



# Samaria and Beyond

Devotional | Here & There | January 22, 2023

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FELLOWSHIP

**Discuss:** Have you ever participated in cross-cultural ministry? Where did you go and what did you do? What model, or models, of missions did you observe along the way?

**Key Text:** *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*

J. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) was born and raised by Christian parents in Yorkshire in Northern England. He became a follower of Christ as a teen, and at age 21, sensing God’s leading for him to take the Gospel behind the closed doors of China, moved to Shanghai. A man of prayer and great faith, Taylor learned to speak several Chinese dialects and helped translate the New Testament into the dialect used in Shanghai. Believing it would show respect for the Chinese culture, Taylor made the radical decision to shave his forehead and wear a pigtail as was common for the Chinese men. This was a missionary technique that was considered controversial among more traditional missionaries at the time. Taylor had to return to England in 1861 due to poor health, but he continued to promote cross-cultural missions by maintaining a grueling speaking schedule throughout Europe and the United States and translating the Bible into Chinese. In 1865, Taylor founded the China Inland Mission which assisted more than 800 missionaries to bring Christ into the unreached interior provinces of China. In 1904, Taylor returned to China where he died and was buried. Modern day missionary strategists say that no other missionary in the nineteen centuries since the Apostle Paul had a greater vision and mobilized a more systematized plan of evangelizing a broad geographical area than Hudson Taylor. Taylor once said, “If I had a thousand pounds China should have it—if I had a thousand lives, China should have them. No! Not China, but Christ. Can we do too much for Him? Can we do enough for such a precious Savior?”

In our series “Here and There” we’re learning from God’s Word about being Christ’s witnesses locally and globally. In last week’s lesson, we focused on the first part of Acts 1:8 and learned that Jesus told us to be His witnesses in our community (“in Jerusalem”) and in our country (“and in all Judea”). In today’s lesson, we’ll see that Jesus also calls us to reach farther out with the Gospel – to be His witnesses not only to our own community and country, but also to other cultures and to the rest of the world.

## 1. God loves the whole world and wants all to be saved.

God’s way of salvation is unique – Christ is the only way (Jn.14:6; Acts 4:12), but it is also universal – it is for all who want to come to Him through faith in Jesus (Jn.3:16; Rom.10:13; Rev.22:17)

**Discuss:** What key words and phrases indicate God’s heart toward all people in these verses: 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Acts 10:34-35; Galatians 3:28?

**Discuss:** Read John 20:21. In what ways can we copy Jesus’ approach to missions and ministry?

## 2. Regardless of our race, social standing, or personal issues, we all need Christ

One of the most interesting examples of cross-cultural missions is found in Acts 16:11-40 when Paul, Silas, and Luke took the gospel to Philippi. Three specific individuals are mentioned in the chapter who accepted Christ in Philippi: Lydia (v.13-15), a fortune-telling slave girl (v.16-18), and the jailer (v.25-40). The diversity among these individuals is worth noting. They were different in at least three ways:

- Racially – Lydia was an Asian immigrant from Thyatira (v.14), the slave girl was Greek (v.16, 19), and the jailer was likely Roman (v.27).
- Socially – Lydia was an upper-class businesswoman (v.14), the fortune-telling girl was a lower-class slave (v.16, 19), and the jailer was probably middle class.
- Personally – Lydia’s need seemed to be intellectual – the Lord opened her heart (v.14), the clairvoyant slave girl’s need was psychological – she became mentally whole in Christ (v.18), and the jailer’s need was moral – he received forgiveness and pardon for his troubled conscience (v.27, 34).

Regardless of a person’s race, social standing, or personal issues, all have been created in the image of God and thus have dignity, value, and meaning to their lives. All have the right to hear about Jesus

**Discuss:** What are some examples you’ve personally seen of Christ meeting the needs of people from varied backgrounds, cultures, personal problems, etc.

## 3. Social and cultural customs and traditions can be tools rather than barriers for reaching others with the Gospel.

Our goal is not to win people to our own culture, but to win them to Christ. If a culture’s customs run counter to the nature and concepts of Christianity, then those customs should be challenged and changed so people can follow God’s Word. But any aspects of a culture that don’t oppose God’s Word can be weaved into the fabric of God’s church in that culture. We are to discern the difference between the culture of a particular people and the essentials of the Gospel.

**Discuss:** What key words and phrases indicate Paul’s attitude of crossing cultures with the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23? What might Paul’s attitude look like in a Christian’s life or in a church today?

**Discuss:** What steps do you think a Christian should take to effectively share the Gospel with friends, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, etc. from other cultures?

### For Further Study:

Resources for Gospel conversations with people of other religions: [www.dare2share.org](http://www.dare2share.org)

Information on missions: [www.imb.org](http://www.imb.org), [www.namb.net](http://www.namb.net), [www.opendoors.org](http://www.opendoors.org)

*Contagious Faith: Discover Your Natural Style for Sharing Jesus with Others* by Mark Mittelberg