

Missions Sunday – Global Focus

Going Global: What sustains missions and passion to declare God’s goodness to the nations?

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May 23, 2021

Jeremiah was a prophet to the nations.

“I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.” Jeremiah 1:5

All nations

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you hope and a future.

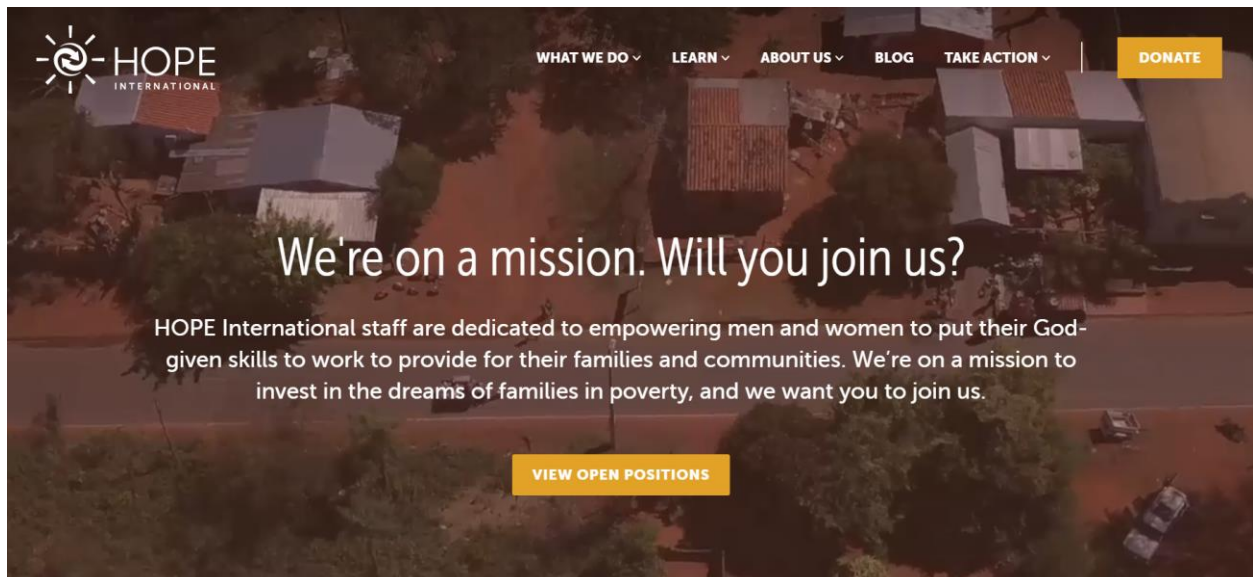
Expectation vs Reality

(Pinterest fails)

**** Pictures to follow**

Short-term mission trips, *“Change the world in one week”*

Board of directors, *“Change the organization in one meeting.”*



- Expectation versus Reality (Foster Care story)

**** Pictures to follow**

Disillusionment: a turning point when reality clashes with our expectations

- Moments when we realize “this is harder than we thought it would be.”

“You misled me!” - Jeremiah 1:19

For his message, religious leaders beat Jeremiah and put him in stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin, humiliating him with mockery and public abuse. The words he spoke offended the religious elite and those who believed Judah was invincible. These leaders were infected with the “disease of autonomy,” believing in their own strength and sufficiency alone.

A group of influential priests tried to convince King Zedekiah to put Jeremiah to death; he threw Jeremiah into deep mud at the bottom of a cistern, where it was assumed that he would starve.

And, as if that were not enough, Jeremiah was not exempt from the judgment his people faced. Eventually, as Jeremiah prophesied, the Babylonians invaded Israel, and the nation fell into captivity in 586 BC under the ruthless rule of King Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah continues writing as the kingdom of Israel begins to implode and his dire predictions of judgment begin to materialize.

Jeremiah delivered the message that his people would experience captivity, displacement, and exile for 70 years: almost two full generations. Throughout Jeremiah, there is a lot of bad news. Destruction. Judgment. Pain.

Jeremiah 7:1-10, Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 19.

Jeremiah 38

Jeremiah 1:3

Death Threats, Assaults, Imprisonment, Slander, Abduction

This is the difference of enduring hopefulness. It’s not humanism. It’s not blind idealism. It’s not a go get ‘em, try harder inspirational message. It’s not checklists and practices to get grittier. It’s not a five-step process to develop more resilience.

Rather, it’s a connection to the Spring of living waters, the Author of life, and the Restorer of the broken. Unshakable hope is grounded in a bigger story. It’s informed optimism, not blind idealism, because it’s connected to the character of God who remains faithful and powerful in both seasons of drought and seasons of plenty.

Idols are worthless; they are ridiculous lies!

On the day of reckoning they will all be destroyed.

But the God of Israel is no idol!

He is the Creator of everything that exists.

We haven't yet reached that long-awaited ending, and brokenness surrounds us. For the exiles Jeremiah writes to, there is also a promised ending—yet for this generation, Babylon would be their home. They weren't only called to serve their time and suffer their consequences. They were called to actively “work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it.”

Similarly, we aren't meant to just lament the brokenness of this world while we passively await rescue. God invites us to engage. To get to work. To see Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. To heal and to hope.

The Quest

There is a journey from idealism to enduring hope. As with any journey, there are opportunities to veer off course. But always there is God's invitation, issued by Jeremiah to the people of Judah long ago and to us today: Return to Me. Stop looking inward at your strength and resolve. Look up.

