



HOW WILL THEY? // MISSION SUNDAY DEBRIEF

Doug McNett // August 2, 2026

Text: Acts 1:8, Romans 10:14-15 (ESV)

Big Idea: God sends ordinary people to share Jesus through faithful relationships.

Well, good morning; how are we? Good, good. I want to give a quick shout-out to those joining us in our online community. We're grateful you're part of the Foothills family, worshiping with us wherever you are. If we haven't met, my name is Doug. I'm one of the pastors here.

This morning we get to hear from some of the student missionaries who have been sent around the world in June and July. It's really remarkable what has happened in these teams and so I'm excited for you to hear about it.

If you're new to Foothills, we are part of a denomination called the Christian and Missionary Alliance. And we like to say that "Missionary" is our middle name. Missions isn't just one of the programs we offer or something we do during the summer. It's who we are as the Foothills Family. And its who we are in the Alliance, we're an Acts 1:8 family.

Right before Jesus returned to the Father, He said to His disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." That calling still belongs to the church today. We believe that the Holy Spirit empowers ordinary people, like you and me, to carry the good news of Jesus across our neighborhoods, cultures, borders, and oceans.

Before we hear some stories this morning, I know that there may be some of you who don't have much experience with missions or are familiar with why we do missions the way we do at Foothills.

Paul described his ministry in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 by saying, "Because we loved you so much, that's the people he took the gospel too, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." I think that's such a beautiful picture of missions. We don't simply

send resources or deliver a message from a distance. We show up. We listen. We learn people's names. We eat together, serve together, laugh together, and sometimes struggle together. So we don't just share the good news of Jesus, but we share our lives with people...the same way that Jesus stepped off of His throne and shared His life with us.

That's why our primary missions model at Foothills is relationship-building. There is nothing wrong with building a house, digging a well, or completing a construction project. And honestly, sometimes it feels better because we can see the immediate accomplishment.

Relationships are harder to measure. You can't always take a picture of trust being formed. And you can't easily measure the significance of a child realizing that someone remembers their name. You may not see what God does through one conversation, one prayer, or a team returning to the same community year after year. Relationships don't always produce immediate results, but relationships are where people experience the love of Jesus.

But, honestly, we don't go just for the people we are longing to serve and love. We're also going as a sort of training opportunity because we want our young people to experience how God can work in them and through them.

We go to serve humbly and to strengthen the work of local churches and leaders who are already there. But we also know that when a student steps outside what is familiar, and has to depend on God, encounters another culture, and sees the global church firsthand, God often does something in that student that could not happen the same way from a classroom or a church seat.

That's also why students raise support. Support raising is about more than covering the cost of the project...which is definitely a real need. But, it also teaches students to trust God, to share what He is calling them to do, and to invite other people into the mission with them. Every person who

prayed, gave, encouraged, or helped send one of these students became part of the team. Some people go, and others send, but all of us participate.

So this morning, you're going to hear stories from Utah, Spain, Hawaii, and Croatia. As you listen, I want you to listen for two things. First, what did God do through these teams in the places they served? And second, what did God do in the lives of the people we sent?

In Acts 14, when Paul and Barnabas returned from their missionary journey, they gathered the church and reported all that God had done through them. That is what we get to do today. We're gathering the family of God, celebrating what He has done, and reminding ourselves that these aren't just their stories. Because you prayed, gave, and sent, these are our stories too.

So let's begin with a group of high school students who took their first step into missions this summer in our introductory mission project to Utah!

So, Utah was a brand-new project for us this year. We designed it specifically as an introductory mission experience for high school students. They didn't need any previous missions experience. They simply needed to be willing to serve, learn, and take a first step.

Our team partnered with an Alliance church in Salt Lake City, where they helped put on a VBS for children in the community. They also had an opportunity to learn about the religious culture of Utah and how to listen to, understand, and love people within the Mormon religion.

Sloan! Let's start with you, before you left for Utah, what were you most excited about—and was there anything you were nervous about? Alright, thanks for giving us a picture of where you were at before the project.

Collin, help us picture the week. What did you actually do at VBS, and what was your role on the team?

Was there a particular child or a moment from VBS that has stayed with you? Tell us what happened and why it mattered to you.

