believe he's got something to say to you because he spent time with God. And I want you to welcome Dick Brockman. Well, good morning.

How are you all today? All right. The Hebrew word for glory is the word havad. And it literally means heavy.

And the sense is that the presence of God is so tangible that it can be felt. It has weight. God, who is so supreme and holy and majestic and awesome and powerful and sustainer, he's so real to us that we can

actually feel his presence.

And when we feel the presence of Jesus, that is when we're experiencing his glory and we fall with kings and prophets and we say, I am undone because nothing compares to the presence of Jesus. Nothing compares to the presence of God. And missions, therefore, must start and end with this question of glory.

God is dedicated to his own glory. God is dedicated to making himself famous in all of the earth. And this is not megalomania, writes David Mathis, because if knowing Jesus were anything less than the greatest of enjoyments, then this pursuit would be unloving.

But he is the most valuable reality in the universe. Therefore, it is profoundly loving for Jesus to exalt himself. And he cannot love the nations without putting himself on display because it's only Jesus that really satisfies the human soul.

And this makes God's heart for God the deepest foundation of missions. And yet, God is not glorified as he should be. Not in me and not in you and not in the earth.

Missions exist because John Piper says worship doesn't. Does God have enough glory in your life? When you walk into a restaurant, can people sense the presence of Jesus? Because the weight is so heavy upon you. Does God have enough glory in this church? Does God have enough glory in the earth? Does it honor God that there are peoples that don't worship him? Is God exalted as he should be when there are peoples and places not exposed to the weight of his presence? Is God praised as he should be when he's not yet famous to every man and lauded by every tongue? Is God really magnified when there are 1.5 billion Muslims that deny his Christ and mitigate his deity? Ichabod.

Ichabod. The glory has departed. God's glory is not known by unreached people groups.

And the lands of Augustine and Origen and Athanasius and Tertullian and the Bishopric in Alexandria, North Africa, the Middle East used to be a Christian area. But the glory is gone. And there is no sense of the presence of Jesus amongst these precious people amongst whom he died to save.

I don't want this to be theoretical for you. I want you to understand that Arab Muslims are mothers and fathers and sons and daughters with the same fears and hopes that you have. Would you watch this video with me please? The street lamps and the buildings are staring down at me.

I am stumbling to tell you that I love you, but I'm mumbling. The clock inside my head comes ticking to a halt as I go tumbling into another country where the warm and fuzzy sea is always rumbling. And I float along in the sea.

And I float along in the sea. And you sing to me in my dreams. You sing to me in my dreams.

You sing to me in my dreams. That Arabic calligraphy that you saw at the end there says very simply in Arabic, For the glory of God. For the weight of the presence of Jesus everywhere we live dead.

Functionally live dead simply means these three things. Church planting amongst unreached people groups through multinational teams. Over the course of the weekend, this will be the fourth different sermon that I've shared with your church.

And the first three have been a little more provocative, a little more of a call to the challenge of living dead. But in this last one, I want to do something a little bit different. And we won't be looking at cost as much as

we'll be looking at character.

What type of people do we need to be if we're going to be able to follow Jesus and to live dead? I know it's not the Christmas season, but I love hymns, I love carols. And the Christmas carol, Away in a Manger, has a second verse that goes like this. Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay.

Close by me forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care. And take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

You ever heard that? Be near me, Lord Jesus. If you have your Bibles, would you turn to John chapter 15, and I'm going to read the first eight verses of that chapter. John chapter 15, verses 1 through 8. I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered.

And they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit.

So you will be my disciples. From generations and from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible unfolds the mission of God. The Bible basically is a missions text.

Missions is not just a little theme in the Bible. It is the organizing theme of which the Bible therefore makes sense in its entirety. And John is no different.

John's gospel is a missionary gospel. And John poignantly cites his theme from the mouth of non-Jews. In John chapter 4 verse 42, when he puts it into the mouth of the Samaritans, and they declare, We know that this indeed is the Christ, the Savior of the world.

This theme is echoed by John in his epistle, 1 John chapter 4 verse 14, And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. And then summarized at the end of John's letter with the purpose statement of the book in John chapter 20 verse 31, where he says, These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. The key verses in the gospel of John accent the deity of Christ, all the I am's, and his saving intention for all people groups on earth.

