

A photograph of three men in a professional setting shaking hands outdoors. The man on the left is wearing a blue and white checkered shirt and glasses, smiling broadly. The man in the center is wearing a purple shirt and has his back to the camera. The man on the right is wearing a dark blue polo shirt and glasses, also smiling. The background shows a blurred outdoor area with trees and a building.

Connect

[ON MISSION]



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[ON MISSION]

On Mission highlights missionaries, chaplains and churches working to reach North America and the world for Christ. On Mission is a publication of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The magazine is also privileged to tell the stories of missionaries serving with the International Mission Board.

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Connected to the Southern Baptist family

By Kevin Ezell, NAMB president (@kevezell)

When I met Dan Coleman a few years ago, he was a church planter with a vision for reaching the state of Maine for Jesus, but he didn't have a lot of resources. Maine can be a lonely place for a Southern Baptist church planter. There are only a handful of SBC churches, and fewer than one percent of residents identify as SBC. Across Maine, only 22 percent of residents attend a church of any kind on a weekly basis—one of the lowest rates in the nation.

Still, God was working through Dan's church plant, and his congregation had grown to 200. In fact, they had outgrown their meeting space in Augusta. A church building across town was for sale, but the \$1 million price tag was impossible for a church of that size.

Because of Southern Baptist resources sent to NAMB through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® and Cooperative Program, NAMB is able to give loans to church plants like Dan's. Most commercial lenders would not touch a church plant, but our in-house property buyer was able to negotiate the \$1 million price down to \$400,000, and we were able to provide the church with the loan. Overnight, his church went from a building with the capacity for 75 people to a building that holds 500. His church now averages 1,100 in weekend services.

This story is only possible because Dan is connected to a greater SBC family. I see the difference it makes every single day. Because of that connection, Dan is not alone. Now, his church is training several church planting interns who will soon be planting churches in the Northeast.

This kind of a network means the world to our church planters and missionaries. Yes, they need financial resources, but even more importantly, they need prayer and to know they are not forgotten. I hope you will take a moment and visit PrayForPlanters.com. We will connect you with a missionary for whom you can pray. It's a simple, easy way you can start having an impact right now. [\[OM\]](#)

Support church planters with your prayer at PrayForPlanters.com. Give to support missions in North America at namb.net/Donate.

PRAY

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Measured



Getting social

For over a decade, social media has played a vital role in North American culture. On average, U.S. adults spend about 10 hours and 39 minutes a day consuming social media. Percentage of U.S. Internet users who access social networks weekly:

70% Facebook
(36% between the ages of 18–34)

32% Instagram
(46% between the ages of 18–34)

30% Twitter
(40% between the ages of 18–34)

25% Snapchat
(53% between the ages of 18–34)

25% Pinterest
(38% between the ages of 18–34)

Source: TIME, March 13, 2017, AdWeek.com, June 27, 2016

Heard

“If I am not engaged in the mission, there is a deficiency in my daily walk with Jesus.”

Vance Pitman, pastor of Hope Church in Las Vegas, Nevada, at the Send Conference in Long Beach, February 2017.

Source: NAMB

“When we avoid not only our own suffering, but the suffering of others, I believe what we are really avoiding is the cross. Embracing refugees, welcoming them, is welcoming Jesus. And we are missing out on the opportunity to do that when we hold them at arm’s length.”

Audrey Assad, contemporary Christian recording artist and daughter of a Syrian refugee, on the refugee crisis.

Source: Blaine Hogan Vimeo account

“The only places we don’t see Muslims coming to Christ in great numbers are in the places we aren’t going.”

Nik Ripkin, IMB missionary, expert on the persecuted church in Muslim contexts and author of *The Insanity of God*, at the Send Conference in Long Beach, February 2017.

Source: NAMB

“These ministry hubs will serve their surrounding areas and become a destination for Southern Baptists who want to send mission teams.”

David Melber, vice president of Send Relief at NAMB, on the establishment of ministry hubs that will provide mercy ministries and opportunities for Southern Baptists to serve.

Source: Baptist Press, February 10, 2017

America’s aging pastors

In partnership with Pepperdine University, Barna recently released a new study on the ages of American pastors. The study found that the median age of pastors today is 54, while in 1992, the median age was only 44. The study also found the percentage of pastors who are 65 and older has tripled since 1992, while only one in seven pastors today is under 40.

Source: Barna.com, March 1, 2017

Independent living?



Around 40% of recent college grads are receiving help from their parents to pay for rent. On average, 22- to 24-year-olds receive about \$3,000 a year from their parents to make ends meet.

Source: The New York Times, February 9, 2017

Church could lower risk of suicide

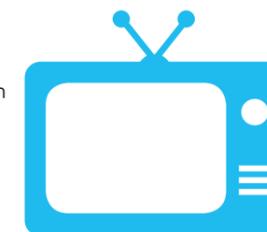
Regular church attendance could lead to a decrease in suicide for women. A recent Harvard University study found Protestant women were less likely to commit suicide than those who did not attend church. Catholic women were seven times less likely to commit suicide than Protestant women.

Source: JAMANetwork.com, August 2016

The change in media consumption

Mainly due to the younger generation’s reliance on smartphones and laptops for media consumption, the proportion of American homes without a TV has doubled since 2009 from 1.3% to 2.6% in 2015.

Source: The Week, March 17, 2017



Noted

A spreading famine

There are more than 20 million people across Africa and the Middle East facing starvation. Famine has already claimed lives in Somalia, while Yemen, South Sudan and Nigeria are also on the verge of famine. The U.N. is calling this the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II.

Source: The Week, March 31, 2017

Wealth in perspective

More than 3 billion people—about half of the world’s population—live on less than \$2.50 a day. More than 1.3 billion live on less than \$1.25 a day. One billion of those in poverty are children, and UNICEF has reported that 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. On average, Americans spend over \$14 a week on coffee, meaning their coffee budget represents many people’s entire weekly spending.

Sources: RelevantMagazine.com, May 17, 2016; DoSomething.org; CoffeeReview.com

Biblical relevance

According to a recent five-year academic study, churches teaching a literal interpretation of the Bible and are more theologically conservative grow faster than churches with liberal alignments. The study showed only 50% of clergy from declining churches agreed conversion to Christianity was important, compared to 100% of clergy from growing churches. The study also showed a majority of growing churches featured contemporary worship services.

