

mission:world

NEWS

ONE LOCAL CHURCH'S HEART FOR THE NATIONS

By Adam Thomas

Pastor of Wyatt Baptist Church
El Dorado, Arkansas

I wish I could say that as a pastor I always expect God to do the impossible. But if I am honest I find myself constantly surprised by a God who does so much more than I ever expect him to do. Wyatt Baptist Church is an average-sized church tucked away in South Arkansas, an hour away from the nearest interstate. And yet over the last couple of decades, I've seen God privilege our church time and time again with a global reach for his kingdom. This all started and is sustained by our short-term mission efforts. I want to take a few moments to talk about how our church has embraced short-term missions, which has led to a long-term impact globally.

First, we teach our people to go. Over the years we have provided our people with opportunities to learn about missions. We have had mission conferences that promote God's heart for the nations. We try to work missionaries and our mission directors into our Sunday services frequently. In preparation for mission trips, we require team members to attend a missions boot camp where they learn how to travel as well as why they are going. We also take frequent opportunities to preach on missions. We have made Urgency in Global Gospel Missions one of the core values of our church, and it is important to help our people understand why we value it like we do.

Second, we plan for our people to go. Our church has a long history of financially supporting missions. We also have a long history of being a friend to missionaries. However, it was always easy for our people to feel a little distant from the missionary efforts we supported. But in 2005 something happened that would change that. In 2005 our church planned our first short-term mission trip to put our people's boots on the ground in another culture in Nicaragua. Then in 2006, we added a trip to Ukraine, and then in 2007 we added interstate trips. This emphasis on short-term missions has continued until today. If your church lacks the resources to plan such trips you can contact BMA Global and promote their medical and VSM trips to your people.

Third, we help our people to afford to go. We have established a scholarship called the Go! Scholarship which exists to help people afford to go. Travel can be expensive and we want to remove as many obstacles as possible for people to get on the mission field. Our goal every year for the Go! Scholarship is for anyone going on their first trip to have their plane ticket fully paid for. We know that if we can get someone on their first trip the chances are likely that it will awaken a missionary heart within them that will last a lifetime. Others who apply for the scholarship will usually have half of their trip paid for. This scholarship serves a twofold purpose. Those that go have help in getting there and those who don't go have the opportunity to send someone. This allows more people to participate in our short-term mission efforts.

Fourth, we encourage long-term mission endeavors. Early on in our short-term missionary endeavors, we had John David Smith speak at one of our boot camps. A phrase he shared was one that has governed our efforts in short-term missions. He told us to make sure that our short-term efforts had a long-term goal. We tend to go to the same places over and over again. Why? Because our goal isn't to provide new and exciting places for our people to travel to, but rather to present to them long-term partnerships that have long-term impacts. Our financial and prayer support goes far beyond our week-long trips. When it comes to these partnerships our people step up to support time and time again.

After almost 20 years of short-term missions, I can say without a doubt that the places we go have had more of an impact on us than we have had on them. Something happens to your church when a majority of your church puts their boots on the ground to take the gospel to another culture. Missions has always been a part of our church, but

over the last 20 years, it has become the heartbeat of our church. Our short-term mission trips have led to all kinds of mission ministries. We have had people on these trips go on the field long term. We have seen our church welcome internationals from the college down the road which led to their conversion. One man on one of our first trips came home and set out to learn Spanish so he could establish a Spanish ministry here in our church. Most recently we have had one member launch a ministry of missionary care.

If you encourage your people to go and participate and see for themselves what God is doing globally, you will see God do through your church what you never thought possible.





LEAST LIKELY

By Danny Ballard

BMA Missionary to the Philippines

bmaglobal.org

Scripture is filled with examples of how the Lord will use the weak, the unlikely, and those whom you would never foresee Him using to accomplish His will and purpose in the world. I would like to begin my story by saying I am one of those examples.

As a young teenager, my dream was to become an archeologist. I love history and trying to understand things from the past. I pursued that dream until one day I found out that part of the requirements of being an archeologist was to be a teacher. My dreams were crushed at the time for one simple reason: I was afraid to speak in front of anyone. I had a fear of public speaking. That fear literally gripped me to the point that I would stutter, lose all train of thought, and shake all over.

