



Branching Into Missions

Exploring Your Involvement

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Exploring Your Involvement

by

Tim Crutcher



Nazarene Missions International

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Dedication

For my teachers Howard Culbertson and Chuck Gailey, who cultivated my own interest in missions; and For my colleagues Eileen Ruger and Joel Mullen, who work so hard to inspire the next generation of young people in their mission involvement.

Acknowledgements:

A book like this is never a solitary production, and it would have never come together without the help of many people. I am very grateful to all whose stories are portrayed in this book. Thank you for sharing your own involvement in missions to inspire the involvement of others. Thanks, too, to Jeanette Littleton for her excellent-as-usual editorial work. Finally, I want to acknowledge my son, Alex Crutcher, for his contributions to the chapter “Making a Big Difference in a Short Time.”

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	
Nazarene Missions: An Amazing Infrastructure	11
Chapter 2	
A Place to Call Their Own	17
Chapter 3	
No Longer “The Least of These ...”	24
Chapter 4	
Harnessing Our Power to Change the World	30
Chapter 5	
Beneath the Jungle Moon	37
Chapter 6	
Making a Big Difference in a Short Time	44
Chapter 7	
Exploring the Call	50
Chapter 8	
The Journey	58
Chapter 9	
The Easiest—and Hardest—Involvement	67
Chapter 10	
Connecting Your Passions with God’s Passions	76
Act On It	78

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Chapter 1



Nazarene Missions: An Amazing Infrastructure

Picture a majestic tree. In North America where I live, it could be a cherry tree in spring, bright pink blossoms welcoming the arrival of warmer weather. Perhaps it's a willow in summertime, long tendrils of leaves blowing gently in the breeze. Maybe it's a maple in the fall, full of brilliant color, glowing in the light of a setting sun, or a sturdy oak in the winter, boughs heavy with snow.

Trees are among the most impressive displays of God's creations. They are tenacious; there are very few places where they cannot grow. You'll find them hanging on to rocks along the edge of a cliff or growing through the concrete of a city sidewalk.

They are also life-giving. Without the oxygen they produce, animal life couldn't exist on this planet. And they can be enormous. The largest living things on the planet are trees. What other plant can reach so far away from its roots, rising a hundred yards into the air or stretching hundreds of feet/meters from side to side?

Because of their tenacity, their life-giving nature, and their great reach, trees make a nice metaphor for the church, particularly the church in mission. As God plants the seeds of the gospel, His Spirit enables God's churches to grow, even in the harshest conditions, to become life-giving communities that spread out to help plant other life-giving communities.

The church started in Palestine nearly 2,000 years ago and has now spread out all over the world, "branching out" into new lands among new people, as missionaries throughout history have crossed the barriers of language and culture. Each local church and collection of churches that we call a denomination is different, but they are all recognizable as God's planting, producing fruit for God's kingdom and spreading the good news of God's love around the world.

It's exciting to think about being a part of such a strong and growing entity. But it can be frustrating and intimidating as well. For a lot of us, thinking about being a part of the church's great mission to share God's love sounds nice. But we don't know how to do it.

We can easily see how it works for those people God specifically calls to cross-cultural ministry—the ones we label "missionaries." They get to do the exciting, world-traveling, other-language-speaking, be-on-the-front-lines kind of work. We love to listen to their exciting stories and hear about their great adventures. But then we walk away from those services into the ordinary world of jobs and kids and cooking and laundry and school, and we don't always see

how that exciting world of mission can connect to the mundane matters of our lives.

If you've ever felt that way, this book is for you. The Church of the Nazarene lists being "missional," or mission-focused, as one of its core values (along with "Christian" and "holiness"). Because of that, it has been committed throughout its existence to providing ways for everyone—not just missionaries, but *everyone*—to be involved in God's great mission to redeem the world.

Like a tree reaching out in many different directions, the Church of the Nazarene has lots of "branches" of mission—different kinds of ministries that share God's love in different ways.

Like a tree whose sturdy trunk and spreading limbs connect the nutrient-supplying roots to the energy-producing leaves, the various structures and programs of the Church of the Nazarene provide lots of ways for people in one place to be a part of what God is doing in places that look nothing like home.

In this book, we'll tell stories about these various opportunities and let you know how you can be involved. There are many ways to branch out in missions. We hope at least one of them (maybe even several!) will pique your interest, tug at your heart, and encourage you to be more involved than you perhaps ever have been before.

Before we begin to explore all those branches, however, we need to pay some special attention to the trunk and roots.

The only way a tree can survive and grow is if it has a deep root structure and a sturdy trunk. The roots pull in resources

from the soil, and the trunk, through the tree's sap, transfers the resources up from the ground and out to the branches and leaves where the most significant growth happens.

We tend to pay a lot more attention to the branches and leaves. But without the trunk and roots, those branches and leaves wouldn't be there.

If the mission enterprise of the Church of the Nazarene is like a tree, then the roots are all those local churches and congregants everywhere in the world who share their resources so growth can happen in places far away. The trunk that connects those roots with the various branches of mission is the World Evangelism Fund.

The Church of the Nazarene has a special way that it organizes its mission activity, which allows for a much sturdier structure than many other mission-oriented churches and organizations.

With most churches and mission agencies, all missionaries have to raise their own financial and prayer support from individual churches. This means maintaining dozens or hundreds of little connections between sending churches and mission fields. While God uses those many little connections to do amazing things, they take a lot of work to maintain and can easily become quite fragile.

While the Church of the Nazarene allows individual connections, the core mission support comes from hundreds of those connections woven together into one strong, centralized trunk system called the World Evangelism Fund (WEF). Every church everywhere in the world is invited to participate in this one resource pool according to its ability.

Then, those resources are distributed throughout the world to provide the structures that anchor mission work. This includes things like providing salaries and transportation for missionaries; constructing the buildings, offices, and houses needed for their work; and providing literature and schools to help that work to grow. The World Evangelism Fund even provides the basic administrative support systems needed so congregations are informed and missionaries are trained and get their paychecks.

In this way, the Nazarene “global missionaries” (what we call those full-time, WEF-supported servants) receive regular support, and every Nazarene church has a connection to every Nazarene missionary. These missionaries can focus their full-time energies on the work God has called them to do, rather than spending a lot of time on individual support raising and the administrative tasks to keep track of that support.

Every so often missionaries go back to their home countries for periods of deputation, which is usually where the rest of us get to hear them. And when we hear them share the good news of what God is doing in the lives of people we will never meet, we know we have been a part of touching those lives through our faithful prayers and our giving to the World Evangelism Fund.

All of the opportunities for mission involvement that we will discuss in this book are made possible because they are supported by the WEF. Without the WEF-reinforced missionaries already on the field, things like disaster response or Work & Witness could never happen. Without the

already-existing structures in our regions and fields, it would be harder to show the JESUS Film or get Child Sponsorship money to the families who need it the most.

We don't want to simply settle for writing a check for the Thanksgiving (Thank) Offering, the Easter (Resurrection) Offering, or Faith Promise and think that's all our involvement in missions means. The whole point of this book is to invite you to find an opportunity for missions-involvement that connects your heart with the needs around the world. But none of these other things would be possible without the consistent giving of faithful Nazarenes to the World Evangelism Fund. Because of the WEF, there are many ways to branch out in missions.

Chapter 2



A Place to Call Their Own

Pio (PEE-oh) and Maria Boccini (boh-CHEE-nee) didn't have much space to live in ... just a simple apartment befitting a railway conductor's salary. But like the Boccinis' hearts, that apartment was dedicated to God's service. It became the gathering place of the small holiness church the Boccinis began in the 1930s.

The congregation, part of the Independent Italian Holiness Movement, might have been a small group, but it was a sturdy one. It had endured through World War II, despite Mussolini's attempts to remove all Protestant presence from the city. Still, the congregation longed to grow, and that is hard to do when the space you have to meet in is so small.

In 1948, the Church of the Nazarene joined the Independent Italian Holiness Movement, accepting its four churches into the Nazarene fold, including the Boccinis' small house church in the great city of Rome, Italy.

That same year, in the United States, a member of the General (now Global) Council¹ for Nazarene Missions International (NMI) named Elizabeth Vennum was charged by the Council and inspired by God to create a new kind of offering for the mission work of the Church of the Nazarene.

Taking a cue from the extravagant gift of love offered to Jesus by the woman who broke a jar of perfume over His feet (Matthew 26:6-10), Elizabeth Vennum and the NMI Council called this new focus the Alabaster Offering.

This offering was to be used to help the church raise buildings and purchase property, providing the space needed for effective ministry and giving the church a permanent presence in the communities it was called to serve.

