

MESSAGE

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SENT

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST
MISSIONARIES



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WHO IS ABWE?

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. Supported by a network of 400 like-minded churches, we are a global family of ministries, dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, churches, and missions movements among every people. Currently, more than 1,000 ABWE missionaries are reaching the lost in 84 countries through evangelism, discipleship, church planting, leadership development, and national partnerships.

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EDITORIAL

FROM THE PRESIDENT



What 'Counting as Loss' Looks Like

BY PAUL L. DAVIS | ABWE PRESIDENT

Like many Americans, I struggle to surrender.

Don't believe me? Just look inside my garage, and you'll see proof that I don't know how to let go.

But it's not just about our stuff. Oftentimes we're addicted to comfort in general. Sometimes our greatest aspirations are to build a nice middle-class home, make nice middle-class friends, and bring up our children in nice, safe, middle-class ways.

Family, wealth, and security aren't bad in themselves—in fact, they're blessings our God has called us to steward. Yet, they can also snuff out our zeal for the Lord.

What do we do if comfort and safety become our functional saviors?

We must heed the Apostle Paul's exhortation to "count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8-9).

Our missionaries are people who have counted their lives as loss. Martha and I are always awestruck by the passion of faith-filled Christ-followers who have done the math and would rather suffer with Christ to reach the lost than achieve the American dream.

Serving those who give all to go—that's why we're at ABWE, and why we share their stories with you.

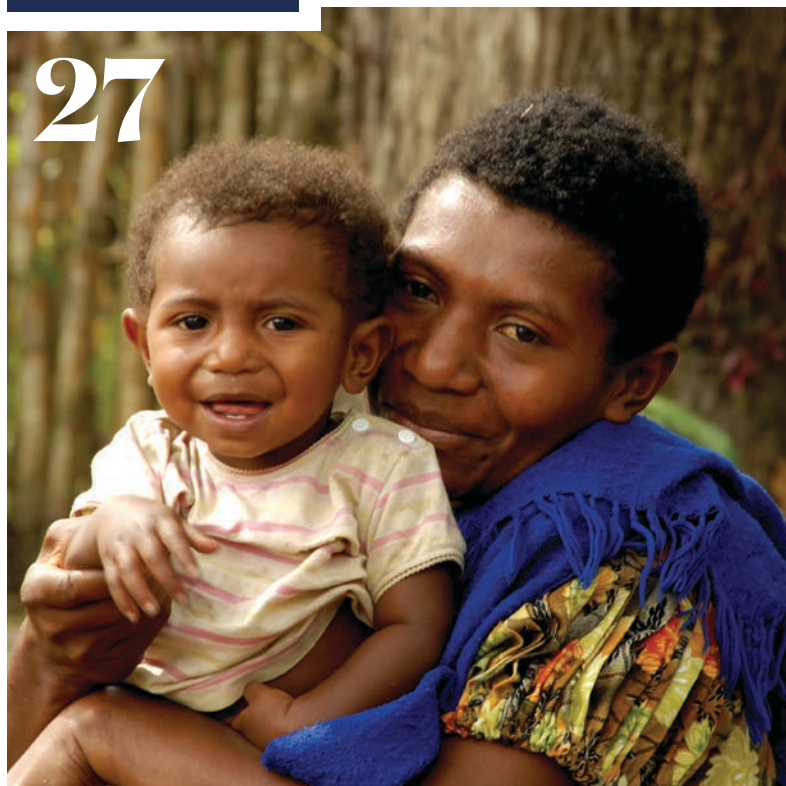
In this issue of *Message*, join us in celebrating those who chose Christ over comfort, love over luxury, and faith over fear. May the Lord grant us some of this same self-sacrificing zeal. Jesus is worth it.

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A man watches the sunrise in the UAE.

©Chalabala

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come from our everyday life experiences.*

SUBSCRIBE ONLINE

Save postage & receive weekly articles, videos, & photos from our mission blog when you subscribe online. ABWE.ORG/SUBSCRIBE

CONNECTIONS



PHIL & JAN SMITH
Papua New Guinea

Students at Goroka Baptist Bible College rejoice at the arrival of 300 new Bibles in their religious instruction class.

DANIEL & KATIE LAMB
Thailand

“We’re excited that we’ve started a new church plant at our house. Most members are young and relatively new believers.”



**AVERY & MEREDITH
DOCENA**
Philippines

Newly appointed ABWE missionaries, Avery and Meredith are the founders of Obed’s House Ministries, a Christian home that gives orphans a second chance. Obed’s House desires to see neglected and abandoned street children fall in love with Jesus and become passionate about serving him.

ABWE.ORG/OBEDSHOUSE



Mission Impossible

LOCATION: UNDISCLOSED

In missions, demonstrating Christlike love might take the form of providing healthcare to the sick, sharing the good news with the hurting, or even helping an unbelieving friend cross a government border during a COVID-19 lockdown.

An ABWE family found themselves in that exact scenario. During the night, the country declared that its capital would be closing its borders in the morning. The new edict was announced on top of an existing curfew which made it illegal to leave one’s home between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m.

“Anyone caught outside their homes during curfew could be beaten, fined, or imprisoned by the police,” said the missionary.

The problem? Their family helper Vanna* was stuck. The Hindu woman lived outside city limits in a local province but stayed with the missionary family during the week. The looming lockdown would separate her from her husband, two children, and blind mother.

**Name has been changed for security reasons*

The family devised an escape plan. They would meet Vanna’s husband Devi* at the border the next day. He held a government position and could negotiate his way across if necessary.

The next morning, the missionary and Vanna drove to the border crossing. Vanna convinced the missionary to bring her youngest son to win sympathy from the police. Devi was waiting on the other side when they arrived. He convinced the police to let him drive through to pick up his wife. The tense situation worsened when a misunderstanding between Devi and the police prevented him and Vanna from crossing back over to get home.

Time was running out as the couple sped off in search of a different crossing point that was still open. Within minutes, a police caravan flew past the missionary down the same road Devi and Vanna had just taken.

If the police had caught up to Vanna and Devi, they could have potentially been separated from their children for seven weeks.

“I called Vanna to let her know the police were close behind them and that they needed to drive faster,” recalled the missionary. “It was like out of a movie!”

By God’s grace, with less than a minute to spare, they made it safely. Seconds after Vanna and her husband crossed the border, police barricaded the road. ■

Something in the Water

LOCATION: TOGO

A young Togolese couple arrived at ABWE's mission hospital with a pressing emergency. The 21-year-old wife Bertine had just tried to put an end to her life by drinking a deadly brew. Fortunately, she was admitted in time, and by the grace of God the doctors were able to stabilize Bertine without any lasting damage to her health.

The staff met with her husband Julien to ask him some questions. The primary goal was to determine what may have caused Bertine to attempt suicide.

Throughout the conversation, it became clear that Julien and Bertine were living in despair and without Christ. Their home lives were miserable because they no longer trusted each other. Bertine was suspicious of Julien and believed he was being unfaithful to her.

The chaplains took time to present the gospel to the couple. After listening carefully, they asked questions about salvation and how to be saved. The chaplains showed Bertine and Julien the truths of God's salvation from Scripture, sharing verses like John 3:16 and Romans 10:9-10.

