DAY 1

WE WILL REACH THE LOST

THROUGH OBEDIENCE

IMB

JESUS IS AN UNFAMILIAR GIFT FOR MANY IN SPIRITUALLY LOST WORLD

Lostness around the world is growing every day. In fact, 59% of the world's population remains unreached. This means there are less than 2% evangelical Christians within their people group or nearby. Unless something changes, they have little to no chance of hearing the gospel in their lifetime.

Your missionaries are a steadfast presence among the lost. You pray, give, go and send. Together we are committed to reaching the lost. In obedience, we will follow the Lord's command to go into all the world.

Many of the unreached people groups live in hard-to-reach places, like remote areas around the world. But did you know that Europeans are now considered unreached? Europe has 800 million people, and only 1% are evangelical Christians. Though the continent has a historical presence of churches, many have turned away from faith of any kind. Europe's top five unreached peoples — Russians, British, French, Italian and German — make up 55% of the European population.

Consider this picture of lostness from Belgium. A big blue bear sits on a park bench, arm extended to the side as if inviting people to come and talk. Writing on the bench does just that, invites passersby to sit and talk because "Warme William listens."

While people sit and talk to the inanimate bear, International Mission Board missionaries Don and Pam Lynch park a bicycle cart, start a generator and turn on an espresso machine.

The missionaries are also ready to listen. Through offering a cup of coffee, the Lynches and team members have a chance to connect with people, start conversations and open doors to the gospel. When people share their struggles, the missionaries can actually hear, build relationships and, most importantly, introduce a loving Savior.

The bear can't do anything.

A government initiative in one region of Belgium led to the creation of Warme William to address rising numbers of depression and suicide among teenagers and young adults. Sadly, without belief in a personal Lord, people resort to talking to the bear.

"When 99.5% don't know the Lord, then they have no hope for the future and there's no consequences for anything," Don said. "If you have no hope for the future, you don't have anything to look forward to. Life is either a great adventure or a slow death."

In addition to a regular coffee cart ministry, the Lynches hosted volunteer teams this summer during Belgium's Ghent Festival, one of Europe's most popular cultural events. Volunteers engaged with visitors of the festival and offered a listening ear and a prayer to a God who listens.

Pray for new initiatives around the world to seek the lost and offer a message of eternal hope.

Pray with Don and Pam that God will provide more opportunities to have deep gospel conversations with people and long-term friendships.

Pray that God would lead more workers to seek the lost around the world and respond with the gospel solution.

DAY 2

WE WILL REACH THE LOST

THROUGH INNOVATION

IMB

VIRTUAL REALITY REACHES LOST THROUGH INNOVATION

Michaela Knippers grabs the bulky virtual reality goggles off the desk and tightens them onto her head. Her husband, Justin, is already strapped in and waving his hand in the air to scroll through different maps he sees through the goggles.

As new International Mission Board missionaries to Osaka, Japan, they've been studying Japanese all day, and their brains need a break. For these 20-somethings, that means jumping into the virtual world — a video game simulating reality that, for them, is both relaxing and their place of ministry.

The couple finds a spot to chill in a virtual backyard that resembles countless real ones — neon tiki lights, Texas-sized mosquitos buzzing around, potted plants and multi-colored flowers. In the back corner, Justin spies some friends around a fire pit and presses his controller forward to walk over. Within minutes, the missionary shares an insight from Scripture.

"Virtual reality evangelism isn't really any different from regular evangelism," Justin says, explaining how it works. "You find a common point, build a relationship and draw the conversation to the gospel."

Unlike most video games, VRChat is all about socializing. No one "wins." The whole point is to connect and talk to people. Michaela adds most in the game are lonely and looking for a solution to their problems, just like she was years ago in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Virtual reality seemed like the perfect fit for her as an introvert. You can be anything you want online without ever leaving the house. This severe social withdrawal, anxiety and reclusiveness is so common in Japan that there's even a Japanese word for it — *hikikomori*.

