

Live with Urgency: Sowing Together for Harvest 2009 North American Mission Study for Adults

When you live with **urgency** you are ready to take action. Something important calls you to act.

In **sowing**, you are planting or scattering seed so that something will grow. When the seed you plant grows, you are ready to **harvest** or gather and celebrate what has grown.

This material and segments from “Live with Urgency: Sowing Together for Harvest” (the 2009 North American Missions Emphasis video) are the main resources to help you plan and direct the North American Mission Study for adults. You may download and copy more materials and ideas on this DVD-ROM or at www.AnnieArmstrong.com/study. The video stories in this study include, “Changing Memphis” (about Willie and Ozzie Jacobs); “What’s in a Name” (about Paul and Elizabeth Biswas); and “Running the Race” (about Brenda Crim*).

Purposes of this study:

- to learn how North American missionaries are sowing (planting the Gospel)
- to know how to be part of their work
- to be willing to pray for the work of Southern Baptist missionaries
- to give money to this missions work
- to think about how to do missions where you live

Pray you will know how to present this material. Pray God will use the study to help adults want to share Jesus with others. Pray for God to provide for our missionaries’ needs.

Prepare

- Decide on a good place and time for the study.
- Arrange for equipment for the study, including a television and DVD player.
- Download and print copies of the listening guides for the video segments. Order Annie Armstrong Easter Offering[®] envelopes, Week of Prayer Guides, and Missionary Prayer Cards for each one who takes part in the study. Listening guides are available at www.anniearmstrong.com/study. Information on ordering the other materials is available at www.anniearmstrong.com.
- Be sure all adult church members know about the study.
- Display a large map of North America. You may place travel-type posters around the map. Show well-known sites in Memphis and Boston, such as riverboats for Memphis and the basketball arena for Boston. These posters can be found on the Internet or at a travel agency.

Lesson Plan

(Based on 1-hour session. Find more ideas at www.anniearmstrong.com/study.)

Introduction (10 minutes)

As a fun opening, hold up several different items. Ask those attending to call out what is the “partner (or matching) item” to the one you are holding. Example: salt (pepper), peanut butter (jelly), bat (ball). Say that some things are just “better together.”

Say there are many examples of partners mentioned in the Bible. Call out names of people in the Bible. Ask participants to name partners of the persons you call out. Examples: Adam (Eve), Moses (Aaron), David (Jonathan), Paul (Timothy), Aquila (Priscilla). Together, these people could do more than they could do alone. Say that in the book of Acts, as the church was beginning, there were partnerships among believers to help Christ’s witness to grow.

In the same way Southern Baptists can do more together. The theme of this North American Mission Study is “Sowing Together for Harvest.” Give the examples above of what it means to sow and to harvest. Invite someone to read John 4:35-37. This example reminds us that the mission field is “ripe”, or ready for harvest. Many people must work together to bring in the harvest. Explain that it is easy to see “partnership” in the church. Different members use their gifts, such as preaching, teaching, singing, praying, for ministry and witness. Ask: “How do you think partnership works on the mission field? How do Southern Baptists ‘sow together’ to bring in the harvest on the mission field?” Explain that in the two videos, featuring missionaries in Massachusetts and Tennessee, we will see the importance of “sowing together for harvest.” We are partners with these missionaries and more than 5,500 North American missionaries. They serve in the United States, Canada, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We are partners with them as we become personally involved in missions. We are partners with them as we promise to pray for our missionaries. We are partners with them as we give money through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

Show the map of North America. Place a pushpin marking your location. Add two strings. Put the other end of the strings on pins located in Boston, Massachusetts, and Memphis, Tennessee.

Missionary Focus One: Willie and Ozzie Jacobs (15 minutes)

Show the video segment, or story, “Changing Memphis.” You may use the listening guide from www.anniearmstrong.com/study. Ask those attending to fill in the blanks as they are watching the video.

Ask those who have visited Memphis to raise their hands. Invite them to share a little about something they remember from that trip. Say that the places in the video, where the Jacobs minister, such as Hope Fellowship Baptist Church, Impact Ministries and

International Baptist Church will never be written in a tourist guide to the city. Yet, they are the places where lives are being changed with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Jacobs minister to people our world tries to marginalize or look at as unimportant. These people are struggling personally and professionally, with their budgets, jobs, or emotions. Ask participants to think about their own attitudes toward these people. Are they indifferent? Angry? Judgmental? Loving? Sympathetic? The Jacobs believe that as they help these individuals with practical needs, they are “earning the right to be heard”. When people know they care, they will listen to the gospel. Lead in a discussion of how this is biblical and how Jesus often met practical needs before sharing the gospel. Say that, at this time, many people are facing difficult economic times; America’s difficulties open up many ministry opportunities.

