

MISSION FRONTIERS™

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HOME

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Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
— Acts 1:8

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God's Grace for There and Back Again

By **DUKE DILLARD**, Editor

Duke Dillard served overseas for 18+ years before settling in Denton, Texas in 2019 with his wife, Laurie, and their seven children. He helps people and organizations become fully who God created them to be. He loves spending time with his wife, children, and grandchildren.

I was called to the mission field, and nothing was going to stop me—not my wife, not two governments, nothing. And then, the call changed. Or maybe it was never there in the first place? Life as a missionary alumnus has brought as many questions as answers.

I “heard” God’s call to the mission field in late 1992. Looking back, part of my hearing involved a deep need to do something that would make me worthy. After getting married in 1995, my wonderful wife wasn’t too keen on leaving America. But eventually, I convinced her, and we moved overseas. It was a bumpy ride full of joy and pain and grief and difficulties and fruit and new life.

Then we got expelled from country number one. Not to be deterred, two years later we moved to country number two. Again, she wasn’t keen; again, my calling won out. Same story, second verse, and then we got expelled again. One year later, we moved to country number three. Similar story, third verse, but this time no expulsion.

Fast forward eight years, and God had done deep work in our character and relationship, but our first child was heading to university, and the tension was high. The time came for marriage counseling. Two years later, with much healing and trust built, we made the decision to return to the States—in three years.

In 2019, after three children had left for university and much work had been done to hand over leadership, we filled a container and moved home for good. The transition was brutal. We moved to a place we had never lived and started going to a wonderful church we barely knew. Our youngest three children (fifth, sixth, and eighth grades) had grown up in Türkiye and now were living in a foreign country (their passport country) away from their friends. Financially, we lost a good chunk of our support and went into debt. I could go on and on, but seven years later, we are grateful for God’s faithfulness in leading and loving us and our kids.

This issue of *MF* focuses on missionaries who have returned to their home country. You’ll read about the struggles, sorrows, joys, and God’s faithfulness through it all. This issue is for **those of you supporting workers** to help you better understand what moving home means. **Agency leaders** and **mission pastors**, please read these articles, share them with your **missions committees**, and take action to plan for those who return. **Missionary alum**, read and see that you are not alone. **On-field workers**, read and consider what you may need to do to prepare.

Many missionaries feel unseen and devalued upon returning to their homeland. Their identity is in transition as much as they are. Missions doesn’t easily translate into their new culture. What can they do? Some want to stay in ministry, some don’t. Some stay committed to a missions focus, some don’t.

For many, this is the hidden cost of missions. Nobody mentions it on the front end; no mobilizers are highlighting the difficulties that will eventually be faced upon returning.

But with all this laid bare, Laurie and I can both say now without reservation that we are thankful for those years, and the authors in this issue express the same sentiment.

So, dive in and experience the other side of missions, as well as our regular columns including a new one.

May all experience God’s deep love wherever they are, Duke Dillard

P.S. You may notice a dearth of authors from outside the US in this issue. I tried to recruit non-American alumni authors, but I failed. So, if you or someone you know is a field alumnus from outside the US, please send me your story, and we will do our best to publish it. Email: editor@missionfrontiers.org.

A New Generation, A New Beginning

By **BRUCE GRAHAM**

Bruce Graham was part of the founding team of the USCWM/Frontier Ventures. He served on staff in Pasadena for 20 years and in India for 12 years.

Reflecting on the early years that led to the development of the US Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures), I think of the seeds—the simple invitations, the vision, the community, and the passion of young people—that God used to spark something far bigger than any of us imagined. I feel so blessed to have been drawn into it at an early age. Its impact continues to shape my life over 50 years later. My hope is that today's younger generation, in whom God is doing a new thing, will catch the vision behind this project, pick up the mantle, and take it further.

An Invitation

I had no idea of the significance of the day when an Indian graduate student came down the hall of the MIT graduate student dorm, knocked on my door, and invited me to Park Street Church in Boston. I had received a full scholarship to MIT to study aeronautics and astronautics with the dream of becoming an astronaut and going to the moon. That student's invitation eventually led to a radically new ambition in life. My dream of a mission to the moon became a mission to people. That led me to Gordon Conwell Seminary, then the Institute of International Studies (known today as the Perspectives Course), which led to transferring to the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary, and joining others in founding the US Center for World Mission. The impact of the Center eventually launched us into mission in India, among the largest blocs of frontier peoples.

Amazingly, a few years ago, that same Indian graduate student called me out of the blue and wanted to know how I was doing. He's followed me all these years. He said he continues to pray for me to this day. What began as a simple invitation to a church launched us, ironically, into the very country he came from. But what were the germinating seeds that led to this new life mission?

Seeds of Calling

During my undergraduate years, I was so inspired by the challenge of difficult pursuits and especially the challenge of going to the moon. I majored in mathematics and aeronautical engineering in pursuit of that dream. During the final months of undergraduate studies, a campus ministry leader invited me to study the Bible and pray with him each morning until graduation. He gave me the *Good News for Modern Man* translation of the Bible, and the scripture came alive for me. I began to experience a whole new motivation growing inside me. He has no idea to this day the impact his invitation had on my life. His last prayer for me before I left for graduate school at MIT was, "Lord, help him find a good church." My Indian friend was God's answer to that prayer.

A Time of Revival

The early years of the 1970s were a time of spiritual revival and renewal in discipleship and evangelism across the United States. Park Street Church's undergrad and graduate student ministries thrived

during those years. The discipleship and expository preaching I received each week at church profoundly marked my life. What I was learning stirred a compelling desire to share my faith. I sought out fellow students to talk about it, and during lunch breaks at Draper Laboratory—where I served as a research assistant—I regularly shared with coworkers what God was doing in my life through Park Street Church.

Every year, the church held a 10-day missions conference. From morning to night, missionaries and mission leaders shared stories of God’s work among the nations. I was deeply moved by what I heard and found myself attending meeting after meeting. The conference concluded with faith-promise pledges, calling the congregation to support the church’s mission program and to consider their own role in God’s global purposes. At the final session, Dr. Paul Toms, our senior pastor, asked, “If you are willing to go anywhere, at any time, for the sake of the gospel, would you stand?” In 1973, compelled by the impact the gospel was having on me, I stood up. From that time on, my focus on going to the moon shifted to people. I was convinced this would have far greater eternal significance. Dr. Toms and Park Street encouraged us (my wife and me) to become missionaries sent by Park Street Church.

Training, Vision, and the Spark of Something Significant



First IIS class—1974

I decided to take a year’s study at Gordon Conwell Seminary following graduation. I wanted to know the Bible more thoroughly. That year, Dr. Ralph Winter was a guest professor, teaching a one-month course

on the World Christian Movement. I joined his class and was deeply impressed by his perspective on mission. He wrote a note on one of my papers inviting me to a program, the Summer Institute of International Studies, that he was creating (1974) on the Wheaton College campus. It was in response to the significant increase in students’ commitments at the Urbana Mission Convention in December 1973.

We were planning for a short-term mission trip to Africa that summer, but Dr. Winter called me several times encouraging us to attend the Institute of International Studies and finally persuaded us. We decided to attend, and Park Street Church supported us financially.

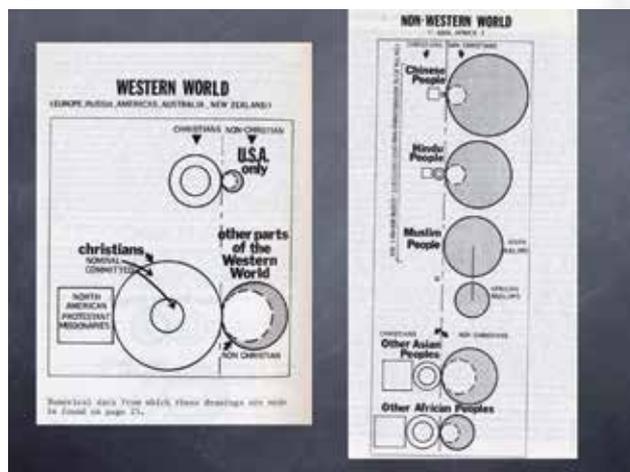
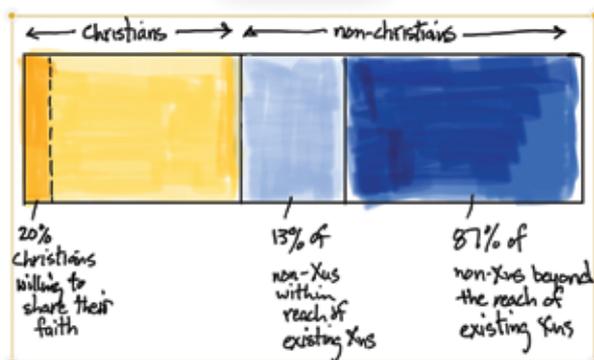
When we arrived at the Wheaton college campus, things seemed a bit unorganized. Dr. Winter was encouraging us to recruit students even after classes began. We became mobilizers! He brought in leading mission professors and experienced missionaries for one-week sessions on the biblical, historical, cultural, and strategic dimensions of world mission. We had classes each morning, studied in the afternoons, and enjoyed informal conversations with the guest teachers in the evenings. Those two months greatly impacted our lives and confirmed God’s call on us.

During that time, Dr. Winter was preparing to give a presentation at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974. As a fellow engineer, he asked me to help with some of the graphics he wanted to use for his presentation. The data and implications behind these graphics were the seed that birthed the US Center for World Mission. They highlighted at that time that *87% of the non-Christian world was beyond the reach of existing Christians*. For them to be reached, people would need to cross barriers of culture and language to reach them. Those facts captured my heart.

Students on Fire

We returned to Park Street Church that fall motivated to share what we had learned and to call others into this vision. We formed a mission-focused small group and taught much of what we had learned over the next year in the church. Dr. Winter was planning for the Institute to be held again the following

summer. We recruited 22 other students from Park Street to attend with us. Students from the first year were encouraged to return for a second module that would be added to the course. That summer of 1975 birthed another step toward the beginnings of the US Center for World Mission.



The rectangle that became a pie chart

A Wild Trip, a Committed Community, and a Growing Dream

Charlie Mellis, a student of Dr. Winter, was director of the program that year. He had recently written a book entitled *Committed Communities: Fresh Streams for World Mission*. It highlighted the significance of mission orders—sodality structures that enable and sustain mission endeavors beyond local fellowships. We learned how young people in previous generations played a significant role in the development of those structures. The student volunteer movement of the late 1800s greatly stimulated our hearts.

During that summer of 1975, Dr. Winter was on sabbatical from his teaching position at the Fuller



Our caravan to Guatemala

School of World Mission. Seeing the enthusiasm of the students the previous year, as well this summer, he organized a cross-cultural mission experience—a trip to Guatemala to visit the places where his family had lived and worked as missionaries. This was a somewhat spur-of-the-moment plan that Dr. Winter came up with. Since we didn't have enough cars for those wanting to go, we went out and bought old used cars to make the trip. We were a caravan of seven clunkers. We drove non-stop from Wheaton, Illinois to Guatemala, eating sandwiches and switching drivers so we didn't have to stop to sleep. Diarrhea hit us in Mexico. We almost got lost (and lost each other—no cell phones!) in turnarounds in Mexico City. We talked a lot about committed communities, about forming a community to pursue the vision capturing Dr. Winter's life. The community would focus on the peoples/nations that were beyond ordinary evangelistic outreach—the 87%. It was a germinating seed reaching a point of sprouting.

A Campus, a Crisis, and God's Timing

In the fall of 1975, the School of World Mission began admitting students without field experience—a decision I believe mirrored what God was awakening among young people across the nation in the early 1970s. With the encouragement of Dr. Winter, Dr. Chuck Kraft, and others, I decided to transfer my credits from Gordon Conwell Seminary and attend the School of World Mission. It would give us opportunity to continue working with Dr. Winter in mobilizing young adults to mission and to rub shoulders with more field-experienced missionaries.



The founding board of USCWM

By now, Dr. Winter was seriously thinking of leaving his position at Fuller to pursue this vision fulltime. This would require a committed community and a place. A campus formerly owned by Pasadena Nazarene College was coming up for sale. Providentially, a Swedish student, Erik Stadell, studying at the School of World Mission at the time, was living near the campus. He learned that the campus was going to be rented to a New Age cult known as Summit Lighthouse, which greatly burdened him. He felt compelled to fast and pray in a little prayer chapel in the middle of the campus until he heard from the Lord regarding the campus. After a week of fasting and prayer, he heard from the Lord. It was to be a *Center for World Mission*. I can still hear him saying this in his Swedish accent! He didn't know yet of Dr. Winter's dreams for a campus.

At that time Dr. Winter decided to leave his position in the School of World Mission and pursue purchasing the campus. He began forming a board of directors. It seemed an impossible pursuit, but the vision was worth the risk.

The Nazarenes, who owned the campus, were facing a predicament. Both Summit Lighthouse and Dr. Winter wanted to buy the campus. Dr. Winter had almost no money, Summit Lighthouse had plenty of money, and the Nazarenes needed money. They didn't want to sell to a New Age cult, but legal constraints required them to be unbiased. Eventually, the Nazarenes agreed to rent to Summit Lighthouse. They were given a major portion of the campus, all but Hudson Taylor Hall, across the street from the main campus. What an impossible situation God was orchestrating in which he would birth a new thing!



The Winter family and early team

The Drama Unfolds—Prayer, Community, and Big Faith

Dr. Winter asked if there might be some place on the campus where he could set up an office. The Nazarenes offered him a room in Hudson Taylor Hall, across the street from the main campus being rented by Summit Lighthouse. We eventually called this room the “morning meeting room.” A few of us joined him in setting up offices there. We set up a few desks of projects Dr. Winter had already started during his years at Fuller. We set up an IIS desk, Fellowship of World Christians desk, and a Fellowship of Artists and Cultural Evangelists desk. Several of us were alumni of the Institute of International Studies.

We had no computers, no big budget, and no prestige—just typewriters, phones, and a deep sense of family and purpose. Every day we met in the morning meeting room to pray, study Scripture, and celebrate the things God was doing in the world.

We eventually began what we called Jericho Marches around the campus for seven weeks. We prayed. We fasted. We consecrated the campus as a Center for World Mission. We sought every possible means to share the vision of what the campus could become for the sake of the 87% non-Christian world. And slowly, miraculously, God began providing what was needed. Eventually, the entire campus became ours to buy. We were given access to all floors in Hudson Taylor Hall. The Nazarene board gave us option to buy, and eventually down payment was made for the whole campus. The dream began to be fulfilled.

William Carey International University was born once we had access to the whole campus.

The Institute of International Studies launched on campus in January of 1978. Dozens of projects were eventually started.

Frontier missions caught fire across the country within churches and agencies with a new focus on these unreached people groups, originally called hidden peoples, now called frontier peoples. The story continues to this day.

Looking Back

God was at work in the early 1970s.

Dr. Winter valued what God was doing among young people. He invited us into his dream. He built structures to help us grow and invite others into. He gave us responsibility. He discipled us in the work. We were a committed community, daily walking in the Word, prayer, and life together as we pursued the dream.

Faith led us—not money, not what was possible. We embraced the vision in faith. As we worked to make

our mission known—simply to keep the campus going—we discovered something deeper. Our true mission was to shine a light on the unreached peoples of the world. The facts and statistics weren't just information; they were a wake-up call. They stirred our hearts, moved us to action, and ignited the same passion in countless others.

Passing the Baton to the Next Generation

And now, five decades later, I'm seeing something familiar—a new stirring among young people across the nation. A new hunger for purpose. A desire for community. A longing for significance that goes beyond career or comfort.

A new day has dawned in pursuit of a long-held dream: To see the gospel firmly planted among every people group and nation where no local fellowship yet exists of that people. Much has been accomplished. Since the 1970s, countless peoples and nations have been reached—but the work is not finished. This remains the heartbeat of Frontier Ventures. To the young people of this generation, as happened to me, I invite you to come, join us, and become part of a story God is still working to fulfill. 

LEARN MORE

Propelled by Hope

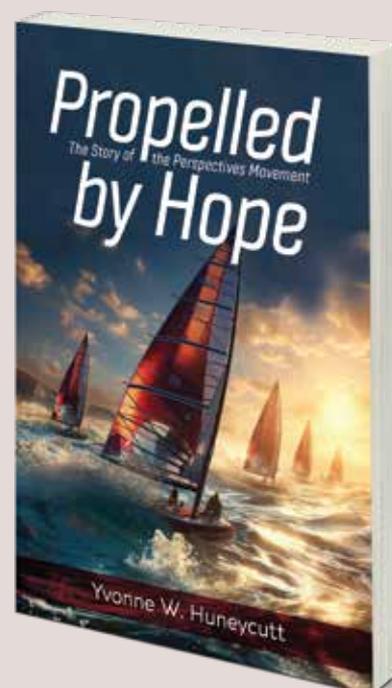
Yvonne W. Huneycutt

The fascinating connection between the Perspectives movement, the frontier mission movement, and church planting movements is a story rarely told yet vital to understanding the spread of the gospel to unreached populations. Yvonne Huneycutt's *Propelled by Hope* unfolds the hidden tapestry of these interconnected movements through sixty personal interviews and inspiring anecdotes.

Discover not just history but a spiritual journey that offers lessons, inspiration, and encouragement for today's believers. Whether you are a mission leader, a student of missiology, or someone seeking to understand God's movement in the world, this book will deepen your insight into the strategies, goals, and personal stories that have shaped modern missions.



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A Letter to the Returning Ones

By JONATHAN TROTTER

Jonathan Trotter (RN, MA, JD, NCC, PLPC) is an author and therapist. He provides pastoral care to missionaries through Team Expansion and professional counseling in Missouri. He is the author of *Digging in the Dirt* and co-author of *Serving Well*. Find more at www.trotters41.com.



WELCOME BACK

Maybe it feels like a glorious homecoming, or maybe it feels like you just had your world yanked out from under you. Maybe you're excited to worship in your heart language again; maybe you're deeply missing the beauty and colors of the global church. Or maybe you're thinking and feeling all these things at the same time. That's normal.

In this short letter, I hope to validate your experience, give some structure for the journey, and uncover a little bit of hope. This letter (and this experience) might get harder before it gets better, but know that it *can* get better. It can get so much better, with post-re-entry growth and joy and immense amounts of gratefulness for God's faithfulness all along the way.

All that being said, re-entry is probably going to be hard. Some of the hard will be expected and you'll feel prepared and equipped for it, but some of the hard may come from unexpected quarters. It might shock you, feeling like body blows to the soul. You'll survive it, but there might be times when you cry. A lot.

My wife cried for a year when COVID upended our lives, and we realized our furlough in the US was morphing into an unexpected repatriation after eight years in Cambodia. We lost everything, or at least that's what it felt like. Our kids didn't get to say goodbye to people or place. Our last week in Cambodia was in self-imposed quarantine, hoping no one would catch a fever before we could catch our flights. Sure, we were grateful to be alive and well when so many people were getting sick and dying all over the world, but we were still hurting. And we still had absolutely no idea what life back in the Midwest was supposed to look like.

To be honest, it felt like a leaden curtain was descending over the entire horizon, blotting out hope and the sun. And oh, how America and the church had changed since we left! It felt like “The End.” Maybe that sounds dramatic, but that’s just because it *felt* dramatic. Feelings often get dramatic in re-entry.

We were in good company. Elisabeth Elliot experienced a hard landing during her re-entry to the States after 12 years in Ecuador. The America she entered was not the America she left, and neither was the church.¹ She floundered, she got angry, she felt pigeonholed and marginalized. She felt like the stories she wanted to tell were not welcome, and the part churches wanted her to play (the “Missionary Hero”) was not really the part she wanted to play. But she found her way, and so can you.

There is hope. Indeed, there is a bright hope strong enough to crack through the crust of transition trauma. But we’ll get to that later.

For now, the pain and disruption of this transition will probably last longer than you’d like. Remember that doesn’t make you or your loved ones weird; it actually makes you all pretty normal. Bruce Feiler, in his book *Life Is in the Transitions*, says that recovery from massive transitions (what he calls “lifequakes”) can take up to five years.

Feiler defines lifequakes as “a forceful burst of change in one’s life that leads to a period of upheaval, transition, and renewal.”² Sometimes lifequakes are chosen (marriage, university, job change), and sometimes they just happen (natural disasters, forced repatriations, an illness). I love the simplicity of how Lev Sviridov (as quoted by Feiler) describes these types of events: He calls them *ampersands*. Sviridov writes, “You enter in one place, go through an elaborate squiggle, then come out in another.”³ That feels about right.

Feiler’s research also suggests that the average person experiences between three and five lifequakes in their

lifetime, implying that the majority of folks are just coming out of a lifequake, are currently in one, or are about to experience one. So then, what can we do during a lifequake—or during a re-entry—to mitigate the pain? To grow? Or at least to not die?

Here are a few ideas for the road of re-entry:

Be Gentle

Allow yourself to mourn and grieve and weep. Allow family members to experience things differently than you do. Embrace lament when you need it. Many people find that re-entering their passport culture after years abroad is harder than their initial move, so be gentle with yourself, your family, and your “new” culture. Rest when you need it.

If at all possible, give yourself time to settle and even enjoy your new place. Do the things tourists would do in your new/old town. There will be a lot of work to do, but it might not all need to be done right now. Slow down where you can, be gentle, and give yourself permission to ease back into things.

