

Unfinished

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Exploring joy

The feeling of life on mission with Jesus

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Cover photo:



In a culture in pursuit of happiness, we take a look at joy. Even for believers, joy can sometimes seem elusive. In this issue, spiritual director Laura Baber helps us through

seasons of joylessness. Missionaries describe the joy of discipling others and of journeying with Jesus, even in the fiercest circumstances.

The Mission Society's Global Outreach for churches has a new name...



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The Mission Society's first GreenLight: Gateway experience a success

College-age participants explore ministry and calling on six-week venture

Seven young women embarked on the adventure of a lifetime this summer in what was The Mission Society's first GreenLight: Gateway program. The program is designed to give college students and young adults (ages 18-23) the opportunity to explore with a team ministry, culture, and calling. Led by two mentors, these women were able to experience what it looks like to live, work, and do ministry cross-culturally.

Gathering from all across the US, the team spent time in Thailand and India during their six-week trip. Jennie Clements, a former missionary to Mexico and a recruiter for The Mission Society, and Amanda Allen, a student at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, led the experience.

The first stop was Thailand where the team spent time with Mission Society missionaries in Bangkok and Roi Et. The team was able to see missionaries in their location of service doing a variety of ministries. The Mission Society's Thailand team teaches English, coordinates youth ministry, leads Bible studies and camps, works with young men and women who have escaped the sex trafficking industry, and discipled Thai youth.

After exploring Thailand, the team participated in The Mission Society's H. T. and Alice Maclin Mission Training Institute. For two weeks Mission Society staff trained new missionaries on aspects of cross-cultural ministry.

At the end of the six weeks, the team flew back to Atlanta and prepared to go their separate ways. Having started the trip as strangers, the women became true friends during the summer. "I have never seen a group mesh like this one," said co-leader Jennie Clements. "During the summer, we had a very small taste of what it looks like to work and function together

really well as the body of Christ."

Most of the women are considering full-time, cross-cultural ministry and are praying for discernment about their next step. Jennie commented, "Many of the team members were struggling to discern God's will for their life. They wanted to know where God was calling them to serve, when should they go, and for how long. It was neat to see them release those questions to God throughout the trip and just draw closer to Jesus."

Having experienced worldviews different from their own, the women now see their own faith through a different lens. Danielle reflected this change when she said, "I want to identify with being a follower of Christ and not just the comfort and familiarity of being a Christian."

The trip that changed these young women's lives will continue to have ripple effects as they, in turn, share their experiences with others.

Laura said, "All of the missionaries we met said cross-cultural ministry is worth everything they had to give up. I am praying God will call me overseas and shape me into the person He's created me to be."

For information about the 2017 GreenLight: Gateway experience, visit our website at themissionsociety.org.

The Mission Society's Richard Coleman identifies future evangelical leaders for Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering, Indonesia

Synergy from 1000 participants expected to advance world evangelization

As selection chair for the 2016 Lausanne Young Leaders Gathering (YLG2016), The Mission Society's the Rev. Richard Coleman facilitated a process to identify some of the most influential evangelicals in the world under the age of 40.



Coleman spearheaded a two-year review of thousands of nominations and, with a team, selected nearly 1,000 emerging young leaders from 150 countries to attend the gathering..

The attendees, identified as young, influential believers with national and international leadership potential, gathered August 3-10 in Jakarta, Indonesia, to connect, address theological and societal issues facing the global church, be mentored by more seasoned leaders, and be inspired to continue their efforts. The theme, "United in the Great Story," looked at how every continent and people group across history takes part in God's great story.

"It was important for us to select today's influential younger leaders who are already making a tremendous impact in their spheres of influence," Coleman said. Described as a "once in a generation" meeting (previous gatherings held were in Singapore 1987 and Malaysia 2006), attendees at YLG2016 were between the ages of 25 and 40.

"In these exciting times, we are witnessing a concerted, conscious, ongoing global effort being moved further by the vision and sense of community among the world's younger leaders," said Coleman, anticipating the event. "The conference will inspire and encourage leaders who are sometimes isolated in their leadership to share creative ideas about how to spread the gospel and address social issues in the church and in all areas of society.

"I envision all these young leaders having Christ-centered contacts across the globe. Those relationships will help us—in each of our ministries—carry out our mutual mission to share the love of Jesus with the world. In the case of The Mission Society, for example, the connections we've made will no doubt help forward our mission of reaching the world's least reached."

Multiple local churches come together to sharpen their mission focus

Conference opportunities available for your church

In April, 32 churches from the North Central Florida Annual Conference came together for The Mission Society's first Activate Conference. During the five-hour workshop, more than 180 pastors and church leaders gathered to learn how to create or enhance a mission program for their local church.

The Activate Conferences are a new program of the church ministry department. In these conferences, entire districts of churches can be introduced to some of the tools and strategies that go into creating a customized mission action plan for their church. Churches are given the opportunity to receive coaching to fully create, implement, and fund a mission plan after the training.

Allen Johnson, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Ocala, Florida commented, "This was the best mission conference I've ever attended."

Activate Conferences have already been held in parts of Florida and Texas. If you are interested in scheduling an Activate Conference for your district or local church, contact Allison Wiggins at 678.542.9046 or cm@themissionsociety.org for more information.

From left to right: This summer, seven young women embarked on an adventure of a lifetime in The Mission Society's first Greenlight: Gateway program. Front: Megan Herrin and Bethany Moon. Back: Amanda Allen (co-leader), Jennie Clements (co-leader), Taylor Otto, Laura Hedstrom, Danielle Barrett, Emily Lewis, and Ashley Compton; an historic gathering of young leaders in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Mission Society's Richard Coleman served as selection chair and co-emcee; The Mission Society's Roger Wright teaches at a Mission Society Activate Conference.



Don't set your sights on happiness

Go for a permanent grounding for life. "I believe the mission of Jesus and joy are inextricably linked," writes President Wilkins, who describes joy in a way you may never have imagined.



Happiness is all the rage. Do a quick search, and you'll find book titles like: *The How of Happiness: A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want*; *The Happiness Equation: Want Nothing + Do Anything = Have Everything*; and *The 7 Habits of Exceptionally Happy People*. As helpful as some resources might be, those who fixate on happiness can even start to feel lonely, reports *The Huffington Post*.^{*} Here, President Max Wilkins sets our sights on joy—and a whole new reality opened to us.

God has endowed human beings with an "unalienable right" to pursue happiness, according to the writers of the Declaration of Independence. Our founding fathers and mothers may have believed this right exists, but no generation has ever embraced it with as much enthusiasm as our current one. The pursuit of happiness and pleasure are in many ways the defining features of Western culture. Ask a typical American to explain the meaning of life, and many will mumble something about "just trying to be happy."

Sadly, there is a problem with the pursuit of happiness as the end goal of

life. Although we all relish happy times, no one is happy all the time. And though happiness can be a wonderful byproduct of accomplishing more worthwhile things, it is usually elusive when it is pursued as its own end. Indeed the word

"happy" has its roots in "happenstance." Sometimes it just happens that we are happy, sometimes not. So when the pursuit of happiness

becomes our reason for being, we are on a course that inevitably leads to disappointment and failure.

God in us

Biblical joy, however, is something far more profound. The Westminster Cat-

echism of our Calvinist cousins states that "the chief end of [humans] is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." True joy has its source in our Creator. And while happiness is elusive and fleeting, joy can be a permanent grounding for life.

The Apostle Paul says that joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Nehemiah says that the joy of the Lord is our strength. This biblical joy becomes a reality in our lives as the glory of the Lord shines in and through our lives, redeeming all. Thus Peter assures us: *Though you have not seen [Jesus], you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.* (1 Peter 1:8-9) As God saves and redeems us, we are brought to a glorious

The pursuit of happiness and pleasure are in many ways the defining features of Western culture.

joy. And the more of creation that God redeems, the more joy the world knows.

Redeemed creation around us

One of the most joyous scenes in all of Scripture is found in Revelation 7:9. When John sees the rapturous worship before the throne of God, he notes that *“there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb”* (NIV). This is a picture of a redeemed creation. Notice that John is able to hear every language, but also can see that every people group, even every tribe is present. How can he tell? It appears the people are joyfully celebrating God in the unique expressions of their own redeemed cultural and tribal heritage. The Lord does not seek to destroy culture, or even to meld culture, but to redeem the best of every culture and bring it together for His glory and our enjoyment! This revelation clearly indicates that culture survives.

I was recently in Paraguay teaching a group of pastors and church leaders. As one session commenced, an indigenous Paraguayan pastor was asked to pray for me. He asked if he could pray in his heart language of Guaraní. As he prayed I was moved to tears, though I didn't understand a word he said. After the prayer I explained what had moved me so deeply. I told the pastor that because of Revelation 7:9, I knew this was not the last time I would hear Guaraní! I explained that John heard that language as he saw the throne room. I reminded them that God had not sent Jesus to destroy what was broken in the culture of the Guaraní, but to redeem the best of it for His glory! This reality brought a grateful, joyous

response from all of the Guaraní present that day. There is truly nothing quite as joyous as experiencing God restoring the original glory to His fallen creation.

Fullness of joy before us

For this reason, I believe the mission of Jesus and joy are inextricably linked. As redeemed people, we have been touched by the joy of the Lord. And as that joy compels us to join Jesus in bringing redemption to more and more of this fallen world, the joy is multiplied. We are able to persevere in all things, even circumstances where challenges and hardship exist and happiness is fleeting, because we know that the fullness of

Pursuit of happiness may be an “unalienable right,” but pursuing God and His mission is the prescription for authentic joy, a joy that remains.

joy will come! And as with Jesus, for the joy set before us we can endure all things. Pursuit of happiness may be an “unalienable right,” but pursuing God and His mis-

sion is the prescription for authentic joy, a joy that remains.

In this issue of *Unfinished* you will read stories from around the world that both claim and proclaim the joy of the Lord. You will also discover the reality that joining Jesus in His mission is not a life-negating proposition but, instead, a pathway to the joy of the Lord that is our strength. So now, *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 15:13, NIV). †

The Rev. Max Wilkins is president and CEO of The Mission Society.