Both made the decision to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. With the chaplains, Bertine and Julien gathered in prayer and surrendered control of their lives to God and repented of their sins.

A week later, Bertine was completely healed and able to be discharged. Ever since, they have been focused on studying the Bible and are also going through counseling with the chaplains to grow spiritually and to seek healing for their marriage. ■



TWEETABLES

ADAM & EMILY BYERLY | Spain

When Adam and Emily were visited by a short-term team in 2015, they hosted a meet-and-greet to introduce the volunteers to friends in the community. The event inspired Adam and Emily to start Brilla Café, a coffee shop ministry that opened this fall to foster conversations and deepen relationships with neighbors.

ABWE.ORG/BRILLACAFE



JON & HOLLY BOYD | Colombia

Last year, Erick became a believer when confronted with the possibility of death after contracting COVID-19. He and his wife were recently baptized and are serving in their local church.



Broken Bones, Healed Soul

LOCATION: SOUTHWEST ASIA

AAKASH* SAILED THROUGH THE AIR AND CRASHED TO THE GROUND, BREAKING HIS FEMUR, PELVIS, AND BOTH FOREARMS.

On their way to play soccer, he and some friends had hitched a ride on top of a truck's roof—as is common in this part of the world—when the vehicle's brakes failed while climbing a hill. The truck collided into other cars, throwing an untethered Aakash into the air.

Two friends drove him to a nearby hospital, but the staff, unable to treat his injuries, transported Aakash to an ABWE medical facility that could.

Over the next 12 weeks, Aakash underwent eight operations to reconstruct and stabilize his bone fractures. But the biggest obstacle to his recovery wasn't his injuries.

"Because of all the medicine I was taking and the pain of my injuries, I didn't have an appetite," said Aakash.

The staff tried their best to feed him through a feeding tube, but they had little success. Then, Aakash fell into a depressed state. Because his father had died when Aakash was young, he was the sole provider for his mother and four siblings. Now they were without his support. Dejected, battered, and weak from refusing to eat, Aakash needed healing—and hope.

But God had been working behind the scenes long before Aakash's accident. ABWE missionaries had been trying to reach Aakash's predominantly Buddhist people since 1978. In 2013, the team began translating the New Testament into Aakash's language. As of 2021, five books are currently complete, including the Gospels.

Aakash was saved after he received eight operations and rehab at ABWE's medical facility in Southwest Asia. His newfound faith inspired six others to follow Christ.

One day, a translator read Aakash a passage from John's Gospel and prayed for him.

"I was struck by the fact," said Aakash, "that through Jesus we can have forgiveness of sins and the part of the verse that says, 'whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.'"

Aakash placed his trust in Jesus Christ—but silently, for fear of being shunned by his people. Or worse.

Aakash regained his appetite, and a few months later he returned to his village, his fractures repaired. Still, he remained silent about his faith since he was afraid his conversion would put his and his family's lives at risk.

When evangelists and a local pastor followed up with a visit with Aakash, he finally announced his conversion and asked to be baptized.

Convicted by Aakash's boldness, six other secret believers in the village also came forward to publicly proclaim their faith in Christ through baptism.

The village noticed and soon Aakash and his family began receiving threats. Yet, God has protected them. Today, Aakash is pursuing training at a nearby Bible school.

Through ministries of healthcare, compassion, Bible translation, and bold evangelism, God is using ABWE workers across the globe to equip future leaders like Aakash in some of the most hostile places on earth. ■

**Name has been changed for security reasons*



One Mission, Five Ministries

THE ABWE FAMILY IS GROWING!

God has been faithful to the mission. In return, we want to steward these blessings well and advance the Great Commission in new, creative ways.

That's why we're expanding the mission to include other biblical ministry models. Each ministry of ABWE exists to tap into a unique avenue to reach the nations.

Some ministries will sound familiar to you. Others won't. But they all play an important role in ABWE's core mission—to *fulfill the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, churches, and missions movements.*

Now, let's meet the family.

abweGO

How will the nations hear unless believers are sent? AbweGO serves the local church by mobilizing teams to live among the nations in more than 70 countries. These teams are committed to evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and national leadership development among the lost and unreached.

LIVEGLOBAL

God is working across the globe, and you have a role. Live Global passionately cultivates edifying relationships between the North American church and ministries across the globe to multiply gospel impact on their communities and beyond.



We're not just one ministry. We're one mission with multiple ministries. We're a global family of ministries."

PAUL L. DAVIS

LEARN MORE ABOUT
THESE MINISTRIES AT
ABWE.ORG/FAMILY

EVERYETHNE

The nations are here! On mission with the church in North America, EveryEthne helps local churches cross cultures without crossing borders. Together, we make disciples, reproduce leaders, and plant churches to reach every people group in North America.

GOODSOIL

In Jesus' parable, only the seed planted on good soil produced significant fruit. Good Soil Evangelism and Discipleship helps people understand, embrace, and firmly hold on to the gospel. We take advantage of ABWE's experience in sharing the gospel cross-culturally to train and resource missionaries, international partners, and the local church.

LAUNCHPOINT

We believe that any believer can go. If you're looking for a short-term opportunity to serve others in another culture, while ensuring your time and resources are maximized for long-term ministry and growth, let us help you launch into missions. ■

NEW

MISSIONARIES

2021

These stories represent a fraction of the missionaries appointed in our most recent candidate class. We can't include each story within these pages (we wish we could!), but you can read more of their incredible testimonies online at abwe.org/2021missionaries.

Many of our missionaries are going to places that can't be openly talked about. We must protect their identities so that they can be effective witnesses where God has led them.





NORTH AMERICA

JIM



To those around him, Jim was a zealous young man with a heart for the Lord.

His life looked perfect. He was in a serious relationship and worked as a campus ministry leader at the University of Georgia. But a secret battle raged within him.

When he was a teenager, Jim realized he was attracted to other men. Over the years, he prayed that the Lord would remove this attraction, but Jim made no efforts to uproot the sin himself. His sin left festering for years, Jim finally couldn't stand his double life any longer.

Instead of proposing to his girlfriend, he broke up with her, quit school, and moved to Atlanta for a fresh start. He connected with a church and promised himself that he would confess his sin struggle to this new community.

But during one Bible study, a leader asked the group to pray for their gay hairdresser.

"The enemy twisted this simple prayer request in my mind to mean 'unsafe,'" said Jim. "I couldn't bear the thought of anyone putting me in that category."

Crushed, Jim turned to the gay community and quickly found affirmation and acceptance. "They understood my sin, and that felt better at the time than those who understood my faith," said Jim.

Jim began to succumb to the lies within the homosexual community, believing that his homosexuality was something to be celebrated, not ignored. For the next 30 years, he indulged in a homosexual lifestyle.

But the faith of his past kept resurfacing. During a move, Jim found his old Bible while rummaging through his belongings. The discovery sparked a moment of joy, quickly smothered by a dark realization that he was too far gone for God. He set the book aside and vowed not to open a Bible again.

