

WINTER 2015/2016

# resourceful

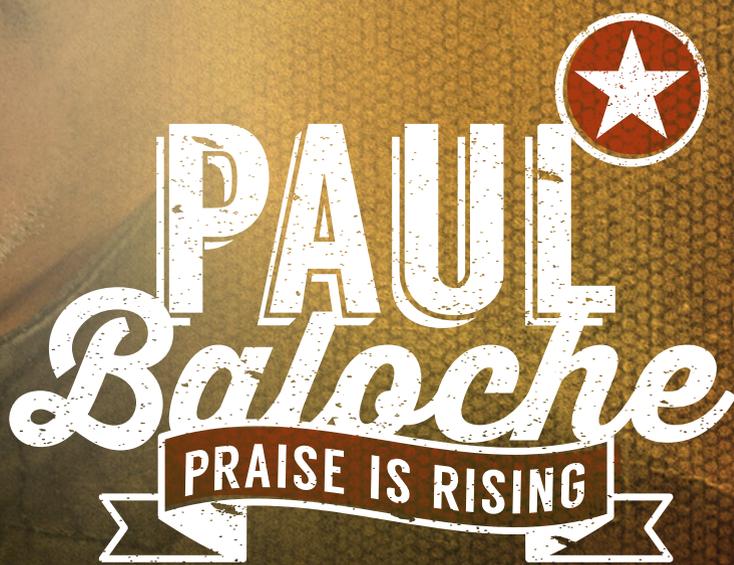
*Equipping the Church*

**SPIRITUAL PARENTING 42**

A Simple Question Triggers a Transformation

**LEADERSHIP 46**

Iron Sharpening Iron: What It Really Takes



MICHAEL COVINGTON • TRAVIS RYAN • DR. CHRIS THURMAN • CRIS H. DOORNBOS



# An enterprising nonprofit model

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 **INTEGRITYMUSIC**  
THE SOUND OF WORSHIP

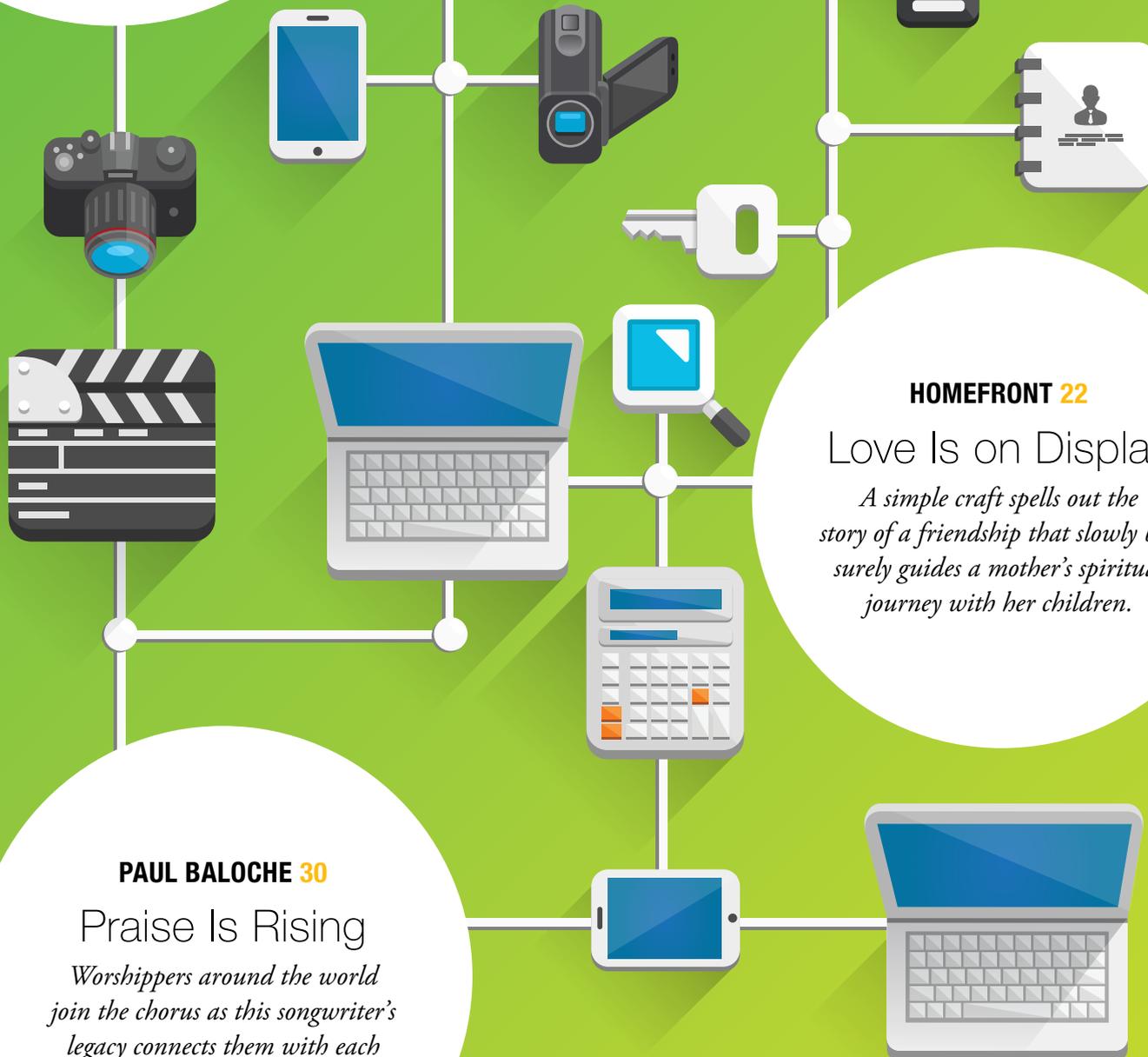
 **disciplr**

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**DISCIPLR**

KidMin's  
Digital Future

*New research reveals the struggle for churches to keep up, but also points to the frontier of digital opportunity.*



**HOMEFRONT 22**

Love Is on Display

*A simple craft spells out the story of a friendship that slowly but surely guides a mother's spiritual journey with her children.*

**PAUL BALOCHE 30**

Praise Is Rising

*Worshippers around the world join the chorus as this songwriter's legacy connects them with each other and with God.*

## FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS

**Michael Covington** (p. 26, *KidMin's Digital Future*) leads the business team at DiscipLr.

**Paul Baloche** (p. 34, *Simple Wisdom*) reaches for a McPherson acoustic guitar when he writes and records worship songs.

**Travis Ryan** (p. 35, *Until My Voice Is Gone*) is known as a servant-hearted worshipper of God who fiercely champions the Church.

**Dan Rivera** (p. 37, *The Story Behind the Song*) leads worship at National Community Church and loves good coffee.

**Bj Pridham** (p. 38, *In Tune*) leads worship with Planetshakers band. He writes worship songs and teaches songwriting at Planetshakers College in Australia.

**Dr. Chris Thurman** (p. 40, *Staying on the Path*) owns a private practice in Texas where he counsels individuals and conducts seminars for churches.

**Cris H. Doornbos** (p. 46, *DiscipleShaping*) serves as the CEO of David C Cook. He is a certified scuba diver and enjoys hiking the mountains of Colorado.

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resourceful

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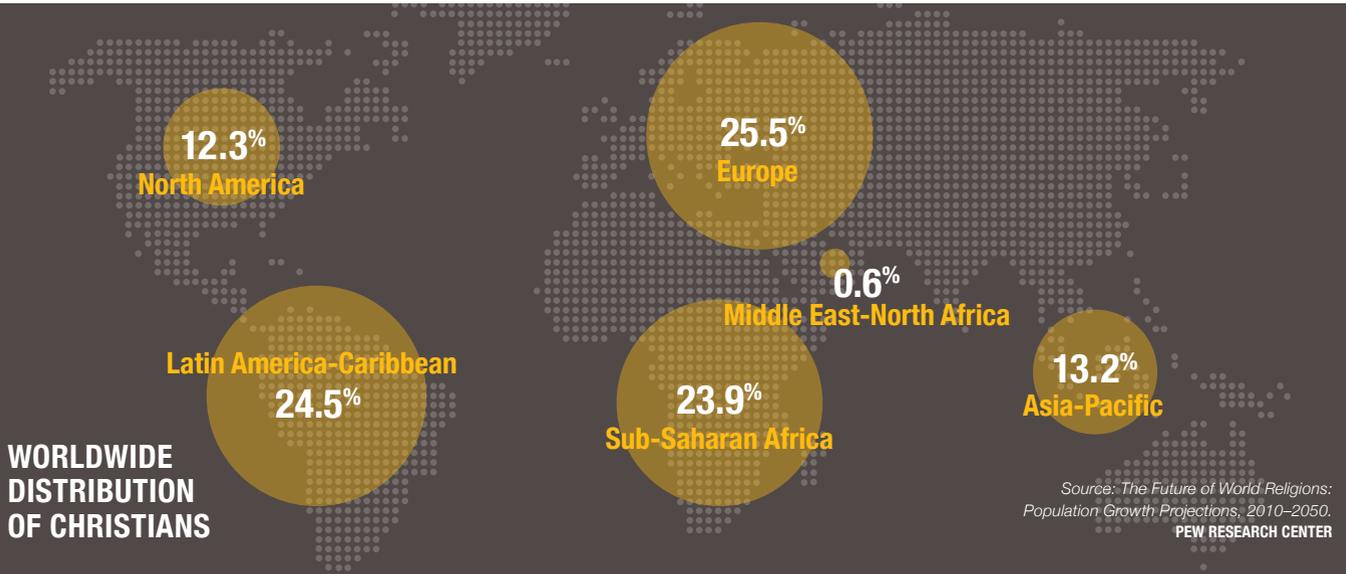
SHELF LIFE



“Those who are forgiven much love much, and usually have no problem showing it. 39

# WORLDVIEW

The mission to make disciples goes deep and wide.



Through the presence of Christians in every region of the world, the Church is *deep* and *wide*. Locally, it goes deep into neighborhoods and relationships. Globally, it reaches wide across borders and languages. Both measures emphasize the same mission: To make disciples.

Going deep is the key to reaching wide. I like the metaphor of aspen trees, which are common where I live in Colorado. Aspen trees grow in community with a root system that connects each stand of multiple trees. The stronger the roots, the greater the spread. What a great picture of the Church—locally rooted and globally connected.

This issue of *Resourceful* offers a quick tour of deep impact and wide influence as the Church fulfills its mission around the corner and around the globe.

## GOING DEEP

Many Christ-centered resources equip the Church for life-transforming relationships in times of hardship. For example, *Helping Communities Heal: Refugees* will enable Christian workers who serve on the front lines of the refugee crisis in Europe. And the vivid illustrations of *The Action Bible* help a missionary family in Liberia, West Africa, to teach children and adults who cannot read.

In North America, local Christians make disciples among their global neighbors, arriving from nations that are closed to traditional missionary work. *The Story of Jesus* reaches refugee children in San Diego, California. And God's love is on

display as *HomeFront* magazine guides the spiritual journey of a refugee mother and her children.

## REACHING WIDE

Nothing speaks truth to the heart so powerfully as a native language. Worshippers around the world now raise their voices in French and Dutch translations of Paul Baloche's songs, released by Integrity Music. And Swahili resonates with more than 100 million Africans, so translation is underway to provide *Life on Life* discipleship curriculum to an emerging generation.

On the digital frontier, churches have begun exploring a new web platform called Disciplr. Every month, more than 200,000 Sunday school leaders and students connect to learning resources and to one another, using technology to make modern-day disciples.

Deep and wide—in local roots and global reach—we are the Church. I hope you'll be encouraged by the transformation we witness as we join God in the incredible work He entrusts to us.

Transforming lives together,

**Cris H. Doornbos**

CEO, David C Cook

CURRENT

# News

## GOD'S WORD IN HER HANDS AND HEART

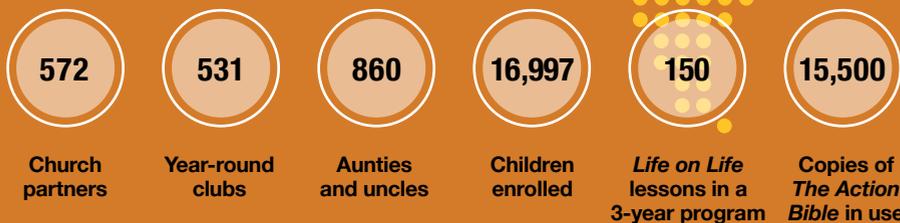
See the girl with *The Action Bible* in her hands? Well, it's not just in her hands—it's reaching into her heart too.

She is one of thousands of at-risk children in India who have received *The Action Bible* since 2010. That's when David C Cook collaborated with pastors in India to create discipleship curriculum especially for vulnerable children like her. Many are orphans.

*The Action Bible* accompanies the use of *Life on Life* curriculum in clubs hosted by "aunties" and "uncles" from local churches. Under the guidance of these caring adults, children come to know Christ's comfort and hope. They learn practical life skills and develop Christian character too.

This girl's smile reminds us that God's Word transforms lives, even in difficult circumstances.

### SINCE 2010, CHURCH-BASED CLUBS IN INDIA HAVE PROVIDED VITAL MINISTRY TO VULNERABLE CHILDREN.



SNAPSHOTS 11

EVENTS & TOURS 12



You don't want to leave a legacy of: "He played it safe, he survived, he made it through."

Francis Chan, via Twitter

# Album Releases

**AVAILABLE NOW**

**Various Artists** *Blessed Assurance: The New Hymns of Fanny Crosby*

**All Souls Orchestra and Special Guests** *Loves Excelling*

**Paul Baloche** *Christmas Worship Vol. 2*

**Various Artists** *Ultimate Worship 2016*

**NOVEMBER**

**Soul Survivor** *Love Takes Over (Live)*

**Life Worship UK** *God Is With Us (Christmas Deluxe Single)*

**Paul Baloche** *Uw Naam (Dutch album)*

**JANUARY**

**Noel Robinson** *Outrageous Love Live*

**Various Artists** *Taize Reflections*

**Various Artists** *Ultimate Hymns For Today*



**TRAVIS RYAN—YOU HOLD IT ALL**

Travis Ryan's recent release, *You Hold It All*, features faith-filled songs to embolden and inspire the church. It includes his recent Dove Award-nominated song, "We Believe," co-authored with Richie Fike and Matt Hooper.