**Huffington Post*, “27 Things You Need To Know About Happiness,” posted March 20, 2014.

MADE FOR JOY

“Made for joy, we settle for pleasure. Made for justice, we clamor for vengeance. Made for relationship, we insist on our own way. Made for beauty, we are satisfied with sentiment. But new creation has already begun. The sun has begun to rise. Christians are called to leave behind, in the tomb of Jesus Christ, all that belongs to the brokenness and incompleteness of the present world. ...That, quite simply, is what it means to be Christian: to follow Jesus Christ into the new world, God's new world, which he has thrown open before us.”

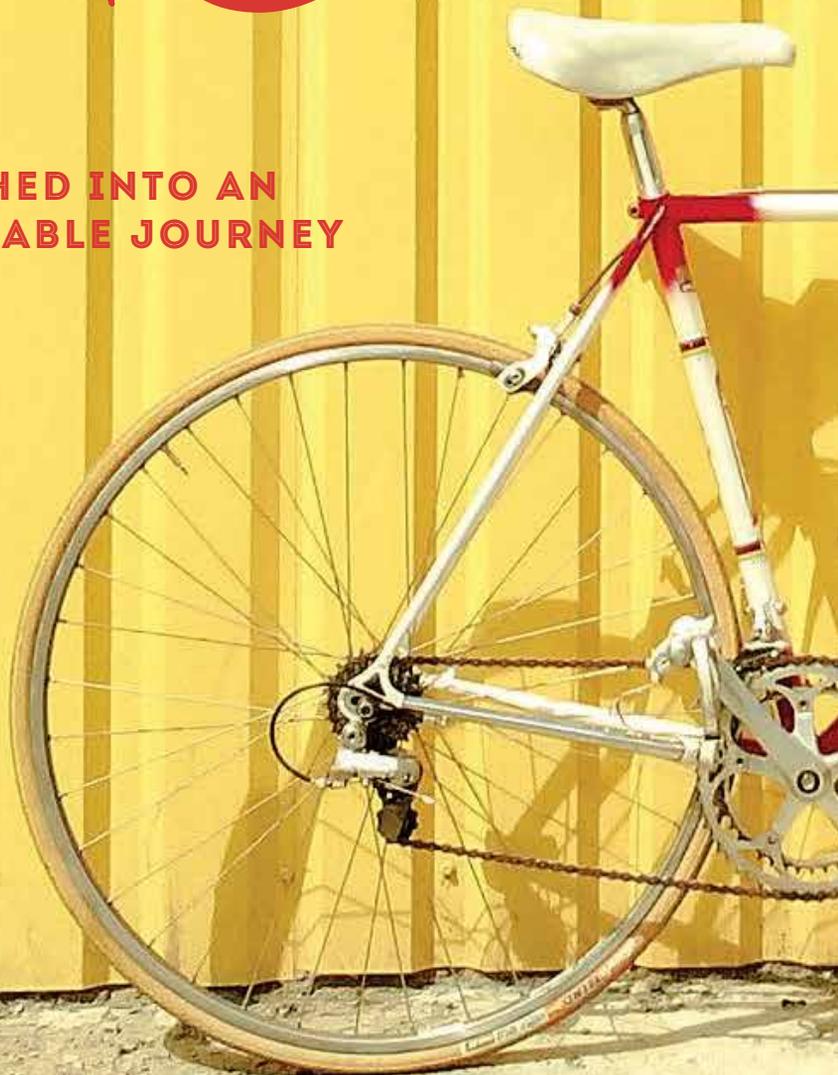
—**N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense***

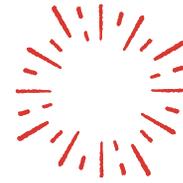


SURPRISED BY

Jay

LAUNCHED INTO AN
UNIMAGINABLE JOURNEY





For the past 20 years, Kathleen* has served as a Mission Society missionary. She had not scripted this life for herself. A mother of two boys, a farmer's wife, and a full-time nurse, she had thought she was settled. But her life was interrupted by deep sorrow.

Abandoned by her husband, abandoned to God, she was launched onto a journey that would take her to years of serving in the below-zero temperatures of Central Asia and the baking heat of Southeast Asia. In it all, time after time, she would meet unexpectedly up with deep gladness.

In these short vignettes, veteran Mission Society missionary Kathleen recounts a few of the countless episodes of joy she has experienced since saying yes to God's call to overseas missions. For her, these incidents are clear evidence of the glorious, reality of God—a reality she takes great joy in representing and proclaiming.

MOURNING INTO DANCING

My sons were angry at their father who had left us and also at the God who had allowed it to happen. Our home was torn apart. So what was God's answer to the shambles that was now my life? Clearly He said, "Go to Kazakhstan."

"WHAT??! NO WAY!"

But His answer to all my arguments, protests, tantrums, and tears remained unchanged.

"Daughter, do you trust Me?"

"Child, WILL you trust Me?"

That was 22 years ago. God long ago turned our mourning into dancing, and I am reminded of God's faithfulness. I finally got the daughters I never had—two beautiful daughters-in-law and eight of the most wonderful grandchildren ever. As I witness the two-year-old seriously bowing her head, mumbling unintelligible words, and finishing with a resounding Amen!, I cannot contain the laughter that bubbles up.

Now this is joy!

"Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

—Psalm 30: 5, ESV

HOPELESSNESS INTO LAUGHTER

It was bitter cold winter on the Siberian Steppe, my first winter alone—without teammates— in this remote village.

Completely surrounded by half-frozen and half-starved people, I was overwhelmed by the reality of how inadequately prepared I was to face the situation. Bundled against the subzero temperatures, I slowly trudged across the village to see my five-year-old patient. I had been making this trip daily for the past two weeks, but today was different. Today I carried nothing in my hands, only a heavy weight in my heart.

Young Nadya had stepped into a bucket of boiling hot water completely submerging her little foot. Although I had been able to prevent infection as it slowly began to heal, it was still raw and open, requiring careful bandaging. That was the problem. I had used the very last bits of my supplies the day before and had absolutely nothing to replace them. I prayed for a miracle but had little faith and no clue what I was to do.

God proved Himself to truly be The One Who Heals that day as I reluctantly unwound that bandage only to find completely healed and intact, pink, healthy skin! I'm not sure what was the loudest as I floated back home across that icy path, my sobs or my laughter.

Now this is joy!

DEATH INTO LIFE

It was a long arduous trip from Kazakhstan that winter, more like a nightmare than an adventure. At the end of the two-day journey was an emergency room, followed by a hospital bed and a horrifying diagnosis: You have end-stage cancer. "You have a 50/50 chance of making it a year...probably not reasonable to expect two."

Three days later my family gathered to celebrate Christmas. I have only a vague recollection of their quiet visits, but I'm sure it was not a very joyous time for my usually noisy and fun-loving crew. One more week found me climbing onto a cold operating table in preparation for the first stage of what I knew was going to be a long and painful journey before the end.

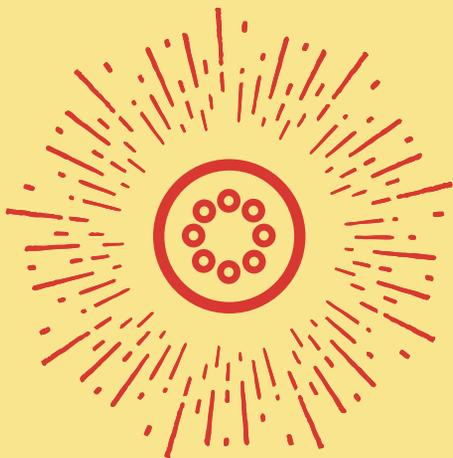
God had given me amazing peace, but my heart was breaking for my children and grandchildren. I prayed for strength to endure and wisdom to help them.

In the recovery room I dragged myself up slowly through the haze to be met by my sister nearly bouncing up and down, "It's a miracle! A miracle! God answered our prayers! You're not going to die!" It took me a day or two to truly absorb this incredible news...To have come to terms with my own death and then suddenly be given a reprieve!
Now this is joy!

JOY: A HINT OF OUR TRUE HOME

For the writer C. S. Lewis, experiences of joy were not to be taken lightly. For him, joy was a hint of the place for which we long. It is "news from a country we have never yet visited"—our true home.





IS MISSIONS YOUR JOY?

The Mission Society offers several specialty “terms of service” to accommodate unique callings. “**Core**” missionaries serve four-year terms. As a core missionary, you would create a new ministry or join an existing team and/or national partners in focused and strategic ministry. The minimum age for applying is 21. Starting the process is easy. Visit themissionsociety.org and complete the interest form. With professional counselors and member-care staff, we can help you discern your call.

NONBELIEF INTO WORSHIP

It's Sunday morning and my turn to host our house fellowship here in Northeast India. Crowded into my living room are a dozen adults, a half dozen teenagers, several squirming and giggling children, and one dog being carefully controlled by his adoring, young owner.

Gogou leads us on his guitar as one of the men accompanies him on an unusual handmade drum. We laugh and sing. Little ones fuss and need to be attended to. A couple of the teens take the kids to the dining room for their Sunday school lesson. The adults share some of the week's accomplishments and disappointments. We pray for one another. We study the Word together, and then we drink tea. Through it all, there is a sense of God's Presence and His blessing.

I quietly observe the young man who is now the leader of our fellowship. His family is from another part of India. They are just as much cross-cultural workers here in this place as our team. From a tribal region where his ancestors were all head hunters, he has an amazing story to share: Because some were faithful to share the Good News in a remote and dangerous place, entire

villages came to Jesus. Those villagers spread the news and continue to spread it as they now send their own missionaries out to new areas. So I am privileged to work alongside these young men and women.

Here I sit with families from the States, families from Far East India, one from Bhutan, a visitor from Australia and one from Nepal—all praising and worshipping together.

Now this is joy! ✠

JESUS EVERYWHERE

While serving in a hospital in Southeast Asia, a painful setting, Kathleen tells why she stayed.

Why do I stay in this sweltering, filthy, difficult place? It's not as hard a question to answer as some might think. Jesus is here in this place. I see Him all around me.