Source: TheGuardian.com, November 17, 2016

Losing the war on drugs



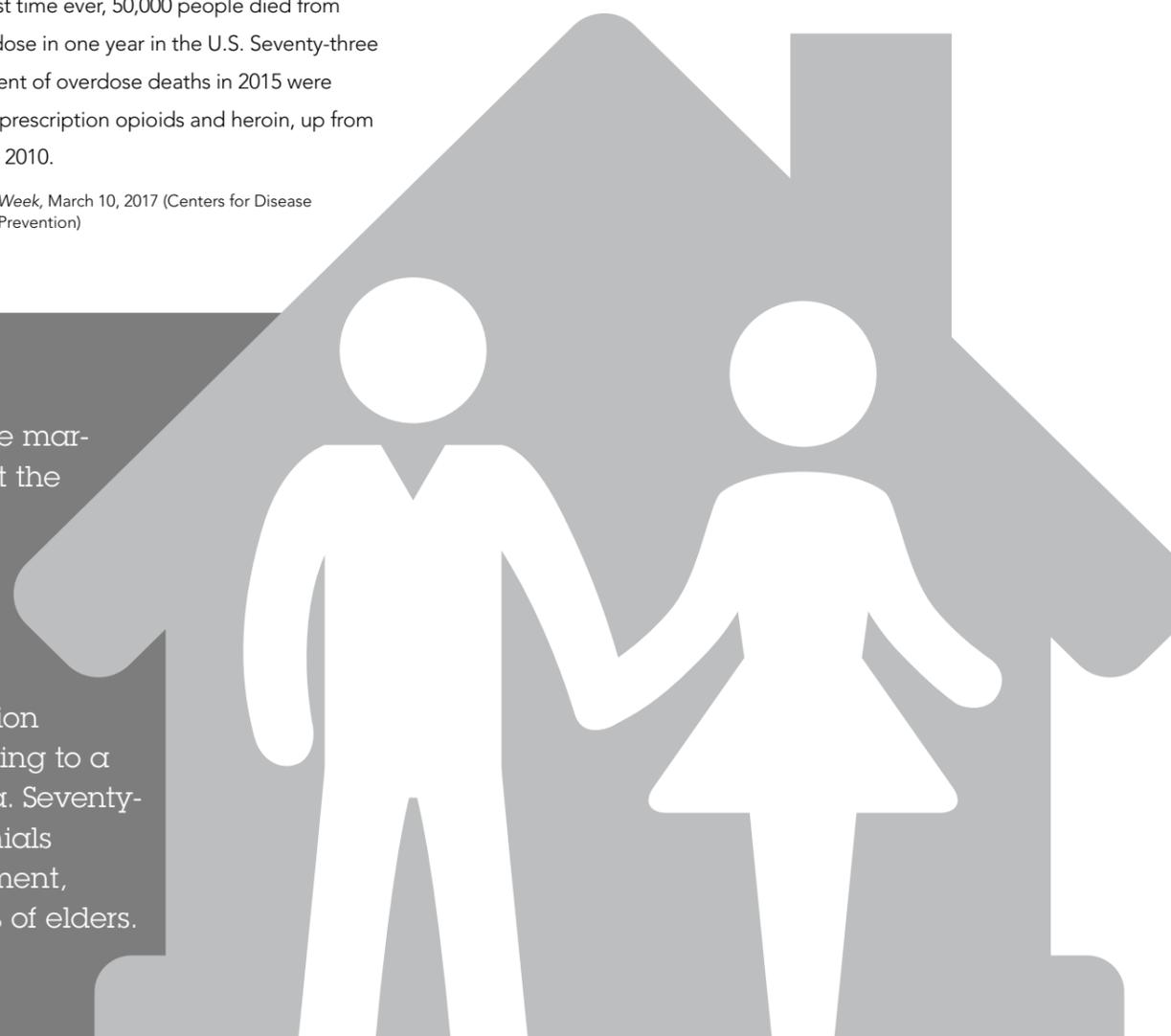
For the first time ever, 50,000 people died from overdose in one year in the U.S. Seventy-three percent of overdose deaths in 2015 were from prescription opioids and heroin, up from 57% in 2010.

Source: *The Week*, March 10, 2017 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

A new normal

Cohabitation before marriage is now what the majority agrees is the best indicator for whether a couple is ready to get married. Sixty-five percent agreed that cohabitation is a good idea, according to a recent survey by Barna. Seventy-two percent of millennials agreed with the statement, compared to only 36% of elders.

Source: Barna.com, June 24, 2016



Interfaith households



Children raised in interfaith households are on the rise according to Pew Research. For millennials, 27% reported being raised by parents of different religions, while only 20% from Gen X reported the same. The study also uncovered that of the 75% who share the same beliefs as their partner, only 44% believe shared religious beliefs are important.

Source: PewForum.org, October 26, 2016

What millennials want in a church

The Fuller Youth Institute has spent the past four years studying over 250 congregations of diverse sizes, ethnicities, denominations and geographic regions and found that one of the most compelling characteristics of a church for millennials is a church's vision to be the best neighbors to their community.

Source: RelevantMagazine.com, November 16, 2016

Women in power

Although most American adults would say they are comfortable with a female CEO, evangelicals show the lowest level of acceptance. A recent Barna study showed the following results when they asked the question: Are you comfortable with a female CEO?

- 94% All adults
- 90% Men
- 97% Women
- 77% Evangelicals

Source: Barna.com, March 8, 2017

The cost of parenting

On average, it will cost \$233,610 for a middle-income family to raise a child born in 2015 through age 17. According to a new government report, at 29%, housing is the biggest cost for parents. Another major expense is childcare, which costs an average of \$37,378 per child.

Source: *The Week*, January 2017



How do I get involved in mercy ministry?

The North American Mission Board is in the process of developing Send Relief hubs to answer that question.

Vice president of Send Relief, David Melber, sees the hubs as "living examples of mercy ministry."

"Instead of artificially creating examples of mercy ministries, Send Relief hubs will be locations where churches, volunteers, interns and more can go to experience mercy ministries with the hope that they will take that experience and implement it in their own communities," Melber says.

"We're looking forward to the doors this ministry tool will open to churches and individuals interested in compassion and mercy ministry," says Melber. "And we're excited to see that many other locations are stepping up and inquiring about how they, too, can become a hub. We're still in developing stages, but we do believe people's willingness to serve is so great that North America can't help but become a fruit-bearing nation for His glory. We are happy the hubs will be a part of that rejuvenation."

Johannesburg



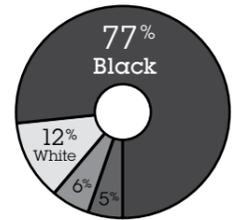
IMB missionary Kurt Holiday believes that Johannesburg, the largest city in South Africa, is the most strategic city on the African continent. "There are people here from every African country," he says. He estimates there are about 300 heart languages spoken in and around their city. "You can literally reach all of Africa from Johannesburg."

Gospel conversations come easily in many parts of Johannesburg. "You can stop someone on the street and get to the gospel in a couple of minutes," Kurt says. "They are very open to hear about what God is doing in your life."

Johannesburg is also strategic because it is a "sending city." During the holidays, the city empties as many return to their hometowns. Sharing the gospel, making disciples and training nationals in Johannesburg carry the potential to bring a spiritual harvest far beyond the city's borders.



Population
Johannesburg proper is **4.4 million** and up to **10 million** including the suburbs.



Ethnic diversity
77% Black African
12% White Caucasian
6% Mixed Race
5% Indian/Asian



Religion
Although many claim that South Africa is majority "Christian," the reality is most people follow a false gospel. Exalting the pure gospel of Jesus is of utmost importance.

Sources: statssa.gov.za, WorldPopulationReview.com

Learn more about people groups in Sub-Saharan Africa at imb.org/Sub-Saharan-Africa.

PHOTO COURTESY OF IMB

Garfield Park



Frank Brown is beyond grateful for the impact Reborn Community Church has had on his life. Hear his full story, and learn why at namb.net/GarfieldPark.



Jamie Thompson

Jamie Thompson is passionate about change in his neighborhood—change that can only come through a relationship with Christ. Learn more about his heart for his neighborhood at namb.net/GarfieldPark.



