



INTRODUCTION: JIM ELLIOT AND A RADICAL AMBITION FOR THE NATIONS

From his time at Wheaton College, Jim Elliot had a burning passion for reaching lost people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 1952, this passion took Elliot to the jungles of Ecuador with his friend Pete Fleming, where they would strive to engage and reach primitive tribes. Elliot would marry his wife Elisabeth in 1953, and they would have their daughter Valerie in 1955.

In 1956, Elliot and four other missionaries—Nate Saint (a missionary pilot), Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, and Pete Fleming—embarked on "Operation Auca" to make contact with the Huaorani people. Using Nate Saint's plane, they began dropping gifts to the tribe from the air, hoping to build trust. Eventually, they landed on a sandy riverbank, setting up camp, and attempting to meet the Huaorani face to face.

Initially, their contact with the tribe seemed positive. A small group of Huaorani visited their camp and interacted with the missionaries. However, just days later, on January 8, 1956, the five missionaries were ambushed and killed by a group of Huaorani warriors. Their bodies were discovered later, floating in the river or on the riverbank, speared to death.

Since the time of this tragedy, many have been critical of the actions that Elliot and his team took, saying that they should have not taken such great risks to reach a tribe that was known to be hostile to outsiders. Critics say that the missionaries should have left the tribe alone, without any attempts to engage them with the gospel. They say that Elliot wasted his life in vain.

At First Baptist Church, we don't believe that these critics are correct. We believe that Jim Elliot and his companions died striving to accomplish the greatest mission the world has ever known – the mission to reach the nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My goal in this lesson is to show you why we believe that. We'll discuss *why* we have a radical ambition for the nations at our church, and then we'll discuss *how* we apply a radical ambition for the nations at our church.

I. WHY WE HAVE A RADICAL AMBITION FOR THE NATIONS

1. For The Spread of God's Glory

The ultimate motivation for global missions is the glory of God. This is true because God is infinitely worthy of all glory (Rom. 11:33). Just as God is worthy of being glorified in every area of our lives, so also, he is worthy of being glorified in every corner of our globe (Ps. 96:1-5).

In fact, Scripture teaches us that the reason why Jesus came to this earth and went to the cross and rose again was so that all kinds of people all across the globe could experience the mercy of God through repentance and faith in him (Rom. 15:9-12). God wants us to shine the light of the gospel among the nations so that God can be glorified and worshiped from all the ends of the earth.

2. For The Fulfillment of God's Plan

Spreading God's glory through the global mission of the church is not an idea that we innovated as a church. It is not a plan that comes from man. It is God's plan.

It is a plan that God established long ago (Isa. 42:6-7) and that Jesus commissioned the church to fulfill (Matt. 28:18-20).

Since God's plans are never thwarted or frustrated, we know that he will carry out his plans to spread the gospel of his glory to all peoples and nations.

In fact, he gives us this assurance in Scripture (Rev. 7:9-10). One day, God's plan to spread his glory across the globe will ultimately be fulfilled. Multitudes of people from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue will gather around the throne of God and worship him for the salvation he has accomplished for them in Christ.

3. For The Good of All Peoples

Our ultimate reason for having a radical ambition for the nations is the glory of God – we want to see God's glory spread across the whole globe. This has been God's plan from the very beginning – and our Lord Jesus Christ has commissioned his church to fulfill it.

This leads to our final reason for having a radical ambition for the nations – the good of all peoples. The way that God gets glory as his gospel is spread across the globe is through the blessing of salvation. As more and more people across the globe come to faith in Jesus Christ as a result of hearing the good news of the gospel, more and more people glorify God for the rich grace he has given them in Christ.

In order to spread the blessing of salvation across the globe, we have to spread the gospel across the globe. Because there is only one way that a person can experience God's grace in salvation – by calling on the name of the Lord. But in order to call on Jesus, they have to believe in Jesus. And in order to believe in Jesus, they have to hear about Jesus. And in order to hear about Jesus, someone has to preach the gospel to them. And in order for someone to preach the gospel to them, that someone has to be sent to them (Rom. 10:13-15).

This is why the world needs missionaries. This is why we have a radical ambition for sending missionaries to the nations. Because without missionaries going to the nations and preaching and inviting people to believe in Jesus, no one among the nations will be saved. And if no one among the nations is saved, then no one among the nations will worship and glorify God.

But when the grace of God (which comes to us through the gospel) spreads to more and more people, more and more people give thanks and glory to God (2 Cor. 4:15). This is our greatest desire – that God's grace would spread from First Baptist Church of Jacksonville to the nations, so that more and more people give thanks and glory to the God of our salvation.

II. HOW WE APPLY A RADICAL AMBITION FOR THE NATIONS

There are several different ways that we live out our radical ambition for the nations here at First Baptist Church.