Stay Curious

Curiosity activates the frontal lobe of our brain, keeping rational thought and executive function online. These are good things, and during the hard emotional seasons of re-entry, we really do need to integrate as much frontal lobe activity as possible. Additionally, curiosity keeps our minds and hearts open to new things and new people. What is God up to? Who might I meet in this season that could become a good friend? Where am I seeing God’s mercy in this season? Where am I seeing beauty, even here? What opportunities might be opening up to me or my family?

It is hard to be curious and judgmental at the same time, and many returning workers find that harsh judgmentalism is always right around the corner. We need to allow ourselves to grieve, and the grieving process often includes anger. We need to allow ourselves and our families to feel the sting of these losses. We also need to remember that becoming highly critical, cynical, and judgmental will not lead to peace and growth and healing.

1 Vaughn, Ellen. *Being Elisabeth Elliot* (Brentwood: B&H Publishing, 2023).

2 Feiler, Bruce. *Life Is in the Transitions* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020), 79.

3 Ibid, 79.

Use the Cross-Cultural Skills You Already Have

When you arrived on the field, you knew that you did not know much. You got curious, you asked questions, you looked for a language and culture mentor, you walked in the markets. You can use those exact skills now.

Things have changed while you've been away and so have you. You may feel like a hidden immigrant in your passport culture: It looks like you belong, and you can speak without an accent, but something deep inside of you doesn't seem to fit. This is normal.

Remember, you have a whole host of cross-cultural skills that are extremely valuable right now. Use them. As a trainer said in our pre-field prep many years ago, "We often see strange cultural norms as abnormal, unnatural, wrong, and bad. We need to see them simply as different." It is helpful to remember that there are parts of every culture that are beautiful and good and even holy, just as there are parts of every culture that are dark and damaging and dishonoring to people and God.

Be Prepared for Some People to Care More Than Others

Some people will want the whole story, and they will set aside hours to sit with you, listen to you, and really hear you. Those folks will want the extended version of the film, along with the actors' and director's commentary. But some people will just want the movie-trailer version of your story, or even just the movie poster.

It can be helpful to have these different levels planned out before you start visiting churches or seeing family. I recommend having a three-second version (movie poster), a three-minute version (movie trailer), a 30-minute version (the movie), and a three-hour version (extended edition with commentary). By trying to be discerning about who wants what version, you can avoid the glazed-eye stare of the folks who are not really interested in the whole story, while focusing your time and energy on the folks who really want it all.

Sometimes, who wants what version might surprise you. And sometimes, a person sees the poster or the trailer and then decides they might actually be interested in the full film and/or the director's cut with commentary! This all takes heaps of grace, but it is worth it.

Access Resources

We live in a day and age teeming with re-entry resources. We've got access to articles, books, conferences, retreats, counseling, and so on. The options can be overwhelming, so here are just a few that might be helpful along the way:

- Books:
 - *Returning Well*, by Melissa Chaplin
 - *Life Is in the Transitions*, by Bruce Feiler
 - *Navigating the Re-entry Journey: Trauma-Informed Care for Global Workers in Transition*, by Shonna Ingram
- In-person group debriefing:
 - TRAIN International: www.traininternational.org
 - Mission Training International: www.mti.org/dar
 - Alongside: www.alongsidecares.net
- Articles:
 - "Leaving and Arriving Well – what to do when your time comes," by Jonathan Trotter: www.alifeoverseas.com/leaving-and-arriving-well-what-to-do-when-your-time-comes
 - "An Open Letter to Returning Workers and Their Support Networks," by Shonna Ingram: www.alifeoverseas.com/an-open-letter-to-returning-workers-and-their-support-networks
- Online "Re-entry Retreat" by Velvet Ashes: www.grow.velvetashes.com/shop/reentry-retreat
- Counseling:
 - Don't be afraid to reach out for professional help. If your emotions feel overwhelming and your level of functioning drops for more

than a couple of weeks, or if you start having suicidal thoughts, please reach out for local clinical help. *Psychology Today's* listing of clinicians can be a good place to start: www.psychologytoday.com/us. Outside of the US, visit www.valeo.global.

Don't Forget Hope

It's been nearly six years since we left, and boy has it been a trip. I went back to school to become a counselor, my wife started an editing business, three of our kids started college, and we've all found some amazing community. It didn't happen overnight, but it happened. We resettled and we're so incredibly grateful.

We lost some things along the way, to be sure; at the same time, we gained so much. This is the paradox of it all. We have tasted the Lord's goodness in multiple

countries now, and we know in our gut that he is faithful to his people no matter what continent they wake up on. His plans are sure and our future is secure, and that security is based not on our geography but on our God. We've been there and back again, and the steadfast love of the Lord still endures. His mercies are still new every morning, and his faithfulness still lasts for generations.

As I wrap up this letter to you, the returning one, I would like to offer an Arrival Benediction.⁴ This is my heart for you as you traverse this wild and unruly land we call re-entry. May the love and peace of the Father be upon you and yours.

⁴ Jonathan Trotter, "Leaving (and Arriving) Well—what to do when your time comes," *A Life Overseas*, October 4, 2017, www.alifeoverseas.com/leaving-and-arriving-well-what-to-do-when-your-time-comes

An Arrival Benediction

Here's my prayer for you, a prayer for the middle spaces:

May you arrive more whole than when you departed,
though the intervening time may have been splintering and hard.

May you arrive with more hope than when you left,
though you've been in hopeless situations more often than you thought possible.

Perhaps you'll arrive empty but may those you've left behind (there and here),
fill you with the love of the Father, aged and distilled through time and perhaps darkness.

May you arrive with peace, knowing in your gut that he is Good, that he is Faithful,
and that he isn't finished with you (or with them).

May you find rest, safe in the arms of love, behind the Captain of the Lord of Hosts, your Healer.

And may you hear him ask you the same questions he asked a confused and lonely and traveling Hagar, "Where have you come from?" and "Where are you going?" At the end of the day, may you proclaim along with Hagar, "You are the God who sees me."

And after your arrival,

May you keep your eyes fixed on the horizon,

Awaiting the day of all days,

When the sky will split,

The darkness flee, and

he will, finally and irrevocably,

Arrive. 

Rerouted and Reaffirmed

By **STEVE RICHARDSON** and **MAXINE MCDONALD** (Pseudonym) | This article is adapted from *Items May Have Shifted: When Missionaries Get Rerouted* (Pioneers-USA, 2023).

Steve Richardson was raised in Indonesia, where his parents took the gospel to a jungle tribe. He now serves as president of Pioneers-USA. Over 400 Pioneers teams impact around 450 people groups worldwide. Steve can be reached through Pioneers.org.

Maxine McDonald has had the privilege of participating in global missions in five countries. She now writes and edits books for adults and children. Maxine can be reached through booksbymaxine.com.

Have you ever asked God to use you, thinking you knew what that would look like, and then had him do something completely unexpected? When that happens, it's easy to get disoriented or disillusioned.

Because global missions—making disciples of all the peoples of the world—is such a vast and complex task, we sometimes assume *faithful missionaries are the ones who go and stay for the rest of their lives*. Longevity remains an appropriate goal in many contexts, but God is now moving his workforce around the globe with increasing frequency. It's becoming somewhat rare for a missionary to spend a lifetime in just one location.

The Bible is full of examples of displaced people and unexpected transitions. Think of Abraham, Jonah, Daniel, and the Apostle Paul. Joseph was relocated by force. Moses spent 40 years in the desert of Midian learning his way around in preparation for what we now consider a far more fruitful season of ministry leading the people of Israel out of slavery. And think about how devastated the disciples must have been to see Jesus crucified! From their perspective, God's plan to provide a Messiah had been shattered irreparably. But then God revealed that apparent defeat was an essential part of his greatest victory. Throughout history, mobility and surprise have been built into his redemptive plans. God's people have always been on the move.



All or Nothing

When David Moore met Ashley during their first year of college, he told her right off the bat, “I’ve wanted to be a missionary since I was 12.” He had promised the Lord, “I’ll go wherever you ask me to.” David meant he’d do what missionaries in biographies did—move to the ends of the earth, endure trials, and see multitudes saved. He and Ashley graduated, married, welcomed their first baby, and began preparing for the field. To gain experience connecting with Muslims, they volunteered with a ministry reaching out to East African immigrant families through tutoring programs. While David and Ashley enjoyed their stateside ministry, their eyes were firmly fixed on Southeast Asia. They were determined to be one of those missionary families who went to the field, loved it, and stayed forever.

I just want to go back to America where our house never leaked.

When they arrived in Southeast Asia, Ashley and David faced all the common challenges of starting life over in a new world: language learning, culture shock, and the need to build new relationship networks. During their first rainy season, a roof leak migrated through their house from room to room, dripping from corners and light fixtures and occasionally reducing Ashley to a literal puddle on the floor, crying, “I just want to go back to America where our house never leaked.” However, they both made steady progress in language and culture acquisition and mostly enjoyed the process. Gradually, their lives settled into a rhythm.

As the Moores finished full-time language study, they shifted their focus toward catalyzing house churches among their focus people group. Every week, David and a local believer went to public places to search for spiritually open people. On a few occasions, their outings were marred by what David considered spiritual warfare. His fingers would tingle and then go numb one by one. Or he would see a black blob over the words in the center of his vision as he read Scripture. Medical friends suggested he was having migraines.

One evening, David and a local partner met an elderly man with a history of sorcery, black magic, and violence. Their simple conversation developed into a year-long Bible study from Genesis through the Gospels. The old man began to confess his faith in Jesus in his prayers: “I know you are the Son of God. I know you can forgive my sins. I know you died and rose again.” Watching his transformation crystallized David and Ashley’s ministry vision. They looked forward to investing many years in that type of relationship.

All for Nothing?

At the end of an intense first term, David and Ashley prepared for a home assignment to visit supporters and give birth to another baby. After three years of often thinking, *I can’t wait to go home*, Ashley now found herself crying over the idea of leaving Asia. They had established a life and ministry they enjoyed. They had deep friendships and a home that felt like a sanctuary. “I want to go home,” Ashley told David, “but I don’t want to go home because this is home.”

When the Moores landed in the US, David’s mom pestered him to see a neurologist about his occasional vision loss and numbness. To humor what he considered her hyper-vigilance, he agreed. The Moores were so confident it was just migraines that Ashley didn’t go to the appointment. David remembers staring at his MRI results in the neurologist’s office, thinking, *That glowing white blob on one side of my brain doesn’t seem like something that’s on a normal person’s brain*. The doctor assured him, “If you’re going to have a brain tumor, you’ve won the lottery with this one. We should be able to take it out without causing any cognitive deficit.”

While the diagnosis was a shock, David saw it as just one more obstacle to overcome. In his words, “My mindset in encountering obstacles was that you beat them.” He admits that some of that attitude stemmed from pride. When the doctor estimated it would take a year to recover from surgery, David mentally cut that in half. Ashley, however, felt utterly overwhelmed and angry at God. “I just finally decided Southeast Asia is home,” she prayed, “and now this is happening. Why did you even bring us there?”

Distortion and Direction

A few months later, David woke up from surgery with severe double vision that baffled his doctors, since the procedure had gone perfectly. Navigating a distorted view of the world took a huge amount of energy. In January, when the Moores had hoped to be on their way back to Southeast Asia, David was still sleeping 16 hours a day and struggling to function. While his vision eventually improved, other challenges lingered.

Once it became clear that the Moores' return to the field would be delayed, David signed up for an online ESL certification class which would make it easier for him to get a long-term visa. The class included an in-person student-teaching experience. Even though he was only a few months post-op, David wasn't concerned since he was a teacher by profession. But during the course, he spent nine hours preparing for each lesson and failed every one of them. He simply couldn't process and communicate the material.

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David was shocked to discover he wasn't functioning normally. Ashley was not. Ever since the surgery, she had been telling David he was different. "You're so insensitive," she insisted, "You're not showing any empathy at all." David responded with anger. He had always been analytical rather than emotional. That was nothing new. He couldn't cope with Ashley's grief and what felt like unfair accusations. "We couldn't wade those waters by ourselves," David and Ashley realized, so they started intensive marriage counseling. After the ESL teaching disaster, David accepted that his brain surgery had left him with a significant cognitive deficit. That realization, while painful, allowed him to communicate more openly with Ashley. "You're right," he admitted, "I'm not the same person anymore."

For the next two years, the Moores moved their departure back in three-to six-month increments while David worked as a substitute teacher to build his mental stamina. Their oldest daughter's most common bedtime prayer was still, "God, help us go back to Asia as soon as possible." But they couldn't live indefinitely with one foot on each side of the ocean. It was time to make a decision about returning.

Over a Zoom call, the Moores' pastor and sending organization told David and Ashley they were not in support of them going back to Southeast Asia for the foreseeable future. The Moores gradually came to own that decision and receive it as godly wisdom. They asked themselves, *Could God actually care more about molding us to become more like his Son than he cares about our overseas ministry?* Ashley felt grief mixed with relief. She wanted to go back to the field, but it also seemed overwhelming. After the relief came panic. *How are we going to survive?* Ashley is a planner, and they had no plan.



God Gets to Choose

To both David and Ashley's relief, the uncertainty didn't last long. A few months earlier, David's childhood missions pastor had mentioned, "If you need a job here, let me know." It turned out that he was now overseeing the tutoring ministry for East Africans that the Moores had volunteered with nearly 10 years earlier, which hired David immediately. The Lord had been laying the foundation for the next chapter of the Moores' ministry for almost a decade. He hadn't responded as they hoped to their prayers to return to Southeast Asia, but David and Ashley felt him assuring them, *I'm still here.*

One of the hardest things about not returning was the feeling that they were letting down their national partners. But over the next 18 months, the Moores' ministry partners in Southeast Asia reported a wave of baptisms and multiplying house churches. "It gave us a lot of peace," David remembers, "feeling like the work was moving on without us."

David's experience working shoulder-to-shoulder with believers in Southeast Asia has forever changed his approach to ministry. When he interacts with the East Africans he serves, he sees himself as a coworker and a learner, not an expert. "I was willing to get on a plane and move somewhere I could do impressive things," he says. "But am I willing to stay here and let Jesus put my self-righteousness to death?"

For Ashley, her experience overseas impacts her relationships with people who are crossing cultural barriers. One East African mother opened up once she realized Ashley had also lived internationally with children. When the family later decided to leave the US and move to North Africa, she flooded Ashley with questions: "How do you know what to pack? Where do you buy a power adaptor?" And once they landed in their new home, her first text read, "The language barrier is hard. I know you know what that feels like."

David and Ashley are still committed to the Great Commission, but David has a different perspective now about his part in it. He has come to accept, and even find comfort in the fact that, as he puts it, "God gets to choose how he uses me to bring himself the most glory."

People on the Move

When I reflect on David and Ashley's story, and many others like it, I find it reassuring that God not only allows us to bear fruit in each season of ministry but simultaneously prepares us for future stages of fruitfulness in other settings. Nothing is wasted as we prayerfully seek him, even—and maybe especially—in situations beyond our control. I believe that a certain recognition, and perhaps honor, is due to missionaries who have paid a price to establish a life and ministry in one setting and then are willing to start over, whether in their home country or abroad, when circumstances require it. Let's remember that as God's people, we are called to a flexible, responsive faithfulness, tenaciously clinging to the God of the unexpected. 



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From Attrition to Stewardship

Why Mission Agencies Must Invest in Alumni

By **JACOB ANDERSON** (Pseudonym)

Jacob Anderson serves as director of the Pioneers Alumni Network, cultivating meaningful connections with Pioneers alumni for encouragement and ongoing kingdom engagement. He and his wife, Heidi, served 14 years in Central Asia.

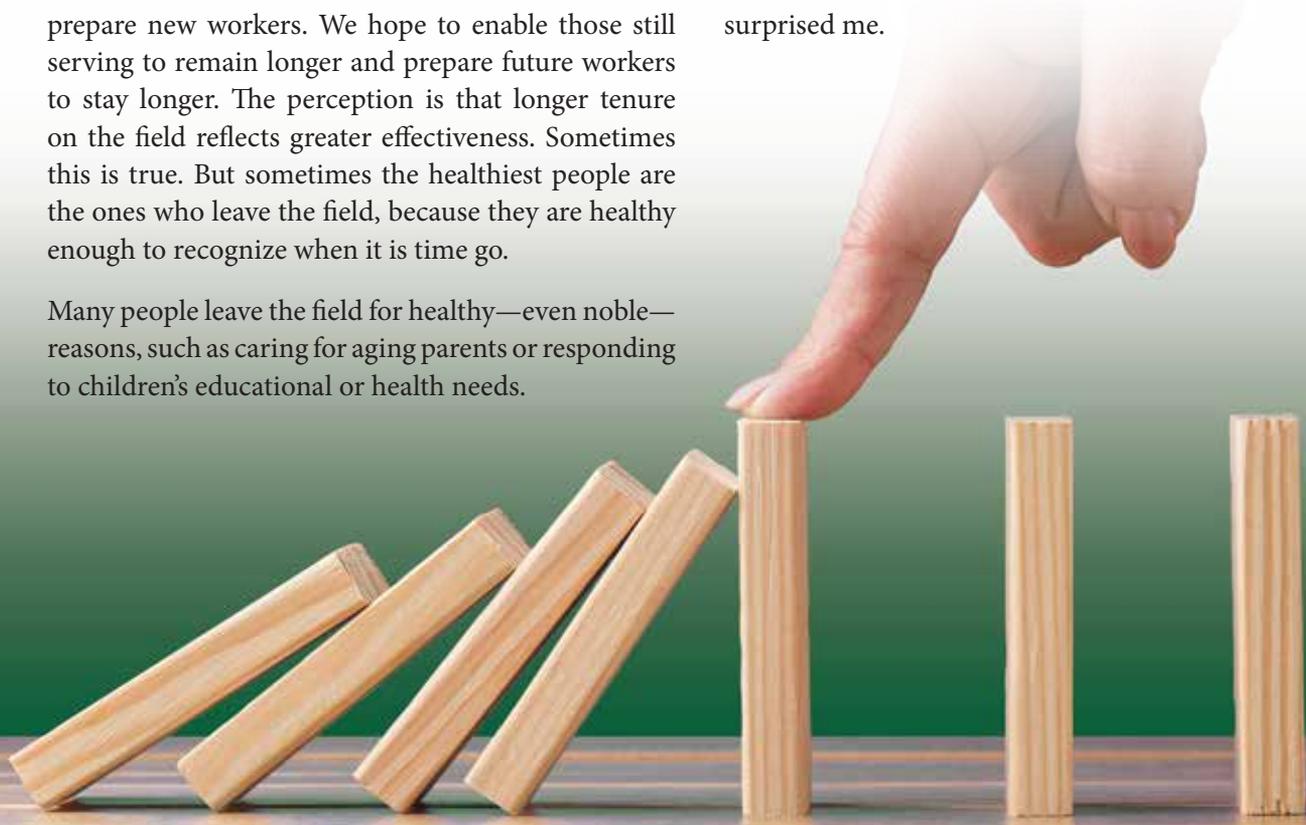
We want to prevent attrition in field workers and help people stay on the field longer. When mission leaders see a trend of increasing numbers of people leaving the field, we all want to address it. This instinct is good and understandable. It grows out of a desire to honor calling, care for people, and steward limited resources well.

Mission organizations often respond by providing additional resources and training for those currently on the field. We also do research to inform how we prepare new workers. We hope to enable those still serving to remain longer and prepare future workers to stay longer. The perception is that longer tenure on the field reflects greater effectiveness. Sometimes this is true. But sometimes the healthiest people are the ones who leave the field, because they are healthy enough to recognize when it is time go.

Many people leave the field for healthy—even noble—reasons, such as caring for aging parents or responding to children’s educational or health needs.

The tragedy is that they can feel sidelined or even like failures. No one intends to communicate this. Still, it can be an unintended consequence of our legitimate desire to keep people on the field longer.

I am not a statistician, and my observations are more anecdotal than formal research. However, because of my role, I have had the privilege of walking closely with many former field workers who have resigned from our organization and entered what we now call the Alumni Network. What I have observed has surprised me.



Among the alumni I interact with, the top reasons for returning from the field are issues related to children (education or health), caring for aging parents, and the workers' own health. I fully expected team conflict to top the list. While team conflict was almost always present in conversations with alumni, it was rarely the primary reason they left the field or the organization.

Among the alumni I interact with, the top reasons for returning from the field are issues related to children (education or health), caring for aging parents, and the workers' own health.

I have also observed there is almost always a two-to-three-year re-entry window after returning to the United States. This should not surprise us. Even moving within one's own country often takes years to settle—new neighborhoods, new rhythms, new relationships. What is striking is how consistently this transition from overseas service back “home” touches deep questions of identity and calling. I cannot help but wonder whether the way we talk about attrition contributes to this experience.

When we speak about preventing attrition, our intention is usually to help people remain faithful to the calling that first led them to join our organizations. As a result, length of time on the field becomes a primary metric of success—for individuals and for organizations. This can be a good thing. It can encourage resilience, a ministry of presence, and a well-formed theology of suffering. But I also wonder whether this same metric unintentionally shapes behavior by discouraging honest conversations, delaying healthy returns, and increasing shame for those who do come back.