Twenty years later, these two stories intertwined in a way that made a decisive difference for the presence of the Church of the Nazarene in Rome. The Church appointed missionaries Roy and Nina (NIE-nuh) Fuller to Italy in 1969, and one of their major tasks was to secure a building for the Nazarene congregation in Rome.

Through a combination of funds from a children's mission offering and Alabaster, the church was able to purchase a three-story residence in the Montesacro (MON-te-SAC-ro) neighborhood of Rome. The upper floors had rooms suitable for meeting and for apartments, and the bottom floor was a garage that was soon remodeled into a sanctuary and office space. This new church

¹ The Global NMI Council works in collaboration with others to promote the purpose of NMI under the leadership of the global NMI director and global NMI president.

building became home to the Fullers while they served in Italy and also to the first Italian district superintendent after the missionaries left.

The church in Rome has had its struggles, as evangelical churches in Europe often do. But one thing that has remained constant is the commitment to the neighborhood represented by that building. Without it, the Church of the Nazarene may not be in Rome today.

The group that meets in that building has always been, and continues to be, a very small congregation in the midst of a very large city. However, even when it had dwindled to almost nothing and they were ready to close the doors, the church ended up saying, “We have a building here, so let’s have a church. Let’s not give up this territory where we are planted.”

That’s the kind of commitment a building demonstrates; that’s the kind of commitment Alabaster fosters.

The current pastor of the church, Angela, oversees a small but faithful group of Nazarenes that continue to make Kingdom use of that building. There’s no way such a congregation could afford to buy or rent a place to worship, especially with the high cost of property today in an urban area like Rome. However because of the offerings of Nazarenes around the world, they have a place and a presence, and God continues to work through them.

Pastor Angela leads the congregation in a very person-centered ministry. She visits people around the neighborhood, including homebound who can’t make it to church, and encourages her people to reach out to those in their

neighborhood with love, regardless of whether or not the people are interested in coming to their church.

Even the church's financial struggles have given them a kind of a witness. Once, Pastor Angela went into the bank to catch up on the church's bank account because it had fallen into negative readings. When she apologized, the teller, who had worked there a long time, replied, "Don't worry, Pastor. A church that isn't poor isn't credible."

A church that could afford a building like the one they use wouldn't have much of a testimony among the many people who view Christians as only interested in power and money. But a church that is stewarding a building that represents the investment of a whole denomination can say, "Yes, we are here to stay. We struggle, but we are committed to ministering to these people even if we face challenges."

And that kind of testimony has a lot of power in an essentially post-Christian city like Rome.

The church's ministry also extends beyond its parishioners and its neighborhood. Each year, the church hosts two community-wide bazaars that raise money for missions and compassionate causes, such as the bazaar they held for the refugees in 2015. Because the church has apartments on the upper floors, the congregation can temporarily house people who are going through a rough financial time, and that demonstrates a tangible love to their community.

Time and time again, in many small but significant ways, that building is a place where the love of God is demonstrated—from the community-centered worship gatherings on Sunday to showing hospitality to travelers and strangers.

As it was with the woman in the original biblical Alabaster story, there are always people who are tempted to say, “That’s a waste. That money could be used for much better purposes.”

Perhaps that’s true. But perhaps it is also true that God uses “wasteful giving” to say something about God’s own extravagant love. Perhaps the Church of the Nazarene’s commitment to the city of Rome, represented by that building, gives a lovely, loving fragrance to those who come in contact with it. And that, after all, is what Alabaster is really about.

What You Can Do

Alabaster represents one of the many opportunities for directed giving in the Church of the Nazarene, various ways in which you can focus your offerings for missions toward a specific set of concerns or endeavors. Those whose hearts are particularly drawn to evangelism appreciate offerings to Nazarene entities such as World Mission Broadcast or JESUS Film Harvest Partners.

For those who are drawn to help with compassionate ministries, it is easier to make sacrifices to sponsor a child through Child Sponsorship or send money to the Global Emergency Relief Fund, which empowers the church to respond when disaster or crisis strikes somewhere in the world, or to help with any of the other needs that are reached through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM). To see more information, explore NCM’s website (www.ncm.org), which describes how you can help in many different ways and areas. Those who want to have hands-on involvement in

compassionate ministries can put together Crisis Care Kits or School Pal-Paks. Find directions for those on the NMI website (www.nazarenemissions.org) under the Giving Tab/Compassionate Ministries.

And those who want to help the church put down deep roots and commit to a place long-term through investment in permanent structures such as church buildings, appreciate the opportunity to give through the Alabaster Offering.

Giving to these needs is best done through the local church, but you can also give online at www.nazarenemissions.org under the Giving Tab/Alabaster. That Alabaster page also contains resources for learning more about Alabaster and for promoting it in your local church.

However, opportunities for involvement like directed giving are most effective when we go beyond merely writing a check or keeping a box for spare change. Our participation in God's mission is as much about allowing God to direct our thoughts and our resources to something beyond us as it is about making sure a specific financial need is met. So, keep your Alabaster box. And when you put money into it, pause to pray for those congregations that are still meeting in temporary facilities without a place they can call their own. Write a check for the Alabaster Offering, but also offer to do something to help your local church work on its facility (like during a local church work day), or even suggest that your whole church be involved in helping a fellow congregation that has needs with their building.

Human beings relate best when we have places to relate from. That's why home and church are so important to us.

By giving to Alabaster, by praying for congregations that need buildings, and by offering to help where you can, you become an agent of God's provision in others' lives. We are blessed to be a blessing, and Alabaster is one good way for us to pass that blessing along.

Chapter 3



No Longer “The Least of These . . .”

David is from Ecuador. His parents were very poor when he was growing up, and they had to work hard to become pastors because they had had so few opportunities for education.

By God’s grace, however, David’s story turned out very different from theirs. When he was young, David’s father told him that he and his sister were getting new “godparents,” people who would help David and his sister have the opportunities for education that their parents never had.

David didn’t know what “godparents” were, but he quickly learned the importance of these new friends. They were David’s Child Sponsorship partners. These people from half a world away faithfully supported David and his sister so they could go to school—and this paved the way for David to become the leader of one of our Nazarene schools in South America today.

Not only did Child Sponsorship provide for David's family in material ways, it also shaped his whole outlook. David says that being connected to this family so far away gave him a bigger picture of the world than he would have had otherwise. It showed him how important it was for all of God's children to take care of each other. And it even gave him a creative outlet to express himself as he wrote letters to his sponsoring family.

To this day, David keeps a picture of the family he never met, but who made such a difference in his life. The picture constantly reminds him that all of us are blessed so that we, too, can be a blessing.

One of the biggest stresses on those who have answered God's call into full-time ministry—and this is true from the United States to Australia, from Brazil to Russia—is the stress of providing for their families financially. Those in full-time ministry often live in communities that can't provide for all of their needs. The stress of dealing with that can easily distract even the most dedicated pastors from their ministerial work, especially in areas of the world where economic resources are already scarce.

In 1983, the Church of the Nazarene created a program to help meet the needs of some of these struggling pastoral families, freeing the pastors from some of the worry so they could focus more of their time and energy on the ministry tasks to which God had called them. The program was called the Pastor's Children Education Fund, and it has evolved into what we now call the NCM Child Sponsorship Program.

Using a philosophy that they call “holistic child development,” the Child Sponsorship program uses the funds sent in by sponsors to promote the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and relational well-being of children.

No longer just designed to support pastors’ children, the NCM Child Sponsorship program strives to reach all children in impoverished communities through Child Development Centers (CDCs). As the sponsored children attend these centers, they receive education, nutrition, hear about the gospel, build relationships with the workers, other children, and caring sponsors, and even develop skills to sustain them in their future.

In 2015 alone, more than 19,640 children participated in 156 Nazarene CDCs in 36 world areas. Nazarene churches started new CDCs throughout the Africa, South America, and Eurasia regions. Additionally seven children from the Child Sponsorship program received scholarships to study at the university level.

Sponsors can choose the actual children they want to support, so the connection between sponsor and child can be very personal, and sponsors get regular reports—usually from the children themselves—about how they are doing and what difference the sponsorship is making.

Through NCM Child Sponsorship, families, Sunday School classes, and individuals in one part of the world can make a daily difference in the lives of pastors’ families in another part of the world. These relationships can last for years and end up significantly affecting the lives of the sponsoring families as well.

Take the story of Penny and Jamie. For about five years now, they have sponsored Teresa from Mexico. They chose her because her birthday was near their daughter's and because she was from the country where Jamie had lived as a missionary kid (MK). A few times a year, they get a letter from Teresa, sometimes with a picture she has drawn, and they read it together as a family. Though the letter comes with a translation, Jamie reads it in Spanish, since he grew up with that language. He pinpoints the things Teresa talks about to explain various aspects of Mexican life and culture that he remembers. Even though his children are only in early grade school, they get to hear about the way that other people live and to be exposed to the idea that other people's "normal" is different from theirs. They also get to see how easy it is to make a significant difference in people's lives by a relatively small investment of money and time.

