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Respond in Mission

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Series: Respond  
Psalm 67

**BIG IDEA – GOD BLESSES YOU TO BLESS OTHERS**

We believe everyone needs to know about Jesus. Whether you are young or old, rich or poor, from the USA or Ecuador (I didn't mean to rhyme there, but I did), we believe everyone needs to know about Jesus.

Our vision here at Two Cities is we want to make and mobilize disciples in an environment of prayer and worship. We want to mobilize people right here in our city, but we also want to mobilize people around the world. As we try to do that, we think of three main categories: *discover*, *develop*, and *deploy*.

We want to help people *discover* a heart for the mission of God. That's one of the main reasons we do short-term mission trips. When you came in, both here and in Lexington, you should have been given one of these purple cards. These have our 2026 short-term mission trips on them.

We are so excited about these. You're going to hear more about these later. We want to see so many people in our church go on short-term mission trips. We want our missions team to be completely overwhelmed by the number of people who want to go. Short-term trips help you discover.

We also want to help you *develop* a heart for the mission of God. What our prayer is... We want to see in the years to come dozens and dozens, and eventually hundreds and hundreds, of people sent out from Two Cities as long-term missionaries.

We understand that there is a very big gap between someone going to Ecuador for one week and being like, "I had a great week," and being to the point to where they are ready

to move their entire life to Ecuador. So, we want to help bridge that gap. We want to help develop.

Then we want to *deploy*. Our heart, as a church, is we want to send people well. We want to send people in a way that's healthy. Then, once our missionaries are on the field, we want to encourage them. We want to invest in them. We want to care for them.

Right now, in our church, we have five missionary units who are overseas. They're members of our church serving somewhere overseas. One of the main ways we care for them is to remember them in prayer. So, we're going to start this morning by praying for missionaries. We have a lot to cover in the Psalms. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the five missionary units that, right now, are serving you overseas. Lord, we know it is challenging to be a missionary. There are logistical challenges. There are all kinds of challenges with culture, with language. Lord, we just pray right now that you would encourage our missionaries. Would you give them resilience? Would you allow them to persevere? Would you protect them?

Lord, I pray that you would allow our missionaries to see the fruit of their labor, even over the next week or so. Lord, we thank you for them, for the example they are to us. I pray that we would be quick to remember them in prayer. We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

On March 12, 2020, Olivia and I were on a short-term mission trip in India, and we were having a great time. We had been looking forward to this trip for a long time. We had taken some time off work. We were having a great time in India. But we woke up that morning, and we found out the world was basically shutting down because of COVID. Do you remember this?

We woke up to the news that the NBA season was canceled, there was a travel ban from countries in Europe, and we also found out that Tom Hanks and his wife got COVID. Do you remember this? He and his wife got COVID in Australia. It was a confusing time, wasn't it? One day, you're just living your life like normal, and then the next thing you know, you're making your own hand sanitizer and watching *Tiger King* on Netflix. It was a very confusing time.

Well, since the world was shutting down, Olivia and I were like, "We have to get out of here." We had only been in India for three days. So, we got on a plane that day. We left and came back to the States, and from the time we got back here, for over two years, Two Cities would not send another short-term mission trip because of COVID.

And we missed it. We missed the mission. We missed the adventure. We missed the stories that come from it. We missed the opportunities mission trips give us to take steps of faith. One of the things we learned during that time is that you and I need mission and adventure. You need those things, because otherwise you are going to become way too comfortable. You're going to become way too bored. You're going to become way too self-oriented.

So, today, we're going to look in Psalm 67 to see how to live out God's mission. If you're new, we've been in a series on the Psalms called *Respond*. We've been looking at this question...*What does it look like for us to respond to God rightly?* The big idea of this psalm and this message is very simple. It's that *God blesses you to bless others*. God blesses you to bless your family, to bless your friends, to bless your coworkers. God blesses you to bless your neighbors and the nations.

We're going to pick up in verse 1. We don't know who wrote this psalm, but they start by asking God to be gracious to them and to bless them. So, let's look at verse 1. **"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us..."** Something that's interesting about this psalm is that the commentators seem to agree it is a combination of Genesis, chapter 12, when Abraham is blessed to be a blessing, and Numbers, chapter 6, when we see the high priestly blessing.

