

## ***“It’s All About the Gospel”***

### **Week of Prayer for North American Missions**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:3-4**

In the SBC family, it the Week of Prayer for North American Missions. This involves specifically praying for those serving as missionaries in the U.S., Canada, and the U.S. territories. In this region, there are 363 million people, 350 languages, and at least 14 religions. Approximately 273 million people do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Week of Prayer for North American Missions is giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering to fund the missionaries’ salaries and ministries. Annie Armstrong (1850-1938) was the founder of the Women’s Missionary Union (WMU). She organized women to pray for our missionaries and to raise funds for their ministries. She started a church in Baltimore, Maryland that ministered to children, immigrants, blacks, and Indians. Annie wrote 18,000 letters in one year, promoting mission causes in the U.S. and around the world. At her funeral, her pastor called her “a woman of great faith.” Because of her work and dedication in missions, the WMU named the Easter Offering in her memory.

We have approximately 9,000 full-time and part-time missionaries serving in North America. Recently, they planted 624 new churches, many of those were specific ethnic or language congregations. They serve in compassion ministries like the inner city homeless

ministries, as well as collegiate ministries on many university and college campuses. There are over 3,600 chaplains serving in the military, hospitals, prisons, and disaster relief. We are grateful for the mission work that these men and women are doing across North America.

In the City of Corinth, the church was divided. It was marked with conflict caused by false teachers spreading false doctrine. There were many different backgrounds who brought into the church their pagan beliefs. It was a talented and diverse church, but it was also a troubled church. One of the conflicts was the teaching of the resurrection of Jesus. Some scoffed and others could not defend it. Paul wrote the Corinthian believers to correct them and to bring them together. He wrote to remind them of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to remind them of their faith in Christ. His theme was *“according to the Scriptures...”* Paul said:

1. ***“According to the Scriptures...”*** Christ died for our **sins** (15:3)

*“For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...”*

- Paul told his fellow believers: *“I want to clarify for you the gospel...”* (v. 1). They had clouded the gospel, and confused many people. Paul was correcting them. He said that what he taught them was *“most important.”* The gospel is Jesus dying for

our sin and guilt. He died so that we could have a personal relationship with God; so that we could have eternal life. That is *“most important.”*

- Pastor and author, Warren Wiersbe said: “The Gospel is the most important message that the church ever proclaims. While it is good to be involved in social action and the betterment of mankind, there is no reason why these ministries should preempt the Gospel.” It is all about the Gospel. That is the focal point of our ministry and the reason that we exist.
- When Paul said, *“according to the Scriptures...”* he may have had in mind what the prophet, Isaiah said: *“He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds”* (Isaiah 53:5). That is the Messiah, the Christ, dying for our sins so that we could be forgiven; so that we could have peace with God.
- 2. *“According to the Scriptures...”* Christ was raised on the third day (15:4)

*“...That He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...”*

- Paul wanted his fellow believers to know beyond any doubt that Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and resurrected on the third day. He came back to life, validating the fact that He is the Son of God. Some of the Corinthians scoffed at a resurrection.

Many today scoff at the resurrection of Jesus. They refuse to believe in the supernatural power of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

- Paul gave three reasons for the certainty of Jesus’ resurrection: their salvation—*“You are also saved by it...”* (v. 2); the Scriptures—*“according to the Scriptures...”* (vs. 3-4); and eyewitnesses—*“He appeared to...”* (vs. 5-8). The Corinthians’ lives had been changed by the power of Jesus Christ. The Gospel had transformed their way of living. The Scriptures taught about the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Messiah. Psalm 16:10 and Psalm 22, as well as Isaiah 53, tell of the Messiah’s death and resurrection. Over 500 people had seen the resurrected Jesus, including Paul himself (v. 8).
- Our faith and our hope is based on the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul said: *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins”* (v. 17). There have been many martyrs who have died for various people and causes, but Jesus died and came back to life. He is not a martyr, He is the living Savior. Paul said: *“...In Christ all will be made alive”* (v. 22b).

It’s all about the Gospel. It’s all about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Share your faith with others. Pray for and support our missionaries serving in North America. The Gospel is just as true and transforming today as it was 2,000 years ago.