I see Him in the gentle touch of the nursery staff as they attempt to care for too-small, too-weak infants who are often lying three to a crib. I see Him in the sorrow on a father's face as he sits at the bedside of his child slowly squeezing an ambulance bag because there are no more ventilators available.

I hear Him in the excited voices of

the outreach teams as they struggle to find the words in English to describe to me another miracle they witnessed in a village yesterday.

I feel Him with every new experience, every new story, one more baby who won't die in a sack in a drainage ditch, one more daughter-in-law who won't be beaten to death, one more child who won't be sold into slavery, one more family laughing, dancing, and rejoicing in their new-found hope in a Savior called Jesus.

This is a place surrounded by hardship, discouragement, struggle, and frustration. This is the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is sweating great drops of blood here, and I want to be with Him. ✠



*Kathleen's identity is protected because she serves in an area where security is in issue.

"Late one night just before I slipped off to sleep, my wife asked me a question. It shed a spotlight on a nagging reality in my career as a pastor and as a 35-year follower of Jesus: "Does anything bring you joy anymore?"

Her question would mark the beginning to...

A DANCING HEART

by Denny Heiberg



For the past 15 years I had been the lead pastor of a growing congregation that had all the outward appearances of being a successful church according to the measurements of our denominational tribe. Our congregation experienced steady numerical growth. We had added a spacious and attractive new worship center. Our operating budget kept pace with our increasing staff and ministry programs, and, by God’s grace, we were debt-free.

However, my wife knew all too well what very few people saw. I was unsettled in my role as a pastor, and I was ready to resign. Truth be told, I realized that I had become a CEO of a religious institution; I was running a church instead of developing and making disciples of those whom God brought under my influence.

I remembered that my original desire for responding to God’s call into the ordained ministry was to help people to become maturing followers of Jesus. However, somewhere through the years I had drifted off course and was spending each week responding to the demands of what others thought my priorities should entail, instead of me being proactive and focusing on making Jesus’ last words my first priority!

Through a series of God-ordained circumstances, I began to pour my life of faith into the lives of men who had committed to a discipling relationship. Within days, genuine joy began to flood into my emotional reservoir. Over these last six years of intentionally focusing upon the mandate of Jesus to make disciples, I have experienced a joy that is hard to match. I shouldn’t be surprised.

My wife knew all too well what very few people saw. I was unsettled in my role as a pastor, and I was ready to resign.

As Jesus was leaving the upper room with His 11 disciples on the way to the Mount of Olives, He gave them a vivid analogy of how they were to continue His mission of disciple making. Their responsibility was to abide in Him as a branch abides in a vine. As they did, they would bear much fruit and the Father would be glorified. In addition, each of them would be filled with His joy and, as a result, their joy would be full and complete. “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” (John 15:11)

Passing it on

Sharing lessons he receives with others, this missionary tells of the astonishing ripple effects of discipleship happening in his European community and in his own heart.

I grew up in church but was never formally disciplined. It is a wonder that I ever came to know Christ. My understanding of Him was through Sunday school or sermons, and that was not very deep.

It was not until later in life that I had the opportunity to get to know Him on



a deeper level, but still through informal methods. Even then it was not stressed that I should share what I learned.

The intentionality of discipleship had been lost on me. Over the past several years, though, the idea of discipleship's being an essential practice for believers has become very important to me.

Recently I sought to be disciplined by

my colleague, Denny Heiberg. I began sharing with others what I learned from him. (These lessons are available at www.mobilizingdisciples.com/life-transformation-studies.html.)

I started sharing them with the Sunday school class that we teach in our country of service in Western Europe.

They are youth, 13-18 years of age, and great kids. We have a blast. I had them read the passages, and we discussed them one at a time. They were so engaged that we had to stop before we were finished because we ran out of class time. One boy who is usually only marginally engaged was so excited that he now wants to share what he is learning with his high school friends during their religion class. He says most don't accept the existence of God, and he never

knows what to say. "Finally! Now I have information!" he said. "Now I know what to say!"

Another youth at one point shouted out, "Wait, wait! This is making my head explode!" He was getting so much out of our discussion, and Christ was being revealed before his eyes. The girl who helps us with the class is a 20-year-

old youth helper. She asked if my wife and I could start meeting with her individually to walk through this and teach her how to study the Bible!

I am also sharing this with two men I meet with every other week. Before, we would read a text. Then, the leader of the group would give his thoughts and comments, and that would be that. Now we all dig into scripture together and with great depth. One of the men in the group (a new believer) immediately began sharing what he was learning with other non-believers in his workplace. Without asking, he took the Bible verses and read them with another man at his work.

This inspires me to continue working with these handfuls of people, helping to equip them to spread the knowledge of Jesus Christ to others. **I have always been grateful to those who shared with me, but I have never received so much joy as I have from being able to give.** It seems that giving is much more rewarding to me than receiving. To see the lights come on in people is pure joy. To see them start to know and understand Christ in a different way has led me to want to dig in more myself and continue to share more with them. And they are not the only ones to benefit. My understanding of Christ, who He is, and what He is doing in the world has expanded as I am being disciplined and am discipling others. †

Communicable joy

If anyone in the world should be filled with joy, it is the disciple who follows the life and teachings of Jesus to become more like Him.

One of my greatest joys in experiencing a discipling relationship with other men is when they begin to pass along

When was the last time your heart danced or shouted because your joy was so full?

to others what we have experienced together. This is what Paul is referring to when he challenged Timothy to entrust what he had been taught by Paul into the lives of faithful men who would teach

others also. Above is a recent firsthand account of a missionary who is replicating what he is experiencing with

me into the lives of those in his field of ministry in Western Europe.

Divine purpose

The word used for *joy* in the Greek New Testament is *chara*. It is a state of gladness and delight. It is the word Matthew used to describe the feeling of the two Marys who arrived at the empty tomb and received the world-shattering news from the angel that Jesus had risen

from the dead. According to Greek linguist experts, Louw and Nida, *chara* is expressed in a number of languages as “my heart is dancing” or “my heart shouts because I am happy.”

When was the last time your heart danced or shouted because your joy was so full? I encourage you to engage in a disciple-making relationship with another person. Not only will you experience the joy of bearing fruit as his or her life begins to be transformed, but you will also watch your friend’s heart dance as God pours into others.

When we answer the call to intentionally make disciples who make other disciples, there is the joy of experiencing a divine purpose in this life. And there is also the assurance that one day we will hear what every servant desires: “Well done, good and faithful servant! ...Enter into the joy of your master.” Let’s join the dance! †

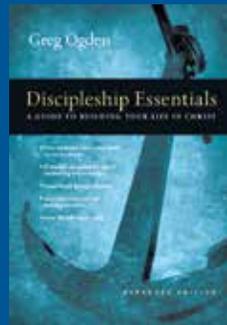
Denny Heiberg (center) and his wife, Cindy, train pastors, missionaries, and church leaders through The Mission Society’s International Mission Mobilization and Discipleship Consultations. The Heibergs are also engaged in predeployment training for Mission Society missionaries and their local church leaders. Prior to his work with The Mission Society, Denny served for 22 years in the pastorate in The United Methodist Church.



“IT IS EVERY DISCIPLE’S DREAM TO LIVE A LIFE THAT HAS GREAT MEANING AND FULFILLMENT. BUT THAT LIFE DOES NOT COME TO THOSE WHO DRIFT ABOUT AS IMMATURE CONVERTS. IT BELONGS ONLY TO THOSE WHO CHOOSE THE LIFE—THE LIFE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP.” —Bill Hull

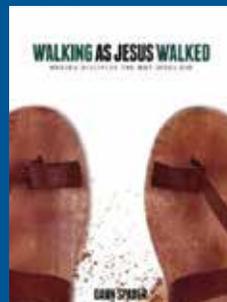
Choose the discipleship life

Wondering where to start? Begin with these.



Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ by Greg Ogden

Jesus' own pattern of disciple-making was to be intimately involved with others and allow life to rub against life. This workbook by Greg Ogden is a tool designed to help you follow this pattern Jesus drew for us. Working through it will deepen your knowledge of essential Christian teaching and strengthen your faith. Each week contains a core truth, a memory verse, an inductive Bible study, a reading on the theme for the week, and discussion questions. This material is designed for groups of three. It has also been used successfully as an individual study program, a one-on-one discipling tool and small group curriculum.



Walking As Jesus Walked: Making Disciples The Way Jesus Did by Dann Spader

This small-group, interactive resource has been developed as a 10-12 week study, but can be adapted for personal use, or for a longer time frame, depending on the needs and interests of the group. With questions for individual preparation, group discussion and interaction will aid in going deeper in this material. A leader’s guide, along with a personal video from the author introducing each lesson is available online at WalkingAsJesus.com. These videos and leader’s guides are free resources and can be used in any way that will serve your group.

Denny Heiberg has compiled 12 of the studies he shared with his missionary friend. Find them here: www.mobilizingdisciples.com/life-transformation-studies.html.

SOMETIMES SOMETHING DIES IN US. IT CAN BE RESURRECTED.
A CONVERSATION WITH THE REV. LAURA BABER.

JOURNEY TO JOY



“I GREW UP IN THE 70s, SINGING THE SONGS OF DEEP JOY,

and there was very little allowance given for a Christian who didn't experience joy 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This can silence those for whom joy might not be their continual experience,” says the Rev. Laura Baber.

Joy can be difficult, particularly for those who have suffered trauma or loss, says Baber who, as a spiritual director, has met with hundreds of church and community leaders, seminary students, and missionaries. But, she says, “There is a journey to joy, and like any paths when we follow Christ, there are different ways to get there.”

Last January during a regional gathering of Mission Society missionaries, held in Costa Rica, we sat down with Baber. She would talk of the guilt of joylessness—and of the avenues available to us to regain joy in Christ.

For some people, joy is a natural disposition. They have joy down to their bones. They sing easily the song, “I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart.” They are the Barnabuses of our communities, the encouragers. They are the Ruths to the Naomis.

