

2022 NORTH AMERICAN MISSION STUDY FOR ADULTS

United: Together on Mission

“Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice.”

(Romans 15:5-6, CSB)

STUDY OVERVIEW

The theme for the 2022 Week of Prayer for North American Missions is “United” The focal Scripture verses are Romans 15:5-6. Paul is encouraging the church in Rome to put aside their many differences and to work together in harmony that they might glorify God with one mind and one voice.

Through this mission study, adults will learn how important it is to work together as one united force, despite personal differences. 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 your church or 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 Michael and Traci Byrd in St. Louis, Missouri.

Prepare for the study

- For overall promotion of the North American Missions Emphasis to your entire church, order the free 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.
- Work with missions leaders and other church leaders to plan aspects of the study, such as scheduling, scope and promotion. Encourage these leaders to enlist other church members to take ownership by helping in the planning and implementation of the study. 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.
- Ask small groups and church members to pray for the study outcome. Pray that individuals will be inspired as they learn about missions efforts in North America and will eagerly support those who are serving as missionaries and chaplains with the North American Mission Board (NAMB).
- Consider enlisting an outside speaker, such as a North American missionary, to address the church before beginning the study or as part of it. For assistance, you can make a request at namb.net/contact/request-a-speaker.
- Explore the website, AnnieArmstrong.com/resources, for resources that will enhance the learning experience for your church.
- Download the study materials and video segments from the website, AnnieArmstrong.com/resources. Make sure you have a way to show the video.
- Other segments on the website can be used for study purposes or for the Week of Prayer and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering emphases. The video segment for adults features church planter Michael Byrd and his wife, Traci, who are serving in St. Louis, Missouri. Download or stream the video from AnnieArmstrong.com/resource/adult-study.
- Order or download and print enough *2022 Week of Prayer* bookmarks and prayer guides for each participant or family to have one of each from AnnieArmstrong.com/resources.
- 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.

- Have on hand index cards or paper and pencils or pens for each participant.

Note: Your church has permission to copy and download videos and other resources at AnnieArmstrong.com. Downloads are free. You can also check out the Annie Armstrong Facebook page for more missions stories at facebook.com/aaeo.sbc.

Lead the Study

Items needed:

- Index cards or paper
- Pens or pencils

Introduction

Welcome participants and introduce yourself to those who may not know you. 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 missionaries in North America and their ministries.

Scripture Focus

The theme for this year's study is United, and the focal verses are Romans 15:5-6. In this passage, Paul is addressing the members of the new church in Rome, which was a diverse community. It was made up of Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, rich and poor, strong and weak. We can be sure there were as many ideas on the "right" ways to live and do ministry as there were individuals. Sound familiar?

While the church must be uncompromising in her stand against activities that are expressly forbidden in Scripture—such as sexual sin, murder and theft—we should not let "disputable things" (Romans 14:1) divide us in our efforts to carry out the Great Commission.

Division is the age-old strategy of the devil. He uses this strategy among family members, church members and the Christian faith at large. Paul encourages us to accept and be patient with one another so that we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice (Romans 15:6).

When we work together as the body of Christ, having in mind to accomplish the mission He has given us and yielding to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we are a force to be reckoned with.

This truth is evidenced in the lives of missionary families who are serving throughout North America, such as Michael and Traci Byrd in St. Louis, Missouri.

Transition to the missions lesson/video.

Missions Lesson and/or Video

Note: If you don't have a way to show the video, or have time constraints, you can teach from this section about church planter Michael Byrd and his wife, Traci. Use the discussion points listed at the end of this section or create your own to suit your class.

If you can, show the video for the adult mission study about the Byrds and have a time of discussion using the suggested discussion points. Download or stream the video from here: AnnieArmstrong.com/resource/adult-study.

Be sure to include possible action steps your church can take to be united in bringing the gospel to people in your community who don't have a relationship with Jesus.

Baden is a north St. Louis neighborhood that is plagued with crime, drugs, homelessness and prostitution. It's hardly the idyllic setting for a young couple in love to start their new life together, yet Baden is where Michael and Traci's love story began.