At this time, Jim was in a long-term relationship and more miserable than ever before. He sought help and reluctantly agreed to meet with a pastor, who began not by confronting Jim with Scripture but by loving him like Christ does. His humility shocked Jim.

One night, Jim worked up the courage to open a Bible and face his sin. The scales fell from his eyes as he read the truth of Scripture for the first time in decades. Falling on his knees, he prayed, "God, mold

me into the man you want me to be."

And mold he did.

After surrendering his life to God, Jim eventually went on to become an associate pastor with 360 Church, starting a ministry to help those struggling with same-sex attraction. Now, he leads EveryEthne's Heart, Mind, and Soul seminar, helping Christians to reach the North American LGBTQ culture.

→ abwe.org/jim

ABOUT HEART, MIND & SOUL LGBTQ

*Learn how to love
and engage LGBTQ
individuals with the
gospel in a bold, biblical,
and relational way.*

abwe.org/heartmindsoul



A

Any outside observer would have pinned Clay as a Christian.

Baptized at eight years old, involved in youth group, attended church regularly, Clay had all the marks of a devout believer. But inside he harbored severe doubts about Christianity.

These doubts simmered for years, and at 19, they reached a boiling point. He demanded from God tangible proof of his existence.

Then, he gave God an ultimatum.

He would read through some of the Bible and wait for God to reveal himself in a concrete way. If he didn't, Clay would forsake Christianity once and for all. He started in the book of Matthew.

Over a summer, the Holy Spirit began chipping away at Clay's heart of stone.

A pivotal moment in Clay's journey occurred the night he visited his dying grandfather. They hadn't spoken in years, separated by a deep resentment Clay had held on to as a teenager.

"It was the first time I saw him in a long time," said Clay.

"By God's grace, I was able to forgive him."

Soon after he forgave his grandfather, Clay realized his own need to repent of his sins and seek God's forgiveness too. He then began meeting with a local pastor. One day, the pastor asked him about missions.

"For some reason, I had told people in high school that I was going to be a missionary," said Clay. "I told the pastor that, and so he encouraged me to think about it."

But by graduation, Clay hadn't sought out missions and picked up a job selling insurance. Yet, he knew the Lord had a greater purpose for him than sitting behind a desk. Missing working with his hands—his first job as a teenager was in construction—Clay quit and jumped back into manual labor.

Throughout this transition, he continued to pray about God's calling on his life. Again, he asked for a sign. This time, God provided him with something tangible—an encounter with a construction missionary.

Clay met the missionary on the job while buying a trailer from him. Their conversation about prices quickly turned to faith and then missions. Inspired, Clay went home and discovered ABWE online.

Clay serves in the US with ABWE's Project Office, which is responsible for the mission's construction needs. Clay hopes to go to Togo next year on his first construction trip with ABWE to help with the Hôpital Baptiste Biblique renewal project.

→ abwe.org/clay



TOGO
STEPHANIE

In her third year of law school, Stephanie dropped out to pursue health science instead. She sensed the Lord calling her into missions and discovered ABWE's Hospital of Hope in Togo through her local church. After a short-term stint on the field, she plans to return to Togo and continue working as a physician's assistant. → abwe.org/stephanie

COLOMBIA

ALEJANDRO & CHRISTA

"I will come back and train others so that they don't have to go through the same struggles I had to while church planting."



It would be an understatement to say Christa possessed a heart for the lost from an early age.

One could often find the young girl out on the lawn with a picture Bible, excitedly sharing the gospel with her neighbors. Because her father was a pastor, missionaries frequently stayed in Christa's home and visited her church.

"These seeds produced a love for culture, language, and peoples in me," said Christa. "Combined with my passion for telling people about Jesus, I knew the Lord was calling me into missions by elementary school."

Although Christa felt the confirmation of this calling during her teenage years, she didn't know the timing. So, she leaned into her passions until the Lord opened a door, studying Spanish in college and befriending international students.

After her college graduation, Christa worked in mobilization at a missions agency in Atlanta and met Alejandro at church. Like Christa, he too sensed a calling into missions, but his journey took a very different route than hers.

Born and raised in Colombia, Alejandro became a believer as a teenager. After college, he joined a church-planting team in Bogota, where Alejandro quickly found himself underprepared

for the task. Determined to fix this problem, he decided to pursue formal ministry and Bible training.

However, his preparation was cut short by his job, which required him to relocate to the US and then the Middle East.

Before leaving Colombia, he told God, "I will come back and train others so that they don't have to go through the same struggles I had to while church planting."

But as Alejandro climbed the business ladder, his commitments to the Lord fell by the wayside. It wasn't until ten years later that God reminded Alejandro of his promise, prompting him to return to Atlanta in search of God's direction. As he started attending Christa's church, they began dating and

Alejandro shared his vision of returning to his home country as a missionary.

For the next three years, Alejandro studied at Moody Bible Institute, while he and Christa led a Spanish-speaking ministry.

Today, they have recently eclipsed the four-month mark in Colombia, where Alejandro serves as an administrator and teacher at Seminario Bautista de Colombia (Baptist Seminary), and Christa helps in church-planting efforts. → abwe.org/alejandro



Ismael and Emmanina are training and raising up pastoral leaders in their home country of Haiti.

→ abwe.org/ismael

URUGUAY

CLAY & MEG



SOUTH AFRICA JOY



Joy lived in Uzbekistan as a missionary kid and pursued a degree in biblical studies with the goal of missions. After wrestling with her calling in college, the Lord led her to Thailand for two years, where she worked in a home for at-risk girls. Today, she is headed to do local church ministry in South Africa.

→ abwe.org/joy

C

Clay received the call at work from his wife, Meg. His worst fears were confirmed. He had cancer.

Clay rushed home to find Meg curled up on the floor.

The couple were new believers, and, according to Clay, this trial put them on the fast track of strengthening their faith.

They packed their things and moved to Charleston, S.C., to start his treatment.

“I had a whole lot of time on my hands,” said Clay. “So, a friend advised me to take Bible classes online.”

With no prior theological education, Clay enrolled in an online seminary, motivated by a deep hunger for God’s word. Through the grace of

God, 13 months later, Clay left the treatment center cancer free and became a pastor.

Noticing his church’s lack of interest in missions, he began preaching Great Commission-oriented sermons, encouraging the congregation to support an overseas ministry and send missionaries.

Later, Clay went on a short-term trip to Nepal. He returned home on fire for overseas missions. Little by little, God was preparing his heart for life on the mission field.

At the beginning of 2020, Clay, Meg, and their children traveled to Ireland to visit Meg’s dying father. The country’s spiritual lostness moved their hearts as they shared the gospel with her father and other locals. These evangelistic moments weighed on Clay’s conscience.

“I struggled to get back into the pulpit,” said Clay. “God wanted us on the field, but I was holding back.”

Finally, the burden of conviction drove Clay to his knees in prayer. He surrendered his life and family to God.

A mutual friend connected them to ABWE through Ryan and Gretchen Rought, missionaries to Costa Rica.

Now, God has provided a way for Clay and Meg to open the field of Uruguay, answering a 30-year prayer of the ABWE South America team.

→ abwe.org/clayandmeg

JAPAN

DANIEL

D

Daniel exhaled the South Carolina air with a sigh of relief.