Travis collaborated with his community of worship pastors and songwriters on this project. It was co-produced by worship pastor/songwriter Michael Farren and arranger/composer Brandon Michael Collins.



The greatest danger in life is anything other than Jesus that becomes a foundation for our confidence.

Kyle Idleman, via Twitter

## 2015 Dove Awards Honor Integrity Artists



The Gospel Music Association (GMA) recently honored nine Integrity Music artists, songwriters, and ministry partners with nine Dove Award nominations. One of the nominees, Israel Houghton, received the award as a co-writer of the Top Gospel Song of the Year, "How Awesome Is Our God."

The list of nominees also included All Sons & Daughters for Worship Song of the Year, "Great Are You Lord," and Worship Album of the Year, the critically acclaimed project *All Sons & Daughters*. They also received a nomination for Inspirational Song of the Year for "Christ Be All Around Me" as recorded by Michael W. Smith.

"We Believe," No. 1 radio hit as recorded by the Newsboys, earned two nominations for songwriters Travis Ryan, Richie Fike, and Matt Hooper. Michael Farren also received a nomination for the Southern Gospel Song, "Pray Now."

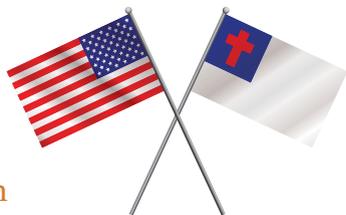
Both Newsong and Planetshakers received nominations for Long Form Video of the Year. In recognition of co-writers Jennie Lee Riddle and Richie Fike, "More and More of You" received a nomination as Inspirational Song of the Year.



## WHAT'S YOUR PERSONAL AND FAMILY IDENTITY?

Adults in America consider a number of factors central to their identity, but none as significant as family. That's according to a study by Barna Group, which compiled the ranking below.

- 1 Family
- 2 Being an American
- 3 My Religious Faith
- 4 My Ethnic Group
- 5 My Career
- 6 My State
- 7 My City/Town



How about you? How does your sense of identity compare? And what about your family?

When it comes to “My Religious Faith” —third on the list— Christian parents have a unique opportunity. They can help form their children’s identity in Christ.

Beyond a Christ-centered identity, spiritual parenting can lead to change in communities and society as a whole. For some inspiration, see the *Imprint* story on page 42.

---

When you tune in to a new podcast by WeAreWorship, you’ll get to hear Integrity Music artist **Paul Baloche** in its very first episode. Subscribe to the podcast on iTunes or visit **WeAreWorship.com**

## Book Releases

### AVAILABLE NOW

**Brian Cosby** *Uncensored: Daring to Embrace the Entire Bible*

**Kyle Idleman** *The End of Me: Where Real Life in the Upside-Down Ways of Jesus Begins*

**Dr. Chris Thurman** *The Lies Couples Believe*

**Kara Tippetts and Jill Lynn Buteyn**  
*Just Show Up: The Dance of Walking Through Suffering Together*

### NOVEMBER

**Dr. Warren Wiersbe**

*1 Kings: Being Good Stewards of God’s Gifts*

*2 Kings and 2 Chronicles: Standing Firmly Against the World’s Tides*

### JANUARY

**Stasi Eldredge** *Beautiful Me: Believe God’s Truth about You*

*Beautiful Now: 90 Days of Experiencing God’s Dreams for You*

**Miralee Ferrell** *Blue Ribbon Trail Ride*



While far from perfect, the spiritually healthy parent is a parent who walks each day, step by step, with God as his or her guide.

**Michelle Anthony**, via Twitter

## HELPING COMMUNITIES HEAL: REFUGEES

For just a few moments, try to put yourself in the shoes of a refugee . . .

In the distance you hear explosions. At first you don't know what they are and aren't too concerned, but soon you realize that they are bombs. And they're getting closer. You panic. You tell your family to pack up food and other essentials.

A half-hour later, you walk out the front door. You take one last lingering look at your home, knowing that you might not see it again.

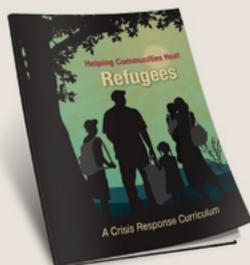
You join thousands of others, all heading the same direction: away from the explosions. Your children are crying, but you don't know how to comfort them. You feel like crying too, but you need to be strong for them.

You walk for hours, stopping only because the darkness has overtaken you. You huddle together to get through the cold night. The next day, and the next day, and the next day, you walk. Your legs ache. You ache even more for your spouse and children, who look to you for answers. But you have none.

Finally you come to a fortress of metal fencing and barbed wire. Your new home.

For the estimated 19 million refugees in the world, 40 percent of whom are children, this is their life. We've all seen the tragic photos that break our hearts, and at the same time, we feel a sense of helplessness. What in the world can we do to help?

That very question prompted David C Cook to create a trauma-informed ministry resource: *Helping Communities Heal: Refugees*. It's a resource designed for adults—parents, relief workers, volunteers, and missionaries—to bring healing to children and young teens who are refugees. It presents God's timeless truth, as only God's Word can, to bring comfort and peace.



## The Story of Jesus in Syria

As we hear news from Syria and pray for refugees fleeing the civil war, we remember the faithfulness of Syrian Christians. Through them, God has already planted seeds of hope.

In late 2013, Christians in Syria worked with David C Cook to print 250,000 copies of *The Story of Jesus* in Arabic.

Since then, they have passionately shared *The Story of Jesus* with their families and neighbors. And the booklet's distinctive and colorful illustrations have captured readers' hearts with the gospel message.

A young girl living at the epicenter of the conflict bubbles with joy when she talks about *The Story of Jesus*. "When I pray Jesus speaks to me. But when they gave me *The Story of Jesus*, I immediately started reading it and I felt so special. This time Jesus didn't only speak to me. He was there right with me."

Syrian Christians have continued distributing the booklet across the country, even in the face of conflict and persecution.

Congratulations to Matt Schaffner, who won a free resource pack after completing our fall *Resourceful* survey. Matt serves as director of youth ministries at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Overland Park, Kansas.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the survey. Your feedback helps us make this magazine a more resourceful tool to equip you and your church.

## THE GREAT COMMISSION: ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

The call to “make disciples of all nations” ultimately comes down to this: People who know and follow Christ invite and teach others to know and follow Him too. Every nation—whether it’s your home or a country halfway around the world—is made up of people groups. To see how Christians in North America are sharing the gospel with unreached people groups close to home, read the stories on pages 20 and 22.



	<b>ALL PEOPLE GROUPS</b> <i>defined by shared ethnicity and language</i>	<b>UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS</b> <i>with less than 2% Christians to plant and sustain churches</i>
<b>POPULATION / PEOPLE GROUPS ACROSS COUNTRIES</b>	<b>7.3 BILLION / 9,680</b>	<b>3.1 BILLION / 3,960</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>34.5 million / 248</b>	<b>2.2 million / 45</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>62.6 million / 106</b>	<b>4.8 million / 32</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>318.6 million / 473</b>	<b>10.6 million / 82</b>



Data from JoshuaProject.net



With self-centered confidence, success will make you prideful and failure will make you fearful. But God-confidence will make you faithful. **Tim Chaddick**, via Twitter

# Snapshots

## Scenes From the Documentary Film: We Are The City Harmonic

The City Harmonic, a foursome of Integrity Music worship artists, took their name from the movement that inspired and commissioned them to become a band.

A film directed by Jesse Hunt presents their story—the story of churches working together for the good of Hamilton, Ontario. In this city abandoned by industry, a collective of churches known as TrueCity gave birth to a hope-filled and creative movement of ministry initiatives.

See the film and share your story of church collaboration online at **WeAreTheCityHarmonic.com**.



# Events & Tours

Join your favorite authors and artists at these upcoming events



**Paul Baloche**

Christmas Tour in Canada,  
**December 1 – 20, 2015**, [LeadWorship.com](http://LeadWorship.com)



**Kyle Idleman**

2015 Worship Facilities Conference and Expo,  
**November 18 – 19, 2015**, [WFXWeb.com](http://WFXWeb.com)



**NewSong**

A Very Merry Christmas Tour,  
**December 2 – 20, 2015**, [NewsongOnline.com](http://NewsongOnline.com)



**Dr. David Jeremiah**

Christmas on Broadway, **December 3, 2015**, [DavidJeremiah.org](http://DavidJeremiah.org)



**Francis Chan**

Urbana Conference,  
**December 27 – 29, 2015**,  
[Urbana.org](http://Urbana.org)



**Kelly Minter**

Converge PacWest Women's Conference,  
**January 22–24, 2016**,  
[ConvergePacWest.com/women](http://ConvergePacWest.com/women)



**Travis Ryan and Dustin Smith**

iWrite 2016: The International Christian  
Songwriters Conference,  
**February 25–27, 2016**, [iWrite2016.com](http://iWrite2016.com)



# GLOBAL INITIATIVES

## They Say It Like They See It

**Tommy can't read yet. And his younger brother, Don, is deaf. But both of these missionary kids have absorbed God's Word through the vivid illustrations of *The Action Bible*. And now they're helping to share it with kids in Liberia.**

● Tommy Riley stood in front of a crowd of two hundred and fifty Liberian children, speaking Scripture and telling stories he knew by heart. Tommy was then only five years old. He spoke with confidence and excitement. His father, Don, wove through the people, showing photos from *The Action Bible* that corresponded with the stories Tommy told. The children were mesmerized by the drawings and sat for as long as Tommy and Don were willing to teach.

Tommy could barely read—not unlike fifty-seven percent of Liberia's population who cannot read. Most of them are older children or adults and will never learn to do so. In rural towns, that percentage is even higher.

When Don and his family moved to the country, they were overwhelmed by the prospect of teaching people God's Word without using written materials. But they had already found a solution within their own family after adopting Tommy's brother, Don Jr., a deaf son from India, in 2012.

"I believe God prepared us through discipling our own children. Just like we needed to communicate visually with our son, we needed to minister visually to the Liberian people," says Don.



**LIFE ON LIFE 16**

Swahili Speaks to the Hearts of 100 Million Africans

**THE STORY OF JESUS 20**

Reaching the Nations Next Door in San Diego

“ In the aftermath of two civil wars and the Ebola crisis, the Liberian people are extremely open to the gospel right now.

The Riley family moved to Liberia in 2013 to work with Wordsower Liberia, a small but mighty organization with an audacious goal: to see a healthy church in every town and village of Liberia within their lifetime.

Wordsower created three church-planting bases across the country and hope to add two more in coming years. From there, they send field leaders to visit surrounding areas and preach the gospel. “We have found that our most effective missionaries are native Liberians. But a lot of them cannot read and if they can, they struggle with comprehension,” explains Don.

Wordsower implemented a Bible institute to equip the field leaders. Leaders undergo four levels of two-week intensive trainings, focusing on different parts of the gospel as well as practical

ways to disciple new believers. In just five years, Wordsower has trained fifty field leaders and has sent them to thirteen of the fifteen counties in Liberia.

## A DESPERATE REQUEST

After seeing his son’s response to *The Action Bible*, Don knew he wanted more for their ministry. But the funds weren’t available.

Earlier this year, Don’s family returned to the States for a few months. One morning, while they were still sleeping, Don woke up to pray. He had just begun working with an artist to try to create a picture Bible similar to *The Action Bible*. But he felt the Lord calling him to reach out to David C Cook to see if he could buy copies at a discounted rate. He sent an email to a





## Don Riley: Father and Son

My son's adoption was a wonderful gift to our family. His name is Don, same as mine, and he is deaf. As we worked through the process of adopting him, we wondered if he would be able to love us, communicate with us, or have attachment issues since he was raised in an orphanage.

I remember walking into the orphanage in India and looking at my son for the first time face to face. He was sitting on the floor, leaning up against the wall of the orphanage. One of his caregivers touched his leg to get his attention and pointed toward us. Don jumped to his feet, yelling, "Papa, Papa, Papa." I scooped him into my arms as he looked over my shoulders and yelled, "Mamie, Mamie." Our bond was immediate.

When we took him to the hotel that night, we were faced with a new problem. Due to Don's deafness, he had no language. The orphanage had taught him to say Papa and Mamie, but that was the full extent of his language development.

Don's orphanage was run by Hindu women and though he was deaf, he learned to worship the false gods in his orphanage. How were we going to communicate the love of Jesus to our son? The answer God gave us was *The Action Bible*. Don quickly learned American Sign Language and we were able to teach him through the pictures of *The Action Bible*. In my heart, I am eternally grateful for *The Action Bible* because God used it to lead my son to Christ.

After bringing Don home, our family moved to Liberia as missionaries. By the time we moved, our family had worn out four copies of *The Action Bible* during our personal devotions. The stories and the pictures had become part of us just like a worn Bible becomes part of its owner's heart.

general address, not really believing anything would come of it.

What Don didn't realize was that David C Cook exists as an enterprising nonprofit. The organization reinvests revenue from its products to help equip the Church around the globe where Christ-centered resources are desperately needed. And that is exactly how Don felt: *desperate*. But the very tool that felt so out of reach for him matched the heartbeat of David C Cook.

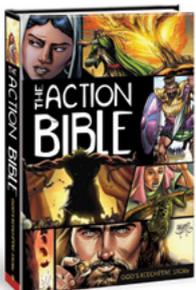
"By midday, I got a response. Someone was going to mail us seven hundred copies of *The Action Bible* to take back with us to Liberia. We were also going to get two thousand booklets called *The Story of Jesus*." They packed as many as they could in suitcases and shipped the rest to meet them in Liberia.

## STRATEGIC EVANGELISM

Don and Wordsower formed an immediate partnership with David C Cook, working together to get more resources to Liberia. "Many people will be in heaven because they saw the life of Christ in these materials. They are transforming the ministry of Wordsower."

Part of Wordsower's strategy revolves around schools. "If we can reach the youth, we can change the nation. My prayer is that initially we take *The Story of Jesus* into every school. It does a great job of summarizing the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and giving people the opportunity to accept or reject Him. Each child can take the booklet home with them. They are encouraged to teach their family as well. That's the starting point ... it introduces Christ in an understandable way."

