

## The Assignment

### Week 5

Pastor Mandy

When I think of what it means to be a witness to the ends of the earth, I think about my late grandpa. Woken. My grandpa woken could fix anything. Shortly after Tom and I got married, we bought a house that was built in the early 1900s. I think it was like 1906 or 1913 or something like that. And, there was a lot to be fixed in that house.

Grandpa and grandma woke in. Came to see our new house. And as I was showing grandma walking around the house, grandpa got right to work fixing things that were broken. Now, grandpa in was somewhat of an expert. He owned a store called Woken and Sons, an appliance repair shop in Tecumseh, Nebraska. So he knew about fixing appliances and things.

Now, back in the day, when your refrigerator or your stove or your washer broke down, you didn't just immediately go out and buy a new one. You repaired it. Often times you would repair it to over and over again. That's the way things worked. But today we live in what we call kind of a throwaway culture. If something is broken, we often just replace it rather than restore it.

And this mindset doesn't just apply to appliances, but it seeps into every thing. There is a, a documentary on Netflix, 2024. Last year it came out called Buy Now, and it exposes how big brands drive this overconsumption, causing, environmental destruction in, in the past. And this film explores the ways, companies keep customers from for buying more and the impact that it has on this world.

You know, if your suitcase breaks down, like, don't try to mend it, just replace it. If you're if there's a hole in your jacket, there's no need for a patch when you can just go buy a new one. Now, this throwaway mindset doesn't just stop at material goods. It seeps into how we treat people, communities, and even entire nations.

We discard what feels too broken or too difficult or too distant. Yet God calls us to do something different. God entrusted us, entrusted us with the world, not just the resources in the world, but also the people in this world. And so, as followers of Jesus, we aren't just called to walk away from the brokenness. We're called to be repairers, to bring hope where there is despair, to see beyond what is discarded and declare that nothing or no one is beyond redemption.

Now, this mission that Jesus gives us, that we've been talking about for the last several weeks, found in acts chapter one, verse eight, where Jesus says, go will be my witnesses.

Go be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. This just isn't about reaching to the ends of the world, the earth, but it's actually about seeing the world through God's eyes, seeing what can be restored, seeing who can be healed, seeing where we are called to go not just in proximity, but actually in purpose.

So today we consider the question Where is God calling us to be repairers instead of simply just bystanders? Where is God's sending us to be witnesses in this world? Now, when I think about the world, there is another verse that comes to my mind and that's found in Matthew chapter five, verses 14 and 15, where Jesus says, you are the light of the world.

You are a city on top of a hill can't be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead they put it on the on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house in the same way. Let your light shine before people so that they can see the good things you do and praise our father who is in heaven.

Last week we talked about being a witness in our own city and the caution of, about making it. Well, us versus them, right? Or us and them right were, better somehow than they are, because the US is all of us. But now we're talking about the world being a witness in the world. And that comes with an even greater threat to the one world that God has created.

Now, I've talked about this book before. I've mentioned it, this this book before because it made a huge impact on me. But the book is called When Helping Hurts, and it's by Steve Corbett and Brian Richert. And the subtitle of this book, When Helping Hurts, is How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor or Yourself. And the book explains how well-meaning efforts to help others, especially when we're talking about places.

Different places in the world, sometimes can backfire, especially and most definitely because usually we don't understand the cultural context. Now, this book warns that giving aid or sending help or going into a community without considering the local culture, without first creating relations, ships can create things like dependency or resentment or even cause harm within relationships within that community.

They. The book also stresses that in different cultural settings, sometimes, what we think might be helping is actually, insulting or counter productive. So it's really important that we that we approach any light that we might offer to the world with caution. And the authors suggest that the best way to do this is, is to empower people and to treat them with dignity and include them in the transformation.

Right. They are part of the transformation in their own community. So I am a skeptic. I am a skeptic when it comes to supporting organizations that help across seas, and not because I don't care about what is happening in the rest of the world. Because I deeply care about what is happening in the rest of the world. But I'm skeptical for these reasons.

First of all, the reasons mentioned in the book that, sometimes we do more harm when we're helping than we than we are actually helping. But also. Right, you hear about some of these organizations that are working overseas and, and you hear about money scandals or executives making far too much from these organizations. We you hear about organizations that that go into communities.

But then there's all sorts of these strings attached when they help, in the community. So I admit, it's not my greatest, gift. Right. It's a certainly one of many of my flaws is that I am a skeptic because I think, right, I, I'm supposed to, not judge people. I'm supposed to, give without expecting any in anything in return.