Justin was the first Christian Michaela met who spoke about Jesus in the virtual world. It didn't take long to see the solution to her greatest problem — spiritual lostness — was the gospel. The now-married couple teams up to be a steadfast missionary presence through digital innovations. They recognize their unique interests and skills in the gaming world means they might be the only ones to share the gospel with those in the virtual world where they serve.

"Virtual reality is just one of many tools missionaries use to reach out to the lost around them," Justin says. The missionary points out it is important to find someone "in real life" (IRL) to follow up and disciple the new believers. This is why they study Japanese — so they can relate at a heart level in the tech capital of the world.

Although virtual reality isn't the real world, Michaela asks that you pray for the real people inside of it who need the gospel.

Ask God to help the Knippers learn Japanese so they may transition relationships from VR to IRL. Pray for more missionaries who are willing to use the newest innovations and technologies to reach the world for Christ.

DAY 3

WE WILL REACH THE LOST

THROUGH RESEARCH

IMB

PROJECT 3000 RESEARCHES, PURSUES PEOPLE ON EDGE OF LOSTNESS

Planes, trains, buses, motorcycles, cars and boats will get them as close as possible before setting off on foot to find hidden people groups. International Mission Board missionaries are going the extra mile, quite often literally. Why?

"We're going to the deepest part of lostness, the place where nobody is looking for these folks, to be able to make sure they have the opportunity to hear the life-giving good news that Jesus saves and can move us from perishing to life everlasting," IMB Vice President John Brady said.

It will take a lot of research, something IMB already conducts at the highest possible level. The IMB is committed to finding and engaging people so far off the map that not much is known about them and their exposure to the gospel. Earlier this year, the IMB launched a new initiative, Project 3000, to engage 3,072 unengaged and unreached people groups. Of this number, 784 groups have no Scripture in their heart language.

New missionary explorers will be journeying into the unknown to find out where they live, learn about their culture, discern their literacy, develop ministry strategies and find people to partner with in the task.

Ray Henry Holiday is in the pioneering group of Project 3000 explorers.

The Tennessean travels with a national partner to remote areas in South Asia for six weeks at a time to live among one of his 10 people groups. Once they arrive in the general area, they find transportation and accommodation.

Holiday compared his job to how Jesus sent out the 72. He'll go with minimal supplies — "carrying my home on my back."

He collects as much demographic information as he can and builds relationships. While he uses a translator, he also takes time to study the people's language.

During his university years, Holiday served in Central Asia with the IMB's Hands On program. He thought he'd be headed back to the Central Asian country, but when he heard the Project 3000 job description, it was an echo of a burden and prayer the Lord placed on his heart three years ago.

As a high school student, Holiday prayed from Isaiah 6:8, "Here I am, send me." The verse was shared at an IMB job conference when the Project 3000 assignment was presented. It further confirmed his calling.

"It's a hard job, and that is part of the reason why I felt called to it. I feel like I have the gifting and ability," Holiday said. "There is a great need. There is no one going to these folks."

Pray for Holiday as he and other Project 3000 missionaries scout out and research their people groups.

Pray the Lord will open the hearts of these unreached and unengaged people groups.

Pray God will call more people to serve through Project 3000.

DAY 4

WE WILL REACH THE LOST

THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

IMB

PARTNERSHIPS ENTER NEW ERA

Prison ministry. Sports ministry. Developing national missionaries. The dreams discussed around the table were big. International Mission Board missionaries Matt and Gretchen Clay saw the passion rising as the group of pastors and lay ministers figured out ways to introduce their North African neighbors to the gospel. But the Clays didn't have the resources to invest at the deep level needed by their brothers and sisters in Christ.

They knew who could, though. The missionaries called their partnering churches in Florida — Fruit Cove Baptist Church and Aspire Church — and asked for help in mentoring and empowering these believers to multiply and plant new churches.