Roy Brown

Former Chicago gang member, Roy Brown, now serves as the co-director for the men's ministry at Reborn Community Church. Learn more about his radical transformation at namb.net/GarfieldPark.



Demaj Splunge

Fourteen-year-old Demaj Splunge doesn't waste time. After dedicating his life to Christ a year ago, he has already been influential in leading six of his friends to Christ. Learn more at namb.net/GarfieldPark.

PHOTOS BY GARY GNIDOVIC

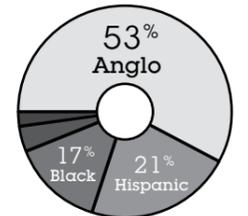
It's known by monikers like Windy City and Chi-Town, but many also refer to Chicago as the "Heart of America." Famous for its deep-dish pizza, Chicago-style hotdog, major league sports teams and beautiful architecture, sadly, Chicago is also known for its crime.

For years, Chicago has been a leading city in the U.S. for homicides, and Garfield Park—a neighborhood on the city's west side—ranks as one of the most dangerous areas.

Southern Baptist church planter of Reborn Community Church, Jamie Thompson, grew up in the neighborhood next to Garfield Park. While many work to get out of the area in pursuit of a better life, Jamie saw an opportunity to reach the community for Christ.

"Ministry like this is going to test your theology; you have to walk close to the Lord," says Jamie.

Garfield Park may be known for gangs, drugs and violence, but Jamie sees a community loved by God and in desperate need of Him.



Ethnic diversity
53% Anglo
21% Hispanic
17% African American
7% Asian
2% Other

Sources: NAMB Research, ChicagoTribune.com, Chicago.SunTimes.com



Go to namb.net/GarfieldPark to learn more about Jamie and the stories of people whose lives have been transformed in Garfield Park.



Follow NAMB on social media to learn more about Garfield Park.

Everyday believer's ordinary mission

Pastor and best-selling author, Francis Chan, shares the importance of every believer living out the mission of God by making disciples.

ON MISSION: At the Send Conference in Long Beach, you spoke about ordinary mission. What is the importance of all believers living out this mission?

FRANCIS CHAN: Sometimes we just look at missionaries like they're a special breed—not truly believing the words in Ephesians 1. We each have an immeasurable greatness of power available to us. The Holy Spirit was given to us so we would be witnesses. There's been a mental gap between the idea of a missionary and a Christian that shouldn't be there.

OM: What does it look like practically for believers to do that?

FC: In my context, we've been doing these house

gatherings. Right now, I have 30 pastors who lead around 15 churches. None of them get paid, but they're all shepherding these churches. Some of these pastors work for Salesforce or Google. Some are school teachers, doctors or contractors. They each take their people out on the streets, knock on doors and teach them how to live like missionaries.

We have to shift our thinking for how missions is done. You can't apply for a missionary visa in a lot of the world today. But you can do the same thing these guys in San Francisco are doing. They have jobs, but they understand the high calling of living on mission, too. It's very transferrable for those who move overseas.

OM: How have you seen that translate to overseas work?

FC: We're starting to send guys out overseas, and I feel such a confidence. My goal for my pastors and their congregations is if they were left alone in some city, they would know how to keep growing in their walk with the Lord because they know



PHOTO BY CASEY JONES

“When we pass along the responsibility, the church suddenly steps up, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they realize, ‘Wow! I can do this. In fact, this is why I was created.’”



PHOTO BY JACK STRUTZ

Scripture, how to study and how to make disciples.

It's like raising kids. I want to know that when my kids turn 18, they know how to make their own way. A lot of times we don't have this goal for believers.

For years, I assumed people would be fine if they just got the right teaching, rather than preparing them to go and make disciples of their own. But maturing the body is so important.

OM: Today, it seems so many believers lack confidence to share their faith or are just too comfortable sitting in the pews. Why do you think this happens?

FC: I think there are many pastors, like me, who don't like to beg people to serve God. I don't want to pressure anyone, so my natural default is: I'll just take care of it.

I think this happens in churches sometimes.

The pastor just wants to see things done, and if other people aren't willing, or he doesn't have the patience to wait for them to do it, he'll do it himself. We end up with these churches where the pastor is suddenly the theological expert, the evangelist, the counselor—he's everything. We really need to look at every person in the body and start saying, "No, you need to do this." Sometimes, the best thing for the body is to be forced into some of these situations.

Back again to children, sometimes it's good when your kid is 18 or 22 or 30, to say, "You can't live here anymore." That may be the only thing making him get a job and be responsible. Many pastors just become babysitters. When we pass along the responsibility, the church suddenly steps up, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they realize, "Wow! I can do this. In fact, this is why I was created."

OM: What would you say are some essentials for pastors as they equip their people to take their first step toward sharing their faith?

FC: The truth is, I don't think many pastors go out and share their faith. It seems many pastors are known for being good teachers, good readers, administrators, writers and counselors. Pastors should love Jesus so much they have a sense of urgency because they also love people and fear the wrath of God. Then, out of the overflow of their hearts, they can't help but speak words of life to others.

People are more likely to follow examples rather than teaching. Until we as shepherds start getting more concerned for the lost and being an example to our disciples, we're just going to multiply who we are. Second Peter 1:8 says, "For these qualities are yours and are increasing. They keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If we're the people we need to be, we're going to be fruitful. If the character's there, the Bible promises we're not going to waste our lives.

OM: For some, evangelism can be very overwhelming and may not feel natural at first. How would you encourage that believer?

FC: First, I would ask, "Are you thrilled to come into the presence of God? Are you obsessed with Him?" In Scripture, you see people who are obsessed with Jesus. When you are obsessed with Jesus, you're overflowing. We have to be so obsessed and addicted to Jesus, it is impossible not to share. A spirit-filled person is obsessed. An addict doesn't think about anything but what he is addicted to. Do we have pastors and leaders truly addicted to Jesus? Because if so, they can't help but talk about Jesus everywhere they go.

I actually think new believers are the best with these conversations. They seem to have the most friends who are unbelievers, and they are usually the most aggressive in sharing their faith. The more seasoned believers go to Bible study, and they go to this and that, but they don't always see the same type of urgency.

If we are really men and women in love with the person of Jesus, a missionary spirit is the fruit. Honestly, I just don't see that much excitement over the person of Jesus. I see excitement over social justice, memorizing Scripture, caring for the poor and not swearing. All those things are good, but we should be completely in love with the person of Jesus. It's out of the overflow where ordinary people are made missionaries. **[OM]**



Are you ready to take your next step? Visit namb.net/SendMe or imb.org/SendMe, and let NAMB and IMB connect you with your next missional opportunity.



Learn how to share your faith at namb.net/3Circles.



Produced by Josie Bingham and Andrea Fanning

When God's people pray, amazing things can happen. Church planters across North America share stories of faith, hope, love and answered prayers.

Living hope

Tony Lesto
Gateway Church Old Brooklyn
Cleveland, Ohio

Last year in January, I spoke at the funeral of a man named Andy. He had passed away quickly from pancreatic cancer, but he had hope in Jesus Christ. He wanted everyone to have that same hope, so I shared Andy's story with all in attendance. There were approximately 125 people from our community at the funeral. Since then, our church has been able to continue serving these men and women. *We had been praying, asking God to make a way for us to share the gospel in our community*, and this was a powerful answer in the midst of a difficult loss. What a wonderful reminder that God works all things for good.