"If we can give each school *The Action Bible*, the children will grow up hearing from the Word of God on a very regular basis. In the aftermath of two civil wars and the Ebola crisis, the Liberian people are extremely open to the gospel right now. It's a wide open door that I think the Church needs to walk through. The fields are truly ripe for the harvest and God is using these materials to bring in that harvest." ●



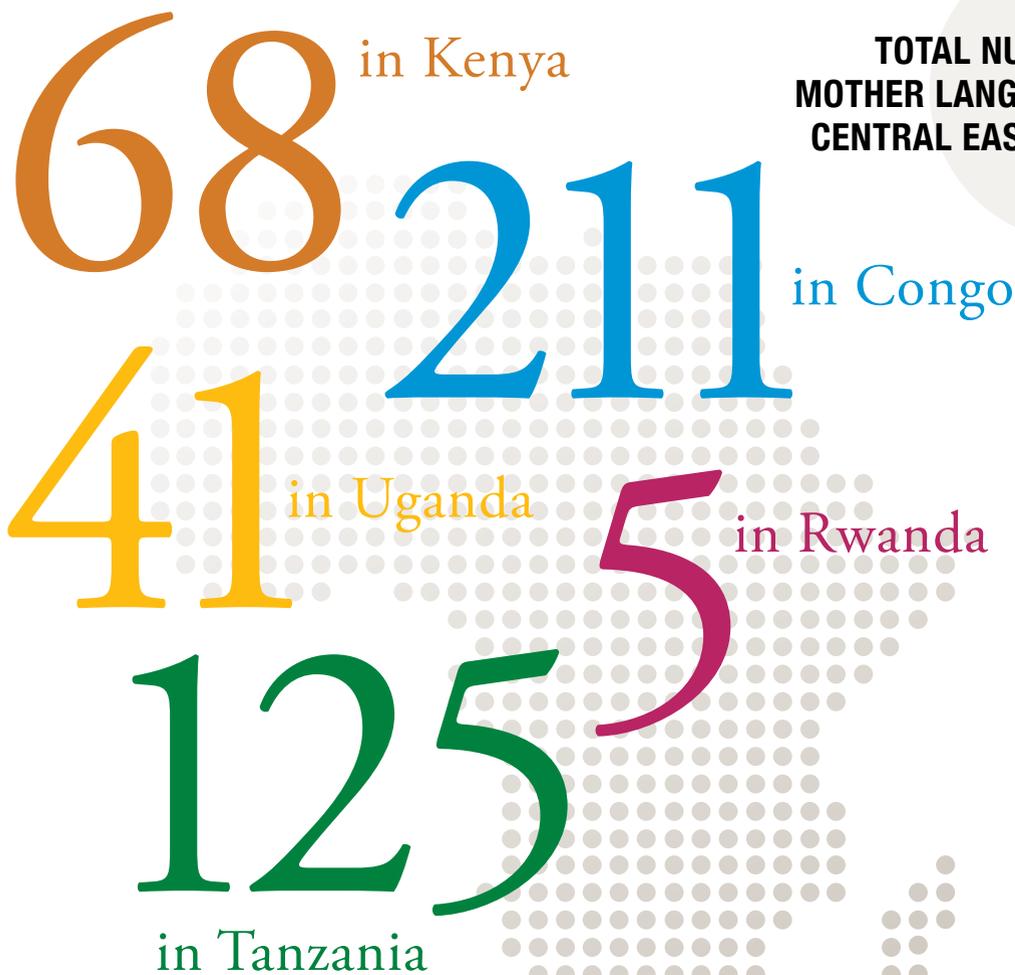
## A POWERFUL TOOL

Missionary Don Riley says *The Action Bible* is an incredibly powerful tool in two ways: teaching illiterate people about Christ and also helping them disciple others. Some of our most powerful leaders cannot read or write, though they are still witnesses for Christ. We needed tools so they can learn the Scripture and teach it to others. *The Action Bible* is a great tool for that because they can listen to the Scripture and memorize it ... they are equipped, not with words from a written Bible, but with pictures from *The Action Bible*.

# Swahili

## Speaks to the Hearts of 100 Million Africans

Swahili is the singular unifying language of Central East Africa, spanning countries and cultures. It gives the region the gift of communication, one that can help spread the gospel and make disciples.





The language we know in our hearts is just that: a heart language. It's how we first associate sounds and objects, and eventually how we articulate emotion and love.

◆ There are very few unifying languages in Central East Africa. Few but mighty. English is an official language of Kenya and Uganda. In Rwanda and Congo it's French. Both of these Western languages infiltrated with the governments who colonized much of Africa.

Swahili (also known as Kiswahili) is one of the only cross-border languages in all of Africa that originated on the continent. Altogether, 100 *million* people speak it. Though it varies from country to country, a large percentage of people in Central East Africa speaks the language. And the unifying tie of this language may prove to be the most useful attribute of the region for strengthening and extending the ministry of the Church.

"I think God always sounds and feels real when He speaks your language," says David Waweru, a publisher in Nairobi, Kenya.

David came to Colorado Springs sixteen years ago to attend a Christian publishing conference at David C Cook. "I knew I wanted to start a publishing house that would offer transformational content, quality products, and quality service. Quite frankly, those words were mutually exclusive when it came to materials here: quality, Christian, and African. I wanted to produce materials that would influence thought leadership and the church and communities of East Africa."

Though English holds the title of official language in many East African nations, David knew he would publish books in Swahili as well.

"When kids, or anyone, are able to interact with God's Word in the language they use on a day-to-day basis, He becomes closer to them. And kids especially shouldn't have to learn another language to know God."

The language we know in our hearts is just that: a heart language. It's how we first associate sounds and objects, and eventually how we articulate emotion and love. Our heart language is the first one we learn and the one that helps us communicate and interact with the world around us. Swahili is the heart language of Central East Africa.





While we can offer solid and meaningful content, we want to co-create. We want them to make it their own: the language, the context . . .

## THE SPREAD OF SWAHILI

Although common across East Africa, Swahili varies from nation to nation, just as English is spoken differently all over the world. The story of how the language came to each nation is as different as their individual histories.

“The language has always been in Tanzania, and that’s where it is still most prominent,” David explains. “In Uganda, the Tanzanians facilitated the coups in the 1970s and 80s. Ugandans viewed Kiswahili as a military language, one of the adversary. Only the invading Tanzanians spoke it, so they stopped using it around that time.” But as the political climate between the nations changed since then, Swahili has become commonplace in Uganda and is spoken just as much as Luganda, the other main African language.

David continues: “Kenya’s history is completely different. Kiswahili came through Mombasa in the trading route. Coastal Kiswahili is very close to Tanzanian, very refined. Even for us in Nairobi, there are times that we don’t really understand what they are saying.”

While governments have introduced English more and more in schools and businesses over the past decade, a resurgence of Swahili has risen in all of these nations. Like the rest of the world, Central East Africa is becoming much more mobile and accessible. Public transportation and cell phone use have grown astronomically in the last ten years. And as teenagers have grown into adults and moved out of their homes, they travel more and interact with more people.

More often than not, twenty- and thirty-somethings marry individuals who do not speak their mother tongue, their heart language. English and Swahili may be the only languages spouses have in common. When they have children, they face a big decision. What language will be spoken at home? The answer is usually Swahili.

“It’s definitely more of a trend in urban areas right now. My wife and I don’t have the same mother tongue. We knew we wanted our kids to know an African language, so we chose Kiswahili. Often kids won’t speak English until they are school-aged, which is fine because they all learn it together there.”

Parents want to keep an African identity in their homes. And knowing many languages is often a badge of honor for people in all Central East African nations. Teaching children an African language as they grow helps keep them connected to their culture.

This trend creates a growing need for Christ-centered children’s resources they can read in their mother tongue. Linguists call it the ‘heart language’ because of its deep emotional resonance. David recognizes the power of heart language

to communicate the gospel and instill biblical truth, forming faith roots that become entwined in daily life, family relationships, and cultural identity.

## LIFE ON LIFE CURRICULUM

David C Cook began to meet with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania last year. They wanted to start the process of translating an important curriculum into a language that hundreds of thousands of children in the region would be able to understand.

The *Life on Life* curriculum leads children through a journey of spiritual development and healing. It was originally written for orphans in India who need restoration after traumatic experiences. From there, the curriculum has attracted interest all over the world, with ministry partners in various countries working with David C Cook to adapt the content for their context.

The second collaboration for the curriculum was the Church of Uganda. They partnered with David C Cook, looking for resources to use countrywide in all their congregations. Eventually, it spilled over the borders into Kenya and Rwanda in partnership with the Anglican Church.

Greg Baird, Vice President of Global Resources at David C Cook, has played an active role in training church leaders in East Africa. “When we partner with a new organization within a country, we send the basic core of the curriculum. We want them to have a hand in the creation of what they will use in their own country. While we can offer solid and meaningful content, we want to co-create. We want them to make it their own: the language, the context, the name of the curriculum and the photo on the cover, and the way it’s presented.”

And though *Life on Life* incorporates the distinct cultural voice of these countries, the English rendering lacks something—the heart language is still missing. But it is making an impact. A teacher’s observation of nine-year-old Farida reveals encouraging signs of transformation.

*Farida’s dad separated from her Mom so she went to stay with her Aunt who attends church. Farida went with her to children’s church where the curriculum is taught. She was so troubled by the fact that she lacked a caring family. But during a lesson called “Adopted into God’s Family,” she became very engaged and interested. Farida told me that she now feels the Church is her family. She is glad to be coming to the class. Although she still worries about her separated parents, she is convinced that God loves her. She is praying that one day her family will be reunited.*

Stories like Farida's can increase by the thousands when resources are offered in Swahili to children throughout East Africa.

"Swahili is an African language. The best way to teach kids is the way they learn best. The best way to connect with anyone is in their heart language. While they may know English in some of these countries, in reality, they're going to learn best in Swahili," Greg explains.

## AN EXPERT TRANSLATION

Because of the variations of the language, curriculum creators needed experts like David to confirm the accuracy of the translation.

"In 2006, we published the *Africa Bible Commentary* in English. We translated it the next year into Kiswahili. It was a great learning experience, and showed us how to do the translation so it would be acceptable across all of the countries. We began with Tanzanian translators and then brought in Kenyan editors. The model worked very well because everyone worked together to find common terms that made sense everywhere. It produced a very high quality product."

David took his experiences with the *Africa Bible Commentary* and applied them to his review of *Life on Life* in Swahili. Now the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania is in the process of completing the translation. "It is a collaboration between regions," David explains.

"I think *Life on Life* resonates with us in Africa because it targets kids in vulnerable and risky situations, helping them find value in themselves and develop character and build self-esteem. That's very relevant area in our context because seventy percent of the Kenyan population is below the age of nineteen. That's huge. A number of these kids come from very poor backgrounds.... When kids are at the position of vulnerability and exploitation and hunger, they have no hope for their future," says David.

"*Life on Life* will help kids realize the intrinsic value in themselves; it will help instill hope and confidence, and then help them recognize the Lord's design for them. I think that is what God wants for every child." ●



# Reaching the Nations Next Door in San Diego

**A Christian camp and a humanitarian relief ministry work in tandem to meet spiritual and physical needs as they share *The Story of Jesus* with a diverse community of international refugees.**

“The world has come to San Diego,” says Bob Lindsay. People from far-flung nations are now next-door neighbors.

Since the 1980s, the city has become a major hub for the resettlement of refugees who have fled conflicts around the globe, from Somalia to Burma to Iraq. Locals anticipate arrivals from Syria in 2016, following the U.S. State Department’s announcement to accept thousands on the run from the republic’s civil war.

Many of the countries and cultures now represented in San Diego would be considered difficult to reach, if not entirely closed to traditional missionary work.

Bob, the director of Indian Hills Camp twenty-five miles east of the city, sees a spiritually rich opportunity. “People are coming from all these countries and have no idea who Jesus is... From a Christian perspective, it’s a gold mine.”

For the past six years, Bob has run week-long, Bible-based camps for refugee children. “Our goal is to reach and teach children about Jesus Christ. We gear everything toward evangelism so no matter what we’re doing, we’re trying to present the gospel.”

## THE LANGUAGES OF FUN AND LOVE

In 2008, the camp committed to serving the marginalized communities in their area. An obvious place to start was City Heights, an ethnically diverse pocket of San Diego. It’s home to one of the largest refugee populations in California, often settling up to half of the state’s arrivals in any given year.

The statistics on City Heights reveal some of the accompanying challenges. Four in ten residents were born outside the United States. One in five speak English poorly, if at all. And only six in ten adults have a high school education. For those lucky enough to have a job, it’s likely a low-skill, low-paying one.

Apart from these facts, another important reality keeps Bob’s attention: Refugee families tend to have more children than the average American family. He desperately wants to serve the kids in City Heights. He sees their need for Jesus and believes a week at camp can introduce a life-changing relationship with Him.

“Kids are the most innocent people in the world. Wherever you go, kids speak two languages: fun and love. We used to take camp to them in City Heights. But about five years ago, we started bringing them to Indian Hills. We only have them for a short time so we always share the most important thing—Jesus Christ.”

In 2014, Bob came across what he calls “the perfect tool” for sharing that important thing: *The Story of Jesus*, a sixteen-page excerpt from *The Action Bible*. “We’re a Jesus camp and we speak every day about the stories of Jesus.”

He immediately recognized how *The Story of Jesus* speaks “fun and love” to kids through the colorful illustrations and simple text. So he’s been using the resource ever since. “I’ve come across different materials over the years, but this one is Indian Hills Camp in a booklet. It’s exactly who we are, and it goes home with the kids... Giving them a booklet at the end of the week when they go home reinforces everything we’ve talked about and continues to be a reminder throughout the year.”





“ *The Story of Jesus* reaches refugee families with a gospel they may never have heard in the country they used to call home.

## CHRIST IN EVERY KINDNESS

When refugee children return home after a week at Indian Hills Camp, they have a place in City Heights to continue learning about Jesus and seeing the Good News lived out. Bridge of Hope, a local relief ministry, runs weekly children’s events and youth activities to give families a safe place to send their kids.

“They are constantly surrounded by Jesus when they’re with us,” says Bob’s friend, Sheri Briggs, who founded Bridge of Hope. “We strive to be a net for them, to catch them and direct them in the way of the gospel.”

Sheri began the ministry ten years ago, helping families through difficult times of transition. As she collected and distributed furniture and food to them, she soon became a respected figure in the neighborhood. Families discovered how Bridge of Hope stands up for them and provides practical help when they need it most.

“We help refugees that are in the system and give them whatever the government or resettlement agency wasn’t able to provide,” Sheri explains. “We build relationship and community with them. We walk with them and help them navigate life here.”

