

Engaged in God's Work

Global Outreach 2018

Psalm 67

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When I was a boy, my dad was a salesman in Omaha. He sold copiers. He wore a suit. He did sales calls. And because he was my dad, I thought this was the coolest thing imaginable. Right? And because he was my dad, I, of course, like most twelve-year-old boys, aspired to be a copier salesman. Right? Not a fireman, not a policeman, not a football player—a copier salesman. So, of course when the summer came around, one of my favorite things to do would be to go to work with my dad. I'd put on a suit—you know, kind of awkward—and we'd go on sales calls. I'd run menial tasks and get paid twenty-five cents when I'd do those things. You know it was absolutely, for my twelve-year-old mind, absolutely incredible. It was one of my favorite days. As I got older, I actually stepped into the sales world a little bit. I got the suit, worked at an office in Chicago on Michigan Avenue, and you guys, you can just imagine me kind of rolling out my first day, feeling really good. I started selling and I stunk. It was awful; I'm an awful salesman. I didn't make a single sale—I was a bad salesman.

So, it makes me think back, “Why did I love going to work with my dad so much?” Because I clearly don't love the sales part of it. I'm no good at that. I don't think I have a particular affinity for copiers. I don't feel too affectionate about them. So, what is it? Well, I think the clear answer is, “I was with my dad; I love my dad. I just wanted to be with him, doing what he was doing, engaged in the work he was engaged in. That was a joy for me; that was a pleasure for me.”

So the question I want to ask you this morning as we dive into the text and think about what God's doing is: “What is our heavenly Father doing?” What's the work that He's engaged in? Where's His office, so to speak? And have we taken the opportunity to go with Him to work...to join Him? In order to do that, we're going to take a look at Psalm 67. So if you have your Bibles, go ahead and turn to Psalm 67 with me. I just want to give you some warning. Because we're thinking about ways that we can actually engage in some of these things, we're going to kind of go in and out of the text. We'll deal with a couple of stanzas, a couple of verses, and then we're going to take a look at ways that we can apply what God's Word is saying. So, beginning in Verse 1:

God be gracious to us and bless us,

And cause His face to shine upon us— (*NASB, Psalm 67:1)

So, what is God up to in the world? What is His work? Well, a part of His work is loving you, being involved in your life. It's blessing you. That's a part of what God is doing. That's a part of what His work is. What does it mean that God loves you and blesses you? I want to suggest to you that when we love someone, what we do is seek to bring good into the life of the person that we love. We seek what is best for them. We pursue it; we foster it—and that's precisely what God does for you and for me. God is seeking what is good for us, and ultimately He knows best, doesn't He? He knows what is best for us. And that's what He's doing; that's part of His work.

And it has this phrase **...cause His face to shine upon us**. As I read this and thought about it, it reminded me about my little four-year-old girl, Lucia, because there are some times she's talking to me about something that, maybe, I don't care about too much. Right? I'm kind of distracted, and

sometimes Lucia will take my face with her hands and she'll turn it right towards hers and make me look her right in the eye. And that's exactly what she should do, because I love her...I love her! And the first step in loving someone is just paying attention to them. And so this request is essentially, "Lord, look at us. Look us right in the face. Look us right in the eye." And that's what God does. Right? God cares about us. He gives us His attention. He pays so much attention to you; He knows the details of your life. So the question we can start to ask ourselves is: "Why? Why does God do this? Why does He just heap his love and His affection on us? Why does He pay so much attention to us?" Verse 2:

**That Your way may be known on the earth,
Your salvation among all nations.**

See, God is working in yours and in my life, and what He is doing in our lives, He intends to extend throughout the world. He wants His salvation to be known to all people. We're so thankful it's known to us in this room, but God is consumed with this larger plan, this thing that takes up more scope. And so He's working to bring blessing into our life, but He intends to use what He's doing in our life in order to advance this bigger agenda, this broader plan of His. So, is God at work in your life? Absolutely! In the minute details! But is He also engaged in something much bigger, bigger maybe even than our mind can imagine? And the answer is: Absolutely! And what this psalm seems to be suggesting is there's this relationship between the two. God is active in blessing you so that that blessing can extend to more and more people. This section of the psalm then ends with what is essentially a prayer. Verse 3:

**Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.**

This word **peoples** in the Hebrew essentially is referring to those who aren't part of the Jewish nation. Just a lost people—so to all people, essentially, the prayer is, "Lord, let all people in the world—every nation, every tongue, and tribe—let them all come to praise Your name, to be worshipers of You." This phrase is repeated two times in this psalm; it's essentially the heartbeat of the psalm—that the nations would become filled with worshipers, with people of praise.