Right. It's not my money. It's God's money. I'm just giving. Giving it away and allowing it to work. How it's supposed to, but I do, I do judge. I am a skeptic in these things. So when I arrived at horizons two and a half years ago, I wanted to know about project Hope, this mission that we have here that is helping others in India.

I wanted to know how it started and who is it supporting and where is the money that we're giving? Where is the money going to? And I will say that I was and am amazed at this mission that we have. I'm amazed at the difference that project Hope is making. Project Hope was born out of the out of the passion of from people here at horizons who love Jesus very, very much.

And it started with relationships. In fact, one single relationship, it started with, and this it started by partnering with people already being a light in a city all the way across the world. And here, we are not we are not, creating the light, but we are allowing the light to shine. Even brighter. This is a really big weekend for our mission, project Hope.

And, our being a light across the globe.

#### Project Hope Video

In the heart of treaty. Tamil Nadu, India. Sister Jesse Alex founded Prediction children's home. Pratiksha means hope in the Malayalam language. From humble beginnings with just five girls and a small thatched house, prediction has now grown to serve dozens of children and family in Turkey and Kerala, India.

With the help of sister Molly, Jessie has provided hope, education and skills to over 100 children since 1990. In 2005, a chance meeting on a train connected Sister Jessie with Horizons Community Church, sparking the creation of project Hope. Over 600 miles away, another journey of Hope was beginning in 1998, in Orissa, India. Pastor Probyn Sitka and his wife Sue Smith founded Bethel Children's Home, which started with five children in need of shelter, quickly became a sanctuary for the vulnerable.

Hope was born out of the Spica's deep devotion to God's calling, and their small steps of faith grew into a thriving home. For many, the connection that began with a simple conversation on train blossomed into something extraordinary. Through your generosity, we've built classrooms, provided essential supplies, and supported food programs. Your support has funded dreams, offering education, shelter and love to hundreds of children across both countries.

Together, we've brought hope to life transforming futures one child at a time. Over the past 20 years, this journey has been nothing short of incredible. The future is full of promises and we will keep transforming lives for generations to come. All thanks to your incredible support.

Pastor Mandy

Over \$1 million. Yes. That is so incredible. So I'm going to invite, Ken to come up here on stage. But, this is this is incredible. What a, great, way to celebrate 20 years. To think about that, generosity of this has reached over \$1 million over the 20 years. So that is that is incredible.

And so I'm going to, invite, Ken to come up here and sit with, sit with me and, share a little bit, a little bit more. So Ken is, Ken Babcock, many of you, most of you know Ken, but Ken is part of our project. Hope team, and, he's going to share with us a little bit, a little bit more about all that's going on.

So. Okay, so \$1 million, Ken, like \$1 million of this support. So tell us a little bit about more who and what this \$1 million has, supported over the years. I don't know. Thank you.

Ken B.

Come on. Yeah. Okay. Thank you. Yeah. And thank you. As I look around, if I could see you. But, for your support, like Mandy said, this is when 20 years, and has helped thousands of kids.

Hundreds of kids directly. And then by the ripple effect, thousands of kids. And we, we currently, for example, currently we, we support about 110 kids over in India fully. I mean, with housing, food, shelter, safety, education. And then we introduce them to Jesus and these kids. It's who we say where life changed. Life changers. Well, many times where life savers because India is a tough spot and sometimes these kids end up on the street and sometimes have sex trafficked and so on.

And so we we're saving lives or just not changing lives. And we have a tendency to focus upon those, 110 kids that get, you know, full sheltering in safety and so on. But most of the other homes, most of the homes have other things going on. For example, at British Care,

they've got an after school program for the community kids that they can get a snack and do their homework and play a game.

At, they also at pretty good. They help college age kids, break out of the cycle of poverty. And at, Bethel and Bethel, they run a preschool. Plus they run a, K through 12 education system, actually, for any kids in the community, they want to come. So we focus upon those 110. But it's much broader than that.

And I as I said then we have the ripple effect, you know, we can for, for a handful of kids, you know, and like 110 kids and more, we can we can expand their boundaries, we can introduce them to Jesus, and they can go out and maybe start. And we can break those cycles of poverty and the caste system.

Pastor Mandy

Awesome. Thank you. So, can, will you tell us how does the work of project Hope tie into our values?

Ken B.

No. Closer. Okay. The values which are written on the wall there in in the atrium. What catches my eyes is, is that as Jesus teaches, we intentionally and boldly serve others to show God's love. And that's what we've done now for 20 years in India. And it's not to prove ourselves. It's not to beat on chest and say we're great.

It's to show God's love and we're directed to do that.