We absolutely need to continue working at reducing preventable attrition through careful screening, strong preparation, and meaningful care for those on the field. But we should also be able to say clearly—and demonstrate through our posture—that returning at the right time can be an expression of faithfulness, not failure.

This tension becomes especially apparent when we consider care versus engagement. Many returning workers genuinely need rest. Some return burned out, disoriented, or wounded by circumstances beyond their control. In those cases, space and care are essential. At the same time, others return healthy but unsettled—eager to contribute, longing for meaningful connection, and unsure where they fit. When our default posture toward all returning workers is “take a break,” we may unintentionally communicate they no longer have anything to offer.

Offering invitation without pressure is not easy, but it is necessary. Care and engagement are not mutually exclusive. In fact, for some alumni, meaningful engagement is itself a form of care.

I once experienced this in an unexpected way. During a follow-up call with a retired alumna in her late eighties, I asked her about when she first went overseas. She told me remarkable stories—about boarding a ship in New York Harbor and traveling for weeks to reach her place of service. When I asked if she would mind if I recorded her story, she paused and said something like, “I don't know why anyone would want to hear my old story, but I suppose that would be okay.” I was genuinely shocked.

Later, I shared this idea casually at a breakfast I had organized for college students interested in missions. I assumed they would be most eager to hear about current opportunities in the Middle East. To my surprise, many of them were more interested in helping collect and preserve stories like hers. They were hungry for continuity, for witnesses who could help them locate themselves within a larger story of faithfulness.

Alumni are not merely people we care for when they return. They are carriers of wisdom, memory, and formation the next generation deeply needs.

That experience clarified something for me. Alumni are not merely people we care for when they return. They are carriers of wisdom, memory, and formation the next generation deeply needs.

It costs a great deal to send someone overseas, especially in the traditional way. Estimates vary, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that sending and sustaining a first-term worker costs on the order of \$250,000 when training, housing, travel, and ongoing living expenses are considered. Over multiple terms, workers develop skills, insights, and perspectives that cannot be replicated through training alone.

In business, sunk costs are expenses already incurred that cannot be recovered regardless of future decisions. Too often, when former field workers return and leave our organizations, we implicitly treat the resources invested in them as sunk costs. But people are not sunk costs. What would change if we viewed those investments as assets to be stewarded rather than losses to be written off?



Another difficult reality organizations sometimes face is the blessing—and challenge—of long-term, capable leadership. Stability matters, and transitions are stressful. Yet sometimes people remain in roles because they can, not because they should. Seniority and longevity can unintentionally delay necessary transitions limiting the development of younger leaders. Ending one chapter well can itself be an act of faithfulness and a gift to the wider body.

Of course, resources are limited. Most leaders would agree that caring for teams currently facing crisis on the field should be a priority. The question is not whether to care for those teams, but whether caring for them requires forgetting alumni. In my experience, it does not.

Practically speaking, agencies can begin investing in alumni in three areas: communication, posture, and systems.

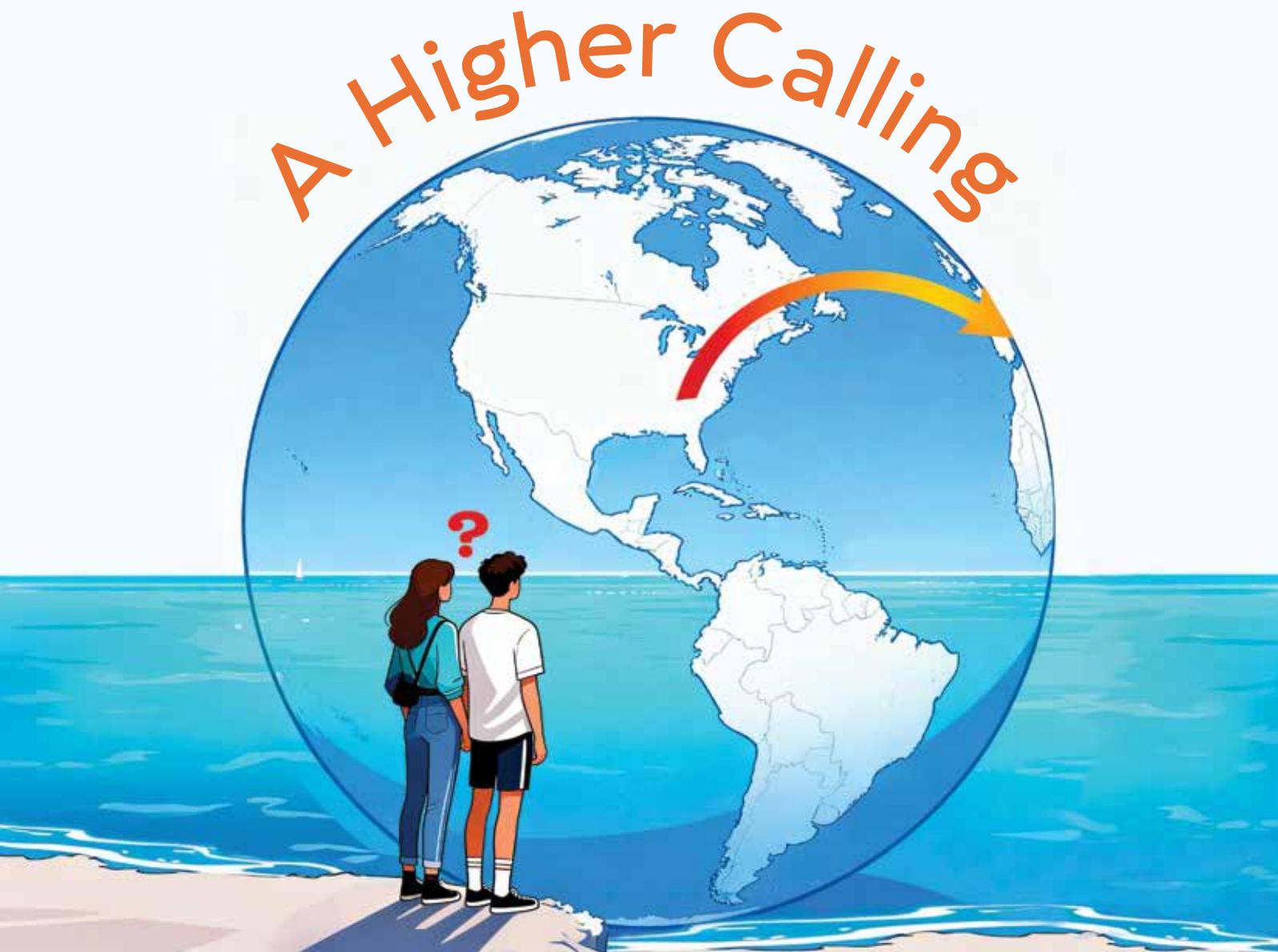
Communication matters more than we often realize. Even small gestures—an email, a text, a birthday card—can reinforce a sense of connection.

Communication matters more than we often realize. Even small gestures—an email, a text, a birthday card—can reinforce a sense of connection. Do not expect immediate responses. The first years back are often overwhelming, and messages may go unanswered. Consistent, low-pressure communication builds trust over time.

Posture matters as well. Taking time in meetings to pray for former workers, or intentionally speaking of them with honor, communicates their service is remembered and valued. This posture also shapes the culture of current teams.

Finally, a few simple systems can make alumni care sustainable. Maintaining updated contact information, creating regular rhythms of prayer, or facilitating alumni connections can go a long way.

In the long run, investing in alumni makes sense strategically. But beyond strategy, it is simply the right thing to do. As Mark Twain once said, “Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.” 🏠



By **LIZA MASON** (Pseudonym)

Liza Mason is a mother and homeschooler of four curious and creative children. Her husband is a former engineer turned entrepreneur who is now in IT management. They live in Arizona with their dog, Bandit.

Twenty-Two Years in a Paragraph

In 2004, six months into our marriage, my husband heard God's call to leave his engineering job and do business as mission overseas. We had been praying for the Middle East with a group at church, and one of the leaders asked us to consider moving to Türkiye with him and his family. Three years later, following intense training and a lot of fanfare, we were on a plane headed for our new home. Life and ministry in Türkiye didn't look anything like I expected, but I muddled through for nearly eight years, working, learning the language,

and raising our first two kids. Then, in 2015, we decided to move back to America. We've now been back for 11 years. But to understand where we are now, I need to take you back to the beginning.

God Pulls a Fast One

My own relationship with cross-cultural work is long and complicated. I was raised on the mission field by church planters. I absolutely loved my childhood, and any sacrifices that came with missionary kid (MK) life

were far outweighed by the benefits of being exposed to so many amazing people, places, and experiences.

In college, being a Third Culture Kid (TCK) was my core identity. Everyone knew I had grown up overseas—I made sure of it. I was proud of my unique upbringing (thanks, Mom and Dad, but I'll take the credit for that). People often asked me if I planned to go into missions. The adventurer in me was drawn to the possibility that God might one day call me into the “family business,” but the reality was that I didn't know what I wanted. I was ruled by a deep-seated obsession to please others and win their approval. However, I knew firsthand that a life in missions would require me to sacrifice my comfort and control. I wasn't ready to say yes to that. Deep down, I resented God's claim on my life and was terrified of what he might demand of me. In short, I didn't trust him or his ways.

So, I hedged my bets and made a bargain with God. I told him that if he called me into missions, he absolutely, under no circumstances, could send me to a Muslim country. Those people were weird and they scared me. This arrangement gave me a sense of control, and I felt like it was a fair compromise.

Life quickly unraveled out of my control when my husband, who said he would never to go into missions when we were dating, began talking about moving to Türkiye, a Muslim-majority country! I felt like God had pulled a fast one on me. I could have said no, but that felt silly. Was I really going to be a Jonah and run away from God? Besides, the people-pleasing praise addict in me basked in all the positive attention and accolades that came as part of the deal. On top of that, I had been conditioned all my life to believe that missions is a higher calling, the highest, really. So, despite my fear and hesitation, the TCK in me rose to the challenge. I could handle this. If God was calling us, he would make it all work out and I would come to love this country I had zero desire to live in.

The Struggle Is Real

I'm still surprised by my naïveté those first years in Türkiye. I never expected to feel so foreign in a foreign country. Everything was hard and humbling. While my husband was embracing the culture and thriving

in his MBA program, I was homesick, lonely, and depressed. I plowed on, but my refusal to be honest and admit that I was struggling only made it worse.

My pride took a big hit as I labored to learn Turkish. I was humiliated by my growing inventory of cultural faux pas. In short, I was disappointed by my performance. I expected to fall in love with the people and culture. Once again, I bargained with God: *Fine, you brought me to a Muslim country, but you must make it comfortable and enjoyable at some point.* He never agreed to this, of course, and it finally dawned on me one day that I wanted to love Turks in my own strength. God wanted me to love them in *his*. I didn't know how to do this. I did, however, come to terms with the reality that I would not appreciate this country the way I expected, the way so many other foreigners seemed able to do. But ultimately, this is not what God was asking of me. He was after my obedience and a deeper dependence on him, not a superficial enjoyment of my circumstances.

We had lost the missional purpose and focus that guided us. Everything we did in Türkiye, even the most mundane tasks, felt more intentional because it was all reinforced by our reason for being there: to live out and share the gospel. Nothing about America felt intentional. It was a default location.

There were, of course, beautifully redeeming qualities of our life there: Diving into the rich culture and history of such a unique region of the world, learning a foreign language, building sweet friendships with Turks and other like-minded workers, overcoming my fear and suspicion of Muslims and seeing them as people. One of the most impactful aspects was our team life. Our family has never had such close-knit and vulnerable community as we did there. The teams we were part of truly lived out the gospel sacrificially, practiced peacemaking, and brimmed with godly wisdom. Doing life with them was a privilege that would change us and our understanding of the Body of Christ forever.

Leaving Behind More Than Furniture

After nearly eight years in Türkiye and all the varied experiences it afforded us, God made it clear to my husband that it was time to return to America. We sold our stuff, packed our bags and said our good-byes. I was a little sad but mostly relieved and so excited to go home. The struggle was over. I could raise our kids around family. I could shed my foreignness. I could be comfortable again. How naïve I was. I would soon discover how inextricably Türkiye had woven its way into our core identity.

As my husband began the arduous and stressful process of trying to re-enter the corporate workforce of America, I got us settled in our home and prepared to have our third child. We were normal, average Americans working and raising kids. On one hand, we embraced the anonymity, relieved to be out of the “fishbowl” where our lives felt on display to friends, neighbors, and even supporters. But it didn’t take long to see that life in America was disorienting on every level.

We had lost the missional purpose and focus that guided us. Everything we did in Türkiye, even the most mundane tasks, felt more intentional because it was all reinforced by our reason for being there: to live out and share the gospel. Nothing about America felt intentional. It was a default location.

Ok then, we would just double down and determine to live intentionally here. We would simply find a new purpose, a new ministry to throw ourselves into. There was no shortage of options. We sought God out for a new calling, anything to fill the void. But he didn’t call us to anything new. He wouldn’t fill the void.

It would take years to unravel all of this, but I believe God was doing a beautiful stripping work in us. He was taking away what we had come to depend on for our identity and worth. He wanted us to understand that simply being his children is enough; abiding in his presence is a worthy calling. The highest calling, really. I began to see God not as a utilitarian deity that demands more and more of his subjects (like forcing them to move to places they don’t want to go), but as a loving, faithful father who chooses to lead his children

through deserts to grow their faith and dependence on him. My relationship with God slowly became less transactional and more personal. I stopped bargaining and started believing that he was worthy of my trust.

By not replacing Türkiye with another calling, God was teaching us that ministry is not the goal-oriented, results-driven work we assumed it needed to be. God’s calling is not about where I am or what I do. It’s a moment-by-moment practice of laying down my life and surrendering to his will, whether that’s making dinner, changing a diaper, or having tea with a neighbor. Life is naturally supernatural and every part of it—mundane or magnificent—is consecrated by him and to him.

By not replacing Türkiye with another calling, God was teaching us that ministry is not the goal-oriented, results-driven work we assumed it needed to be. God’s calling is not about where I am or what I do.

After 11 years of life in America, we are still grasping what it means to be missional in our average, ordinary lives. We are slowly learning how to cultivate a relationship with Jesus that is less about *doing* and more about *being*. It will take the rest of our lives, and that’s something I will happily give him. He is trustworthy. 



Always Invitation

By **JACQUELINE SCOTT** | All Scripture references from the NASB.

Dan & Jackie Scott have led teams in Bolivia (1986), and Central Asia (1994), in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's disillusionment, opening doors to the unreached. They have four married adult children and nine grandchildren. A SYMBIS facilitator, PCC credential through ICF, and a La Rucher debriefer, Jackie is the author of *Your Life is Re-markable* and *Beauty in the Broken*. jackiemscott59@gmail.com



Dayenu

If all He did was invite me to Himself. To new life, freedom, forgiveness, and joy, *Dayenu*.

If He then ushered me into His community—caring, quirky, and honest—*Dayenu*.

If He called me, noticed me, gifted me, and honored me with a call to join His reaching work—*Dayenu*.

If His call to me only involved deep soul preparation, stripping, refining, sharpening, discipline for His purposes, *Dayenu*.

If He took me to the other side of the globe to further teach me, humble me, and use me to display His glory, *Dayenu*.

If He blessed our family through displacement, dysfunction, discovery, and delight, *Dayenu*.

If He gave me voice, words, and reach into the unreached; prayers that penetrate darkness and move away evil, *Dayenu*.

If He let me see transformation in myself and those I'm serving, overcoming conflict and despair, *Dayenu*.

If He continued to draw me and my co-laborers to His unfathomable riches, *Dayenu*.

If His plans take me from this place of sprouting growth, leaving unseen marks and ripples with always more need, *Dayenu*.

If He invites me to more by leaving, by going back home, by opening the way before us, *Dayenu*.

“You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways.”
—Ps 139:3

When we landed on the field in 1986, the furthest thing from our minds was how we would finish. When, where, and why it would be. We'd seen difficult endings, well-planned ones, premature ones, forced and flippant ones. We'd experienced moving from one field or phase to begin another, ending roles and taking on others with more depth, responsibility, and burden.

Each ending had its inner work and shifts. At one point, we clarified the goal of our work, starting with the outcome we'd hoped for and working backward in steps to the present. While it was a good exercise, reality is often quite different from expectations. When 40 years of endings and beginnings hover in the blinking sign passing by, it's good to stop.

In *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, Peter Scazzero writes, “All endings require inner work.”¹ Several years ago, in a crisp July breeze off the North Atlantic Ocean, I stood shaking, watching our beautiful daughter walk toward the arbor she and her dad crafted for her wedding day. A month later, on a balmy Houston day, our son beckoned with his eyes his bride to the altar. Then, a short few months after that, another son longingly awaited the love of his life's hand in the December beauty of Rome, GA. Within six months, three of our four kids married! (Our second son had

¹ Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 1.



Invited!

found his love five years before and was expecting our first grandchild.) These poignant life moments were, at the same time, exhilarating and disorienting. The endings that year for me were weighty.

These events meant the end of family as we had known it. The end of the assumed holiday gatherings as they had been. This ended the era of coming alongside our single adult kids as they found their way. Though many sweet beginnings are embedded in these life changes, I had to let the losses sink in.

We had recently handed over our 10-year leadership position to a competent colleague as we sensed God's leading, pulling us toward deeper local involvement. The hand-off took place smoothly with joy. The lives we were part of leading, the feeling of being in the know, the beautiful and brutal issues at hand in our region, were now off our radar.

Feeling the relief of a new, energetic leader in place, we also felt the dizziness of the change. Who are we now? How do we relate to those we previously led? How do we best steward the things God has entrusted to us? Processing these questions, we floundered, staying in place geographically while passing on our position of leadership.

We had also said goodbye to my father-in-law. His death hit me like a scowl. I wasn't close to him, yet respected the godly and stalwart life he led. I did see, after wading through, with my husband and his siblings, the relics of his life, that there was so much more to him than I knew. I felt ashamed of having somewhat put him in a box; I regret that I didn't find out more about him, though I was unsure how I could have. The expressions on faces in old pictures felt piercing and questioning. It became a wandering ogre of thought mulling how things could've or should've been; thinking of our absences and lack of engagement in each other's lives, primarily because of a half a globe of distance away. The creep of regret was subtle and spreading, wanting attention. So, I wrote, prayed, talked, and cried. And began a practice of handing the

mess to the One who redeems messes. The One who sits with us in the mire and rearranges us as he holds out his hand to walk us out. I'm thankful that even in the mire we can still have his shalom.

As we now face leaving this land—the majestic mountains, the colorful, rich fare of the markets, the resilient, hospitable people making their way in this world—we are reminded of the small part of history we get to be. The ripples of our lives are beyond what we know.

This final move from being on the field to the strange and unusual country called America—a place very different from the America we left 40 years ago—is a crossing into another culture. Most of our adult lives have been overseas. Facing this is daunting. We are asking many who have gone before us. Some groan, some shake their heads, some give great advice.

As we explore what re-entry is, receive coaching, and ask each other questions, we feel the tug of both worlds. We hope to continue some of our work remotely. We have plans and dreams of where and how we'd like to serve in our later years. But the immediate task of leaving is before us as we walk the transition bridge into unknown territory, losing outward identities while anchoring to our foundational identity.

In the leaving, in the loss, I'm noticing his surrounding invitation, like the one to the exiles in Babylon; the invitation to embrace where I am now, with everything in me; the stage, the age, the limits, and the opportunities. Recognizing and naming regrets, disappointments, and the sense of not being needed is helpful and cleansing. Naming and celebrating the victories is therapeutic. We cherish the new and energetic ones he's bringing with their unconventional, creative ways of living and working here. Affirming, empowering, blessing them, welcomes God's continued plan here. We were privileged to be part of his mighty army in opening an unreached place and to see the sprouting fruit that few can claim as their own doing.

As I accept that invitation, I'm lured into the next adventure with him if he takes me home to start something new in me or through me, *Dayenu!* 

Called to Remember

By **RACHEL HAMANN**

Rachel Hamann served with Frontiers and Christar, sharing Jesus in the Middle East. She now works to make Christ known in a small town in the USA alongside her husband and four children.

When my family returned from overseas in 2018, we were spent, reeling, and unsure about next steps. Both my husband and I expected, or at least hoped, that the return was temporary. We thought all we needed was to get healthy again, and then we would head back. After all, *we were missionaries.*

I had planned to work in the mission field from the time I was in sixth grade. It was the guiding direction through the preparation of my college years. After getting married, I had invested three years into putting my husband through graduate degrees in Biblical Studies and Intercultural Studies while helping support him in his work as a missions coordinator. After his graduation, we spent two years applying to an organization, building a sending team, completing trainings, and selling our stuff.

Then we were there, living the dream: nearly seven years in two Middle Eastern cities. We learned two languages. We helped build churches and discipled new believers. Nate served as a liaison between minority groups and the teams translating Scripture into their languages. I educated our own missionary kids and sometimes the kids around us also. We witnessed beautiful, holy things as well as disorienting, horrid things. We met a lot of precious people. Some became friends; others seemed to hate us. We lived normal, everyday lives in two interesting cultures, and we weathered abnormal, national crises that made international headlines.

Our move back to the States was not a hasty decision but was born out of much prayer as my husband saw the compounding stress stealing my ability to function. Moving back meant relinquishing a career

he loved and was thriving in and accepting in its place a vague unknown and a hundred layers of loss. He courageously decided that loving his wife and laying down his life for her was as key a part of his calling as loving unreached people groups.