Little did I know at that time that God had a special plan for me and my life that would bring me to do the one thing I feared the most. The lesson to be learned was that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

My family attended Vardaman Street Baptist Church in Wiggins, MS. I loved helping with the youth and was always volunteering to help, never leading, always just a helper. One day, our youth director came to me and asked me if I would be willing to be the Awana Commander at our church because we were implementing the program for the first time. She told me that I would just be the figurehead and she would take care of everything. I thought about it and prayed about it for several weeks and again was reassured that I would basically be the figurehead as commander, so I said yes. Little did I know that was the beginning of God's plan for my ministry and the beginning of my story that led me to be a missionary to the Philippines.

You can already imagine that I was not just the figurehead, but actually, I was the leader, the commander of the Awana program. Mrs. Robbie later told me that she saw something in me that no one else had seen and how the Lord laid it on her heart to ask me and convince me to be the commander. I worked with several youth pastors during my seven years as the Awana commander. I always loved working with the youth and helped however I could. The current youth pastor had resigned, and the church had been searching for a replacement for months. Each candidate would come in view of a call, preach before the church, and, one by one, the church always voted not to call them.

One particular Sunday evening, another candidate had just come in view of a call, and that night, the church voted; again, it was a no. I was up in the church's balcony, kneeling on the floor, leaning against the rail and praying, asking, "Lord, why won't you give us a youth pastor?" At that moment, as I prayed, something happened that would alter my life forever. It felt like the Lord had placed His hand on my shoulder, leaned over, and spoke into my ear, "Because I want you to do it."

At that moment, I turned around to see who was behind me, but no one was there. I remember it just like it was yesterday. I said, "Lord, you know I can't do that. You know I can't speak in front of people. You know I am not smart enough to be the youth pastor." I was scared to death, to be honest, but I began to pray about it for many weeks and then asked our pastor to pray as well. I knew the Lord was calling me, but I was afraid to say yes. Then I finally prayed, "Lord, you know I can't speak in front of a crowd. You know I am a very shy person at heart, but I am willing to surrender. You will have to do the work in me and give me the ability to speak in front of people."

As I began my journey as the youth/missions pastor, my idea of missions was to give money. But all that was soon to change. I volunteered to lead a VSM mission team one year. I was assigned to co-lead a team to China. The trip to China was the beginning of the Lord calling me to full-time mission work. I knew at that time, while I was in China, that one day, I would be back in Asia somewhere doing some kind of mission work. Over the next several years, I would lead teams from our church on mission trips in the states and globally. Year after year, God was working on my heart, but at that time, I was unsure if I should continue doing what I was doing or surrender to being a full-time missionary, but I would soon find out.



One day, our pastor, Eugene Anderson, was going to the missions office for some training they were offering. Several missionaries were going through the same training at that time. He asked me if I would come along to help with the driving and keep him company. I agreed to go and asked if I could go through the training also. God was busily working all along in all of this to get me there to the training. Robert Murphy, a missionary to the Philippines, was at the training. This was the first time I had met him, and it was like our spirits were drawn together. We would sit up until 2-3 a.m. just talking about the ministry and people of the Philippines. I was a sponge, and his words were a vast amount of water I was soaking up and could not get enough of. The burden continually grew and grew.

The following summer, I had planned three different mission trips. One was to Trinidad and Tobago, one was to Nicaragua, and the last one was to the Philippines. I begin to pray to the Lord, "God, please give me an answer to the question, 'Do I stay where I am and keep doing what I am doing, or do I surrender to full-time missions?' Please give me an answer before the Nicaragua mission trip is over." The first trip came and went. It was a great trip, and God blessed me very much, but no answer. Then came the trip to Nicaragua. God was working and blessing in so many ways again. There were just two days left of our two-week trip, and there was still no answer from the Lord. I was laying in my bed that night begging the Lord to answer me before that trip was finished because I already felt that if He were calling me to the mission field full-time, it would be to the Philippines.