Now, we heard a few weeks ago that the definition of *blessing* is the favor and fellowship of God. *Blessing* is the favor and fellowship of God. One of the things we see here is that it is not a bad thing to ask God to bless you. It's not a bad thing to ask God to show you favor. God shows us favor, and he blesses us in so many different ways. I'll give you just two. He primarily blesses us with himself, but he also blesses us with his stuff.

When God blesses you with himself, this is a spiritual blessing. When God forgives them of their sin and reconciles them to himself, he is giving them a spiritual blessing. But also, God blesses us plenty of times and with a lot of things with his stuff. This applies to everything from your relationships to your family to your natural giftedness to your money and to your personality. He blesses you with himself and his stuff. We should ask God to bless us in all of those areas.

But I actually think most of us have no problem with that. Most of us have no problem asking God to bless us. Right? But here's the problem: we ask God to bless us, and that's usually where we stop. Did you notice how it ends in verse 1? I'm going to read it again. It says, **"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah..."** *Selah* means to pause, to meditate.

The problem is that, so often, our prayers will be just like this prayer in verse 1, where we are asking God to bless us, but we will end it with a period. We will end it with a period instead of a pause. We will say, "Lord, bless me with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Bless me with a spouse. Bless me with kids or grandkids." Period.

"Lord, bless me with good health. Bless me by helping me get better." Period. "Lord, bless me by letting me get the internship I want or get into the grad school I want so I can make plenty of money someday." Period. We put a period where there should just be a pause. This is what we naturally do.

So, let's finish the sentence. Let's see why the psalmist is asking for blessing. You'll see he's going to say, "Would you be a catalyst of God's blessing and not just a cul-de-sac?" Verse 2: "[May God bless us] **that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.**" This is very important. God wants to bless you, but God does not just bless you for *you*. God blesses you so that you can be a blessing to your neighbors and to the nations.

As I was studying this psalm, pretty much all of the commentators seemed to say that what we have to figure out how to do is to connect God's blessing with God's purposes. Think about it. God blesses us in a lot of different ways. The challenging thing for the Christian is to connect his blessing with his purposes.

So, let's make this very practical. Most of us can agree that over the last nine years, God has blessed Two Cities Church. We have seen the favor of God in incredible ways. That should make you ask the question...*What's the purpose of that blessing?* Is the purpose of that blessing just so we can feel good about ourselves and high-five each other in the hall? No.

Is the purpose of that blessing so that we will see more Two Cities magnets riding around our city when we're looking at cars? That is not it. The purpose of our blessing is so that we might be a blessing to other great churches, to other great ministries, to missionaries around the world. We are blessed so that we can be a blessing.

One of the things I love and appreciate about Pastor Kyle, just to honor him, is if you were to ask him right now, "What are you most excited about when it comes to the future of Two Cities Church?" I know exactly what he would tell you, because I've heard him say this multiple times over the last year.

He would say, "I am most excited, over the next year, in the coming years, for us to become more and more of a sending church, sending out pastors, sending out church plants, sending out missionaries." We are blessed as a church so that we can be a blessing.

If God has blessed you financially, the purpose of that blessing is so you might be generous so that the mission of God can go forward around the world. Here's the thing about the money you have been blessed with. Your money is going to effortlessly go toward the things you love the most. Think about it. Some of you love your iPhone, and if that thing would break, you would immediately buy a new one. You wouldn't even have to think about it. It would just effortlessly go there.

Some of you have an Android or an HP laptop. For some reason, if that thing broke, you would buy a new one. Some of you love experiences. You love your family. What that looks like is you don't have much trouble at all spending some serious money on those things...on a vacation, on sporting events, on concerts. What does your money effortlessly go to? That's going to tell you a lot about what you love the most.

If God has blessed you relationally, maybe with a spouse, the purpose of that blessing is so you can partner together for gospel work. If God has blessed you with strength and energy and vitality, the purpose of that blessing is so you will have more energy to serve. So, on a daily basis, what we need to ask are these two very simple questions: "What has God blessed me with, and how can I connect my blessings with their purposes today?"

The great theologian Garth Brooks says what we need to do is to not put off until tomorrow what can be done today. So, if you have a great marriage, what would it look like for you to, today, invite over a younger couple who might be struggling or to invite a single person over to your house to be with you and your family?