Then there are others for whom joy is challenging. Often people with prophetic giftings have a challenge to get to joy, because they see things that are not right in this world and they feel the injustice very deeply. Joy can also be difficult for people who have had trauma or significant loss. Even for people who normally carry a deep sense of pervasive joy, when they experience crisis, trauma, or loss, sometimes they need to give themselves permission to feel the pain or the sorrow of that experience.

Since “to everything there is a season,” particularly for those in grief or for whom joy is difficult, it’s helpful in the Christian journey to give room for a journey towards joy.

Discern what is blocking the joy.

In the journey to joy, I ask people to release guilt and condemnation for not being joyful. Feeling guilty is not helpful. But what is helpful is to prayerfully discern what is blocking the joy. Is there anything that is not right? Is there

any healing that still needs to still be done? Elijah was a prophet who had the most amazing ministry [when he had the showdown with the prophets of Baal (see I Kings 18)]. But then he went into a cave in despair. There was no joy in Elijah, a mighty man of God. And the Lord allowed that.

Sometimes after moments of profound and miraculous ministry, we can be very depleted. And the Lord allows us to go into a cave and rest for a while. But there will be a time when the Lord will say, “What are you doing? Come on out. Let’s talk. Why are you so upset? What’s really going on?”

Elijah, for example, thought he was really all alone. I call that the Little Red Hen syndrome, and I have it on going. I can think, “I’m working so hard. Where’s all the help? The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Poor me.” It robs the joy. But that’s also just the exhaustion and depletion of ministry.

So when we are depleted, we need to be gentle with ourselves. We need to give our bodies time to rest. But then we need to do some emotional and spiritual clean-up with the Lord. We

need to ask: What am I really depleted by? What has dried me out? What has robbed the joy? And be honest about it. Then listen for what the Lord says, and see how he wants to minister to us. Remember that the Lord told Elijah who was so depleted, “You are not alone. Right around the corner are more prophets.”

Name and release all that is not joy.

The theologian Paul Tillich preached in a sermon after World War II that, as Christians, we have a joy deeper than our suffering—that we both follow the suffering servant, and we have the joy of His resurrection. That’s a paradox of two things occurring at the same time.

In a journey towards joy, particularly in a season of suffering, often there needs to be a release of all that is not joy. There needs to be a giving to Christ all that is not right, all that is pain.

Releasing to Christ all that is not joy—naming it and giving it over to Him—is a cathartic process. In my own journey, I have at times allowed myself to rail to God about what was not right. It’s after releasing righteous anger in a healthy way to the Lord that I have experienced effervescent joy—joy so deep that I feel drunk with the love of God. But

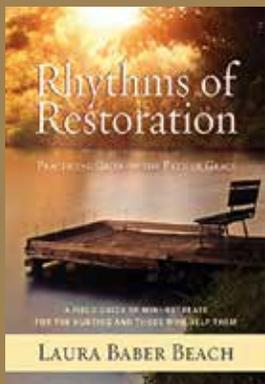
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Get back to joy: A resource to restore individuals and groups.

Rhythms of Restoration: Practicing Grief on the Path of Grace

By the Rev. Laura Baber

Published by Seedbed Publishing

This book is beautifully written and absolutely necessary for any group or individual experiencing grief or just in need of restoring ... mind, body, and, of course, soul. I purchased two volumes of this priceless book. One for my personal use, and one for my church community which has been suffering with horrible grief. With this book, I found a way to help heal.

—Online reviewer

this came only after allowing myself to release the anger. When anger harbors within us, it becomes frozen. It turns into despair and depression, and it can block the joy.

We generally don't hear Christians advise to rail to

God, like David did in the Psalms. In fact, growing up, I was told: if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. This can silence our speaking out about what is not right to God, because sometimes some of the injustices that need to be prayed or spoken about are not very nice. And so righteous prayers are not always polite and composed and dignified. They can be angry. But this kind of purging prayers, or prayers of lament, can unleash resurrection-life joy on the other side.

Experience God in new ways.

After an intense season of ministry, crisis or tragedy, the completion of some project or schooling, or even after Christmas, it's really common for people to go into a funk—to maybe not experience the presence of God like they did before that occurrence. They're dried out; they just can't work up the presence of God like they used to. The

reason is that they're not the same person that they were before going into that experience. Often a stretching

of some sort has occurred.

They may not feel like it, but they're more mature. They've grown a bit. So their

experience of God will be different; they're different.

For example, let's say that someone has almost always experienced God by playing and singing old hymns. But now, after a major life event, this person sits and plays some favorite hymns on the piano, and it no longer seems to help that person into God's presence like it did before.

This person needs a new rhythm, a new practice for the new season. Remember that we are to put fresh wine in new wine skins. But we try to put new wine into the old wineskins, and it just doesn't work.

It's not helpful. And then we tend to get disappointed with God. We say, *Well, where are you? Why can't I find you?*

When we're teenagers, we don't play

with the toys we played with when we were in elementary school. We don't behave in college like we did in high school. At every growth period, we do new things. And yet, for some reason, on the Christian journey we think for our whole life we will experience God's presence through the same practices. Some people have the blessing of that being true, but for a large number of people, it's not true.

And so, it's very helpful to journey with someone like a spiritual director or mentor to help explore different means of grace. There are lots of means of grace beyond what John Wesley named. There are many, many creative ways to practice the presence of God.

I often encourage someone after a major life experience to try to find a softer approach. Maybe instead of reading the Word, maybe sing the Word. Maybe begin a new practice using the body in some way—take walks, maybe

dance, maybe build something. Often creative arts are helpful—painting, writing, sculpting, creating a garden, do-

ing woodworking. Remember that Jesus was a carpenter. God was described as a gardener, a farmer, a vine dresser. He very creatively honored the craftsman

THE PROBLEM OF JOYLESSNESS

It could be brain chemistry.

In 1897, a term was coined for the inability to be happy: anhedonia. Some victims might have a shortage of chemicals in the brain that normally release during experiences of pleasure, like when one is on vacation or after a major accomplishment. If you ongoingly experience joylessness, consider all factors. Everything is interconnected — body, mind, and spirit.

of the tabernacle and blessed them. God is an artist.

After a hard season, doing more creative, or tactile, or kinesthetic activities can be very helpful to regenerate—rather than doing lots of heavy thinking. What this is doing is simply using different means of grace to help us bump into the love of God, because sometimes something in us needs to be restored. If we look at a tree whose limbs are waving in the wind, and it does not spark a delight, then something has died that needs to be resurrected. And so, it's worthy of pondering what has died, and what caused the death, and to sit at that empty tomb like

the women on Easter Sunday, waiting for the resurrected Christ to surprise us as a gardener.

Ask for help.

If you are in a joyless season, remember that we are not to suffer alone. We need help when we are suffering, and it's very important to articulate your needs and to build a care team to support you through the suffering. When we are weak, Christ is strong. But it's not just Christ in spirit; it is Christ in the body. Ask for help. It's critical. We totally under-utilize the body of Christ, because we try to do everything ourselves. Christ never told us to

be lone rangers. He sent His disciples out by two, then brought them back in and processed with them. Thinking "I can do this myself" is not healthy. It isolates us. It creates shame. It prevents other people from asking for help as well. But when we ask for help and then when resurrection life comes to us with the help of others, those people can see us—like Lazarus—coming out of our tomb, and it edifies the body.

Take care of body, mind, and spirit.

On the journey to joy, there are several lines of defense. We need to be sure

to take care of the physical body, the jar of clay that holds the treasure of God. Take care of our emotional needs. Honor the full range of humanity—our body, emotions, mind, our will, and become open to different ways of engaging God's spirit through the means of grace, as we've talked about.

Know that our joy can be restored.

When people begin to get quiet before the Lord and listen for what the loss, or trauma, or sadness is, name it, and then give it over to Christ, they connect with such a peace and joy. I have never known this not to be so. Psalm 116 tells of crying out to the Lord and being restored by Him. We so often ignore these scriptures in the Bible.

As we do the work of release, as we stay connected to Christ and His body, and as we engage in the means of grace, we can operate in joy even in the most difficult circumstances. We may not be the most percolated person in the room, but there will be a joy that is deeper than our suffering. We will have a deep confidence that all will be well in the end, and that we serve a God who brings life out of death. There is a deep joy in that. ✚