So, we deconstructed the life that had taken 17 years to build and stepped backward, trusting that God was leading although the direction felt counterintuitive. We knew about reverse-culture shock, but we didn't anticipate the massive assault to our own identities that the transition would unleash. I do not know that the lesson is getting easier, but I do know that the lifeline in this season of repatriation has been in remembering who God is, who we are, and who we are called to love.

Remembering Who God Is

When we first arrived back and the dust settled after follow-up trips to our sending partners, a debriefing, and the acquisition of a job that could support our family, God provided a house and the funds for a down payment. It was one of the cheapest on the market in our hometown at the time, which meant it needed a lot of work. The hidden edges of the dingy brown carpet revealed it originally boasted a shade of mint green. There were outdated appliances along with plumbing, electrical, and roofing issues. Plus, all the walls and ceilings were swathed in different hues of wood: chocolate, gray, mustard, cherry, orange. Fresh-start white felt like the antidote, so I sanded and painted, coat after coat, surface after surface. And as I painted,



I cried and prayed prayers of lament: “Where were you when *that* happened? Why did the wicked prosper, and *we* were struck down? We let go of *so* much. We *obeyed* when we thought you were directing. We tried to fight the battles with *your* weapons and *your* heart. Why did you let it end like *that*, God? Where is the story going here?”

I was surprised at how long the questions echoed. Often in congregational worship as I was singing something true about God, I would be overwhelmed by a memory that felt dissonant and stand in tears through the rest of the songs. Sometimes as the music played, I would recall a story from the Scriptures that paralleled our experiences and grasp something I had previously missed. Sometimes a passage of Scripture sprang to mind and as I looked it up, I heard the Lord’s words to me in the verses.

Once when I was reading our children a missionary biography, an incident in the story sparked a memory that put me in bed nauseated and trembling for hours. I called our co-workers who had been there that horrible day, and they prayed with me. It was one of the few times I got an answer to my question: “Where were you, Jesus?” I was reminded that my friend Kody had stepped in to protect my kids when I felt the danger in my gut but was paralyzed with fear and cultural ignorance. And I watched the story play again, this time with eyes to see. Yes, there he was, Jesus, in his servant Kody, a shepherd who sat with me at the table of my enemies, who stared down the evil one, and who gathered the lambs in his arms.

The more we have remembered, the more convinced we have become of the presence and goodness of the Lord. He was there in lovingkindness when we sinfully lashed out at each other in anger and fear, when we stood strong in the face of circumstances that hit us with the force of gale winds, when we stumbled with weariness, when we made mistakes we didn’t even realize we were making, when we bore the wrath of evil forces who did not like

an outpost of shalom being raised in the areas they oppressed. Christ was there, the lion who held back the evil and the lamb who suffered with us through its midst.

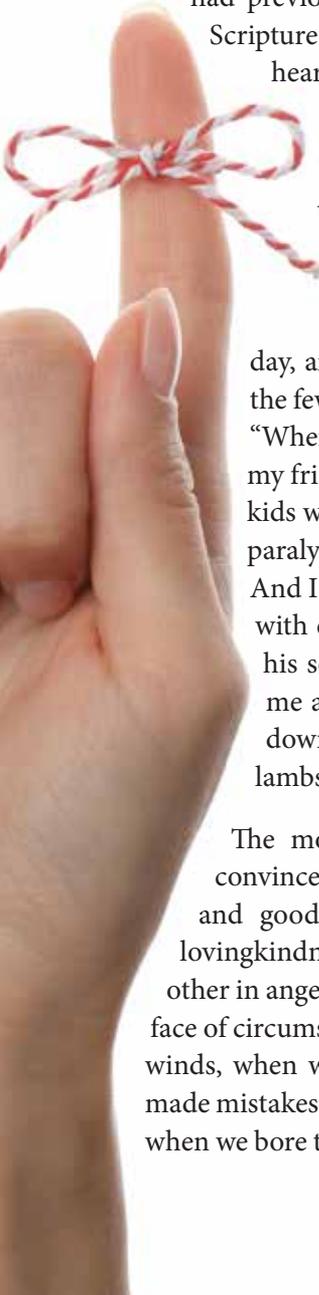
Remembering Who We Are

When we re-entered the mission field of our homeland, our understanding of God was not the only thing that was shaken and refined. We also had to re-understand ourselves. In our communication with supporters, we had often spoken about their role in building the kingdom of God in their hometowns even as they sent us out. God’s kingdom can be built anywhere. It is needed everywhere. It all counts. We thought we believed that with our whole hearts but found it hadn’t sunk in as deeply as we thought.

In the States, there were cultural markers all around us that pointed to our inferiority. We had a smaller house than our peers, though we had more children than many of them. We drove an older car and only had one. Less and older were also themes in our technology, our clothing, and our furniture. In nearly every conversation you have in American circles, you talk about what you do, meaning the career you get paid for. My husband had re-entered the secular workforce at the bottom rungs of the corporate ladder. I had scaled back to just a homemaker and homeschool mother to our four kids. And as the conversations stacked up where we had nothing to contribute and no way to relate, we began to feel less valuable.

All our years of knowing and teaching the Bible, learning other cultures, and perfecting other languages? They no longer mattered. No one spoke those new languages here. In our small midwestern town, other cultures were not seen as a blessing, they were suspect. No one expected laypeople to know and teach the Bible, except perhaps on the side as a Sunday school teacher or guest speaker. The last nine years of our lives were a weird blip that didn’t fit.

We wanted to believe that the perseverance, character, and hope that we had grown in overseas mattered in these new-old arenas. Surely, they made us better at our lives here, too? But the skills and the experiences behind them often felt invisible.



It has been a struggle to remember that our job, as citizens of a heavenly kingdom, is building that kingdom alongside his people in all the places we are sent. It's so easy to get caught in the cultural rat race around us, hunting for acceptance and identity in a new job, a raise, a performance review, a vacation, or updated stuff. Several times we have tried to recover what has been lost by attempts to return overseas or to find a position of ministry in a church instead of continuing as salt and light in the workplace and the home. So far, we keep hitting concrete walls and the direction to hold steady.

Several times we have tried to recover what has been lost by attempts to return overseas or to find a position of ministry in a church instead of continuing as salt and light in the workplace and the home.

Is it enough to believe we are forgiven, holy, beloved, and gifted simply because we are children of God? Is it enough to listen for the quiet voice of our Lord and be directed by it in unglamorous circumstances, while at the same time having the humility to not flippantly throw out the voices of those around us who are also created and renewed in his image? Is it enough to make it our ambition to live a quiet life, working with our hands and growing in godliness? When our sight is clear, we are convinced it is enough, but winning that battle over our minds is still a big portion of our work in these days.

Remembering the Alien, Orphan, and Widow

The last theme that we have been helped by is remembering the alien, orphan, and widow. In many ways, it was a longing to bring peace and hope to the poor and marginalized that launched us into overseas missions in the first place. Sometimes that passion grows dim in the nitty-gritty of daily life and the whirlwind of lies that call us off the path. But when we remember who God is and who we are, it reorients us back to the place where we can see the neighbors in need around us right now.

One of the biggest gifts of those years overseas was the experience of being a foreigner. We actually know what it is like to be told we cannot rent a for-rent apartment, to be denied service at a store, to be stopped for questioning, to be cheated in a transaction, to be pulled over without cause in a vehicle, to be openly mocked, and to be met more times than we can count with hostile stares. This knowing births compassion and invites us to quietly step into suffering with immigrants who currently experience such things, to offer a meal, a bag of household goods or clothing, a word of encouragement or advocacy, or a companionable silence.

Likewise, the personal losses of friendships, homes, possessions, and careers that we have experienced in our transitions can make us attune to others experiencing loss around us. The act of remembering lights a quiet fire that compels us to comfort others with the comfort we have received ourselves (2 Cor 1:4). Our home stands across the street from two lovely women who have been widowed and two little girls who lost a father in the last 10 years. Walking with them is a gift. So is sitting with friends who lost a job, a dream, or a marriage, for in the broken places we experience the presence of Christ.

It would not be true to close with a tidy resolution. We still do not see where the story is going. The past year—seven full years into our time back in the USA—has been one of our most difficult thus far. Yet it is profoundly true that in the midst of the pain, the act of remembering heals. Sometimes it heals like a surgeon's scalpel cutting out infection and other times like a cool rag on a feverish brow. In remembering, we are being made whole and reminded of our true identity: children of "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness," (Exod 34:6) who are called to love the weak and overlooked with that same extravagant love. 

Following the Signs

Trusting God's Direction Through Times of Change

By **LIZZIE H** (Pseudonym) | All Bible references from the NIV.

Jesus called **Lizzie H** to full-time ministry 22 years ago. She is currently a member of a church planting team working amongst refugees in rural East Africa. Email: mhall_secure@protonmail.com



“Our times and houses are in His hands.” (Ps 31:15)

I woke up in a cold sweat and shook my head as if to somehow help with processing my thoughts. I'd dreamt of a Welsh terrace house, not unlike the one I was currently living in. On the exterior wall of the house was a sign in white saying “For Rent;” next to it was a sign in red saying, “For Sale.” The dream summed up my circumstances perfectly, I was trying to work out if I should move into rented accommodation or buy a house and indecision was plaguing me. I was in my mid-thirties working enthusiastically at an overseas mission base in the UK. I had already moved houses five times in six years. I was tired of the instability of roommates leaving, forcing me to adapt to new people all the time or worse, move home. I longed for a house to call my own and lavish my decorative talents on. I also desired to be married and share that home with a missions-minded man, but that goal was proving elusive, too.

At the time, I also had family commitments I'd never expected—I was helping my mum care for my father, who'd suffered a debilitating stroke some three years earlier. This meant long journeys to the south of England and back again. I had no extra brain power for constantly negotiating accommodation issues and a revolving door of housemates.

Some close friends learned of these struggles and generously offered me a loan so I could have a deposit to get on the housing ladder. But I knew the properties I could afford (if I could raise a mortgage) would be old and difficult to maintain and I had no spare cash to do up a property. Added into the equation was a growing sense that the Lord was calling me back overseas, in which case would I want the hassle of renting out an old house whilst I was away?

In the end, the dream helped—I figured if God wasn't leading me to either rent or buy, something else was called for. In part, I was helped by a prophecy spoken to me by a stranger at a church event, “Don't hesitate, don't hesitate, don't hesitate.” The person giving me this word looked at me enquiringly and said, “I have no idea what this means.” I smiled widely and felt pressure lift off me both mentally and physically, “Oh, no worries, I know exactly what that's about.”

A few weeks earlier, a young woman seeking a ministry partner to move to Muslim East Africa had come into my office and requested that I advertise her need on our website. But as I sat with the paper in my hand, I found it impossible to type into the computer—I wanted to go, my spirit was stirred. However, a few

weeks later, I had still taken no action. How could I leave while my father was ill?

The prophecy was the confirmation and nudge I needed to step out in faith. I spoke to my boss, a Welsh man with an impressive baritone voice who boomed in lyrical reply, “Well, if that’s what the Lord’s told you, that’s what we’ll pray for; we’ll pray for your father’s health, and we’ll pray you into North East Africa.” And so, my prayer life changed from a focus on housing and marriage to getting back on-field.

The way my colleagues’ and my prayers were answered was not what I had hoped for. Shortly after that decision was made, my father had a second stroke from which he never recovered. Sitting at his bedside, during his final days in the hospital, my mum asked me, “Where do you want to go?”

“Go? I’m not going anywhere. You and Dad need me.”

“Oh, it’s just your dad, and I think perhaps you’d be better working overseas again.”

My mouth dropped in amazement—I had wanted to honour and care for my parents and so hadn’t even mentioned this fresh call to return overseas.

“Actually, your dad thinks you’d do really well in the Middle East. He said the other day that you’d look good in Middle Eastern dress because of your dark eyes.”

I continued to gawp like a goldfish. I had never mentioned an interest in the Middle East—but that was where I was going to have to go first to learn Arabic.

A few days later, he passed peacefully into eternity with Jesus. I felt at peace knowing I had my father’s blessing to move overseas again, and, with my mum’s encouragement, I moved six months later to start the intensely humbling course that is called “learning Arabic.”

Called Home

Some 12 years later, now engrossed in ministry amongst refugees, I received a message from my mum requesting a Zoom call. She was struggling with fatigue, and the doctors had discovered various growths that they were keen to remove and test.

A few weeks later, my own health became questionable when a dull pain in my back turned out to be an impressive collection of gallstones. So, I returned home to care for my mum, who sadly turned out to have cancer, and sort out my own health issues.

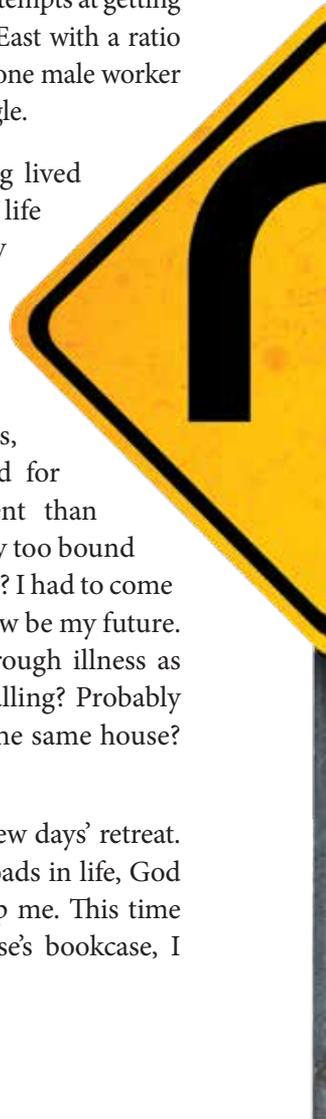
By now, she had moved to a town I had never lived in, in a rather expensive area of the UK. I moved into her spare room and in record time for the NHS (National Health Service) nursed her through two operations, before having my own gallbladder removed.

This extended time in the UK opened my eyes to the rate of inflation in the UK that previous trips had not. The successive blows of Brexit and COVID-19 had hit the economy heavily and I calculated that whilst I could afford my rent in the Middle East fairly comfortably, I couldn’t even afford a room in a house in the UK.

The suddenness of my forced return to the UK was a shock. I had only one friend in the area and no family members nearby. And despite my best attempts at getting married on-field, which in the Middle East with a ratio of about nine single women workers to one male worker was fairly impossible, I was also still single.

Here I was in my mid-forties, having lived an extraordinary and adventurous life for God, rich in relationships, daily challenges, and superior quality hummus and falafel, finding myself living in my mother’s small spare room in a town mostly known for its retired population, churches, and museums. I felt better equipped for a terrorist incident or imprisonment than middle-class England. Was my identity too bound up in being in wildly exciting locations? I had to come to terms with the fact that this may now be my future. Could I serve and love my mum through illness as I had my father? Was this my new calling? Probably yes. Could I do that whilst living in the same house? If I was honest, possibly not.

At a suitable interval, I escaped for a few days’ retreat. I have often found that at such crossroads in life, God provides me with a good book to help me. This time was no exception. Scanning the house’s bookcase, I



came across a missionary biography of a woman in her early 50s. She, too, had struggled with health, hormones, and loneliness but had found herself “re-deployed” after an enforced period of time off-field. I felt the Spirit’s whisper to me that I would go out again. And so it was—mum’s check-up a few weeks later revealed she didn’t need chemotherapy and the cancer was, as far as they could tell, completely removed. I found myself released for a second season of service. More surprisingly, after years of feeling a pull to East Africa, the Lord led me into a change of location.

However, my time in the UK and my mum’s health issues continued to perturb me. Previously, during holiday or home assignment, I had lived with single friends in London. Now, I found my friends had no spare rooms and, sadly, a dear friend died. Quiet places to rest between tough stressful seasons had disappeared and even retreat places for missionaries felt well out of my budget at almost £100 a night. I also had to change my sending church, which was complicated. Being their first missionary for a long time (as opposed to a Christian charity they donate to), most people thought I was paid a salary. The economic difficulties of being single on a low income and spending any time in the UK became a black cloud.

Recently, in a passing conversation with some very experienced workers in the Middle East who were preparing for retirement, they asked how I found returning home, and I remarked, “It’ll take more faith for me to return to the UK, than it would to stay overseas—back home I will be in my fifties, jobless, homeless and single. On the mission field, I have the social status of ‘Aunty’, housing is cheap, and friends are plentiful.”

Sitting with an old friend, incidentally the friend who had offered a loan all those many years ago, drinking coffee, catching up, my fears spilled out of what my future would be if I had to return home again to care for my mum in the years ahead. She listened with great sympathy and a few days later texted me this message: “Hi, a few days before we met I was praying and it came into my mind that we should offer to help you with accommodation in some way...

What we talked about on Saturday felt like confirmation, so I spoke with my husband, and he agrees. Could we chat?”

The chat revealed that they’d just been given a large inheritance and would like to not only give me the tithe of that inheritance but also a loan, to help get me on to the housing ladder. The pieces of the puzzle are not quite all in place yet, the numbers don’t quite work, but the hope is that I can buy and let a small property that, when I come off-field in the years to come I can live in, near my mum. Perhaps in part I agreed to write this article as a kind of prayer, as well as wanting to highlight for others the struggles of single workers in this area.

What Can You Do?

How can churches and mission agencies help? Here are some ideas to consider for you (single) missionaries:

- If you don’t own property, have you considered buying a home and renting while you are gone so you will have a place when you return? If you need funds, could family or friends help?
- Churches and mission agencies, consider having some housing available for returning workers.
- Above all, ask regularly, “What is God saying?”
- If people in your congregation are wealthy, ask if they’d consider gifting a property to a missionary.
- Challenge single missionaries to not hold back from buying an investment property until they’re married. Help them be aware they may not be able to get a mortgage.

Missionaries, realise that God may call you home one day or for a season to look after family members or help yourself. This isn’t failure. Our identity is not in being a missionary. It’s in being a child of God in any season. Allow yourself to enjoy it. Get good rest. Let the Lord lead your steps. When you are back on furlough, keep investing in friendships back home. Ask God for where your homebase should be. Is it a number of towns or one? Try not to spread yourself too thin. Focus on a region or area, so, if you return home, you’ll have community. 



When Home

Doesn't Feel Like Home

Walking with Those Who Return from the Field

By JACOB ANDERSON (Pseudonym)

Jacob Anderson serves as director of the Pioneers Alumni Network. He and his wife, Heidi, served 14 years in Central Asia and now walk alongside former missionaries and churches as they navigate life and calling after the field. He can be reached at Alumni@orlandoteam.com.

After leaving the mission field, a long-time supporter asked me the hardest question in the lobby of our sending church. He gave me a big hug and said, “Doesn’t it feel good to be back home?”

I felt the familiar pit in my stomach—the feeling that comes when I don’t know how to answer a question or when I know the other person won’t like my truthful answer.

My friend meant well, and the question was legitimate. Our sending church is located in my hometown. I was born here, attended elementary school less than five miles away, and I even attended university in this town. This church is where I met my wife. It was in this town that we had our children, bought our first house, and started a business. Given that history, it

was reasonable to assume that this was where I would feel most at home.

Fifteen years earlier, we had moved away from this place, where I had deep roots, and now we were back. But was this still home?

Most people who have lived overseas, especially the kids who grew up on the mission field, have experienced some version of this dialogue. The question is mundane: “Where are you from?” My answer evolved over the years.

Just after we moved overseas, my answer was, “I’m from Texas.” From my perspective, I was simply answering a question, not making a statement. As a proud Texan, I couldn’t even see my own bias. Somewhere along the way, I noticed I rarely heard people say,

“I’m from Vermont.” Wanting to be more sensitive and not appear arrogant, I adjusted my answer.

I began answering, “I’m from America.” Most people understood that I meant the part of America between Canada and Mexico. Then one day, a Canadian sister gently pointed out that when I said “America,” I was still operating from a narrow paradigm. So I began saying, “I’m from the United States.” It was still an effort to be sensitive, but I also noticed it brought clarity.

I began to realize something else as well. The question “Where are you from?” can also mean, “What place do you call home?” I don’t call Canada home, so saying “the United States” was more accurate. I didn’t recognize it at the time, but something inside me was shifting—gradually and almost imperceptibly—as our life overseas continued. The shift didn’t begin overseas. It had roots that went back years earlier, long before we ever boarded a plane.

We were settled in Texas when making the decision to move overseas. From the outside, it seemed radical. I had a promising career as a finance director. I also owned, with my brother, a retail business with multiple locations. We had young children. Then, seemingly suddenly, we sold our business and house, I resigned from my job, we moved into an apartment, approached our church, found an agency, and began preparing to move among unreached people groups.

However, to those who knew us well, it wasn’t sudden at all. This had been our “five-year plan” for more than a decade. We took Perspectives in the 1990s, where we first connected the dots that God desires people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation to know him. His invitation to us was to participate in what he was already doing.

We were willing to go and thought we were ready. But the doors kept closing. At first, we were confused. By the early 2000s, however, my wife and I could see the wisdom and grace in those delays. We had growing up to do, work to do in our marriage, and much more.