If you have a lot of energy, what if you, today, put something on your calendar to go serve somebody who's in need? If you have a lot of resources, what if you decided today to bless somebody with an act of generosity, if you decided today to put the Lord first in your finances? Would you be a catalyst and not a cul-de-sac? Would you take your blessings and use those blessings to bless other people?

Now, what we're going to do for the rest of our time is we're going to talk about three things people are confused about when it comes to blessing, when it comes to being a blessing. We're going to talk about the exclusivity of Christianity, the judgment of God, and why we go on short-term mission trips.

Some of these topics are going to be a little bit heavy, so just take a breath and bear with me. We're going to get through them. But we need to talk about these topics. As we talk about them, I want you to keep in mind that the overarching theme of the psalm is that God wants to bless you. He wants you to feel joy and gladness.

Now let's keep going and pick it up in verse 3. It says, "**Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!**" The word *peoples* is mentioned four times in this psalm.

The latest data from the Joshua Project says that right now in the world there are about 17,000 people groups. A *people group* is a group of people that has a distinct language, culture, and identity.

Of those 17,000 people groups, 7,500 of them are unreached, which means they're less than 2 percent Christian. What it means is that these people have little to no access to the gospel. Right now, there are 3.5 billion people who have little to no access to the gospel. The church has made a lot of progress in recent decades, but there is still so much work to be done. There's still so much lostness around us.

We also have to see it says in verse 3, "Let the peoples praise *you*, O God." Do you notice what the psalmist *doesn't* say? He doesn't say to let the peoples praise *any* gods. He doesn't say, "Let the peoples praise *the* gods." He says, "Let the people praise *you*, O God." Remember, in verse 2, he says, "That your way may be known on earth." So, we need to talk about this very important question...*Why is Jesus the only way to God?*

Tim Keller, about 20 years ago... He was a pastor who just passed away recently. He became very well known for talking about how Christianity is both inclusive and exclusive. What he said was that, depending on your spiritual background, you might find out a lot about whether or not you're more uncomfortable with it being inclusive or exclusive.

The Bible clearly teaches that Christianity is an inclusive religion. If you grew up in church or in a religious environment, this is what you might struggle to deal with. The Bible is inclusive in that it says everyone is welcome in the kingdom of God...*everyone*...whether you're young, old, rich, or poor. It doesn't matter where you're from. It doesn't matter what language you speak. It doesn't matter what skin color you have.

It doesn't matter what kind of flag you have hanging outside of your house or what kind of sign you have in your yard. Maybe most importantly, it doesn't matter what you have done in the past. The terrible things you have done don't matter. For those who repent of their sin and place faith in the Lord Jesus, they are welcome in the kingdom of God. So, from *that* side of things, Christianity is extremely inclusive.

Now, on the other side of things, Christianity is very exclusive, because the Bible teaches that there is only one way to God. There are no other ways. If you didn't grow up in church, this might be the topic that's more challenging for you to deal with. But we have to be clear about the fact that you being a good person is not enough for you to get to God. Your morality cannot save you. Sincerely believing in other religions will not save you.

It's important to understand that when we talk about these topics, we have to do it compassionately, lovingly, and with humility. We're not talking about these things arrogantly, but we have to understand that Christians need to care enough to confront the lies in our culture.

The lie our culture will say to you is "There are multiple paths to God. There are multiple different ways for you to be saved." They'll say, "Everyone is going to be okay. The well-meaning, sincere Muslims are going to be okay. The well-meaning Buddhist is going to be okay." We have to care enough to be clear about the fact that that is just not true.

We don't say this with bravado or with arrogance, but we have to be clear. Islam is a false religion. Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mormonism are false religions that will not lead to God. Sure, there might be some common-grace teachings in all of them, but the Bible says in 1 Timothy 2, "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." The exclusive claims of Christianity are really just asking this very simple question: Who can save us?

I remember I was in college when I heard my pastor explain this. He used this illustration. Let's say that you are out by the pool. It's you and your best friend out by the pool, and let's say you can't swim. For some reason, you're walking around the pool, and you fall in the deep end, and you start to drown.

