



## THE “ALL” OF MISSIONS

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Let me begin by telling a couple of stories. Back in 1996 or 97, Luaine and I had the privilege of working with Luis Palau in one of his evangelistic crusades. Luis Palau has been called the Billy Graham of the Hispanic world.

In his book, *Go to the Ends of the Earth*, Luis wrote: My family and team have gone to over sixty countries declaring the glory of God. When I first went to the Muslim-, Hindu-, and Buddhist-majority nations, I trembled to do the right thing for the glory of God. I talked to a Hindu guru years ago, and he said, “Luis, don’t ever use the Western style of arguing, trying to show your religion is better than my religion or your Savior is superior. Just simply tell who Jesus is. Tell of his character. Tell what he’s like. Let people do the comparing for themselves.”

This is what Luis Palau does—he lets people see Jesus. He doesn’t try to force his message on them. In the same way our missionaries today try to fit into the culture where they serve.

This month is a special time of praying for and giving to our international missionaries through the Lottie Moon Christmas offering. Here is the second story:

Those of us who have been in Southern Baptist churches for a while know that few ambassadors for Christ have had the long-lasting influence of Lottie Moon—both to those she ministered to in China, and to us today.

Her life was a model of loving service to the nationals in China as well as to fellow missionaries. Near the end of her life she declared, “If I had a thousand lives I would give them all for the women of China.”

Lottie Moon was born on Dec. 12, 1840 into a life of privilege and wealth. She accepted Christ as her Savior when she was 18 and was appointed a missionary to China in 1873.

In China she sought to overcome the great barriers of hatred and prejudice the Nationals had for foreigners, while, at the same time, she struggled to learn the difficult language.

She opened a school and taught the Bible, but recurring famine frustrated her work and she often fed the destitute people at her own expense or with her own food.

She told a colleague, “We must go out and live among them, making friends before we can hope to make converts.” And that’s what she did, even adopting the Chinese way of dress. It helped her relate better to the people.

Through her 39 years of ministry in China she endured waves of persecution, especially during the terrible Boxer rebellion. The suffering she experienced with the Chinese helped her be more accepted.

But the Chinese did not accept Lottie right away; still she needed to share Christ with them. So she would bake delicious cookies from an old Virginia recipe, endearing herself to children and their parents. Instead of calling her the ‘devil woman,’ they began to call her the ‘cookie lady.’

She fought many battles on behalf of the Chinese she had grown to love: She was a leader in the effort to ban the foot-binding of young girls. She helped to break down barriers against the education of girls.

Lottie did the work of three or more missionaries. She kept up a continual barrage of letters home urging more missionaries and finances to support them.

In her greatest act of empathy for the Chinese, because of famine and floods and war, she stopped eating, giving instead her food to others.

This took its toll and her health failed. So Lottie, very frail, was forced to return to the States. While en route to the States, in Japan her frail body finally quit, and in 1912 she went home to be with the Lord.

Because of her dedication and persistence, the special offering we take every Christmas is named in her honor.

Luis Palau today, and Lottie Moon are examples of what our verse for today says: 1 Cor. 9:22b, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”

## 1. Every person needs the Savior

It is God’s intention that every Christian be large-hearted, big-spirited, all embracing, tactful, sensitive and versatile. Our greatest model for this all things life style is Jesus Himself.

The Scriptures say that Jesus, 6Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness. (Philippians 2:6 - 7)

He was not a man, yet He chose to become “all things” to all humanity in order that some might be saved. The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions, and the nearer we get to Him the more intensely missionary we become.

Becoming all things is not a license to sin or moral or spiritual compromise. Paul involved himself in the world without entangling himself with the world.

He accommodated himself to his culture and society without compromising his faith or witness. To use Jesus’ words, he was in the world but not of the world because he knew that every person needs the Savior.

## 2. Every person is worth saving

Jesus told the disciples in John 4:35, “I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” The world is the harvest field. This is where we live and minister. We are to live in this field without putting down roots. Our permanent citizenship is heaven.

Until then the entire world is the harvest field. Our prospect list includes all people. According to Jesus and the Bible, every one of us should be concerned about every lost person.

As Christians we are to care for the best person, the worst person, the first person, the last person, and the least person—all the lost people on earth.