Sloan, part of the experience was learning about the spiritual culture of Utah, including the beliefs of the Mormons. What did you learn, and how did that experience help you in your own faith and how to share the truth with them?

Collin, was there a moment during the trip when God stretched you, surprised you, or asked you to depend on Him in a new way?

I want to finish by asking both of you the same question, but keep your answer to just a sentence or two. What would you say to another high school student who thinks "I don't know if I want to go on a mission project"?

I love that. God doesn't only use people who already feel prepared. He uses ordinary people who are willing to say yes. For many of these students, Utah was their first mission project—but we're praying it won't be their last.

Collin and Sloan, thank you for being willing to go, serve, and share your lives with the children and church in Salt Lake City. We're proud of both of you. Would you thank them for sharing with us this morning?

Our next team served in Spain. This was a smaller team of young adults who traveled there to partner with members of our Christian and Missionary Alliance family and help put on a VBS for children in their community.

One of the things I love about the Alliance is that wherever we go, we aren't going alone. God already has faithful people serving in these

communities. Our role is to come alongside them, encourage them, learn from them, and strengthen the work God has already called them to do. Would you welcome Sarah and Lulu to the stage?

Lulu, let's begin by helping everyone understand the project. Where in Spain were you, who were you serving alongside, and what did a typical day look like?

Sarah, what was your particular role during VBS? What did you find yourself doing throughout the week?

Was there a relationship or child, or a moment from VBS that has stayed with you. What happened, and why was it meaningful?

Lulu, what surprised you most about Spain—either about the culture, the church, or the people you met?

Earlier, I talked about our relationship model of missions. We don't want to arrive believing that we are the heroes or that we are bringing God somewhere He isn't already present. We want to serve alongside local believers and learn from them. So Sarah, where did you see God already at work in the people and churches you served with?

I want to ask both of you one final question. We've been talking this morning about what God does through the people we send and what He does in them. What is one thing God taught you or changed in you through your experience in Spain?

Thank you both. Thank you for representing Foothills and for sharing your lives with the children, families, and church in Spain.

Our next project also reminds us that we don't have to do missions alone. In fact, something incredibly powerful can happen when churches choose to work together.

This project was also a first—not only for Foothills, but for our entire district. If you haven't heard of our district, it's made up of 120 Alliance churches from Utah, Nevada, Northern California, Hawaii, and Guam. I serve on the missions board for our district and our missions mobilizer Sandy and I were dreaming of a way to unite our district churches and create opportunities for younger people across the district to experience what the Foothills Family has experienced through missions. SO! I created a new ministry called the Launch Collective.

There are students throughout our district who want to go, but their church may not have enough students, leaders, resources, or experience to form a complete team. So we began asking a simple question: What if our churches worked together to “launch” students into vocational ministry?

SO! In June six churches came together to send students as one team to a highly impoverished area called Waianae, Hawaii. I had the privilege of helping lead that team, and Foothills sent one student with me, Nieva.

Nieva, when you first heard that we were going to Hawaii, what did you expect the experience to be like? And what did you discover about Waianae once we arrived?

When most of us hear “Hawaii,” we picture resorts, beaches, and vacations. But Waianae is a community facing significant poverty and some very real challenges. It's also a community filled with strong, resilient people and local leaders who are faithfully serving there every day. We went to come alongside those leaders, learn from them, and join the work God was already doing.

Nieva, help everyone understand what we actually did. Who did we partner with, and what did serving in Waianae look like from day to day?

One of the things that made this project so unique was that our students came from six different churches. Most of them didn't know one another

before we started preparing for this project. But over time, and especially during the project, we watched them become one team.

Nieva, what was it like serving with students from so many different churches? How did those relationships change over the course of the project?

That was one of the most meaningful parts for me as a leader. I watched students who began as strangers learn to serve one another, depend on one another, pray for one another, and become friends. It reminded me that we really can accomplish more when our churches work together. Earlier, I said that we don't go only because of what we hope God will do through us. We also go because of what we hope God will do in us. So, Nieva, how did God challenge you, surprise you, or change you through this experience?

Alright, thank you, Nieva. I am incredibly proud of the way you represented Foothills, the way you stepped into a team of students from other churches, and the way you allowed God to work through you and in you.

