

Go, Engage, Invest

*Touching Lives with
the Hope of Christ*



Greg Barshaw

Foreword by Joni Eareckson Tada

GO, ENGAGE, INVEST

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Hope of Christ*



GREG BARSHAW

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FOREWORD

BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

In the early 1980s, I visited the Philippines with a Christian organization that had graciously shipped hundreds of wheelchairs for our team to deliver to needy Filipinos with disabilities. During our visit, the organization's in-country missionary invited my husband and me to his home for dinner. I was expecting to be driven to a poorer district of Manila. Instead, his house was in a compound on the outskirts of town, surrounded by high cinderblock walls and barbed wire. After multiple locks on the gate were opened, we made our way to their beautiful home resting on a well-groomed lawn—it looked like any other house on an American cul-de-sac. That evening, our dinner was by no means Filipino Chicken Adobo.

I felt awkward in such fine surroundings. And if I felt uncomfortable, I'm sure Greg Barshaw would have felt the same.

I've known Greg since I met his family in the 1970s at Grace Community Church. His father and mother were pillars in that congregation, serving as leaders and teachers—Fred and Mary Barshaw were incredibly welcoming to me, a

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newcomer to southern California who was just beginning an outreach to people with disabilities called *Joni and Friends*.

From the moment I met their son, Greg, I was impressed with his passion to serve the poor of the world. He had just returned home from Africa where he had been ministering among Ethiopians impacted by poverty, disease, and famine. Here was a man who humbly worked not only among people with disabilities in his church, but in impoverished nations alongside wounded people in desperate situations. And you could tell he loved it.

That was over four decades ago, and Greg Barshaw has continued to thrive doing this kind of work. He even helped develop our early programs at *Joni and Friends* and served on our board. He loves making Christ real by not only telling people about Jesus, but by showing them through practicing Christianity with his sleeves rolled up.

So, when my friend speaks and writes about missions, his words ring with confidence and authority. Is missionary work dangerous? “By all means,” Greg would probably say. If your service is not sacrificial and a little risky, then watch out—you might end up trying to do missions from behind a high cinderblock wall and barbed wire.

In his new book, *Go, Engage, Invest*, Greg Barshaw describes missions—whether here in the States or overseas—as much more than presenting the salvation message and listening to someone recite the Sinner’s Prayer. Giving the gospel is a way of life that makes a clear difference for Christ in your family, neighborhood, community...or in a nation overseas. My remarkable friend has written a practical and powerful guide to living out Christian missions among your coworkers, fellow students, or neighbors, whether they live down the street or in the thickets of the Amazon Basin.

Greg’s sage wisdom is particularly timely as many believers are now struggling to make Christ real in our skeptical and cynical culture. So, no matter where God is calling you to serve in missions, open the first chapter and get ready to practice the Good News with its sleeves rolled up.

Thank you, Greg, for all your help to me, my husband Ken, and to Joni and Friends. And bless you for distilling your knowledge and experience into this outstanding little book, showing us what it means to be a good and faithful missionary...what it means to shake salt and shine the light of Christ wherever our sphere of influence may be!

Joni Eareckson Tada

Joni and Friends International Disability Center



PREFACE

My daughter, Caitlin, lost her young child in a car accident. It was a devastating experience for our family that brought surprises we couldn't have anticipated. One of those surprises was seeing the way other Christians stepped in to support Caitlin and her family in their suffering. One woman from my daughter's church went to her house and took pictures of household items—detergent, refrigerated goods, and more—then went to the store and bought things in the specific brands Caitlin used. It was brilliant.

She didn't sit down with my daughter and ask what she liked; Caitlin was in no state to share what would be most helpful. Instead, her friend shouldered the burden herself and did the work to find out what she needed. That's radical ministry. The people who did the most for Caitlin were the people who didn't ask how they could help. They just saw a need and acted. These believers displayed a kind of sacrificial love that reflects the heart of the gospel—a pure love for God and others that we would all do well to emulate.

In the American church, we have lost the understanding of what it means to show mercy, compassion, and minister to grieving people. It doesn't come naturally. Much of that is because, as a culture, we have separated ourselves from grief and suffering. Institutions care for the sick and needy. We move old people to convalescent hospitals, and the ritual of

death happens apart from society, in morgues and funeral homes. That cultural reality has created some gaps in Christian ministry as a result.

