

Perspectives as Worship

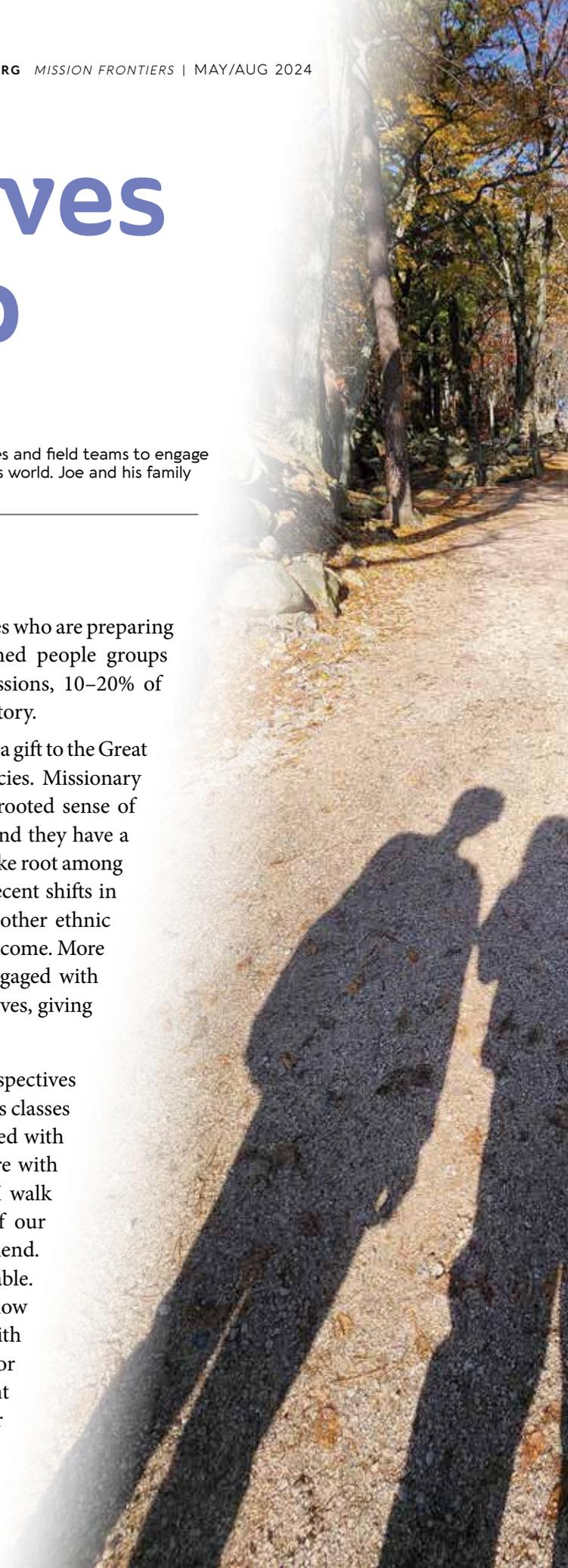
By **JOE GOBER**

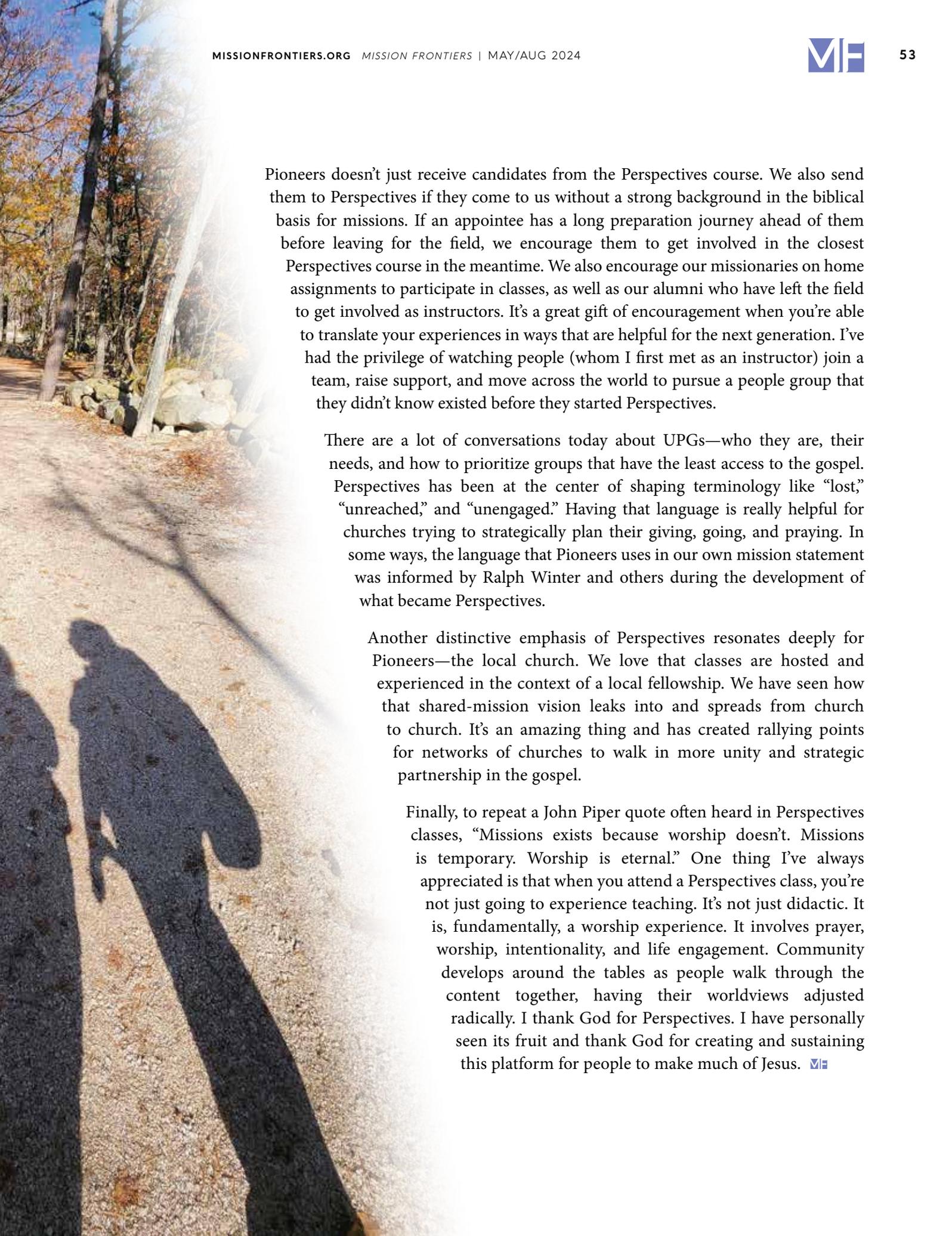
Joe Gober is VP of Global Engagement for Pioneers. He equips churches and field teams to engage unreached people groups and builds partnerships in the global missions world. Joe and his family previously served in Asia South Central.

