

2021 NORTH AMERICAN MISSION STUDY FOR YOUTH

The Mission Moves Forward

“Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”
(1 Corinthians 15:58, HCSB)

STUDY OVERVIEW

The theme for the 2021 Week of Prayer for North American Missions is “The Mission Moves Forward.” The focal Scripture verse is 1 Corinthians 15:58. Paul is encouraging the church in Corinth to keep the mission of the gospel moving forward, even when it’s hard. Why? Because through Jesus Christ, they have victory (v. 57). Because Jesus conquered sin and death through His death on the cross and His resurrection, their efforts are not in vain.

Neither are our efforts, nor the efforts of missionaries all over North America, in vain. Paul instructs us all to be steadfast and immovable in advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ despite hardship. We are in this together.

Our gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® provide the funds missionaries need as they train and serve all over North America.

Through this mission study, youth will learn how important it is to keep moving the mission forward, even when it is difficult. They will learn how important it is to give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® and to pray for all missionaries in North America. Perhaps some in your group will become actively involved in church planting or in ministry to hard-to-reach populations as they learn about the ministry of Joshua Valdez in Farmington, New Mexico.

Prepare for the study

- For overall promotion of the North American Missions Emphasis to your entire church, order the free North American Missions Emphasis

theme poster, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering envelopes and prayer guides from your state WMU office or from the Annie Armstrong website. Ordering information can be found at AnnieArmstrong.com/StateWMU or AnnieArmstrong.com/Resources.

- Featured missionary video segments and additional downloadable promotional resources can also be found on the site for use with your overall church promotion. You can order a DVD if needed with the missionary video segments by calling 1-800-634-2462 or email AAEO@namb.net.
- Download the youth study materials and accompanying video segment at AnnieArmstrong.com/Resources. Make sure you have a way to show the video, “Youth Mission Study: Farmington, New Mexico.” It features church planter, Joshua Valdez in Farmington, New Mexico. **This video is only available on the website to view or download.**
- Order 2021 Week of Prayer prayer guides for each participant, or the guides can be viewed online at AnnieArmstrong.com. Download bookmarks to print from the site or order a supply from NAMB.
- Work with your youth leaders to plan aspects of the study, such as scheduling, scope and promotion. You may choose to do the study as a special event or incorporate it into an existing meeting or group setting.
- Publicize the study through church bulletins, social media, churchwide announcements, newsletters and so forth.
- Pray that youth will be inspired as they learn about missions efforts in North America and will eagerly support those who are serving as

missionaries with the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

- Connect with your pastor to receive clear understanding of how your church supports the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. Be prepared to share that with your class.

Note: For more missionary stories and North American missions news, check out the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering Facebook page at [facebook.com/aaeo.sbc](https://www.facebook.com/aaeo.sbc).

Lead the Study

Introduction and Opening Activity (10 minutes)

Welcome students and introduce yourself in case you have new students. Introduce the study using the information in the study overview. Explain what the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering is and how your church participates. Note that all donations to the offering go directly to support thousands of missionaries in North America and their ministries.

Ask your students if they have ever felt hopeless. Do they know of anyone at school or someone outside their circle of friends who seems to be depressed and lonely? Missionary and church planter, Josh Valdez, knows many in his community of Farmington, New Mexico, who feel utter despair and worthlessness. But because of the outreach efforts of the congregation—and especially the youth—of his church plant, Higher Ground Church, things are changing in northwest New Mexico. People are finding hope.

Transition to the lesson.

Lesson and/or Video (20-30 minutes)

Before the lesson, download the free Life On Mission app created by the North American Mission Board to your phone from the app store or from namb.net/Evangelism/Life-On-Mission-App. Practice using the app before you meet with the students.

Acquire a white board and a dry erase marker to use in the activity for those students who may not have a smart phone.

Note: Introduce the study by showing the video, “Youth Mission Study: Farmington, New Mexico,” found at [AnnieArmstrong.com/Resources](https://www.anniearmstrong.com/resources). Use the lesson material and discussion points below to lead the study. Be sure to include possible action steps your students can take to move the mission forward by ministering to their friends and family just as Joshua does. Encourage them to practice using the Life on Mission app described in the activity after the lesson section.

Another option if you don’t have a way to show the video, you can teach from this lesson material and discussion points or create your own discussion points to suit your class.

Joshua Valdez was born and raised in northwestern New Mexico. His dad is Hispanic, and his mother is full-blooded Navajo. When he was around 2 years old, he and his family began attending Grace Baptist Church in Farmington, New Mexico. When he was 5 or 6, he heard and understood the gospel in Sunday School and professed faith in Christ, asking Jesus to forgive him of his sins.

As a teenager, he began to doubt his salvation. Though he wasn’t leading an outwardly sinful life, he wasn’t reading his Bible or praying regularly either. Realizing he had a problem, he repented and submitted to Christ as Lord. He began reading his Bible regularly, beginning with the book of Romans. He read the Bible in its entirety and experienced life transformation.