As a result of this sponsorship arrangement, Teresa and her family have a better quality of life, and Penny and Jamie's children get a bigger vision of the world and their role in it. As is so often the case with our involvement in God's mission, blessings flow in both directions.

Kelly and Chris started sponsoring Cesia (se-SEE-uh) when Kelly was a pastor in Arkansas, USA. They wanted to help a child in need and, as a pastor, Kelly was particularly interested in helping a pastor's kid. She also wanted someone her daughters, pastor's kids themselves, could write to and share experiences with. Since she'd been to Mexico, she requested to sponsor a child from there, and Child Sponsorship connected her family with Cesia.

Kelly and Chris sponsored Cesia for 10 years. Through their support, Cesia was able to attend school and get an education. The connection also helped their children catch a vision of a world beyond the one they knew. Their children wrote letters to her, and the family always included her in their prayers. Their youngest daughter was only a baby when they started sponsoring Cesia, and she never knew a time when family prayer time didn't include Cesia. Once she even asked why she had a sister that she never saw.

After 10 years, Cesia graduated from school and the sponsorship relationship ended, much to Kelly and Chris's disappointment. Though they no longer have contact with her, her inclusion as a member of their extended family made a real difference in their lives, and they find that they still miss her.

Child Sponsorship is much more than just sending a regular check; it's a chance to personally connect oneself to a part of the church that we may never meet but to whom we are still connected as the family of God.

What You Can Do

Sponsoring a child is easy. For approximately US\$1 a day, you, your family, your Sunday School class, or even your local church can make a lasting difference in a child's life, and in the ministry of that child's parents, and ultimately in the community in which that child lives.

Start by going to the Sponsor A Child page on the NCM website (www.ncm.org). There you can choose a child to sponsor, set up a regular way to donate your sponsorship

money, and get the answers to any other questions you might have about the process. When you sign up, you'll receive a sponsorship packet within about two weeks and can immediately begin establishing a relationship with your sponsored child.

If you want to do more than just sponsor a child, you can also learn how to be what NCM calls an "advocate," someone who accepts a more intensive role in promoting the welfare of children. Advocates try to learn more about what's going on in the lives of children in need so they can encourage other people to be more involved as well. To learn more about that role, and to order an "advocacy kit," go to the Sponsor A Child page on the NCM website (www.ncm.org) and click on the Become An Advocate link at the bottom of the page.

Sponsoring a child is one of the easiest, quickest, and most personal ways to branch out in mission. Because the World Evangelization Fund supports the structures that make sponsorship possible, it is also one of the most efficient, requiring little overhead expenses.

So what are you waiting for? Make a difference in a child's life today.



Harnessing Our Power to Change the World

Young people desire to change the world. What would happen if you gave them the chance?

That's what Larry Bollinger, director of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM), and Gary Hartke, director of Nazarene Youth International (NYI), wondered when they began to dream about collaborating in the spring of 2014.

The current generation of young people—often labeled “millennials”—is very interested in issues of social justice and compassion. However, many of them are also suspicious of the church—especially when they don't feel as though the church cares about the same things that they do.

NYI's mission is to help young people in their discipleship to Christ and equip them to serve others, and NCM's mission is to mobilize churches to serve those in need and proclaim the gospel in both word and deed.

Because their missions dovetail, a partnership between the two entities seemed the most natural idea in the world.

For such a partnership to work, however, they would need to find someone who lived in and knew well both the worlds of NYI and NCM—someone with experience in youth ministry who also had a passion for social justice and the way it connected to Christian discipleship.

They soon found a youth ministry veteran named Brooklyn Lindsey. Rev. Lindsey had been a youth pastor for over a decade, and she had actively been helping young people think about social justice. She had taught justice seminars for youth around the country and had even written some curriculum for youth connecting social justice and Christian discipleship.

When Larry and Gary approached her about the possibility of leading an effort to connect young people and social justice throughout the denomination, she jumped at the opportunity.

Throughout the last half of 2014, Brooklyn traveled and talked, worked and wrote, and listened and learned. She tried to figure out how Nazarene young people from around the world wanted to connect their Christian faith to real-world action and how the church could come alongside them and empower them in that endeavor.

At the large Nazarene youth gathering called “Third Wave” in Costa Rica in January 2015, she began field-testing some of her ideas among young people and listening to their suggestions. She was encouraged to see how many young people around the world were excited about living

out their faith in justice-oriented ways, and she was challenged as she tried to pull so many different threads together into one project that would help everyone.

Slowly but surely, however, the general shape of the project came together. Since NCM, NYI, and Brooklyn wanted to create a large vision for the role that justice plays in helping people see the reality of the kingdom of God, they named their whole project “The Justice Movement.”

As a partnership between NYI and NCM, it would be youth-led. It would empower young people to be involved in their communities and to help their communities get involved in helping other communities around the world. It would also be holistic and global, using the various concerns to start conversations about the issues that affect human well-being—relational, physical, and spiritual. It would focus on children and communities that nurture them. Most importantly, it would foster the kind of transformation of people and communities that only an encounter with Christ could create.

Justice, however, can be a nebulous concept unless it is given a practical focus. They needed to start by honing in on one aspect of justice that young people could support and that would make real differences in communities. Considering the various needs around the world and the capacities the church already had to address them, they decided to start with water. They decided to address the lack of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene in so many impoverished communities around the world, and they called this first global campaign “Just Water.”

This new initiative was launched at the USA/Canada Nazarene Youth Conference (NYC) in Louisville, Kentucky, USA, in July 2015. The theme of that conference, “Thy Kingdom Come,” provided a great atmosphere for the Justice Movement to start encouraging young people to think about the real way their faith could affect the world. The leaders prepared an awareness-creating curriculum, designed events that youth could hold to draw attention to this cause, and created videos to highlight the need. When NYC arrived, they were ready to go.

Since the Justice Movement and the “Just Water” campaign were officially launched in July 2015, this is one of the newest opportunities for mission involvement available. In the first few months almost US\$12,000 had been given, which is the average cost for the kind of projects that can secure safe water for a given community.

The first target community was in Sri Lanka, where the “Just Water” funds will be used for drilling and maintaining wells and the pumps that serve them, providing improved sanitation facilities, and educating people to practice better hygiene so they will experience fewer water-borne diseases.

However, since all this work is done in and through a local church, supported by the broader Church of the Nazarene, the benefits go far beyond helping people take care of their physical needs. The goal of the Justice Movement is not just community development in a secular sense, but full transformation of lives through Jesus Christ.

As a local church demonstrates God’s love by helping its neighbors with better access to clean water, more of those

neighbors want to hear more about that love—particularly as it is expressed in the gospel. Other local churches from around the world come alongside that particular local church through their prayers and donations to obediently follow Jesus’ words about meeting others’ needs, and they, too, become a part of growing the kingdom of God in that place.

What You Can Do

You can support and get involved with the Justice Movement in many ways, whether or not you are one of the those young people for whom this opportunity is specifically designed. You can find all the resources and possibilities on their website: www.justicemovement.com, but here are a few of the highlights.

A good way to start is for churches and youth groups to host a Just Water Weekend. A leader’s guide is available on the website to show you how to do that. A Just Water Weekend is a time to focus on the problem and encourage people to get involved in helping to solve it. A Just Water curriculum has already been prepared so you can learn—and help others learn—just why this is such an important justice issue in our world today and how addressing it can open doors for God’s kingdom.

Another way to get involved and raise awareness is by participating in a Just Water Challenge. The challenge is to only drink water for a defined period of time (7, 40, or 365 days). You can use that “fast” to foster awareness for the need for clean water resources and to come alongside those who

struggle to obtain what many around the world easily procure. You can also use the challenge as a fund-raiser and to draw attention to the need. Every time you turn down coffee or soda to drink water and people ask you why, you can tell them about what you are doing and share your passion for this cause (www.justwater.causevox.com).

There are other ways of getting involved as well, from showing videos to your church or youth group to putting up posters to draw people's attention to this issue. If you are a young person, take the initiative to talk to your youth group or your church about these options. If you are a church leader, share these resources with the youth leaders of your church and support their efforts by working together. This is an NYI/NCM partnership, and it's designed to be led by youth. If you can get others to join you, launch a campaign or host a Just Water Weekend. If not, consider doing a personal challenge as a way of raising the importance of the issue. Perhaps out of that, others will want to join you and you can take the next step.