Having spent the last 17 years as a missionary kid in Japan, he was finally back in the US—for good this time.

From the early age of two, all Daniel knew was missions. His parents were pioneering missionaries in a rural town called Miyakonojo. Here, they planted a church, where they continue to serve today.

When he was a teenager, his father asked him what he wanted to do with his future. Daniel shrugged and halfheartedly threw out the idea of becoming a missionary like him.

Five years later, as Daniel prepared to leave for university, he was certain of two things: he wanted nothing to do with missions, and he never wanted to come back to Japan. He was determined to blaze his own trail, not follow in the footsteps of his parents.

But by his last semester at Bob Jones University, Daniel still lacked direction in life. One day, during a business class lecture, Daniel tuned out his professor and imagined what life would look like if he continued on this trajectory: attain a well-paying job, earn money, and then retire comfortably. His life story played out before his eyes, leaving him dissatisfied and unsettled.

“I spent the next few nights on my knees praying to God and asking him what to do,” said Daniel. “I sensed the Holy Spirit telling me to go to Japan.”

Struggling with the direction God was leading him, Daniel ignored the calling for a few years, until he traveled to Greece for an archeological tour of

Paul’s missionary journeys. The apostle’s words to the Philippians, “To live is Christ and to die is gain,” echoed in Daniel’s mind as he stood in the streets of Philippi.

“I wasn’t afraid to die for Christ,” Daniel recalled. “But if I wasn’t afraid to die for him, why was I so hesitant to live for him?”

In that moment, the Holy Spirit began to change Daniel’s heart toward missions in Japan. In 2018, he returned to Japan for three years and worked alongside his parents. In 2022, he plans on going back as a long-term missionary with ABWE, serving in the same church plant where he first came to know Christ.

→ abwe.org/daniel

“I wasn’t afraid to die for Christ,” Daniel recalled. “But if I wasn’t afraid to die for him, why was I so hesitant to live for him?”



RESTRICTED ACCESS MISSIONARIES

*We can't say who they are,
but we can tell you what
they are going to do.*



E.J. | Southwest Asia

*will be working as a nurse
at our mission hospital
ministering to Muslims.*

→ abwe.org/0192301



J & C.L. | Southeast Asia

*are completing a short-term
stint and then will return
to the field as long-term
missionaries to build Bible
translation software.*

→ abwe.org/0171531



S & A.S. | Southeast Asia

*will be witnessing to an
unreached people group
through sports ministry.*

→ abwe.org/0171331



T & H.G. | Southwest Asia

*will be training national
leaders through
theological education.*

→ abwe.org/0171501



NORTH AMERICA

DAVID

***Suddenly, a strange
sensation came over
David. He was on his way
to a party, but the church
on the side of the road
seemed to be calling him.***

Compelled to veer off course, he found himself driving around the steepled building.

David didn't grow up in a religious home. He'd never been interested in faith before either. As a teenager, he decided to follow the crowd, chasing idols and worldly vices. Nothing changed as he got older.

"Anything that you can imagine a 34-year-old doing, I was doing it and had done it," said David. "I had a serious anger problem that landed me in prison."

During his time behind bars, he had actively belittled the chaplain and other cellmates who said they were Christians.

Now, his heart was telling him to go inside. Something was different.

After the eighth lap around the church, he finally pulled into the parking lot and tentatively walked inside. As soon as he walked through the door, a pastor greeted him. For some reason, David immediately shared his entire

story with him. To David's surprise, the pastor had a similar testimony.

"We spent the next eight months walking through the Bible before I gave my life to the Lord," said David.

David devoted himself to studying God's word and, eventually, went on a missions trip. During this time, the Lord sparked his passion for the lost, specifically the homeless on Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles.

"The Lord pressed a calling on my life for people who struggle with addictions—drug, alcohol, pornography," said David. "He has uniquely gifted me to talk and relate to these people."

In 2018, David became a short-term missionary with EveryEthne to minister to addicts in Des Moines, Iowa. This year, he made the decision to continue his work as a long-term missionary.

→ abwe.org/david



***Mark & Kelsey focus on developing
church leaders through Scripture teach-
ing and theological education, along with
helping the local church meet the needs of
international ministries.***

→ abwe.org/markandkelsey



NORTH AMERICA

VELU & VIKKI



Velu was born and raised a Hindu in India.

Growing up in a performance-based culture and having experienced sexual abuse, Velu turned to addictive behavior patterns as a coping mechanism. His repeated and frequent pleas to Hindu gods for freedom from these behaviors fell on deaf ears.

When he moved to the US to get his master's in electrical engineering, his habits followed him. With no Hindu temple nearby, living directly across the street from a Baptist church, and believing all religions lead to the same God, he began attending church on a regular basis.

Velu said, "I loved the message, I loved the worship, I loved the people, but I had an issue when the pastor would give an altar call at the end quoting John 14:6, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

With frustration, he pondered how 800 million Hindus in the world (*at the time*) could be wrong. How could the pastor say that Jesus is the only way?

The Holy Spirit, through the welcoming nature of the church members, kept drawing him back. Months later, Velu met Vikki at their workplace.

Vikki's family had deep roots within ministry. Her grandparents were church planters in Austin, Texas. She grew up in the church and came to know Christ at an early age.

While working together, Velu and Vikki became friends. On one occasion, Vikki distinctively remembers God saying to her, "I have my hand on Velu's life."

Vikki committed to pray for Velu from that day forward and follow the Holy Spirit's leading.

Five years later, after wrestling though Christianity's "exclusive" nature and comparing it to Hinduism's "inclusivity," Velu was on the brink of salvation. He craved the freedom the gospel offered from his addictions.

In December 1997, Velu took the leap of faith and entrusted his life to Christ. His life was transformed; he turned away from idol worship and, by the grace of God, found victory over the power of sin.

Velu and Vikki were married less than two years later. God used Velu's heart for the lost to burden Vikki too. Originally, she had little desire to go into missions, but as she watched Velu's passion for the mission field grow, her attitude toward the nations changed.

They sat on the missions committee at their church, partnered with missionaries, and went on many mission trips.

Their church supports Sharon and Doug Martin, Vice President of Strategic Initiative Development and Executive Director of EveryEthne. This summer, Doug recruited Vikki and Velu to lead EveryEthne's Heart, Mind, and Soul seminar for Hindus, a ministry reaching the Hindu diaspora in North America, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world. Velu will also be partnering with churches and equipping believers to cross cultures without crossing borders.

→ abwe.org/veluandvikki

LINDA



Linda collapsed to the floor. She had pushed herself too hard, again.

Physically and emotionally exhausted from her shift at the hospital, she waited for her daughter to drive up from Florida and rescue her for the second time.

It had been more than four years since her life began to crumble.

First, it was the breast cancer diagnosis. Then, the deaths of her parents. Finally, her husband of 31 years walked out, leaving her in Virginia to grieve and fight cancer alone.

On the heels of her cancer remission, Linda had jumped into nursing school as a distraction from her grief. Often, she would overwork herself to the brink of a meltdown—just like tonight.

This time, when her daughter came and took Linda down to Florida, she stayed. But even family couldn't heal the hole in her heart.