Joshua left New Mexico and went to college in Greenville, South Carolina. It was there God impressed upon him the overwhelming spiritual, physical and emotional needs in his hometown and began drawing him back there to serve. With the help of the North American Mission Board and his home church, he planted Higher Ground Church in an especially needy area of Farmington.

The people in Farmington are mostly Hispanic and Native American and very hard to reach by outsiders due to their culture and isolation. More than half the people have no religion at all.

Farmington is an impoverished community where people feel despair and worthlessness. There is real spiritual and emotional darkness. Jobs are hard

to find and most require long commutes to more distant communities. The high-school dropout rate is extremely high, as is drug and alcohol abuse. This creates poverty, physical abuse, broken homes and high illiteracy rates. The people there feel stuck and hopeless with no way out. The coronavirus pandemic only made a bad situation worse as the Navajo were hit hard by it.

Josh knows many at-risk young people in the community because he works at a local school as an intervention specialist. He is responsible for coming alongside kids to help keep them engaged and prevent them from dropping out. Statistics show that if students have a positive mentoring relationship with even one adult at their school their likelihood of graduating goes up. Because of this fact, Josh has freedom to minister to the kids in whatever way works. Becoming their friend and introducing them to Jesus is what works.

Josh has worked hard to build bridges and connect with his local community by meeting needs. His church is growing and has become a place for people of all ages and backgrounds. The church's youth group has proven to be one of the most encouraging aspects. Students have been inviting their unchurched friends. Students who know Josh from school have also been attending. Josh teaches through the Bible verse by verse. For many, it is the first time they are hearing it, and they have lots of questions. With Josh, they are comfortable asking, and their lives are changing.

Josh describes a few of the teens who attend regularly. One young man had a reputation of being suicidal and depressed. No one could get through to him. He is a different person since coming to youth gatherings and being loved on by Christians.

Another teen is being raised by his sister. He struggles with drug abuse, but as he has been attending church and Wednesday youth gatherings, he has become excited, asking questions about salvation and baptism.

One girl, when asked why she attends, said it gives her hope. She said she didn't have a purpose until she discovered Jesus.

People need to feel loved, that they matter, and that they have a purpose, otherwise they feel hopeless. No one is ever too young to introduce others to the saving power and hope of Jesus

Christ. Sometimes it is hard to know where to start. Becoming a friend, listening and showing that you genuinely care like Josh does is a good place to begin. Invite them to join you at church and in your youth group where they can learn about Christ and become part of a caring community.

Discussion:

Help the students in your group understand how people in Farmington might feel by leading them through the discussion points below.

1. Because of coronavirus restrictions, people all over the world had to isolate from others to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Most students had to enter a whole new way of learning in an online classroom. Interaction with friends was limited and there was uncertainty of the future. Ask students to discuss how they felt while in isolation. Did they ever feel lonely, frustrated, without purpose or in despair? If so, how did they react?
2. Many young people grow up in homes where their parents have problems that render them unable to care for and nurture their children, especially emotionally. Discuss how not having a stable home life where one feels loved and cared for can lead to depression and acting out in destructive ways.
3. Everyone, young and old, needs someone they can depend on to always be there for them. Someone who is always the same. Someone who will love and protect them. That person is Jesus. Tell students they are the hands and feet of Jesus. Encourage them to identify at least one person they can come alongside as a friend and invite to join your group. Encourage them to pray for that person. They can help change a life.

Activity (10 minutes)

Many people want to share the gospel with others, but don't know how to start. This activity is about teaching students how to share their faith using three simple circles. You can download the free Life on Mission app created by the North American Mission Board to your phone from the app store or from namb.net/Evangelism/Life-On-Mission-App.

According to the ages of the students in your group and the availability of smart phones, you can either have the students download the Life on Mission

app to their smart phones or demonstrate how to use the concept on the white board. Have paper and pencils available for the students to draw it out, if that is the option you choose.

Have the students break off in pairs to practice using this method with each other. Encourage them to also share with their families and other friends.

Close (5 minutes)

Close by praying for Josh Valdez and the other Week of Prayer missionaries. Distribute the prayer guides and bookmarks you downloaded or ordered from AnnieArmstrong.com/Resources.

Using the prayer guide, verbally review the ministries and prayer needs of all the missionaries featured during the Week of Prayer for North American Missions.

Note that every dollar given to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering goes to resourcing the mission and ministry of these missionaries and thousands more across North America. We emphasize the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering during the Easter season, but donations are accepted year-round.

Encourage students to set aside a designated sum of money year-round. Decorate a jar or box in which to put the funds and celebrate as God blesses and multiplies the amount.

Ask for volunteers to pray aloud for the needs of a specific missionary listed in the prayer guide. Encourage students to use the bookmarks as reminders to pray for these and all missionaries in North America throughout the year. The future of North America rests in the power of prayer.

Dismiss the class.