When I woke up the next morning, I began my daily devotions. I used the Charles Stanley Life Principles Daily Bible for my devotional. It breaks down the Bible to where you read the Old Testament, Psalms/Proverbs, and the New Testament daily. Normally, on mission trips, things are so hectic that it is easy to fall behind on your reading, but that morning, I was ahead by two days. As I sat down, I prayed again, "Lord, please speak to me and answer my prayer about the direction You have for me." Keep in mind I was ahead two days as I began to read. When I got to the New Testament Scripture for that day, it was Romans 10:13-15: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how

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NEWS

SAVED PEOPLE ARE SENT PEOPLE

By John Meriweather
VP of Global Operations
bmaglobal.org

In a world inundated with noise and distractions, the profound truth that those saved by Christ are also sent to share his message often gets lost in the shuffle of daily life. The essence of Christianity lies not merely in personal salvation but in the transformative journey from redemption to responsibility, from being rescued to becoming a rescuer. Consider the words of Jesus to his disciple after his resurrection and before he ascended to heaven:

- John 20:21 “...As the Father has sent me, I AM SENDING YOU.”
- Matthew 28:19 “Therefore, GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
- Acts 1:8 “...YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus has not only **saved** us but he has **sent** us to serve his mission by proclaiming his glory and salvation to all people!

God’s mission is not a suggestion to consider but a command to obey.

Saved individuals are not mere recipients of a divine rescue mission but are integral participants in the ongoing narrative of God’s redemptive plan. In exhorting his followers to take up his mission, Jesus was not offering suggestions for us to consider but commands for us to obey. God chose, equipped, and commanded his followers to fulfill his purpose.

God’s mission is an interwoven theme throughout all scripture.

The entire narrative of scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, is God making himself and his mission known to man.

- As he chose Abraham to establish a new nation through whom “all the people on earth will be blessed.”
- As he spoke through the Psalmist to “declare his glory among the nations.”
- As we’ve seen through the redemptive work of Jesus who proclaimed his mission to his followers.
- As we read in the apostle’s letters to the churches that we “have been given the ministry of reconciliation.”
- As we see in Revelation 7:9, it culminates when one day “every nation, tribe, people, and

language” will stand before the Lamb!

God’s mission is not just something we do; it is who we are.

In Christ we have a new identity aligned to a new purpose. Our identity is not based on what we do, it is based on who we are in Christ. In Christ our identity is tied to our purpose. Therefore, God’s mission cannot be relegated to a budget line item, a program, or an event. We are sent to live out our purpose every day, in all we do, in whatever way we are called, and wherever we are sent.



God’s mission was not given to a mission’s agency but to local churches and disciples.

I am proud to work for BMA Global where we exist to fulfill God’s mission to all nations. However, we do not do this in isolation but in partnership and on behalf of local churches. Local churches are both the source and goal of missions. It’s from, in, and through local churches that disciples and missionaries are sent, supported, prayed for, and served.

Saved people are sent people—sent to go, sent to give, sent to pray, sent to love, sent to share, sent to serve—all people – everywhere. In February 2024 the churches of the BMA will celebrate world missions and give to the Jerry Kidd Missions Offering. May God use this time to renew our hearts with a passion for his mission to reach every nation, tribe, and tongue.

Least Likely continued

shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

At that moment, I knew the answer to my prayer. I began to weep tears of joy, but at the same time, I was scared. This was something totally new for me. I prayed and thanked the Lord for his answer and told Him, “Ok, Lord, I am willing to go, but like I prayed when You called me into the ministry as the youth/missions pastor, it is You that has to lead me, guide me, and give me the strength to do what You have called me to do.

My wife, Rita, had been praying with me the entire time for God to answer me. I shared with her how the Lord had answered our prayers; it was one of the happiest moments in her life. Rita had felt a call to the mission field when she was a teenager, but she had to wait until the Lord trained me and brought me through everything He did to get me to the place where I would be ready also.

