

PERSPECTIVES

ON THE WORLD CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

Study Guide

2009 Edition

Steven C. Hawthorne

Curriculum Development

Institute of International Studies



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Contents

Introduction	v
How to Use This Study Guide	viii

Biblical Perspective

Lesson One	1
<i>The Living God is a Missionary God</i>	
Lesson Two	13
<i>The Story of His Glory</i>	
Lesson Three	23
<i>Your Kingdom Come</i>	
Lesson Four	37
<i>Mandate for the Nations</i>	
Lesson Five	49
<i>Unleashing the Gospel</i>	

Historical Perspective

Lesson Six	59
<i>The Expansion of the World Christian Movement</i>	
Lesson Seven	73
<i>Eras of Mission History</i>	
Lesson Eight	85
<i>Pioneers of the World Christian Movement</i>	
Lesson Nine	93
<i>The Task Remaining</i>	

Cultural Perspective

Lesson Ten	105
<i>How Shall They Hear?</i>	
Lesson Eleven	117
<i>Building Bridges of Love</i>	

Strategic Perspective

Lesson Twelve	127
<i>Christian Community Development</i>	
Lesson Thirteen	139
<i>The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches</i>	
Lesson Fourteen	155
<i>Pioneer Church Planting</i>	
Lesson Fifteen	171
<i>World Christian Discipleship</i>	

Lesson Reviews	
Personal Responses	



Introduction

Perspectives: A Course of Vision, Hope and Passion

As the name implies, the *Perspectives* course is about vision. It's the same vision which empowered Jesus to live His life with joy, hope, and single-hearted passion. This course explores that vision and will help you respond to Christ's invitation to live for the same purpose and significance that He did.

There's joy in this vision. Jesus told His first followers that the value of living fruitfully for His Father's glory was "that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11).

What was the vision? Jesus summed up the vision in one of His final prayers to His Father, "I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave me to do" (John 17:4). Jesus' life purpose was to bring about God's glory on earth. Throughout His life, Jesus kept the vision of God's greater glory before Him. He believed His Bible as it told the story and described the prophetic certainty that God would be delighted by worship from every people. The vision of God's glory focused His life choices and filled His daily affairs with immense significance. Passion for God's glory energized and integrated His life. Life with purpose was so satisfying that He said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). As He set His life toward the hope of finishing God's work, His life became a daily feast of purpose. This course aims to help you live strategically toward that same hope.

"Missions" is a loaded word for most Christians. Many people are exposed to missions in the context of appeals for volunteers or funds. Missions has often been reduced to a limited question of whether you will be a missionary or not. Most Christians would admit that they don't really know enough about what missions is to know what they would do or be if they were to aspire to be a missionary. Even less clear is how someone can live for God's global purpose without being a missionary.

The point of this course is not to persuade you to become a missionary. Neither is it to train you in skills you need to serve as a missionary. The point of exposing you to many of the practicalities and challenges is to persuade you of the feasibility and to set you on a path of ongoing learning to play your part wisely and well.

The primary idea is that God will fulfill His purposes. The certainty that He will see it fulfilled makes His invitation to join Him in His mission a matter of heart-blazing hope. We are not called to perform dull religious duties. He is enlisting His followers to lead lives of huge significance.

We are convinced that God has a "world-sized" role for every Christian in His global purpose. Whether people go to distant countries or stay at home is a secondary issue. The primary issue is what most people are hungry to discover: vision to live a life of purpose. Discovering that vision makes this course valuable, and perhaps crucial, for any Christian.

What's In This Course?

The course is designed around four vantage points or “perspectives”—Biblical, Historical, Cultural and Strategic. Each one highlights different aspects of God’s global purpose.

The Biblical and Historical sections reveal why our confidence is based on the historic fact of God’s relentless work from the dawn of history until this day. That’s why the essence of this course is the record of what God has been unfolding for thousands of years toward a certain, and perhaps soon-coming, culmination.

As we wind our way through history, we will meet the largest and longest-running movement ever in history—the World Christian Movement. You will find that virtually every innovative approach you can think of has been attempted by those who have gone before us. We are in league with the most substantial movement of creative and self-sacrificing people the world has ever seen.

The Cultural and Strategic sections underscore that we are in the midst of a costly, but very “do-able” task, confirming the Biblical and Historical hope.

The Biblical Perspective

1. The Living God is a Missionary God

God’s purpose is three-fold: against evil—kingdom victory; for the nations—redemption and blessing; and for God—global glory in worship. God’s purpose revealed in promise to Abraham. Exploring God’s purpose for the nations: Blessing to the nations described.