Well, your friend is seeing you drown, and let's say your friend cannot swim either, but for some reason, your friend is feeling heroic, so he jumps in after you and tries to save you. What's going to happen? What's going to happen is they're going to find *both* of you at the bottom of the pool. The point is that in order for you to be the savior, you can't have the same problem as the person who needs to be saved.

So, why is Jesus the only way to salvation? It's because Jesus is the only one who can overcome the two things you can't overcome. The two biggest problems you have in your life are, first, that you're a sinner. You cannot live a perfect life. You cannot earn your way to God.

Second, you are going to die. There's nothing you can do to avoid it. The reason Jesus is able to save us is because he overcame sin by living a perfect life and overcame death by rising from the grave. Having done that, he now extends the offer of salvation to anyone who will repent and believe.

You might hear that and think, "Well, this still doesn't seem fair. It just doesn't seem fair to me that there's only one way to God." To which I would say we have to understand that what would be fair, ultimately, would be for God to not allow any of us to be

reconciled to him. None of us are owed salvation. None of us are owed God's forgiveness. The fact that he has provided one way should cause us to celebrate.

Some of you might say, "Well, this just sounds sort of intolerant." In fact, there are a lot of Christians who don't like to speak about this topic because they don't want to be labeled as intolerant. I would say that if truth and morality are matters of subjective preference, then I can understand why you would say it's intolerant, but Christians do not believe that truth and morality are matters of subjective preference. We believe that the Bible, what God has revealed to us, is a matter of objective truth.

You see, people in our culture will say this today. They'll say, "Well, I'm just living out my truth." I understand what they mean when they say that, but we have to say truth is not inside of you, and truth is not fluid. It's not subjective. We believe truth is outside of you and truth is fixed. It's unchanging. It's totally objective.

Imagine that you had a birthday party, and you told all of your friends, "My birthday party is on Friday night at 7:00 p.m." You notice that your party comes and goes, and your best friend doesn't show up to the party, although you thought they would be there and you invited them.

Well, let's say that the next morning, at 7:00 a.m., you get a knock on your door. You go to it, you open it, and your friend is standing there with a present. He's like, "Hey, man. Happy birthday." You would be like, "What's going on? Why are you here right now? My party was last night." He's like, "Well, I know you said your party was last night, but I'm a little bit of a morning person, and Fridays are hard for me after a long week of work, so I thought that your party is actually this morning."

You would say, "That doesn't make any sense. My party is not a matter of subjective preference; it is a matter of objective truth when and where my party is." We have to believe that God's plan for salvation is a matter of objective truth regardless of how we feel about it. Our heart is that we would see all people from all nations being welcomed into the kingdom of God. And that's what we're going to see.

The psalmist is going to pray this next in verses 3 and 4. He says, "***Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah.***" What we see here is that God wants to be worshiped and praised and enjoyed by all people.

Pastor John Piper became well known for talking about how the goal of the church is not missions. He said the goal of the church is worship, and missions exist because worship doesn't. The reason missions exist is because there are people around the world who are not responding to God rightly.

We see in these verses that God wants to be worshiped *by* people, but we also see that God is the judge *of* people. Look back at verse 4. He says, "***Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity...***" This is really interesting, because what the psalmist seems to be doing is praising God for being a judge. He is praising God for being a judge who judges with fairness.

So, we need to talk about the judgment of God. By the way, if you're new, welcome. We talk about all sorts of topics here as they arise from Scripture. This is a very important topic to talk about, and I'll just start by asking this question: Do you believe in divine judgment? God's judgment is his fair and righteous response to sin.

I'll talk with a college student about this every once in a while, and we'll be talking about the different characteristics of God. What's interesting is that no one seems to have a problem with God being a father or God being a friend or God being a healer or our redeemer. Whenever you say *those* attributes, people are like, "Great. That sounds good to me. I'm in full agreement." But when you start talking about how God is a God of judgment, people will get very uncomfortable. They don't like it.

Normally, when I have those conversations, I'll just ask them, "Would you really like God to *not* be a God of judgment? I don't think you do, because what's the opposite of a God of judgment? The opposite of a God of judgment is a God who is morally indifferent. He doesn't care. Do you want a God who's morally indifferent? Do you want a God who just doesn't care?"