"I couldn't find a way to get better. I struggled with depression and complicated grief. Even the psychiatrists didn't know what to do with me," said Linda. "Finally, I had to learn to be independent and face my wounds."

So, Linda moved in with a friend, created a healthy separation from family, and focused on her relationship with the Lord. Some days, she would rewrite the Psalms for hours.

A year into her healing process, Linda woke up one night and sensed God telling her, "I have a place for you." Confused, Linda sought to forget the voice by scrolling through Facebook. Immediately, a picture popped up of a friend surrounded by orphans on a missions trip to Uganda.

Linda had grown up in a missions-minded church and even attended Bible college in the hopes of one day going to the field. But plans changed when she married a competitive businessman and became a stay-at-home mom.

Something shifted within her as she looked at the photo. Unsettled, she fell back asleep and tried her best to continue with her routine the next day. But God wouldn't let her.

He led Ugandans into her workplace. Then, her church announced the location of their next short-term trip: Uganda.

The Lord was calling her, and for the first time in years, she felt ready to take a step of obedience.

Since that first trip, Linda visited Uganda multiple times to help the same orphanage she saw on Facebook. In the spring of 2022, she plans to return and work as a long-term missionary with ABWE.

→ abwe.org/linda



Merritt's first experience in missions was a short-term trip to Wales during college. Inspired by the missionaries she met, Merritt went on three more trips in Europe, where the Portuguese captured her heart. She currently teaches first and second grade at the Greater Lisbon Christian Academy in Portugal. → abwe.org/merritt

TOGO

JUSTIN & MEGAN

J

Justin fell in love with airplanes as a boy, often building model planes with his brother growing up.

His fascination with aviation was inspired by his father, who was raised in a house at the end of a runway.

So, when he saw a yellow-winged model Piper J3 Cub in his pastor's office, Justin was immediately intrigued.

"You like airplanes?" Justin asked.

The pastor responded, "You know Nate Saint and Jim Elliot?"

The question, a reference to the legendary missionaries who flew the iconic aircraft in Ecuador, figuratively flew right over Justin's head. The world of missions wasn't part of his "semi-churched" upbringing.

Justin had stopped attending church before college, turning his back on faith until his mother became severely ill. Her condition moved Justin to prayer, asking God to miraculously provide the funds to afford her medication. When God came through and healed his mother, Justin couldn't ignore the Lord any longer and surrendered his life to him completely.

While in college, he met Megan, who had at the time just recently recommitted her life to Christ.

Megan loved going to church as a child, but as she grew older, attending church was no longer optional but mandatory. This enforcement bothered Megan, and like Justin, when she gained independence, she distanced herself from Christianity and plunged into the world for fulfillment. Megan resurfaced depressed and unsatisfied.

Then, God brought her back to himself.

At a David Crowder Band concert, she was introduced to a missions opportunity. The following summer, Megan went on a short-term trip to Canada to help lead a Vacation Bible School program.

While in college, she plugged into a church and brought Justin along too.

Seven years later, Justin and Megan, now married, were meeting with their pastor when Justin noticed his miniature airplane.

Seeing his interest in aviation, the pastor recommended Justin join a missions trip to Alaska with the Kingdom Air Corps, a bush pilot ministry bringing the gospel to Alaskan natives in some of the most isolated places in North America.

The experience set Justin's heart ablaze for the Great Commission. He sensed God leading him to do aviation ministry full-time, a vision Megan wholeheartedly agreed with. Missionary friends recommended they check out ABWE, and soon after they attended a 24-Hour Demo event at the International Headquarters.

Today, they and their two children are headed to Togo to reach unengaged people groups through aviation ministry. → abwe.org/justinandmegan

ENGLAND
KRISTA



In a family of hunters and baseball players, Krista found her passion in drama and the arts. But after teaching theatre for six years, she quit to follow her true passion—Jesus Christ. Krista went to seminary and will be partnering with a local church to reach creatives in England.

→ abwe.org/krista

ECUADOR

JESS & AMY



J

Jess and Amy had the odds against them, but God's fingerprints are all over their story.

Amy grew up in a churchgoing family and accepted Christ as her Savior at a young age.

As a teenager, she began to feel a burning passion for missions. A string of personal tragedies abruptly changed her mind. She grew bitter toward God and put her faith on the backburner.

Unlike Amy, Jess' exposure to the gospel during his childhood was limited. Although his family attended church, conversations about Jesus never made it into the home.

"Even though I was exposed to Christian things, I didn't understand any of it," said Jess.

In public school, he got involved with the wrong crowd, doing drugs and landing himself in county jail on multiple occasions. He was out of rehab on a five-year probation by the time he met and started dating Amy in college.

In 2008, Jess and Amy got married and moved to Dallas with their two sons. But their relationship started to fall apart. Amidst her failing marriage, Amy lost her job and spiraled into a debilitating identity crisis.

"I thought I was a failure as an employee, as a wife, as a daughter, and as a mom," said Amy.

Jess insisted on divorce. Amy wouldn't accept it as an option.

Amy returned to church in search of answers to save her marriage. The Lord drew her back to himself and filled Amy with peace about Jess.

One day while driving, Jess was listening to *Crazy Love* by Francis Chan. Jess' mother-in-law had given him the audio book on CD. Chan's description of God's magnitude and greatness humbled Jess. He knew what he needed to do.

Rushing home, he told Amy, "I finally get it. I need Jesus."

Jess turned his life over to God that day and, according to Amy, "has been living for the Lord ever since."

As the Lord repaired their marriage, they dove into ministry at church. Jess went on a short-term trip to Colombia and returned home believing God was calling his family into missions. But, despite her passion for missions in her youth, Amy was hesitant to go.

Then, after another missions trip in 2016, both Amy and Jess knew God was leading them to the field. Today, they are in Ecuador conducting Good Soil evangelism and discipleship trainings to local churches.

→ abwe.org/jessandamy

JAPAN STEPHEN



As a teenager, Stephen surrendered his life to the Lord and immediately sensed a calling to Japan. The next Sunday, God confirmed this purpose for Stephen when a missionary from Japan spoke at his church. He recently graduated from Moody Bible Institute, where he was introduced to ABWE and is currently preparing to join the team in Japan to continue making disciples and reaching the Japanese through God's word.

→ abwe.org/stephen

UGANDA

KIMBERLY



“Unless God dropped a child in my lap, I wouldn’t pursue a kid,” Kimberly said half-jokingly.

Seated in a café in England, she and another friend discussed their attitudes toward adoption. Kimberly had made the pitstop on her way home to the US from Uganda, where she served as a medical missionary at a small, rural clinic.

Less than eight hours later, God called Kimberly’s bluff. Her phone buzzed with a text message from her brother-in-law, asking if she could take care of his oldest son, Josiah.

Kimberly’s sister had suddenly passed away a year prior, leaving her husband alone to raise Josiah and two other children. But Kimberly never expected to be thrown into the role of “instant mother,” as she called it. Wrapping up her responsibilities in Uganda, she moved to the US to raise Josiah.

“I wrongfully put God in a box, thinking that missions was done now that I had a nine-year-old,” said Kimberly.