"I think the direction we are going to see global missions moving is to partner more with the global church to mobilize workers and increase momentum," Gretchen explained about the need for help in this ripening harvest field of North Africa. "Using U.S. fellowships along with national partners is a way to multiply the work force."

This trifecta partnership — the IMB missionaries, two Florida churches and church leaders in North Africa — was decades in the making. A collaboration of churches in Jacksonville, Florida, began praying for this area of the world back in the late '90s. They sent short-term teams through the years to do everything from Vacation Bible School at meetings to ministry in the villages. This newest request, however, was different.

The North Africans didn't need someone to come "do" prison ministry; in fact, Americans aren't even allowed in the facility. They needed someone with experience, like Fruit Cove, to listen to their ideas and step in as mentors. They wanted to be trained as a healthy, multiplying church.

"We have a robust prison ministry here [in Florida] and it only makes sense for us to share knowledge," Tim Maynard, Fruit Cove's senior pastor, said, noting that each of the Florida churches has different expertise to offer. "This partnership is more about discipling believers who want to go to areas where there are no believers. They need encouragement and training."

Just thinking about how much the national churches have matured and grown through the years gets Gary Webber, the Aspire Church senior pastor, excited. He remembers when no one in this area was even interested in Jesus, let alone sharing the gospel. To see churches request training and be equipped to multiply and reach the lost is something they've prayed to happen for years.

As the decades-old partnership naturally morphs into a new era, the Clays sit back and watch the excitement grow among the Americans and North Africans. They know that church planting and multiplication lead to local ownership of God's mission.

Pray for these partners as they seek to take the gospel to areas previously untouched by the good news of Jesus Christ. Praise God for requests to be trained and mentored. Ask for continued fruit in the work of the Clays, who are a steadfast presence among the lost.

Some names have been changed due to security reasons.

DAY 5

WE WILL REACH THE LOST
THROUGH CHURCH PLANTING

IMB

TRAINING RESULTS IN 17 CHURCHES PLANTED IN ZAMBIA, STILL GROWING

It was just a normal meeting of some Zambian pastors and a few workers from Christian organizations. When Randy Windham stood up and handed a sign-up sheet to the person next to him, they had no idea that ministry as they knew it was about to change.

"I've been to a training on how to plant churches," the International Mission Board missionary told them. "I'd love to share this knowledge. If you are interested, just sign up and we'll set a time for training."

Teaching Zambians to plant churches and transform lives with the gospel is Randy and Kimberly Windham's passion. Seventeen new churches have started in and around Lusaka, Zambia — five in the last six months.

From that very first training session to the one they hosted very recently, the couple is always on the lookout for a pastor or church member to mentor. To them, it's just natural to keep the training cycle going. Your gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering allow them to walk alongside local believers as they train them in a four-step process.

Randy explained the first step is gospel access or entry into a community. During this entry phase, they pray for God-prepared people — ones whose lives God is already working in — to enter the picture so they can train them to address the world's greatest problem of spiritual lostness.

Step two is all about evangelism. The Windhams teach Christians how to share the gospel. Everyone uses this skill immediately for door-to-door evangelism.
"We want everything reproducible," Randy said. "We teach everyone — including teams from the United States — to draw the plan of salvation using a stick in the dirt. That can be done anywhere in Zambia as a visual aid."

As people make decisions to follow Christ, the church-planting team moves into the third step, discipleship. In a country where false prophets and cults are common, this is important. New believers grow in their faith by studying Scripture.

As this group grows spiritually and in number, they move seamlessly to the final step — healthy group and church formation. Not every group grows into a church, but those who choose to follow this route learn the 12 characteristics of a healthy church. This step alone can take three to four months.

Churches never look the same from the outside. They might meet under a shade tree, use a room at a school or have their own building. However, at their core, all have biblical teaching, fellowship, worship, service and evangelism. Now, it's the new church's turn to train and help start another one.