Pastorally, John is writing this letter to Christians in order that they super exalt Jesus and that they make disciples of Jesus of everyone everywhere. And by the time we get to chapter 15 in John, it is the night of betrayal. Jesus is giving his last instructions to the disciples, and some think because the last verse in chapter 14 and the first verse in chapter 18 that Jesus was speaking as he was walking.

And so perhaps Jesus has left the upper room and he's walking by a vineyard, and he's seen it, and he's looking at the temple, and he's talking as he's going by these things. And you know on the temple there

was something that was called the golden vine. It was a gilded image of Israel as God's vine that was crafted onto the temple mount.

And maybe he was still inside and looked at one of the coins. The Maccabees had a vine as the national symbol of Israel. And for whatever reason, whether it was the golden vine at the temple or passing a vineyard as he walks or looking at a coin, Jesus has this metaphor of a vine in his mind.

And he says, I am the true vine. Meaning that power and life is not found through religion, and it's not found in politics, and it's not found in money. But Jesus is life.

By implication, therefore, there are many false vines. Do you realize that missions is a false fuel? Causes and the lostness of man can only take us so far. And if our life is derived from missions or from ministry or from preaching or from evangelism, that's a false vine.

Ministry is a thing of earth. It will not exist in heaven. It will grow strangely dim.

And if our identity is in church planting or pioneering or being on the front lines, that will take us far but not far enough. It will give us energy, but it won't give us divine life because Jesus alone is the true vine and only Jesus can life these mortal bodies. So I want to look at a few things here quickly and then we're going to look at the three different branches and see which one applies to you.

Number one, let's just do some definitions because so often we approach this text not understanding what John's trying to say. Fruit. The Bible has many different definitions of fruit.

Everything from love to obedience, character, faithfulness, believing, production. But John uses fruit in a very different way. John always uses the word fruit in a harvest motif.

And the Greek word is karpos. And it refers to what can be harvested, what can be collected, what can be gathered, what can be reaped. Specifically, John uses karpos, fruit, to refer to disciples that are being made.

John 12, 24, reveals that Jesus is thinking this way as well. He says, Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.

It produces much grain. Jesus knows that by dying, he is going to win many people to himself. This understanding is consistent with Paul.

He talks about the first fruit out of the churches in Achaia. And he's referring to the believers who's coming to the family of God. He's calling them fruit.

So, in John 15, when he's talking about producing fruit, Jesus is saying, You will produce disciples. Second definition. Abide.

The Greek word for abide is meno. And from this word, we get the Latin mansio. In the English, mansion or house.

Meno has the continuity and the understanding, the implication of patient endurance in ongoing proximity. You're near someone for a long time and you stay with them. Abiding is giving Jesus extravagant time, lingering with and living with Jesus.

And he who remains, John is saying, he who lingers with me, holds on to me, presses in with me, he continues walking with me, he will bear much fruit. He will make many disciples. So, let's look at abiding then very quickly in two different contexts.

Number one, abiding. And this is the first chapter of the Live Dead Journal, if you're going to pray through that. Abiding is daily giving Jesus extravagant time, lingering in his presence, experiencing the weight of his glory through reading the Bible and prayer.

David Livingstone faced great loneliness in all of his years in Africa. And he'd been there for 16 years after his wife Mary died. And he returned to the University of Glasgow in Scotland to give a lecture.

One of his arms was useless because a lion had attacked him. He'd gone through 27 different bouts of malaria. His face was full of wrinkles from the wear and tear of daily living.

And a hush crept over the students as he spoke. And this is what Livingstone said, Shall I tell you what sustained me amidst the trials and hardships and loneliness of my exiled life? It was the promise of a gentleman, of the most sacred honor. It was this promise, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.

John York is one of my mentors. He died too young of leukemia. And he said from that great commission of Jesus, There is no go without lo.

There is no go into all the world without lo. I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Livingstone died as he was kneeling in prayer in the middle of Central Africa at his bed.

His servants found him. His Bible was open. And he was there kneeling dead.

And his Bible was open to this passage. And he had scrawled in it the words of a gentleman. Lo, I am with you always.

1924 Olympics. Eric Little refused to run on Sunday. Perhaps you know his story from Chariots of Fire.

He switched from the 100 meters to the 400 meters. An event he hadn't trained for. Placed in the outside lane.

The worst lane for a runner. And he ended up winning. 1925, the next year.

Maybe you don't know this part. He went to China as a missionary. He used to run through the crowded streets to stay fit.