No matter your age or level of involvement, giving to the World Evangelism Fund (WEF) will help the Justice Movement and the Just Water campaign. The World Evangelism Fund provides the undesignated money and mission network that all Nazarene ministries need. Your gifts create and sustain ministries, and allow ministry personnel to spread the gospel. Both NYI and NCM benefit directly or indirectly from the World Evangelism Fund.

If you are older, mentor and encourage young people to be involved, and lead them by the example of your own

involvement. Become more aware of social issues and how we are called to follow Christ's words in passages such as Matthew 25. Idealism comes naturally to young people, and everyone wants to make a difference. Here's a great way to help them focus their difference-making desires on justice and the kingdom of God. As one of the Justice Movement's slogans says, "It doesn't matter when you start. It only matters that you do."

Chapter 5



Beneath the Jungle Moon

The jungle is normally dark at night. Perhaps a few scattered lanterns or torches prick little holes in the darkness, maybe a candle illuminates a foot or two here and there in the village. Sometimes the moon will peek in the scattered patches of open land. Otherwise, the normal night is black as pitch.

But not tonight. Tonight a strong white glow emanates not from the sky, but from the open area in the center of the village. And the people gather to see what this light is.

A few sturdy poles hold up a large white sheet, and on that sheet, a series of moving images dance while a loudspeaker gives voices to the images and narrates what is happening.

Some people sit on the ground, some sit on makeshift seats of logs, some are standing. Before them, an extraordinary story is being played out that tugs at their hearts.

When, after the images are all gone, someone invites people to pray about what they saw, a number of people get

up and move to the front. After they pray, they meet a pastor from the next village, and he agrees to come back and meet with them and help them develop their newfound faith.

Three thousand miles away, those same images are played under the same moon. But this time they're shown against the interior wall of a house, this time projected by a much smaller device and with a smaller audience. The story is the same, though narrated in a different language.

The audience is in a dark interior room, as far away from windows as they can be. It wouldn't do for any passerby to see. The authorities would certainly not approve of this movie; they don't want anyone talking about the man whose story is unfolding in pictures on that wall.

The viewers watch in silence, but something inside them—their emotions and more—is deeply stirred. When the movie is over, the man who brought it to their house, one of their fellow citizens with a very different outlook on life, asks if they want to pray. A husband and wife look at each other, afraid.

“Just think about what you have seen,” the man says as he packs the small projector into an inconspicuous backpack. “I'll come back next week, and we can talk more about it.”

With that, he shoulders his backpack and slips into the lights and bustle of a city at night.

Scenes like these have been repeated at least hundreds of times on every continent, from big cities to small villages, from tropical islands to frozen wastes, from gatherings of hundreds to a single person watching on a tiny screen. Sometimes simply the sound is broadcast on a Bluetooth device

that other riders on a train can hear and learn the forbidden story. Over and over again, people have heard the message of the gospel for the first time and accepted Christ as their Savior from the story of His life as told in the *JESUS* Film.¹

The *JESUS* Film is one of the greatest tools for missions evangelism that the church has known. Campus Crusade for Christ created it in 1978 after five years of careful research and writing. Based on the Gospel of Luke, the film attempts to translate the scripture directly to the screen, adding as little extra-biblical material as possible.

In May 1997, Campus Crusade approached the Church of the Nazarene about forming a partnership to use this evangelistic tool to start churches and reach the lost for Christ. Campus Crusade would provide the film and the equipment, and the Church of the Nazarene would provide the personnel and infrastructure necessary to show the film, disciple the new believers, and form the churches that would gather these new disciples into communities. The agreement was signed in August of that year and just a month later, with the full approval and endorsement of the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene, the *JESUS* Film Harvest Partners (JFHP) Office was created.

From 1998 to 2015, JFHP teams reported 72 million evangelistic contacts, resulting in almost 14 million new

¹ *JESUS* Film Harvest Partners and Campus Crusade for Christ have an agreement about how each ministry's work with the film *JESUS* will be written to avoid confusion. *JESUS* Film Harvest Partners, the ministry for the Church of the Nazarene, refers to the film as the *JESUS* Film or *JESUS* (no italics). This is to distinguish their ministry from Campus Crusade's *JESUS* Film Project. The style difference is reflected in this book.

Christians, about half of whom also began discipleship training. Out of that work, more than 55,000 new preaching points have been established, many of them in areas closed to traditional mission work. Many of these preaching points eventually become fully organized Churches of the Nazarene.

Since the JESUS Film is available in nearly 1,400 languages, it is one of the most versatile tools for evangelism, reaching into places with the message of salvation in the language of people's hearts. In one South Asian area that is resistant to the gospel, more than 2,000 churches have been started on one district through the work of JFHP teams using the JESUS Film alone.

JFHP is built on the foundation of the World Evangelism Fund of the Church of the Nazarene (WEF). WEF provides the infrastructure through which JESUS Film teams function. The teams are grassroots workers whose efforts are coordinated through the district, country, field, and region. They are responsible for evangelism and the beginning of ongoing discipleship through preaching points. Pastors for the JFHP church plants are trained in seminaries supported by WEF. Church buildings are built through Alabaster funds and the labor of Work & Witness teams. JFHP would not exist as a stand-alone ministry. The global structure of the Church of the Nazarene, as supported by WEF, makes JFHP's efforts possible. The investment has resulted in over 14 million men, women, and children making decisions to follow Christ. WEF is an investment in eternity.

Jesus himself noted that the harvest was plentiful but that the workers were few (Luke 10:2). As a tool for reaching

that harvest, the JESUS Film has proven to be extraordinarily effective. If your heart beats especially for evangelism and missions, then maybe this is the opportunity to branch out into missions that you've been longing for.

What You Can Do

JESUS Film Harvest Partners has a number of ways to get involved, and the best procedure to start exploring them is by visiting their website: www.jfhp.org.

Besides multiple links to videos and stories from JESUS Film events around the world, you will also find links to various JESUS Film-related evangelistic resources, including the ability to download the JESUS Film in just about any language you can think of.

The purpose of the JESUS Film is evangelism, and one way you can get involved is to learn how to use the evangelistic resources available through JFHP to reach others for Christ right where you live. Sharing the gospel is intimidating to many Christians, but JFHP has a number of tools—from EvangeCubes® to the *JESUS* Film itself—that you can use to more easily tell people about Christ.

Start where you are. Download the JESUS Film and watch it. Think of some non-Christian friends you have who might be interested in watching that presentation. All Christians should want to share the source of the joy that governs their lives, and the resources available through JFHP could empower you to do that.

If you want to be involved personally in the work of showing the JESUS Film, there are two main ways to make

that happen. First, you could encourage your local church or your district to form a Ministry Trip. That's similar to a Work & Witness trip that uses JESUS Film showings as its central evangelistic thrust. There are needs for teams all over the world. Depending on the size of your group and the resources you could bring to it, JFHP would help you find the opportunity that works best for you. For a list of needed teams and to get the conversation going about starting your own trip, go to www.jfhp.org/ministrytrips.

The second way to get involved is by taking part in what JFHP calls a Mission Trip. These trips involve groups of individuals from around the country to help deliver JESUS Film equipment to places where it is needed. These trips are already scheduled and need workers to sign up. Such trips give you an opportunity to see what JESUS Film Harvest Partners ministry looks like firsthand and to experience a short time in another culture, attending local churches, and meeting church leaders. Since each participant pays his or her own way, JFHP is fully committed to facilitating the work on the field. To explore what that might look like, go to www.jfhp.org and click on Partner Involvement.

Of course, in addition to these areas of personal involvement, JFHP can always use prayer partners, and even financial partners—people who will sponsor the cost of equipment or evangelistic resources, or teams, so the JESUS Film can be shown as often as possible in as many places as possible.

Given the number of showings and the number of people who have responded and the amount of money that has been raised so far, JFHP estimates that it only costs about US\$3 to reach each new person for Christ.

The goal of JFHP is to reach 100 million people for Christ, and they are nearly three-quarters of the way there. Your involvement could help them reach their goal, and affect your own life in the process.

Chapter 6



Making a Big Difference in a Short Time

Zuleika (zoo-LAY-kah) sat on the front step of her home in Pinar del Rio (Pee-NAHR del REE-oh), about 100 miles southwest of the capital city of Havana on the beautiful island of Cuba. She watched a group of men and women work on a new structure being built next to her house. The group was from the United States, which was a wonder in and of itself, and they were there to help to construct a new church, which might have been an even greater wonder.