"You just continue to do the same thing over-and-over again," Randy said. "We never stop training and planting churches."

Pray for the Windhams and their work in Zambia. Ask God to bring boldness and wisdom to local believers as they are discipled. Pray for continued church multiplication.

DAY 6

WE WILL REACH THE LOST

THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

IMB

CALLING REALIZED THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

Rose had a passion to reach a people group situated in the Horn of Africa. Accessing them was another question altogether. She knew she couldn't do it alone.

Rose is a member of a church in Mexico and a teacher by trade. As she grew in relationship with church leadership, they pointed her to the mission field. However, they couldn't afford to send, equip and sustain her work as a missionary alone. They soon realized they didn't have to be on their own. Her pastor recruited 15 other churches across Mexico and Panama and cast a vision for them to financially support Rose.

These Latin American churches are determined to see Africans come to know Christ. Recently, a small group from her church traveled to Africa to see how the Lord was working.

"My pastor told me to remember that when I'm on the field, I need to be focused on what I'm doing there," Rose explained. "He said their work and ministry as a church is to share what the Lord is doing among nations through me, and how [God's] calling the church to work together."

On the other side of the world, Rose partnered with IMB workers Thomas and Lori Beth Bain's team as a Global Missionary Partner. Before arriving, she worked on learning English, knowing if she wanted to partner with a team of Americans, she'd probably need to speak their language. Providentially, Thomas was fluent in Spanish. This helped Rose's language studies greatly as she also had to learn the local language.

Rose's language lessons paid off, and missionaries describe her as a true asset to the team. This is a relationship that is advancing the gospel in a hard-to-reach part of the world. Even though security issues have forced her to relocate with the IMB team multiple times, she's remained laser-focused on reaching the diaspora of her people group. Her contributions to the team have been invaluable, the Bains shared.

Rose's Mexican passport allows her greater access to a hard-to-reach people than her American partners. The people she has been called to are farmers and tend livestock. They have no running water or electricity. Lately, their shepherds have replaced their staffs with rifles, as their land has been under attack.

Conflict and arid land aren't the only hostile things among them. Their hearts are hostile to the gospel. Those who do come to faith among them, Thomas likened "to the cactus where they produce fruit even in desert climates."

Rose is dedicated to being out in the community, wherever she goes, making connections with these people God has laid on her heart.

Pray for ministry among Rose's people group to flourish, even as they experience ongoing political conflict. Her passion is to see the lost come to saving faith.

Pray the coalition of Latin American churches grows in relationship with the IMB as we reach the nations together.

Pray more of Rose's family in Mexico come to faith as she pours her life out across the globe.

Some names may have been changed for security purposes.

DAY 7

WE WILL REACH THE LOST

THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP

IMB

SIGN LANGUAGE BREAKS BARRIERS TO GOSPEL, DISCIPLESHIP IN WEST AFRICA

International Mission Board missionary Paul Yount sits just outside a crowded cafeteria. Inside the room, chairs squeak across the floor. A cacophony of voices mixes. Forks scrape plates. The ice in the drink machine crashes to the bottom of an empty glass.

He hears none of it.

More than 71 million people worldwide are Deaf, like Paul. Most culturally Deaf people have almost no access to Scripture in their heart language. Very few have ever had the gospel shared with them. Most of the Deaf around the world have never seen Jesus' name signed.

This IMB missionary connects easily with other Deaf. He is uniquely equipped to disciple them because he experiences the world in much the same way they do.

The commonalities between Paul and Joseph, a Senegalese believer, have helped Paul disciple him more effectively.

When Paul met Joseph, he was already a believer, but Joseph was hungry to know more about God's Word. While he had a basic understanding of the gospel, he couldn't fully connect with the truths of written Scripture.

As a Deaf student, Joseph needed to see the Word, not just read it. Seeing is how he connects with the world. Paul understands this need to learn visually, and, along with StoryOne Camps, he teaches the Bible in a way Deaf can understand — through storying.

