

**Welcome to the
Common Ground Café!**



Sunday, December 3, 2023

**God's Missionary Heart
A Study of Zephaniah 3:9**

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Sometimes when a friend sends out invitations to a birthday party or anniversary dinner, they say, “No gifts, please. Your presence is your present.” How is *presence* a *present*?

The reason missionaries go to all the world—and the reason we support their efforts—is because *presence is a present*. Make a list of things that can happen only when missionaries commit to residing long-term in a place.

The goal of all our missions work is expressed in a unique way in Zephaniah 3:9. Read that verse.

This verse promises a reversal of what happened at the Tower of Babel. Read Genesis 11:1-9. Why do you think God decided to “confuse their language”? In what way is this a judgment?

If Genesis 11 presents the **confusion** of languages as a judgment, how does that help us understand Zephaniah’s prophecy that one day God would “**purify** the lips of the peoples”?

Read Revelation 7:9-10. How is this vision a fulfillment of Zephaniah 3:9?

Some people identify the Christian faith with white Europeans or Americans, and so they regard “missions and evangelism” as trying to make other cultures “Western” or specifically “American.” How do verses like Zephaniah 3:9 and Revelation 7:9-10 correct that view?

Read Acts 1:8 and explain which of the following two statements is true and which is false:

- True or False:** The people who heard Jesus’s challenge in Acts 1:8 were white middle-class Americans, mostly from the southern United States, bent on colonial rule.

- True or False:** The people who heard Jesus’s challenge in Acts 1:8 were olive-skinned Middle Eastern Jews who believed Jesus was the Savior of the whole world.

Pastor Tom recommended four responses to today’s sermon.

First: Be glad that you’re already supporting international missions with your giving.

Were you surprised to find that the International Mission Board receives a portion of your church offering every time you give?

Second: Give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Churches traditionally challenge people to give to missions during the Christmas season. What is it about the Christmas story that should make us think about *going* and being *present* with others so that they might believe? (Hint: the “main character” in the Christmas story did just that!)

Pastor Tom challenged us to make sure our Christmas gift to missions at least matches the largest Christmas gift we’re planning to give to another person. Is this a reasonable way to figure out what to give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering?

Third: Pray.

You were given a Prayer Guide for this week’s “Week of Prayer.” When would be the best time for you to use this guide: first thing in the morning, at noon, or the last thing you do before you go to bed?

Fourth: Stay Informed.

For years, we’ve scheduled missions lunches so our people can learn from visiting missionaries. Which missionary visit has been your favorite?

Do you keep up with IMB missionaries via their newsletter and/or social media?

Close with praise reports and prayer requests