Zuleika turned her attention back to the group of children gathered around her door. They listened to another visitor from the US, Nohora (NOH-rah), tell them a story about Jesus. Originally from Colombia, Nohora knew Spanish, which was the only language the children understood. Nohora had confessed to Zuleika at the beginning of this week that she was nervous about teaching the kids, but that the leader of their group had told her, “Just love them. The rest is up to Christ.”

Zuleika thought that was pretty good advice. The kids were open and eager, asking Nohora a bunch of questions, and they could tell that she really cared about them.

Zuleika saw that the workers were getting ready to take a break, so she got up from the step and headed back into the house. With the help of her son, Carlitos (cahr-LEE-tohs), she got some coffee ready for them, along with fresh mangos that Carlitos had picked early that morning. Coming back out of the house with the tray, she passed through the group of children and smiled at Nohora. Nohora smiled back, both of them feeling that deep sense of connectedness that comes from being sisters in Christ.

Zuleika had met Nohora the previous year, in 2012, when Nohora had come with a group of Americans, exploring ways they might help their Cuban brothers and sisters. Now, with the US and Cuban governments easing some travel restrictions, it was possible for some groups from each country to visit the other, and so the American branch of the Church of the Nazarene was looking for ways to further help their Cuban brothers and sisters. They had come from a place with the exotic name of *Oklahoma*, and they were looking to bring another group to the country on a trip they called *Work & Witness*.

The government was going to let the group use the plot of land right next to Zuleika's house, and this group would come and help build a church there. It sounded like an exciting venture, especially for a new Christian like Zuleika, and she would have a front row seat.

Sure enough, a year later a group of 17 Americans showed up and labored all day for several days to help the church get built. Zuleika thought the least she could do was give them coffee.

A year later, another team came. This time, besides continuing work on the physical building, they helped build the church in less tangible, but important, ways. They held a couple of events for women, teaching them about the gospel and encouraging them to share their new faith with their family and friends.

Nohora also returned; and she helped train Zuleika to teach the children, nurture them in their faith, and encourage them to share that faith with their parents. Many of those parents practiced Santería (sahn-tah-REE-ah), a religion that blends elements of Roman Catholicism with traditional religious beliefs from Africa.

One group helping another group, which reaches out to help another group, and so on—that's the way God's mission goes forward. While it is important to support that work with our giving and our praying, nothing replaces the joy and satisfaction of getting personally involved. That's what Work & Witness in the Church of the Nazarene is all about—giving people a chance to invest their time and presence in the work God is doing to grow His church around the world.

Often groups will go on a short-term trip to be a part of a building project; sometimes they help the local church with other kinds of projects like clinics or compassionate ministry. However, while the local church always appreciates

the work and the materials teams bring, the eternal benefits of the trip aren't found in the buildings they help construct. The rewards are found in the relationships that develop, in the testimonies for the Kingdom that service represents, and in developing that awareness that God's mission is always bigger than our little corners of the world.

The Work & Witness ministry of the Church of the Nazarene was founded more than 40 years ago. Since 1974, these short-term mission teams have dedicated more than 5,000 years of labor worldwide.

The vision of connecting people personally and materially to God's work around the world has also resulted in more people developing a broader and deeper vision for God's kingdom. Our vision is diminished when we can only see the small slice of that kingdom where we live. These short-term trips have also planted seeds for much deeper engagement, as many people move from these two- to three-week trips to dedicating months, years, and even their whole lives to cross-cultural service.

If you want a deeper vision for missions than you've ever had and you've never been on a Work & Witness trip, then maybe now is the time to branch out.

What You Can Do

Work & Witness provides opportunities to experience God's kingdom away from home, and you take the best advantage of these opportunities by joining a trip. Many districts and local churches will sponsor trips, and you can easily find out what's happening on your district by

contacting your local or your district NMI president. There is also a good list of possible projects and an abundance of helpful resources pertaining to Work & Witness online at workandwitness.nazarene.org.

There are trip possibilities for just about any age group and just about any budget. While specialized skills like carpentry and bricklaying are always welcome and useful, all that's really required is a desire to serve Christ. "Just love them; the rest is up to Christ." That is about as good a motto for Work & Witness as you can find.

Even if you can't go on a trip yourself, you can always support those who go. You can support them in prayer, praying that God would use these short-term trips to instill in people a bigger vision of the kingdom of God than they ever had before. You can pray for the safety of the team and for opportunities for them to share the gospel and the love of Christ with those around them. You can pray that the team demonstrates an attitude of loving service even when things do not go exactly as planned.

You can also support Work & Witness trips financially. If you know someone who is going on a trip—especially a young person who might be trying to discern a call to missions—help make that trip possible for the person. If a particular area of the world tugs at your heart, find out if any teams are going to that area and help them buy the materials they might need to make their trip a success. Even if the donations are small, they are still meaningful. After all, the work of missions is God's work. God just "lets us help" by using our time and talents, our prayers,

and our financial resources. And each bit that we invest in God's kingdom becomes an offering that honors God and connects us more deeply to all God is doing throughout the world.

Chapter 7



Exploring the Call

Joel and Sara met while on a summer mission trip in college. Joel Mullen was attending Southern Nazarene University in Oklahoma, USA, and Sara Pullen, Mount Vernon Nazarene University in Ohio, USA; and they had both signed up for the same summer mission experience.

Independently, both young people had felt a call to missions, so the trip was a natural way to explore what that meant for them. It was the early 1990s, and those were the early days of e-mail. So as the people going on the trip began e-mailing each other, Joel and Sara corresponded even before they met in person. By the end of their short-term mission experience, they each knew that they had found a lifelong partner.

They became engaged to be married; and as they were planning for and praying about the next step in God's journey for them, an unexpected opportunity arose. Joel's missions professor at SNU, Dr. Howard Culbertson,

approached him about a volunteer opportunity in Italy. Missionaries had not been in Italy for a while, and a church in Sicily requested young volunteers to serve with them. Dr. Culbertson wondered if Joel and Sara would be willing to volunteer there for a year or so.

After praying and contemplation, Joel and Sara decided that this was the perfect way to “field test” their call. They could serve the church that needed their help and “try out” the missionary life to see if that was truly what God was calling them to.

After all, until a person lives cross-culturally, he or she never knows how he or she will handle such things as culture shock or learning a new language or adjusting to new food. Their short-term mission experience had not been long enough to raise those issues, but a medium-term engagement like this would be perfect for giving them the true missions experience.

Joel and Sara were married in June; and by August, the Mullens were on the ground in Italy with a few other volunteers. They helped the church in Catania (kah-TAHN-yuh) while living out of their suitcases and learning what it would really mean to serve God outside their home cultures. They learned the basics of Italian, learned how little money they actually needed to live on, and learned to fall in love with a people not their own. That two-year stay in Italy confirmed and anchored their call to missions.

The Mullens returned to the United States to finish preparing for mission service. Joel attended Nazarene Theological Seminary in Missouri, USA, to obtain his

Master of Divinity degree, and Sara took the classes she felt would benefit her work. Because Joel had already served a short time on the mission field, he felt like he received much more benefit from his mission-oriented education. He knew what questions to ask, and he knew why all the materials he was learning were important. Education was not just a series of hoops to jump through, but was a way to discuss answers to the questions he encountered while he was on the mission field.

Joel and Sara applied for mission service. Because of their previous mission experience, the church chose to send them back to Italy. They were the first full-time missionaries to be appointed there in nearly two decades. After 12 more years of serving in Italy and Eastern Europe, they have come back to the United States, where Joel is serving his alma mater, Southern Nazarene University. His task there has been to encourage young people to engage in mission through short-term opportunities called SIMS (SNU In Missions) and then by connecting them to medium-term experiences, like a year of volunteer service. In his time of service, the SIMS program has grown from 52 participants (on 5 teams in 5 world areas) in 2013 to 195 participants (on 22 teams in 19 world areas) in 2016.

Joel and Sara expect to return to cross-cultural ministry one day. For now, because Joel has seen the power of mission encounters in his own life, he wants to help others connect to these experiences as well. For Joel and Sara, mission experiences confirmed their call.

Not everyone who participates in medium-term missions work goes on to pursue long-term mission work. That fact, however, does not lessen the power of those transformative experiences. That's what Jeff and Cheryl Crouch learned when they headed from their home to the opposite side of the world to share in God's mission.

Jeff and Cheryl began dating near the beginning of their college years at Southern Nazarene University in the late 1980s. Sometime during that time, they heard a life-changing quote from Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary from the 1500s who went from Europe to India and finally to Japan to share the gospel. His advice to the young Jesuits-in-training back in Europe was, "Give up your small ambitions."

That idea challenged Jeff and Cheryl. They began to discuss what it would mean for them to be open to God's big dreams for their lives, and they wondered if that might mean becoming missionaries. Even though neither of them felt a distinct "call" to missions, they wanted to be ready for that call if it came.