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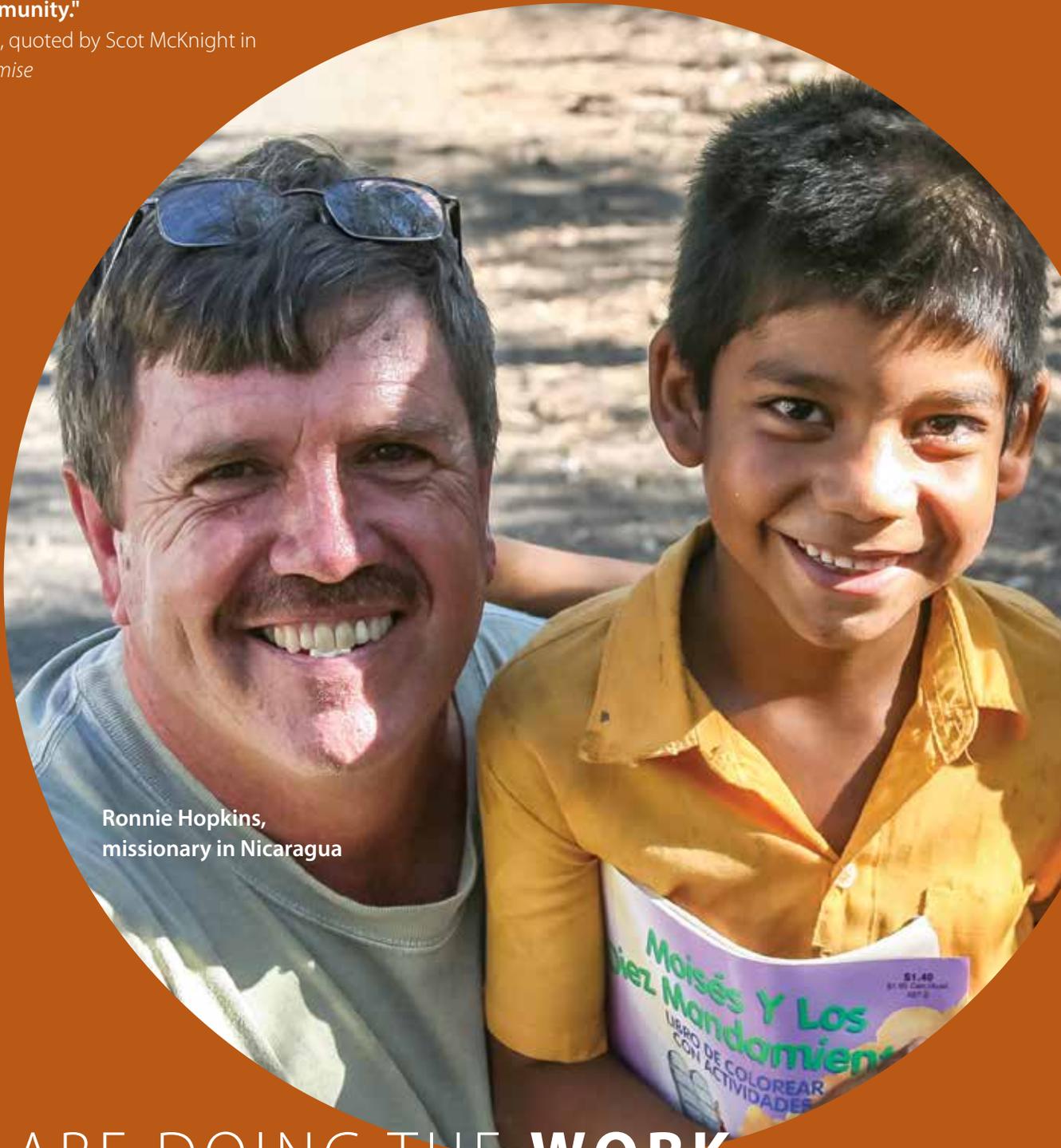


The Rev. Laura Baber is an ordained deacon in The United Methodist Church and the founder of Equipping Lydia, which provides spiritual direction and retreats, helping guide individuals and groups through the process of spiritual formation. The office of Equipping Lydia is located on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky. For more information about retreats and resources, visit EquippingLydia.org.

Last January, Baber led a three-day spiritual formation workshop during a Mission Society missionary regional gathering in Costa Rica.

"Seeking joy in and of itself will not bring it to you. Do the work of creating community, and you will obtain it—although never exactly according to your schedule. Joy is an uncapturable yet utterly predictable side effect of genuine community."

—M. Scott Peck, quoted by Scot McKnight in *The Heaven Promise*



Ronnie Hopkins,
missionary in Nicaragua

YOU ARE DOING THE **WORK**
(Five ways you usher in joy)

If you are a **Mission Society partner**, you create genuine communities. In the following, Mission Society missionaries tell of a few of the ways



Healing Prayer

ESTONIA // HOPE GROWS

I have been praying with a young woman who came to me struggling with issues of rage and feelings of isolation. Natasha* has been a faithful Christian for many years, serves in a variety of ministries, and has heard the promises from Scripture about the joy we are promised through Jesus.

Through our prayer meetings, the Holy Spirit revealed to Natasha some of the real sources of the rage and feelings of isolation that had always plagued her. She saw that a lot of her struggles were based on lies she began to believe about herself as a child. As these old places of pain and darkness were brought into the light of Jesus Christ, the deceptions that had been born out of them started to

lose their authority in her life.

Natasha saw that, as she submitted her life to the blood of Jesus Christ, the sources of the rage and shame no longer maintain the control in her life. It was in these days that she first began to experience real joy.

True joy has almost nothing to do with our outward circumstances. I have come to believe that the roots of real joy in a life are founded in hope, which only comes as we submit ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit. The joy we discover in Jesus Christ deepens and grows along with our knowledge of Him.

***Miki Chastain** coordinates a prayer center and leads healing prayer workshops in Estonia and Russia.*



Photo by Jedediah Smith/Genesis Photos, Greece

Refugee Ministry

THE MIDDLE EAST // MEDICAL HELP COMES

My husband and I serve in a small medical clinic among Syrian refugees in the Middle East. I recently visited a woman who has diabetes and needed medical attention. Yara* lives in an abusive relationship with her children and an angry, demanding mother-in-law. She cannot work because she is a refugee, so she stays trapped in her home all day, sad and alone.

My translator and I arrived to visit Yara, and she welcomed us with snacks and tea. We talked and laughed and had a wonderful time visiting. Before we left, I prescribed the correct insulin dose and demonstrated how to administer it.

The next day, my translator called to tell me that Yara had called her to thank us for the visit. She said, "Thank you for coming to see me and spending time with me. You are the only people in the world who really care about me."

Sharing joy doesn't happen as we might think. It comes from walking in relationship with Jesus and sharing time with people who can see the light of Christ in you. Jesus provided the example of sharing life together—at meals, in homes, or while working. It is still the most effective way to spread joy in the world today—wherever you live.

This unnamed cross-cultural worker serves in discipleship and healthcare ministries among the under-reached in the Middle East.

Those you train and send help others experience their belovedness in Christ.
God uses you to connect souls and bring joy to people in 34 countries.

Discipleship

JOY TAKES OVER // SPAIN

Rosa came to know Christ a month before I met her. She tells me that Jesus caused a complete transformation in her life. Rosa used to be bitter and angry all the time. She had a short fuse, was quick to anger, and exploded at family and friends often.

It's hard for me to imagine that person as I sit and study the Bible with Rosa each week. The Rosa I know is always smiling and happy; she is joyful and loves life. I have been with Rosa through several family crises, and have watched her tranquil spirit in the midst of turmoil as an "indwelling of the Spirit." When I expect her to be scared, nervous, or sad, she is not; she is peaceful. When I expect her to be fearful or stressed, she is not; she is hopeful and joyful.

Rosa told me, "I have joy in knowing that I am surrounded by the Spirit and that my new friends are also full of that Spirit. I have joy in knowing that I can always count on my friends, on their humility, and in the knowledge that they want to grow together in discipleship in Christ. More than anything, my joy comes from seeing the reflection of my loving Jesus in my friends."

Laurie serves in Antequera, Spain where she ministers to the marginalized in the community.



Employment Opportunities

FAMILY OF COWORKERS FORMS // INDIA

Our business employs a group of women, each one with a unique life experience. It has been very important to us to hire women who have had limited opportunity to find good work—those who are marginalized or cast off as undesirable in the workplace.

The Lord has given us a group of women that our area has not seen come together before. We have young single women, older married women, high- and low-caste Hindus, Muslims, and Christians working together. This group of women would never have met if the Lord had not brought them together in this unique way in our business.

As a staff, we have promoted ideals such as value, equality, and unity in the office, teaching the women that God desires these qualities in us. But now, it seems those things no longer have to be driven by us, the directors.

These women, once strangers, have become a tight-knit family that we never could have dreamed of. We have experienced sicknesses, deaths, tragedies, festivals, and weddings together.

In an impoverished region of India that lacks hope and resources, these women are finding joy and community in these new relationships. Recently, at a wedding, the women looked around and proclaimed, "We are a family now." They are experiencing joy through living out the kind of community God desires for each of us—love that transcends our differences.

This unnamed cross-cultural worker in North India recently launched a small business with the hopes of being used to transform the lives of some of the poorest people in the region.





Engineering

GHANA // CLEAN WATER HEALS

I first met Abena when we were distributing water filters in her village, Kwahu No. 2. These ceramic pot water filters take water from a dirty source, such as a local pond, and make it safe to drink.

Usually, the first women in a village to receive the filters are the important women in the community, such as the chief's or the local politician's wife. But when we distributed filters in Kwahu No. 2, I asked for the newest mother in the village. Abena stepped forward carrying her three-week-old daughter, Janet, on her back. Abena was so excited to receive a filter. She knew Janet needed clean water, but she

didn't know how she would be able to provide it.

Every time I return to Kwahu No. 2, Abena is quick to find me and thank me for the filter. She shows me how much Janet, now a healthy three-year-old, has grown. Being able to watch her baby grow into a healthy child has brought Abena, and so many mothers like her, such joy. She and the women I work with thank Jesus for the gift of clean water, and the joy on their faces brings me great happiness as well.

Mary Kay Jackson is a civil engineer who serves with Methodist Development Relief Services and Pure Home Water, two charitable organizations that focus on bringing safe drinking water to the rural poor in Ghana.

**Pseudonyms and stock photos used.*



WHAT A PRIVILEGE TO SERVE IN MINISTRY WITH YOU!

As a partner with the Mission Society, you reach people in 34 countries with the love and message of Jesus. In addition to ministries noted in these pages, your 187 missionaries serve in a wide variety of ways, including healthcare, education, social work and counseling, care for vulnerable children and youth, leadership development, peacemaking, cell-group development, and many other ministries. **Because of your love for Jesus, today others experience the joy of walking with Him.**



IN THIS LAND WHERE THE POPULATION IS 95 PERCENT BUDDHIST, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PUTTING THEIR FAITH IN JESUS

Chris and Dora Barbee serve in Roi Et, Thailand, a remote and impoverished region of the country. Since 2010 they have been teaching English classes, music classes, and discipling Thai youth in their relationship with Jesus. Each year, they host a month-long academic and Bible camp in Bangkok for middle- and high-school-aged students. Chris tells the unusual way one of their students encountered Jesus through these ministries:

Min* has hung out with Dora and me for years, but has never shown much interest in learning about Jesus. She wants to be a chef or baker after she graduates, so she comes to our house every Saturday and she and Dora bake together. However, whenever one of the other students wants to read the Bible, Min usually leaves.

During our last camp, our team felt led to dramatize the Easter story within the Isaan context. We planned to perform it for the students during the Easter service at the Bangkok Muang Thai Church. Min was cast as Jesus' mother.