Our final team was also part of something much larger than a single trip. They returned to a place where we are building long-term relationships and investing in a partnership we believe God is calling Foothills to champion for years to come.

We don't want Croatia to be a place we visit once, take some pictures, and then move on to the next destination. We believe God is inviting us to build a lasting partnership there—to keep showing up, deepen relationships, strengthen the local ministry, and allow trust to grow over time.

This is what our relationship model of missions looks like. We aren't trying to complete a project and declare the work finished. We are investing in people, and people are never projects. We want our friends in Croatia to

know that we love them, that we remember them, and that Foothills is committed to walking alongside them for years to come.

Would you all welcome Nathan and Noelle?

Noelle, for someone who knows very little about our Croatia project, help us understand it. Where did the team serve, who did you partner with, and what did a typical day look like?

Nathan, what was your particular role on the team? What did you find yourself doing throughout the project?

We've talked several times this morning about relationships being difficult to measure. We may not be able to point to a building and say, "We completed that," but we can point to people we know, love, and continue to pray for.

Noelle, can you tell us about one person you met or one relationship that became meaningful to you. Who were they, and what made that connection significant? Anyone else that you saw really connect while we were there? (Tobia & Camden?)

Nathan, was there a particular moment when the trip became more than an activity or a schedule for you—when something happened that made the mission feel personal?

Earlier, I asked everyone to listen for two things: what God did through the people we sent and what God did in them. So, Noelle, where did you see God working through the team in Croatia?
And Nathan, what did God do in you? How did He challenge you, change you, or deepen your faith through this experience?

We believe one of the most important things we can do in Croatia is continue to show up. Trust takes time. Friendship takes time. And meaningful ministry usually takes time.

I want both of you to answer this next question. After experiencing Croatia firsthand, why do you believe it is important for Foothills to remain committed to this partnership and continue sending teams in the years ahead?

One final question: If you could ask our congregation to pray for one person, one ministry, or one need in Croatia, what would you ask us to pray for?

Thank you both. What you have shared helps us understand why this partnership matters.

We are committed because there are people there whom we know and love, local leaders whom we want to encourage, and important work that God is already doing.

And Foothills family, this partnership will require all of us. It will require people who are willing to go. It will require people who will pray faithfully. It will require people who will give generously. And it will require a church that is willing to keep showing up, even when the results are difficult to measure.

Nathan and Noelle, thank you for representing Foothills, for loving the people of Croatia, and for sharing your lives with them. Would you thank them—and the entire Croatia team—for saying yes?

This morning, we have heard what God did in Utah, Spain, Hawaii, and Croatia. We have heard what He did through the people we sent, and we have heard what He did in them. But before we finish, I want to return to the question at the heart of this morning: How will they?

In Romans 10, Paul writes, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they

have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" How will they hear? Someone has to be willing to go.

But how will someone go? A church has to be willing to send. That is what we have seen this morning. Students and young adults said yes to going, but they didn't go alone. You went with them. You prayed for them. You encouraged them. You gave. You helped them raise support. You made it possible for them to show up, build relationships, and share the love of Jesus in Utah, Spain, Hawaii, and Croatia.

Paul finishes that passage by saying, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

This morning, we have heard from some people with beautiful feet. Not because they traveled somewhere impressive, and not because they came home as heroes. Their feet are beautiful because they were willing to carry the good news of Jesus, share their lives with people, and join the work God was already doing.

But this calling doesn't belong only to the people who stood on this stage. It belongs to all of us. We are the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Missionary is our middle name. We are an Acts 1:8 family.

So maybe the question for us isn't only, "How will they hear?" Maybe the question is, "What is my part?"

Maybe God is asking you to go. Croatia has been asking us for two years to send a team of Adults the first two weeks of December, to do a Christmas fair, maybe that's you? Maybe He's asking you to give. Maybe He's asking you to pray faithfully, encourage a student, or help send the next team. But every one of us can take part.

Friends, may we never become satisfied simply hearing these stories. May we continue creating them. May we be a church family filled with

people who say yes to the Holy Spirit, yes to going, yes to sending, and yes to sharing not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well.

Because how will they hear unless someone goes? And how will they go unless we send them?

Let's pray.