Yeah. Awesome. Okay, so, this picture here, is one of the students. Would you tell us her story? Sure. And look at that smile. That just melts me. But, I'll. I'll call her Shristi. I that might be close, but she's ten years old. Or she has a new kid or family, but her father is.

It has went mentally ill. So the mother took a job as a porter, but could not afford probably the essentials. Could certainly could not afford to send this little girl to school. So they brought her to Bethel and Bethel accepted her and she is flourishing. And they had to start her in a in a in a grade lower than her age.

But she is caught up now doing well and she is, science is her favorite subject. That's awesome. Okay, so, Ken, a lot of the people who have supported project Hope over the last 20 years or are sitting out here. So, what can you share with them today? Well, the biggest thing and I and I say it every time is thank you.

You know, this is one example, these pictures, there are the kids getting, an outfit at Christmas time. We have a couple of fundraisers during the year, one for school supplies

and one for Christmas. So, we try. We our campaign was to, sell ornaments at \$20 each and that the full \$20 went to, India to buy a present for each one of these 110 kids.

And, and due to your generosity and your purchase of the ornaments, we were well over that, but. So all of the money went to India, and you could just see the smiles on those kids eyes. So thank you. Thank you so much on their behalf.

Pastor Mandy

Yes. Thank you. So, yeah. So all of the money that does go, is given to project Hope goes over there.

So kind of the operating expenses come out of our, our general budget. But yeah, everything that is given, supports those kids the pictures on the screen. Right. These aren't just stock photos. These are pictures that we have, from the to homes. So there are still children in these, cities and villages, that still that are, that need help.

Right. The, the community, these, these two children's homes are making a difference in their community, but there's still some pretty, deep pain. And, darkness in some of these, community. So how can we continue to support these homes?

Ken B.

Yeah. Thank you. It's there are, of course, ongoing needs. And if you are, if you look at the slides, you can see kids that are, you know, this high up to high school.

And so the expectation is that the kids can go all the way through and they can get, at least in high school graduation and be introduced to Jesus. So I'm always when I, when I'm up and I'm talking to groups and so on, I tell people we're always looking for new or increased donations because of the work we do and the ongoing needs we do have, but we also want to look at, the future and could we do more?

Mandy and I were talking about it the other day, or one of the things that that province has spoken about, and it would be wonderful if we could do, is he would like to be able to start helping graduates, to go to college or to go to a trade school after they're done at Bethel. And that would be a wonderful step.

So looking towards the future, maybe the next 20 years, it might even be bigger. We also need prayers and prayers for the kids and prayers for the, the directors, because India is a tough spot. It's really it's a really hard spot to be an especially hard spot to be if you're a child. So if you wish to give there's a number of ways to do it.

You can go on the website or you can download the Church Center app that's got to be it's got to be easy because I did it or in the back of the room there, if you want to do it. Paper

and pencil. They're giving stations. So thank you. Okay. So there is also a really exciting opportunity coming up this year.

So tell us about that. Yeah this this this is amazing. We are having mission trip to India and, and it's, and it says it will be a life changing mission trip, which will, the dates will be, the end of October, 1st November. It depends that the actual, you know, the finalized dates will be based upon you know, what works best for the people that are going over.

We're going to go to both children's homes. And the approximate cost is \$2,500. Now I know and I went on that 1 in 2017. And I know that there are there were some that said, you know, that's good. But I don't have \$2,500. What I know took place and a lot of cases that people that wanted to go, they reached out, they reached out to the church, they reached out to their home group, their family and so on.

And they raised that that money, the registration and we have more information out in the atrium. Afterwards. But the registration is due this this slide is in error. That was my bad. It says March 31st is actually March 28th. But and I'll talk a little bit more about that later. So why is this trip so important?

Well, I think that the first and foremost is we want to be able to go over and we want to talk, to the directors and play with the kids. We want to we want to build that relationship. And that means so much to them. When, when a group goes over, impacts them. And then also, you know, you want to we want then people to come back and be able to witness to others about what's going on over there.

Probyn. He coined this. Come and see. Go and tell. And that's what he wants us to do. Also, I think if you're like me, it'll change your faith walk. Because I went when I was, not a young man. I was 65, but. And the only time I kept a diary was when I. When I went over to India.

And we were encouraged to do that. And after the first day, I dug out the diary, the other day I. And I prayed this. I said, Lord, please fill me with the Holy Spirit so I can actually see the beauty here and discern my purpose here, because I and that was, I was in a bit of a culture shock right then because it's India is crowded and it's noisy and they honk their horns and you're definitely in the minority.