State that Jacobs clearly stressed: “The church needs to learn new ways in order to reach people with the gospel. She must sow in a way that is non-threatening and builds relationships.” Ask participants: “Why do you think new approaches to telling the old story of the gospel are a good way to reach people for Jesus?” Invite those attending to share ways they have tried, or would be willing to try, a new ministry and evangelistic approach in their personal lives. Perhaps they will mention their workplaces and neighborhoods.

The Jacobs would be unable to do all that they do if they did not have support. Their support comes in at least three ways: people who volunteer, prayer and finances. Those who offer such support are “sowing together for harvest.” Ask: “What will you do to sow together with the Jacobs to help bring in a harvest of people for the Kingdom?”

Missionary Focus Two: Paul and Elizabeth Biswas (15 minutes)

Say that over 1,200 miles to the northeast of Memphis, another missionary couple is reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Show the location on the map.)

Show the video story, “What’s in a Name?” If possible, use the listening guide from www.anniearmstrong.com/study. Ask participants to fill in the blanks as they are watching the video.

Although founded on Christian principles, our nation has become a mix of non-Christian religions. Ask: “When you meet someone with a non-Christian religious background, how do you feel?” Those attending may admit reacting with fear or confusion. Or they may feel unprepared to “defend” or explain Christianity if asked. Some may even admit that they are not interested, believing that “all roads” will lead to heaven.

Lead in a discussion of how Paul and Elizabeth Biswas may have experienced this full range of attitudes and emotions. Paul chose to follow Christ and turn his back on his family and the faith they held so strongly. He was even willing to change his family name because of his newfound faith! Even with all the personal sacrifices he has been forced to

make for his Christian faith, he continues to faithfully share the gospel in and around Boston. Immigrants from Southeast Asia who are living there are the mission field to which Biswas is called.

Ask: “How do you think the background of Biswas uniquely equipped him for this ministry?” Ask participants to answer the same question for themselves: “How has your personal background prepared you for a particular ministry?” For example, someone who has survived a serious illness, or gone through a divorce, or served in a war may be able to minister to others in these type circumstances.

Be sure to remind those listening that these missionaries could not do their work if they did not have support in the areas of people getting involved, prayer, and money. Those who give such support are “sowing together for harvest.” Ask: “What will you do to sow together with the Biswas to help bring in the harvest of individuals for the Kingdom? Will you volunteer? Will you pray? Will you give?”

If you have time, you may include information about the work of Brenda Crim here.*

Prayer Time (10 minutes)

State that one way all believers can support North American missionaries is through prayer. Divide the group into two smaller groups for prayer. Before the study, appoint a prayer leader for each group. One group will have prayer for the Jacobs and their ministry in Memphis. The other group will pray for the Biswas and their ministry in Massachusetts. Before the meeting, ask the prayer leaders to prepare to share a favorite Scripture about prayer, to suggest some prayer needs of their missionaries and needs of those they reach and then to lead in a time of both silent and spoken prayer. Encourage prayer leaders to use the Prayer Points section on the listening guide to direct the prayer time. Explain that those who do not want to pray aloud will not be asked to do so.

After a few minutes, close the groups’ prayer time with a prayer for all North American missionaries.

Notes of Encouragement (5 minutes)

Give each person a blank card. Ask participants to write either Paul and Elizabeth Biswas or Willie and Ozzie Jacobs. Tell them to write the sentence, “I prayed for you today,” and then to write one sentence telling what they prayed. For example, “I prayed for you today. I prayed that God would give listening hearts to those you share with.” You may want to write some samples on the board so they may be copied, if needed. Collect the cards after a few minutes. Put the cards for each of the missionary couples in a package and mail them to the addresses found at www.anniearmstrong.com.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Write these quotes on a poster board. Display it where everyone can see it.

*“Americans here are getting a new experience because the world is at their doorstep.”
Paul Biswas, North American missionary serving in Boston, Massachusetts*

“We don’t have to go out of the United States anymore. God has sent the mission field to us.” Willie Jacobs, North American missionary serving in Memphis, Tennessee

Use these quotes to encourage mission projects. For ideas see “Mission Project Choices for Adult Mission Study.” Think about inviting your group to pray about ministering to those from non-Christian religious backgrounds or to those who are struggling with finances or lifestyles.

If anyone is interested in learning about missionary service, encourage the person to contact the North American Mission Board at (770) 410-6000, or visit www.namb.net.

Give out Missionary Prayer Cards. Encourage participants to pray for these missionaries during the Week of Prayer for North American Missions.

Give out offering envelopes for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®. Encourage giving, reminding those attending that 100 percent of the offering goes to help missionaries share the Gospel and sow seeds of faith.

Close in prayer, thanking God for faithful missionaries like the Biswas and Jacobs. Ask for God to bless their ministries. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will inspire Southern Baptists everywhere to join together in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who do not know Him.

*Material to support an alternate study segment, “Running the Race,” featuring Brenda Crim, are available on www.anniearmstrong.com/study.