People often say that others can see things about people that the person can’t see themselves. When we returned from the trip, I spoke with our pastor and told him that the Lord had called me to be a full-time missionary, and his words to me and the entire church were, “I know! I have seen it coming for a long time.” Others saw what God was doing, but it just took me a little longer to catch up.

My family and friends would ask me, “Are you crazy? You are moving to the other side of the globe, away from all your family and friends. Are you not worried that something will happen to you?” My reply was simple. I told them, “I am more afraid to stay here out of God’s will than to go to the other side of the globe and be in God’s perfect will.”

God worked in so many ways, with so many small things and using so many people to accomplish His task of calling a man who gave up on his dream of being an archeologist because he was afraid to speak in front of people, to become a missionary to the Philippines. Rita and I are going on eleven years of ministry here in the Philippines. We should never doubt what the Lord can do with someone with a willing heart.

Let me end by saying if you have never been on a mission trip, go! It will open your eyes to our vast world and the great need to reach the masses for the Lord. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life and the Lord to use you to do great and mighty things for His kingdom.

He accepts the least likely people to do His work and ministry. The Lord can do this for you when you surrender to His calling!

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8).



REACHING THE NATIONS IN THEIR OWN CULTURAL LANGUAGES

By Heather Harrison
Lifeworld
lifeworld.org

Since its beginning, Lifeworld has been committed to sharing the gospel worldwide. Telling just one person about Jesus is a privilege; proclaiming the Good News to the multitudes is an overwhelming honor... and what an honor we've been given, now talking to millions via the Lifeworld Cloud and social media platforms.

Whether installing radio transmitters so listeners can hear the gospel in remote areas, sharing about Jesus on Facebook, or broadcasting gospel messages via the Lifeworld Cloud, Lifeworld team members constantly seek ways to reach the unreached in every culture. While the numerical reach God has achieved through Lifeworld is astounding, our focus is not simply utilizing these methods but also working in, within, and through culture and various contexts.

A person's culture, way of life, characteristics, beliefs, social norms, customs, and religion affect how they see the world, themselves, and most importantly, God. In essence, one's culture becomes the lens through which one sees everything. This is why Lifeworld seeks to share Christ in such a way that people not only hear but understand and respond. Language is one part of this, but we don't simply share in an understood language; rather, we share in the cultural and heart language of the listener—many living or moving into our backyards.

There are countless cultures, even within a small geographic area, and knowing the surrounding culture is important when sharing the message of Christ. The Garifuna living in Honduras have a different set of needs than the Garifuna living in New York, but they both need the gospel in their cultural language. The Venezuelans living in Arkansas or the Nigerians in Houston, away from their native country, face challenges that open doors to sharing the gospel in their context and Lifeworld is helping with that.

Sociologists classify cultures in three ways: guilt, shame, and fear. The Good News is for all cultures, teaching that Christ took our guilt and shame and erases the need to fear. To the guilty, He imputes His righteousness; to the shameful, He restores honor; to the fearful, He proves faithful. Knowing the surrounding culture gives the messenger insight into the unspoken worldviews, motivations, and deepest questions. Lifeworld is poised to help local churches reach those of different cultures around them.

The apostle Paul understood cultural languages. Lifeworld is learning from these biblical examples. To the Jews, he quoted what they were familiar with - the Old Testament. However, to the Gentiles, he met them where they were and quoted their philosophers but pointed them to the creator God and the work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection. The

same truth was presented but in the context of their cultural language.

Lifeworld intends to continue taking the gospel in more languages but focused on doing so in the cultural language of the viewer, like the Czechs, Ukrainians, and Spanish speakers in the USA from various cultural backgrounds.

One of the beautiful truths of the gospel is that even though its history was set in a specific time, place, and people, its message is for people in all times and places. While some may think coming to Christ includes assimilating into a specific culture, the differences among believers highlight the creativity of God in creation and the power of God to unite such diversity.

We read in Revelation 7:9-10 "After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Can you imagine it? The beautiful tapestry of His creation—all nations, tribes, people, and languages worshiping our God together. What an honor. What a privilege. Lifeworld is perfectly positioned to partner with your church in reaching everyone in their cultural language and context.