More than meeting physical needs, the ministry takes a gospel-first approach, pointing clients to Christ with every kind deed. “God is obviously bringing the nations to us.... We have so many refugees here from different cultures that have different views of the gospel. And the majority of these people are children. The parents send their kids to us, and we just try to plant seeds,” Sheri says.

“ Wherever you go, kids speak two languages: fun and love.

## SPIRITUAL SEED PACKETS

When a generous donor gave Sheri a few boxes of *The Story of Jesus* last year, they might as well have been seed packets. With every story, Sheri plants a seed. The soil of the soul has already been prepared—either at Indian Hills Camp or Bridge of Hope, or both.

“It’s really profound how many people come to Christ because of a story they saw when they were little. Kids don’t forget those cartoons. And though we might not see the fruit right away, I think God uses illustrations to plant the seed in a child’s mind.”

The simple English text helps too. “A comic book about Jesus in their language would quickly get thrown away,” Sheri says of families with Muslim backgrounds. But in English, it’s a keeper. The language represents the new life they’ve come to find in America. At the same time, the story represents the new spiritual life they can find in Jesus Christ.

In the hands and hearts of children in City Heights, *The Story of Jesus* reaches refugee families with a gospel they may never have heard in the country they used to call home. But here in their new neighborhood, the next-door nations meet Him. ●



LOVE

A large, three-dimensional word 'LOVE' is the central focus. It is constructed from a thick, textured material that appears to be thread or yarn, giving it a soft, tactile quality. The color of the word is a gradient, starting with a pale pink at the top and gradually transitioning through shades of pink to a vibrant, saturated red at the bottom. The letters are bold and blocky. The 'L' and 'V' are on the left, and the 'O' and 'E' are on the right. The word is standing upright on a rustic wooden surface, which is also the background. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the texture of the thread and the grain of the wood.

● Ayana carefully wrapped colored yarn around the large paper-mâché letters: LOVE. At one time, the word was foreign to her. But someone she met three years ago began to show her the depth of its meaning. Not merely the dictionary definition. Nor a valentine cliché.

But the kind of love that goes along to doctor's appointments and the grocery store. The kind that notices parenting struggles and offers sanity-saving help. The kind that prays and patiently hopes for the light of Christ to break through and reveal a heart that has finally welcomed Him. It's not clear yet whether Ayana has. Nonetheless, a new kind of love is making its presence known in her life.

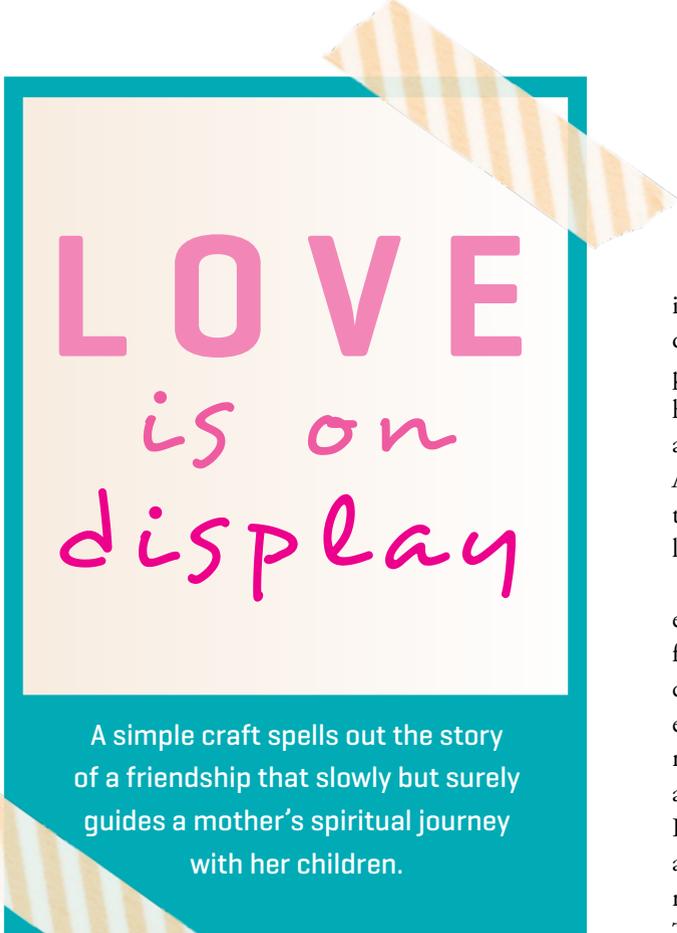
She's a young wife and mom, thirtyish, with three children ages six, four, and two. When Lucy first met her, the youngest had not yet been born. The family was living in a two-bedroom apartment in a run-down part of town, and they were glad for it. They'd gotten the fresh start they'd been wanting for several years. Ayana made friends among her neighbors and did her best to settle in.

Her husband worked a factory job for a while. Then he switched to repairing air conditioners, which were regularly put to the test as summer temperatures spiked to the high nineties in the Midwest. But before long, winter would set in, and snow covered the ground. Snow—one of so many things they'd never experienced before they moved here.

Three winters have since passed and a fourth is arriving. And love is on display. Through that time, Lucy has become like an older sister to Ayana.

## SIMPLY FRIENDSHIP

Lucy and her husband are active church members—and not just inside its walls. When their pastor writes in the church newsletter, “There is no more important mandate than to go



LOVE  
is on  
display

A simple craft spells out the story of a friendship that slowly but surely guides a mother's spiritual journey with her children.

into all the world and make disciples, and we have the privilege of making that happen personally,” they’ve already put it into practice. And not to brag. It’s what they believe the Christian life is meant to be.

Although Lucy has traveled overseas numerous times for mission projects, she’s come to realize that her everyday mission requires no passport. So three years ago, when a friend contacted Lucy’s church about coming alongside in friendship with refugee families, she said yes. That’s how she met Ayana.

Their relationship began with an invitation to dinner.

Considering the language barrier, Lucy knew a home-cooked meal wouldn’t need translation. Ayana and her husband, both from Africa, came to the United States by way of the Middle East.

Ayana was eager to learn English, so Lucy began to meet with her for conversation. They would sort through the mail at Ayana’s apartment while Lucy explained each piece and helped separate the junk from the essentials. The two women made regular trips to the grocery store, which presented more opportunities for language practice.

Since Ayana had been raised with a cultural awareness of Christianity, Lucy used simple Bible stories for English practice too. But Ayana seemed to know the stories already and, rather than wanting to talk about their spiritual meaning, she pressed to learn other material. That, and the children kept interrupting. It became clear that Ayana struggled as a mother of two preschoolers, on top of figuring out life in a new country.

Lucy prayed that somehow the love of Christ would shine through the muddle. Though committed to the friendship, she floundered.

Meanwhile, a third baby was on the way. As the months passed, Lucy went along to Ayana’s prenatal appointments and repeated the doctor’s words slowly to make them easier to understand. Ayana appreciated the companionship.



# LET THE CHILDREN COME

By custom, her Muslim husband would not attend the birth; that was a role for female relatives. So Ayana invited Lucy—a sign of the sisterhood that had begun to bond them.

## A LOVE LESSON

Like any young mom, Ayana's parenting challenges increased with a new baby in the home. So Lucy tried a new idea: She turned to a Christian parenting book and rendered the chapters in the most basic language she could. For Ayana, she hoped the exercise would double as parenting lesson and an English lesson at the same time. But the discussion got bogged down, the kids' interruptions continued, and Lucy became frustrated. Until it dawned on her to *include* the kids.

Lucy couldn't help but think of when the disciples shooed little ones away from Jesus because they were getting in the way of ministry. Supposedly. But Jesus spoke words as true now as they were then: *Let the children come*. Lucy sensed it was the right thing to do.

And she knew a tool that could help—a parenting resource with activities for the kids to enjoy along with Ayana. It teaches biblical principles too. And because it's family-friendly, it uses simple English. So on the next visit to their apartment, Lucy brought along a copy of *HomeFront* magazine.

This past summer while the two older children were out of school, Lucy's visits always included a craft and a lesson from *HomeFront*. Having a hands-on activity helped everyone relax. Conversations flowed from a genuine sense of relationship, rather than feeling like English practice. The kids eagerly joined in.

The LOVE lesson is one Lucy remembers well. While Ayana carefully wrapped yarn around each of the four letters, the kids created their own yarn crafts. Lucy guided them through I Corinthians 13—*Love is patient, love is kind*—and they roleplayed the meaning of these character traits. When the lesson was over, Ayana proudly put her LOVE letters on display.

Now Lucy passes along each monthly issue of the magazine and teaches Ayana how to use it. And the children are beginning to look to their mom for spiritual guidance and family activities.

Around the apartment, many different crafts serve as reminders of lessons learned. Lucy prays they'll also be signs to Ayana's husband that there's delight in getting to know Christ. Maybe someday he will be open to exploring Christianity too. ●

The names in this story have been changed for the sake of privacy.

# WHO IS MY neighbor?

We who have discovered and experienced God's great love are called to live every day modeling it to the world in which we live. And our world becomes personal when we prayerfully ask God to show us: *Who is my neighbor?*

Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan to teach us that our neighbors can come from places we least expect. Regardless of any street address, we meet our neighbors all along the road of our lives.

"God is bringing people to us for His purposes," says Lucy, who has a particular passion for internationals and refugees. She recognizes the opportunity to make disciples among the nations right there at home. Even when God doesn't call us to a foreign country, she says, "He calls us to places where we need to trust Him."

## LUCY OFFERS SOME NEIGHBORLY ADVICE:

- 1** Be the friend you'd want to meet. If you've ever traveled to a foreign culture, you know how awkward it can feel to be the outsider. Imagine how much your friendship means to someone newly settling into life in your community.
- 2** Participate with your church to match locals and internationals together in supportive friendship. Look for church partnership opportunities available through World Relief ([WorldRelief.org](http://WorldRelief.org)), We Welcome Refugees ([WeWelcomeRefugees.com](http://WeWelcomeRefugees.com)), and International Students Incorporated ([ISOnline.org](http://ISOnline.org)).
- 3** Invite international friends to celebrate your family milestones like baptisms and weddings, or holiday meals at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Beyond the cross-cultural connection, these occasions provide a sense of extended family at times when internationals might feel most lonely.
- 4** Share family-friendly resources like *HomeFront* magazine that can bless children and parents alike. Lucy's kids were grown and out of the house when she met Ayana; but if you have children at home, include them in your friendship with an international family. Look below for printable samples and subscription information to get you started.



### [DCC.is/Advent](http://DCC.is/Advent)

Get a free Advent Reading Calendar for 2015. Print one for your own family and a second to share with another family who might enjoy this tradition.



### [DCC.is/Love](http://DCC.is/Love)

Share the LOVE lesson that Lucy and Ayana did together. Pray that God would direct you to a family that needs to experience His love through you.



### [DCC.is/HomeFront](http://DCC.is/HomeFront)

Sign up for a monthly subscription to *HomeFront* magazine for yourself, for a friend, or in a bulk quantity for your church.



# KidMin's Digital Future

New research reveals the struggle for churches to keep up, but also points to the frontier of digital opportunity.



Churches compete for people's attention and time more than ever.

● *“I see Christian education five years from now on an app. Watching it from a phone. Live streaming.”* **Children’s Ministry Director, Charlotte, North Carolina**

In the fall of 2014, I traveled to three cities in five days: Dallas, Charlotte, and Chicago, to do only one thing—listen. This was a huge challenge for me, just ask my wife!

Fortunately, I had some help keeping quiet on this assignment. I was forced to sit behind one-way glass with a one-way speaker, to observe focus group conversations facilitated by Grey Matter Research Group.

The purpose of this research was to explore how churches are changing their approach to curriculum and what we call “group-based learning outside of the worship service.” We wanted to understand, on an experiential and qualitative level, how churches are “doing ministry” and where they see things going in the next five years.

Of course, much of the group-based learning that takes place outside of the worship service in any church happens in the children’s ministry. There’s no consensus on exactly what to call that ministry. Sunday School, Kids Church, Word Explosion, Bible Blast—the names vary as much as the churches themselves.

More than seventy paid ministry staff participated in the research. Six different groups represented churches above and below four hundred in weekly attendance. What we heard from these churches revealed that, whatever they call their ministries, they share an awful lot in common. Especially when it comes to the challenges they face week in and week out as they teach and lead families toward a closer relationship with Christ.

Now, before I dig into the research any further, let me back up and explain why we were interested in this information. The company I work for, Disciplr, had begun developing a brand new technology aimed at making church curriculum simpler. Disciplr was built on an idea that came from a small group of us who worked at David C Cook—yes, the hundred-plus-year-old Sunday school publishing company.

With that much history in curriculum and a pretty good knowledge of technology trends, we knew the time was right to begin rethinking the curriculum process. In our minds, Disciplr

was an amazing idea. But we needed validation of the idea, thus the reason for this research.

Okay, so here’s what we learned:

## PEOPLE ARE BUSIER THAN EVER!

It didn’t matter which group we were with.

Both big and small churches told us that compared to ten years ago, people (read: volunteers and families) are busier than ever. Coupled with this, or possibly even caused by it, is a decreased willingness to make a regular commitment of time to their local church.

In Dallas one youth minister remarked: “It used to be that communities and schools would be somewhat considerate of Wednesdays and Sundays. Those were kind of sacred times, but not anymore. They’ll schedule practices at ten o’clock on a Sunday morning if that’s the only time they can find during the week.”

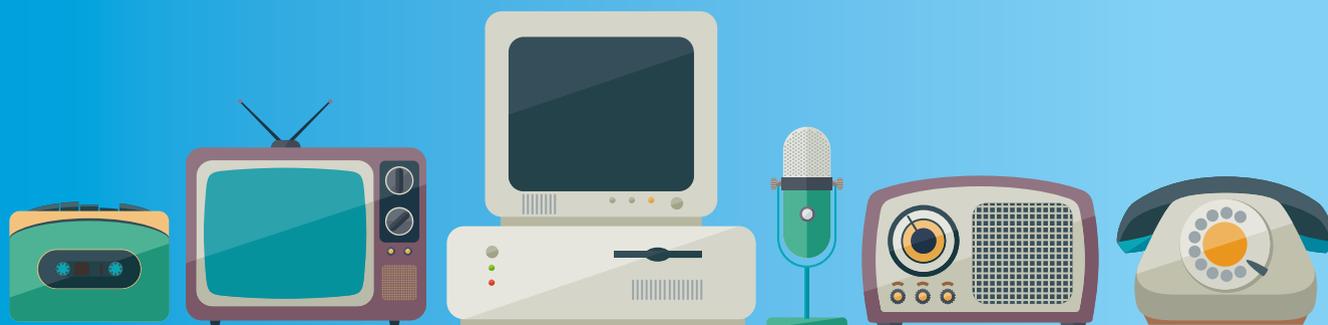
Churches compete for people’s attention and time more than ever. Both volunteers and kids are often inconsistent in their involvement and attendance. The job of ministry staff in retaining volunteers and connecting with kids is tougher than it’s ever been!

