

Bible Study

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together everywhere

Together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
1 Corinthians 1:2

Introduction:

My sister and I have an ongoing competition to see who can fly through, into or out of the most airports. After vacation trips to Japan, Germany and France, she is winning with more than 60 airports. I am her older brother and only have traveled to a measly 39 airports. As the competition rages on, I strive to win. I want to fly to as many places as I can!

This desire changes the way I view airline travel delays and reroutes. Recently I took a mission trip to the Middle East. Before I left my stateside home airport, my first flight was delayed. I would miss my international, overnight flight and would have to make other arrangements. I was not alone. The line of delayed travelers at the customer service desk grew and began to extend down the corridor — all the passengers upset at the change in their travel plans. A business woman traveling to Texas was distressed that she would miss an important marketing meeting. A family from Europe was visibly upset that they would have to spend the night in the airport. When the airline representative shared possible alternative plans with me, she braced herself for my predictable negative response. She apologized many times when she said she would have to reroute me through London Heathrow and possibly through Frankfurt, Germany. I smiled. She did not expect that response, but I explained to her that I had never flown through London Heathrow or Frankfurt. (Plus two airports for me!)

The phrase in 1 Corinthians 1:2, “all those everywhere,” reaffirms the desire to go to new places and meet new people. Jesus’ church is commissioned to “go to the entire world and make disciples.” How can you go to all places?



Get-to-Know-You Questions:

- To how many airports have you been?
- To how many states in America have you traveled?
- To how many continents have you traveled?
- What is the one place you would like to travel to that you have not yet visited?



Bible Reading:

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 aloud.

Retell the main ideas of this Bible passage in your own words.

Group Questions:

- What does this Bible passage say about God?
- What does this Bible passage say about humans?
- Who are the people to whom Paul is addressing his letter? (v. 2)
- What are the two characteristics Paul uses to describe the recipients of this letter? (v. 3)



Deeper Study:

I have planned numerous cross-cultural mission trips in my ministry. When I traveled to the Middle East to help the local FM churches serve refugees, I faced a unique issue in the planning: I had to travel to three types of locations.

- Location Type 1: places I had visited before and planned to revisit — the homes of Christian refugees
- Location Type 2: places I did not plan to visit — the homes of Muslim refugees
- Location Type 3: places I did not want to visit — refugee camps of militant refugees who support ISIS

At each location, I faced different challenges.

Location Type 1: I found myself no longer shocked or outraged to see and hear the now familiar (to me) story of this Syrian refugee family. The family told of their encounter with ISIS in Homs, Syria. When ISIS entered the town, the father was kidnapped and placed in an abandoned factory building with 30 other men. The father prayed to every god he could think of, “God, save me!” When he prayed to Jesus (who he read about in the Quran), a bomb exploded outside the building and opened a small hole in the wall. He quickly wiggled through the new opening and ran to freedom. Sprinting away from his captors, he heard gun fire in the building as the other men were killed. He gathered his family and escaped to Jordan, where the local FM church visited him. Hearing about Jesus again from the Jordanian church leaders, this man placed his faith in Jesus.

If I had entered this man’s house asking questions about his poverty and his needs, I would have never heard the marvelous story of Jesus. Because his story motivated him to speak, it motivates me to go to familiar places in Jesus’ name but with new eyes, new vision and new creative purposes.

Questions:

- Where are the places I often go?
- Who are the people God wants me to see with new eyes as I go to these familiar locations?
- What power does the name of Jesus possess in familiar places?

Prayer: God, help me to offer grace and peace to the people I am familiar with but often overlook.

Location Type 2: I had to gracefully accept changes to my travel plans when we visited refugee homes of Muslims. I would rather visit with Christians, but when I spent time with Muslims I realized God wants grace and peace for them, too. This Syrian refugee family was warm, welcoming, laughing

and full of much joy. Even though they are Muslim, they asked me to share a Jesus story with them. Listening intently, they engaged with the story, asking questions and seeking clarification. I was honored to proclaim a blessing upon their home.

Questions:

- Am I open to be taken to places (and to meet people) that are not included in my agenda today?
- Am I willing to boldly share a Jesus story even though the listeners may not apply the truth to their lives?

Prayer: God, help me to offer grace and peace to the people I do not plan to meet but do meet today.

Location Type 3: I had to defeat my fear when I was taken to scary places. There is a particular refugee camp in Jordan where no Christian (besides our FM church) goes. This camp is the origin of ISIS leadership and many militant Muslims. Our FM leaders have been threatened and our FM house church there has faced much persecution. As my trip plans formalized, it was evident Jesus was drawing me to visit refugee families in this neighborhood. Choosing to focus on faith not fear, I went to pray for families and encourage the work of Jesus. When I was frightened, I remembered the bold words of the local FM pastor, “God will go before us. God will protect us.” I realized God wants to proclaim grace and peace into these places, too.

Questions:

- Where are the dark places in my community?
- How is God shining light into these places? What can I do to help?

Prayer: God, help me to offer grace and peace to the people I am afraid of.