So, this leads us to the first step that we want you to consider, in terms of ways to *engage*. The first step is: we're asking you just to "**Pray**". We would love it if we would become a church that would just be permeated with prayer, that we'd become engaged in what God is doing and partner with Him in His work through praying for what He's passionate about. See, we have missionaries all around the world, and I know that they would say right now to you—if they were here today—is, "Pray for us. Advocate for us, but not just for us. Pray also for those that we are ministering to. Pray that God's name would be glorified in this place." We can join God; we can engage in what He is doing by praying.

So, as I was preparing, I thought, "You know, I think I say this every time I'm up here—every year—and maybe people are getting tired of hearing me say it. So we thought, instead of me saying it once again, let's talk to one of our missionaries. So, Clint Kirby is one of our missionaries in Poland, and Clint is home right now. He actually had a baby two days ago. Yeah. (*applause*) He didn't really. It was Missy that did most of the work. (*laughter*) But we asked Clint, "Would you come and share with us about what prayer means to you?" And so, let's watch now as Clint explains what our prayers mean to him in his work.

(Video):

My name is Clint Kirby, and my wife Missy and I have been in Gdansk, Poland, as church planters for Lincoln Berean since 2009. So over in Poland there's this young woman named Aga, and she started coming to Gospel Church about a year ago and began being discipled by women in the church, including my wife. We began to talk about baptism and what that looked like in the gospel and where she was at in believing it, and definitely seeing some amazing things happen in her life during that time. So the conversation began, and being baptized in Poland is a really big deal, and most people are baptized when they're an infant. So for an adult to be baptized is viewed as very strange, almost a betrayal of Polish culture. And so when she began going to Gospel Church, her parents were not fans. In fact they said that they almost wished she went to no church at all, rather than going to Gospel Church. She was definitely fearful of how her parents would react when she told them that she wanted to be baptized.

Around that time, Patty Neidow from Lincoln Berean always emails the missionaries once a month for prayer requests, and so I had replied back to Patty, "Please pray for Aga and our conversation with her parents, that it would go well." It's not a light thing to me when Patty or other people ask for prayer requests. Prayer is a powerful way to partner with us. Knowing that people are praying here means the world to us. We believe that God hears us and that He is faithful. Perhaps seeing that prayer request on the list, if someone read it and prayed for it—it might have just seemed like one thing to pray for after another—but in Aga's life, it was huge. Everything we're doing there on the mission field is out of our control, and we can only ask and pray for God to move.

After months of wrestling with it, Aga finally got around to talking to her parents about it. And to her amazement and to her surprise, they said that they would come. Well, we had the baptism service in August down in the Baltic Sea. Aga stood up before everyone and shared her story, and what a powerful moment to see her parents there, to see the church there, and to see God answering the prayers of people like you back here. For me, it was just a moment of gratitude and thankfulness to God, and just a reminder that God works. And when we pray, we're asking God to do things that, in our human minds, may seem impossible, and I definitely believe that God heard that prayer and answered that prayer. So, for me, it's not a coincidence that those two things happened. I believe that God was working in the hearts of the people that prayed and He heard the prayers and worked and moved in Aga's and her parents' lives.

(Ryan):

My favorite description of prayer is that prayer is talking with God about what we're doing together, again, talking with God about what we're doing together! And it's a way that we can get involved in the work that He is doing. Join Him in that work; engage with Him in that work. If that is something that God is putting on your heart, if He's prompting you to engage that way, I want to encourage you to go to an information booth after the service and grab one of these prayer guides. It has all of our missionaries in it. It tells you about what they're doing and it gives you ways to pray for them. If we run out—we went through quite a few last night—we'll print more next week. The other thing that you could do is join those of us that pray every month. Every third or fourth Sunday of the month, we gather and we just lift up our missionaries. We take the requests they've given us, and we pray. We engage in the work God is doing. We join Him in that work by lifting them up.