We should desire that every lost person should have the opportunity to hear the Good News about Jesus Christ. Every person on earth should have the opportunity to say “Yes” to Christ.

Just before Jesus ascended back to heaven, He said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) These words were eye-openers to the disciples.

They still held to their nationalistic aspirations. They asked Jesus if He were about to restore Israel to her national independence.

They wanted to keep Him just for the Jewish people. Jesus wasn’t having any of that. First He promised that the Holy Spirit would empower them to be His witnesses.

Then He told them that they would indeed begin in Jerusalem, the very city in which He had been condemned and crucified. But they wouldn’t stop there—they would then continue beyond the city to Judea.

And then the Christian mission would radiate out from that center, first to the despised Samaritans, and then far beyond Palestine to the Gentile nations—to the ends of the earth.

This is our Lord's mandate to missions. We have been given the privilege and responsibility of bringing 'all' the Gospel to 'all' the world to 'save' some.

### 3. Their salvation is more important than our personal comfort

This line has also been translated as, "That I might at any price rescue some," or, "that I might at all costs gain some."

There is a price to be paid in reaching our world for Christ. There is a price in money, material, and man-power. We can help with all those through the Lottie Moon Christmas offering, your tithes to the church (10 ½ % Coop. Prog.), oh, and going ourselves.

There are people in our world who are missing God's invitation to come to Christ. Many live in places that are hard to reach such as mountaintop villages or near jungle rivers. Many live in hard to live place such as hot or dry climates, or polluted areas.

Others live in parts of the world where there is open hostility toward outsiders, or where Christians are persecuted. Many do not have the Scriptures in their own languages. Many others do not have religious freedom.

Are we willing to help bear the cost of reaching our world with the good news of Jesus? A great missionary name of modern Christianity was William Borden. As heir to the Borden Dairy fortune and estate, he was already a millionaire when he graduated from a Chicago high school in 1904. He could have anything he wanted and as a graduation present his parents gave him a trip around the world. During Borden's travels through Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, a burden began growing in him for the world's hurting people. Finally, he wrote home to say, "I'm going to give my life to prepare for the mission field." After making this decision, William Borden wrote two words in the back of his Bible: "No Reserves." During his first semester at Yale University in 1905, Borden started a movement that transformed the campus. He began daily prayer groups that spread to every one of the college classes. By the end of his first year, 150 freshmen were meeting for weekly Bible studies. By the time he was a senior, 1,000 out of Yale's 1,300 students were meeting in such groups. After graduating from Yale, Borden turned down some high paying job offers. And he wrote two more words in his Bible: "No Retreats." He went on to graduate work at Princeton Seminary in New Jersey. And his missionary call caused him to begin to focus on Muslims in China and from that goal he never wavered. When he finished his studies at Princeton, Borden sailed directly for China, stopping first in Egypt to study Arabic. But while in Egypt he came down with spinal meningitis. Within a month 25-year-old

William Borden was dead. This was written about his death: “When the death of William Whiting Borden was cabled from Egypt, it seemed as though a wave of sorrow went round the world... Borden not only gave his wealth, but himself, in a way so joyous and natural that it was manifestly a privilege rather than a sacrifice.” You may be thinking, “What a waste.” Well, William Borden didn’t see it that way. Before he died he wrote two more words in his Bible. Underneath the words “No Reserves” and “No Retreats,” he wrote, “No Regrets.”

The fact is, if your Christianity has never cost you anything, it is very likely that you don’t have any. Jesus said it this way in Luke 9:23, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

One of the great heroes of British military history was Lord Horatio Nelson. He was the personification of heroism. He led his fleet to victory after victory on the high seas. When the fleet returned from an around the world voyage during which it won resounding victories for England, many of the sailors suffered from severe battle wound injuries. Some had lost legs or arms or hands. Some were crippled; some were blind, other decimated by disease. Someone said to them, “We know the salary was not enough motivation and the voyage was extremely difficult. We know, too, that the spoils of victory were not sufficient to command such sacrifice. So what was your motive?” The common reply from Nelson’s men was this: “It was reward enough that we were with Nelson.”

Is Jesus not worth at least as much from us?

## Application:

Remember the three ‘alls’ of missions: all things, to all people, by all means. This is the ministry and mission of the pilgrim people of God to share Jesus with the world. And we will not stop until the whole world has heard the ‘Good News.’ Jesus Himself said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).