But it wasn't culturally acceptable. And so he stopped running. A few years later, 1928, he was invited to Japan.

And he was going to run in an international event, 400 meters again, against defending world class sprinters. With no training, he accepted. And he delighted the crowd by winning.

But he surprised the crowd because he ran right through that ribbon. And he ran out of the stadium because his ship was leaving back to China. Ran down to the dock.

It had slipped his berth. And he leaped over the last few yards. Sprawled on the deck.

Made it back to China. Got back to China. Was arrested.

And put in a concentration camp in which he died. And the man that watched him die, Eric Little, said this. What was his secret? He unreservedly committed his life to Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord.

That friendship meant everything to him. By the flickering light of a peanut oil lamp, every morning early, he studied the Bible and talked with God an hour every day. As a Christian, Eric Little's desire was to know God more deeply.

And as a missionary, to make him known more fully. George Mueller, maybe you know that name. He said, I look upon it as a lost day when I haven't had a good time over the Word of God.

Mueller was a German genius. He was raised on rationalism. He rejected it.

Turned to Christ. Decided to trust the promises of God completely. Ran these orphanages.

Prayed in the money. He believed in the power of prayer. When he was 80 years old, a group of seminary students asked him, Mr. Mueller, what's your secret? The 80 year old man pushed his chair back and bent his old limbs to the ground kneeling in prayer.

And he said, this, this is the secret. Mary Slessor, perhaps you know that name. She was a fiery Scottish woman.

She was a redhead. She used to fight thugs in Dundee with her fists. She went to Africa and she fought slave traders and baby killers.

She gave her life to the Calabar and she fought for the rights of African women and children for 40 years, lived in a mud hut. When she died in 1915, thousands of Africans mourned her. Her African name was Mother of All Peoples and she had cultivated a lifelong habit of chatting with her Heavenly Father out loud and incessant, so often that people thought she was crazy because she was always talking to Jesus.

She was the one who coined the term, God plus one are always a majority. Every person that has lived greatly for Jesus in history, every person that has disseminated the weight of the glory of God, has given extravagant daily time to Jesus in the Word and prayer without fail. And some might resent the perceived legalism of saying, you've got to spend a lot of time in the Word and in prayer every day with Jesus.

And they claim, I'm always in the presence of Jesus. But John Darienpol rightly says, the truth is, we only learn to pray all the time everywhere after we have resolutely set about praying some of the time somewhere. The second essential component of abiding, therefore, is this, that we do walk with Jesus all the time.

Perhaps you're like me. I love to have my devotions early in the morning. I love to be with Jesus.

I love to read my Bible. I love to be in prayer. But then often I kind of check that off my list and do my own thing for the rest of the day and pick it up with Jesus the next morning.

And Jesus wants more from us than that. It's all-day communion that He's hungry for as well. There's a story told by Tolstoy about three monks on an island.

And these were simple guys, but they had learned to abide with Jesus all day long. And they would serve one another and they would do the work of the ministry. And they had a prayer that encapsulated their heart.

They would say this over and over all day long. Thou art three. We are three.

Lord, have mercy. And they would pray that simple prayer all the time. Well, a monk on the Russian mainland heard about these three guys and he said, As the bishop that presides over them, I'm going to set them straight because they're kind of simple.

They don't really get it. Got on the boat, went to the island, and he gave them a prayer seminar. He's leaving, sailing away from the island.

And as Tolstoy tells the story, there's a flash of light. And these three monks came running over the water and jumped up on his boat. And they said, Oh, Abbot, we are so sorry.

We are so stupid. We forgot how you told us to pray. What are we meant to do again? And the bishop looked at these three guys that had just run across the water.

He said, Never mind. Go back to whatever you were doing before and just keep praying that way. In about the 4th century, Christians did what they called breath prayers.

They would find a retreat and they would say to Jesus, Lord, help me understand my own heart. What do I really want from you? What do I want from you, Jesus? What is the cry of my heart? And they would encapsulate the cry of their heart, the thing they most desperately wanted from Jesus. And they would put it in a 7-9 syllable sentence.

And then they would pray that sentence all day long. It started academically. But over time, months and years, it would sink down into their spirit.

And ultimately, it would get into their subconscious. So they're even praying that. Their spirit was praying that even when they slept.

And it disciplined them to be aware of the presence of Jesus all day long. That's why I started with that simple chorus. Be near me, Lord Jesus.