Ever since she was a little girl, Kimberly had a passion for people. She remembers running around lighting everyone’s candles during the Christmas Eve service. The childhood experience of bringing light to dark places foreshadowed her future as a missionary.

Despite the joys of motherhood, the sudden loss of her first love in missions burdened Kimberly.

A few years later in 2019, an ABWE missionary-friend, who was launching into long-term ministry, asked Kimberly if she would help them move to Uganda. She excitedly agreed, thinking this could serve as the perfect opportunity to show Josiah her past.

But, at first, her wonderful plan appeared to be falling apart.

“The first night, Josiah hated it and was freaking out,” said Kimberly. “I was really worried if I

had made the right decision to bring him. I asked myself if I was just dragging him into my world for selfish reasons.”

But over the next several days, God worked in Josiah’s heart, and he soon fell in love with the country and its people. Kimberly’s spirit lifted as she watched him play outside with other Ugandan children. It felt like God was “honoring the love of [her] heart.”

When they returned to the US, after some encouragement from her ABWE friends, Kimberly joined the mission to serve with them in Uganda. In addition to working at a medical clinic, she’ll be discipling young women struggling with the aftermath of choosing abortion.

Lord willing, they’ll be in Uganda by the end of December. This time, Josiah can’t wait to go.

→ abwe.org/kimberly



PHILIPPINES

AVERY & MEREDITH

Avery and Meredith run a residential care ministry in the Philippines called Obed’s House Ministries. Meredith’s heart was moved on a short-term trip when she encountered Filipino street children without a home and any food. She met Avery in the Philippines, and they joined ABWE to continue the work of showing the love of Christ to orphans.

→ abwe.org/averyandmeredith



TOGO

THERESA



NORTH AMERICA PHILLIP & CHRISTIANA

Phillip and Christiana are joining ABWE's Member Care team, bringing with them Phillip's experience in pastoral ministry and Christiana's background as a missionary kid in England.

→ abwe.org/phillipandchristiana

T

Theresa had made the five-minute commute to the Hospital of Hope (HOH) numerous times in the past. But today, she would be arriving not as a worker, but a patient.

Ever since she was 12 years old, Theresa had imagined herself moving to Africa as a missionary. Although working at a hospital didn't match the "missionary jungle adventures" of her childhood fantasies, the experience was a dream come true.

She studied nursing at Cedarville University, where the Lord continued to stoke her passion for missions. During college, she even had the opportunity to work with Muslim refugees, which God used to soften her heart toward Muslims.

Theresa was connected to HOH through ABWE missionaries. They encouraged her to go on the short-term healthcare trip that she was currently on.

She was making her way to the hospital for another day on the job. While crossing an intersection, Theresa collided with a motorcyclist.

The head-on impact injured her mouth and knocked several teeth out, bringing an abrupt end to her trip.

She returned to the US with a heavy heart, wanting to be with the Togolese on the field. Before, she was certain God wanted her to serve in Togo long term. Now, she was uncertain of her next steps.

Over time, through prayer and encouragement, Theresa realized God was drawing her to greater dependence on him during this difficult season.

"God's glory isn't jeopardized by where I am," said Theresa. "The accident got me to a place of surrender, knowing the Lord is still in control."


Theresa plans to go back to Togo in May 2022 as a mid-term missionary. → abwe.org/theresa



SPAIN DAVID & CATHERINE

Raised as Roman Catholics, David and Catherine became believers in their mid-40s after friends shared the gospel with them. They began serving at a local homeless shelter with David giving monthly devotionals. David sensed a call to go to the field, so he and Catherine are retiring and will be spending their second careers as missionaries to Spain.

→ abwe.org/davidandcatherine



POLAND

NICK & JILL

“God used Riki’s sickness and death for his glory. Through it, he called three people into missions.”

I

It was Black Friday, and instead of waiting with friends for Best Buy to open—like he did most years—Nick sat at home watching “My Hope America” on Netflix.

Nick never took Christianity seriously growing up, but something prompted him to watch the Billy Graham docuseries. Halfway through the first episode, he paused the show, confessed his sins, and surrendered his life to Christ.

As the Holy Spirit worked in him, he began attending a college ministry, where he met Jill.

Jill came to faith in high school and caught the missions bug after participating on a few short-term trips. She was set on going to the mission field after college, but, upon meeting Nick, her plans changed.

After they got married, Nick was hired as a youth group leader. Nick and Jill fell in love with discipling and mentoring teenagers, but Nick noticed a theological famine among the kids.

“We needed to get back to basics and go over foundational truths, like the existence of God and the inerrancy of Scripture,” said Nick. “We started something called ‘Tacos and Theology.’”

It wasn’t just the youth group that lacked sound theology—the pulpit did too. So, with great sadness, Nick and Jill left the church and found Landmark Baptist Church. They befriended pastor Ron Davis and his wife Riki, former ABWE missionaries to Slovakia.

Around this time, the Lord moved in Nick’s heart, making him consider missions while reading David Platt’s *Radical*. Nick and Jill discovered ABWE online and attended a 24-Hour Demo event to learn more about who ABWE is.

Jill worked at the cancer treatment center and asked the Davises questions about ABWE during one of Riki’s breast cancer checkups.

“Their jaws hit the floor,” said Jill.

The Davises had no idea Nick and Jill were interested in missions, let alone partnering with their former sending agency.

Immediately, the Davises began pouring into the younger couple, fanning their passion for missions.

Then, Riki passed away, and God used her death to call Ron back to the mission field, this time in Poland. He encouraged Nick and Jill to join him, and they eagerly accepted.

“God used Riki’s sickness and death for his glory,” said Jill. “Through it, he called three people into missions.”

➔ abwe.org/nickandjill

THAILAND

MICAH & MISTI



NORTH AMERICA
KEN & EILEEN



Ken and Eileen served in church ministry for years, enjoying leading teenagers on short-term trips. When Ken was offered the position of lead pastor at his church, he declined, knowing his and Eileen's spiritual gifts would be best suited elsewhere. Today, they are leveraging their background in pastoral care to help mobilize, team build, and encourage ABWE missionaries in Africa.

→ abwe.org/kenandeileen



Things are coming full circle for Nathan and Micah, brothers who spent their boyhood years as missionary kids in Africa and are now returning to the field—this time as teammates.

But it wasn't planned, they both insisted.

"Sometimes siblings grow up, become best friends, and want to do everything together," said Nathan. "That wasn't the case for us—not that we had a bad relationship, but this is just something God has brought about in his own way."

Four years Micah's senior and the oldest of four siblings, Nathan had always gravitated toward the company of adults and took the most responsibility in lending a hand to his parents' ministry.

He remembers late nights

with his father setting up equipment to show the *Jesus Film* to refugees in Ivory Coast. To be sure, Micah participated too, often accompanying his father to the fish market and around town to make small talk with locals.

Even their two sisters caught a passion for ministry early on.

And how could they not? Missions was in their blood, starting with their grandfather, who embarked on his missionary journey to Liberia in 1959. Sitting under the preaching of their grandfather and father, both Micah and Nathan vowed as children to become missionaries when they came of age.