They graduated and married in 1991. They immediately committed to paying off their school debts as quickly as possible so they could be financially free to go to the mission field should God call them. They both worked but lived on one income, dedicating the other to their school loans. After two years, they were debt free. As if on cue, a door to cross-cultural ministry opened right away in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

In PNG, the best school for the children of missionaries to attend was five hours away from the place where most

of the Nazarene missionaries lived. To allow the students to live near the school, the church had started a Nazarene Youth Hostel, and that hostel needed a new set of dorm parents. Jeff and Cheryl were only 24 and had not yet become parents themselves. However, when the call came, they decided this was one of those “big ambitions” that was worth giving up their small ones for. So they agreed to go be dorm parents.

The Crouches spent two years in PNG being “Aunt Cheryl” and “Uncle Jeff” to 17 teenaged MKs. They cooked, cleaned, helped with homework, coached basketball, led Bible studies, and generally cared for these charges while their parents were hours away.

Their world was also enlarged in ways that would have never happened had they stayed at home or only made short visits to other countries. Cheryl recalls the time that they were invited to a church dedication in “the bush”:

As I stood in the midst of the rain forest, eating food off of a palm frond which served as a truly disposable plate, surrounded by people who did not speak my language and looked nothing like me, I could have been overwhelmed by the differences I experienced. Instead, I was overwhelmed by the similarities—brothers and sisters in Christ who desired to bring their children up as part of a strong church family, worshipping God and making a public commitment and then celebrating together with (what else?) great food. That day showed me in a new way what a glorious, amazing God we serve and

what a wonderful church we are privileged to serve Him through.

After two years, the Crouches returned to the United States to settle in Denton, Texas. But they never fully managed to leave Papua New Guinea behind. To this day, their medium-term mission experience has shaped their lives and continues to fuel their work to support missions. As soon as they returned, they became involved in discipleship ministries and the work of Nazarene Missions International (NMI) in their local church. Today, Cheryl is the NMI president of the West Texas District. Cheryl's experience with MKs also inspired her to write missions books for children, putting a vision of God's great redemptive purposes in front of them and helping them to hear God's call on their own lives.

Unlike the Mullens, Jeff and Cheryl never felt a call to full-time missionary service, but that's fine. God calls some to stay at home and support, just as God calls others to spend their lives on the mission field. Medium-term missions can be a bridge to both of those vocations.

What You Can Do

While anyone can take advantage of a short-term mission trip, packing up your life and family for six months or two years is much more daunting. Still, if God calls and you're open to the opportunity, it's amazing to see what can happen.

The best place to go to learn about medium-term mission opportunities (three months to two years) in the Church of the Nazarene is the Mission Corps website:

nazarene.org/mobilization. On that page, you will find a link to the list of currently requested volunteer openings from around the world. And when you're ready to take the next step to consider being a missionary in the Church of the Nazarene, for whatever length of time, go online to missioncorps.nazarene.org, click on Steps to Serve in the left menu, then click on the link to the Exploring Missions Form.

If you are interested in this, pray through the list and see if God may be directing you to give significant time in service to God's kingdom, even if you don't necessarily feel "called" to missions.

Of course, just showing up in a foreign country feels rather intimidating, and most of us aren't really prepared to do something like that. Fortunately, the Church of the Nazarene provides a focused time of training called Cross-Cultural Orientation (CCO). The CCO is a dynamic weekend event that provides an initiation for missions with the Church of the Nazarene. The weekend includes important sessions for orientation, tools for assessment, and interviews with the Global Mission Team. Interested candidates can view a schedule and register. Go online to missioncorps.nazarene.org and click on the Cross-Cultural Orientation tab.

Beyond the opportunities listed on that website, there are other ways to get involved cross-culturally for longer than a two-week mission trip. For example, Korea Nazarene University is always looking for English teachers. Usually the only requirement is being a native English speaker and having a bachelor's degree. In fact, there are a lot of oppor-

tunities for teachers throughout Asia. For more information on them, contact the Asia-Pacific Regional personnel coordinator by e-mail at rpc@apnaz.org.

Africa Nazarene University in Nairobi, Kenya, also uses medium-term volunteers to support its educational work. If you are qualified to teach at university level and are interested, you can visit their website (www.anu.ac.ke) or contact their deputy-vice chancellor for academics by e-mail at dvcacademic@anu.ac.ke.

Other opportunities abound within the structures of the Church of the Nazarene if you go looking for them. If a particular world area is of interest to you, search for opportunities by learning more and even talking to missionaries. If God wants to open a door for you, then the door will open.

Often, when we think about medium-term mission engagement, we assume that we should do nothing unless we feel called. While it's odd to think that someone would spend a lifetime on the mission field without some kind of call, medium-term missions only require the level of call that all Christians have to engage the kingdom of God and promote the gospel.

Cross-cultural service isn't for everyone. However, what would happen if we assumed that God wants us to go and then moved until the doors closed, instead of assuming God wants us to stay unless a door opens?

Is God calling you? Maybe you should take a step and find out.

Chapter 8



The Journey

When most of us think of missions, we think of people who spend their lives serving the Lord cross-culturally. While this book is designed to point out other ways people can be involved in God's mission, God continues to call individuals and couples to serve long-term beyond the comfort zone of the cultures to which they were born. As a church, we should all want to make that call as easy to hear as possible.

One good illustration of how that works is the story of Philip and Paula Troutman. The Troutmans serve in the Portuguese-speaking countries of southern Africa. Currently, they make their home in Angola, where they work for the Nazarene Bible Institute that prepares ministers for those countries. Their journey to the mission field is a great example of how the whole church can take part in helping people hear God's call.

Philip's first encounters with people from another culture came during his grade school years, when he visited

his aunt and uncle in New Mexico. They owned a farm that employed a number of immigrants from Mexico. Philip was amazed that his uncle could talk to these people who spoke a different language, and he resolved to learn Spanish, too. The simple hospitality of trying to speak another's language may seem like a small thing, but the kingdom of God is often built from such actions.

Through his junior high and high school years, the churches Philip attended always hosted missionaries; he remembers best the ones who came from Latin American countries. One missionary, serving in the Amazon, let the kids try out the large blowgun he had. Another set of missionaries, Larry and Eunice Bryant, frequently visited St. Paul's Church of the Nazarene in Kansas City, Missouri, USA. They always let Philip practice his broken-but-getting-better Spanish with them and encouraged him. They radiated joy about serving the Lord in South America, and that, too, impacted Philip.

After graduating from high school, Philip went to Bethany Nazarene College (now Southern Nazarene University) to study in their pre-med program. But he quickly came in contact with two missionary kids who continued to nudge his life toward cross-cultural service. One was Delores Wood, who taught Spanish and who had grown up in South America, where her parents had been missionaries. Her infectious love of all things Hispanic led Philip to drop the pre-med idea, change his major to Spanish, and attend a Spanish-speaking church.

The other missionary kid who affected Philip's life was from Cabo Verde (KAH-boh VAIR-day) and named Paula Stroud. Paula was a fourth-generation Nazarene whose parents had been pastors and missionaries since she was born. Although Paula came to college wanting to return to the mission field one day, she was wrestling with the idea that maybe her call to missions was her own idea and not God's.

Philip and Paula started dating after they both went on a college Spanish club trip to Mexico. Paula told Philip about her dream of ministry, her desire to be a pastor's wife, and her thoughts of maybe returning to Cabo Verde to continue her family's ministry there. But at the time, Philip still didn't feel any specific call from God.

Philip and Paula married. Soon they received the final piece of the call, courtesy of the words of another missionary, Mark Rudeen (roo-DEEN), who was serving with his family in South America. Rev. Rudeen was meeting with SNU students, including Philip, for breakfast after doing a mission rally at a local church. Philip was showing off his Spanish-speaking skills to the missionary when Mark spoke the words that "sealed the deal" in terms of helping Philip hear God's call.

"You have no right *not* to use your talents for the Lord," Mark told Philip.

To Philip that was like hearing God's voice. He immediately went home, talked to Paula, and the two agreed that God was calling them to ministry and cross-cultural service.

The journey since that time has been varied. While working in a Spanish-speaking church in Chicago, Illinois, USA,

Philip and Paula attended a district NMI convention where John and Linda Seaman were the missionary speakers. At that event, they both felt individually impressed that God was calling them to be missionaries in Africa.

When they talked to each other afterwards and learned that they both had felt the same thing, they knew the call was from God. That call has since led them to learn Portuguese, to work on Portuguese-speaking fields in Africa, to return to the United States for further education, and now to teaching back on the mission field.