The year 2004 marked a convergence. We completed required Bible classes, finished raising support, and bought plane tickets. The event took place on the stage

of our church. Some with hands on our shoulders, others with hands outstretched, the pastors, elders, and members prayed—commissioning us to take the good news to people in a country where most had never met a follower of Jesus. I was 36 and unconcerned about leaving a career behind. I was finally doing what I had long hoped to do. We were leaving our home and going to make a new home in a new land.

After two years overseas, we became pregnant and returned to the United States for the birth of our third child. While “home,” we discovered we were no longer allowed to return to our country of service. We ended up in a second country where the language was similar. For the next 12 years, we worked hard at making that Central Asian country our home, even as we returned to the United States periodically. Our goal was to put down roots, and we did. That country became a place we called “home.” We were settled there.

Most people who have lived overseas, especially the kids who grew up on the mission field, have experienced some version of this dialogue. The question is mundane: “Where are you from?”

In 2018, another convergence arrived. My parents were aging, and we needed to help one of our sons transition to college. We made the difficult decision to move back to the United States—after 14 years, two countries, three kids, multiple years of language study, medical evacuation, a life-threatening accident, terrorist attacks, revoked visas, and several different ministry roles.

Some parts of returning to the States were enjoyable—barbecue brisket, convenient shopping, and not wondering whether I fully understood a complicated bill in the mail.

Other parts were surprisingly difficult. Friends who once made time to meet with us during home assignments no longer seemed available. Within months, our financial support began to decline, even though we were still working for our mission agency. I was asked whether I planned to get a real job. While the financial stress was familiar, something deeper weighed on me. I felt unsettled and unseen.

Life “back home” was supposed to be easier than on the mission field, yet it often felt harder. Internally, we did not feel settled. This did not feel like home anymore, yet no one knew that. Externally, other people could not see the ways that our lives had changed and our hearts had been shaped by the experience overseas.

Overseas, I had felt useful as a church planter. Here, in one of the most reached communities in the world, I felt sidelined. In a highly mobilized community, lots of young people around us were excited about going to the nations. However, many of them did not know we had lived there for 14 years. We wondered whether our experience still mattered and whether we had anything to offer the church.

Eventually, my mission organization invited me to lead a developing initiative called the Alumni Network. The goal was simple: Reconnect with those workers who had returned to the United States or left the mission organization for various reasons.

As I listened to story after story, I heard inspiring accounts of faithfulness, perseverance, and fruit. That wasn't surprising. What did surprise me was

a recurring theme. Many felt exactly as I had felt—sidelined. Life “back home” was supposed to be easier, yet it often felt harder. Other people had also left careers to go overseas, only to return to the States and feel like the years overseas did not count when applying for new jobs.

Over time—often after two or three years—people adjust. For most workers, the overseas years become a scrapbook of good memories and stories occasionally shared. But I think there is more.

As our organization's Alumni Network has grown, we have witnessed something beautiful unfold. Groups of former overseas workers are gathering—sometimes around a table, sometimes on Zoom—sharing stories and discovering, “I'm not the only one.” In many ways, that space with other former workers is where we feel the most at “home.” We reconnect with our calling to the nations, and we are inspired to live out that calling in new ways. We remember that we are not merely former workers. We are children of the King, and he is not finished with us yet. We still have much to offer. If you'd like help, I'd love to hear from you. ❏

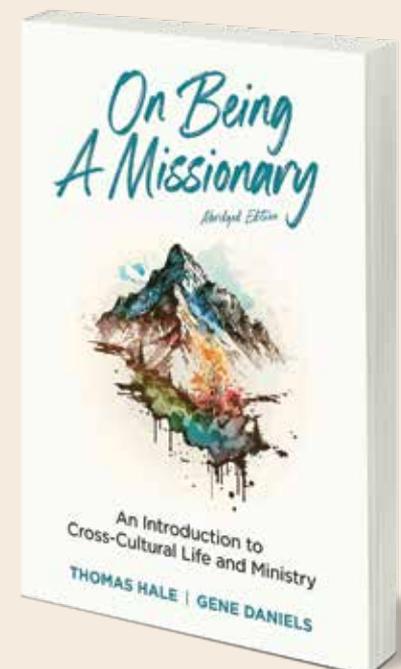
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On Being A Missionary Abridged Edition

Thomas Hale | Gene Daniels

Missionaries must adjust to new cultures, learn languages, work as a team, maintain healthy relationships, and discern best ministry practices. Nothing can fully prepare a person for life as a missionary. However, for almost thirty years, Thomas Hale's *On Being a Missionary* has helped to equip cross-cultural workers to not only survive but thrive in their calling.

This abridged version of *On Being a Missionary* remains practical and accessible. It addresses the new realities of the changing missionary force. It also looks at the challenges of bonding with a new culture in an increasingly globalized and technologically connected world. The book is written for everyone with an interest in missions, whether the missionary on the field or the supporter at home. It is written by learners for learners.



Engaging Missionary Alumni Opportunities Abound

By **LOUISE GREENFIELD** (Pseudonym)

Louise Greenfield has more than 20 years of experience living and serving the kingdom of God in five countries on four continents. She is currently writing a book on cross-cultural living for Americans retiring overseas.

Missionaries leave the field for a variety of reasons. Some of those reasons are planned or voluntary, such as the end of the committed term of service or anticipated retirement. Some of them are involuntary or unexpected, such as a loss of visa eligibility in the country of service, the need to return in order to care for aging parents, changes in family status, or health issues of a spouse or child. But does returning to one's passport country mean the God-inspired call to missions among the nations has ended? Surely the heartbeat for reaching the nations remains, even if one's location has changed. We tend to think of missionaries as being overseas, on location in the homelands of the unreached people groups they engage. But is there a way to make use of the experience in language, culture, and cross-cultural ministry gained over the years of living on the field and continue to apply that experience "at home" to the advancement of the kingdom of God?—YES!

Ongoing Outreach

Mission-sending organizations and local churches are increasingly recognizing these returning missionaries as an untapped resource. This is particularly true as the worldwide diaspora has exploded and unprecedented



numbers of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are on the move internationally. Recent decades have witnessed a level of global mobility among the world's people that is unprecedented in modern times. Political instability and oppression, warfare, poverty, lack of economic opportunity and social, religious, and ethnic persecution have all created urgent circumstances that have caused tens of millions of people to uproot their lives and relocate to a different country. Amidst all this mobility, migration, and resettlement of people from many countries, missions alumni are well-positioned to minister to these migrants living in their communities. Having themselves lived with the challenges of integrating into a foreign culture, missionaries have a unique understanding of the difficulties facing the new arrivals. Welcoming the stranger, offering hospitality, and simply being friends all create significant opportunities to establish relationships and create credibility to share the gospel.

Returning Well

We know about Third Culture Kids (TCKs), but we sometimes forget that adult missionaries also are living between cultures. Especially for workers who have spent a considerable time overseas, both they and

their culture of origin have changed a great deal in the intervening years and reverse culture shock is genuinely difficult. Well-meaning individuals who don't deeply understand the missionary experience may believe that for the returning field worker "it must be good to be back home." But home is hard to define when you have become a third-culture, global citizen. Living cross-culturally changes a person and so "going home" to the passport country can be challenging because you aren't the same person who was sent out years ago. It can be lonely because people in the community you are returning to don't truly understand what you have experienced. But it can also be an opportunity to share the riches of cultural learning acquired on the field and to continue ministering to people from other cultures living in the United States.

Like-Minded Community

Finding a community of like-minded people who understand the joys and the trials of cross cultural ministry and living is a wonderful blessing. The transition from the field to the next chapter of life in a new context can be painful, uncertain, and poignant but also joyful, fulfilling, and wonderful. Returning field workers understand each other in a way that is unique to their shared experiences. They can affirm and support each other in their ongoing kingdom roles through encouragement, partnership, prayer, and presence.

An Invitation to Continued Engagement

The missionary journey doesn't end when someone leaves the field. Alumni are a vital part of God's continuing story—serving in their local churches, workplaces, and communities while still connected to the global mission movement... honoring legacy, nurturing ongoing community, and reinforcing the value of lifelong mission engagement. —John Lewis, Alumni Network, Pioneers

There are many ways a returning field worker can remain engaged in missions. For instance, the sending agency Pioneers has created an Alumni Network to raise awareness among churches, communities, and individuals of opportunities for returning missionaries. Some of our activities include:

In weekly prayer meetings, we intercede for alumni, and in monthly calls, we feature guest speakers who are often alums or other leaders from our organization. Returning workers are sent a copy of the book *Returning Well: Your Guide to Thriving Back "Home" After Serving Cross Culturally* by Melissa Chapman. *Returning Well* small groups provide support to alumni as they transition from the field. The Church Engagement department works to link our partner churches with returning missionaries to promote possible collaborations. Alumni are available to mentor and advise potential candidates for overseas assignments. As appropriate, alumni members receive birthday cards and congratulatory phone calls.

What Can You Do?

If you are a church leader, welcome and affirm your returning missionaries! Meet with them to discuss a potential role in your church's cross-cultural engagement programs. Connect with a sending agency to see if there are missionary alumni in your area with whom your church could consult to enhance your cross-cultural outreach.

If you support a missionary, ask them about their plans. If they are considering when to retire or otherwise leave the field, perhaps you could discuss options with them for continued engagement once they return.

If you work at a missions sending agency, start discussions in-house about how to best provide opportunities for returning workers to remain engaged in kingdom advancement.

Finally, if you are a missions alum or are still on the field but thinking about a return to your passport country, consider how you might continue to serve in cross-cultural ministry. Start discussions with your sending churches about how you might contribute to their outreach undertakings in their communities. Ask your sending organization about networks and opportunities for returning field workers and, if your organization doesn't currently have anything like that, ask them to consider launching an alumni network. You have so many God-given talents, skills, and experiences to offer! Prayerfully consider your options—perhaps God is not done with you yet! 

Inside Church Planting Movements

A Deep Dive into the Real, False, and In-Between

By **DAVID GARRISON**

David Garrison, PhD University of Chicago, is a veteran missionary with four decades of service in Asia, Africa, and Europe. He is the former Associate Vice President for Strategy at the International Mission Board, SBC.

Church planting movements have sparked considerable debate since they emerged at the dawn of Christianity's third millennium. Some have viewed them as a Great Commission panacea, while others have dismissed them as illusory at best or sinister at worst.

If we pull back the curtain on church planting movements, what do we find? Does this phenomenon prove to be a grand deception, akin to Dorothy's discovery when she peeked behind the curtain in Oz? Or is it as real as the wheat fields of Kansas?

The new book, *Inside Church Planting Movements: What 25 Years of Assessments Reveal*, addresses these questions: Are church planting movements real? If so, how do we know? How do we know when church multiplication has occurred? Can we trust what has been reported? And, if not, why not? How can we assess the quality and quantity of the work being reported? Can we really discern the truth from potential deception?

The research in this new book draws from dozens of sources. Chief among these is the extensive data found in the archives of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB). Between 1998 and 2022, the IMB collected thousands of pages of research from 28 onsite investigations of reported church planting movements in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. This valuable trove of information has been inaccessible to the outside world—until now.

Just as important as the movements themselves are how they were assessed. Accordingly, much of this book focuses on “how we know what we know.” Only as we learn how God is at work in these movements can we hope to clarify our own roles within them.

Wherever possible, the actual names and locations of these movements have been retained. However, many of the movements occur in countries where rapid Christian growth remains imperiled. Those familiar with ministry among the world's least evangelized will understand the necessity of obscuring details in these security-sensitive contexts. In all cases, however, the facts and events recorded in this book are accurate to the best of my knowledge and ability.

Global Scope

Rather than cherry-picking movement assessments that predetermine positive results, this book covers every movement assessment retained in the International Mission Board's archives. The book provides a summary of 28 reported movements and the assessments that followed. They cover a range of reports from East and South Asia, the Middle East, North and Sub-Saharan



Africa, and the Americas. The findings were anything but uniform.

Of the 28 movements, 11 were found to be clear and unassailable, often discovering that the scope and integrity of the movements far exceeded what the missionary had initially reported. Eleven reported movements proved to be something less than or different from the clear definition of a movement. Perhaps most intriguing were the six movement assessments that revealed something in between. These were multiplying church plants that, the assessors determined, had yet to reach a tipping point that would indicate they had cascaded into “rapidly multiplying indigenous churches planting churches that sweep through a people group or population segment.”

Security Sensitivities

Though many of the assessed movements took place in countries that remain hostile to missionary work and accordingly required obscuring their locations, the details for each one are reported with candor and accuracy, verified by the IMB’s Global Research Department before going to press. These archival reports cover movements among Muslims, Hindus, Communist atheists, rural villagers, and urban dwellers. The reader will have no difficulty deciphering the context of each movement and gaining missiological insights into how these movements emerged and the dynamics each encountered.

Critics and Catalysts

An entire chapter is dedicated to the principal objections to movements’ missiology that are circulating in the Christian world today. I describe these criticisms without attempting a defensive rebuttal. Instead, I invite readers to examine the evidence for themselves, from the actual on-site assessments, and draw their own conclusions.

The book also provides a biographical history of movement missiology, relating the earliest and most prolific champions of movements from both Western and non-Western provenance. The presentation of movements themselves is treated historically, from the earliest assessed movements in 2000 to the most recent in 2022.

Practical Tools

Some readers have seen particular value in the transparent presentation of the assessment process. Each assessment includes the names of those who conducted the on-site survey. Readers also receive a step-by-step process for conducting their own movement assessment, and new assessment tools that have appeared over the past decade. These include online tracking tools such as “Pattern” (patternlaunch.com) and “GAPP” (Gospel to All Peoples and Places — taethni.com/gapp).

What Others Are Saying

Warrick Farah, editor of *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nations*, wrote: “Only David Garrison could distill thousands of pages of reports into a compelling story!” Dr. David Singh, director of PhD studies at the Oxford Center for Mission Studies, confided, “Having sat on the fence for years and imperiously granted a certain ‘phenomenological being’ to the reports of movements (including those emanating from my own country of birth), I found the author’s honest scrutiny of CPM’s reality, his evaluation of its critics/catalysts, and his concise assessment of specific movements, refreshingly persuasive.” Samford University’s Chair of Christian Ministry, J.D. Payne, wrote: “*Inside Church Planting Movements* is the book we have been waiting for—a must-read for those interested in contemporary movements of the Spirit!”

Are movements real? Yes. Are there deceptions? Also, yes. *Inside Church Planting Movements* is not a promotional book about movements, but an invitation for Christians to find out for themselves—not with presuppositional biases for or against movements, but with a keen eye and a curious mind that seeks to discover the truth.

For too long, many sincere Christians have been on the outside of movements, left to their own imaginations to determine whether these movements were real, or, as one critic opined, “sinister.” For the first time, concerned Christians are invited behind the curtain to see for themselves. ■■



24:14

Disciple Making Is for All of Us

By **THE WALKER FAMILY** (Pseudonym)

The “Walker” family began cross-cultural work in 2001. In 2006, they joined Beyond (www.beyond.org) and in 2011 started applying CPM principles. They moved countries in 2016 and have been supporting the movements from a distance.

I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.
(1 Cor 9:22 ESV)

In India, an incredible movement is taking place. Currently at more than 1 million house churches across 19 states, people from Hindu and Muslim backgrounds are becoming followers of Jesus. They come to know Christ through a simple disciple-making model approach: They receive the Word of God and are encouraged to read it with others in their community, applying the Scriptures to their daily lives. As they personally apply the Word to their lives, they discover that the Holy Spirit is a faithful teacher who guides them to obey everything Jesus commanded, including the command to go and make more disciples.

For the past year, we have focused on equipping young leaders (ages 18-30) to actively engage in ministry. These leaders fall into four distinct categories, each bearing fruit in unique ways. What incredible news! These young leaders are living out the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20, taking up the call to make disciples of all nations. The torch of faith is being passed to the next generation, and they are carrying it boldly and faithfully.

How Are They Making Disciples?

In this movement, as in most disciple making movements around the world, disciples follow the model Jesus gave in Luke 10 to reach the lost. Jesus’ strategy stands in stark contrast to most outreach

strategies today. Modern outreach strategies usually include inviting lost people to attend a church service, or a particular event like a college pizza night. That approach, however, requires the lost to come to us.

In contrast, Jesus’ strategy in Luke 10 sends disciples *out*. They sow seeds of the gospel wherever they go, while also seeking anyone who is spiritually open. When they find someone who is, they share a Bible story, pray for a need, or ask if the person knows others who would like to hear the story, as well. If interest continues, the disciple maker encourages that person to gather friends or neighbors to read Scripture together, using simple Discovery Bible Study questions. In this way, the Word of God takes root directly in homes and communities. As the groups read Jesus’ words about what it means to be a disciple, baptism, and loving their enemies, etc., they witness firsthand the fruit of applying Scripture. Many then commit to following Jesus, are baptized, and begin sharing with others.

The beauty of Jesus’ outreach strategy is that anyone can be a disciple maker—young or old, men or women, literate or not, seasoned or brand new.

What Is the Strategy?

Disciple makers in disciple making movements follow Jesus’ command to sow seed without restraint

(Matthew 13). To meet new people and continue sowing abundantly in India, young disciple makers have found creative strategies that fit naturally into daily life. Several themes have emerged:

- College students from diverse caste backgrounds and degree programs are starting Bible studies and house churches on their campuses. They boldly share the message of Jesus with their classmates, living out their faith by *sharing as they go*. By boldly talking about Jesus with their classmates, they are creating disciples among their peers.
- Day laborers, both illiterate and semi-literate, are starting Bible studies among working youth. These groups are springing up in fields, chai stalls, and even while shepherding goats. Disciples share stories about Jesus in the midst of their daily routines, proving that anyone, regardless of their education, can join in the Great Commission.
- Many youths share a common interest in music. Music has always held a central place in Indian culture, often carrying deep spiritual meaning. From temple chants and bhajans (Indian devotional songs) to sufi songs and folk traditions, gatherings around music are both communal and devotional. Among Indian youth, informal jam sessions are a common way to connect—friends come together with drums, guitars, or traditional instruments, creating a shared space that naturally draws others in. These settings are already familiar with religious music, since it is common for Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh youth alike to sing devotional songs as part of cultural life. Recognizing this, musically-inclined youth incorporate the simple authenticity of their own faith into their jam sessions, beginning the music time with a simple prayer with whoever is present, and incorporating songs about Jesus or Psalms into their time. As friends gather and hear new songs, they ask questions: “*Why did you pray before we played?*” or “*Where did you learn this song about God?*” These natural questions spark deeper conversations, leading to opportunities for prayer and for sharing stories about Jesus. Many house churches have been birthed through this creative and relational approach.
- Parks and playgrounds have become mission fields as youth gather to play cricket, badminton, or football. Before games, disciples pray for safety and strength. This simple practice intrigues Hindu friends, who soon begin asking for prayer themselves or for the disciples to teach them how to pray so they will also become better athletes. Over time, these conversations lead to deeper spiritual exploration and Scripture study. This simple yet effective strategy has also resulted in new house churches.



An Application for Christians in the West

God is doing a great work in this movement in India, as well as in other movements worldwide. In these movements, disciples follow Jesus’ model of discipleship by sowing seeds in ordinary, everyday spaces—such as classrooms, workplaces, jam sessions, and playgrounds. The fruit is undeniable. Over 1 million house churches have been birthed across 19 states in 13 years! What a powerful reminder to all of us that the task to make disciples of Jesus is not reserved for professional ministers or polished programs. Rather, when ordinary disciples take Jesus at his word, they directly apply it to their lives, allowing him to use them in the places where they live, work, and play. They find that the Holy Spirit is right there, equipping them for the task. God loves to save the lost! And he loves to use the supposedly foolish things of this world to shame the supposedly wise. 📖

Reflections on an Idea

A Response to *Christianity Today*

By **GREG H. PARSONS** | All scripture references from the NASB 2020, unless noted.

Greg H. Parsons and his wife have been on staff with Frontier Ventures since 1982. They live in Southern California.

Almost 50 years ago, Frontier Ventures was founded on an idea. At the core of it, our thinking goes something like this:

- We want the gospel to take root in the cultures where it has not yet.
- Usually, that happens best when people share with those who are like them. We've called these people groups.
- The people groups that do not have a viable church movement are called unreached people groups (UPGs).

Frontier Ventures continues to pursue the mission of God at the edges—meaning where there are unreached groups with little or no presence of believers.

In the last few years, we have been encouraged to see *Christianity Today* begin to include more about global issues. Their Nov-Dec 2025 issue included three articles on the idea of unreached people groups. This is my response to *CT*'s coverage. The articles included helpful observations and questions about this idea, such as:

- Reaching the unreached has become a compelling and convicting framework that helped catalyze a movement of workers globally.
- The concept of UPGs has enduring strengths yet has growing limitations.
- It remains a key factor in mobilizing new workers around the world, especially in the Global South.
- Is the phrase “unreached people group” helpful for mission in a majority world context?
- Can the UPG idea effectively grapple with migration and increasing urbanization?
- How might social media, AI, and other digital tools affect how the gospel is spread?

As you have likely seen in some of the 270+ issues of *MF* we have published since 1979, we have engaged with these issues and with many global mission leaders. When an idea about reaching people is shared, we pass it on to other leaders—many of whom are “on the ground” among UPGs. Just this morning our Missiology Catalyst group heard an update from one of our Edge Network leaders in Asia about what he is learning there.