2. The Story of His Glory

Exploring God’s purpose for Himself: How God has been steadily unfolding a plan throughout all nations and generations to bring about His greater glory, ultimately drawing to Himself the worship of all the peoples. Passion and prayer for God’s glory.

3. Your Kingdom Come

Exploring God’s purpose regarding evil: How God has accomplished a defeat of evil powers in order to open a season of history in which the nations can freely follow Christ. The kingdom of God as the destiny of all history. Christ’s mission seeks a hindering of evil to bring about a sign of the coming peace of the kingdom of God. Our prayers contend with evil in order to bring about the transformation of society with Christ’s kingdom in view.

4. Mandate for the Nations

Jesus shows great strategic interest in Gentiles; wise strategic focus by initiating a global mission on a few disciples among the Hebrew people. The

Great Commission and the ways of God’s sending in relational power. Dealing with the ideas of pluralism (all religions the same) and universalism (all persons saved).

5. Unleashing the Gospel

The first followers of Jesus: obedient in costly, foundational ways. The climactic act of the book of Acts is the freeing of the gospel to be followed by Gentiles without Jewish traditions as a requirement. A foundational act of God which speaks to the situations where the gospel is hindered today. Strategic suffering and apostolic passion.

The Historical Perspective

6. The Expansion of the Christian Movement

The story of God’s purpose continues relentlessly from Abraham’s day until the present moment. An overview of the largest and the longest-running movement ever in history—the world Christian movement. How the gospel surged through the peoples and places of the world. Important insights for our own day.

7. Eras of Mission History

The greatest explosion of growth ever has taken place in last 200 years in three “bursts” of activity. Why we could be in the final era of missions. The global harvest force comprised increasingly of non-Western missionaries.

8. Pioneers of the World Christian Movement

Today we anchor the race by continuing what others have begun. It’s a day of finishing. All the more reason to learn the wisdom and the heart of ordinary people who did extraordinary things in earlier generations. Reading the writings of William Carey and other leaders to discern what these people have left to us. Exploring the contribution of women in missions throughout the centuries.

9. The Task Remaining

God’s pressed His purpose forward until the present hour of amazing opportunity. Understanding the concept of “unreached peoples” to assess the remaining task. Recognizing the imbalance of mission resources shapes strategic priorities. The basic minimal missiological achievement in every people group opens the way for working with God against every kind of evil so that the gospel of the kingdom is declared and displayed with clarity and power. The need and opportunity of urban mission.

The Cultural Perspective

10. How Shall They Hear?

Culture and intercultural communication of the gospel. Communicating the gospel with relevance

at the worldview level helps avoid syncretism (blending of cultural error with God's truth) and also enables powerful movements of the gospel. Sensitive missionaries will look for ways that God has preserved or prepared people to hear the gospel, often finding redemptive analogies for God's truth.

11. Building Bridges of Love

The incarnation as a model of missionary humility. How missionaries can enter appropriate roles in order to form relationships of trust and respect to develop a sense of belonging, and thus to communicate with credibility for understanding. Explore the intricacy of identification in another culture. Explore the even greater complexity of presenting identity with integrity in a globalized, terrorized, pluralized world. Recognizing the dynamics of social structure in order to initiate growing movements of ongoing communication throughout the society.

The Strategic Perspective

12. Christian Community Development

A survey of world need. Dynamic balance of evangelism and social action. Hope for significant transformation as a sign of Christ's Lordship by Christian community development. Exploring the charge that missionaries destroy instead of serve cultures. Healing the wounds of the world between the peoples.

13. Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches

Look beyond institutional features of churches to understand churches as dynamic movements of Christ Himself being followed. Such a view of churches as organic, living things opens up the practicality of seeing them multiply rapidly as movements and also flourish in society bearing the fruit of social transformation. Churches as counter-communities, acting as salt and light, bringing change to their cultures. How movements multiply by connecting with entire families and larger social structures.

14. Pioneer Church Planting

The hope of planting churches among unreached peoples. How the breakthrough of the gospel in an unreached people requires that the gospel be "de-Westernized." The difference of contextualizing the message, the messenger and the movement. Distinguish and appreciate people movements, church planting movements and insider movements.

15. World Christian Discipleship

What it means to integrate life for Christ's global purpose as a "World Christian." Into the great story for His glory: a Person-driven life as a way of

pursuing a purpose-driven life. The basic practices of world Christians: going, sending, welcoming and mobilizing. The essential disciplines of World Christian discipleship: community, giving, praying and learning. Simplifying your lifestyle as if in "war-time." Exploring the practical ways of pursuing God's purpose. Business and mission. Short-term mission. Welcoming international visitors. Wisdom in working with local churches and in partnership with Christians in different parts of the world.