1. Missionary Sending

As we saw earlier, Romans 10:13-15 stresses the importance of sending missionaries so that people can hear and respond to the gospel.

This is the vital mission that God has given to the church – proclaiming the gospel to and making disciples from all nations.

What this means is that we should be willing to send some of our best people out across the globe to spread the good news of the gospel. This goes against the grain of the way we typically think about church. Our instinct is to keep our best people and use them for the ministry that we are involved in. But God is drawing people to himself from *every* tribe, tongue, and nation, and that means that sending our best people is one of the greatest investments that we can make in his kingdom.

It is our hope that college graduates, young families, retired couples, and all kinds of people would launch from our church onto the mission field. You should seriously consider whether God is calling *you* to this great work!

However, not all of us can go to the mission field, but all of us can participate in sending others to the mission field. In order to send missionaries from our church to reach the unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must be willing to give, and to give generously and sacrificially. Today is our church's *International Missions Christmas Offering*, which is completely dedicated to sending missionaries. Would you give today? And would you make that giving significant and sacrificial?

2. Missionary Care

It is very common for missionaries to go onto the mission field and feel forgotten. We have a commitment that *none* of the missionaries that we send from our church will ever be forgotten.

As William Carey said to the friends that sent him onto the mission field, “I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the rope.” As our church's missionaries descend into the darkness of a lost world, it is our responsibility to hold the rope for them.

There are several different ways that we do this:

- *We pray*: Each year, our church produces a *Missions Prayer Guide* that lists all our church's missionaries and their prayer requests. We encourage all our members to

regularly pray through this guide, and we pray for one mission partner weekly in each of our Sunday School classes. You can also download the *IMB Pray* app to get fresh prayer requests and prayer prompts for the lost around the world.

- *We advocate:* Our church has a team of “missions advocates” that receive regular updates from our missionaries and share those updates with their Sunday School classes. This ensures that our missionaries receive constant care, that their needs are met, and that they are able to share their most urgent prayer requests.
- *We visit:* Our church regularly sends pastor-led teams to visit our missionaries, refresh them in the Word, meet any needs that they have, and bring back firsthand reports to the church about the burdens and blessings our missionaries are experiencing on the field.

3. Short-Term Mission Trips

Most of the people who end up on the mission field were inspired by a short-term mission trip that they went on. This is especially true for students and young adults. The International Mission Board reports that 70% of their long-term field workers first got their calling as a missionary when they went on a short-term mission trip as a student.

Because of this, our church strives to provide as many opportunities as possible for our members to go on short term mission trips. We especially focus on providing opportunities for “Next Gen” trips for First Students and College & Career, so that we can fan the flame of missions in their hearts when they are young and send our best to reach the nations with the gospel.

Over the past year, we have seen missional zeal sparked in students and young adults who went on short term mission trips. We designed these trips to not only give participants an opportunity to serve in a foreign country, but also to introduce them to as many missionaries as possible and allow them to learn what life on the mission field is truly like.

We focus on going on short term mission trips that serve to accomplish the core missionary task of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. We want them to get a taste for what it could be like for them to be a missionary, so that they want to give their lives to this noble calling full-time.

CONCLUSION: HE IS NO FOOL

Was Jim Elliot’s death in vain? Our answer is a resounding *no*. God’s mission is to gather the nations to himself to worship the risen Lord Jesus Christ. And he has called us to participate in that mission by going. Jim Elliot died pursuing this great task.

Jim Elliot himself summed it up best. He wrote in his journal, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” Elliot understood that there are more important

things than our physical life on this earth. There are eternal matters that are worth dying for. The great mission of the church – to reach the nations with the gospel – is one of them.

There is another wonderful sense in which Elliot’s death was not in vain. His story took a remarkable turn when, years later, Elisabeth Elliot, Jim’s widow, and Nate Saint’s sister, Rachel, returned to live among the Huaorani. These women shared the gospel with the very people who had killed their loved ones, leading many Huaorani, including some of the murderers, to become Christians. The tribe, once feared for its violence, was profoundly transformed by the gospel.

And so, the vision for which Jim died – the conversion of the Huaorani – was fulfilled. Jim Elliot gave what he could not keep to gain that which he could not lose. May the same be true of each of us. May we give our time and money and energy and our whole lives for the sake of the Great Commission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been on a mission trip or participated in missions in any way? If so, where did you go and/or what did you do? How did the experience shape you?
2. In the lesson, three reasons were offered for why we should be committed to international missions: (1) for the spread of God’s glory, (2) for the fulfillment of God’s plan, and (3) for the good of all peoples. Which reason for our church’s radical ambition for the nations jumped out to you the most? Why?
3. What are some specific ways you can get involved in living out a radical ambition for the nations at our church? What are your next steps? How can you also help your family catch this vision for the global advance of the gospel?