I ask thee to stay. Because when I did this, that was the prayer that I had. I said, Jesus, more than anything else, I want to be near to you.

I want you to be near to me. And so that's my breath prayer. And all day long, I try and pick things that help me remember.

Like every time I send an email or every time I do a task, I just say, Jesus, be near me. Be near me, Lord Jesus. And it helps me learn to abide with him all day long.

And also give him the extravagant blocks of time every morning. With that as a background, let's turn our attention now to the three branches that are in this text. And I just, as we go through them, I want you to ask yourself, which branch am I? The first branch, it says, every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

The word take away comes from the Greek. It is aero. And take away is an unfortunate translation.

For aero literally means I lift up. Viticulture, tending vines, helps us here. It gives us sense.

Because when the shoot of a vine falters, it often sinks into the mud. Other branches sometimes take up so much sun that the smaller, weaker branch is not getting enough exposure. And the vine dresser in the Middle East and also in the days of Jesus, today in modern methods as well, would lift that branch up out of the mud and tie it to the trestle so that it could get enough sun.

He lovingly gives it an opportunity. He lifts it up that it might be revived, that it might bear fruit. Note that the text says branches in Christ.

This is the disciple, this is the missionary that is in Jesus but not making other disciples. Are you making disciples? Who are you discipling right now? The Bible says that if you are in Jesus and not making disciples, He will aero you. He will lift you up.

This does not mean He's going to discard you. This does not mean He's going to throw you away. You know what it means? He's going to teach you to abide.

He's going to orchestrate events and circumstances in your life, whether pleasant or painful, so that you know what it means to spend a lot of time with Jesus and to commune with Him all day long so that He can give you of His life, so that you can bear fruit, so that you can make disciples. Jesus wants you to abide in Him. And if you're not abiding in Jesus, there is no transfer of life.

You could do a lot of ministry activities but you're not really going to disciple anyone because you don't have the divine life flowing through your branches and into them. And you know what happens when we don't abide? We wilt. It happens to the best of us.

Hudson Taylor, famous missionary to China. After his first term, he returned to England and he was just spent. He was finished.

He was exhausted. He was burnt out. He had not learned to abide in Jesus.

He spent five years back in England as a nobody, hidden. But in those years, the Father lifted him up, tied him to the trestle, and he learned to give Jesus extravagant time and he learned to abide with Jesus all day long. He returned to China and he returned a different person.

A colleague wrote about him and said this, He was a joyous man now, a bright, happy Christian. He had been a toiling, burdened one before and latterly not much rest of soul. He was resting in Jesus now and letting Jesus do the work which made all the difference.

Whenever he spoke in meetings after that, a new power seemed to flow from him and in the practical things of life, a new peace possessed him. Trouble did not worry him as before. He cast everything on God in a new way and gave more time to prayer.

Instead of working late at night, he began to go to bed earlier, rising at 5 a.m. to Bible study and prayer, often two hours before the work of the day began. It was the exchanged life that had come to him. The life that is indeed no longer I. Abide in me, Jesus says, and I in you, and there will be exchanged strength.

You know the verse, it's common from Isaiah chapter 40, They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They that abide in Jesus shall exchange. The Hebrew for renew is exchange.

They that wait upon the Lord, they that give Jesus extravagant time will exchange their strength. They will give Jesus their weak, limited, pitiful resource strength and Jesus will give them his divine, unlimited power for life and service. Do you understand how elemental this is? It is the most important thing that we can do is to wait and linger and enjoy the presence of Jesus and when we do that, he exchanges strength with us and he takes all of our limitations and he gives us all of his divine power.

There it is. Missions 101, Church Planting 101, Ministry 101, Christianity 101. Spend a lot of time with Jesus.

Give Jesus your best. Give him the best hours of your morning. Give him the last hours of your day.

Commune with him all day long. If you will abide in Jesus, if you will draw life from him, you will have divine power for life and for godliness and you will make disciples. Second branch.

Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit. The intention of the vine dresser is to glorify himself. By this the Father is glorified when his disciples make many other disciples.

And in order for God to self-glorify, in order for you to produce many disciples, guess what? God is going to prune you. Everyone that makes disciples, the text says, God is going to prune so they make more disciples. Isn't that great? Now, interesting here, the word kathiro is the word used for pruning and literally it means cleaning.