## TECHNOLOGY IS GREAT, EXCEPT WHEN IT ISN’T ...

A number of leaders echoed the positive impact technology can have. They believe that churches will ultimately have to adapt in order to keep up with the culture.

*“I like it, but I’m thinking maybe some of the older teachers may not use it.”* **Large Church Practitioner, Dallas, Texas**

On the other hand, there is a real struggle to keep up with changes in technology. Church staff fear that a new tool or process that uses technology may frustrate existing volunteers—volunteers they can’t afford to lose.





It's time for us  
to take digital  
discipleship  
seriously.



## CURRICULUM SHOULD BE RELEVANT, BIBLICAL AND EASY-TO-USE!

In our final group of questions, we asked churches about curriculum. How do they find and select it? Where do they buy it? And most importantly, why did they choose what they're currently using?

We found a number of churches, both big and small, that were still using traditional printed quarterly curriculum. For these folks, the decision to stick with what they know was as much about making things easy for their teachers, as it was about their own comfort with the status quo.

*"You're trying to respect your teachers. Children's Sunday school has so many elements to it, and they have way more preparation involved.... You're thinking primarily of how easy is it for our teachers to prepare this and present it to a group of kids."* **Small Church Practitioner, Charlotte, North Carolina**

When it came to digital (downloadable) curriculum, people loved the options, the media, the colorful resources and relevant content, and the flexibility. However, for some, the need to wrangle files and organize and prepare everything seemed to add to the problem of less time, fewer teachers; all that used to be done for them with printed curriculum.

*"The reason I'm getting out of (Brand X Downloadable Curriculum) is that it's so convoluted. I hate it, because I have to modify it so much to get it usable on Sunday morning that it's not worth my time. It's such a pain."* **Small Church Practitioner, Dallas, Texas**

And yet, other churches have completely forsaken the idea of print altogether:

*"For us, selecting children's ministry curriculum, downloadable is huge. If we can't download it, you're already off the list, because it's just too much of a pain in the rear end to order a book and run photocopies."* **Large Church Practitioner, Charlotte, North Carolina**

Most churches were generally positive about the new opportunities provided by the Internet and digital curriculum. We were excited to learn that many had begun using Right Now Media as a midweek or supplemental resource to their KidMin efforts.

*"We've started using RightNow Media ... anybody can get it anywhere."* **Large Church Practitioner, Chicago, Illinois**

## IT'S ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP.

*"Discipleship is the main goal for everybody. We want them to be disciples. So Sunday school or Christian education or whatever would be a means to the overall goal of discipling people."*

**Small Church Practitioner, Charlotte, North Carolina**

As I wrapped up my multi-city quest for information I was left with an indelible impression. In every group and from every participant, I heard a love for people. These ministers love their congregations. What motivates them to do what they do, and how they do it, is always first and foremost, people.

Their volunteers are especially important—the hands and feet of ministry efforts. The lens through which decisions are made is most often “how will this affect my teachers?”

As I have pondered this last point, I have begun wondering if the sensitivity to frustrating the busy volunteers in our churches is a major reason we're struggling to keep up with the technological shifts around us. Maybe it's easier to go with what works. But what if what's working isn't as relevant? What if it begins to lose impact in a media-centric, digitally connected culture?

What are the consequences of choosing not to lead our volunteers in the digital revolution? While we fear they might resist or leave, we could be contributing to a larger problem: Those gifted to teach are not adequately equipped to do so. Particularly in an age when sixty-four percent of American adults own a smart phone, and seven out of ten visit Facebook at least once a month.

The church is in a tough spot! Children's ministries are, more often than not, challenged with small budgets and big demands. Recruiting and retaining volunteers can become a constant battle to please and appease. But as believers, we are all called to be disciple-makers (Matthew 28:19). Those who volunteer in your ministry are more than likely doing so as a response to God's leading.

In the same way, God has called you to be a leader of leaders. Your job is not just about scheduling, organizing, and coordinating. You're called to equip people so that God can most effectively work through them (Ephesians 4:12).

I pray this research provides both an encouragement and a challenge to you. Maybe you're on the bleeding edge of technology, you love gadgets, use social media, and are fluent in “txt tlk.” For you, using technology is natural like breathing.

However, if you're like the churches we listened to, chances are you feel the tension between the worlds that exist inside and outside your church walls. For you guys, I'd like to leave you with a final thought from a brand new ebook we've published at Disciplr:

*"Remember: Jesus told his followers to make disciples as they go, and today, we go digital. So if we take the great commission seriously, we'll be leveraging the technology we use every day to make disciples."* **The Digital Discipleship Manifesto**

At Disciplr, we're pressing toward the frontier of digital opportunity for churches. Nobody has all the answers, so I can't give you a handy checklist. But I welcome you to take this adventurous journey with us, and we'll continue to share what we learn along the way. ●

**Michael Covington** is the Business Team Lead for Disciplr.





# PRAISE

*is rising*

WORSHIPPERS AROUND THE WORLD  
JOIN THE CHORUS WITH

PAUL BALOCHE



In many nations, praise is rising through the music Paul Baloche has written and recorded over three decades. His new release in Dutch follows two albums in French and fourteen in English. This “pastor to worship pastors” sees his songs as a creative means to a faithful end: a legacy of connecting people with each other and with God.

*Praise is rising, eyes are turning to You, we turn to You  
Hope is stirring, hearts are yearning for You, we long for You  
‘Cause when we see You, we find strength to face the day  
In Your presence all our fears are washed away, washed away  
Hosanna, hosanna ...*

More than just the lyrics of a popular inspirational song, these words also reveal the rising international influence of Dove Award-winner Paul Baloche. Mind you, he wouldn’t describe himself in such sweeping terms. But the accolades follow a deserving track record.

Paul recently concluded twenty-six years of ministry as a worship pastor at a community church in East Texas. He credits this church as the anchor of his spiritual health, the inspiration for songs born of simple prayers set to music, and the filter for how to best engage a congregation in worship.

Churches in the United States and Canada have been singing Paul’s songs as he has written them over the course of three decades. For many of us, his songs have infused the worship experiences of our youth and adulthood. We’ve lost count of how many times we’ve sung the familiar lines of “Open the Eyes of My Heart” and “Above All.”

Another of his songs to top the charts is “Hosanna (Praise is Rising).” Beyond the worship expressed by the lyrics, the words also describe the swell of voices in many other nations around the world. Their praise is rising too.





## A NEW GENERATION OF PRAISE

Collaboration with worship leaders in Europe and Asia has enabled Paul's songs to find new resonance with an emerging generation that is discovering contemporary expressions of Christian faith.

Two years ago, coming off a tour to India, Malaysia, Singapore, and China, he recalled: "How awesome it was to see thousands of people gather, hungry to experience God, and to see the power of corporate worship. I don't know if God's saying something new about worship beyond how we're to continue to gather as the body of Christ and sing our prayers to him, to make our worship authentic, to make Jesus the *raison d'être*, as the French would say—our reason for living."

He returned home from a 2015 visit to the Philippines with a similar impression. And he notes: "More than half of the people who show up are under thirty years old. That's the most encouraging thing to me I see overseas—the next generation, the younger generation."

Paul senses their passion to connect with God through music. But he's careful not to overstate the numbers. Some gatherings are small but strong—in France, for example.

"I'd love to say that revival is breaking out, and all young people are pressing into Jesus. Not the case. In France, there are much smaller audiences—almost a reaction to the extremely secular government and previous generations. France is post-Christian, post-modern. Yet there's a rising tide of teenagers and twenty-somethings that are spiritually hungry. They respond to worship music."

He likens their experience to a highway onramp. The modern music of worship provides an entry point to join the movement that connects historic Christianity to life in today's world. Hearts and borders are open, and the road beckons.

## THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

On the road, Paul develops relationships with churches and worship leaders around the globe. In addition to concert tours, he hosts LeadWorship Workshops to equip worship musicians. He gives equal attention to the practice of music and the heart of worship. And it's the latter that prompts people to call him a "pastor to worship pastors," a title he embraces as part of his legacy.

"As I get older, that's where finishing well comes in. Because whatever influence I may have with leaders or pastors of any age, I know that at the end of the day, it's more than the songs, more than the albums and the projects."

Paul's international relationships came into play as he honored his French-Canadian family heritage with his first translated albums. Canadian worship leaders appealed to him to record in French. Around the same time, while touring in France and Belgium, he discovered a similar desire among churches there.

Although Paul doesn't speak French, he agreed to collaborate with worship leaders who are fluent in the language. "One of my main passions is to bring people together, to work together to do something for the kingdom. These are simply my best efforts to do that while sharing songs with people who want to connect with God in their native tongue," he says of the albums they created together.

In 2009, Integrity Music released *Ouvre Les Yeux De Mon Coeur (Open The Eyes Of My Heart)*. Then in 2013 came *Glorieux (Glorious)*, which garnered a Gospel Music Association (GMA) Canada Covenant Award for International Album of the Year.

Worship leaders in Quebec, Canada and Lyon, France worked with Paul to ensure the best possible translations. They added their voices to the recordings too. The resulting songs speak the language of the heart for worshippers in both countries, which represent one third of the potential reach to 220 million French speakers worldwide.

## COLLABORATION ROOTED IN RESPECT

Paul is quick to add "and friends" when describing collaborative projects like his international recordings. It's no different for his Dutch album released in November 2015, *Uw Naam (Your Name)*.

Worship leaders in the Netherlands pushed for the project, Paul says. "They told me: 'We've translated your songs, and we're singing them in church. Let's do what you did in France.' So I practiced and practiced the words. I was able to sing half the songs on the album, and the other half are sung by worship leaders from the Netherlands."

In his typical low-key manner, he sums up the Dutch project: "I love the spirit of what we captured together." He adds self-deprecating humor too, to acknowledge that he's an outsider to the culture.

Paul approaches his outsider role with an advantage, but not swagger. "I'm the outside guy who can be a catalyst for unity ... leveraging whatever credibility I have from hanging in there long enough," he says, looking back on his career. At the same time, he emphasizes: "Respect is a big word for me."

"Each one of these projects is an attempt to meet that culture at least halfway," he says of his collaboration with French and Dutch musicians. "They're so used to Americans especially who come and do their thing and then go home." Instead, Paul appreciates the opportunity to include a variety of voices and the relationships they represent.

## MANY NATIONS AND DENOMINATIONS

During his twenty-six years as local worship pastor, Paul served with awareness of "the nitty-gritty of the hard stuff people walk through." He developed empathy. It's a trait he considers valuable to bringing people together, especially musicians, who often project ego while wrestling with insecurity.

Now he takes that experience with him into a new season of life and ministry. In July 2015, Paul and his wife Rita packed up and sold their Texas home, and returned to their East Coast roots, closer to where their three adult children have settled. The dramatic change to a New York City address hasn't changed Paul's pastoral heart. If anything, the move gives him more leeway to serve as pastor at-large to worship pastors at home and abroad.

He's a unique pastor because the appeal of his music and influence spans the boundaries of nations and denominations. And he sees his songs as a creative means to a faithful end: a legacy of connecting people with each other and with God.

At worship events, it's not uncommon for Paul to say to his diverse congregation: "You know what's beautiful about tonight—the most beautiful thing? In this room, there are Presbyterians and Charismatics and Baptists and Catholics and Episcopalians. And here we are in this room to honor the Lord and express our thanks and worship. There's freedom here tonight."

And in that spirit, praise is rising in a new hallelujah:

*Can you hear, there's a new song  
Breaking out from the children of freedom  
Every race and every nation  
Sing it out, sing a new hallelujah*

*Let us sing love to the nations  
Bringing hope of the grace that has freed us  
Make Him known and make Him famous  
Sing it out, sing the new hallelujah*

*Arise  
Let the church arise ...*

"Hosanna" by Paul Baloche & Brenton Brown;

© 2006 Integrity's Hosanna! Music/ASCAP & Thankyou Music/PRS

"A New Hallelujah" by Michael W. Smith, Debbie Smith and Paul Baloche.

Lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc.

# SIMPLE WISDOM

*for finishing well.*

**DON'T NEGLECT THE BASICS**

**Paul Baloche talks often about finishing well. But even at age fifty-three, it's not a new topic or goal for him.**

"Since I was in my twenties, I've thought about legacy," he said during a recent conversation about life and ministry. "I read a book once that talked about beginning with the end in mind. That thought really affected me. Through the years it's inspired me, it's motivated me to say: By the grace of God, I want to run the race. I want to finish well. I'm aware that the actions I take today have consequences for generations to come."

For those who share the desire of finishing well, Paul offers simple wisdom that helps him stay spiritually healthy: "Don't neglect the basics." It applies to ministry leaders and pastors of all kinds.

"I've recognized over the years the temptation to neglect the basics. The Word of God. Prayer. Weekly attendance at church whether you're leading or not leading. Staying plugged into a handful of people you're doing life with. Not withdrawing from the body of Christ, even if your church is going through a weird season. Keeping your hand on the plow."

In a video interview for MultiTracks.com to mark the release of his *Christmas Worship Vol. 2*, Paul directly urges worship musicians: Invest in two critical areas—your primary instrument and your heart for the Lord. "It says in I Chronicles 25:7, all the musicians were 'trained and skilled in music for the Lord.' ... So do an inventory of where your time is going, and be intentional.... Become trained and skilled, maybe take some lessons." And likewise: "Get steeped in the Word of God. Colossians 3:16 says, 'Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.'" Paul advises worship leaders to memorize the Psalms because they are "the vocabulary of worship."

Beyond his church connections, Paul gives and receives encouragement in a wider community of believers: members of his band, fellow songwriters, project collaborators, workshop attendees, and international worship gatherings.

"When I meet people who are full of the Spirit—despite their present circumstances, beyond their temperament or attitude—I'm inspired." He translates that inspiration to his own legacy: "I want to be that kind of person, to be in His presence, to read and digest his Word, to make it part of my DNA, to walk it out—to live it out. In the end, I want my life, my music to facilitate a conversation about God and who He is."