In all this, the vocabulary we use and what we mean is important. Some have used “the unreached” very differently, and we can't control that. But it may be helpful to clarify our perspective again.

I will not detail here the biblical foundation of our vision and mission, but we have sought to grapple with the Scriptures about this. Many articles in *MF* have done this, including a series on the biblical foundation back in the 1980s. The first third of the Perspectives course are biblical lessons, plus many other biblical reflections throughout.

Our ultimate motivation is to bring glory to God and see some from every “tribe and tongue and people and nation” before the throne (Rev 5:9 and 7:9).¹

I won't include more from Scripture here. I encourage you to take the Perspectives course and get 10 hours of class time along with dozens of readings reflecting on Scripture. Below, I reflect on our perspective on the meaning of UPG and how we have expressed more detail in these key ideas.

¹ I often note that we do not know God's definition of a tribe, tongue, people, or nation, or when the last person in a group is saved.

Are there believers in fellowship among the people group?

A key factor is the *presence or absence of a viable church* within the people groups.² If they have a viable church that is spreading faith within their culture, they are no longer a UPG—even if there are many non-believers in the culture. Remember, we are talking about a group, not individuals. In both reached and unreached, there will be many individuals who are not yet believers.

Why has there been no response?

The gospel may not have taken root because of language or cultural distance from believers. Nearby believers may speak the same language yet have not been able to communicate in an effective way. Sometimes, these believers may be afraid or oppressed by the majority population—either religious or secular. Or they may be disdainful of those among the unreached group.

Are there barriers between religious traditions?

An underlying issue is that the divide between those from Christian religious traditions and those from other major religious traditions is often huge. A study in 2007 noted that, “Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims have relatively little contact with Christians. In each case, over 86% of all these religionists do not personally know a Christian.”³

What do we not know?

In many contexts, we simply do not know what the “boundaries” of a people group are *until* “global servants” are “on the ground” among them. Usually this means people from different places coming into the unreached group and learning the language and culture to begin to understand the how the message of the kingdom might spread among the people.⁴ All of that hard work does not mean that the *message* of the gospel changes, but that the *method* of sharing it increases in effectiveness—all founded on the work of the Spirit!

2 When we say church, we do not mean a building. I actually prefer the word fellowship or the Greek transliteration used in the N.T., *oikos* or *ecclesia*.

3 Johnson, T. M. and C. L. Tieszen (2007). “Personal Contact: The *Sine Qua Non* of Twenty-First Century Christian Mission.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43(4): 494–501.

4 Remember, if a group has no churches or few Christians, there are no “native missionaries” within that people.

Why outsiders?

Global servants come *from* many different peoples and places all over the world, and they have for many years. If these believing witnesses are from a nearby group, sometimes animosity between the groups is strong, creating barriers to the gospel that would not exist for someone from further away. Barriers morph over time making it harder to understand what might be effective. Unreached peoples may be more open to global servants who come from certain cultures than from others. Certainly, some people groups may not be as open to workers from the US as they used to be. Yet, loving and serving people still opens doors for sharing.

Peoples are not people.

Part of the challenge of the idea of the unreached is that we try and apply it to individuals. People have taken the idea of unreached people groups (UPGs) and applied it to their neighbor. And, certainly, if your neighbor is Hindu, or Muslim, or Buddhist... then they are part of a *group* that is likely considered a UPG. We would call any non-believer who has not heard the gospel, *unevangelized*, not unreached. There are not “unreached individuals.” Of course, how people relate to their culture and those around them continually shifts from one village to the next, especially in places like India. This is why on-the-ground presence and observation is so crucial.

God values all people.

We know that the Lord is “not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). Every individual non-believer’s soul is valuable. God is working among people groups that are reached but need more evangelism. He sends people there, too, and empowers local Christians to share their faith and establish fellowships.

So, what is the priority?

If we consider the people among unreached groups with very little or no witness, it seems best to make them a *priority* for our mission efforts. This is, in part, because a non-believer who lives in a culture with viable churches is more likely to hear the gospel. Someone who lives among the 2 billion Muslims (who live in some 2,500 different cultures or people groups), or 1.2 billion Hindus (who live in some 1,670 different

cultures or people groups), or Buddhists, Sikhs, Ethnic Religions, or Parsee... is not likely to hear that Jesus has visited the earth and “news” that is “good” about him.

Note: when we say that reaching UPGs is a “priority” we do *not* mean they are more important than any other group or unsaved individual. It is a “priority” to get the process of witnessing started among them. Otherwise, there is no one to evangelize them.

The urban and migrant challenge.

Many have noted the significant increase of “displaced” people, both within and outside of their homeland—including 300 million international migrants in 2024. We should do all we can to reach out to them, and they can be key in extending the gospel to their people group in their homeland. Still, “the whole world” is not coming to our door. 300 million is fairly small when you consider that the frontier people groups represent over 2 billion people.⁵ And many of those displaced people are from Christian contexts.

Some suggest that because so much of the world lives in urban centers, the idea of people groups is shifting. While most UPGs are not isolated tribes, we must grapple with the issues that large cities represent and remember that many cultural barriers do not dissolve when people move into big cities. Often immigrants try to hide, and different religious traditions continue to avoid each other. Some will blend in with Christians, which can make true faith harder to determine. Some groups from other religious traditions, such as Muslims or Hindus, become stronger in their opposition to Christian faith if they are in the Christianized West.

What about the global youth culture and AI?

We recognize that the global youth culture (think TikTok) is shifting, and we need to continually find new ways to reach out to them. Some suggest that they know enough of a major language (like English, Spanish, Hindi, Urdu) to communicate with others outside their cultural groupings, yet others wonder if that is an effective way to engage them in spiritually deep matters. Will all churches speak these major languages?

And if they do, will those for whom it is a second or third language thrive in those fellowships? Certainly, AI can help produce tools in many languages, and while generations need different approaches, relationships are always central to effective witness. Heart language is important also.

Perhaps some illustrations will help us. Large diverse places like China and India (and of course Africa) are complex. For India, it is *social distinctions* which seem to mark the difference between peoples with a gospel presence and those without. Even if they are geographically right next to each other, caste differences isolate groups within the same village. For China, although there is one *written* Chinese language which is readable to all Chinese, *spoken* Chinese is a very different story. Cantonese, one of the major Chinese language families, with some 85 million speakers, has 25 mutually unintelligible dialects! That means they can *all read* the same Chinese Bible, *but* if they speak it out loud, they cannot understand each other!⁶

In 2016, I was in central China with a co-worker. We were in a third-tier city (population almost 4 million) waiting at our hotel lobby. As the hotel shop keeper came to open his store, a friend of his came by, and they chatted for about 10 minutes. When the shopkeeper’s friend left, my co-worker (who spoke both Cantonese and Mandarin) told me, “I did not understand one word they said!”

The world is complex. We continue to look for better ways of explaining all this. God has always worked through the relationships of people for his purposes. Yet, moving across language and cultural barriers introduces new problems which we often can’t see clearly without significant time living in the culture. And our enemy lurks seeking to hinder us. Still, our hope is to see the gospel spread where it has not yet. May God give wisdom to us as we pray and struggle to strategize and witness, by the power of the Spirit against the powers of confusion and chaos. ❏

⁵ Frontier people groups are unreached people groups who are less than 0.1% Christian of any type. That is 1 in 1,000. FPGs also have no self-sustaining church movement.

⁶ Even still, the Chinese Bible translation is very old and in need of a new version.

Faithfulness in the Mundane

By **IRENE SPRINGFIELD** (Pseudonym)

Irene Springfield and her husband have been field workers in North Africa for eight years and team leaders for three years. Their ministry is focused on sharing the gospel with high-identity Muslims. They have three children.

I recently asked some friends to share what misconceptions they had before coming to the field. A common theme was expecting life overseas to be exciting or romantic, with every moment filled with meaningful activity.

I quickly learned reality is not so glamorous! There was a honeymoon period after we first arrived, when everything felt new and exciting: new language, food, friendships. But when these things started to become normal, I realized how much of my life here resembled my life back in the US. And not the fun parts—the boring parts! We still needed to get our kids ready for school every day, plan meals, answer emails, and get our oil changed.

“I had a very romanticized view of being a worker. I just thought it would be exciting all the time,” said a friend when I asked her about misconceptions she had before coming to the field. “I didn’t realize how much being a worker in this part of the world is ‘day in, day out’ living for him. There are some exciting moments, but much of it is faithfulness in the small things, and there is a lot of mundaneness.”

I think a lot of workers started picturing themselves on the field when they were young. Like other kids dreaming of becoming doctors or astronauts, we pictured ourselves crouched on the floor of a mud hut in Africa, having deep theological discussions in a language with lots of clicking. Before I came to the field, my dreams were part Jane Goodall, part Indiana Jones, part Elisabeth Elliot.

I loved a song called “Seize the Day” by Carolyn Arends, who was a popular CCM artist in the '90s. The lyrics say: “I know a doctor, a fine young physician/Left a six-figure job for a mission position/He’s healing the sick, in an African clinic/He works in the dirt and writes home to the cynics/We work through the night almost every day/As we watch the sun rise we can say/Seize the day ...” Talk about romantic!



While dirt floors and working through the night might be a reality for some workers, it’s not mine. My floor is often dirty—I live not far from the Sahara Desert—but it’s tiled. I have running water, electricity, and dependable wifi, and so do most of my neighbors. And I *do* have theological discussions with locals, often in Instagram-worthy coffee shops. But not every day.

I think the misconception that our lives as workers are spent mostly engaged in deep, meaningful spiritual work is held not just by aspiring workers, but also by support communities.

My teammate recently visited her passport country after two years on the field. Some well-meaning church members put a post on social media inviting people to “come and hear



all about what God is doing” in our region. My poor teammate was so stressed out about coming up with good stories to share! This is a woman with an evangelist’s heart and a strong work ethic, but most of her time over the past two years has been dedicated to learning language and helping her kids adjust to life in a new country.

The pressure to report back to our support communities with metrics—people baptized, Bible studies started, and churches planted—can be overwhelming. While we hope and pray for these things to take place, the reality, especially for those of us working among unreached or unengaged people groups, is there may be years of investment required before we get to see this kind of fruit.

Our challenge as workers (as Christ followers) is to be open to opportunities to be salt and light throughout our day. Whether we’re getting our vegetables weighed at the grocery store, sitting in the waiting room at the pediatrician’s office, or riding public transportation, we’re looking for opportunities to share something that says, “I’m a person who cares about spiritual things. Let’s talk.”

A lot of our time is spent preparing for these moments. How do we do that? We learn the local language. We learn spiritual vocabulary in the local dialect. We learn how to present ourselves in a respectful and approachable way. We learn where in the city we are most likely to encounter our targeted people group and at what time of the day. We learn which topics they enjoy discussing and which topics are taboo. We learn through training, reading, observing, and making a lot of mistakes. This preparation is crucial and time consuming, but it doesn’t make for very exciting slideshow content!

When I’m feeling discouraged about how much of my time is spent focusing on the “mundane,” the Lord often reminds me of a quote from the devotional *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers: “We are not meant to be seen as God’s perfect, bright-shining examples, but to be seen as the everyday essence of ordinary life exhibiting the miracle of His grace. Drudgery is the test of genuine character. The greatest hindrance in our spiritual life is that we will only look for big things to do. Yet, ‘Jesus... took a towel and...began to wash the disciples’ feet...’ (John 13:3-5).”¹

As a first-born, type-A, to-do-list-making type of woman, I *long* to be God’s perfect, bright shining example! But I’m so thankful he calls me instead to display his grace as I faithfully complete the tasks he’s called me to each day—no matter how mundane they might seem.

I think many of us come to the field looking for big things to do. And that’s not a bad thing! We want to honor God with our time and talents. We want to see the nations enter the kingdom. But it’s important to remember Jesus’ example. He was familiar with the mundane and faithful to do the small, seemingly insignificant tasks that are the building blocks of the kingdom. May we exhibit the miracle of his grace as we faithfully serve him, in big and small ways.

For those of you from the support community, I’m not asking for permission to be unproductive. I am asking for recognition that our work does not often yield a clear, quantifiable, or immediate return on investment, but that doesn’t make it less valuable. I’m asking you to keep supporting your workers through seasons that may not look impressive in terms of metrics, but they provide critically important time to adapt and learn. May you exhibit the miracle of his grace as you love and support your field workers in whatever tasks the Lord has called them to in this season. 🍷

¹ utmost.org/updated/get-moving-2/

Engaging Gen Z with the Gospel

By **RUMI 2.0** (Pseudonym) | All Bible references taken from the NIV.

The author has been living in the Middle East for nearly four years. She engages in creative communities through writing, education, and art. Her desire is to see new worship rise up with this next generation. You can contact her at UntilIHaveHeard@proton.me

“Okay, hear me out!” Lara shouted from across the room. “In the Quran, it says that Muhammad, peace be upon him, was told to pick up the pen and write. What if we, too, can form our own destinies through manifestation?” These types of comments from Lara are not too uncommon. A few weeks prior, we spent at least an hour talking about prayer, fate, destiny and tarot cards. The thing about working in creative communities in the Middle East is that you really never know what is going to come out of people’s mouths. You can ask if they are religious, and get answers such as, “I’m spiritual,” or “50/50, but I work at a club.” After, you may end up spending hours discussing what that means specifically to them. These types of dialogue have been especially interesting when discussing Jesus, as well as holding onto personal and cultural identity. Many young creatives do not fit the mold of what I was expecting when I came to the Middle East. They use their voices boldly to express their opinions, dress in ways that would give their *Tatas* a heart attack, and explore gender identities that are still illegal in many places in the region. Their actions are not a rejection of spirituality, but evidence of a greater search for freedom, identity, and authenticity. Therefore, the way we engage spiritually with Gen Z must be different than other generations.

Many of my creative, Gen Z friends often quote Rumi. They love how he brought a different perspective to relationship with God. Mewlana Jalaluddin Rumi wrote



about finding oneness with God in spiritual mysticism. Rumi was a 13th-century Islamic scholar, preacher, and poet from modern day Türkiye. His poetry has grown in popularity more recently due to translations being available, as well as the message throughout it. His overall message is unity in the existence of the divine, as well as universal love. Rumi described a relationship with God much like a romantic relationship while also rejecting religious labels. In his poem, “Only Breath”¹, he describes himself as, “Not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi, or Zen. Not any religion or cultural system.” And finishes with, “I belong to the beloved, have seen the two worlds as one and that one call to and know, first, last, outer, inner, only that breath breathing human being.” This form of religion or spirituality is attractive to this new generation, specifically in the Middle East, for a variety of reasons—including breaking away from older generations, wanting an escape from their realities, and seeking out genuine authenticity. While there is truth, beauty, and unity in Rumi’s words, they reveal a desire for transcendence that I believe only Jesus can fulfill.

Many Gen Zers have a desire for different religious practices than the generations that came before. I believe this is partly because they have grown up seeing abuse of power, lack of genuine worship, and people letting their words be one thing and their actions another. I do not attribute this to any one religion, as this has historically been the case in many religious systems. I have seen it in parts of Asia, the Middle East, and America. Gen Z is watching the people that came before them, and where there are holes in theological or religious beliefs, they want answers, as well as an escape from their current realities. This stems from a desire for freedom in their mental health journeys, a break from the materialistic world, and to truly know themselves and their identity. I think it is important to note that the desires are not bad, but merely a reflection of the world

¹ Rumi, “Only Breath,” trans. Coleman Barks, in *The Essential Rumi*, ed. Coleman Barks (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 32.

that we live in. This world is full of war, poverty, abuse of power, and unexplained loss. This generation wants to fix this, and they do this through authentic communities. Many Gen Z individuals from this region are seeking out authenticity, oneness, and community. While they have sought to find them in the traditions of their culture, they have seen firsthand the systems that have been broken long before they were born. Given this, the rise of activism among Gen Z is not a surprise. In a recent study, the United Way² showed that nearly one third of all Zoomers are regularly involved in activism. This generation takes action with their beliefs. I have heard many say that their political beliefs stem from their spiritual ones. As this generation continues to seek out spiritual growth, their actions become an embodiment of their beliefs.

So, what do we do in response? Like any other relationship, we meet people with the love of Jesus. Jesus wants to bring freedom, healing, and identity. In Luke 4:18, Jesus quotes Isaiah saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.” The things that Gen Z is seeking out—manifestation, activism, and mysticism—are the very things that Jesus came to do. What Jesus came to do is for everyone, young and old, rich and poor, Middle Eastern and American. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” We remember that Jesus does not change, but the way that we interact with Gen Z does. Gen Z desires to be fully known, so we must take the time to know them. I get asked all the time, “How do you make friends here?” and I tell them every time to find something that they are passionate about and join communities that have that in common. When we do this, we operate from who we truly are and can stay authentic in the

² United Way NCA. “The Gen Z Activism Survey.” United Way NCA, 5 Mar. 2024, www.unitedwaynca.org/blog/gen-z-activism-survey/.



ministry that we do. I do not believe that this practice is limited to this region. There are people all around us seeking something; when we step into their lives, right where they are, we are bringing the light of Jesus. We do not have the power to change lives, but Jesus does. Through dialogue, asking questions, and sharing truth, we can carry Jesus into the lives of Gen Z.

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Color the World: Bringing it All Home

Artwork by **Kody Friesen**, an artist who especially enjoys using Middle Eastern and Persian art forms to highlight the beauty of Jesus. He and his wife Amy are creators who have spent 20 years among Middle Eastern communities. They now live in Canada with their four children. You can find their work at www.akfriesen.com.



Horizon Beckoning

watercolor by Christine Mesias (Pseudonym)

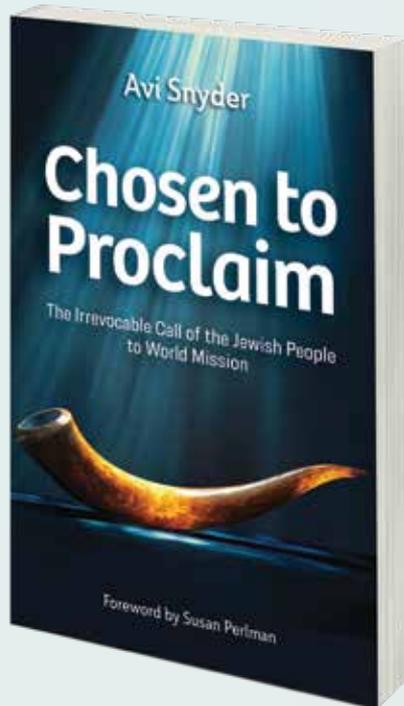
Christine Mesias returned from the field in 2024 and has been working in the Training and Equipping Department of her sending organization as a coach and training specialist.



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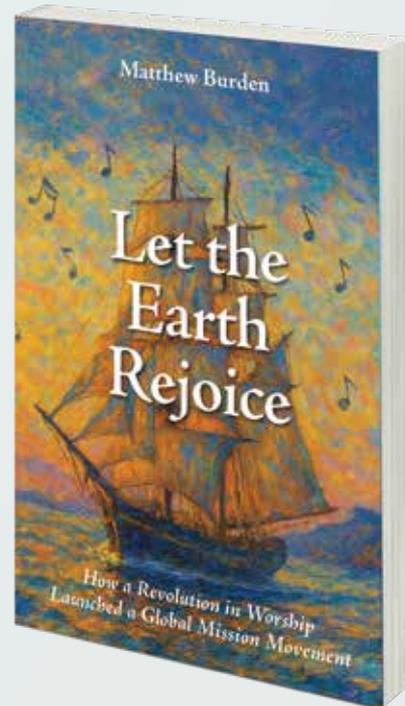


Chosen to Proclaim

Avi Snyder with Foreword by Susan Perlman

What does it mean that the Jewish people are “chosen”? For many, the word evokes confusion, pride, resentment, or even hostility. In *Chosen to Proclaim*, Avi Snyder clarifies this often-misunderstood idea, showing from Scripture and history that God’s irrevocable call upon Israel has always been missional: to be a light to the nations and to proclaim his salvation to the world.

Remarkably, even during times of unbelief, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has used the Jewish people to draw gentiles to himself. And if he can use his people in their unbelief, how much more will he use them once they receive and share the gospel they were created to proclaim? *Chosen to Proclaim* challenges readers to recognize why the Jewish people are essential for the gospel to reach the ends of the earth.



Let the Earth Rejoice

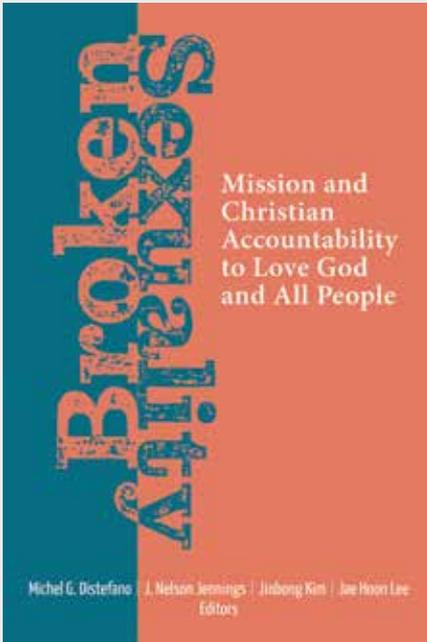
Matthew Burden

Worship and mission have always been intertwined—a bond evident since the earliest days of the church. In the 1700s, two powerful movements reshaped global Christianity: the rise of English congregational hymnody at the beginning of the century, and the launch of a far-reaching Protestant mission movement at its end. *Let the Earth Rejoice* uncovers the surprising connection between these developments, arguing that a revolution in congregational singing helped pave the way for the missionary efforts that followed.