All of us are products of our culture in one way or another. As we grow up in an increasingly sanitized and mechanized world, each generation loses practical experience with hardship. For this reason, you might be surprised how helpful it is to take a young person to two places: a morgue and a burn unit. One, so they see the reality of death, and the other, so they see the reality of hell. We need to reattach ourselves to the realities of what brokenness, pain, suffering, and loss look like, because daily life doesn't do that for us anymore. Our instincts as Christians are often to send a verse or a book to those in pain, but we know from the book of Job that approach isn't always right. Our metric is skewed.

But what if believers, with their unique gifts and talents, were to come together and share their gifts with one another? What if someone with the gift of mercy were to share how they do things in a really practical way? And what if another Christian, with the gift of hospitality, were to hear that and share their own experience in return, creating an opportunity for each other's ministries to be reciprocally enriched? How would that interdependence affect the way we approach international missions?

When I was twenty years old, I went to Africa for three months. It was one of the most impactful times in my life because of the exposure to a ministry context that was different from my own. During those months, I learned some incredible lessons about God's provision. Working alongside other faithful Christians, helping with famine relief specifically, I found myself confronted with the theology of why God allows terrible things to happen, what it looks like to trust Him in suffering, and how we can know that in everything He has a divine purpose. I came to see the truth that God can and does carry us through suffering is one of His most loving acts.

No one desires to feel uncomfortable. But that's part of our responsibility as we seek to embrace other people in their suffering. Experience gives you empathy, and only through empathy can you care for others effectively. A man told me

when I was in college that going to seminary was the way to make my life count for the gospel. God had other plans, and in this book, I want to share some practical thoughts on cultivating a heart for suffering, regardless of your ministry background or education.

We're all called to ministry. Whatever your vocation, it's your life's work as a Christian to make Christ known. And that's something you can only fully understand as someone who has a relationship with God because of your salvation. Our salvation is central to missions in the same way. Because we know God's love, we can extend love to others through ministries and programs anchored in the church. But we do medical ministries, give food and supplies, and offer tangible help through the church to create relationships in which we can share Jesus. Christ is the only answer to the problems of pain, suffering, and evil in the world, and I can share that hope with others because I know God personally as a loving Father and the Savior of my soul.

The goal of this book is to help Christians think rightly about ministry. We often make decisions based on cultural or personal inclinations, but God would have us do so much more. We need to reexamine the roots of Christian ministry from the pages of Scripture and recalibrate our modern understanding accordingly. Biblical ministry is radical ministry, and zealous faithfulness is challenging. My hope is that each chapter in this book would compel us to think clearly about the call, model, and equipping we have in Scripture, and the steps we can take to make our responsibility a reality. As we understand God's plan for His church and for our own lives as Christians in even greater detail, I pray our knowledge would lead to powerful action for His glory.



NOTE ON THE TEXT

Over the years, our ministry in Haiti has taken many forms. Natural disasters, governmental instability, and gang control have pushed us to be flexible. Changing needs require equally adaptable solutions, and in some ways, our current ministry efforts look different than they did when we began in 2008. But one thing has remained consistent through it all: our principles always guide the particulars. This book explains those principles, using examples from our earliest years in ministry to illustrate what it might look like to make a difference for Christ in a context of need.

Please pray that we would have wisdom as we continue pursuing new opportunities to deliver hope to the people of Haiti.



INTRODUCTION

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

—Matthew 28:19–20

The 2010 earthquake changed Haiti in a way that can still be felt today. In a city of three million people, 300,000 were dead in the span of an afternoon. Tent cities became home to 1.8 million in the days that followed, and the persistent question became: "How do we make sense of this?" Tragedy raises questions that seem remote in easy times, but as Christians, we know that life and death are pressing realities in every moment, whether we think of them or not.

Connect 2 Ministries got its start in this context. Seeing the need, both physical and spiritual, that gripped Haiti after the earthquake presented some unique opportunities. We started to think and pray about how we could make order out of this chaos, meeting with nearly 350 Haitian pastors who shared our focus. Haiti is a deeply religious country, and pastors are an integral part of their system; it was this network of relationships that formed the foundation for what happened next.

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We started by restoring cities on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. In each town, we would rebuild a church and then supply that church with food, medicine, and other resources. The pastors did the rest. It happened naturally that people would move from tent cities and migrate to these churches because of the provisions they offered.