First responder

Ashley Austin
Canvas Church
Victoria, British Columbia

My church and I were praying for guidance on where we should plant our next church. God answered by providing the perfect place. When I first arrived here a few years ago, I asked God to lead me to a police officer who could give me insight into the city. When I opened my eyes, a police officer was standing there in front of me asking, "Can I help you?"



Revenge to redemption

Greg Mott
Little Earth Fellowship
Minneapolis, Minnesota

I was asked to give a deposition in a custody case involving a gang member's girlfriend. The woman lost the rights to raise her child, and in the days that followed, the gang member's anger raged. He sought to kill me on several occasions, but God protected me. *I prayed God would have mercy on him.* Recently, he gave his life to Christ and joined a recovery ministry with my friend and fellow church planter, John Steger. He shared the story of the court case and his attempts to kill me with John. He told John he wanted to be free from anger. John assured him that with God all things are possible and called me so we could pray. Together, we are working toward redemption.



Saving home

Reagan Wagoner
Grace Point Church
Springboro, Ohio

For the first time in over a decade of marriage, Mike and Bethany prayed together. They needed \$3,000 in four days, or they would lose their home. Less than 24 hours before the window of payment closed, they were still \$509.63 short. Then the phone rang. It was their pastor, and he asked if he could stop by. They hadn't told him about their financial crisis, but when he arrived, they explained through tears, they weren't going to have enough money to keep their home. He gave them a \$1,500 loan to pay off the debt and get through the following month. The church rallied around them, and soon after, the couple paid back the full amount. They were able to keep their home and are grateful for what God did through their pastor and church who reached out in practical, encouraging ways. Sometimes, God saves homes—in a very literal way—when we pray!

ILLUSTRATIONS BY COURTNEY WINDHAM

Building faith

Jonathan Woodyard
Northfield Community Church
Minneapolis, Minnesota

We needed a building of our own. *I prayed and fasted with friends for doors to open.* A few weeks later, I was driving by a bank in the city. I decided to stop in. I got in line and was led into a conversation with the bank manager. The manager was a believer, and as it turns out, he knew the landlord of a building we had interest in using. We were given an entire floor to worship in for \$100 a month. Hallelujah!

Marriage celebration

Kale Booher
Lifepoint Church
Delaware, Ohio

Mark and Rachel both attended Ohio Wesleyan, a misleading name for a very secular school. They were living together when they started attending our church. They joined our small group and serve teams and started getting involved in other areas of the church as well. One evening, I invited them over to talk about their relationship. *I had been praying for them* a lot, and I also prayed about the conversation—I anticipated that it was going to be a difficult one. Instead, they shared with me that through getting involved at the church, praying and reading the Word, they felt convicted about their relationship. They decided to stop living together and moved their wedding date up. I was able to perform part of their wedding ceremony and share a little bit of their story. A week later, Rachel got baptized at Lifepoint. Praise the Lord!



Invitation to share

Rayden Hollis
Red Hill Church
Edwardsville, Illinois

I have been praying for my multicultural neighborhood for a long time. One day after praying, I found myself in conversation with some of the men who live in the area. One of the men was a Muslim, and he brought up the differences in his faith and the Christian faith. "If you were going to try and convert a Muslim to your faith, what would you tell them?" he asked. It was the ideal setup for me to share the gospel with him and the entire group. When I finished sharing about Jesus, he had another question: "Now, if you were going to try and convert a Jew, what would you say?" As the evening went on, I had the opportunity to share the gospel in several different ways. I'm continuing to pray; God is at work.

Tuned in

Josh Crisp
Gospel Grove Church
Bargersville, Indiana

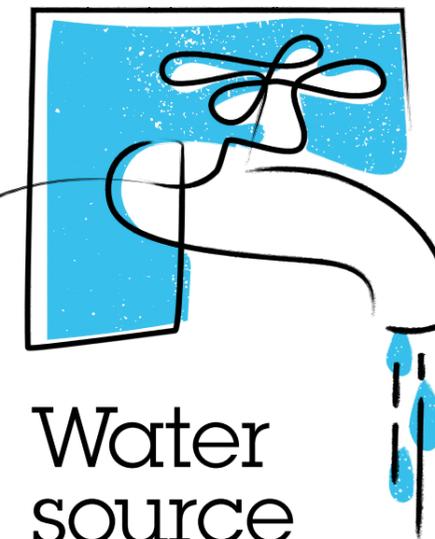
Charlie's wife had been coming to Gospel Grove Church for months. One day *she asked us to pray for her husband* to come back to church. He had been hurt by another pastor and hadn't been to a service in over three years. We prayed specifically for Charlie for several months.

Every Sunday, we looked for the two of them, but every Sunday his wife came alone. While this was going on, we were moving into a new building. When we had our first service there, Charlie showed up! He hasn't missed a Sunday service or men's group since. In fact, he is now our sound and computer guy. Praise the Lord for answered prayer!

Healing power

Buck Wilford
Brunswick Community Church
Brunswick, Ohio

A woman who attended our church told us she had been fighting cancer for 15 years. Though she had been in remission for a while, the symptoms had recently come back. We immediately started praying. The next week, in tears, she told us her latest doctor's appointment confirmed the cancer had come back, and there was a grim prognosis—six months to live. There was one more test to verify the results. She was strong in faith, and she knew that if she died, she would be with Jesus. *She asked us to pray for God's will, whatever it may be.* That's exactly what we did. We gathered around her and prayed as a group. The next day, she called me. "The cancer is completely gone!" she shouted with joy. "It's a miracle!" The same doctors who had given her months to live were astounded; they, too, called it a miracle. She still attends our church, and every time I see her, I am reminded of her beautiful testimony and the power of prayer.



Water source

Jason McKinney
One Church
Cincinnati, Ohio

Our church needed an indoor space with access to water so we could have baptism services in the winter, but there were only four indoor pools downtown, and none of them seemed promising. *One day while prayer walking, I felt led* to talk to the staff of the building where my family and I live. I couldn't shake the feeling that they had space. So I talked with the managers, and they not only let us use the space but gave us the freedom to store all of our equipment there free of charge.

Pray for Planters

Prayer works. Not only is prayer a line of communication between us and our Heavenly Father, it ties us in as a lifeline of support for church planters—just like these—ministering to people across the continent. [\[OM\]](#)



Learn more about communities and campuses in need of prayer, and sign up to pray for the church planting teams there at PrayForPlanters.com.



Timeline of grace

By Polly Maclean

Eva was exiting the subway in Singapore among a rush of people when a woman next to her fell to her knees. She beat the ground with her hands and cried out in Chinese. Eva, a Chinese American, heard the woman say she didn't want to live anymore. Eva comforted her and reminded the woman, a Christian, that God loves her so much, He sent Jesus to die for her. His love for her is not dependent on how others view her or what she does for Him. Then Eva prayed for her.



2010

Only five years prior to that subway platform encounter, Eva wasn't even a Christian. As a recent graduate in chemical engineering, she had just moved to North Carolina for a job in pharmaceutical manufacturing. She and a Christian coworker named Tiffany hit it off immediately. The two became close friends, and Eva began to spend a lot of time with Tiffany and her husband, Matt. Eva confided in Tiffany during triumphs and personal difficulties—including a series of painful relationship failures.