**DCC.is/Christmas**

Enjoy a free download of  
"For Unto Us a Child Is Born."  
Download before January 15, 2016.  
📄 SUBSCRIBERS ONLY



# WORSHIP

## Until My Voice Is Gone

**There are no bounds to the free-flowing unrestricted rushing praise of God's people.**

**Travis Ryan** • When the Lord asked me to help shepherd a one-hundred-year-old church, I left a long-term position in an influential, California mega-church and moved my family to the very foreign land of Smyrna, Tennessee. Here, at LifePoint Church, God began to change my life.

I found myself tasked with moving our congregation forward into a new season of passionate worship, despite its century of history. The real challenge was seeing the heart of the church break without breaking its spirit. How is that done? Or should its spirit break? Should I encourage it even? Don't we sometimes need to be broken open?

For LifePoint to worship with a tender heart and an eager spirit, I've learned that I must first be broken.

**Broken of my pretense and pride.**

**Broken of my expectations and fear of failure.**

**Broken of my own rigidity and schedule.**

**Broken of my self-dependence and comfort zone.**

**Broken of my need to control.**

I must break into laughter, break into dancing, break into song. I must break into others' lives and let them break into mine. I must break, though the breaking may be awkward. I cannot lead where I will not go.



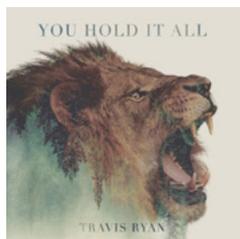
**WHERE WOULD I BE? 37**

The Story  
Behind The Song

**KINGDOM WORSHIP 38**

In Tune

“ We have become so accustomed to good that we have lost our ability to be provoked by its awesome beauty.



## You Hold It All

**Integrity Music recently released a set of five new songs from Travis Ryan, Dove Award nominee, KLOVE Fan Award winner and co-writer of the hit song “We Believe,” included in the set.**

This recording project became a source of strength for Travis and his wife, Hayley. As Travis began to seek out the words for the title track, Hayley suggested incorporating a line for friends who were struggling with infertility. So he did: *From the womb of the barren ... You hold it all* was seamlessly woven into the first verse.

“Months go by, and we’re singing this song, and it’s just radically doing these incredible things in the life of our church,” Travis remembers. And during that time, Hayley discovered she was expecting their third child. They were ecstatic. However, Hayley miscarried.

“The first thing I thought was, *Okay, do I believe that God holds it all?*” Travis confesses. “My wife and I looked at each other and we knew that God gave us that line because He knows the future. He gave us that anchor—a cornerstone—just to walk through that difficult time.”

Holding fast to the words they were singing, it wasn’t long before redemption entered their story. “God, in His great goodness and mercy, gave us a ‘rainbow child,’” Travis says, describing a baby who’s born immediately after a miscarriage. Today, the Ryan family can’t imagine life without baby Scarlett, who just turned one year old.

Why is there difficulty in breaking into authentic worship with the saints of God? How is it that I can sing until my voice is gone about the greatness of Jesus and sometimes feel like rocks are blankly staring at me? Don’t they feel something deeper inside themselves? Their frenzied praise and shouting at a sporting event is the proof that they do. How many millions rush to stand in a star-struck ovation over the winning touchdown?

If you go to a U2 concert, you’ll find non-singers straining after every note. Normal restrained self-awareness is replaced by wild self-abandonment. How is that? Why will everyone break open to sing with Bono—even at the risk of pulling something? I realize the church does not possess a Bono or a championship team to lead us out of our Sunday morning mundane. But is that the problem?

Over the past year, I’ve read blogs that blame the Church’s lack of participation on pitch, tempo, theme, and taste. They offer a wide variety of non-answers about song when asked, *Why doesn’t the Church sing?* Isn’t the real issue that we are blind to the River and can’t see it for the water and the rocks?

When we gather, do we overlook the Holy Spirit? Are we nonchalant about Him? Or do we warmly welcome Him and give Him the right of way? Do we give Him respect? Do we defer to Him? Do we spotlight Him? Do we let Him lead us beyond our agenda? Or do we treat the Holy Spirit like the family member at the reunion that has to be there but makes the room feel awkward? Do we attempt to placate, pacify, and polish Him up?

I believe we have hardened ourselves to the Holy Spirit and we’ve earned calloused eyes. I believe we’ve become

blind to the River. We are not thirsty anymore. And somewhere we forgot we have God with us.

We do not celebrate and sing because we do not see. It’s not a singing issue. It’s a seeing issue. It’s a satiated issue. We can’t celebrate the One we don’t know, the One we forgot we wanted, the One we have become too familiar with. We have become so accustomed to good that we have lost our ability to be provoked by its awesome beauty.

Unrelenting, passion-filled worship is not bound to highness of note. It is bound to the free-flowing, infinite supply of the boundlessness of God. What if we opened up to the Holy Spirit and decided to let our worship on earth rush out like it does in heaven? Like there will always be more. Because there will always be more. He is always and forevermore, on repeat. How could we refuse to sing? How could we not forever sing!?

There are no bounds to the free-flowing unrestricted rushing praise of God’s people. According to Scripture, it is like the sound of many waters. In other words, it sounds like life—and life to the full!

My prayer is that we would all rush to break. That we would break like the rock that held in the water meant to satisfy the multitude. “There is a River whose streams make glad the city of our God.” Do we need to be prodded with a rod, or can we rush to break open at His Word, at the mere sight of Him drawing close?

My prayer for myself, for LifePoint, and for all of us, has been that “when we’ve exhausted every single way; with our bodies weak and with our voices strained,” we would still say, Lord: “You are still the song in us that never ends! We can’t help but stand and start it all again!” ●



# The Story Behind the Song

**Worshippers pause to reflect on God's grace and love as they consider: "Where would I be without your grace?"**

**Dan Rivera** ● I first sang the chorus at a prayer and worship night. It was one of those melodies I loved to sing in intimate worship settings because it opened up the opportunity for reflection. For a long time, it was just a verse and chorus progression that I would use in prayer and extended worship settings. But this year, it became a song: "Where Would I Be?"

Our church focused on the theme of "One Day" for a series leading up to a combined gathering with all eight of our campus locations. It's an annual time to celebrate all members who have made the decision to get baptized. The theme prompted us to think: All it takes is one day, one conversation, one moment of worship, one word of encouragement, or one word from God to completely alter a person's life. In this instance, it is one decision: the one to be baptized.

When we were brainstorming for the series, "Where Would I Be?" ended up feeling like the right chorus to get that point across. What would my life look like if not for that one day where I made a decision to receive Christ as my Savior? What would any of our lives look like without the grace of God intervening in those one-day moments?

We began writing the rest of the song thinking of ways to tie in a future tense. Because the grace of God isn't just something that happened in the past, it's something that continues to happen. We wanted to put that emphasis in the bridge about how God's grace is active here, now, and forever. He is bringing the dead to life, reclaiming the lost and broken. Where would we be without the grace of Jesus? ●

**Dan Rivera is a worship leader at National Community Church.**



## You Alone

*You Alone*, NCC Worship's new album is meant to be more than a release: it's a resource to connect people to God's presence. It's NCC Worship's first album of the year and includes studio recordings as well as live recordings. National Community Church and NCC Worship seek to make the Lord's name famous in this generation, and all proceeds from the album will be donated to serve that goal.

# InTune



## PLAYLIST



### DCC.is/InTune

Stream the Spotify playlist of songs—and maybe even select a few for upcoming church services.

- 1** **MYSTERY OF FAITH**  
New Life Worship
- 2** **OVERCOME**  
New Life Worship
- 3** **WE ARE WAITING**  
All Sons & Daughters
- 4** **THERE IS POWER**  
Lincoln Brewster
- 5** **ALL ABOUT YOU**  
Planetshakers
- 6** **ALL HAIL**  
Planetshakers
- 7** **OH WHAT LOVE**  
The City Harmonic
- 8** **ARMS**  
Tim Hughes

# Kingdom Worship

**Bj Pridham** ● Today I wanted to share with you three critical things I've observed while serving as one of the praise and worship leaders at Planetshakers:

**1. God's method for praise and worship.** There are so many differing opinions on what praise and worship is, and truthfully, I feel as though its roar has been lulled to sleep in the global church. God's word gives us a clear definition of what it means to praise:

Psalm 100: *Enter His gates with thanksgiving, enter His courts with praise ...*

This is one of many kingdom guidelines to praise the way God loves to be praised.

It was Israel's obedience to shout that brought down the walls of Jericho. Despite what your flesh says, the Bible says God loves someone who worships in spirit and in truth... Therefore, how we feel (flesh) is not the basis of praise. Who God is and how He likes to be praised according to the Word is how we should praise.

**2. Praise and worship is a kingdom culture.** When we lead people into praise and worship, we are bringing people into an environment of kingdom Order. This Scripture tells us that God abides (sits on) our praise. A praise and worship leader ushers people into "heaven on earth."

Psalm 22:3 *But You are holy, O You who dwell in the holy Place where the praises of Israel are offered. Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted (leaned on, relied on You and were confident) and You delivered them.*

Paul and Silas, imprisoned in the midnight hour, sang hymns of praise to God. What happened next is supernatural. The cell doors flung open not only for themselves, but also for others.

As leaders we must know praise is not only a weapon that brings freedom to us, but releases freedom to others.

Here's one of thousands of testimonies we have from a recent meeting:

An eleven-year-old girl who was 90 percent deaf in one ear suddenly noticed that the music was excessively loud. At that moment, she realized she had been healed! Since then, doctors have verified and confirmed she has 100 percent hearing in both ears.

**3. Praise and worship evokes an encounter with God.**

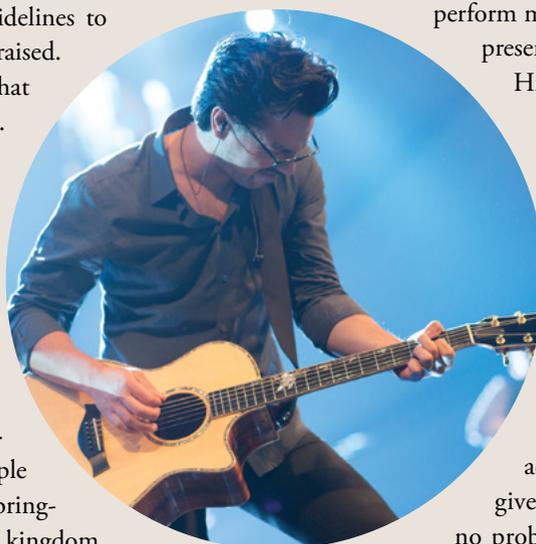
The Bible says where Jesus was honoured, He was able to perform miracles. I believe it's the same with His presence. Whenever we lift Him up, giving Him honour, He is right there with us, able to do whatever He wants to do.

I love the response of the cripple at the gate when he received his miracle in Acts 3:6:

*And leaping forth he stood and began to walk and he went into the temple with them, wailing and leaping and praising God.*

His response to God's work in His life was proportioned to the miracle he'd received. Those who are forgiven much love much and usually have no problem showing it. I have two beautiful boys and as their Daddy, my favorite time of day is when I get home from work. They run, leap, cuddle, and kiss me like crazy! They don't care what it looks like. All they know is Daddy's home. It is impossible to love someone with your whole heart and not show it. Our Father did with Jesus and withheld nothing by sending Him to the cross, and raising Him in a glorious victory. Perhaps praise and worship, using our whole being, is indeed a fitting response for all He has done. ●

**Bj Pridham** is the worship pastor at Planetshakers Church and a member of the Planetshakers band.



## REFLECTION

Do you praise the Lord as emphatically as He answers your prayers? Do you find ways to worship Him throughout your daily life? Do you shout praise to God with the kingdom in mind?

*Clap your hands all you nations; shout to God with shouts of joy.*

**PSALM 47:1**

# HEART & HOME



SPIRITUAL PARENTING 42

Imprint

## Staying on the Path of Renewing Your Marriage

**Christian psychologist and author of *The Lies Couples Believe* outlines four ways to reveal the truth that will transform your marriage and your mutual relationship with God.**

**Dr. Chris Thurman** • You may have heard the statement “God can’t steer a parked car.” Well, I would say that God can’t steer a parked marriage. God is committed to doing certain things on His end to help us have a loving marriage but we have to do certain things on our end if we want the same.

Let me walk you through four spiritual disciplines that, when done with your spouse, can help your marriage grow by leaps and bounds.

### STUDY

I tend to purchase things that require assembly and then fail to read the instruction manual when I put them together. I once did this when trying to assemble my daughter Kelly’s new crib. It didn’t go well. Because I didn’t read the manual carefully, I ended up working on it all evening and into the wee hours of the morning. If we want our marriages to be loving and healthy, we have to devote ourselves to studying our “instruction manual,” the Bible. If we try to build a marriage without God’s instruction, we risk messing up everything, resulting in a marriage that is not functioning as it was designed.

The Bible is “lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Ps. 119:105), and we are being wise if we dedicate ourselves to studying what it has to say. God has done His part by providing His Word and by indwelling us with the Holy Spirit, whose job it is

“ Don't forget that you have God on your side ... and He's not the least bit intimidated by what you are up against in marriage.

to “guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13) and help us believe truth in our “inmost being” (Ps. 139:13). Our part is to study the Bible like there's no tomorrow so that we know not only what it says but also what it means.

If you want a loving marriage, study together.

## PRAYER

God uses prayer, one of the most important activities of a Christian's life, to change us. Christ had a solid, unwavering commitment to prayer: “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35). Prayer gives God a crucial means by which to bring about a radical change in both who we are and, when it is His will, in the circumstances we face.

God has done His part by being ready, willing, and able to not only hear our prayers but also to act on them according to His will for our lives. Even Christ, who is God, said to God the Father, “Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matt. 26:39). We need to do our part and “pray continually” (1 Thess. 5:17).

If you want a loving marriage, pray together.

## SERVICE

To grow in your marriage, serve each other. The Bible says that Christ “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45). Even though He was God, Christ washed people's feet, gave them food, listened to them, healed them, had compassion toward them, and deeply cared for them.

We all have a tendency toward wanting to be served, not serve. Among the interpretations of what dying to self means in

the Bible, one certainly means dying to that selfish part of you that wants your spouse to serve you without you serving your spouse in return. Christ's life and teaching demonstrates that true greatness is in serving others.

Yes, we are to serve each other's needs in marriage but we are also supposed to serve the needs of hurting people in our community and around the world.

If you want a loving marriage, serve each other and serve the world.