Our Thai teammates did an amazing job of painting a picture of how heartbreaking the situation of the empty tomb must have been for Mary and Mary Magdalene. They had already suffered through watching their son/teacher brutally murdered, and now they were devastated to think that his

corpse was so harshly disrespected by a grave robber. The more time the team spent working through this scene, the more the reality of Jesus' mother's situation settled over Min, and she was truly overcome by emotion. She wept tears of true sorrow, and we could tell she was starting to understand the depth of the sacrifice that Jesus, and His community, made in His death.



"Jesus' joy is not manufactured by our ability as leaders, but it only comes from Him," say Chris and Dora Barbee, who have served Thai youth since 2010.

The skit was such a success that we decided to celebrate Easter in Roi Et when we got home. In June we celebrated the mid-year Easter, and all of our students (including the ones who are not old enough to attend camp with us) had the chance to hear the news of Jesus' resurrection.

The most incredible thing happened when our students performed the skit in Roi Et. As our students dug deeper into the story of Jesus' resurrection, they found more than just the pain and separation of Jesus' death—they found joy in His life!

Min, who again performed as Jesus' mother, was not only broken with grief at His disappearance, but was actually crying tears of joy upon His reappearance in the upper room! I watched as Min was not only acting, but really listening to Jesus' words as

He explained how He had conquered death and sin for each person so they could live joy-filled lives in Him!

It was an amazing moment as we watched Jesus speaking to so many of these students. It reminded me that Jesus' joy is not manufactured by our ability as leaders, but it only comes from Him.

*Pseudonym



MEETING THEM WHERE THEY ARE

EAGER TO SERVE, MISSION SOCIETY MISSIONARIES
IN EUROPE DECIDE TO WAIT NO MORE.

It's 90 degrees and still not noon as we plug into our GPS the coordinates for the Malakasa Refugee Camp and start our drive north of Athens, Greece. I'm not sure what to expect. I'm trying to mentally and emotionally prepare myself for this day, but I'm also asking God to break my heart for what breaks His, and to give me eyes to see what He is bringing me here to see. I believe that our invitation to come and visit Malakasa is for a purpose.

The Malakasa refugee camp is housed on an old Greek military base surrounded by high fences and razor wire, gates and guard houses, and posted soldiers. I don't think we walked 20 feet before the first man approached us, a young adult male from Afghanistan. All smiles, he stuck out his hand for a handshake and said, "Hello, my friends! Good to see you today." I can't lie. That was not what I expected! This guy was happy; he was friendly, and he spoke perfect English with almost zero accent. This scene was repeated over and over again as people smiled and greeted us while we walked through the camp.

The camp itself is bleak. Rows and rows and rows of tents sit in the scorching sun, no breeze, little to no shade. We are ushered past the tents, occupied by 6-10 people in each. There are more than 1600 people housed here right now. Then we pass the kitchen area, where the military is providing meals. Every camp setup is different. In this camp, the military is responsible for the feeding, and volunteers provide other services—snacks of crackers and cookies, hot tea, a community room, and a large tent for children's services. We enter in to the community room, and it is full of people sitting at picnic-style tables, taking advantage of a place out of the heat.

Hosai and Sidiqa

That is when I see her. She is captivating. Her face draws me in. Her eyes are so deep and her smile so kind, her face is enchanting. "Hello!" she says to me. "Come and sit." She slides over on the bench and pats the seat next to her.

For the next hour, I sit with this fascinating young girl,



In Europe, the current policies on refugee resettlement have caused bottlenecks and delays. Blocked from gaining entry into nations, masses of migrants are stuck in overfull camps. After many months of hoping for refugees to be resettled into their countries of service, Billy and Laurie Drum and other Mission Society workers are traveling now to camps in Greece—to meet refugees where they are. In the following, Laurie Drum recounts her experience—one which, she observes, has changed her forever.

and I am forever changed.

Hosai is 14 years old, the oldest child in her family. She wants me to know that her name means “deer” in her language. She is from Afghanistan. I also meet her younger sister, Sidiqa. Sidiqa is eight, but she wishes to be nine, and she keeps telling me that she will soon be nine, so I should just think of her as nine. I smile and say that she looks like a nine-year-old to me, and she shakes her head and smiles.

I ask about the rest of the family. Hosai tells me that there are four children total (of whom she is the oldest) and their father. She then looks out the door into the distance and says that her mother “is no more”; she died on the journey. Hosai is now the “mother” for her brothers and sister. Since their escape, they have been traveling for seven months—five months of walking and escape, and two months in the refugee camp. They left Afghanistan in January.

“What is your favorite thing to do in camp?” I ask.

“There is no favorite thing in camp. It is the same every day. Nothing. Nothing to do. In Afghanistan, I had a lot to do. Too

much! (She laughs.) Every day was different. It wasn’t a good life, but every day was different. All we do here is get up, eat, sit around, eat, sit around, eat ... the same every day. I want to study and to read. I miss my books. I love to study!”

“What do you love to study?”

“Math! Math is my favorite subject. Oh, I wish for a math book, or a class, or a teacher to sit with me! I wish to study again.”

I have already had this conversation with the camp directors. They say that one of their biggest issues right now is fighting boredom for the people, especially the women and children. The women would like something to do, handwork or workshops or something to learn. The children want to study. They have the right to go to school and study, but there is no school close to the camp, no transportation, and no way to provide the school supplies and books they need. So they cannot go. The volunteers are trying to do crafts and play games with the children, but they have limited resources and limited man-power. .



Since the Balkan route to Germany has been closed, more than 57,000 displaced persons are stranded in Greece. The Malakasa Refugee Camp, roughly 25 miles north of Athens, has the capacity to house 1,000 people, yet it is presently home to 1600, mostly Afghan. The overcrowding means worsening living conditions.

Hosai tells me, for the millionth time, that my daughter is so beautiful. She is captivated by her hair. She says so to Sarah, and Sarah giggles and says, “No, your hair is much more beautiful than mine,” which leads to a discussion about hair. I am struck by the fact that my 7th grade daughter, American born and Latina/Española raised, is sitting here talking about hair with a young girl from Afghanistan. How different and yet how similar they are! Completely different cultures and backgrounds, yet both are immigrants trying to find their place in a world different from their parents’. And here they sit, being fully and completely girly, discussing hair.

Ameneh, baby Aisha, and her brother

The entire time we are talking, another young woman has been sitting across from us, watching. She speaks no English. I have asked her a few questions, and Hosai has been translating for us. Ameneh has been in transit for 10 months. She traveled for six months from Afghanistan, mostly walking. She spent two months in another refugee camp before being transferred here two months ago. She doesn’t offer any extra information and does not seem eager to carry on conversation. Her face is hauntingly sad, and I can’t help but think that, even though she is surrounded by people, she feels completely alone and tiny in this sea of wanderers. Desperately alone.

Another boy has come over to listen in on several

occasions, to interject into the conversation, and to try out his English. He is 13 years old and is carrying the most precious little fairy of a baby girl, his one-year-old sister, Aisha. He is bubbly and happy and has near-perfect English. He tells me that his favorite thing at camp is the children’s tent. “It is the happy place. It is my favorite place when it is open. Singing and playing and happiness, making drawings, the nice people—it is the best place in camp!” We go over to see the children’s tent, which is closed now, and two volunteers are sweeping and picking up papers.

Lucy and Mohammed

Today, the children’s tent is being manned by a young Swiss man and a 20-year old girl from Argentina. The Argentine is a bubbly young nurse who has a heart for service. She is constantly surrounded by children. This camp has many unaccompanied minors—children whose parents have died in transit, or whose parents only had enough money to get one or two people in the family across a border, or who were literally thrown to strangers on boats or buses or across borders, in the hopes that the children could find freedom when the parents could not. These children now have no one but each other and the kindness of strangers and volunteers, so Lucy* becomes a big-sister figure or a surrogate mom to many. “These kids sit close to me, so close. They can’t get close enough. They just want me to touch them, to caress their

arms or their heads.”

There is another presence in the room, always watching, always reaching for someone or trying to engage in conversation. It is Mohammed, 22 years old and wheelchair-bound, due to cerebral palsy. He speaks English, although it's difficult to understand. He has a fond place in his heart for Spain and has a Spanish flag attached to his wheelchair with many signatures on it. When he hears that we are from Spain, he shouts, “Viva España!” and dissolves into laughter.

Mohammed did not always have his wheelchair. The wheelchair was a gift from Spanish volunteers. His father carried him here on his back from Afghanistan. We met his father, who is not a big man. He is about my height (5'2") and probably in his late 40s or early 50s. Thinking of this man physically carrying his son from Afghanistan, I'm instantly in awe of such dedication and love.

Mohammed keeps saying that I am a sister to him. I agree to be his sister and his friend. He sits next to me in his wheelchair and holds my hand most of the afternoon.

Volunteers

Soon, lunchtime rolls around. Refugees leave the common room to go to the dining room to pick up meals and eat with their families. Volunteers stay in the common room and sweep and clean up and prepare the room for lunch. A group in the kitchen has prepared spaghetti for us, and the volunteers all sit together, family style. It is a table full of nationalities—Spaniards, Italians, Swiss, Germans, and a few Afghan refugees who volunteer to help in camp every day. It is a beautiful mix at the table, a family, and I think that this is what the kingdom of God is supposed to look like.

Mohammed stayed behind when the others left for lunch, and no one thinks twice. They just wheel him up to the end of the table, and he sits with the volunteer family. Billy, my husband, is asked to pray for the lunch and the group, and he prays over this mix of people and religions and traditions like it's just any other day.

Mohammed is seated at the end, between Billy on one side and Sarah on the other. A few minutes into lunch Lucy, the Argentine, assumes her mother role and scoots Sarah to the side so she can switch places. Effortlessly, like someone who has done this her whole life, she feeds spaghetti to both herself and Mohammed while she carries on a deep conversation with me about places she has served and her

heart for people. Her heart speaks so much louder than her words, and I am convinced that she has a calling. She is destined for great things!

Our afternoon is full of conversations with camp directors, fact-finding, needs assessment, and discussion about the future of this situation. We leave the camp with a better understanding and a clearer vision for how our community, the Church in Europe, and the world can rise to the occasion and help. We now better understand how to pray.