This book lies at the intersection of church history, missiology, and liturgics. It reveals the hidden connection between worship and mission, showing how two waves—one of song, one of mission—emerged from a small group of churches and changed the world.



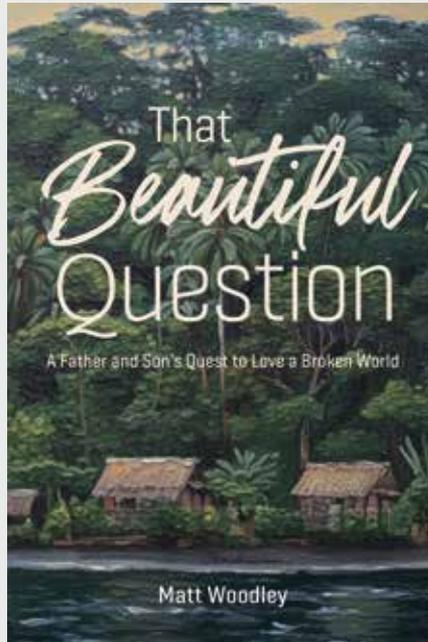
Coming Soon



Broken Sexuality

Based on the 2025 Korean Global Mission Leaders Forum

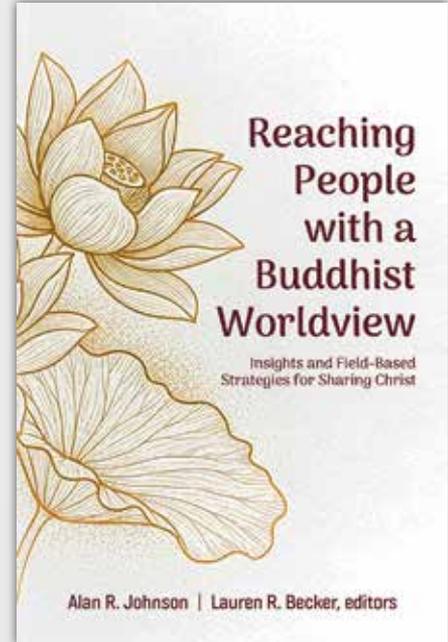
Mission today is both polycentric and multidirectional, resulting in a Christian witness amid diverse—and often conflicting—sexual values. Regardless of the beliefs held by missionaries, agencies, and sending churches, they must discern and apply biblical teaching, despite legal, economic, and international challenges. *Broken Sexuality* addresses these issues directly, affirming that the gospel of Jesus Christ remains good news for people burdened by sexual shame, guilt, confusion, and loneliness.



That Beautiful Question

Matt Woodley

In *That Beautiful Question*, Matt Woodley invites readers into a gripping father-son journey that spans continents. He weaves together the story of his struggles as a pastor recovering from burnout and disillusionment, with that of his son, a young ER doctor in Papua New Guinea, who confronts diseases easily cured in the West but often fatal in the Highlands. Together, they wrestle with a deep and enduring question: Can you truly know the world in all its suffering and beauty and still love it?



Reaching People with a Buddhist Worldview

Alan R. Johnson & Lauren R. Becker

Missionaries and local Christians sharing the gospel have been met with indifference, confusion, or resistance. *Reaching People with a Buddhist Worldview* explores why the message of Jesus often sounds unintelligible and the church feels so foreign to Buddhists. Readers will gain confidence and practical tools to build relationships with Buddhist peoples and partner with local Christians to explore ways to grow communities of faith, revealing Jesus as truly good news.

MARCH

1 Banjar

There are ancient spiritual strongholds that keep the Banjar from putting their faith in the one who walked out of the grave on Easter. The Banjar language is very difficult for other Indonesians to understand. The Muslim Sultan gave the Christians in Kalimantan a large portion of land, and in exchange, he wanted no Christians to evangelize Muslims in the region.

May the LORD give strength to His people! May the LORD bless His people with peace! —Psalm 29:11

- Pray for new believers among this people group to be blessed with strength and peace.
- Pray for hundreds more to join a daily prayer effort for the Banjar.
- Pray for spiritual hunger among the Banjar that will give them the will to embrace Jesus Christ.
- Pray for a powerful movement to Christ. Pray for God to strengthen workers among the Banjar.

2 Tamazight Berber

With so few believers, Tamazight Berbers need outsiders to bring the gospel. In a region that upholds their Islamic faith, Berbers are a hard group to reach.

For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away. —Psalm 31:10

- Pray that this people group will understand that sin drains and destroys, but the Lord offers forgiveness and spiritual refreshment.
- Pray for a spiritual hunger among Tamazight Berbers that will lead them to the cross and the empty grave.
- Pray for Tamazight Berbers to put their faith and hope in Christ, paving the way for disciples to make more disciples.
- Pray for loving workers to go to leaders and find persons of peace who will welcome them into their communities.
- Pray that the Christians would be known by their good fruit and as light in the darkness.

3 Deha

Traditionally, the Deha wove winnowing fans to sift wheat from chaff, but today most sell cloth. For unknown reasons, divorce has become more common among the Deha since India's independence in 1947. The Deha are Hindus who worship Kali, the goddess of destruction, along with regional deities.

Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown His steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city.

—Psalm 31:21

- Pray that this people group will be drawn to the unending love of the Lord, our eternal Heavenly Father.
- Pray for followers of Christ to help the Deha with literacy and economic development.
- Pray that they will soon give praise and worship to the King.
- Pray for a spiritual openness to the ways of Christ.
- Pray for them to have the spiritual hunger it takes to embrace Christ, no matter what the social cost.

4 Xiangcheng

The Xiangcheng build beautiful houses, which have white rocks on the roofs like those of the Qiang. Xiangcheng homes are square, two-story, with colorful decorations around the window frames. The Xiangcheng are fervent adherents of Tibetan Buddhism. Their beliefs form a large part of their identity as a people. The Xiangcheng are one of the most spiritually overlooked people groups in China.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

—Psalm 32:8

- Pray for this people group to accept the Lord's guidance and salvation.
- Pray for the Lord to provide for their physical and spiritual needs as a testimony of His power and love.
- Pray for an unstoppable movement to Christ among them.
- Pray that Chinese Christians go to the Xiangcheng.



5 Kujriya

There may be no Christ followers among the Kujriya. There are likely no Christians among their neighbors, either. How will they hear without a preacher? The remoteness of their villages and their dedication to the Islamic religion present significant obstacles.

Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.
—Psalm 32:10

- Pray for many from this people group to notice this stark difference and turn to the Lord.
- Pray for the Lord to send compassionate and dedicated workers to the Kujriya.
- Pray for the Lord to give the Kujriya family leaders dreams of the holy and risen Christ, and that they will share their dreams with many others.
- Pray for Christians to establish schools for the Kujriya, and that this will help encourage them to follow Christ.

6 Komodo

Komodo National Park is on Indonesia's Komodo Island, and tourism was once the island's main source of revenue. However, rumors of park closures and increased awareness of the dangers posed by Komodo dragons have limited tourism to only the most adventurous visitors. They are Muslim, but they also retain pre-Islamic beliefs.

He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD. —Psalm 33:5

- May this people group seek and find the Lord's unfailing love!
- Ask God to soften the hearts of Komodo family leaders to the gospel and to draw entire families to Himself.
- Ask God to send disciple-makers to the Komodo and to direct them to persons of peace.
- Pray for God's blessing, strengthening, and healing of Komodo families and communities through the abundant life Jesus offers.

7 Muslim Makrani

They are Muslim, but the Makrani perform some Hindu rituals along with Islamic ones. Birth, circumcision, marriage, and death rituals are observed according to Islamic traditions. Other rituals have Hindu roots.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as His heritage! —Psalm 33:12

- May this nation choose the Lord, and no other!
- Pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done among the Makrani.
- Pray for a movement of Makrani households to study the Bible and accept the blessings of Christ.
- Pray that the Makrani will gain no satisfaction from their traditional religion but will instead hunger to know the God who loves them and who has revealed Himself through His son, Jesus the Messiah.

8 Hindu Bhoi

At the wedding, a Bhoi bride and groom walk around the fire seven times. The Bhoi work in Hindu temples and, therefore, have been accorded a high social status. Every house has an altar to Manasamata. Besides this, they have images of Khandoba and a few other gods and goddesses. Nominal Christians who don't truly follow Jesus' teachings may impede the Bhoi's understanding of how Christ changes lives. They must be able to see the difference between disciples of Christ and those who are Christian only in name.

Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in His holy name. —Psalm 33:20–21

- May this people group rejoice in the Lord always.
- Pray they will be zealous to learn of Christ and follow Him.

9 Boya

The word Boya comes from a word meaning “earth diggers.” They have a history of being soldiers and warriors in the armies of South India. Today, most Boya work in agriculture. A small number are employed in government offices. Child labor is prevalent.

Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you. —Psalm 33:22

- Pray for this people group to give their love and devotion to the Lord and be rewarded with hope and joy forever.
- Pray that God will release the Boya to enjoy complete peace with God.
- Pray for the Boya to understand and embrace that Jesus wants to bless their families and neighborhoods.
- Pray for Boya families to be drawn to Jesus and to the Bible so that they may learn more about Him.

10 Southern Barasano

The Southern Barasanos in Colombia are desperately trying to protect their homeland and way of life. They face displacement and violence from logging interests. They make their living through fishing, hunting, and agriculture. Their mythology is closely tied to their shamanistic religion. Their shamans perform rituals that involve psychoactive substances. Christianity might be viewed as the religion of oppressors.

I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. —Psalm 34:1

- May many from this people group praise Him at all times!
- Pray for faithful workers to go to the Southern Barasano who would display Christian love and share Christ.
- Pray the Lord will prepare their hearts to receive Him.
- Pray for a great movement of the Southern Barasano to Christ.



11 Dabarre

Dabarres are a Somali people group that lives only in Somalia. Reaching them would have to be through direct contact and building relationships. They are unlikely to have any outside capacity to be reached by means such as social media. Dabarres follow traditional Islamic practices and beliefs.

Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. —Psalm 34:5

- May there be many from this people group who look only to the Lord for help, and may they be filled with joy and peace.
- Pray for loving and dedicated workers to go to the Dabarres despite the ongoing conflicts.
- Pray for the Lord to bring lasting peace to Somalia.
- Pray the Holy Spirit will lead Dabarre elders to Jesus.

12 Muslim Ghosi

For centuries, the Ghosi have been selling milk. They make their way to nearby homes and sell milk. People believe what they want to believe. It’s challenging for anyone living in a community where everyone adheres to a particular religion. People almost always stay with what they know.

Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O LORD. How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. —Psalm 36:5–7

- Pray for this people group to understand the vastness of the Lord’s faithfulness and righteousness. May they be drawn to Him.
- Pray for prayer warriors who will faithfully intercede for Ghosi hearts to be softened to Jesus Christ.
- Pray that Ghosi leaders will have hearts that are willing to respond to the loving call of the only Savior.

13 Ayamaru

Ayamaru practice “slash and burn” agriculture, and hunt and fish to supplement their diets. Most Ayamarus speak Bahasa, the Indonesian national language, as well as their own language. They believe that spirits inhabit parts of nature. Sacrifices, rituals, and charms must appease the spirits, or they can bring harm to the people.

For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever before me. I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin.
—Psalm 38:17–18

- Pray that this people group finds peace and salvation when they confess their sins to the Lord.
- Ask God to grow the small group of Ayamaru believers in their faith.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to work signs and wonders through the Ayamaru believers to open the minds of others to the gospel.

■ 14 Jola-Felupe

The Jola-Felupe of West Africa believe in living a moral life because if you live a bad life, your soul will become an exiled, roaming spirit. There is Islamic influence among the Jola, but on a practical level, they are mostly animistic. They use charms and sacred objects to communicate with the spirit world, in hopes that the spirits will protect their families, villages, and crops. They also believe these spirits will defend them from converting to Islam or Christianity.

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. —Psalm 42:1

- Pray for this kind of longing for the Lord among today's people group!
- Pray that fear of the spirits will change to faith in Christ when the Jola-Felupe hear of the finished work of our Lord.

■ 15 Brahmin

Brahmins are often proud of their high status in Hinduism. Many have high-paying jobs in the tech industry. They tend to see Christianity as a foreign religion, only for the poor and outcasts. They see themselves as the preservers and teachers of Hinduism.

By day the LORD commands His steadfast love, and at night His song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.
—Psalm 42:8

- Pray for many from this people group to find the Lord's unfailing love and respond with praise and worship.
- Ask the Lord to send loving workers to the Brahmins.
- Pray that the Brahmins would be open to reading the Bible and investigating the claims of Jesus Christ.
- Ask the Lord to raise up a movement to Christ among the Brahmin soon.

■ 16 Kanaujia Brahmin

Kanaujia Brahmins often live two lives. On one hand, they engage in modern Indian society, and on the other, practice and teach the ancient beliefs of Hinduism as revealed in the Vedas. The Vedas are the earliest Hindu writings, written in Sanskrit and dating back to 1500 BC. They want their children to pursue higher education and attain careers as teachers or respected professionals.

Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!
—Psalm 43:3

- Pray that this people group will respond to the Lord's light and truth.
- Pray that the Lord would humble the Kanaujia Brahmins and that they would see themselves as sinners in need of the only Savior.
- Pray that soon Kanaujia Brahmins will embrace and teach the gospel.

■ 17 Kalota

Kalota are engaged yet unreached. There are probably no Christ followers among the Kalota. Very few who speak the Hindi language have bowed their knees to Jesus Christ. There is a high number of atrocities reported in their area, presenting danger to missionaries who would attempt to enter this community with the gospel.

The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted! —Psalm 47:9

- Pray that the Lord will find honor and worship from today's people group. May they understand that they belong to Him.
- Pray that Indian believers will help them to begin their own movement to Christ.
- Pray for the physical and spiritual safety of the evangelism teams.
- Pray for faithful intercessors and workers to go to the Kalota.
- Pray for spiritual openness when they hear of the claims of Christ.



18 Yunnan Shui

Yunnan Shuis are animists. Living in one of China's least-reached provinces, the Yunnan Shui have little or no exposure to the gospel. The Yunnan Shui do not see living Christianity in practice unless they meet one of the rare believers.

The Mighty One, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.
—Psalm 50:1

- Pray that today's people group will respond to God's summons to come to Him!
- Pray for many to meet vibrant believers.
- Pray for the authority of Christ to bind and hinder spiritual forces and lead them from darkness to light.
- Pray for signs and wonders to bring about breakthroughs, with rapid multiplication of disciples and churches.
- Pray for bold workers driven by the love of the Holy Spirit to go to the Shui in Yunnan Province.

19 Jingar

Jingar obtained its name from the word jins, meaning "saddle." This refers to their traditional occupation of crafting saddles for horses and camels. They still make saddles, but many of them also make embroidered shoes. A few work in agriculture.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. —Psalm 51:2–3

- Pray for true heart-felt repentance to come to leaders of this people group.
- Pray for spiritual openness to the things of Christ.
- Pray for Christ to heal them in such a way that they no longer put their faith in anyone else.
- Pray for an unstoppable movement to Christ among them.

20 Yangliu Lalu

The Yangliu Lalu are animists and ancestor worshipers, believing that the souls of the dead remain on earth rather than passing into another world. Despite living near other Tibeto-Burman groups where Christianity has taken root, the Yangliu Lalu themselves have never had a known church or fellowship.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. —Psalm 51:4

- Pray leaders among this people group will understand the depth of their sin just as King David did.
- Pray for dedicated workers to go to the Yangliu Lalu and share Christ in ways that resonate with their culture.
- Pray for the rise of Yangliu Lalu believers who will become disciples and disciple-makers, planting many seeds of faith in Christ in their community.

21 Hindu Kachhia

The name Kachhia refers to "vegetable-growers" in the Gujarati language. Men use the term Patel in their names. There are several divisions among them based on economic levels or landholdings. They will likely find it challenging to comprehend the gospel because it is so different from everything they have ever known. People in their region have been hostile to the gospel.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. —Psalm 51:7

- May members of this people group be broken, and willing to repent and follow the Lord.
- Pray the Holy Spirit will move upon the Kachhia community as the gospel moves through India.
- Pray that a movement to Christ will grow among the Kachhia community.
- Pray for record-high crop yields and rising educational levels.

22 Sawaria Brahmin

Often, a busy Sawaria Brahmin will put off spiritual discussions as something to address later in life. Their main needs involve relational strains that are usually kept behind closed doors. Modernization is breaking down family units, which have been the glue to society for many generations, and loneliness is increasingly a problem. They are expected to achieve much, but ironically, achieving much can be an empty pursuit.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. —Psalm 51:10

- Pray for leaders among this people group to have hearts that seek to be clean before the Lord, and that they will teach others His ways.
- Pray for Christ to reveal Himself to Sawaria Brahmin leaders.
- Pray for a disciple-making movement to emerge among every Brahmin community.

23 Dhanuk

Dhanuks are occupied with fishing and animal husbandry. Many earn their livelihood by working as agricultural laborers and household servants. Dhanuks believe in magic, witchcraft, and ghosts. The Dhanuk community speaks nearly thirty languages. Evangelistic and church planting projects need to accommodate these language subdivisions.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Psalm 51:12

- Pray that when some from this people group accept the ways of God that they will be refreshed with joy and share it with others.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to give them a desire to seek and encounter spiritual truth found only in Christ
- Pray for the low-status Dhanuk community to be able to care properly for their families.
- Pray that they prioritize education for their children and that schools are accessible.

24 Hindu Batwal

The Batwal community provided the traditional watchmen for villages. Many rural Batwal have started to migrate to towns and cities. The main occupations of the Batwal are agriculture, government jobs, transport, trade, and commerce. The Batwal are divided into 13 clans.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. —Psalm 51:17

- Pray for the Lord to break the spirits of members of this people group and bless them with joy of salvation and mercy.
- Pray for a spiritual desire to come to the Batwal so that they will seek and find the Holy One of God, Jesus Christ.
- Pray that answers to prayer will give the Batwal a thirst to know more about the Lord Jesus.
- Pray for believers to go to the Batwal and help them with both their physical and spiritual needs.

25 So Tri

Most So Tri are animists, but Theravada Buddhism is growing in prominence because of influence from the Lao and Phutai. There are a few believers, but the majority of So Tri are unevangelized and have no contact with Christians.

You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? —Psalm 56:8

- Pray for members of this people group to turn to the Lord with their sorrows and trust Him to wipe away their tears and replace it with eternal joy.
- Ask God to send laborers to share God's grace and truth with the So Tri.
- Pray for a strong church planting movement to emerge in their midst.
- Pray for believers anointed by the Holy Spirit to encounter the So Tri.
- Ask God to give the So Tri an abundant harvest this year as a testimony of His goodness and power.

26 Dayak Pasir

Rich natural resources and fertile lands of the Dayak Pasir do not automatically make their life better. The income they earn is sufficient only for their daily needs. One reason is that their means of transportation is limited. This makes it difficult for them to bring their products to market. The Dayak Pasir are folk Muslims.

For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken. —Psalm 62:1–2

- Pray that many from this people group will make Christ the rock of their salvation this decade.
- Pray for loving workers to go to them and help them with their physical needs.
- Pray for the Lord to send a powerful gospel witness to them.
- Pray for them to have the spiritual hunger it takes to respond to the claims of Jesus no matter what the cost.

27 Saharan Arab

In the modern Arab world, traditional values have undergone significant changes. However, many of the Saharan Arabs still live as desert shepherds. They move their herds to the desert during the rainy season and move out of the desert during the summer. Their remoteness and the lack of nearby Christian believers are two factors that keep them in spiritual darkness.

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah —Psalm 62:8

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will draw many from this people group to trust the Lord at all times and share their hearts with Him.
- Pray for God to send abundant rain to the Saharan Desert as a testimony to the Arabs of His goodness and sovereignty.
- Ask God to open the hearts of the Saharan Arabs to the message of salvation.



28 Hindu Kachari

The Hindu Kachari have a cultural heritage and a history of significant contributions to their region. They are known for their unique architectural style. Their religion is a mixture of local religion and Hinduism. Bihu, their main festival, is celebrated with their neighbors. They also celebrate an important festival each April, known as Taro Chira.

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. —Psalm 63:1

- Pray that hundreds from this people group will earnestly seek God and find Him.
- Pray for many Holy Spirit-anointed workers to go to the Kacharis.

29 Hindu Dusadh

Largely because of their low status, Dusadh have had to find creative, though often demeaning ways of making a living. They are famous for catching wild animals, extracting honey from beehives, and even lower status jobs, such as taking insects off the backs of cattle or begging. They are often unemployed. Christian workers need to approach them with respect, humility, and love.

Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. —Psalm 63:3

- May many from this people group understand this and act upon it.
- Ask God to provide good schools for their children.
- May He pave the way to improve their standard of living.
- Pray for loving, respectful Christian workers to go to the Dusadh community.

30 Adamawa Fulani

Some Adamawa Fulani have moved beyond pastoral life to become scholarly and influential community leaders with roles in politics. Their children are raised to value generosity, honesty, and modesty. This blend of religious devotion, cultural tradition, and emerging leadership defines the Adamawa Fulani as both resilient and adaptable.