The best thing was that people were not only finding a solution to their practical needs, but they were instantly connected with a compassionate pastor extending the gospel alongside this tangible help. Our mission today is the same: to support international ministry by strengthening churches and enabling pastors to care for their congregations and communities.

C2M MINISTRY MODEL

In Haiti, the Connect 2 Ministries main campus finds its home in Onaville, on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. The compound is home to a medical clinic, vocational training center, and a church, Mission Église Chrétienne Rédemptrice, at the center. About a mile down the road, you'll find our Mercy and Regency Children's Homes, where we provide education, food, housing, and community for rescued restavek children.

The church is the beginning of everything we do in Haiti. All of our outreach efforts—from VBS programs to providing medical services—flow from a local congregation of believers. The work these pastors do in their communities is a major extension of the heart of Connect 2 Ministries in Haiti. From distributing food to offering spiritual help, these men consistently and wholeheartedly invest in the people around them. And we invest in them because of it.

Out of the 350 pastors we initially knew after the earthquake, we developed consistent mentoring relationships with twelve pastors in the greater Port-au-Prince area. This group, our Mercy Network, follows a church-centric model. When we give food or supplies to meet needs in Haiti, we don't simply give to a

humanitarian organization and trust they'll do things the right way. We give resources to churches, allowing those churches to hand out food and create relationships with people through the distributions. C2M also partners with other like-minded ministries to support and strengthen these local churches while fostering Christ-centered relationships. Whether our ministry partners support us financially or by supplying us with resources, all of their efforts and ours revolve around local church ministry.

It has been a big encouragement to hear our pastors' stories from these distributions. The goal is that these resources would be a tool for evangelism, not just a humanitarian effort, and every time we see pictures and hear testimonies from these interactions, we know we are witnessing ministry in action. During one meeting with our Mercy Network pastors, we spent some time in prayer, specifically focusing on the topic of having a gospel witness in whatever our situation. One of the pastors has shepherded the same church for nineteen years, has approximately 100 people in his congregation, and lives in an area that is extremely violent. His building is run-down, and he is currently meeting with a married couple where the husband has been unfaithful and is not interested in changing. He brings these things before the Lord every day.

Another pastor has been in his church for eight years, with a congregation of 125 people. He is encouraged that the church is growing spiritually. He asked specifically for prayer for two separate couples, both of whom have been trying to have children without success. Another pastor, one of the older men, has pastored his church for twenty years. He is a good shepherd and helps lead two other churches as well. He specifically asked us to pray for a woman in his church who has had three surgeries for the same problem and is not getting any better. Another pastor shared that his church had burned down only a week earlier. Evidently a neighbor lit it on fire over a land dispute, and the entire building was lost. He asked that we pray for the Lord's guidance and provision during the coming months.

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All of these pastors receive oversight and guidance from Frandy Poyis, the indigenous leader of all our ministry programs in Haiti. Pastor Poyis was born in Haiti to a family that practiced Catholicism and Vodou. He lost his father when he was very young but gave his life to his Heavenly Father when he was twelve years old. After finishing high school, Poyis entered Bible school with the goal of entering full-time ministry. Before joining our staff as Children's Homes director in 2010, Poyis served as dean of Delmas Christian School in Port-au-Prince where he also used his gifts of shepherding and teaching to serve the local church. In 2014, after serving with C2M for four years, Poyis planted Redeemer Christian Church of Onaville. He now runs all ministry functions of Connect 2 Ministries in Haiti, including: pastoring the church, overseeing the medical clinic, managing food distribution, guiding ministry teams, and running the Children's Homes for rescued restavek children. Poyis is a selfless servant who is beloved by the community and vital to our ministry.

Through all the joys and hardships, the faithfulness of these men has allowed our churches to build strong reputations in their communities as places of hope and healing. We have even seen many individuals come to faith in Christ. The Lord does the work, and we are thankful for the way He uses His church to glorify Himself and advance the gospel. But what does it look like practically to support and invest in this church-centric model?