The Lord often, answered my prayer because the next pages are about the beauty that I did find there and the beauty was not geographic. The beauty was in the people. It was in the directors. And those wonderful kids. So it and, I can't guarantee it will change your faith walk, but it'll rock your world. It'll change your life.

So it's been a few years since we've sent a team or a group of people over there. So can you share some of the experiences when we did send a group. Certainly. And the other day

when we talked, I said, is this book me for about an hour and a half? Because, I, I it did change me.

This first slide, is, is a humbling, slide in that this is what these kids, they're just so excited to be with you and to do anything with you. The one on the left there, that's Amber, my daughter. And she's, making just little bracelets for the girls. And you can see how she's just being swarm.

They just love that.

And then the other slide is we have Anthony and Pauline and they're playing the game that I never heard of that at that time is slap my hand and we demonstrate here okay. Oh gosh I should oh gosh I wasn't serious. But here we go. See she's good. She's a ringer. And look at the.

And that was the whole game. And look at the lines of the kids that play that game. Also I didn't take a picture of it, but, and you probably can't see it, but at the back of the diary, I have list of the kids that they sign my diary and I think it was before supper and had a little time.

And there is some kids around, and I just asked them if they'd be, if they'd do that for me, if they'd sign their diary for me. And then I looked up and we had a line of kids who wanted to sign their diary, and they put their name and their age in, and if they're a boy or a girl.

So it was so, so humbling. These kids compared, kids in the U.S. have nothing. A lot of times they come, they come to the children's home with the clothes on their back, and they're joyous. So this this is a, this slide shows, our, Allie, who headed this up for us. That's this trip. And, on the right side, she took some of the members, into the community and met some of her friends.

Allie was. I should back up. Allie spent a considerable amount of time over there as a missionary at Bethel, and she got to know the kids. She got to know the community. So this is this is, like, old home week for her. Yeah. So Allie will be leading this trip for us in the in the fall. Yes.

And that's so exciting. Yes. You mentioned that book, concerning about doing no harm and so on. When we went over in preparation for the trip, we read that book because she's very sensitive about that. Yes. She's a tremendous guide. And that's and I've been lucky. I've got to travel quite a bit. But that's the first time and the only time where I got an itinerary and I said, thank you.

That's all I'm doing, right? They tell me to be here, here, and I'll be here at that time. And it was it just ran perfectly. So next slide, please. I wanted to show you what takes place in the,

every evening at Bethel. They, they have an open air, meeting room. Huge. Now it's huge. And the gentleman there with the microphone, he was at that time, he was the preacher.

And it was like an evangelism meeting. It was it was something he used the mic, but he didn't have to. I mean, they heard it probably in the, in the communities around there, but it was it was a regular church service. There were songs, there was Bible reading and so on. And you could see on the right there it's full because the kids come and a lot of the community members come.

So that's another way we're spreading the word. And then, in the middle slide every after the official sermon and so on, there was entertainment and the kids entertained us. And this group is dancing for us. And that's it's just wonderful. And then after the official service becomes the unofficial service. All right, the unofficial activity, which is dancing, and that's a big deal.

They play music, and it's a big deal to get the Americans out there and dance with you. Right. Great fun. So demonstrating that. Oh, wow. If and if, if I could give you a piece of advice, if you're, you're fortunate enough to go and you go, here is if they ask a dance, it is so fun. And the kids get such a big kick out of it.

So that next slide, please.

Yes. What? I wanted to talk a little bit about the picnic. The picnic, the two slides, with the pictures of the kids. The day before we left, I was out walking with some of the kids and around the school, and we heard this, this roar. So we went to the, we went towards the roar, and they were applauding and saying, well, it was just announced that there was going to be a picnic that next day, which happened to be our last day.

There. And the picnic was pretty minimal. But that top on the top side, you can see a river running in the back and the activity of the picnic was you got to you got to wade in the river and the river was not clean. And in fact, down, down stream. There were water buffalo in the river. So you didn't get in the river.

You could wade in the river, you know, you didn't put your head down in it. And so that was the activity. The, the treats were everybody got a little bag. It was a little plastic bag of water. I had never seen one before. And you could bite a quarter of it. And then drink the water, because there was no water in that area that you could drink and that was safe to drink.

So they got that, they got a little packet and I think it had two cookies in it. And then they got about this much, maybe an inch and a half of pop in a, in a plastic cup. When we were

riding out there, I noticed there was this sack and it had four, two liter bottles of pop, and you could see the crowd.

So every child got about an inch and a half of pop. And they were joyous. You look at those faces, they were so happy, and I was so humbled. So if you if you're interested in attending or going on that trip, there's a couple QR codes, if you're good at that. And there's, there's a website at, in the atrium afterwards.