## FELLOWSHIP

God works through community. Speaking about the local church in the first century, the apostle Paul encouraged the early Christians not to give up “meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another” (Heb. 10:25). With regard to marriage, we need the support that comes from being with other like-minded husbands and wives who are trying to have marriages that are pleasing to God.

I think back over the years that Holly and I have been married, and I am grateful for all the couples we have been with

in small groups. These couples have been such a blessing to us as we all came together to work on being better spouses and better parents.

If you want a loving marriage, fellowship with others.

As you seek to strengthen your marriage, don't forget that you have God on your side. Don't forget that He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere at once and He's not the least bit intimidated by what you are up against in marriage (Rom. 8:31: “If God is for us, who can be against us?”). Don't forget that He wants to “prosper you and not to harm you” (Jer. 29:11). Don't forget that as husband and wife, you are two strands, but that with God as the third strand, the two of you cannot easily be broken (Eccles. 4:12). And don't forget to co-labor with God in trying to improve your marriage as opposed to trying to do it on your own strength. Remember, “Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain” (Ps. 127:1).

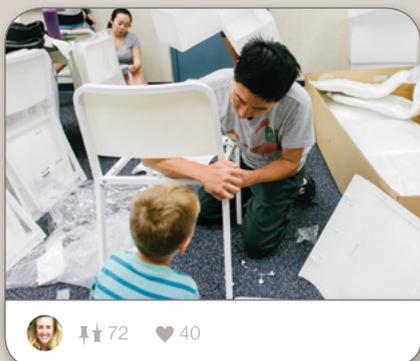
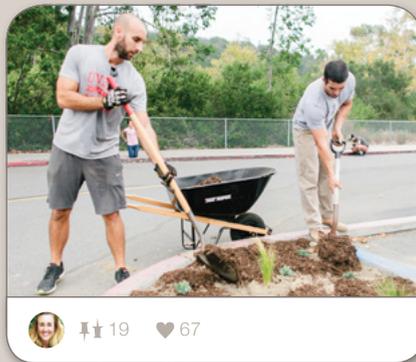
May God richly bless all that you do to honor Him with your marriage. ●

Excerpt from *The Lies Couples Believe: How Living the Truth Transforms Your Marriage* © 2015 Dr. Chris Thurman



# IMPRINT

What needs to be done? This simple question posed in *Spiritual Parenting* transformed Candice Becklund's approach to life and to the needs of a neighborhood school.



“ This was how Jesus led his life, serving those in his community.



◆ Something clicked for me when I read Michelle Anthony’s *Spiritual Parenting* book. Usually I am a very linear thinker, working through a checklist of to-do items. That’s just how my brain works. But *Spiritual Parenting* helped me to realize we’re never really off the hook. As believers we’re called to always be open to God’s leading.

I read about training your kids to enter into a space—whether a neighborhood, a friend’s house, a school—and look around to see: What needs to be done? That was the key question, and it caused me to examine not only how I raise my kids, but also how I approach life.

It started to slowly change things for me. Especially as I realized that this was how Jesus led his life, serving those in his community.

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

When we moved into our home, the elementary school directly across the street from us caught my attention. We knew it was a great school, but from the outside it seemed that the campus had not been updated in a while. The letters were falling off the sign, areas were knee-high in weeds, and paint was chipping off the curbs.

My kids weren’t going there at the time, but I felt like something needed to be done. So I took pictures and sent an email to the school foreman letting him know about the problems. Really I was just hoping to push it back on the school district—to check it off my list.

His response was short and to the point. “Thanks for bringing this to our attention,” he wrote. “We have to take care of thirty-five schools, we are working with a limited budget and resources.”

Over the coming weeks I kept driving by the school and thinking, “Gosh what can I do?” So I emailed back and asked if we could help to raise the funds, if we could purchase the needed items for them. I never heard back but knew something needed to be done.

## SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

I mentioned the need to my church at the *Spiritual Parenting* class I was attending, provided photos and created an inspiration board on Pinterest to create excitement.

To my surprise, the church agreed to donate \$1,000, and a week later bumped it up to \$2,000. Then I gave a presentation to the whole congregation. They donated another \$2,500, and the principal of the school agreed to let us help out.

Seventy people came from the church to help with improvements to the school. We redid the entire parking lot, five big planter beds and the teachers’ lounge. It was beautiful watching people arrive with their families to love their community just like Jesus did.

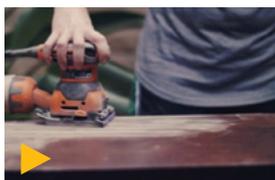
As we walked around the school we started a long laundry list of other updates we hope to make: New trash cans, basketball hoops, picnic tables, and more. Our church has really taken schools in the area under our wing.

And the amazing thing is, the whole time we were training ourselves, and our kids, to see what needed to be done and respond. The very thing *Spiritual Parenting* challenged us to do.

It’s been amazing to find my place in my walk with God and to watch our community come together. ◆

## Spiritual Parenting

Candice Becklund discovered *Spiritual Parenting* through a class hosted at Rock Harbor Church in Mission Viejo, California. She and her classmates used a series of videos and worksheets provided in the *Spiritual Parenting* curriculum to guide their time together. The class provided them with the opportunity to bounce ideas off of one another and deepen their understanding of the book. It was instrumental in rallying initial support for the community service project at Del Lago Elementary School.



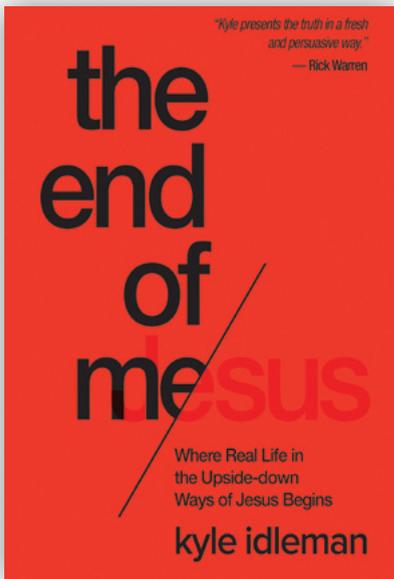
**DCC.js/Imprint**  
See a video about the project  
inspired by *Spiritual Parenting*.



# Shelf

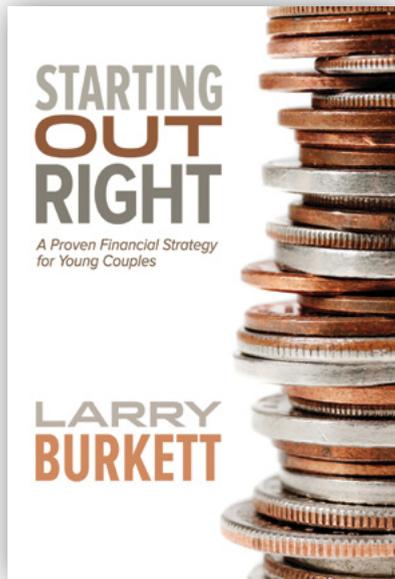
## Beginning the New Year refreshed and prayerful.

As December rolls into January, life starts to revolve around New Year's resolutions. The new calendar feels like a clean slate for everyone: a chance to prove yourself worthy and capable of change. But so often, the only essential change is a heart that gives up the burden of proof and instead turns toward Christ, praying daily and surrendering to Him.



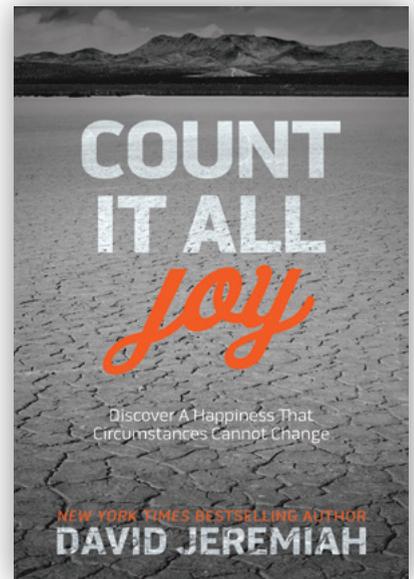
*The End of Me*  
**KYLE IDLEMAN**

The path to wholeness begins with brokenness. The way to blessing starts with mourning. And the journey to strength is through weakness. We need to find the end of ourselves because only then can we embrace the inside-out ways of Jesus.



*Starting Out Right*  
**LARRY BURKETT**

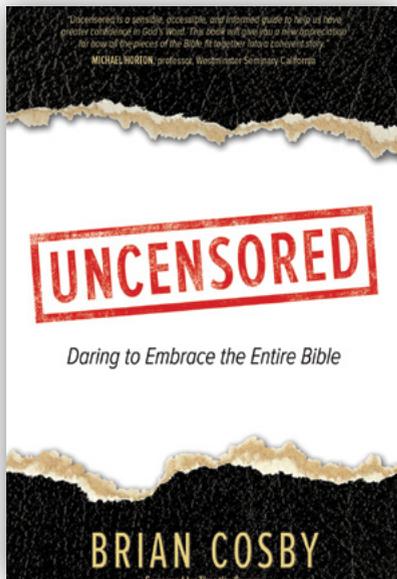
If you are engaged or newly married, you probably have a lot of questions about how to make, spend, and invest money as a couple. Should we rent or buy? Which one of us should be the record keeper? Do we really need life insurance? Everyone needs practical advice in the beginning to start out right.



*Count It All Joy*  
**DAVID JEREMIAH**

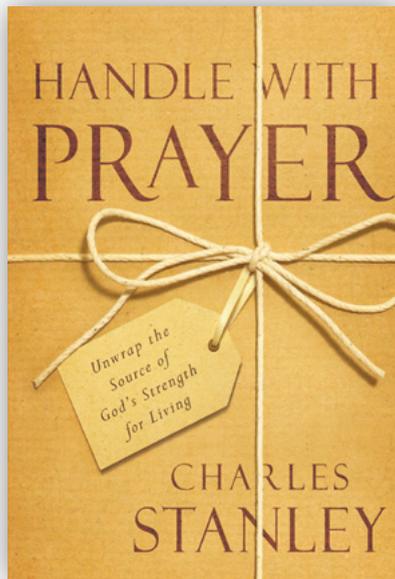
The apostle Paul wrote his most personal letter while abused and abandoned in a Roman prison. He wrote to believers who lived in the shadow of the Roman tyrant, Nero. And yet his letter, Philippians, is the most joy-filled epistle in the Bible. And that letter shows us exactly how to be joyful in spite of any circumstances

# Life



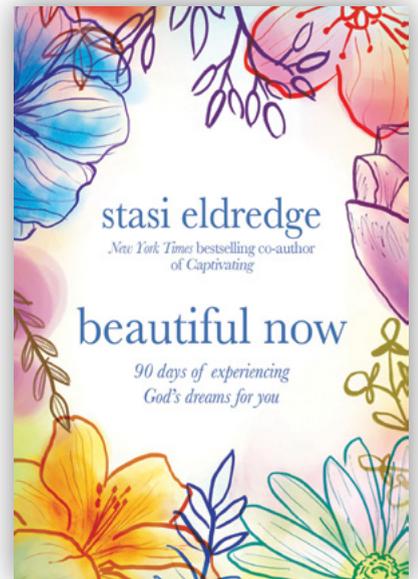
*Uncensored*  
**BRIAN COSBY**

The Bible is brimming with passages that can make Christians blush, squirm, or reel with embarrassment. In response, many opt for a feel-good faith by embracing only the socially acceptable verses or safe topics like “success” to win people over. But there is power in accepting all of God’s Word.



*Handle with Prayer*  
**CHARLES STANLEY**

Prayer is essential to the life of every believer. It connects us with our Heavenly Father, and opens the door for Him to move in our lives, to impact our circumstances, and to help us make wise choices. Prayer helps us uncover God’s solution for whatever we face.



*Beautiful Now*  
**STASI ELDRIDGE**

No matter how you see yourself today, God sees you as beautiful now. It is a truth women need to hear and explore as they walk their journey as courageous individuals, capable of making a difference in the world through living their heart’s desires.



**DCC.is/SheffLife**  
Enjoy a free download of *Uncensored* by Brian Cosby. Download before January 15, 2016.

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# LEADERSHIP



## MINISTRY 48

Why You Need a Spiritual Mentor

## SUPPORT YOUR PASTOR 49

When the Going Gets Tough

## DiscipleShaping

**Being ready and responsive in the moments when iron sharpens iron.**

● Until we understand how a blacksmith accomplishes his task, we miss the wisdom of Proverbs 27:17: “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” The proverb’s author, King Solomon, lived and ruled during the Iron Age. He knew the metal’s potential. Iron formed essential tools and weapons to build and defend his kingdom.

But how does one piece of iron sharpen another? We find a clue in another common saying that proves itself true in science: “Strike while the iron is hot.”

When placed in the intense heat of a forge, a piece of iron begins to glow red, then orange, yellow, and eventually, white. The ideal moment for sharpening the metal comes when it glows orange-yellow. That’s when a skilled blacksmith places the hot iron on an anvil and strikes it with a cold iron hammer or chisel.

Once the hot iron cools down, the opportunity for shaping has passed. To continue shaping and sharpening the iron, the blacksmith must reheat and repeat, always striking while the iron is hot.

The process of DiscipleShaping applies this wisdom to the way we discover the full life God intends for us. Let’s consider two crucial factors at work here—intentional relationships and appropriate timing. When we pay attention to these, we’ll be ready to respond to orange-yellow moments of the DiscipleShaping process.

### CORE CIRCLES OF FRIENDS

According to a 2013 report by social researchers, Americans’ core relationship networks are smaller and less diverse than they were two decades earlier. And it’s not



Until we understand how a blacksmith accomplishes his task, we miss the wisdom of Proverbs 27:17.

because of digital technology. The report argues that social support has slowly become less necessary as our society has become more prosperous.

Yet if followers of Jesus are called to make disciples—and the fulfillment of that calling is inherently relational—should we be content with the trend? Prosperity may make us more self-reliant, but at what cost to our spiritual journey? When close relationships are missing, so is the significant potential for iron sharpening iron in the DiscipleShaping process.

I'm blessed to have two core circles of close friends—one social, the other business. Both circles enrich my faith, family, personal, and professional growth. When I invite people into either of these core circles, they inevitably remark on how special they feel to be a part. Many have never experienced this kind of friendship before.

I don't say this boastfully, but rather to encourage everyone reading this. Deep, intentional friendships are life-giving and worth pursuing. Invest yourself in them, and you'll see returns in fellowship, trust, and wisdom you can't find anywhere else.