Let's say that someone committed a terrible crime against your daughter, just something horrible. You don't even want to speak about it. Can you imagine taking that person to court, presenting your case before the judge, and the judge is just scrolling on his phone the entire time? He's dozing off. He's texting. He just doesn't care. Then, at the end of the trial, he just says, "All right, man. You're good."

We do not want a God who is morally indifferent. We desire justice at the deepest level of ourselves. God is not morally indifferent. His judgment is a part of his perfect character. The Bible teaches that God is going to finally and fairly respond to sin with either everlasting joy in heaven or everlasting judgment in hell.

What's really interesting is that Jesus mentions hell more than anybody else in the Bible. He mentions it about 18 times. I've been thinking recently... Why do we not think about hell much? Why do we not talk about hell more than we do? I think the answer is actually fairly simple. It's because we don't *want* to think about it. We don't *want* to talk about it. It gives us too much negative emotion. We don't want to talk about it because it is uncomfortable and unpopular.

In the same way, when you're watching a video that has some kind of gruesome injury or some kind of terrible act of violence, you just don't want to watch it. It's uncomfortable. But it's also unpopular. They've done studies. Of people in the US, 70 percent believe in heaven. Only 55 percent of people believe in hell. So, what I want to do briefly is give you four things that should be true of us in view of God's judgment.

First, in view of the judgment of God, you should be filled with boldness. If we believe there's only one way to God, that salvation is provided only in Jesus, we should have a lot of boldness as we engage our friends and our neighbors. We should have a lot of desire to serve the nations, as well, which we're going to get to in a second. But this is hard, isn't it? It's very hard to be bold.

I only take an Uber once or twice a year, maybe three or four times a year if I travel a lot. I would like to think I'm the best Uber passenger possible. I get in, I make a little bit of small talk, and then I just sit there. I'm quiet. I'm not making all kinds of requests. I'm not asking you to turn the music on or whatever.

About a month ago, I got on my Uber app for some reason, and I saw that my Uber rating is 4.72 stars. I thought, "What? Why?" It bothered me. I was like, "Why is my rating only 4.72 stars? I feel like I'm doing this right." Well, a couple of weeks ago, I was taking an Uber from Winston-Salem down to Lexington to pick up a car.

I get in the car, and I sit in the back seat, and the guy is driving up front. I immediately begin to think, "I need to have a spiritual conversation with this guy." But then I thought, "If he doesn't like it, my Uber rating is going to go down." So, I just sat there for a couple of minutes. It was a 30-minute ride. I was like, "Okay. I might muster up the courage here in a little bit."

Well, after sitting there for a couple of minutes, he turns on K-Love, which is a Christian radio station, which is basically a green light for a spiritual conversation. Once he turned that on, I felt so convicted. Now, we had a spiritual conversation briefly. It went well, and (praise report) my Uber rating is now 4.79 stars. Not to brag.

But I got out of the car, and I just thought to myself, "What is wrong with me? Why do I care so much about a stupid Uber rating that I am not willing to have a little bit of boldness to engage this guy in a spiritual conversation?" In view of the judgment of God, we should be filled with boldness.

The second thing that should be true of you in view of the judgment of God is that you should have a sense of urgency because life is short. Your classmates are not going to be your classmates forever. Your coworkers are not going to be your coworkers forever. The

children in your home are, hopefully, not going to be in your home forever. So we should have an urgency to share the gospel, and we should prioritize it.

We've said here before that we care about all kinds of suffering, especially eternal suffering. We truly want to help alleviate poverty. We want to help fix world hunger. We want people to have clean water and mosquito nets and education, but more than anything, we want people to be able to hear the gospel and respond. We want the nations to be glad not just for 80 years but for forever. We believe eternity is too long to be wrong, so we need to have a sense of urgency.

The third thing is that you will be able to rest. The judgment of God helps us rest with injustice in the world. The only way for you to maintain your sanity is if you know there is perfect justice coming and that all sin will eventually be paid for fully, either by Jesus on the cross or by the sinner.

The fourth thing that will be true of you is that you will have a greater appreciation for the cross. One of the things God's judgment does is it magnifies the love of God toward us. You see, the center of Christianity is that Jesus was judged for you so that you don't have to be. That reality should cause us to feel so much gratitude, so much appreciation.