We have a little card you can take. It's got the QR code also, and you can look into it. Of course you all have questions and so on and so forth. There there's going to be, an electronic online meeting a week from today in the evening at 830. And you can sign up for that, and then we will include you in there.

And, I could say the deadline is March 28th for the application doesn't take very long. And then Ali will walk you, walk you through all of this and, and acclimate you. And, you know, there may be some shots you have to get some immunizations and so on. But I, I highly encourage you to look into it if you're interested.

And then also, I just wanted to say, please join us for some cake after this service, we're celebrating with a little cake. So yes. Thank you. Celebration. Well, thank you can for being here and, being a part of what we're doing over there. So much, much appreciated. I mean, if you can't, tell, like, I feel like project Hope.

Pastor Mandy

Like this is the light they are being, the light of the world. And, it is a pretty remarkable thing. Now, this passage, you are the light of the world sits within what we call the sermon on the Mount. I'm definitely doing a sermon series soon on the sermon on the Mount, because there's so much to unpack.

But there's a couple things I want to unpack about this. This verse. Jesus wasn't, in the sermon on the Mount. Jesus wasn't directly rejecting the government, but Jesus was challenging the systems of power. Both the political systems and the religious systems. And he did that by teaching this radically different way of living under God's rule.

Now in Matthew chapter five, verse 17, also part of the sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, don't even think that I have come to do away with the law and the prophets. I have come. I have not come to do away with them, but to fulfill them. And I'll tell you a little bit, and what Jesus says by that.

But, by what Jesus means by that. But Jesus is, is talking about what we would call the Old Testament when he's talking about the law and the prophets, the Hebrew Bible. And this

verse is often used today against people, sometimes, not thinking about the words that are in the rest of the sermon on the Mount.

It's an excuse for people to not help certain people, or not kind of that determination. People who do not follow the law as we have defined, in the world, but instead label people as outsiders or worthy. But Jesus challenged the system. He said he's I'm challenging this, this power, and he redefined greatness. In the very beginning of the sermon on the Mount, where we have the Beatitudes, right, where he's blessing the humble and the persecuted.

And, not only in the Beatitudes, but his other words and teachings. Jesus taught that this true loyalty that belongs to God's kingdom, right? That's what we're supposed to be loyal to, not earthly rulers, not wealth of this world. And Jesus commands us to love our enemies and turn the other cheek. And all of these things like undermine the systems that are in place currently.

This is a radical new way of teaching that impacts the world. If we follow what Jesus says. So how can we be a light in the world for Jesus? How can we be a witness in the world for Jesus? Well, that comes to this final assignment that you have. And it doesn't end today because this assignment of being a witness encompasses every part of who we are.

Jesus sums up what the law and prophets saying in Matthew chapter seven. Still in the sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, therefore you should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you. This is the law and the prophets. Here's the summary. Here is what we are called to do. And so that's your assignment.

The golden rule we call it. And maybe part of your assignment will include getting more involved in project Hope through your prayers or your resources, or maybe considering going on this trip. Or maybe you have another worldly organization that you are passionate about, but he just goes beyond that. Even it goes beyond that because it's our whole life.

Even our purchases can have an impact on people around the world. What we spend our money on is power. There is power in that. And so we can think about purchasing things that are, ethically sourced or fair trade goods. And what that means is, when it says it's fair trade, it means that the people across the world usually who are part of this goods and creating these goods are paid fair wages and they're safe working conditions, and there's no child or forced labor involved.

It's an environmental responsibility around it too. So this assignment that we have isn't just about today. It's not just about checking a few things off our list. It's a way of life that shines light in the darkness, because it's not enough to be a witness in your family, sharing your story and being kind and loving to them.

Apologizing when we mess up. It's not enough to be witnesses to our neighbors and our coworkers supporting each other in times of need. It's not enough to be a witness in our city by caring for a refugee family. It's not enough to send prayers and resources to orphanages across the world, because to be a witness and the light of the world means seeing with God's eyes, restoring, empowering, and bringing hope where others see only despair.

So it's not enough. But that's overwhelming, right? How can I do all of these things? How are you? How can I be a witness in all of these places? Well, it's overwhelming unless we remember that we're working together. It's overwhelming. Unless we. We remember that that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit in order for us to do this work.

It's overwhelming. Unless we remember that that is why the church was created. We're doing this together, and horizons is certainly doing it together. So the world is not hopeless. It's not beyond repair, because God's kingdom is bigger than that. If it ever feels overwhelming, think about the Golden rule. Right? Do unto others as you would have them do to you. That is what Jesus calls us to do.