"After the second or third breakup," Tiffany says, "I realized that, although I had a deep relationship with Eva, I'd never shared the gospel explicitly with her. I really wanted her to find hope and purpose in the gospel instead of in dating and relationships."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF EVA AND SUMMIT CHURCH

Tiffany invited Eva to meet for dinner. As they ate, Tiffany shared the gospel with Eva. "It was the first time she had ever heard it presented like that, and she was really emotional and receptive," says Tiffany.

Eva didn't become a Christian that night, but during the next few months, she investigated the gospel for herself. She read the Bible, went to The Summit Church with Matt and Tiffany and attended a small group.

"But she was also looking for answers in other places," Matt says.

While Eva continued her search for answers, Matt and Tiffany continued sharing the gospel and their lives with her. They knew only the Holy Spirit could do the actual work of salvation in her heart.

"I was more confident than I ever had been that God was going to do it," says Tiffany, "It was just a matter of timing."

2013



25

24

February of that year, Matt attended an early Sunday morning service at church, and after hearing the message, he told Tiffany to bring Eva.

"That day, Tiffany came to pick me up for coffee and said she really wanted me to hear the sermon," says Eva. Something in the service spoke to her heart, and a week later, Eva shared some news with Tiffany—she had decided to follow Jesus.

"One of the main reasons I came to Christ is because I idolized relationships," Eva said. "But I realized the gospel really was the answer." Eva was baptized a month later.

"It seemed like a short amount of time, but when I look back, God has been shaping my entire life to lead up to this point," Eva said.

As she settled into her life in North Carolina, she bought a house and became a member of The Summit Church. That's when she began to hear about the importance of supporting missionaries, doing mission work and going on short-term mission trips.

"I was sure God could use my international experience somehow," Eva says. She didn't think it would happen anytime soon, but she began to consider how she could use her job for the gospel in Asia.

When Eva's boss found out she had an interest in Asia, he connected her with a former colleague in China. That contact became an important professional mentor as Eva started working toward an international transfer.

At her church's missions fair, Eva learned about a trip to Singapore. "I knew my company had a factory there," she said. "So I signed up."

She called her professional contact in China a week before the trip and expressed her interest in a job in Asia again. Her mentor was open to the idea and encouraging about the prospects of finding a position there.

"As we talked, we realized we were both going to be in Singapore the following week and scheduled to meet up for a couple of informational interviews," says

2014

2015

Eva. It was on that short-term mission trip Eva encountered the woman on the subway platform.

"There were so many moments that showed me God was moving in Singapore," says Eva. "Just to meet people who didn't know the gospel was eye opening."

Eva frequently recalls the story in Isaiah 6:6–8 about the burning coal cleansing Isaiah's lips before he volunteered to be sent to speak God's message.

"I love that verse," she says. "The joy of the gospel was so overwhelming to me—the guilt being taken away, my sin being atoned for, but also being part of God's children. That joy was so overwhelming for me, I can't even imagine how other people can live their life without knowing. It just overflows. I really want to reach out to people."

While on the trip, Eva's mentor introduced her to many international leaders of the company she already worked for in the U.S. All of them had the same question for her, "What job do you want?"

BAPTISM PHOTO BY BRETT SEAY





2016

“I had prayed for God to use me, and here God handed me a job where the need was so great and my contribution was tangible,” Eva says. “How can I not go?”

Eva left her life in North Carolina and joined an IMB team working in Singapore. When she went, she provided them with much-needed help and encouragement.

Eva went from being an engineer in the States to an engineer in Singapore. She sees the same people every day at work, a luxury most full-time missionaries don't have. Her job gives her the opportunity to build deep relationships with people she sees day in and day out.

“Anyone who gets a job here immediately has access to people that we do not,” says her IMB team leader. “There are job opportunities all over this country. What if we were able to fill these jobs with people who not only wanted to do

a good job with their work but also wanted to develop relationships with their coworkers, share the gospel and disciple new believers?”

“When she first became a believer, she asked, ‘Do I need to quit my job? Do I need to work for a nonprofit or go into full-time ministry?’” Tiffany says. “The answer was no. She absolutely went into ministry and still uses the gift of her career God had given her somewhere strategic for the sake of the gospel.”

Polly Maclean is an IMB writer based in Asia.



To find out how you can use your day job to serve alongside an IMB team, visit imb.org/Cities.

Literary triumph

By Andrea Fanning

Discover how to change the world—one hour, one child, one word at a time.

Donna Gaines saw a great need in her community for literacy skills. She has used this as an opportunity for ministry to the community in a way that points others to Christ.



Students in low-income areas have fewer resources to help them reach their full potential. ARISE2Read aims to change that narrative.

Look! America is beginning to change. It's a powerful statement, not just in its declaration but also in its structure. Each word used is a "sight word," a foundational element in reading comprehension. Right now, you are applying literacy skills, developed over years of study, to read these words. What if, instead of understanding the meaning behind this string of letters and spaces, you saw only *confusion*, *headache* and *jibber-jabber frustration*? For many children and adults across the nation, it is a reality—one that kept Tennessee native Donna Gaines up at night.

"I came back to Memphis after 25 years," says Donna, an author, wife, mother and grandmother. While participating in service evangelism with Bellevue Baptist Church, where her husband, Steve, is the pastor, Donna had an opportunity to work with inner city and refugee children. She saw things she had never seen before.

Seeing the need

"I started to realize the need in our city; there are third-world conditions right here," she says. "Forty-two percent of our children live in poverty.

“Without an intervention, students who cannot read fall further and further behind. Most do not graduate from high school, and it is difficult for them to find work.”

The more you know

- Students in low-income communities are, on average, three grade levels behind their peers in affluent communities.
- The Tennessee 2015 Priority Schools List represents the lowest-performing percent of schools in academic achievement. It contained 85 schools; 59 of them were in Shelby County, and 28 of them were elementary schools.
- In middle-income neighborhoods, the ratio of books per child is 13:1. In low-income areas, the ratio is one age-appropriate book for every 300 children.
- Two thirds of students who do not read proficiently by the end of fourth grade will end up either in jail or on welfare.
- There is hope! Children in poverty who read proficiently by the end of third grade have an 89 percent graduation rate.

Source: ARISE2Read.org

I wondered how this could happen in a country with so many resources. I couldn't sleep. I had no idea what to do, but I had to do something, so I started to pray.

"God impressed upon me: This is your city, and these are your children. What are you doing about it?"

Donna continued to pray; she wanted to break the poverty cycle. She learned about the Team Read program that pairs second-grade students with volunteers who coach them through literacy exercises.

"By the time a child gets to third grade, he or she no longer has an opportunity to learn to read; from there on, it is about applied reading," says Donna. "Without an intervention, students who cannot read fall further and further behind. Most do not graduate from high school, and it is difficult for them to find work."

Ministry solution

In the midst of researching reading programs, inspiration struck. What if churches got involved and became a part of the solution? By combining literacy training with the love of Christ, churches could adopt schools and train volunteers, thereby engaging at-risk children while also providing consistent support to teachers. ARISE2Read was born.

“I feel called by the Lord to do this, to take care of the least of these. As the church, I feel we are responsible for serving our neighbors and helping these children.”