So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips. —Psalm 63:4–5

- Pray that much praise reaches the heavens from this people group.
- Pray that the few followers of Christ among the Adamawa Fulani would be filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit in such a way that their Muslim neighbors will want Christ in their lives as well.
- Pray that the Lord would soften and prepare the hearts of the Fulani to receive the gospel.

31 Pekal

If a newcomer wants to live with the Pekal, they must cook a meal to share with their chosen clan. They must also fulfill customary obligations and customary duties of a Pekal community member. After this, the person will be formally considered a part of the clan and will be treated like all other Pekal.

Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple! —Psalm 65:4

- Pray for many from this people group to find joy in the Lord.
- Pray that council leaders come to Jesus Christ and lead their people into a movement to Christ.
- Pray that they will look past their traditional religious practices and come to the revelation of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to Pekal leaders in Indonesia.
- Pray for their hearts and minds to be open to the Bible and to Christ as the only way to the Father.

APRIL

1 Gwama

Most of the Gwama are Muslim, but there are also followers of the traditional religion. They have their own ritual specialists. There might be no Christians among the Gwama. Additionally, they lack access to electricity, medicine, clean water, and quality medical care.

By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; —Psalm 65:5

- Thank the Lord that He is the hope of all the earth and the hope of all nations!
- Ask the Lord to send Christian medical personnel, teachers, and workers to reach the Gwama with the gospel.
- Pray that the Gwama would receive resources that share the gospel in an understandable language.
- Pray that the Lord would soften their hearts to the good news of Jesus Christ.

2 Bhoyar

The name Bhoyar comes from the word “bhor” meaning “morning.” They were expelled from the caste by the Rajputs and went to the central provinces. The Panwari are thought to be the highest sub-caste of the Bhoyar because they claim to have descended from the Panwar Rajputs who protected the city of Dhar in the past. Whoever reaches them must reach family and village heads who can lead others to the only Savior.

So that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs. You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy. —Psalm 65:8

- May many from this people group stand in awe of the Lord’s deeds and joyfully follow Him.
- Pray that instead of being “religious,” the Bhoyar will desire a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Pray that spiritual barriers will be broken from within this Hindu people.

3 Ben

Ben people are free to choose their own partners. After the sun sets, a man will go to the home of the woman he desires and play musical instruments to win her favor. They live in a region rich in natural resources, including coal, copper, iron, lead, and graphite. There are very few known followers of Christ among the Ben; however, many of the neighboring Wa are Christian.

Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of His name; give to him glorious praise! —Psalm 66:1-2

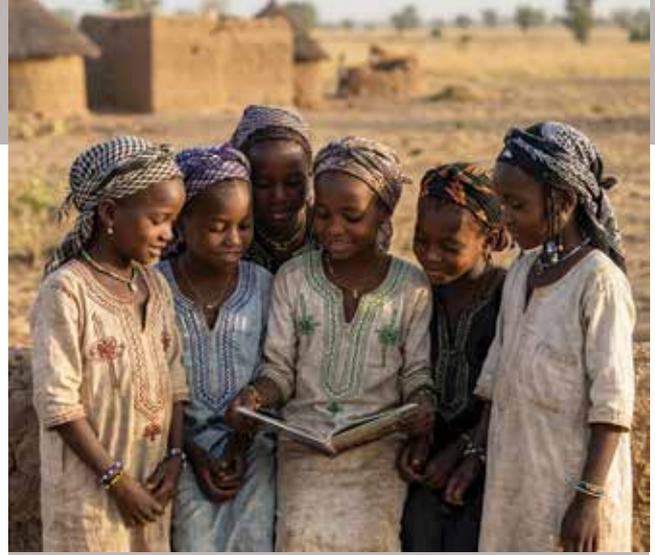
- May there be many from this people group doing just this very soon!
- Pray for the authority of Christ to lead them from darkness to light.
- Pray for signs and wonders to happen among them.
- Pray for a rapid multiplication of disciples and house churches.

4 Gandla

The Gandla practice Hinduism, the ancient religion of India. Hinduism is a catch-all phrase for the local religions of South Asia, so it is very diverse. At the popular level, Hindus worship and serve the gods of the Hindu pantheon. There are other Hindus who are much more philosophical, especially among the Brahmins. Such a situation means potential gospel workers will need to take extra care to understand their spiritual beliefs.

Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of His praise be heard. —Psalm 66:8

- Pray that today's people group will loudly sing His praises to other nations.
- Pray that the council leaders come to Jesus Christ and open the doors for a movement to Christ.
- Pray that gospel recordings and the JESUS Film will become readily available to them.



5 Fulbe Futa

Fulbe children belong to age-sets that last until marriage, with each set including all children born within a three or four-year period. Members of an age-set often attend school together, participate in community labor, and may assist one another with bride service duties. Efforts to evangelize these people have yielded only a few Fulbe believers. They are very devoted to their Islamic religion and see it as a fulfillment of their needs.

For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. —Psalm 66:10

- Pray for the Lord to test and purify today's people group.
- Pray that God would open their eyes to understand that salvation based on works is insufficient.
- Pray for the effectiveness of the JESUS Film among the Fulbe throughout Africa.

6 Hindu Gadaria

Low literacy rates can be an obstacle to the gospel, but not necessarily. If oral means of communication are effectively used, Hindu Gadaria individuals can readily understand. To do this, someone would need to understand their culture and their felt needs to get them to pay attention.

Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul. —Psalm 66:16

- Pray for bold testimonies of the Lord's deeds to come from today's people group.
- Pray for many Gadaria families to embrace the Savior. Pray that soon they will open the eyes of their hearts to the Lord of lords.
- Pray for the widows and orphans among them, that they will be well cared for.

7 Amma Kodaga

The Amma Kodaga enjoy their cultural life, particularly on special occasions, such as traditional festivals, music, and dance. The Amma Kodaga community places a high value on family unity, hospitality, and reverence for elders, ensuring the transmission of religious and cultural traditions to future generations. There is likely no single Christ follower among the Amma Kodagas, so they will need to hear the gospel from outsiders. In most traditional cultures, outsiders are not trusted until they demonstrate their trustworthiness for an extended period of time.

That your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. —Psalm 67:2

- Pray that His ways will soon be known by today's people group.
- Pray their hearts will be open for a movement of disciples who will then be willing to disciple others.

8 Pando

Karma is a festival in celebration of the Pando liquor god. Everyone, young and old, men and women, will drink the whole day. The Pandos resist the gospel truths, which do not allow for a lifestyle of excess. They need a desire for holy living.

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah —Psalm 67:3–4

- Pray that this day will come soon!
- Pray for the Lord to prepare the hearts of the Pando to grasp and believe the gospel.
- Pray for the Lord to bless the Pando with adequate education and medical facilities.
- Pray that the Lord will bless the Pando so abundantly that they will see that He is the only one worthy of praise and worship.

9 Kaili Ledo

Family units are highly valued among the Kaili Ledo in Indonesia's Sulawesi Island. The family always makes decisions collectively, and they especially value the traditions of their ancestors. Marriage arrangements often blend Islamic and traditional influences. After marriage, the couple usually lives with one of their families until they have a child.

God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him! —Psalm 67:7

- Pray for fear and worship to rise up from all peoples in the 2020s.
- Pray that the Kaili Ledo seek and find the Lord even within a Muslim atmosphere.
- Pray for them to experience and share God's glory and power.

10 Naita

The Naita of central India have Islam as their main religion, but there are Hindus among them. There may be no Christ followers among these Muslims, and few Christians live in their part of India. They have no one to share Christ with them at this time.

Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in His holy habitation. —Psalm 68:5

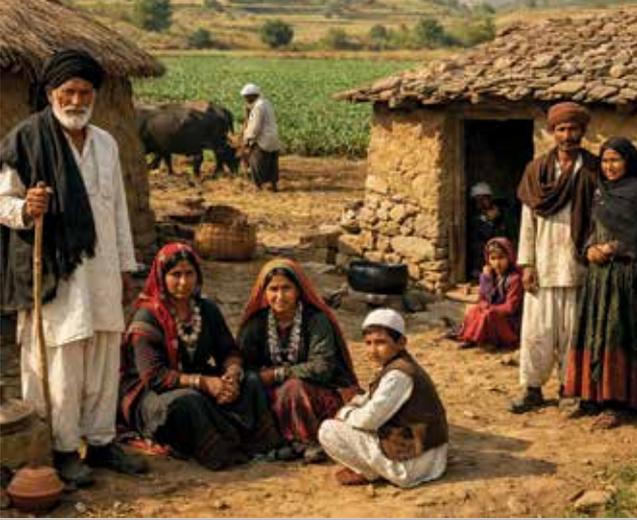
- May the widows and orphans among this people group become part of His family.
- Pray that God will give them dreams and visions that lead them to Jesus Christ as their Lord.
- Pray for faithful intercessors and workers to go to them until they have a movement to Christ.
- Pray for an intense spiritual hunger among the Naita that will lead them to the cross.

11 Muslim Ghanchi

By tradition, Ghanchi manufacture cooking oil. The Ghanchi name supposedly came from "ghanch" meaning a traditional oil pressing machine. They press the cooking oil from seeds. Many have become businessmen and work in transportation.

Sing to God, sing praises to His name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; His name is the LORD; exult before him! —Psalm 68:4

- May today's people group feel His holy presence when they worship Him.
- Pray that existing Indian churches will produce many disciples among the Ghanchi.
- Pray for Ghanchi elders and religious leaders to have dreams of the risen and victorious Christ.



12 Hindu Gujar

Gujar Muslims are seasonal nomads who live in windowless, one-room houses during sedentary growing seasons, whereas the Hindus are settled farmers who live in the same place all year. Gujar are primarily concerned with improving their economic situation. They typically neglect their spiritual lives or settle for traditional Hindu rituals.

Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. Selah —Psalm 68:19

- May today's people group allow the Lord to carry them in His powerful arms.
- Pray that believers will go to the Gujar in friendship and love, and that they will be given the privilege to share the gospel message.
- Pray for the Lord to prepare loving and tenacious servants to go to Gujar to share Christ.
- Pray God will encourage the Gujar believers and give them a vision to reach their own people.

13 Muslim Gujar

There are both Hindu and Muslim Gujars in India today. Muslim Gujars also reside in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Muslims are usually very closed to the gospel for historical and theological reasons. Few Gujar hear about Christ the King of kings in their lifetimes.

O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, Selah to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out His voice, His mighty voice. —Psalm 68:32–33

- May all the nations praise Him!
- Pray for hundreds to trust Jesus and deepen their relationships with Him, no matter what obstacles they encounter. Pray for God to bring about His purpose for the Muslim Gujar.
- Pray for Christians to have love, joy, peace, and patience as they tell Muslim Gujars about the King of kings.

14 Moger

Most Moger live in Karnataka, described as South India's most spiritually needy state. They face the threat of militant Hindus in that state.

Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the skies. Awesome is God from His sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to His people. Blessed be God! —Psalm 68:34–35

- Pray for many from today's people group to tell of God's power and goodness to others.
- Pray for their protection.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to open their spiritual eyes.
- Pray for nearby Christians to become burdened to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the Moger.
- Pray that the Moger will come into contact with Christian believers in other communities who are real disciples of Jesus, people who will demonstrate the love of Christ to them.

15 Lao Wieng

The Thai name this group Wieng because the descendants of prisoners of war originally came from Wieng (Vientiane) in Laos. Over the past 20 years, a significant number of Lao Wieng have moved to Bangkok in search of employment. Despite their long separation from their homeland, the Lao Wieng retain different cultural and linguistic traits even while living among the Thai.

You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. —Psalm 73:24

- Pray that today's people group will seek God's counsel and be led to His glorious destiny.
- Pray for God to extend mercy on the Lao Wieng, doing whatever it takes to place them in a position to receive Him.
- Pray for them to understand and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.



16 Kandera

Kandera of India are both unengaged and unreached. The term “Kandera” is derived from “Kandir,” associated with arrows. The community also has a historical connection to cotton ginning, a profession some Kanderas chose due to challenges in securing employment in native armies during the Mughal invasion. Their community is split between Hindu and Muslim segments.

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. —Psalm 73:25–26

- Pray for many from today’s people to know that they must have no other God but the Lord.
- Pray for a movement to Christ to flourish among this people group soon.
- Pray for the Kandera to be blessed with peace, joy, and spiritual prosperity as they follow Jesus Christ.

17 Bharia Bhumia

The Bharia Bhumia is a forest-dwelling scheduled tribe of Madhya Pradesh. They worship deities like Hanuman, the monkey god. Jesus needs to be presented to them as more than just another deity in their pantheon of gods. A low literacy rate suggests that printed presentations of the gospel will be inadequate for this community. Stories from scripture, music, recordings, and videos are all needed and useful.

When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. Selah —Psalm 75:3

- Pray that many from today’s people group will allow Him to be their firm foundation in times of trouble.
- Pray for teachers and gospel workers to help them become firmly established as followers of Jesus.
- Pray for love and Holy Spirit anointing to distinguish the lives of the few Bharia Christian believers.

18 Bhunjia

Bhunjia have two major groups, namely Chokutia and Chinda, in the states of Chhattisgarh and Odisha. In some villages, they live with people of other castes. Not only are there very few Christ followers among them, but they live in parts of India where hardly anyone bows their knees to Jesus Christ.

But I will declare it forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. —Psalm 75:9

- Pray for many from today’s people group to tell of God’s wondrous deeds to their families.
- Pray that God will send culturally sensitive workers who will show them the way to the cross.
- Pray for a movement to Christ to flourish among this people group.
- Pray for the Bhunjia to be blessed with peace, joy, and spiritual prosperity as they follow Jesus Christ.

19 Muslim Gujjar

You may not have heard of the Gujjar, but you are probably familiar with their infamous ancestors, the Huns. Gujjars continue to practice a nomadic lifestyle. In their constant striving to survive, the Gujjar haven’t had a fair opportunity to hear, understand, and accept God’s invitation to a relationship. Their commitment to Sunni Islam also poses a challenge to acceptance of the gospel.

Glorious are you, more majestic than the mountains full of prey. —Psalm 76:4

- Pray that this people group will realize the eternal majesty and glory of the Lord, and give Him praise.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to speak to the Gujjar, softening their hearts.
- Pray for workers who will help with education and medical care.
- Pray that soon, Gujjar disciples will make more disciples, spreading Christ’s glory throughout India.

20 Hajam

Many Hajams own barber shops or salons, while others serve at family events, trimming hair for weddings and funerals. Some Hajam also carry out circumcisions, act as matchmakers, or assist in childbirth. This makes them important in both social and religious traditions. While most are Sunni Muslims, Hajam women often wear a nose stud and even the Hindu-style bindi, reflecting cultural overlap with their neighbors.

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake! —Psalm 79:9

- Pray that many from this people group will call out to the Lord as desperately as the psalmist did in this verse.
- Ask the Lord to send loving workers who will share the gospel with humility and compassion.
- Pray for a movement to Christ that spreads within the Hajam community, bringing hope and transformation to families.

21 Mirisia Zuruk

The Mirisia Zuruk have only one primary school. Their livestock, which is their livelihood, is suffering from a lack of food and water. They are having trouble adjusting to sedentary lives. They believe in Allah for salvation, but in their daily lives, they put their faith in the spirit world. They do not understand the centrality of Christ.

Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me! —Psalm 81:8

- Pray for this people group to heed God's warning and listen to Him!
- Pray for a powerful awakening that draws their hearts to Christ, and that will enrich the Mirisia Zuruk community.
- Pray for spiritual openness to Jesus Christ, unhindered by traditional spiritual beliefs that may stand in the way of the living faith in Jesus.

22 Tima

During the past 50 years, the Tima have undergone many cultural, religious, social, and political changes. Many parts of Tima society are changing, such as its language, dances, songs, games, and religious beliefs. Islam has largely replaced their traditional religion.

But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. —Psalm 81:11–12

- Pray that this will be the year when this people group stops following their own stubborn desires and begins to follow the Lord.
- Pray for the Tima to hear from the Holy Spirit and be drawn to Jesus Christ, the only Savior.
- Pray for peace with South Sudan, and for all tribes and peoples to experience revival fire, leading them to the cross.
- Pray for the entire Nuba Mountain region to be stable and safe, and for the tribes in the area to prosper.

23 Kadera

Weddings among the Kadera involve Hindu rituals such as the exchange of garlands, sacred fire ceremonies, and celebrations marked by music and dance. They need better infrastructure, roads, education, healthcare, and vocational training to improve their livelihoods. Addressing these needs will help the Kadera achieve greater socio-economic stability.

My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. —Psalm 84:2

- Pray that the Lord will raise up many from this people group who have this kind of heart for being in the presence of the loving Lord.
- Pray for them to have access to roads, clean water, and education, so their standard of living will improve.
- Pray for the Lord to give a record harvest for the Kadera as a testimony of His goodness and power.
- Pray that God will send culturally sensitive missionaries who will show them the way to the cross.

24 Hindu Dharhi

Though the primary religion practiced by the Dharhi is Islam, there are also Hindus in the greater Dharhi community. Whenever there is a religious divide, the community divides itself by religious affiliation. Like many people groups in India, the Dharhi were once all Hindu until Muslim invaders thrust Islam into this part of South Asia.

O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!
—Psalm 84:12

- Pray for many from this people group to find joy and hope in trusting the Lord Almighty.
- Pray for the Dharhi culture to be renewed and enhanced by a work of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray that soon the Dharhi will have a faith in Christ that leads them to live honorable lives that draw others to the Savior.

25 Zhugqu Tibetan

The Zhugqu Tibetans carry a long history. Before Buddhism took root, they followed the ancient Bon religion, which taught that mountains are sacred. They pray to the mountain gods for peace, protection, thriving herds, and good harvests, hoping to secure the blessings needed for survival in a challenging environment.

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to His people, to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly. —Psalm 85:8

- Pray that those who follow the Lord among this people group will never return to their old ways.
- Pray for the Lord to reveal Himself to families in ways they can recognize and understand.
- Pray that their hearts will be drawn away from fear of spirits to the Lord of lords.
- Pray for a vibrant movement to Christ to rise up in their communities, bringing hope and transformation for future generations.



26 Hazara

Can you name a Muslim people who other Muslims have persecuted within their own country? The Shia Muslim Hazara have been the recipients of attacks by Afghan Sunni Muslims for centuries. At one time, Hazaras made up half the nation's population. Today, they make up only about one-tenth. Although they have a long history of persecution, they are known for their resilience.

Surely His salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. —Psalm 85:9

- Pray for the land of this people group to soon be filled with His glory and mercy!
- Ask the Lord to give each Hazara the opportunity to hear a clear presentation of the gospel.
- Pray that the handful of Hazara believers will be bold in sharing their faith.
- Pray that Hazara believers will be supernaturally protected as they share the gospel.

27 Muslim Chinese Hui

Distinct from other Chinese ethnic groups, the Hui are united by their Islamic faith and practices. The majority follow Sunni Muslim beliefs. Their traditions—such as clothing, language, and lifestyle—blend Chinese culture with Islamic distinctives. Those distinctives include daily prayers, halal dietary practices, and a community life centered on the mosque. This combination of Chinese cultural integration and religious identity continues to define the Hui.

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. —Psalm 86:5

- Thank the Lord that He is eager to offer love and forgiveness to people who turn to Him for help!
- Pray for Hui culture to be renewed and enhanced by a work of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to move among their family and community leaders to seek His face and enjoy His blessings.



28 Habbania Baggara

The Habbania, a subgroup of the Baggara, live a nomadic lifestyle. Each year, they move their herds twice to find grazing land. Before changing locations, the Habbania usually plant sorghum, sesame, millet, and beans in their fields, harvesting the crops on their return. Mission agencies have ministered among the Baggara tribes but have met little success.

All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. —Psalm 86:9–10

- Pray for many from this people group to understand this.
- Pray for spiritual openness to the only Savior.
- Pray that God will raise up long-term workers to go to each Baggara subgroup.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will complete the work among the Habbania through adequate discipleship.

29 Sikh Khatri

The Sikh Khatri are a trading caste with a long history in South Asia. Past census records listed more than 700 subdivisions within the community. Traditionally, they have been involved in banking and moneylending, though some have also taken up farming.

A God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him? —Psalm 89:7

- Pray that many from today's people group will understand that the only God is the Lord, and they must turn to Him. Pray they will be in awe of His might.
- Pray for the Sikh Khatri to recognize their need for a savior and to come to see that God has provided that Savior in Jesus Christ.
- Pray that many will begin to seek knowledge of the Lord and receive faith to believe.
- Pray for teachers and mentors who can help new believers grow strong in their understanding and walk with the Lord.

30 E

While this group calls themselves "E", the Chinese call them Wuse, a derogatory name meaning "five colors." The E celebrate the traditional Chinese festivals, the most important of which are the Spring Festival and the Chinese New Year.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you. —Psalm 89:14

- Pray that today's people group will seek and find His righteousness and justice.
- Pray that they will be thankful for His unfailing love.
- Pray for the Lord to intervene in the daily lives of their families, resulting in many of the E learning about the Lord.
- Pray for their hearts to be drawn to the Lord of lords.
- Ask God for loving workers to serve among the E, especially through a church planting movement.
- Pray these churches will spread in their communities and throughout Guangxi Province.



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