Improvements Over Earlier Versions

This is the fourth major edition of the curriculum called *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. The first edition of the curriculum appeared in 1982. A second edition was released 10 years later, in 1992. The third edition, which appeared in 1999, was a significant overhaul of the course.

Changes in the Fourth Edition

Since the basic themes and core ideas have not changed, the fourth edition will be familiar to the more than seventy thousand people who have worked through the *Perspectives* course. The lesson titles are almost identical. But watch for surprises! Many articles which have been part of the curriculum for years have been greatly revised. Some have been edited to make them accessible and more clearly organized. Others have been updated with current vocabulary and ideas. We have also sought to add more biblical substance throughout the course so that the paradigm shift of hope is a stronger, life-integrating vision.

In the biblical section you'll find new material clarifying the powerful idea of blessing, exploring how God endowed humanity with responsibility for creation care and showing how the kingdom of God gives hope in our world. In the history section we explore how the gospel moved eastward, how the Christian movement is shifting southward and some interesting research that dispels some of the anecdotal myths about missionaries harming societies. The culture section contains some new material about orality, storytelling, and the complexity of ethnicity and missionary identity in a globalized world. In the strategy section we have new material giving hope for churches to bring change in their culture and, working together, address the great problems of our day.

For many the highlight will be several new case studies describing the dramatic and costly work of God among the unreached. A new section about world Christian discipleship is designed to help every believer move beyond filling roles and integrate their lives with others to fulfill God's great global purpose.

How to Use This Study Guide

This *Study Guide* is designed as a companion to the book *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Even though the *Reader* is the larger book, don't be fooled. The articles in the *Reader* were selected and edited carefully to fit together as a course. In a very real sense, the *Study Guide* constitutes the course. You can compare the *Study Guide* to an interpretive guide in a museum who helps you to understand and thereby appreciate and remember what you see. The integrative outlines show you how to read different authors and articles in a way that helps you evaluate and integrate what they are saying. The outline summarizes and organizes the main points. In some cases, the *Study Guide* adds material and short paragraphs of reading to what you'll find in the *Reader*.

Three Parts to Every Lesson

We've organized each lesson in three roughly equal sections or modules: Key Readings, Certificate Readings, and Credit Readings. The Certificate Readings build on the essential material found in the Key Readings. There are about 15 pages of readings in each of these modules. The Credit Readings go further to explore the ramifications and add detail with fascinating case studies. The end of the key readings is marked by this bar:

 **Conclusion of Key Readings for this lesson.** 

You'll find a similar bar signalling the break point at the end of the Certificate readings. Don't let the markers stop you from going on to study every part. Many of the most fascinating highlights are in the material beyond the key readings. We encourage you to skim every article for highlights as you are able. Don't be surprised to find that the readings are engaging and meaningful. We've not only gathered material from some of the best authors and leaders, we've sifted and edited their writing. Every page contains valuable vision and practical insight.

Study the Readings

The *Study Guide* will cue you to read selections from the *Perspectives Reader*. You will often be asked to read portions of articles. You will find the range of

a	c
b	d

pages with beginning and ending points described not only by the page number, but also by a letter. The letter indicates which quadrant on the page you will find the starting or the ending point. Most of the starting and ending points are at break points above subheadings. The diagram to the below left shows which letter corresponds to which quadrant. If there is no letter, assume you need to read the entire page.

Focus on the Objectives

Each lesson opens with important introductory paragraphs and a list of objectives. This list should help focus your attention on the basic ideas.

Take in the Key Word

The "key word" at the beginning of each lesson is designed to stimulate interest and signal what may be of primary value to you. It is not intended to be a one-word summary of the content of the lesson.

Reflect on the Thought Blocks

Sometimes we invite you to stop and reflect on an idea, look elsewhere in the notebook for an illustrating story from another article, or examine some scripture that will deepen your grasp of the topic.

You'll find the reading assignments in a shaded, gray screened box like this.

You'll find these Thought Blocks in an outlined box like this.

Learn from the Reviews

The reviews are designed to be completed with an open book and open Bible, if you prefer. There is no time limit to completing the review. The left column is designed to help you prepare for class discussion with your written answers. The right "in-class review" column is designed for you to write down information gleaned from class or mentor discussion which corrects or extends your answers.