The acronym stands for: A Renewal In Student Education and Evangelism. Donna selected the moniker after reading Psalm 78:6-7. *“That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.”*

ARISE2Read launched in 2012, and today, the ministry reaches more than 30 schools in and around Shelby County and partners with 27 churches, businesses and organizations. And it’s working. At their pilot school, Treadwell Elementary, reading scores have increased significantly; the most recent numbers showing a 68.75 percent upswing on the Standardized Achievement Test since 2014.

Partnership

With one basic training session and an investment of one hour per week, volunteers are changing the lives of hundreds of children.

“We’re seeing it make a difference,” says Donna, who, in addition to being the ministry founder, is now president of the board. “These children receive time and attention; they are given encouragement and assistance, and they look forward to reading time. As believers, we know we have an obligation to help the poor. These schools are in parts of the city where people are fearful of entering,

but once they go into these schools, they realize there’s nothing to fear. In fact, one of the most rewarding things for me is seeing the progress, the spin-off ideas that are happening as a result of participating in the reading programs.” She explains how one volunteer saw a child in need of clothes and created a clothing closet with the school’s guidance counselor. There are also service days, thank you cards and teacher appreciation meals.

“We see the teachers as a part of our mission,” says Donna. “We ask them, ‘How can we serve you? What can we do to help?’”

God’s provision

Now that news has spread about ARISE2Read’s success, Donna and her team cannot keep up with all the requests from schools wanting to participate.

“We’ve done nothing to grow this other than being faithful. The Lord has gone before us,” Donna smiles and explains, noting that this is only the beginning. “I have a 10-year vision for our city, and our ultimate goal is to change the statistics one child at a time. We’re excited about the possibility of this kind of ministry going nationwide.”

From giving away books to connecting families in need to local churches who can come alongside them to offer support, ARISE2Read is a practical program with proven results. Amazed by what she



Students in ARISE2Read programs are given one-on-one attention as they develop their academic skills.



ARISE2Read volunteers often support schools beyond their weekly reading coaching by providing for the other needs of teachers and students.

has personally witnessed as a volunteer playing word games with the children, Donna has high hopes for the future and a deep desire to keep the day-to-day dealings centered on sharing the gospel.

"I feel called by the Lord to do this, to take care of the least of these," she says. "As the church, I feel we are responsible for serving our neighbors and helping these children."

When she sees that smile from a child who has mastered a set of new words, she smiles, too. Her sentiments are summed up in these sight words: *Because we trust God and work together, all things are possible.* [OM]

Andrea Fanning is a freelance writer living in Birmingham, Alabama.

Fry sight words

According to The National Institute for Literacy, having a bank of sight words "releases a reader's attention needed for comprehension and for figuring out more difficult and less frequent words." In essence, the idea behind sight words is to build a foundation of familiarity. Educator Edward Fry embraced this concept and developed a list of 1,000 words that a reader must recognize and understand on sight—Fry Words. The words are divided into levels, which roughly correspond with grade levels, and to illustrate their impact on education, the first 300 words on the Fry Words list represent about 67 percent of words students encounter throughout the entirety of their coursework from kindergarten to twelfth grade.

Want to know more?

Visit [ARISE2Read.org](https://www.arise2read.org) and for additional information on the literacy crisis in American, read *Educating All God's Children* by Nicole Baker Fulgham.



Learn about more ways churches are involved in community engagement on the Send Relief podcast at namb.net/Podcasts.



Joining hands

The power of leadership

By Charles Braddix

From West Africa to South Korea, the Graysons have learned that no matter the location, strong national partners are crucial to effectively advancing the gospel.

Two decades ago, a change in IMB's strategy strained relationships between the organization and various national Baptist conventions in West Africa. IMB missionaries John and Jennifer Grayson* worked to rebuild those partnerships.

"God began to work on my heart early in my career on the mission field," says John. "I always knew that national partners could do the work as effectively or better than us if we could find ways to effectively partner with them. That includes training, walking alongside each other, open communication, equal roles, sitting equally at the table, etc."

After four years of renewing relationships, healing

began to take place. The Graysons were asked to do the same kind of ministry in other areas of West Africa. John's passion and vision for strong partnerships increased as he worked with the Baptist conventions of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin and others.

Equals at the table

John credits the example of two missionary couples who modeled effective partnerships for him through their work.

"They were able to show me how to develop these relationships where churches and conventions may not be on the same page as we were, but if we



took the time to develop those relationships and partner with them, we would be able to do greater things together.”

The missionary couples showed John that in true partnerships with nationals, the nationals have a strong, equal voice at the table with the missionaries. This meant inviting nationals to help define and shape the direction of missions. It also meant allowing them to not only *feel* like a partner but to truly *be* a partner, he says.

John learned that time and effort fostered deeper levels of Christian fellowship and partnership.

“All that I did and learned working with and alongside them impacted not only how I worked among

these conventions, but also my thinking and strategy as I later transitioned to my current role in South Korea,” he says.

What is best

God prepared the Graysons for their new mobilizing role in South Korea not only during their time in West Africa but also during an interim time at IMB’s training center where they helped equip new missionaries for overseas service.

When training new missionaries, the Graysons encouraged them to focus their time and efforts on those things that are best—not just good.

“This is a great truism to really move toward

“God began to work on my heart early in my career on the mission field. I always knew that national partners could do the work as effectively or better than us if we could find ways to effectively partner with them.” — John Grayson, IMB missionary

accomplishing specific goals,” John says.

“However, in partnerships, sometimes those we desire to work with may not be ready for what is best or may not have the capacity for doing it. So we work with them on what they might consider is best. When we do this, it shows them we are truly interested in them, and we care for them. This results in a new level of trust and appreciation that opens doors for greater and deeper levels of partnership.”

God both blessed and challenged John and Jennifer while they were preparing others to go to the nations. Not only were they equipping missionaries to work hand-in-hand with national partners, but God also was planting a vision within them to forge deeper and broader partnerships. “The result of this challenge caused us to shift from Africa to South Korea where we currently serve,” John says.

Mobilizing the East

According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, nations like Brazil, India and South Korea are each sending out tens of thousands of cross-cultural missionaries. Though the United States still commissions the most missionaries, the church in the South and the East is rising to fulfill the Great Commission.

Over the past 70 years, God used the passion and

faithfulness of Korean Baptists to plant thousands of churches locally and send thousands of South Korean Baptist missionaries worldwide. IMB has a long history with Korean Baptists and their missions agency, the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) of South Korea.

“Many of those who have run their races ahead of me with our South Korean brothers and sisters have invested much time and prayer and have shed many tears for them and with them,” John says.

“Our current focus in South Korea is one of both mobilization and facilitation,” John says. “Our desire is to develop and encourage greater partnerships among our South Korean Baptist churches and Korean Baptist churches worldwide. Through these partnerships, we are hoping to strengthen and encourage existing work both locally and globally as they seek to reach the lost in Korea and around the world.”

Audrey Chism* and her husband Matt* are IMB missionaries serving among refugees and have frequently partnered with South Korean volunteers.

“We value partnerships with Korean Baptists because we are strengthened and encouraged by them,” Audrey says. “Koreans pray fervently, share their talents and go back to their country to mobilize others to join what our Father is doing. Many have come back to the field to partner with

“What a great privilege it is to have opportunities to partner with those out on the field. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle fitting together, we are able to get a glimpse of a bigger picture of what God is doing.” — Susan Lee, wife of Baptist pastor in Seoul

us throughout the years.”