## MOMENTS THAT MATTER

As you develop intentional relationships, you'll learn to recognize the appropriate time to give and receive sharpening. To illustrate, let me describe the core social circle of friends my wife and I have come to know well. This circle has grown to more than a dozen married couples.

As a group, we connect regularly—not all of us at every gathering, but enough that we've become close friends. We do stuff together for fun. We encourage one another. We share what's going on in our lives. We often split into smaller huddles of conversation, and then eventually find ourselves all together again. It's social, but it's also quality time spent together talking about real issues of life and faith.

Sometimes we admonish one another, generally in those smaller huddles. We've gotten to a place of trust where we can tell each other the truth, even when it's not easy to say or to hear. We've come to expect and accept it.

I remember one particular night when the group got together. Two of us stepped aside in conversation with a third guy. He was looking for counsel to help him navigate through something unexpected. And because of our friendship, he was willing to reveal himself in an orange-yellow moment in his life. The two of us responded with knowledge and insight just when it was needed. He gave us his thanks for the sharpening advice, and we know he acted on it.

Just recently, another friend in the same social circle celebrated a ten-year anniversary at work. Most of us are reluctant to blow our own horn about an occasion like that. But someone else from the group who attended that celebration was at our next gathering, eager to share the highlights of our friend's accomplishments. It was an orange-yellow moment for everyone. Because in retelling that success story we gained not just an appreciation of what our friend had achieved, but also of who he is. We felt a longing that stirred in our own lives to alter our behavior and bring focus to how we each want to be remembered.

These kinds of conversations wouldn't happen anywhere else. Within our core circle of intentional relationships, we experience iron sharpening iron in moments of DiscipleShaping as God calls out the best in us. ●



**Cris H. Doornbos**  
is the CEO of David C Cook.

## Resource

Growing relationships draw us into meaningful conversations, especially about family, faith, and leadership. It helps to have good resources for discussion, such as *Becoming a Spiritually Healthy Family* by Michelle Anthony or *Cold-Case Christianity* by J. Warner Wallace. You might encourage your friends to read and discuss a book together, or simply read on your own and recommend others do the same.

## Relationship

To develop intentional relationships, you have to be willing to extend an invitation and just as willing to accept one. Start with a neighbor, coworker, friend, or someone you've met at church. Depending on your personality, you may feel a bit uncomfortable. That's not only normal; it's likely how they feel too. And it's okay to acknowledge that. After all, being honest helps to build deep relationships.



“ A spiritual mentor will give you a platform to dream of what is possible, both for your ministry and for you personally.

## Why You Need a Spiritual Mentor

**Walking through life with a mentor can rejuvenate and strengthen your ministry.**

● Ministry is a joyful calling, but also a draining one. There's something about mixing the outward focus of leading an organization with the intense privacy of personal faith. It can be a bad mix for both. Often, ministers give in to the temptation to choose isolation over community, and their faith suffers accordingly.

That's why having a spiritual mentor is so important—they provide the best defense for the unique pressures that come with a life in ministry. With that in mind, here are some of the key reasons we all need spiritual mentors, and the benefits that come with them.

**Spiritual mentors give you the opportunity to live authentically.** When you serve in ministry, you feel the weight of the expectations of your congregation. This can inhibit you from feeling the freedom to live out your faith authentically—with all the questions, struggles, and risks that come with it. Having a spiritual mentor gives you a place where those aspects are welcomed. We all need to experience authentic faith if we hope to pass it on to our students, to find someone who can help you experience it.

**Spiritual mentors give you the opportunity to dream of big things.** One of the great things about a mentor is that they will give you a platform to dream of what is possible, both for your ministry and for you personally. It takes the voice of someone who knows you well, can see your strengths and weaknesses clearly, and has the freedom to speak honestly to allow you to dream of great things.

**Spiritual mentors give you the opportunity to be prayed for and supported.** When things are tough, when you're facing a big decision, or need guidance from the Spirit, it helps to be prayed for by someone who truly knows what you're experiencing and what you need. A spiritual mentor can do those things, when people in your own congregation may not be able to.

Okay, so you know you need one. But where do you start? Reach back into your history and look up past spiritual leaders. You can network and look for wise, established folks in your area that may be a fit. You can even talk to your senior leadership, and see if they have any guidance for you.

There are lots of wonderful leaders who would love to shepherd you onward in faith and in ministry. You can speak freely and openly with them about your daily struggles and triumphs. A spiritual mentor will make a huge difference in the life of your ministry, so seek one out and dive into life together. ●

# When the Going Gets Tough: Four Reasons to Support Your Pastor

**Consider these four reasons to work through your frustrations and honor your pastor's leadership.**

• Churches are unique organizations, and they come with their own set of joys and challenges. However, as unique as they may be, they are still organizations, which mean that you sometimes find yourself in the uncomfortable position of having a difference of opinion or vision with your senior leadership.

Sometimes this points to a truly insurmountable impasse that can't be overcome (e.g. differences on your foundational theology, moral failures, or financial improprieties), but most of the time, the frustrations we face are far more mundane. This doesn't mean that it's easy to overlook them, however. A great temptation is to become frustrated and undercut someone who leads you. As tempting as this may be, it's always wise to tread carefully to support your senior leadership, for several reasons.

They have to see and respond to the bigger picture. Sometimes your great idea, vision, or change may look great for your ministry, but negatively impact other ministries in your church. Sometimes your pastor may have a vision for further down the road, and your idea doesn't fit in. When you disagree with them, remember that they are tasked with guiding the entire church, and this sometimes means they have to see beyond your specific ministry.

Ministry with others is a joy and a challenge. If you seek to honor God and those who lead you, you'll reap the reward of the healthiest possible environment, and a good reputation among your peers. It can be hard to do, but it pays off in the long run. •

Collie Colburn, [TruMinistry.com](http://TruMinistry.com)



1

## IT WILL BUILD YOUR CREDIBILITY.

Senior leaders want to work with people they can trust. If you show that you have integrity even when you are disappointed, it will demonstrate that you are someone who can be trusted, and you're more likely to have freedom to move boldly in the future.

2

## IT PROTECTS THE STAFF AS A WHOLE.

It doesn't take much to throw off the chemistry of your team. Even if your frustration is justified, don't respond in a way that hinders the ability of the rest of the staff to function well.

3

## IT HONORS GOD.

Hebrews 13:17 tells us to respect those who are in leadership, because they will give an account for how they lead. When you are frustrated, remember that your pastor has a unique responsibility, and that they are called to carry it wisely. Honor them, because that's what God calls you to do.

4

## IT WILL HELP YOU LEAVE WELL, IF YOU NEED TO.

The truth is sometimes you do need to leave a ministry. Sometimes even great leaders have differing visions, and other times you need to leave an unhealthy environment. If you handle conflict with grace in the meantime, you will set yourself up to leave with a clean conscience, and a good recommendation as you search for a new place to serve.

# TRAVELOGUE



**Tim MacDonald** is Chief Advancement Officer at David C Cook.

## What was the purpose of your recent trip to Cuba?

A team from David C Cook went to investigate what kinds of resources the Cuban church needs. A few of our staff and several donors met with pastors and church leaders, and shared tools like Warren Wiersbe commentaries, *The Action Bible*, and *The Story of Jesus*.

We've had a long lasting partnership with the Cuban Council of Churches and the Bible Commission over the last seventeen years. This trip really enhanced a relationship we've already enjoyed with the resources that would be most appropriate for them today.

## What is the ministry environment like in Cuba?

Churches of all kinds are growing rapidly in Cuba and the younger generation is extremely open to the gospel. Pastors there are excited because they recognize a unique opportunity to reach this generation, immediately. For this to take place there is a strong need for Bibles and evangelistic outreach tools like *The Story of Jesus*. Equipped with the resources they need, these pastors are going to make an astounding change.

## What makes *The Action Bible* and *The Story of Jesus* so appealing to churches in Cuba?

The artwork is perfect for the Cuban youth who are increasingly open to the gospel. And it is amazing to see the adults enjoy it, too.

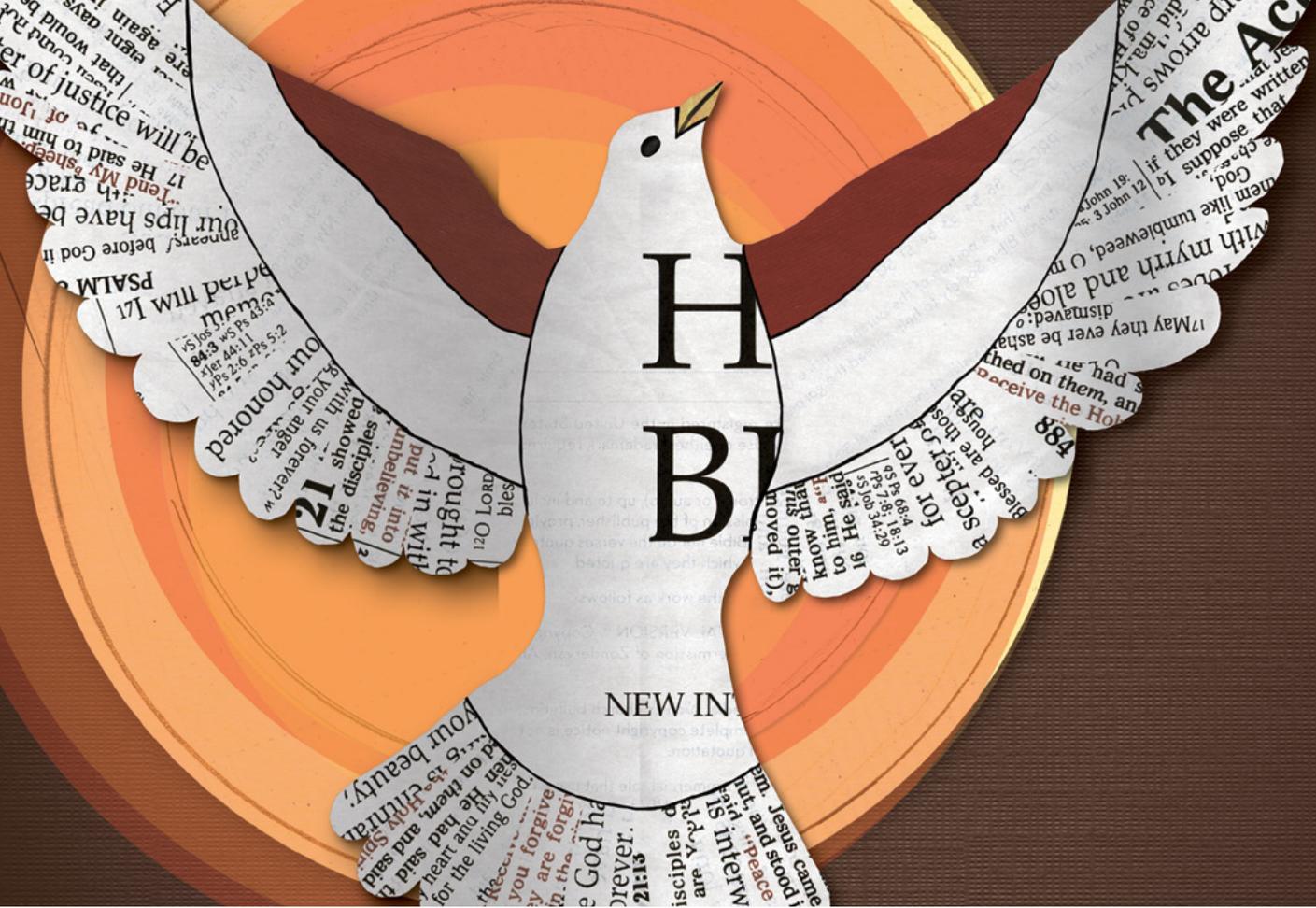
*The Action Bible Study Bible ESV* also presents a great opportunity, as new believers in Cuba want to learn more about their faith. With this tool, they get the Word of God with study questions and artwork interspersed. It's a great resource that allows readers to relate visually to the Word of God.

## What made a lasting impression on you?

One day when we were meeting with the Bible Commission, the general secretary introduced us to a woman in her early twenties. Fifteen years ago, the woman received a David C Cook *Picture Bible* and accepted Jesus into her life. She has followed him ever since and is involved in the church. When she found out we were coming to Cuba, she said, "I would love to bring the Bible I was given and thank them."

She is just one example. On this trip, we got to see the harvest of years of effort by many people. They earnestly followed God's call on their lives to plant seeds of the gospel. Now we celebrate their work.





# The Art of Transformation

With the hardcover release of Francis Chan's bestseller, *Forgotten God*, the book's cover still invites readers to discover and experience what Scripture reveals about the Holy Spirit.

● Jim Elliston, a worship pastor at Cornerstone Church, designed the cover of *Forgotten God*. He had heard Francis Chan, the church's founding pastor, give a message about the difference between *exegesis* and *eisegesis*.

Francis explained that *exegesis* means "to lead out" and requires examining the text of Scripture to discover its meaning.

On the other hand, *eisegesis* starts with a preconceived idea and looks for Bible verses to prove a point. And there's a danger of taking verses out of context to support something false or sinful. But we can just as easily miss out on God's power for our lives.

"I believe many people have an eisegetically formed concept of the Holy Spirit. In essence, we have cut and pasted whatever verses and ideas work for us; this forms our understanding of the Holy Spirit," Francis wrote in the early pages of the book.

To counter that, the book proceeds with a careful examination of the role of this special Counselor. The cover design presents a dove, symbolic of the Holy Spirit, constructed from the pages of Scripture and promising the same to the reader.

"I can't think of another cover that uses pieces of God's Word in a creative design the way Jim did," says Amy Konyndyk, David C Cook's creative director for trade books and marketing.

With Scripture as the guide, Francis Chan wrote to remind us: "We are not all we were made to be when everything in our lives and churches can be explained apart from the work and presence of the Spirit of God." ●



Two bestsellers by Francis Chan release as hardcovers, available December 2015: *Forgotten God* and *Crazy Love*.

## DONORS SEND THE ACTION BIBLE TO CHILDREN IN INDIA

For 16,997 children served by Christian clubs in India, *The Action Bible* is likely the only book they've ever called their own. To date, 15,500 of the children have received a Bible, thanks to the generosity of donors to David C Cook.

With additional donations, *The Action Bible* will soon be on its way to the remaining 1,497 boys and girls—and to future club participants too.

