



**Study Guide**  
to accompany the Movie

**A FEATURE FILM ABOUT  
AFRICA, MISSIONS, THE CHURCH,  
AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO REACH THE LOST**

[WWW.DISTANTBOAT.COM](http://WWW.DISTANTBOAT.COM)

## Introduction

The move of God in Africa today, through various ministries, churches, and mission agencies, is indisputable. However, the church of Christ in Africa is facing a great challenge from the rise of Islam. Muslims are working hard to turn Africa into an Islamic continent through the spread of their religion and culture. Many churches are not aware that Islam in Africa is a force to reckon with. Others know it, but they have shelved the idea and trust that a “white missionary” will come some day to reach the Muslims around them. Others are dead silent on the issue, because they fear possible persecution. How long will the church in Africa be silent at the expense of our girls, boys, mothers, and fathers who are already being ensnared by Islamic influences?

The Great Commission in Mathew 28:18-20 includes the Muslims. Unless pastors, Christian leaders, and Christian brothers and sisters embrace the task of reaching out to Muslims, the task remains unfinished and the church in Africa remains weak, and struggling. It is time for the African church to become an agent of change by sending missionaries to their Muslim friends, neighbors, and relatives. If the church does not awaken to the challenge of Islam, in a few years it may be too late to arise and proclaim the gospel message. Africa could easily become a Muslim-dominated continent.

How we can reach Muslims with the gospel in light of the many roadblocks? Because we know there are significant differences between our faith and Islamic beliefs, we need to lift up Jesus Christ in such a way that we draw people *to Him* without repelling them from the Truth.

## The Story of *The Distant Boat*

*The Distant Boat* tells the fictional story of Max, a young urban Kenyan who has it all: a dream job, a best friend, and a girl he hopes to marry. In the midst of a crisis, Max has a radical encounter with a poor Muslim fisherman named Yusef. His people have no church and no Christian witness. After taking time off to visit his family, Max shares with a wise old uncle his heart for Yusef’s people, and in the process, Max realizes that God may be calling him to be a missionary.

But the journey is filled with obstacles. Max must be willing to risk everything—his future, his reputation, and even the love of his life—as he pursues this call. There’s ridicule from his friends, rebuke from his potential in-laws, and disappointment from his family. His church has never known a Kenyan missionary before, and the pastor hardly knows where to begin. For Max, his family, friends, and the church, it is a journey of discovery of what it means to be and send a missionary, and why it is worth the cost.

## Engaging Your Church

The *Distant Boat* is designed to awaken your church to the many people groups around them who do not have access to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The film is a tool for getting your congregation to *re-engage in the Great Commission*. Through quality production and dramatic story-telling, the film has a broad appeal and a compelling message. This movie is intended to draw responses from various age groups including pre-teens, teens, young adults, and adults.

## The Study Guide

This study guide is designed to accompany *The Distant Boat* movie. The goal of the guide is to ensure that after watching, viewers are able to reflect on and engage with the pertinent issues raised in the film. The aim is to draw a response at the deepest levels, both individually and corporately as a church.

## Notes to Group Leaders

As you lead your group—whether it is a Sunday School class, a home group, a mission committee, or a group that has come together at a conference—know that you are leading them through a process of *discovery*. There are many themes about missions that run throughout the story of *The Distant Boat*. Six themes have been selected as points of focus for discussion in this guide, each building upon the previous one.

It is very important that the study questions contained within each lesson be used as conversation starters. As the discussion leader, be sure to allow the group to share their thoughts and opinions freely. Your initial role is to ask questions, encourage conversation, and help them draw conclusions that are in line with the intent of the movie—and ultimately, in line with Scripture itself.

Each lesson references a video clip from the movie that you should watch with your group before discussion begins. The video clips are located on the film’s DVD in the “Study Guide” section. Each lesson is labeled appropriately. A PDF of this Study Guide can be found at [www.distantboat.com](http://www.distantboat.com), and may be freely downloaded and printed as needed.

In each lesson, the questions follow a similar pattern: Observation questions, Interpretation questions, and Application questions.

We trust that you and your group will enjoy this journey of discovery, and that all of you will be impacted by the truths you find within.

## Lesson One

### Who is in the Distant Boat?

*“Don’t laugh at a distant boat being tossed by the waves. Your brother might be in it.”*

#### Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Watch: *Nzomo Proverb* 01:31:40–1:32:40; *Sermon Proverb* 01:44:04–01:45:19

1. What is your understanding of this African proverb quoted by Uncle Nzomo?
2. According to Uncle Nzomo, in this proverb, who is your brother?
3. Who is laughing at a distant boat?
4. What do you think will happen if the boat continues to be “laughed at”?
5. Have you disregarded the unreached? If so, in what ways?
6. In what ways has the Church, overall, disregarded the unreached?
7. Why should we, and our churches, have active concern for the unreached people groups?