Every year, Pioneers welcomes 200–250 new missionaries who are preparing for long-term cross-cultural service among unreached people groups (UPGs). When we ask about their journey into missions, 10–20% of them, at a minimum, identify Perspectives as part of their story.

At Pioneers, we have experienced firsthand Perspectives to be a gift to the Great Commission community and particularly to mission agencies. Missionary candidates who take Perspectives have a broad, biblically rooted sense of missions. They have historical examples to look back on. And they have a greater appreciation for the challenges of seeing the gospel take root among UPGs, which helps them develop perseverance and grit. Recent shifts in the curriculum, like encouraging students to engage with other ethnic groups even before they leave home, have been especially welcome. More missionary candidates are coming to us having already engaged with people from other cultures, often at the impetus of Perspectives, giving them greater confidence to step out into global missions.

I still remember many of the lessons I learned in the Perspectives class that I took in 2001 in Little Rock, Arkansas, and various classes I've been part of since then. A dear brother who had worked with nomads for 40 years told our class, "I can drive somewhere with someone and be there in five minutes, but I find that if I walk the road with someone, Jesus becomes a normal part of our conversation." That instructor later became a mentor and a friend. This space to hear from mission practitioners is irreplaceable. Most Christians and most churches do not personally know a missionary and would not know how to engage them with their people. They don't have access to their lives, insight, or wisdom. Perspectives brings wisdom, hard-won in the front lines of kingdom advance, right to the front rows of our churches.





Pioneers doesn't just receive candidates from the Perspectives course. We also send them to Perspectives if they come to us without a strong background in the biblical basis for missions. If an appointee has a long preparation journey ahead of them before leaving for the field, we encourage them to get involved in the closest Perspectives course in the meantime. We also encourage our missionaries on home assignments to participate in classes, as well as our alumni who have left the field to get involved as instructors. It's a great gift of encouragement when you're able to translate your experiences in ways that are helpful for the next generation. I've had the privilege of watching people (whom I first met as an instructor) join a team, raise support, and move across the world to pursue a people group that they didn't know existed before they started Perspectives.

There are a lot of conversations today about UPGs—who they are, their needs, and how to prioritize groups that have the least access to the gospel. Perspectives has been at the center of shaping terminology like “lost,” “unreached,” and “unengaged.” Having that language is really helpful for churches trying to strategically plan their giving, going, and praying. In some ways, the language that Pioneers uses in our own mission statement was informed by Ralph Winter and others during the development of what became Perspectives.

Another distinctive emphasis of Perspectives resonates deeply for Pioneers—the local church. We love that classes are hosted and experienced in the context of a local fellowship. We have seen how that shared-mission vision leaks into and spreads from church to church. It's an amazing thing and has created rallying points for networks of churches to walk in more unity and strategic partnership in the gospel.

Finally, to repeat a John Piper quote often heard in Perspectives classes, “Missions exists because worship doesn't. Missions is temporary. Worship is eternal.” One thing I've always appreciated is that when you attend a Perspectives class, you're not just going to experience teaching. It's not just didactic. It is, fundamentally, a worship experience. It involves prayer, worship, intentionality, and life engagement. Community develops around the tables as people walk through the content together, having their worldviews adjusted radically. I thank God for Perspectives. I have personally seen its fruit and thank God for creating and sustaining this platform for people to make much of Jesus. ❏