And there is no telling where the journey will lead next.

One thing shines through in Philip and Paula's story, however: God often uses lots of little connections and incidents from many parts of God's church to guide people on the path to missionary service.

By engaging with missionaries and taking little steps of faith, Philip eventually found his way into a lifetime of cross-cultural service. He and Paula have also passed on their mission orientation to their children—one is now serving with his wife as a missionary in Asia.

As we engage with those who have answered God's call to missions, we open ourselves to that call as well. And when we encourage others to engage, we help them stay open, too.

Of course, God does not always call people into the work of missions by a predictable process of gentle nudges, a feeling of call, a time of preparation, and then deployment on the mission field. Take the example of Mitch Modine (Moh-DEEN).

For the last eight years, Dr. Mitchel Modine has been a professor of Old Testament at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS). Although he is an American, he now lives and works in Manila, Philippines. His ministry involves working with students from all parts of Asia, as well as other parts of the world. He helps them to understand the Hebrew scriptures more deeply and prepares them to be effective pastors, ministers, and preachers.

Even though he spreads the gospel cross-culturally, if you were to ask him, Mitch would tell you that he doesn't really have a "call to missions" the way we normally understand that phrase. Instead, he's just followed the open doors that God placed in front of him and has ended up serving God, effectively and fruitfully, across the ocean from his home country.

Mitch received his call to ministry at the USA/Canada Nazarene Youth Congress (now Nazarene Youth Conference) in Orlando, Florida, USA, in 1991. He headed to Trevecca Nazarene College (now Trevecca Nazarene University) in Nashville, Tennessee, USA, to prepare for that call and then to Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, USA. Halfway through his seminary program, he felt confirmation that he was called to be an educator. Upon graduation from Seminary, he headed to Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, USA, to do post-graduate work in Old Testament.

When he finished his coursework, Mitch moved back to Nashville to write his dissertation, taking an "ordinary day job" at a bank and looking for the next door God would

open. As it happened, he had to wait a while. Even after the dissertation was finished, Mitch found few Bible-teaching jobs available. Four-and-a-half years later, he was still working at a bank, still looking for the place God had been preparing him to serve.

Then, in early February 2008, on Ash Wednesday, Mitch got an unexpected e-mail from Dr. Floyd Cunningham, the president of APNTS in Manila.

“Our Old Testament professor is moving back to Korea to pastor, and I understand you have an Old Testament degree,” Floyd wrote. “Would you be interested in applying to teach at our school?”

Cross-cultural teaching was not part of Mitch’s plan, but he was willing to let God work however God decided. So he began to pursue that open door. Because of the need and the time frame, Mitch ended up going through the whole missionary candidacy process rather quickly and somewhat backwards. After filling out all the applications, he went to a “final missionary assessment,” which is usually one of the last steps to becoming an assigned missionary in the Church of the Nazarene.

After the church decided to send Mitch to the Philippines, they sent him to a Cross-Cultural Orientation (CCO), which is often one of the first steps in the candidacy process. At the CCO, he learned things like how to deal with culture shock and some basic advice about living outside of one’s home culture. Just a month or so later, in June of 2008, he touched down in Manila and has been living and serving there ever since.

Even after eight years of living in the Philippines, marrying a Filipino lady, and learning a functional level of Tagalog (tuh-GAH-luhg; or Filipino, one of the two national languages of the islands), Mitch still articulates his fundamental calling as education. However, even if his sojourn in Manila turns out to be a “long-term temporary” assignment, he knows that—at least for now—he is where God has called him to be, serving in the way God has prepared him to serve. The fact that he does it cross-culturally and has done it for a while makes him a missionary. The fact that his journey is not a typical one reminds us that God is free to find and prepare His servants however He deems best.

Sometimes God calls people and then leads them to prepare. At other times, God prepares people first and then opens a door and beckons them through it. That, too, can be seen as a calling. Perhaps if more people were simply open to following God’s call wherever it leads, they would discover the special rewards of serving God outside their comfort zone.

What You Can Do

God’s mission will always need Kingdom agents who will commit themselves to the long haul of building bridges for the gospel across the barriers of culture and language. If you want to be involved in fostering and promoting that work, you can do that in a number of ways.

First of all, if you feel that long-term service to God outside of your home culture might be a part of God’s will for your life, contact the Mission Corps personnel in the Glob-

al Ministries Center for the Church of the Nazarene. They like to keep in touch with people who are thinking about long-term missions and help them in their discerning and preparation. You can register your interest on their website (missioncandidateopportunities.nazarene.org), which also contains many helpful links about the various stages of becoming a long-term missionary. You should also talk to your pastor and NMI president about your possible call and try to get in touch with your district's mission call coordinator.

Even if you don't think that long-term cross-cultural service is your vocation, you can still be a part of the church's work in helping those whose are called to that kind of service. One important way to do that is to encourage the young people you know to participate in short-term mission opportunities and support them financially in those endeavors. God often calls people to long-term missions through their short- and medium-term experiences. Empowering them to make these trips is often a way to open the door to their calling.

Another important way to support long-term missionaries is to help create a culture of participation in missions at your local church. The more often a local church puts cross-cultural ministry in front of people, the easier it is for people to hear any call God might be giving them in that direction. Attend the church's mission-oriented services, and listen to missionaries when they are on deputation. Read about missions (like you are doing right now!) and help people in your church see how important this facet of Kingdom work is.

Who knows? Even if you don't feel any call to mission service now, God may be waiting for just such an opportune moment to invite you to accept the task of sharing God's love in another part of the world.



The Easiest—and Hardest— Involvement

Of all the ways that we can lend our support to and participate in God's great redemptive mission, the twin disciplines of prayer and fasting are the easiest or the hardest—depending on how you look at it.

They're easy because they only require a commitment of time—no other resources needed. Anyone and everyone can pray. And they can do it whenever and wherever they are.

However, as easy as that sounds, many of us still find it hard to pray, at least for any serious length of time. Praying for a meal is easy. Short prayers in the morning or at bedtime are not difficult. But most of us would really struggle if we had to pray for a solid 30 minutes or an hour—even more so if we had to lead such a prayer for a group. And if you were to ask us to add some kind of fasting on top of that, many of us would be completely out of our element.

Perhaps the reason not enough of us pray deeply and well is that we don't really know what we are doing when

we pray. We often treat prayer like a laundry list or a set of instructions that we feel like we have to give to God (“Dear God, please do this, and please take care of that”). No wonder it feels like an odd exercise.

But what if we saw prayer as the powerful but mysterious way that God allows us to be involved in God’s activity? As something that God responds to but is not necessarily constrained by? Then we might want to participate more, and more often, with God’s work around the world through prayer.

Imagine a child coming in the house from playing outside on a summer day. She asks her mother, “Can I have some lunch?”

Unbeknownst to the child, Mom is already preparing the child’s favorite meal.

“Sure,” Mom says. Within minutes, the child’s lunch is in front of her. Was Mom responding to her daughter’s request? Sure, she was. Did the daughter’s request cause the mom to make lunch? No, not really. Would it have been right for the daughter to come in and sit down at the table, expecting lunch, and not say anything? Probably not. Would Mom have fed her anyway? Probably, but the daughter’s relationship to her mom is much better for having interacted with her about this request.

In many ways, that’s what praying for God’s work overseas is like. What we ask for—protection for the missionaries, open doors for the gospel, the salvation of those who have not yet heard, and the like—are all things God already wants to provide. After all, God loves the missionaries, and

God loves those people who have not yet heard the gospel. But prayer about those matters is the way God has given us to be involved in part of God's accomplishing them.

We cannot pretend we know how that works. But even in the absence of understanding, we can still trust that God knows what He is doing by calling us to pray. Through our prayers, God allows for our participation in mission work, even when we are not personally on the mission field.

So what about fasting? How does that add anything to our prayer?

Here again, we are easily prone to misunderstandings that make it hard for us to engage fasting as a discipline. It's easy to think that fasting makes a virtue out of the sheer act of sacrifice, as if going without a meal or two somehow makes us more holy or makes God want to listen more attentively to our prayers.

To many of us that sounds silly, and so we say to ourselves, "Why bother?" However, if we can give ourselves a more appropriate idea of fasting, then we almost automatically find we are more willing to engage it.

The point of fasting is not the negative act of giving up something that would otherwise be good. The point of fasting is the positive act of pursuing an important good, but one that happens to demand the surrender of a less-important good along the way.

It's kind of like what happens when people decide to start exercising. If you want the important goods of a healthy heart or a healthy weight, you find that you can only obtain those by giving up some goods involving comfort and ease.

A person doesn't exercise in order to be uncomfortable; he or she is just willing to take the discomfort as a necessary side effect of the pursuit of good health.