What does “**Unreached**” mean?

“An unreached or least-reached people is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize that people group.”

*The Joshua Project, [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net)*



#### Final Thoughts

As Pastor Wambira said, “We tend to love our own.” Yet, the truth is that many tribes and people groups still do not have a Church in their midst. They have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ! And they will not hear it unless we move beyond “loving our own” and begin to “love the world” just as God does.

#### Mission Memory Verse

*And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*  
—John 10:16

#### Mission Quote

*“No one has the right to hear the gospel twice, while there remains someone who has not heard it once.”*  
—Oswald J. Smith

## Lesson Two

# Cultural Differences and Barriers

*“I don’t even want to eat fish!”*

### Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Watch: *Samaki* 00:05:21–00:05:51; *Max and Yusef Meet* 00:13:08–00:18:38

Max’s first meal at the coast was not very appetizing—at least not for him. He is yet to encounter several other religious and cultural barriers during his stay with Yusef’s family. These experiences expose differences, prejudices, and even potential barriers between Max, the family, and others at the coast.

1. What cultural and religious differences did Max encounter while he was at the coast?
2. Identify words, actions, and/or attitudes that express his religious and cultural prejudices.
3. In what ways can culture be a barrier to communication? Describe an instance where you had a misunderstanding with people from another culture.
4. Jesus and Paul were good examples of cross-cultural workers or “missionaries.” What are some of their stories of encounters with different cultures? What are some scriptures that teach us how to perceive and relate to people of different cultures or religions?
5. What types of things can you do to “build bridges” with those of other cultures in order to increase trust rather than prejudice?



### Final Thoughts

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a life-changing message that must reach all people and all tribes. Each tribe, however, has a different culture, which means they hold different assumptions about life, and a different way of seeing and interpreting the world around them. When people who carry different core assumptions try to communicate with each other, they often misunderstand each other and lose their message in the process. Our message—the Gospel—is too valuable to get lost due to cultural misunderstanding. We must make every effort to understand other cultures so that His message enters as truth into those cultures.

### Mission Memory Verse

*And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.*

—Acts 17:26

### Mission Quote

*“Love is the root of missions; sacrifice is the fruit of missions.”*

—Roderick Davis

## Lesson Three

### The Call

*“What about the Great Commission? It doesn’t say sit and wait for disciples. It says go and make them.”*

#### Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Watch: *Grove Scene* 00:19:27–00:21:02; *Flashback* 00:35:45–00:40:58; *Club Dinner* 00:51:58–00:54:04

Through his encounter with Yusef, Max is confronted by the reality of the lost. He suddenly becomes aware of the fact that Yusef’s family and community are cut off from the Gospel. Max responds by questioning what his responsibility is, and he becomes restless. Notice how his focus changes. This single encounter ignites a passion within Max that consumes his whole being, putting into question his whole future.

1. In what way did Max discover that Yusef’s family was separated from the Gospel?
2. How does Max demonstrate his sense of responsibility?
3. Uncle Nzomo observes, “So you’ve been reading your Bible. I mean, *really* reading it.” How is the study of the Bible connected to the call to missions? Read Genesis 12:1-3, Galatians 3:8, and Romans 10:14-15. How do these verses relate to missions?
4. According to Scripture, *who* is called to get involved in reaching the unreached?
5. How will you know if God is calling *you* to get involved through praying, giving, or even going?
6. Does the Church need to be called? Or is it automatically responsible?



#### Final Thoughts

It is important to realize that the whole Body of Christ is responsible to reach the unreached. It is non negotiable. If you read your Bible—and I mean, *really* read your Bible—it becomes very clear. In one way or another, we as the Church must be involved in reaching the unreached people of the world. To actually go, a call from the Lord is very important. You must be convinced in your heart, just as Max was, that it is God who has called you. As a calling develops in an individual, it is important that a church be in a position to identify and affirm that calling, so that the missionary can be sent.

#### Mission Memory Verse

*How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?*

—Romans 10: 14-15

#### Mission Quote

*“Some wish to live within the sound of a chapel bell. I wish to run a rescue mission within a yard of hell.” —C.T. Studd*

## Lesson Four

### The Cost

*“The easy way is not always the right way.”*

#### Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Watch: *Ruth Crying* 00:54:04–00:55:37; *The Easy Way* 01:16:01–01:17:49; *Malombe Dinner* 1:06:23–01:10:05

At first, Ruth seemed comfortable with Max’s questions about responsibility. But when Max suggested that he might want to go back to the coast and plant a church, she responded in fear and uncertainty. Her concerns were genuine. Max’s boss (and Ruth’s father) warned him that he would lose everything.