As the psalmist continues in Verse 4, he turns our attention to the response that the nations will have when this good news of God's salvation comes to them. Verse 4:

**Let the nations be glad and sing for joy;
For You will judge the peoples with uprightness
And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.**

Selah. When you're reading the psalms and you see that word **Selah**, it essentially means just pause for a second; just stop and consider, marinate for a moment in that thought. And then, Verse 5:

**Let the peoples praise You, O God; (There it is again.)
Let all the peoples praise You.**

You know, in my role here on staff, I've had the opportunity to step into some of the direst circumstances you can imagine around the world. I've been able to go into trash dumps in Mexico and serve tacos to people that live and work there day in and day out. And I've been able to walk through slums in Nairobi, Kenya, and in Mumbai, India, and just see the pain and the suffering that's taking place there. And you know, as I look back on those times, the one thing that is true is that the common denominator in each one of those situations is these places and this suffering is the result of corruption—the result of corruption that is rooted in sin and a sinful world that's permeated by corrupt people and corrupt leaders doing corrupt things that keep people in situations where they suffer.

And as I think about that, I ask myself, “What is it that will cause these people in that context to rise up and to be thankful and to praise God?” And Verse 4 tells us. The end of Verse 4 says: **For You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations of the earth.** And the response by the people will be that they will erupt in praise. They will erupt in worship. So that work that God is aiming towards is this moment in the future—this future day—when God will rule and everyone will know it. There will no longer be hiding to the fact that God is the One in charge. See, for a time He is allowing—somehow in His sovereignty—corrupt leaders and corrupt people to be in places of power. But a day is coming when that will no longer be the case. A day is coming—this future day, this not-yet day—when He will eradicate the pain and the suffering in the world. He'll put the world to rights. He'll start to unravel all that's wrong, and if you're anything like me, and you hear that, you think, “Lord, what are You waiting for? Why don't You do it now?” But, upon a moment's reflection I have to say to myself, “But He is. God is doing it. He is working. He's working through His people—people who He has blessed and who are taking up the call to engage in the work that He is doing.” People and organizations—organizations like the *Hope Venture*, like *Compassion International*, like *Food for the Hungry*. See, God is working and is bringing justice and hope to the oppressed. So, of course we await that day, that day when God's justice, God's way, will be the last word. It will be the only thing that we see. But in the meantime, we can't lose sight of the fact that God is doing it now...God is doing it now! He's doing it through His people, people who He has blessed. And our desire as the Global Outreach Team is to introduce you to more and more of the people and the organizations that are doing this work of bringing hope to the oppressed.

This leads to our second step of *engagement* that we want you to consider. We just said, “**Go**”. See, we want to encourage some of you in this room that we believe God is calling to **go** with us and **go see** what God is doing on the front lines. **Go** meet the people and the organizations that are working on the front lines to being about God's justice, God's goodness, God's hope in places where it seems like there is none. See, God is active. He is working, and we would love to take you and show you that—take you to His workplace so you could see Him doing it.

Back in August I introduced you to Jason Harms who is our Global Engagement Pastor, and Jason has been working to connect us to more and more organizations and places where we can take you and you can *engage* in what God is doing. And rather than having me tell you about this new philosophy of short-term missions, we thought we'd have Jason explain it briefly. So let's join and watch Jason now as he tells us about this new way that we're going with short-term missions.

(Video):

Hey, I'm Jason. I'm the pastor of Global Engagement here at Berean. And as a Global Outreach Team, we've put a lot of thought and prayer into how we can give our people opportunities to engage in what God's doing around the world. For example, while we know that short-term trips are great, we don't want to do trips just so we can check off some magical box that says we're sending people all over the world. No! We found that, if not done thoughtfully and with strategy in mind, short-term trips are exactly like they sound—Short! And while they're filled with passion, excitement, and this idea that you're going to change the world, all in a week, but let's be real. A week isn't much time and, in reality, oftentimes when things are done with passion and haste and in a short amount of time, they end up hurting things more than helping.