But when their mother's health complications brought the family back to the US, the brothers' paths took different directions. They both still clung to a vision of ministry, but neither's involved each other.

Nathan married Jackie, a childhood friend whom he began dating while on furlough a few years prior. A job at Liberty University brought Nathan and

Jackie to Lynchburg, Va., and his school employment allowed for both of them to complete their undergraduate degrees.

Though she wasn't brought up on the field like her husband, her passion for the lost equaled his. Before going into missions, Nathan wanted to continue his biblical education at seminary. Between avoiding student debt, having children, and juggling a demanding job, it was put on hold.

While finishing his Master of Divinity, Nathan and Jackie's hearts were set on serving in Thailand after a missionary presented to their church the need to build churches among the Thai people.

When Nathan left home, Micah stayed with the family and became more involved in his parents' ministry to African refugees. Then, he attended Word of Life Bible College and later Lancaster Bible College. There, he found a missions opportunity to teach English in East Asia. Although Micah considers himself more of a "math guy," the chance was too good to pass up.

And his decision paid off.

Along with getting exposed to Asia's massive need for the gospel, Micah met Misti through a network of house churches. Misti grew up in the church but didn't hear the gospel clearly until college. After giving her life to Christ, she joined a church-planting team to East Asia.

Micah and Misti made their first trip back to the US to get married but were forced to leave East Asia again when Misti's visa was on the verge of expiring. With the pandemic on the horizon, they found themselves stuck in the US.

But God was working in the background. With the world-on-hold, it gave the brothers an opportunity to reconnect.

"When I went off to college, we weren't particularly close," said Nathan. "It's not that we were enemies, but we just couldn't foresee working together."

But those attitudes existed

when they were still young, naïve brothers. Now, as adults forged by the experiences of marriage, family, and overseas ministry, they see each other as friends.

Although Micah was set on returning to East Asia, Nathan approached him about the idea of serving in Thailand together.

After some time and prayer, Micah and Misti agreed. Today, with Nathan and Jackie's four children, and Micah and Misti's two, they are planning to do church-planting work in Thailand.

→ abwe.org/micahandmisti

→ abwe.org/nathanandjackie



SOUTH AFRICA CHRIS & RACHEL

Chris and Rachel will be serving in South Africa doing community outreach and evangelism. Chris worked as a youth pastor before entering the military. Rachel grew up in the church and served in children's ministry when she was old enough. They met in college, were married, but God didn't call them to the field until later in their lives.

→ abwe.org/chrisandrachel

THAILAND

NATHAN & JACKIE



BRAZIL

JOEL

In terms of legacy, if anyone was ever destined for the mission field, Joel was.

His family history in missions dates back to the late 1930s, when his great-grandfather, Willard Stull Jr., arrived in Brazil. His life inspired following generations to become missionaries to the largest

South American country. He lived out his final years on the field in a small house in Joel's parent's backyard.

To Joel, his great-grandfather wasn't just a spiritual giant but also a beloved family member. So, when he passed away, Joel found himself wondering for the first time why his great-grandfather had stayed in Brazil all those years.

He asked himself, "What was in this man that he would give everything he had to the mission field?"

The Holy Spirit opened Joel's eyes to the answer—a passion for Jesus Christ. At the age of 14, he asked God to stir within him the same zeal that motivated his great-grandfather to serve faithfully. As a result, Joel resolved within himself to be more involved in ministry.

"I made that faith and ministry my own," said Joel. "It wasn't just my parents' faith or being a missionary kid in Brazil."

His parents having recently started a third church plant, Joel viewed it as fresh opportunity to demonstrate his newfound commitment to ministry. He jumped in with both feet, serving on the worship, tech, and youth teams.

In college, God made it known to Joel that he belonged on the mission field. The only question remaining was where.

Eventually, after a period of fasting and praying, the Lord impressed the answer upon Joel. It turned out to be what he already knew deep in his heart: Brazil.

Today, Joel will be returning to Brazil to plant churches, make disciples, and take the gospel to the gauchos, South American cowboys.

→ abwe.org/joel

RESTRICTED ACCESS MISSIONARIES

*We can't say who they are,
but we can tell you what
they are going to do.*



Y & J.S. | Southwest Asia

*will be joining a
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→ abwe.org/0171571



H.Q. | North Africa

*will be working in
children's ministry.*

→ abwe.org/0171291



J & A.D. | Middle East & Europe

*will use their experience
with Syrian refugees to
minister to Arabs.*

→ abwe.org/0171421



J & A.D. | Middle East

*are joining a team that is training
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Faces of the Lost

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Photography by Hannah Strayer, Marissa Dickey, and Unsplash.





the greatest of these is **LOVE**



A mother forgoes cancer treatment to protect her baby's life at the risk of losing her own.

BY LORI SMITH

I took a deep breath and braced to tell Lillian the difficult news.

She probably had breast cancer.

Immediately, we arranged to send her to our provincial hospital in the city of Goroka for further evaluation, but the doctors there dismissed my discoveries and sent her home without even performing a biopsy.

By the time she came back to our clinic, not only had her cancer spread, but I was alarmed to discover she was pregnant.

I considered the dilemma. Lillian had a very progressed stage of cancer and her chances of survival were already low without adding in the complications of a pregnancy and delivery. On top of that, the increased hormone levels associated with her pregnancy would only accelerate the cancer growth.

When I could find the words to tell Lillian about her pregnancy, I had to be honest about the risks involved. But I also had to be honest about the precious life growing inside of her and God's perspective on the sanctity of life.

Obviously, Lillian was overwhelmed by the news, but she agreed to have an ultrasound so I could introduce her to her little baby.

What began as shock quickly turned into determination when she saw her baby for the first time. In that moment, surrounded by the rhythmic beating of her baby's heart, she decided his life was worth the sacrifice of her own. I promised I would help her walk through this journey in any way I could.

Through the pain of cancer and the discomforts of pregnancy, Lillian bravely carried on. But as her baby grew, so too did the deadly cancer consuming her from the inside out.

Nine months passed slowly, and Lillian's suffering grew more and more each day. When the time came for her to give birth, she was overwhelmed by an intense, searing pain from a massive tumor in her chest. It was obvious how much the cancer had weakened her body. Terrified for her, I held her, praying encouragement and strength over her until her precious son was born into my arms.

That day, we named the healthy, baby boy Able—because God is Able!

Knowing that nursing would extend the hormones accelerating her cancer growth, Lillian asked that I take Able home and care for him while she traveled to the hospital for radiation treatment.

Through the pain of cancer and the discomforts of pregnancy, Lillian bravely carried on. But as her baby grew, so too did the deadly cancer consuming her from the inside out.

The goal was to decrease the size of the tumor and relieve some of her pain. But when Lillian saw that all the other radiation patients died despite treatment, she became scared and stopped radiation.

When she returned to our clinic, not only had her cancer started taking over her entire body, but I discovered another “little something” during an examination. She was pregnant again.

I gently broke the news to my sweet friend, and a distressed look fell across her face before she fainted.

Lillian knew the last straw of her life had just been plucked from her hand. Her last pregnancy had exploded the cancer growth, so we could only assume that this pregnancy would do the same. Again, she was faced with the impossible decision between her life, or what little was left, and the life of her baby.