1. What are some things that Max had to lose to follow his calling?
2. What was his mother afraid of losing?
3. What was Ruth afraid of losing?
4. In the end, *why* were each of them willing to potentially lose everything for the gospel?
5. How would you advise someone like Mary (Max’s mother) or Ruth as they are struggling with the call of someone they love?
6. What encouragement would you offer to a person like Max who will face opposition as a result of the call?
7. What would you be willing to sacrifice in order to accomplish God’s call to make disciples of all nations? What would your church be willing to sacrifice?



#### Final Thoughts

Jesus paid the highest price for the salvation of the world! Who, therefore, will pay the price to get the message of that salvation to all nations? It is simple. The Body of Christ must be willing to pay the price. Is any cost too much for the redemption of the nations?

#### Mission Memory Verse

*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*  
—*Mathew 10:39*

#### Mission Quote

*“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”*  
—*Jim Elliot*

*“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”*  
—*C.T. Studd*



## Lesson Five

### The Role of the Church

*“To be honest, Max, I wouldn’t even know where to begin.”*

#### Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Watch: *Club Dinner* 00:49:48:07–00:51:18; *Pastor Introduces Max* 01:42:23–01:43:44; *Wambira’s Office* 00:42:46–44:34

*“Well, we’re not a wealthy church. And there are many needs right here in our congregation. Quite frankly, too many. Sometimes I don’t know what more I can do. And there are non-Christians right here who need to be reached. There are other organizations and denominations and countries that are better equipped for that. They have resources.”*

1. What were Pastor Wambira’s reasons for why his church could not be more involved? Do you see these as valid reasons?
2. In the restaurant, Max, Ruth, Zipporah, and Tom briefly discuss their understanding of missions. How would you compare the difference in attitude and perspective between the four of them?
3. Truly, what is the Church’s role in sending missionaries?
4. What are the hindrances to engaging in missions and what should the Church do to counter such obstacles?
6. What is your church doing to carry out its mission mandate? What more can your church do to further its involvement?

5. What can you do to enhance mission awareness or involvement in your church?



#### Final Thoughts

The church in Antioch was willing to send the best (Paul and Barnabas) to the nations. We too must be willing to send our best. But, in order to see that happen, we must teach the Word—really teach the Word—to our people. We must expose them to the needs of the unreached. We must lead them to pray for the unreached. We must teach and model giving for the sake of the unreached. If we are faithful in the above, the call to the unreached will begin to well up in the hearts of the people. They will begin to pray, give, and go. And as the Church sends, the Church must be committed to caring for their missionaries as they minister among the unreached. This is the key to the Church finding its role in missions, and making an eternal impact.

#### Mission Memory Verse

*While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

—Acts 13:2-4

#### Mission Quote

*“The mark of a great church is not its seating capacity, but its sending capacity.” —Mike Stachurarun*

## Lesson Six The Commitment

*“We must finish the task.”*

### Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Watch: *Max's Sermon* 01:44:04–01:55:40

God introduced Max to a fisherman and, in so doing, changed Max's way of thinking about people of other cultures and faiths. God used Max to change Pastor Wambira's way of thinking, and to rally the church around his decision to go.

1. What elements in the story show Max's level of commitment?
2. What activities is Max involved in as he prepares to go to the mission field?
3. In the end, were Pastor Wambira and the church committed to missions? What indicators of commitment did you see?
4. What do you think it will take to not only send Max to the mission field but also to support him and his family while they are there?
5. How has God used this movie to change your way of thinking? What is one thing God has impressed on you? What do you need to do first?



### Final Thoughts

Approximately half of the world's people groups are considered “reached”, but it is the easy half. Reaching the remainder will not be a weekend affair, and will not be accomplished through half-hearted efforts. It will require commitment more than any other factor—more than even money. With an unwavering commitment to reach the unreached, and with God's help, we can *finish the task!*

### Mission Memory Verse

*I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*  
—Philippians 4:10-13 (Read through v.18)

### Mission Quote

*“It is the whole business of the whole church to preach the whole gospel to the whole world.” —Charles H. Spurgeon*





## What about you?

Formulate a plan of how you will get involved in the work of missions in your church. Each member of your group can identify their role and how it fits into the work of missions. It could be as a mission's mobilizer, intercessor, encourager, full-time missionary, financial supporter, volunteer, etc.

Think about it. Pray about it.



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