Both Michael and Traci agree that they need and complement each other. Where one is weak, the other is strong. And most important, they lovingly and patiently encourage each other. This was especially important in starting a life together in Baden.

Michael says, "It was tough living in this neighborhood. And then we were able to move out and said, 'Thank you, Jesus, we will never go back!'"

But six years ago, God told Michael and Traci to do what they said they would never do—move back to Baden and plant a church from scratch.

Traci says, "You think you escape. It's like, 'Oh I'm out of the hood, I'm out of the hood! Woo-hoo! And

then God has other plans.”

So, the first thing Michael and Traci did when they came back to their old neighborhood was to prayer walk. That was something they could do together. But then Michael started doing all the things pastors do, and Traci began to wonder about where she fit in building the new church.

The Byrds found the answer to Traci’s question, and a powerful way to reach their neighbors, as they spoke with people on the streets of Baden. They quickly realized that a common need among families was how to plan meals so the food they had could stretch to last a week instead of just one day. And it just so happens that Traci is an expert at that. She knows how to plan meals that are nutritious, economical and delicious.

She started cooking classes for her unchurched neighbors. She taught them how to shop for food on a budget, how to plan meals and how to get the most from their purchases—and how to make a killer mac and cheese. She taught them the practical things she had learned as a wife and as a mother of four kids. What she learned out of necessity became a gift to someone else.

And so, Traci’s new cooking class friends experienced the love of Christ in a practical way which opened the door to them hearing and responding to the gospel at what is now called Faith Community Bible Church.

Michael and Traci are united in their church planting efforts as Michael pastors and Traci leads worship. They are a united force working in harmony to bring the people living in Baden into a relationship with Jesus.

And much of this is made possible by our gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. Traci says, “I’ve never experienced the kind of love I have since I have been part of this group of churches. This is the body. This is the body of Christ. That’s what Annie Armstrong means to me. And that’s exactly how I see it. This offering, it does have a face. It’s my face.”

Discussion:

1. Ask the class members, what about this story impacted them the most?
2. Michael and Traci worked together for the

good of their family, their neighborhood and their church. Talk about the damage done to our ministry efforts when we let differences of opinion get in the way of the work.

3. Churches have actually split when differences reach the point of being divisive. Talk about how that looks to non-Christians. What kind of damage is done to our Christian witness?
4. When the world sees Christians lovingly supporting and encouraging one another, they are seeing an accurate reflection of the God we serve. The devil seeks to divide us. It’s his age-old trick. Discuss a few events in the Bible where God’s people were divided and the ultimate consequences of that division. Now discuss the power of unity.
5. We all have gifts and talents to bring to the table, though we may think ours aren’t very significant. Ask members to write down their talents, gifts and likes. Brainstorm ways these can be used as part of the body of Christ.
6. Consider the gifts and talents of your group members. What action steps can you as a united church take to bring the gospel to those in your community who don’t have a relationship with Jesus?
7. Michael and Traci started their ministry through prayer. They prayer walked their community. You can virtually prayer walk neighborhoods where church planters are serving and send them notes of encouragement at PrayForPlanters.com.

Close (5 minutes)

Maybe all of us can’t go to the mission field like the Byrds, but we can all give something to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. This offering helps to fund missionaries in church planting like Michael and Traci, all over North America. Most are ministering to hard-to-reach people in hard-to-reach places to see lives miraculously changed as people discover a new life in Christ. That’s something worth investing in.

We can also pray for these missionaries. Distribute the prayer guides and bookmarks you downloaded or ordered from AnnieArmstrong.com/resources. Also, encourage your group to visit PrayForPlanters.com to virtually prayer walk neighborhoods where church planters are serving and send notes of encouragement to missionaries.

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 directly to resourcing the mission and ministry of these missionaries and more across North America and not to administrative costs. We emphasize the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering during the Easter season, but donations are accepted year-round.

Encourage participants to make it a family goal 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 participants 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 and in Christians working together as a powerful, united force.

Dismiss the class.