Fasting is like that. If we want the extra time and resources and discipline to focus on God's kingdom—and not fall into the trap of merely focusing on our own comfort and ease—then we find that we have to give up some of that comfort and ease to make room for those better things.

We may fast a meal in order to devote that time to prayer since our lunch break is the best time of the day we have to give to God. Or maybe we'll give up that meal in order to be able to send the money we would have spent on it to support some mission project or another.

Sometimes we fast because we need God to help us identify with those in need. Most of us rarely go hungry, unlike many people in the world. Experiencing hunger doesn't make us better Christians. But allowing ourselves to experience hunger might create an awareness of need that will motivate us to act. And that could make us more effective disciples of Christ.

Prayer and fasting are two of the most important ways we can be involved in God's mission, because they connect us into God's work in ways that transcend the limit of our resources. We can only be in one place at a time. But through prayer, God can connect us to God's work around the world. We have limited financial resources. God's resources, however, are infinite; prayer and fasting allow us to be a part of how God distributes those resources. And while we won't always get the answers to our prayers that we were

hoping for, no act of prayer is ever a waste of time. All the things that we do to open up our lives to God's great mission move us to be more effectively involved in it.

What You Can Do

One good place to go to begin to resource yourself on how to pray and what to pray about is the NMI web page on prayer: www.nazarenemissions.org/Praying. On that page, you will find resources, including a link to the Prayer Mobilization Line (PML), a weekly updated list of the most crucial prayer concerns for the mission work of the Church of the Nazarene. There's no better way to stay involved with—and informed about—the global work of the church. You can even get frequent updates by “liking” Nazarene Missions International and the NMI Prayer Mobilization Line on Facebook.

Another way to be intentional about making prayer a part of your involvement in missions is to pray consistently for specific missionaries. Perhaps missionaries have visited your church, or maybe people you went to school with are now serving on the field. If you have personal connections to missionaries, pray for those people. You can easily spend a half hour in prayer for missions by picking five missionaries you know or are connected to and then praying for each of them in turn, devoting a minute or so to the following six concerns:

1. Relationship with God—It would be nice if God worked somehow so that everyone called to cross-cultural service became a “super saint” once he or she reached the

mission field. We often put missionaries up on a spiritual pedestal. But the truth is they struggle in the same ways that the rest of us do to keep up a daily devotional routine, have a good prayer life, and keep their relationship to God healthy and growing. Pray for the missionaries' spiritual lives, that God would continually invite them into deeper relationship and empower them to do their work out of His resources and not their own.

2. Health—Living outside of your home environment always puts you at risk for diseases that your body isn't used to, and many areas of the world struggle to offer adequate health care to their people. Sometimes even the stresses of cross-cultural living can take their toll on a missionary's health. Pray that your missionary friends stay healthy and that God will keep them safe as they travel with their work. Pray, too, that they will find times of renewal for their minds and spirits, as well as their bodies.
3. Family—When missionaries go to the field, they go with their immediate families, but they also leave many loved ones behind. Cross-cultural living can put a great strain on families. Pray for couples, that they can keep their marital relationship vital and healthy. Pray for their children by name, if you can. Pray that the interactions between parents and children show the love of God and become a witness to all who know them. Pray, too, for the missionaries' extended families, the people who aren't with them on the mission field. It's hard on parents,

grandparents, and aunts and uncles to have their kids, grandkids, and nieces and nephews living so far away, seeing them only rarely, and missing so much of their growing up years. Those sacrifices are real, and we also support the missionary family as we pray for their family members who stay. We can pray that God would also encourage their hearts.

4. Ministry—Missionaries work in a variety of ministries from education to literature development to compassionate ministry projects to planting and leading local churches. Pray for the stability and success of those ministries: that the work will be effective, that the various ministry members would have good relationships with one another, and that God would provide the resources to sustain those ministries over time.
5. Evangelism—The purpose of missions is to spread the gospel and make disciples, so pray that God would open doors to allow that to happen. Pray that the missionaries would be empowered to share Christ whenever opportunities arise, and pray that people would be receptive to their message. Pray that God would guide the missionaries, giving them wisdom about the best opportunities to pursue. But also pray that God would use serendipitous interactions and chance encounters to make people more aware of God's love through that missionary's life and testimony.
6. Country—When missionaries live for a while in another place, they end up adopting it as a second home in their

heart. They feel their adopted country's ups and downs much like they feel those of their home country. Pray for the nation where the missionaries live. Pray for the government and the people and for the missionary's relationship to them. Many missionaries have to wrestle with visa issues and government bureaucracy to get permission to continue their work. Pray that those things happen with minimal hassle and disruption.

Prayers that cover those six areas will touch on almost all aspects of a missionary's life and ministry, and praying through a list has the advantage of helping you to focus, particularly if you often struggle to find the right words to say in prayer. Once you've prayed for the missionaries you know, you can extend your prayer ministry to others as well.

You can find lots of other Nazarene missionaries to pray for at the following website: www.nazarene.org/MissionaryProfiles. There is usually a "featured" missionary when you first load the page; and if you reload the page, you'll be shown a different person you can pray for.

Even if you can't devote 30 minutes to prayer, you can still pray for one missionary each day. Perhaps you could go through the above list of concerns for one of them on your lunch break or with your morning cup of coffee. Every prayer involves us more deeply in God's work and connects us to God's mission.

If you want to add the discipline of fasting to your prayer ministry, you could easily do that by following the suggestions listed earlier in this chapter. Give up one meal every

week, every other week, every month, or whatever. Devote that time to pray for a specific mission project (maybe one you read about in this book) and donate the money you would have spent on your meal to that cause.

Pick a new cause every month; and in the course of a year, you will have made a real difference for God's kingdom around the world in both material and spiritual ways. Chances are, that kind of engagement would make a significant difference in your own life as well.

Chapter 10



Connecting Your Passions With God's Passions

We are often tempted to think about cross-cultural ministry and missions as something different from our normal participation in church. We go to church and to Sunday School and to youth events and to potlucks and maybe to the occasional missions service, but it is easy to think of missions as something that happens “over there,” something quite disconnected from where we are “here and now.” Hopefully, through this book, you’ve seen different ideas of what you can do to bridge that gap.

Opportunities abound for you to branch out into missions physically, materially, and personally. You only need to find the opportunity (or two or three or four) that connects your interests and passions with God’s. You can give in ways that allow you to support missions broadly—such as through the World Evangelism Fund; and narrowly—such as to projects like Alabaster or Child Sponsorship. You can help on a mission field for a few weeks—such as with Work

& Witness or with a JESUS Film Harvest Partners trip—or for a few months. And no matter how much or how little time and money you have, you can be a part of God’s world-wide work with focused and intentional prayers. With all these opportunities, there’s no reason not to be involved.

Jesus said, “As you go, disciple the nations—all of them, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all the commandments I have given you. Look, I am with you day by day, all the way to the final coming together of all things” (Matthew 28:19-20, author’s paraphrase).

So...what are you waiting for?



Act On It

- All of the opportunities for mission involvement discussed in this book are made possible because they are supported by the World Evangelism Fund (WEF). Consider the branch of mission involvement you are most passionate about and how the World Evangelism Fund benefits it. Give to WEF, and know that you are also helping many other missions ministries for the Church of the Nazarene.
- Encourage the youth of your church to become involved in missions. A good way to do that is to encourage them to explore the Justice Movement site and to host a Just Water Weekend. Let them do the planning, and support their efforts.
- Show the JESUS Film or a shorter, updated version called *The Story of Jesus Through the Eyes of Children*, in your area. This can be done by purchasing copies of the

films and distributing them to your neighborhood or inviting the neighborhood to a JESUS Film showing at your church. Depending on where you live and the time of year, you might consider showing the film outdoors in a park or even on an outside wall of your church. The films and additional resources can be purchased by contacting JESUS Film Harvest Partners (913-663-5700; info@jfhp.org) or by ordering items online: www.jfhp.org/resources.

- Participate in a Work & Witness trip. Perhaps your church or district will be sponsoring a team in the near future that you can join. Another option would be to contact the Work & Witness Office and ask if there are teams that need extra members and could use your willing hands. If you cannot participate in a trip, provide financial resources for someone else to go. For more information, go to workandwitness.nazarene.org.
- Do you think God might be guiding you toward medium- or long-term service in missions? Attend a Cross-Cultural Orientation to explore the opportunities. To do so, go to missioncorps.nazarene.org and click on the Cross-Cultural Orientation tab for more information.
- Pray and fast for missions in the Church of the Nazarene, and encourage others to do so as well. There are many resources listed in this book that will help you in these disciplines. Begin praying now.