So, let me tell you a little bit about how we're going to try to avoid these common mistakes and set our people up to effectively and continually engage with what God's doing around the world. Our mission is to give every person in this church an opportunity to personally engage with the people around the world that God is pursuing. This may be through going overseas, but we also want to give those who don't go a way to engage as well. So, how do we do that?

Well, the truth is there are loads of great organizations that are doing Kingdom work around the world, and we've decided to partner with some of these organizations—organizations that are doing great work and who can give our people clear ways to engage with the people they are serving on the ground. We've been hard at work to launch a load of trips for you to engage in, trips that will appeal to a wide variety of people. There are many different types of trips with different objectives. Each trip will have unique ways for us to serve, not only the organization, but the leadership on the ground and the people they're serving. Our great hope is that, after the trip is done, engagement with the work God has been doing will just be the beginning. Our commitment to long-term engagement is so high that we plan to follow up with those who have gone on trips to provide clear ways for them to continue to be engaged in the lives of the people afterwards. This could even be done through engaging locally, through the refugees in Lincoln.

Hopefully, by now you've heard a common theme as I've been talking: Engagement! Here's the deal: We'll no longer be doing short-term trips. We are interested in long-term engagement by working alongside those who are in the trenches day after day. This is why we are now calling these trips engagement trips. We hope to get every person at Lincoln Berean engaged with people from around the world and places where we believe Jesus is currently working and would be spending His time if He were still physically here with us today. So, let's engage with those around us and spread the hope of Jesus to a world that desperately needs Him.

(Ryan):

What's God doing? What's His work? Well, his work is He's blessing you...He's loving you, and God blesses in order that He may expand His work, that He may bless others. And we are so excited about taking some of you, essentially, on this road trip to see God working—to use my metaphor—to pile you all into our station wagon and take you to the office and, see Jason! I don't know that his job's been difficult enough yet. So, what I would love is if everyone in this room

would sign up to go on a trip. Let's challenge him. If God's encouraging you to engage in that way, to engage by going, I'd just encourage you after the service to go online and to sign up for a trip. They're all listed there and you can see how to apply. Or just shoot us an email and we can answer questions. We'd love to find a fit for you, something that is kind of in line with who God's made you to be.

Turning now to the final stanza of this psalm, really what the psalmist does in this final stanza is reiterate so much of what he's already said, but he introduces this new image to us. It's the image of the harvest. So, Verse 6:

**The earth has yielded its produce;
God, our God, blesses us.
God blesses us,
That all the ends of the earth may fear Him. (Vs. 6-7)**

So, of course in the ancient world a full storehouse, a bountiful harvest, was a sign of God's blessing, a sign of God's provision and His care. But of course this psalm is really not about the harvest as much as some of the farmers in the room might want to think. What it's about is God's blessing. It's about the way God blesses. It's about the way that God comes in and provides what is necessary in order to step into a life of flourishing, a life that has the potential and the ability to become all that God intends for it to be. And so as we think about this verse and this idea of harvest, we need to contextualize it a little bit. I want to ask you, "What do you think in our world today are those things that are necessary in order to step into a life of flourishing, in order to become all that God intends for people to be?" I would suggest food and shelter for all, right? Those are basic, and they're certainly necessary, but there are places around the world where even those basic things are not provided. Clean water! There are people all around the world that are dying because they just can't get access to clean water, or access to proper medical care and education—education that allows you to step into all that God intends for you. I'd say these all fall under the category of things that are necessary to become all that God intends for people to be.

You know, the fact that those things come into our lives so easily, and we don't even think about them very much, is an indication of just God's lavish grace and blessing that He's poured out on us. But, again, what about those places and those people for whom these things don't come easily? What about them? What's God doing? Has He forgotten them? And, again, just like the last step of *engagement*, the answer is, "No!" God has not forgotten; God is working. Once again, God is working through people just like you and me, people who have been moved by this idea of God's blessing going out to all the nations and becoming active in trying to find ways to start to bless the nations. He's doing it...He's doing it! And our hope is to connect you to these organizations so that you can play a part. You can be active in joining God in what He is doing around the world, of helping people He loves become all that He intends them to be.