Let's keep going. We're going to go to verse 5. This verse is mentioned for the second time. It says, "**Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!**" I think most of us read this verse and think, "That sounds great. I would love to see all of the people around the world praising the Lord. I would even love to be a part of it." But a lot of times, we don't know exactly how. So, I want to give you a few practical steps for how to do your part to make an impact on the nations. Some of these are going to be super obvious, but I think they'll be helpful.

The first step is to *make disciples here*. What's going to happen is as you open up your Bible, as you open up your life, you're going to see more evangelism happening. You're going to see more multiplication happening. You're going to see more and more people who are repenting of sin and being called to go on a short-term trip and, eventually, more people who are called to long-term missionary work. So, the first step is to make disciples here.

Another step is to *partner with a missionary as a Community Group*. You may not know this, but our goal, as a church, is that by the end of this year, all of our Community Groups, which is 100-plus, are going to be partnered with either one of our missionaries or one of our global partners. So, your group can write notes of encouragement. You can send care packages. You can maybe even go visit them and serve them at some point. Partnering with a missionary is a great step.

Another great step is to *pray*. Psalm 67, this entire psalm, is a prayer. If you're wondering, "How do I pray for the nations?" you could just open up to this psalm and pray right through it. You could pray for more laborers. You could pray for the unreached. The Joshua Project has an app called *Unreached of the Day*. They will give you the name of an unreached people group, where they're at, their struggles, and how you can pray for them. That's a great next step.

Another next step is to *give*. We say often here that when you give *to* the church, you give *through* the church. What that means is we set aside 11 percent of our budget every year to give away to local, national, and global missions. I want you to know that we are extremely serious about giving to organizations and churches that are the tip of the spear in pushing back darkness. So, giving is a step.

The last step I'll give you is to *go*. Would you prayerfully consider going on a short-term mission trip in 2026? Now, here's what I know. I know that as soon as I say that some of you think, "Well, he's not talking to me." Some of you might be in a season where I might not be talking to you right now. Maybe you have little kids who are very little. Maybe you have some kind of health issue that needs to be taken care of. But other than that, I am talking to you.

Right now, this year, 2025, we are going to send 282 people on a short-term mission trip on a plane somewhere. Our goal for 2026 is that we would see 400 people go on a short-term mission trip somewhere, which is basically 10 percent of our church. You may be wondering why exactly we go on short-term mission trips. Well, I'll give you three reasons.

The reason this is important is because mission trips can sometimes have a bad reputation. The reason this happens is because well-meaning groups have traveled to foreign countries in their matching neon green tee shirts, taken pictures of poverty, and then posted them on Facebook with their favorite Bible verse, and it's just not helpful. So, three reasons why we do short-term trips.

The first is to *encourage and serve our missionary partners*. It says in 3 John 1:7-8, "***For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.***"

What we do on these trips is we show up, and we just look to our missionaries and ask, "How can we serve you?" We do not show up high maintenance. We understand we are not on vacation. We understand that we are not there to save the day, because in seven

days, we're going to be going home, and we understand that they're going to be there long term.

This is why on our trips, part of the time we spend will be to multiply the time of the workers. What this means is our teams are often doing evangelism. They're helping with projects. They're serving our partners by providing childcare, which can be very helpful to them.

Sometimes our teams are just talking to our missionaries in English, which is the most life-giving thing for them sometimes. Occasionally, we will send people on a team who have specific skills for them to repair missionary houses, to build missionary houses, and things like that. We want to serve and encourage our partners.

The second reason we go on trips is to *discover a passion for the nations*. The reason this is important is it is easy for global lostness to be out of sight and out of mind. My concern is that some of you have only experienced Jesus and fellowship with other Christians in North Carolina.

I think God has so much more for you than that. When you go, you're reminded of the global lostness, you're reminded of the global church, and that right now, even though we don't see it, there are men and women around the world worshipping the same God as you who are elsewhere.

The third reason we send short-term trips is to *develop a boldness for the gospel here*. We see this after pretty much every trip. We have people go on trips. They are doing evangelism on the trip. As they do that, they're walking up to people. Their hearts are beating out of their chests. Then they have a spiritual conversation, and the conversation goes great. They come back home, and they say, "I can do this right here."