Can any of the worthless foreign gods send us rain?
Does it fall from the sky by itself?
No, you are the one, O Lord our God!
Only you can do such things.
So we will wait for you to help us.

We cannot do this in our own strength. We need to pay attention to our roots. To discover God's presence that alone leads to an enduring hope. Based on our exploration of Jeremiah and other leaders who exemplify an enduring hope, the next four stories highlight four defining characteristics of leaders who look up:

Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13

Jeremiah 10:15-16a

Jeremiah 29:7

Matthew 6:10

Jeremiah 14:22

“One of the striking things about Jeremiah was his tenacious faithfulness in carrying out God's instructions in the face of unrelenting opposition and harsh criticism.”

Farai's Story

“I would get death threats. My family was victimized. My kids were victimized. It was tough, but I believed in the mission, and I knew we were standing up for what was right.” - Rev. Farai Mutamiri

“We felt like we were reliving the persecution of the early Church, and I was proud to have been associated with the suffering of the faithful followers.”

Farai: "My life is not my own. I am not afraid of death. One day I will meet my Maker. And until then, I will remain faithful."

"We became so strong. People would come to church with their Bibles and with wet towels, so they were prepared for tear gas. You'd wonder where we were getting that zeal and energy."

Riaan's story

"The needs on the ground are significant. It can discourage you to see women and children who have been exploited and broken by poverty." He adds, "Most of the time, I love what I do, but there are days when it seems everything goes wrong." - *Riaan

On the most difficult days, Riaan remains focused on his original call, on the beautiful obligation he and Priya have to serve in India. "The people we serve are daily reminders of our mission. Any challenges we face in our life and leadership pale in comparison to what these communities face."

**** Wrapped gift image**

This is what the Lord says:

**"Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans,
who rely on human strength
and turn their hearts away from the Lord.**

**They are like stunted shrubs in the desert,
with no hope for the future.**

**They will live in the barren wilderness,
in an uninhabited salty land.**

- Jeremiah 17:5-6 NLT

**** Tumbleweed image**

**"But blessed are those who trust in the Lord
and have made the Lord their hope and confidence.**

**They are like trees planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach deep into the water.**

**Such trees are not bothered by the heat
or worried by long months of drought.**

**Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop producing fruit."**

Jeremiah 17:6-7 NLT

Jeremiah 17:5-6 VS Jeremiah 17:7-8

Tumbleweeds VS fruit-bearing trees

**** Fruit-bearing tree image**



**** Edouard's picture**

Edouard's Story

"When we heard the news, my wife and I sat in our home and cried. We asked God if this school was really worth it. If this was really what He was calling us to." – Edouard Lassegue

They were baffled and hurt that parents would bring legal action against them. As they prayed, God led them back to their initial call and commitment. "The whole experience caused us to ask ourselves, 'What are we here for? Are we here to make a name for ourselves or are we here to make an impact on the next generation?'"

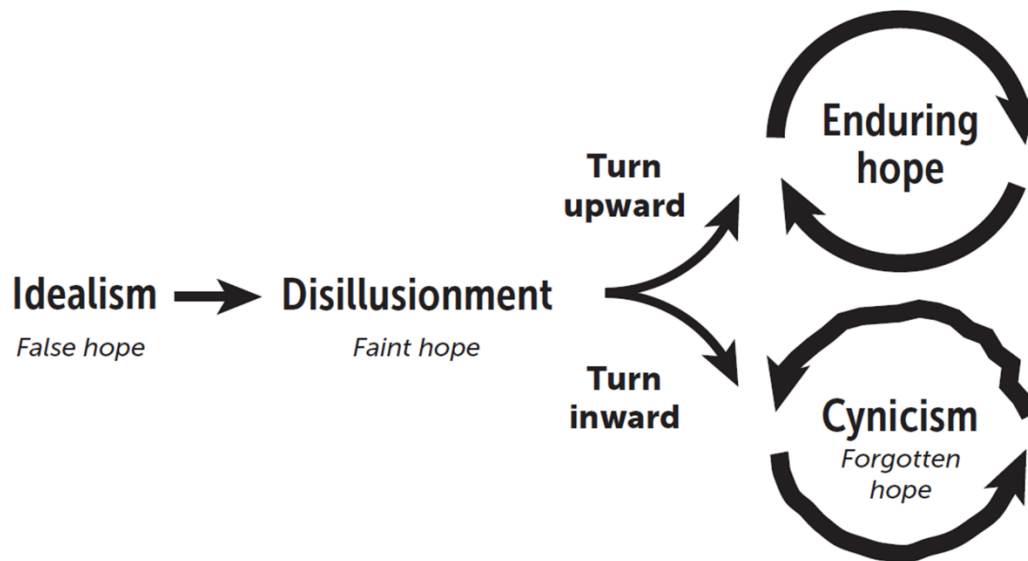
"There are days I've asked God to relieve me of my duty, relieve me of my love—for sometimes, it's just too painful."

Enduring hope: our complete trust and active expectation in God's redemptive work

Ann Saylor's Story

"If we all gave up when it was hard, there would be no one left." – Ann Saylor

- she weathered storms with an informed hopefulness



What path will we choose?

Conclusion

“In this world you will have trouble...”

**“In this world you will have trouble,
but take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

Jesus, John 16:33b