So, this moves us to our third point of *engagement*—the third thing we're encouraging you to think about. And we're just calling that "**Sponsor**". See, we know that not everyone in this room can get on a plane and go all around the world and be involved in helping bless people. We know that. But we also know that there are organizations that are doing that work, and through things like sponsorship, we can come and we can be an active part in blessing an individual life. We can actually get to know the people that we're involved with. We can know their names and we can see what God is doing.

One organization that we are fond of that grew right out of this church and that many of you have heard about is the *Hope Venture*. And the *Hope Venture* has been seeing God work through sponsoring students in Kenya—and they've watched incredible things happen as they've sponsored an education for these students and God has been actively at work! And we wanted to have *Hope Venture* share a little bit about what God is doing through these student sponsorships. And we wanted to ask you to consider, would you partner with what God is doing in this way? So, let's watch as we see what the *Hope Venture* has been up to in Kenya.

Video link: <https://www.facebook.com/thehopeventure/videos/345068569562423/>

(Applause) I don't even know those guys, but, man, I love them! They're dreamers, aren't they? They have some big dreams. But, you know, the reality of those dreams is not possible without an education. It's having an education that even gives them the freedom to dream. God is working. God is working in their lives, and we have an opportunity to join Him in what He is doing through sponsorship. If that's something that you feel like God is prompting in you, I want to encourage you. The *Hope Venture* is outside today; they're at the Spotlight Booth. They have eighteen students that they would like to get sponsored by the end of the year, and I would love nothing more than to tell the 10:45 service, “Hey, nine o'clock took care of it.” We can join God in His office, His workplace, by engaging in what He is doing. We can do that through sponsorship.

Church, God blesses us. He blesses us so that all the ends of the earth may fear Him. So, what's God's work? What's He doing? Well, He's working in your life. He is loving you; He is blessing you. We can be confident of that! But we also don't want to lose sight of this bigger thing, right? And the question we want to ask is: “Lord, how do we keep mindful? How do we stay aware of what *You* are doing around the world...the work that *You* are doing? Not just that, how do we remain *engaged* in the work that *You* are doing?” This morning, we just offered you three simple steps: to **Pray**, to **Go**, to **Sponsor**.

Let me go back to 1990-ish—to the twelve-year-old Ryan with his awkward suit and his bad salesmanship. You know, as I look back on that, one of the things that I've realized as I've thought about it, is in going to work with my dad, something unexpected happened. What happened is I started to know my dad better. I started to understand him more. I kind of grew in my affection and my appreciation of him. See, I always knew home-dad, and I loved home-dad. Home-dad's great! But work-dad was a little different. Seeing him engage in his work, seeing him conduct sales calls, I started to have this affection for him, this respect for him that I didn't have before. I think if you think about your friends or even your spouse and you think about them and seeing them in their workplaces, I think you'd agree that when we see people engaged in the work they're doing, it deepens our relationship with them. It helps us to have more respect for them, more love for them, more affection for them.

That's the opportunity God is giving us—to join Him in His workplace and get to know Him better by getting involved in what He is doing. So, what's God's work? What is He doing? Well, He's expanding His name. He's expanding His glory. He's caring for the orphan and the widow. He's loving the oppressed. Where is He doing it? Right here in your life—a hundred percent, absolutely! But God's got offices all around the world, doesn't He? He's doing it all around the world. How do we get involved? Opportunities are right in front of us. The question is just whether we'll join Him and engage in what He's doing. God blesses us that all the earth may fear Him! Let's pray:

Our Father, we thank You that You are so much bigger than we can possibly imagine. And we thank You that You have come into our life and You are working like crazy in our life and, Father, we never want to stop being thankful for that, praising You for that. But, Lord, we also know that You are so active in the world, and we long for that day when all the nations of the world will rise up and call You blessed, that worshipers will be filled—every nation will be filled with worshipers of You. And so we want to be involved in that work with You. God, we ask that You would do it and we ask that You would give us clear ways to get involved in the work that You are doing, for the sake of Your name and, ultimately, for the sake of Your glory, we pray, Amen.

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