So, those are the three main reasons we go. I also want you to know that we do a lot of different things to try to remove barriers that stand between you and going on a trip. We subsidize the trips to help make them as affordable as possible. We plan the trip. We take every action we can to make sure these trips are as safe as possible. I'm going to say that again for parents of high schoolers and college students. We make these trips as safe as possible. We want to remove barriers.

Now, we can't guarantee that these trips are risk-free in the same way that you can't guarantee that your trip to the beach with your family is going to be risk-free. Here's the thing about risk. You don't necessarily want to minimize risk in your life; you want to optimize risk. So, is going on a trip going to be a little bit risky? Maybe. Are you going to risk getting sick? Yes, probably. But some of you are sick right now. You're going to get sick *here*, so you might as well go *there*.

We will send you with plenty of Pepto-Bismol. We'll send you with ibuprofen. Some of you love your charcoal pills. You can take as many as you want. It's going to be great. We should be willing to take the risks. In view of our desire to see the nations worshipping the Lord, like we see in verses 3 and 5, we should be willing to go. Most of you are not going to be called overseas long term, but I think most of you do need a taste of it.

Now let's see how this psalm ends. Pick it back up in verse 6. It says, "***The earth has yielded its increase...***" That's a poetic way of saying God is going to provide. "***...God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!***" *Fear* here is not being afraid; *fear* is having the appropriate reverence and respect.

The way this psalm ends is with an expectant and confident posture toward the nations. It says two times, "God shall bless us." So, if we are guaranteed that as we take steps of faith, God is going to bless us, how could we not go? How could we not take some risks?

If we really believe that Jesus is the only way of salvation and that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, how could we not share the gospel with people around us? How could we not be filled with boldness? How could we not have a sense of urgency? If we believe the reason God has blessed us is to bless other people, how could we not be generous? How could we not make some sacrifices?

We're wrapping up our series called *Respond* where we're looking at what it looks like to respond to God in worship. Do you know what the highest form of worship is? Suffering. The highest form of worship is suffering for the sake of the gospel going forward in your city and around the world.

I think about a woman in our church who's a single mom who was paying out of her own pocket to go on a short-term trip to serve some of our missionary partners. I think about my mentor from college who has stage 4 lung cancer. He's on oxygen 24/7, but he is still filled with faith, making disciples.

I think about our missionaries. Many of them are raising their young families overseas. Many of them are giving their youth to the mission of God overseas. Why? It's because they want to see the nations be glad and sing for joy. They want to see the nations have an opportunity to hear the gospel and respond.

I think about an email I got a couple of weeks ago from some of our missionary partners who are serving in a very difficult region in South Asia. The email is titled "When Love Leads to Sacrifice." It says, "As we leave the US after visiting the States, our hearts carry a deep ache, the ache of leaving family behind once again. No matter how many times we pack a suitcase or board a plane, saying goodbye to the people we love never becomes routine.

Watching our children, parents, and close friends disappear behind airport glass always leaves a quiet, heavy place in our hearts. There are moments when loneliness presses in, and I wonder, 'Is this kind of pain really necessary?' Then I remember Jesus, who did not go to the cross on a whim or because it felt right in the moment. His love was not driven by mere emotion; it was a choice, a holy decision.

He saw us in our brokenness, in our sin, and he still chose the road of suffering because he loved us perfectly. That love led to both sacrifice and joy. It's that same love that compels us to serve in South Asia, to share with those who've never truly heard about the one who loves them." You see, God has blessed you to bless the world. God has blessed you to be a blessing to others. Let's pray.

Father, I pray that Two Cities Church would continue more and more to be a church that receives your blessings and is quick to bless other people. I pray that we would do that on an individual level. Lord, I pray that we would be catalysts of your blessing and not just cul-de-sacs. Would it not stop with us. Would we take the message of the gospel, the good news of your forgiveness, and would we be filled with boldness. Would we be filled with a sense of urgency.

Lord, would you give us servant hearts, knowing that you came in the form of Jesus not to be served but to serve and to give your life as a ransom for many. Lord, I pray that in the years to come we will see many in this city and around the world receive your free gift of forgiveness. Lord, we pray, "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you." In Jesus' name, amen.