As we are leaving, we are blessed with Salaam (Peace) by many. Hosai sees us just before we leave the military base gate, and she comes over to wish us well and say goodbye. She is visibly sad that we are not staying, as are we. She had wished to play volleyball with Sarah. We exchange a hug that lasts a little too long for me to be able to contain my tears anymore, and I have to smile and turn away. But not forever. I will be back.

What lies ahead for Hosai? Will she be here when I return? I hope so, and I hope not. ☩



Originally from Texas, Billy, Laurie, and Sarah Drum serve in Antequera, Spain where they seek to share the love of Christ with marginalized people. If you or your church would like to know more about ministering among refugees in Europe, contact billy@drumsforchrist.org



The summer 2016 issue of *Unfinished* tells of the simple and extraordinary ways Mission Society missionaries are caring for refugees. If your church is interested in learning more about “welcoming the stranger,” check it out at <http://tinyurl.com/uf62tms>.

You've read the statistics. You've seen the images.
You've heard the stories of the Middle East refugees.
But you haven't known what you can do to help.
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Unlock Hope provides a simple way for you to make a practical difference in the lives of refugee families and others displaced by conflict in the Middle East.

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Learn more and sign up today: worldrelief.org/unlockhope



When joy eludes us

Letting pain pray



PHOTO BY STEFAN KUNZE

“Everywhere a greater joy is preceded by a greater suffering.” — Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?*

We experience it in some form every day. Pain. Something is not as it should be—or not as we wish it were. And the size of the gap between “should be” or “wish it were” and “is” is the size of our pain.

We exert considerable energy to reduce that gap. And when pain becomes unbearable, we do just about anything to be free of it. Deny. Blame. Escape. Control. Rage. Even pray.

Especially when we’re in pain, our prayers can show beliefs about God that are distorted. Unlike people, God does not shake His finger at us in our pain or tell us to snap out of it. He doesn’t blame us for feeling the pain of the gap between “should” and “is.” Unlike us, He doesn’t hide from the truth of the way things are. Our God has fully embraced pain. He knows the pain of being rejected, of being sinned against, of being misunderstood. He knows the pain of death, grief, lowli-

ness, poverty, and humiliation. He even knows the pain of being made flesh, finite. He knows our weaknesses.

It is true that some of our pain is avoidable; it is caused by our own foolishness and sin. It is caused from grounding ourselves too much in the approval of others, or in anything other than God. But some of our pain comes as we, followers of Christ, share in His sufferings and stand in the gap between what is and what, by God’s grace, will be.

Perhaps, like Jesus in Gethsemane, our pain is a call to prayer. We pray, not to escape our awful ache, but to release it to Him—to trust our good God in it, knowing that God in Christ exerted all of His power to totally eradicate the gap, so that we can be sure that what should be will be. One day. †

*Jesus, here I am,
all weakness and wishing for
Something more,
Something else,
Something better.
But without the power to bring it
about.*

*Jesus, your grace is enough for
My painful situation,
My longings,
Me.
Apart from You I am nothing and
have nothing.*

*Jesus, I am relying on You for
Perspective on pain,
Peace in pain,
Perseverance through pain.
May Your power rest upon me.*

Becky Stephen is The Mission Society’s senior director of field ministry.

FIND YOUR PLACE

Mission service opportunities for you or those you love



CENTRAL ASIA

Join a team mentoring and discipling first-generation believers, or match your experience as a pre-K or primary school teacher with a call to cross-cultural ministry by developing curriculum and training teachers. Both opportunities are in a hill station city at the foothills of the Himalayas, where most people do not know the good news of life in the kingdom of God.



GHANA

Participate in church planting and discipleship in northern Ghana through community healthcare services, evangelism, and discipleship with illiterate or semi-literate rural Ghanaians.



KENYA

Oversee construction of a school in an underserved region of Kenya (must have construction or architectural background). Or develop a community co-op for agriculture that would form the basis for discipleship groups. Must be skilled in agriculture/farming.



MIDDLE EAST

An educational business start-up is in need of the following: a bookkeeper with skills in international finance and taxes, a grant writer, and a media and marketing specialist.



THAILAND

Are you an English teacher desiring to work cross culturally? Taxi drivers who have moved to the growing city of Bangkok and students preparing for university need you.

To read of other mission opportunities visit us at www.themissionsociety.org.

CoWork

Two-year term for professionals

Are you a professional who dreams of using your skills in missions? "CoWork" is a specialty term of service. As a CoWork missionary, your skills and calling to cross-cultural ministry are matched with a Mission Society team or project. This two-year term is ideal for those with some life and vocational experience to offer. It's easy to start the journey. Visit themissionsociety.org and complete the interest form. Below are a few of the CoWork opportunities.

THEY
ARE ON
THEIR **WAY!**



Johannes & Lena Ebner - Liberia

(July 2016)

Having previously served orphans with another Mission Society couple in Namibia, the Ebner family has relocated to Liberia, where they are forming a team with another Mission Society family committed to share the good news of Jesus through their lives, work, and words.

TRAINING BRINGS TOGETHER NEW AND VETERAN MISSIONARIES

This summer, 56 missionaries and Christian workers gathered for the annual H.T. and Alice Maclin Mission Training Institute to receive specialized mission training.

From June 29-July 11, 2016, Mission Society staff, new missionaries, and Indian believers from all over the country came together in India for 13 days of training and fellowship. The attendees included eight Mission Society missionaries, eight GreenLight: Gateway team members, and more than 40 local Christian ministers, missionaries, and seminarians.

“We offer our cross-cultural training to Americans and persons from other parts of the world alike. Time and time again we receive positive feedback, especially on our emphasis on incarnational methodology, listening (rather than telling) as a starting point, our discipleship emphasis, and the innovative approaches to reaching people from other religious backgrounds that we teach. We seek for our training to be both informational and experiential, hopefully resulting in a transformational experience that will be multiplied into the lives of others,” said the Rev. Frank

“We seek for our training to be both informational and experiential, hopefully resulting in a transformational experience that will be multiplied into the lives of others.” — Frank Decker



Decker, vice president for mission training and development.

The sessions were taught by Mission Society staff members and missionaries, as well as Indian missiologists and church leaders. Lessons included cross-cultural challenges, discipleship, core ministry strategies,

preparedness, Jesus movements, cell group ministry, mission shock, the theology of mission, spiritual warfare, and prayer.

The attendees also visited nearby communities to practice the cultural observation skills they were learning.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO GAVE IN HONOR OR MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONE THIS MEMORIAL DAY

We thank ...

Jennifer Foster
Gordon & Cathy Jones
Robert & Gloria White
Richard & Patricia Aultman
Mary Turner
Dale Groves
Charles & Marcia Webb
Charles & Nancy Heinlen
Gerald & Joanne Anderson
Alita Holt
Joyce Paris
Thomas Kyle
Dillon & Maudie Hess
Maryann DeForest
Dennis & Faye Short

Gift in memory or honor of ...

Minnie Taylor and James Taylor
The Faris Family
Virgil Maybray
Joseph Webb Aultman
James Alexander Turner (husband & WWII Sgt.)
Virgil Maybray
H.T. & Alice Maclin
Our parents
H.T. Maclin
Ira Galloway
H.T. Maclin
Joseph Loch & Irving C. Hoay, Jr. (veterans of WWII)
Richard H. Hess
Keith DeForest
Julia Williams

We also offer our heartfelt thanks to those who gave a special gift in celebration of Memorial Day:

Phillip & Angela Rehmus, Ken & Liz Link, Tom & Twilah Kaldenberg, Hugo & Kathleen Westphal, W. Eugene Danneberg, William & Doris Thompson, Jonas & Jane Cosner, Thomas Shreve, Everett Jenne, Odella Leow, Alfred & Dorothy Allison, James & Mariella Sargent, Julia Cushman, Robert & Rosa Fleming, George Wolffbrandt, Verona Chapman, Karen Grossman, Frank Boggus, Rudolph & Rita Ashton, Virginia Massey, Billy & Bonny Shelton, Robert & Rita Jolly, Karen Holliday, Jack & Lois Erickson, Russ & Nancy Davidson, Steven & Valerie Burgess, Bill & Gayle Cooper, Ann Bennett, Frank & Helen Brutcher.



Can missionaries have fun?

When your greatest joy meets some of the world's greatest needs—that's fun living, says Jim Ramsay. Here, he offers insight into an under-examined aspect of missionary life.



Taylor Otto, a pre-med student at the University of Kentucky, traveled to Thailand and India this summer as a member of the Greenlight: Gateway team. See details for joining next summer's team on page 33.

"Is there anything you regret or have missed?" A young woman in a group of students exploring missions asked this question of a veteran missionary, who has lived in India for 18 years. The woman answered, "I am totally fulfilled in what I am doing here. I can't imagine any other life for me." It was clear from our meeting with this missionary that she had a deep and abiding joy. This was not just some abstract, spiritual joy; she liked being here, she had lots of fun, and she genuinely enjoyed her life.

Great fulfillment

One of the running jokes among those in cross-cultural ministry has to do with their expectation that others imagine them to be miserable—"suffering for Jesus." It sometimes comes as a shock to people to hear missionaries on "home leave" speak of missing home, by which they mean their place of service. The kind of joy the woman in the example

above referenced is actually fairly common among most missionaries I have interacted with. Why might that be? There are several reasons, including the following:

1. Joy in purpose

There is a satisfaction in being where you believe God wants you, doing what He has gifted you to do. Frederick Buechner says, "Your vocation in life is where your greatest joy meets the world's greatest need." When a person has found that spot, it brings a deep joy, regardless of the physical environment. And if a person has not found that spot, joy will be elusive even if the person has all the comforts of an affluent life.

There is a satisfaction in being where you believe God wants you, doing what He has gifted you to do.

2. Joy in a new normal

When living in a new context, a person develops a "new normal." Things like spotty electricity, chaotic traffic, outdoor markets, or extreme temperatures appear insurmountable issues when a person visits a place where these are common. Yet once you've lived there for an extended period, a new normal sets in.