Paul discipled Joseph with three sets of Bible stories that rely on sign language mnemonics which help commit the stories to memory more effectively. This visual presentation of Scripture resonated with the new believer.

After attending the first StoryOne Camp, Joseph was sold on this storying method. When another was held, he returned. "He felt so moved and so inspired, and we were excited for him to experience that," Paul said.

Now, because Joseph was given access to the Scripture in his heart language, Francophone African Sign Language, he's passionate about sharing the gospel with those like himself who need access to the gospel in a way they can understand.

His faith has come at a great cost for him. He is disowned by his family, but he hasn't backed down. He's now working in a Deaf church, discipling other believers through this mnemonic storying method.

Leading out in a Bible translation project, in partnership with Paul and Deaf Pathway Global, a ministry organization, is another way this growing disciple is fulfilling the Great Commission.

Thank the Lord that He is using missionaries like Paul and national believers like Joseph to reach the Deaf.

Pray for Joseph as he continues to spread the gospel to the Deaf while being burdened for his lost family members.

Pray for Deaf Pathway Global as they work to translate the Scriptures and present them visually for the Deaf to have gospel access.

Some names may have been changed for security reasons.

DAY 8

WE WILL REACH THE LOST

THROUGH COMMITMENT

IMB

IMB COMMITS TO LOVING AND SERVING DURING TIMES OF DISASTER

Natural disasters can strike anytime and anywhere. They leave millions of people in need. Those in the path of storms, earthquakes or hurricanes often find themselves hungry, homeless and hopeless.

Thanks to the long-term commitment of Southern Baptists, missionaries can respond quickly to unexpected disasters with more than physical assistance. Missionaries understand the greatest need people have when they lose everything on earth — eternal hope in Jesus Christ.

Central Asia is a region where natural disasters are common. Large earthquakes, like February's earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, make the national news, but earthquakes of all sizes are also common there. Even small earthquakes can block roads, cutting off entire areas from aid. Central Asia also faces other catastrophic events like extreme temperatures, mudslides, floods and avalanches.

Disaster relief ministry is vital in Central Asia, and IMB workers are uniquely positioned to respond. In the first six months of 2023, they have been involved in more than 80 different projects that have included things like clean water systems, flood and earthquake relief, trauma care, food distribution, women's health initiatives and job skills training for refugees.

IMB workers have been faithful to plan these projects and undergird national believers to help their own villages, towns and people. For missionaries, their love and compassion for people groups doesn't form when disaster hits. They've loved the people they serve for many years, some decades. They've learned the languages and the customs. And many face the realities of natural disasters along with their national friends.

"For us, it's about relationships," Robert Botta said. Botta has served among Central Asian peoples for over two decades. He is one of many workers who focus on relief work.

"Despite the challenges posed by limited resources and a shortage of evangelical churches and believers in the affected region," Botta said, "our national partners have found ways to serve vulnerable communities by supporting compassion-filled local believers."

Missionaries report that national churches find ways to be the hands and feet of Jesus while sharing a message of eternal hope. By strengthening local churches and believers, compassion and aid isn't a one-time occurrence or only a response to immediate need. The benefit of working through partners on the field who have relationships with nationals is that aid is closely linked to long-term gospel access.

For example, a family will receive fresh water, blankets, food and shelter for the short term. But they will also meet believers who will share the hope of Christ and connect them to local Christians.

This is our commitment to fulfill the Great Commission, no matter the cost. Through our missionaries, we learn best how to serve and how to love. We support them because they are the hands and feet of Jesus in places many of us will never go.

Pray God would bless the long-term commitment of the IMB and national Christians who faithfully serve.

Pray for Robert Botta and others serving in disaster relief work, that they would have strength and wisdom during difficult days.

Ask God to lead Southern Baptists to stay focused on reaching the nations and to generously support those who are working among the world's lost.

Some names may have been changed for security reasons.