Tears filling her eyes, Lillian bravely chose her baby. The two years she had spent with us had begun to change her. She saw how precious her young son was and deeply knew the value of human life. If the baby inside of her was like Able, she could not kill it.

So we dove deeper into God’s word together, as her health continued to decline. She attended all the ladies’ meetings where I was a guest speaker and teacher. As her hunger to know more about God increased, he slowly changed her heart.

A few months into her pregnancy, our fears came true. The cancer had spread into her lungs and brain. Lillian began


to have intense and terrifying seizures. Sometimes her whole body would fold into a fetal position, and eventually she lost her ability to walk.

I sent out an urgent message to her family, telling them this was most likely their last chance to come visit Lillian. She was in agonizing pain that was almost unbearable to watch. The tumor had grown very large, and open sores covered her body.

Watching her convulse in pain broke me. With tears in my eyes and agony in my heart, I told her that I could give her stronger pain medication, but it may injure her precious baby. I was sure that there was no way Lillian would survive long enough to deliver. But even with the knowledge of her looming death, Lillian was determined to protect her baby, despite her crippling, all-consuming pain. She chose not to take the medication.

I believe that God saw and honored that choice for life, because there’s no medical explanation for what happened next, other than miraculous grace. Lillian began to improve.

One day, I was scheduled to speak at a ladies’ conference, and Lillian was determined to attend. She started pulling herself from the bedroom, down our hallway, into the bathroom, refusing a wheelchair or any assistance. Slowly, the pulling became a crawl. Then, she started to force her weight onto her feet, turning them from an inward position to stand flat on the floor. Step-by-step she forced each foot forward, until she was walking.



Lori Smith and her husband Bill have been serving in Papua New Guinea since 1990. Together, they are church planters, using the tools of medical evangelism, baby care ministry, and theological education. Lori works alongside nationals at Seigu Baptist Clinic to provide quality healthcare to the surrounding areas. Since it was founded, the clinic has flourished, serving 22,000 patients in 2021 alone. The clinic also cares for 678 pregnant women and delivers 68 babies annually.





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& ETERNITY
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I held my dear sister in my arms as she struggled for each breath.

By the time the meeting started, she was there, patiently waiting. The whole time, she was completely focused on me, intently listening to each word of each session. God was at work in her heart.

Through some miracle, Lillian did carry that baby to full term, and I had the joy of delivering precious baby Joyce, who was named by Lillian after my own mama. I took Joyce immediately after the birth to care for her. Then, I began to watch Lillian slowly slip away.

It was at another ladies' meeting, just months after Joyce's delivery, that God answered our heart cry. When I invited people to give their lives to Christ, Lillian's hand immediately went up. As tears poured down my face, I held both Lillian and baby Joyce in my arms as Lillian came to accept Jesus as her Savior.

Lillian had nine precious months with Joyce, which was longer than any of us had dared wish for. But eventually the day we'd been expecting for years finally came.

I held my dear sister in my arms as she struggled for each breath.

We gazed into each other's eyes, making a silent promise, a mama oath between us, that I will always look after her babies.

And then she was gone.

Her face finally relaxed, free from pain and suffering, as she entered into the glorious arms of her Lord and Savior.

To this day, I still care for Able and Joyce with the help of their pastor uncle. We are working together as a team to make sure they attend school, have clothes and food, and learn about Jesus.

But most importantly, we make sure they know how much their mama loved both of them.

Lillian made the ultimate sacrifice for them, but in the end, their lives are what brought Lillian to eternal life! It was a beautiful example of sacrificial love, and an incredible journey to watch, as Lillian learned to love our Lord through deep suffering and pain. •

SPOTLIGHT

LIVE GLOBAL



Generation Upon Generation

Amir opened the shop door, unaffected by the humid air, just as he'd done every morning for the past five decades. First, for his grandfather who was in charge, and then for his father.

Now, with his father gone, he was the sole owner until his son came of age. Each day was the same, interrupted only by the call to prayer at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening.

And it's the same thought that gets him out of bed and to work each morning—earn enough for another day. Wake up. Survive. Repeat.

But with rice, flour, and oil running low, combined with his age, how could he keep providing for so many mouths at the table?

I should be happy to be alive, but this life is a challenge and a hardship. How is it possible for one to ever prosper? Is this all there is to life? Will I ever find joy? Will I ever find hope?

These things don't exist for Amir. Life is empty, without meaning and truth. He will continue to open his shop door in the hope that something might change—but it won't. Not until the good news reaches him. ■

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ABWE.ORG/LIVEGLOBAL

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER



This Live Global missionary is a visual media creator, traveling the world in search of stories that inspire North American churches to connect with national partners.

FIELDNOTES

STORIES FROM THE FIELD



DAVID CARREL and his wife use everyday experiences, like taking their kids to the park, to fuel their ministry.

Using What You Have

Sometimes the best ministry opportunities come through normal, everyday life.

I *magine moving to a foreign city as a total stranger with the goal of starting a new church in a culture of different religious beliefs.*

No family. No support system. No step-by-step manual. Where do you even begin?

Upon arrival in Arcoverde, Brazil, these concerns weighed heavy on our hearts. But amid such uncertainty, God reminded me of the first message I ever preached—the passage of Moses and the burning bush.

Like Moses, who was convinced of his own inability to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, we felt unready for our ministry. But just as God ensured Moses that his presence was sufficient for the task, we sensed confidence as we surrendered to the Lord, vowing to put one foot in front of the other and use whatever he had blessed us with for his glory.

In our case, we had hobbies, a foreigner status, and two adorable little girls. Most afternoons we walked at a local park, praying that we might run into people and spark a conversation.

One day we met Chico and Bia, whose daughter Alice was riding her bike in the park. Our daughter Evelyn was close in age. We discovered they had just moved to town as well and shared our plight of being relatively friendless. We hit it off and started to hang out often. Soon, we began walking them through The Story of Hope, ABWE's evangelistic Bible study. Their Catholic upbringing had left them dissatisfied with religion, but the story of the Bible resonated with their hearts. Before we even finished the book, they caught the gospel and decided to follow Christ.

And right after we made our first Christian friends, they moved! Chico was offered a job closer to their home city, a little less than an hour away. We sensed God directing us to follow them, and so we started paying visits to continue our friendship as well as our Bible studies, which eventually attracted

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more and more people. Eventually, we outgrew any house we had access to, so we rented a building that we could call our church.

Currently, Chico is studying homiletics and has already taken some speaking opportunities with the church. Bia is steadfast in her faith and both are earnest about reaching their city for Christ.

For missionaries in a new field, it is easy to grow weary and discouraged, wondering if God will ever give you fruit. But God is with you, molding you, while at the same time molding some around you that you may not even know about. And you don't have to be a missionary to be able to develop these same types of friendships. I've seen God use seemingly ordinary things for his glory all the time. A park trampoline, English, soccer, cheerleading, birthday parties, and many other activities have led to fruit in the last few years.

We can all learn to use what we have to reach others around us and give God a good chance to bless those relationships with long-lasting fruit. ■



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