I remember in our early years in Kazakhstan, electrical outages were frequent and long. If the lights went out during dinner, we just lit the candles and continued conversation, hardly paying attention to the change. Sometimes those very things that seem like challenges—for example, grocery shopping at outdoor markets—actually create additional joy because of the interaction with people they create and

the forced slowing down of the pace of life.

3. Joy in connection

As people created for relationships, we experience joy from the fact that building relationships is a central part of our job as missionaries. Often missionaries experience deep relationships and community where they serve that can be elusive in modern American culture. For me personally, this lack of natural community was the most challenging part of adapting back to life in the USA.

4. Joy in lighthearted fun

Missionaries do have fun. The community that is usually formed both among members of the mission team as well as with local people lends itself

to enjoying fun activities together. Our family had theme parties, immersed ourselves in local celebrations, experienced events and visited places that would not have been possible had we remained in the USA.

Significant sacrifices

Let me hasten to say that there are sacrifices and costs to a life of living cross-culturally, usually far away from one's country of origin. These should not be trivialized. The sacrifices are real and can create a sense of loss. We missed several years of extended family celebrations. Our children did not have frequent contact with grandparents or spend summers with cousins. Those were difficult realities, yet we found the promise Jesus made to His disciples about leaving family and receiving so much more were true. Nonetheless, those are sacrifices commonly experi-

I remember one evening at an event in Kazakhstan, my friend and colleague the late Joel Duggins looked over at me and said, "Can you believe we are having this much fun?"

enced. They do not, however, diminish the joy of serving.

Deep gladness

We do not serve a Lord who calls us to be miserable. He does not guarantee comfort or safety. But He does promise Himself, gives us a part in His redemptive purposes, and invites us to be in community with those around us. That alone is sufficient to bring deep joy to all who choose to follow Him wherever He sends them.

I remember one evening at an event in Kazakhstan, my friend and colleague the late Joel Duggins looked over at me and said, "Can you believe we are having this much fun?" It was a genuine expression of the delight God had given us in the work we were called to and the deep relationships we had. Again, this was not an abstract sense of joy, but lighthearted fun that was reflective of a deep gladness. †

Jim Ramsay is The Mission Society's vice president for mission ministries.



NEXT SUMMER, EXPLORE MISSIONS!

GREENLIGHT: GATEWAY gives college students and young adults ages 18-23 the opportunity to take a close look at cross-cultural ministry in a group setting. Participants will join a group of 5-10, led by a mentor, for five weeks to serve alongside a team of missionaries.

Wanting to discern if missions is your calling? Explore life and ministry in a different culture!

For more information, visit themissionsociety.org/greenlight-gateway. The deadline for registration is **January 31, 2017**.



The joy of recalibrating

Three temptations to avoid when trying to grow your church



“Avoid focusing on one type of church growth. I had that temptation when I planted a church.”

Thomas Merton wrote, “The biggest human temptation is to settle for too little.” Even in our ministries, we can sometimes settle for too little. Other times, we may be measuring incorrectly or focusing on the wrong things. In case it seems your church has plateaued, here are three temptations to avoid when trying to grow your church.

1. Focusing only on one kind of growth.

The first temptation to avoid is to focus exclusively on one type of church growth. Donald McGavran, father of the Church-Growth movement, identified many types of Church Growth, including biological, internal, transfer, and conversion growth. George Hunter expanded on McGavran’s types by identifying catalytic and proliferation types of Church Growth.

If many types of Church Growth exist, why do we often limit ourselves to one? Some churches’ major focus is taking care of themselves. They focus almost entirely on internal growth through well-developed programs that serve those inside the church to the exclusion of programs that serve the needs of least-reached people. On the other hand, some churches focus so much on non-believers that they don’t offer any ministries that serve the spiritual growth needs of long-term attenders.

I faced that temptation when I planted a church. I wanted to reach lost sheep rather than to take care of the sheep already in the pen. If your church “insiders” are lacking in grace, love, and

forgiveness, they won’t be able to offer it to unchurched outsiders. God will probably not attract lost people to a spiritually unattractive church.

If it seems your church has plateaued, take note of the ways it may also be growing. Perhaps one of the church’s greatest needs in this area is for informed leaders who lead with a balanced strategy for Church Growth.

2. Focusing only on your friends and family, or people like you.

The second temptation to avoid is focusing only on the two groups/one location strategy. The two groups I speak of are your friends and family. These are the folks most like you, the people you know

What groups in your community or region do people avoid? How might God be calling you to reach them?

and love. You feel safe around them. After weekend worship, you have them over for dinner. You're comfortable focusing your energies on reaching them. *After all, someone should be reaching them*, you say, *so why not me?* By reaching those most like you, your church probably benefits in terms of attendance and finances.

Avoid at all costs the temptation to be a "Jerusalem-only" church, a church that ministers almost exclusively to people who are alike.

Jesus has a better way. He wants our churches to expand our horizons beyond the friends and family plan. He pitches a world-encompassing strategy for church growth in Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be my witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Notice the "and" in this passage: Jerusalem *and* Judea *and* Samaria *and* the ends of the earth. We start in Jerusalem and go all the way to the world. There is almost nothing as motivating and as challenging as your church getting a vision to impact the world!

Consider ways in which God is calling your church to grow by reaching out to your "Samaria." In Jesus' day, Samaritans were disdained by the Jews, so they would go around Samaria, rather than through it. Then along comes Jesus who casts this vision to be a witness in Samaria.

The Samaria for your congregation would be the location that is culturally, ethnically, socially, or economically different from your church. It would also be an area lacking a viable witness of the transforming power of the gospel. What groups in your community or region do people avoid? This is your Samaria. How

might God be calling you to reach them?

Also, how might God be calling your church to grow by reaching the ends of the earth? Short-term mission teams and career cross-cultural workers can be sent to plant churches and reap a spiritual harvest for the kingdom.

Don't give in to the temptation to

adopt a Church-Growth strategy that includes only your friends and family/one location. Perhaps the church's greatest need in this area

is for informed leaders who lead with a balanced strategy for church growth that involves local, regional/national, and international.

3. The temptation to quit.

As any baseball batter knows, the last words he wants to hear the umpire say are, "Strike three! You're out." When a batter strikes out, he's forced to retreat to the dugout in defeat. For church leaders, we face the task of moving our churches forward in making disciples. When you've stepped up to the plate to try to lead your church to spiritual vitality and growth, but nothing seems to be working, it's easy to succumb to the temptation to retreat in defeat and despair to your office and work on next month's sermon series. So the third temptation to avoid when trying to grow your church is the temptation to quit.

Jesus faced the temptation to quit. On that ominous night in Gethsemane when He was to be taken before his accusers to be crucified, Matthew records three instances where Jesus went away and prayed to His Father for deliverance. He would die at the cross for the sins of the world, and it's understandable that in His humanness He was tempted to resist, to ask for a way of escape. I find it fascinat-

ing that Matthew writes that Jesus "went a little farther." Three times he persevered in prayer to complete his mission. It an example to all of us to "go farther" in leading our churches to grow.

If you sense your church is not growing, remember, too, that your role as a pastor, says Eugene Peterson,* is to pray, to preach, and to listen. "It is far more biblical," he writes, "to learn quietness and attentiveness before God than to be overtaken by what John Oman named the twin peril of ministry, 'flurry and worry.'" Take care of the priorities; seek to grow in your love, prayer, and faith, and trust God to lead you to grow your church (which is His church), as He would have it. †

Dr. Duane Brown is The Mission Society's senior director of church ministry.

**The Contemplative Pastor, page 25.*



This article was adapted from an article originally published by Seedbed, a 21st century movement and media platform whose mission is to gather, connect, and resource the people of God to sow for a great awakening. Producing Bible studies, books, small-group studies, training courses, videos, podcasts, conferences, Seedbed is out to "develop a new class of disciple-making resources" in every way possible. We enthusiastically recommend Seedbed to you. Visit them: www.seedbed.com/about-seedbed.



Joy ahead

A reminder for the overwhelmed, mistreated, or unsure



This 18-year-old Peruvian, Emilio,* suffered many beatings and was never allowed to attend school or learn to read. Here is his reaction when missionary Tim Goshorn gave him an audio Bible. Emilio had never received a gift before. “When we focus on lives transformed,” writes Richard Coleman, “the heartaches and sufferings turn to joy.”

Picture the eternal Word of God delivering in heaven whether or not He would take the humble mission of the incarnation. (See *Phil. 2*.) Imagine Jesus, the Word made flesh, in the Garden of Gethsemane, agonizing over going to the cross. Our Lord knew His journey would not be an easy one, so why would this all-powerful, eternal member of the divine Trinity willingly subject Himself to pain and suffering?

According to Hebrews 12:2, it was for the joy set before Him that He endured the cross. And what was that joy? It was to glorify His Father and to redeem a people from every nation, tribe, and tongue. Jesus’ joy of completing His mission—the countless souls beyond the finish line—compelled Him to push through the

physical, social, and spiritual torment He would soon face.

Like their Lord, the cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 11 lived a faith-filled life that was no cake walk. In fact, if it weren’t for their vision for the future promises of God, they might have curled up into a ball and retreated from the call of God on their lives. I mean, what kind of person wants to be destitute, persecuted, and even put to death (Heb. 11: 37)? But these were all commended for their faith.

If it weren’t for their vision for the future promises of God, they might have curled up into a ball and retreated from the call of God.

What about you? How do you respond to God’s invitation to join Jesus in His mission? When considering the role God

has called you to play in His mission, are you tempted to focus on the shame or potential hard stuff? For example, do you think, *I could get malaria, or I’m no*

good at learning languages, or I could be ridiculed for talking about Jesus? The scenarios of discomfort are endless. Rehearsing the “what ifs” have a way of paralyzing us with fear, keeping us from responding to God’s call. Of course, Jesus tells us to count the cost, but he also encourages us to consider the reward—the joy set before us. What would happen if we focused on the eternal results instead of the temporal ones?

Perhaps the question to ask is this: Is it really our joy to see lives transformed by the gospel? Will you share in the Father’s joy, no matter the cost? †

Richard Coleman is The Mission Society’s senior director of mobilization and candidacy.

*Pseudonym

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