Susan Lee* and her husband, Peter,* pastor of a Baptist church in Seoul, have led numerous international mission trips, often partnering with IMB missionaries.

“What a great privilege it is to have opportunities to partner with those out on the field,” Susan says. “Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle fitting together, we are able to get a glimpse of a bigger picture of what God is doing.”

Partnership as a new pathway

Partnerships with South Korean churches have opened up new means for reaching the world. “Our president, David Platt, has been sharing a shift in focus—think about new pathways for global missions and engagement,” John says. “What I see happening with our IMB work and in the increasing partnerships with South Korea are new pathways for engagement both in Korea and abroad for our South Korean brothers and sisters.”

The new level of partnership between IMB and the FMB of South Korea has resulted in the recent deployment of 17 Korean missionary units for international service. Three of the units are long-term career appointees assigned to IMB teams already on the field, and 14 are students from Daejeon Seminary and the FMB’s Hands On program who serve on IMB teams for six months.

“This level of partnership is beginning to stir excitement among our South Korean brothers and sisters,” John says. “These types of partnerships that we are engaged in have the potential to not only impact South Korean churches, but also missions among South Koreans for many years to come.” [\[OM\]](#)

Charles Braddix is a writer for IMB.

*Names changed

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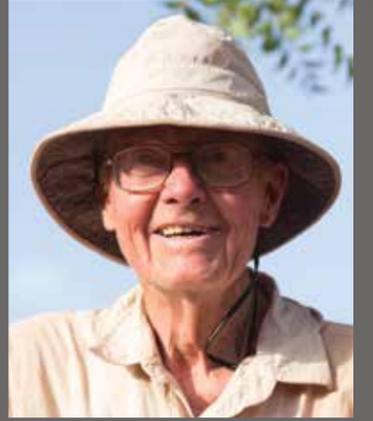


To explore ways you or your church can take the next steps in global mission, visit imb.org/Next.

Bimoba women in Chintilung No. 2, Ghana, wait to see the dentist and have their teeth extracted.

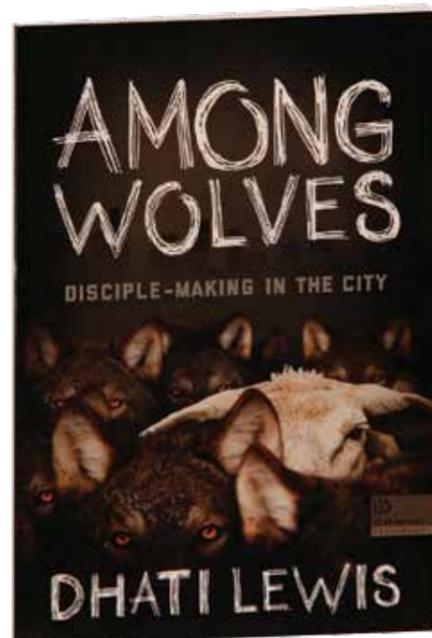


Short-term trip, long-term commitment



Dr. Fuller Robinson, an 88-year-old dentist from Roanoke, Virginia, has been volunteering his services at the Baptist Medical Centre in Ghana's northern region since 1981. This was his 41st trip to the region. Despite his age, Dr. Robinson not only makes the journey to Ghana, but he gets up daily before the sun rises to travel to some of the hardest-to-reach interior villages. His work there alongside the staff of the Baptist Medical Centre opens doors for the gospel to be proclaimed.

Ministry Gospel



Among Wolves

Dhati Lewis
(B&H Publishing Group, 2017)

In *Among Wolves*, Dhati Lewis shares his burden for his generation to be the “last generation of urban practitioners forced to leave the urban context in order to be discipled.”

Dhati defines *urban* as the intersection of densely populated cities with the diversity of inhabitants. These complex environments bring unique challenges to the disciple-making process. Dhati equips urban practitioners—men and women working to bring the gospel to the urban context—with tools needed to help them defend a culture of disciple-making. His strategy is four-fold: provide gospel-centered content, local church-based application, reinforce disciple-making as the ministry of the church and maintain urban-focus.

Dhati walks readers through eight movements of discipleship found in Matthew and couples his exegetical work with real-life examples from his own ministry through Blueprint Church in Atlanta. Dhati leverages the community where he lives and pastors as a case study for the urban practitioner to consider. He then calls his readers to consider how they can contextualize his content where God has placed them.

Among Wolves is not simply for the urban pastor, rather, every man or woman working to advance the gospel message in urban contexts. The content is rooted in Scripture and applicable to both indigenous urbanites as well as those transplanting into an urban landscape to create a culture for disciple-making.

D.A. Horton currently serves as pastor at Reach Fellowship, a church plant in North Long Beach, California. He also serves as the chief evangelist for the Urban Youth Workers Institute.

Next Door as it is in Heaven

Lance Ford and Brad Brisco
(NavPress, 2016)

Did you know one in four Americans has no one with whom they can discuss important issues?

That would pose a tremendous opportunity for God’s kingdom, but sadly, American Christians are just as isolated and disconnected as everyone else.

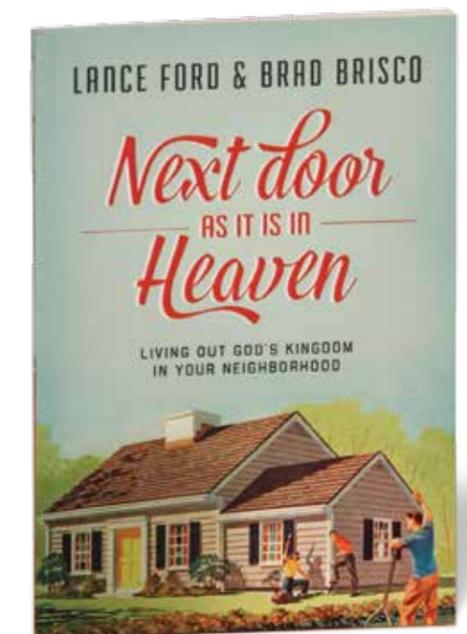
In *Next Door as it is in Heaven*, Lance Ford and Brad Brisco offer practical advice about ways God’s people can relearn “the art of neighboring” and restore genuine community to our neighborhoods.

The heart of the problem, they say, is that “our relational network is down.” A toxic mix of individualism, privacy addiction and consumerist mindset has isolated people from one another and fragmented everyone’s lives. People stress out over full schedules and exhaust themselves commuting from one obligation to the next. Convinced the good life can be purchased, they impoverish themselves relationally in futile pursuit of more.

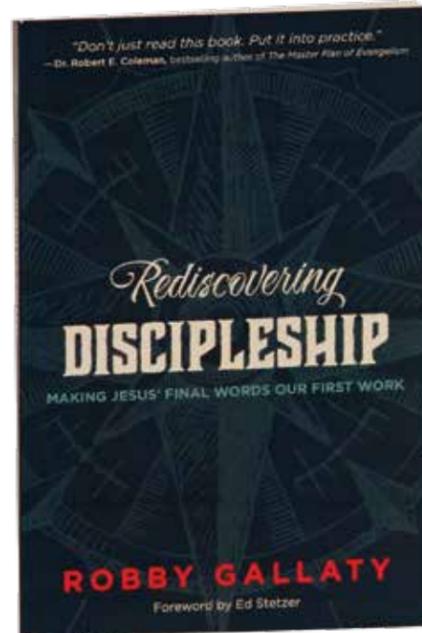
The scarcity mindset, which says problems can only be solved by hiring an expert, must be replaced with an abundance mindset—unearthing the treasure-trove of skills buried in our own neighborhoods, Lance and Brad say. To break the bonds of isolation and exclusion, people simply need to begin practicing hospitality.