God is going to use some means and it might be painful to wash you and to cleanse you and to get rid of some of your junk and to get rid of some of your carnality and get rid of some of the flesh and he's going to do that lovingly and graciously. Why? So that you can bear more disciples. So be encouraged, O beloved branch.

Jesus is going to wash you through suffering and if you will submit to that, you will bear more disciples. The third branch. This is the branch that does not abide.

Maybe you didn't realize that there are three branches in this text. Verse 6, it says, If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered. And they gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned.

Branches are disciples. We've seen that in the text. And this verse reveals it's possible to be a follower of Jesus and not abide in him.

And maybe that's you. It says that that type of branch will be cast out. The Greek word for cast out is balo.

And it literally means to let fall. Jesus is not going to force you to spend a lot of time with him. He woos us.

He invites us. He desires us to linger with him. But we have a part to play.

And if you as a follower of Jesus, if you don't abide in him, inevitably you will dry up, you will wither on the vine and he will let you fall. By that means, he leads you to your own recourses and to the consequences of your own decisions. And you will dry up and you will fall and you will be marginalized and you will fall to the ground.

And maybe you've seen this on a vine. The dead branch just kind of limps to the ground. And when it becomes so dry, it separates itself from the vine.

And that's the meaning of being cast out, of letting fall. And it's good for nothing, the scripture says, but to be gathered and to be burned. Please understand, you could survive in Christian life.

You could even go to the mission field and survive in the Muslim world and make it functionally for years in Saudi or Oman or Syria. But if you're not abiding in Jesus, there is no divine life. There is no authority in the Spirit.

There is no power for transformation. You won't plant churches and you won't glorify God and you'll be no use to the Master and you'll whittle away and waste your time and waste your life because you didn't learn to abide. The Puritans, they gave us some wonderful traditions.

And I would like to read to you as we work towards an ending, a Puritan prayer that is connected to abiding in Jesus. Would you listen to this beautiful prayer? O fountain of all good, destroy in me every lofty thought. Break pride to pieces and scatter it to the winds.

Annihilate each clinging shred of self-righteousness. Implant in me true lowliness of spirit. Abase me to self-loathing and self-aborrence.

Open in me a fount of penitential tears. Break me, then bind me up. Thus will my heart be a prepared dwelling for my God.

Then can the Father take up His abode in me. Then can the blessed Jesus come with healing in His touch. Then can the Holy Spirit descend in sanctifying grace.

O Holy Trinity, three persons and one God, inhabit me, abide in me, a temple consecrated to Thy glory. When Thou art present, evil cannot abide. In Thy fellowship is fullness of joy.

Beneath Thy smile is peace of conscience. By Thy side no fears disturb, no apprehensions banish rest of mine. With Thee my heart shall bloom with fragrance.

Make me meet through repentance for Thine indwelling, for Thine abiding. For nothing exceeds Thy power, and nothing is too great for Thee to do, and nothing is too good for Thee to give. Infinite is Thy might.

Boundless is Thy love. Limitless Thy grace. Glorious Thy saving name.

Let angels sing for sinners repenting, prodigals restored, backsliders reclaimed, Satan's captives released, blind eyes opened, broken hearts bound up, the despondent cheered, the self-righteous stripped, the formless driven from a refuge of lies, the ignorant enlightened, and saints built up in their holy faith. I ask great things of a great God. Jesus wants us to live for His glory in all the earth.

Jesus wants us to be these mobile temples that carry the presence of God with us wherever we go. Jesus wants us to make disciples of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. But take away all the methodology, and take away all the strategy, and take away all the rhetoric, and take away all the noise, and all the opinions of men.

It comes down to one very simple thing. Abide in Me, and I in you, and you will make disciples, and those disciples will make disciples, and the gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness, and then the end will come, and we will be with Jesus forever in heaven in the weight of His glorious presence. Isn't that what we want? Don't we want to see Jesus glorified everywhere? Well, what should we do? Read your Bible, pray every day, and you'll grow, grow, grow.

Amen. Let's be a people that spend extravagant time in the presence of Jesus. Let's give Him massive amounts of blocks of time every day.

Let's commune with Him all day long. It's so simple, and it's so powerful. And Jesus is asking and inviting and longing for you to respond to this invitation.

Abide in Me, and I in you, and you will bear fruit, and your fruit will remain. This is the center, and from this comes all the divine power to live and to die for Jesus in these extreme contents.

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