Lance and Brad lay out an excellent array of simple, practical ideas for creating “sweet spots” in which people can relax, connect and experience God’s kingdom “next door as it is in heaven.”

Mark Kelly is an SBC journalist and host of the God’s Revolution podcast.



Leading Mission



Rediscovering Discipleship

Robby Gallaty
(Zondervan, 2015)

Christians everywhere need a discipleship plan. Robby Gallaty's engaging and readable book, *Rediscovering Discipleship*, illumines the path. Step one: Follow Jesus well. Step two: Pursue a simple plan for discipleship in the 21st century. His simple plan is a group process in the local church instead of just one-on-one meetings—how many view discipleship.

Robby lays out a practical approach that keeps God's Word central in discipleship. He advocates organizing small, intentional, church-based cohorts called D-groups. D-groups are not magical formulas for success, but need the care of proactive facilitators. Each group must be launched (and evaluated) to bear the "M.A.R.C.S." of discipleship—missional, accountable, reproducible, communal and scriptural.

Robby is at his best when he presents the biblical basis and patterns for disciple-making, or when he describes how D-groups work in his local church context. His illustrative examples throughout the book are engaging and helpful.

Readers should come away with a deeper conviction that discipleship is truly the local church's main work. Nothing is more critical. "Whatever 'success' a church may have, if the goal of discipleship isn't being met, it's not biblical success."

R.E. Cline lived and worked overseas with his wife and family for 20 years. He now designs curricula and does cross-cultural training for IMB.

5Q

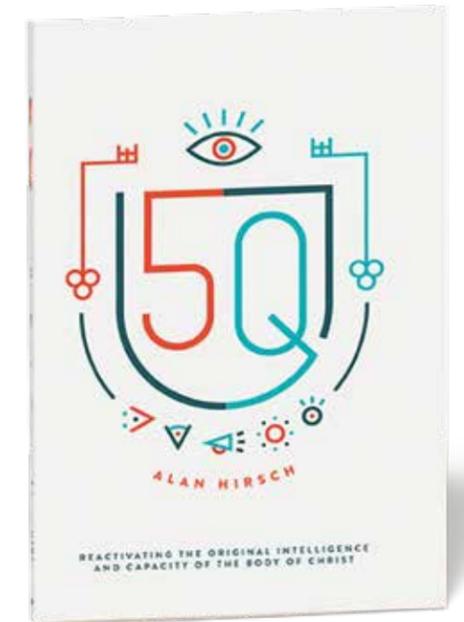
Alan Hirsch
(5Q, 2017)

In his latest book titled 5Q, Alan Hirsch takes his readers on an amazing journey into the depths of the fivefold typology of ministry (APEST: apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher) as articulated in Ephesians 4:1–16. He first locates the origins of APEST in the nature and purposes of God. He then moves to identify the ways each of the gifts are rooted throughout creation and culture as well as how they are perfectly exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus.

After laying this crucial foundation, Alan contends that APEST provides not only the proper diagnostic, but it's also a necessary metric to recalibrate the body of Christ. In other words, the fivefold typology helps identify what ails the church, then provides a means to reestablish the ministry of Christ in the body of Christ.

5Q is a holistic lens by which we can see ourselves, our functions and our churches in a new light. It opens up our way of viewing the world. It is not a collection of ideas as much as a new perspective. The book is scripturally rich and gives an invaluable architecture for leaders who are committed to equipping and releasing the church into God's redemptive purposes. It also provides practical tools and training for transformative discipleship practices, leadership development and organizational change.

Brad Brisco is the director of bivocational church planting at NAMB.



Seeking Him first

By Rolly Abarca (@imrollyb)

I am a musician, producer and radio DJ, and I am a follower of Christ. I am from the west side of Waianae Hawaii, which is best known for football, drugs, fighting and the musician Iz. Now, I live in Los Angeles. I like reggae, rap and worship music. Even if it means risking injury, I'll walk the block from home to my favorite Chinese place—those spring rolls and dumplings are worth it.

The first sign I was losing my eyesight was in 2013. Detached retina. I had surgery, and after a few months, God restored my vision. But I woke up one day in 2015, and everything was gray.

Though I prayed and tried medical solutions, the only vision I had was the ability to sense light.

I struggled. I lost my identity. I thought I would walk away from God completely, but I was surprised when I didn't. Instead of running from God, I found myself fighting to understand Him more. Once I discovered my true identity wasn't in music or in the studio but in Him, my joy came back. He became more real to me than I ever thought possible.



As I found hope, laughter and purpose, I felt like God was leading me into something new. One day, D.A. Horton came on my radio show to talk about the Send Conference and about how evangelism isn't just something Billy Graham did years ago.

When I heard Trip Lee was going to be there, the fanboy in me couldn't resist, so I went. During the conference, I realized my prayers had been very self-focused—*God give me clarity, so I can do the things I want*. Freedom came in the revelation that God is sovereign, and my prayers should be centered on seeking Him first.

God chose me. He knew I was going to go through this blindness, and I was going to overcome it. Every day, I look for opportuni-

ties to share God's love. Since I cannot drive, I Uber most everywhere, and that means I typically get to meet someone new at least twice a day—going and returning. My physical disability is an immediate conversation starter. When people see my joy, they ask me where it comes from, and I get to tell them about my story and about my Jesus. [OM]

Rolly Abarca is a broadcast engineer and on-air host at 99.5KKLA in Los Angeles.

Cooperating for God's eternal glory

By David Platt, IMB president (@plattdavid)

Since its beginning, IMB has had one goal: to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost peoples of the world. At the first Southern Baptist Convention in 1845, the Foreign Mission Board was founded for the propagation of the gospel. Southern Baptist churches believed that by working cooperatively, we could accomplish more for God's kingdom.

Over 170 years later, this same reality rings true, and the need for our cooperation resounds more urgently than ever before. With more than 2.8 billion people in the world who still lack access to the gospel, Southern Baptists cannot settle for anything less than aggressive calls for the body of Christ to pray passionately, give sacrificially and go intentionally for the glory of Christ among all peoples.

Many Christians in Southern Baptist churches traditionally have seen global mission as a program in the church for a select few people who are called. Yet, when we look at Scripture, we realize that global mission is not a program in the church for a few; global mission is the purpose of Christ for us all. Every single one of us has been created, called and commissioned to play a part in making disciples of all nations.

God's plan for fulfilling the Great Commission includes the local church as the agent that sends and shepherds missionaries. Consequently, the IMB exists to help tens of thousands of local churches in the SBC do exactly that.

Throughout IMB's history, specific strategies for how local churches reach the world have changed as the world has changed. What has not changed, however, is the privilege and opportunity Southern Baptists have to participate with God in the spread of His glory among all people. This is why we cooperate in global mission: We want to see Christ glorified in the church here in North America and among the nations, particularly among people who still haven't even heard His name. [OM]



Register to attend the Send Conference in Orlando at SendConference.com.



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