FOUR PILLARS OF MINISTRY

In missions, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the needs of the people you serve. Without a clear strategy, you can exhaust your resources quickly. You're never going to end hunger or meet every need in a community, so it's critical to identify *why* you're doing ministry in the first place. The goal for us at Connect 2 Ministries is not to end suffering in Haiti. The goal is not even to change Haiti, but to change eternity. Offering temporal help is secondary to sharing the

gospel with the lost, in the hope that some might come to know Jesus and find eternal life in Him. The same goal stands for any community we might try to reach. Real gospel ministry means meeting someone in their suffering in order to communicate Jesus. Everything we do must have a spiritual purpose, which ultimately focuses us on the only true solution to the struggles of this world.

At Connect 2 Ministries, we've developed four core values that create a framework for everything we do in ministry. These priorities are not exhaustive, and they won't necessarily be the same for everyone. I'm sharing them not as a prescription for how to do ministry, but as an example of some things you might consider in the process of cultivating a life of missions.

1. Biblically Focused

The Bible is our source. We have no wisdom, peace, or hope without it, so all of our ministry flows from a foundation on God's Word. We are conscious of cultural differences, especially in international contexts, and our ministry necessarily relies on Scripture—not culture—for wisdom and direction.

2. Church-Centric

God designed the church to be an extension of Himself in the world, and we represent Christ because of our unity with Him. By working through local churches, whether in the US or in Haiti, we affirm God's plan for Christian ministry to happen in the context of community.

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3. Compassionate Relationships

Compassion for suffering is a good thing. Jesus healed, fed, and comforted the needy as He gave them the good news of salvation, and we work to do the same. All of our humanitarian work, from construction to supplying food and medicine, acts as a means to communicate Jesus.

4. Indigenous Ministry

"Making disciples" doesn't stop after conversion. Our goal is to support Haitian believers by equipping them for ministry in a culture they know better than we ever could.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

One everyday area of ministry where we exercise these four principles is in caring for rescued restaveks in our Children's Homes. The title, "restavek," describes an abused child who lives with and serves a family that is not his or her biological family. The term "restavek" was originally used as a verb. Meaning "to stay with," it once described the action of living alongside another, but it now communicates something very different. These children have either been sold by their own family to another that is financially able to provide, or they are orphans with no family to care for them. Either way, they find themselves without stable parents before they ever come to our homes.

The majority of restaveks in Haiti are physically, sexually, and emotionally abused. They are regularly starved, beaten, and taken advantage of. Grievously, this reality is a common occurrence and has become a cultural norm for the people of Haiti. The country of Haiti is home to approximately 300,000 restaveks. This means that around one in fifteen Haitian children is currently enslaved. Due to the ongoing political and economic climate in Haiti, we expect this number to grow substantially.

There are a few things that must happen in order for a restavek child to be rescued. The Bureau for the Protection of

Minors (a government department similar to Child Protective Services in the US) is notified, usually by a family who suspects a neighbor family of owning a slave. In these investigations, if the child has papers, then he or she is a child of the home. If the child doesn't have papers, then BPM determines them to be a restavek, steps in, and takes them to a holding place for a brief time until they can be rehomed. The goal is to give them a chance at a better life in their new situation, and it's at this point that phone calls come to Pastor Poyis. After a process of administration, paperwork, and establishing our ability and willingness to comply with guidelines, the child is finally brought to our compound. Every child we receive into our Children's Homes is brought to us by the Lord. We are conscious of the caring providence behind every story of rescue, and knowing it's God's power, not ours, at work in this process gives us hope.

To that end, one of the first things we do when a new child comes to our homes is give them a medical examination. Because our kids come from situations where they were enslaved, we make it a priority to meet any physical needs as soon as possible. The first eight kids we brought to the Regency Home were lovingly and carefully examined by a medical team which consisted of three U.S. nurses who had volunteered their time and skills to help in this ministry. These nurses were seasoned professionals (each one had more than twenty years of experience in the medical field), but they were still overwhelmed by the level of physical trauma these children had experienced.

Professional medical care is one of the first steps we take to show our rescued children that they are loved, valued, and protected, because we serve a Savior who met His people's physical needs. Jesus brought a message of spiritual salvation, but He also healed the blind, made the lame walk, and even raised the dead. By following His example and showing care for our kids' physical afflictions, we are able to earn their trust, eventually giving us an opportunity to share about the Great Physician who can give us a greater healing by cleansing our sinful hearts.

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We try to approach our ministry to these kids as a holistic endeavor. A term that immediately comes to mind when thinking about these Children's Homes is *orphanage*. And in a sense, it fits. Our kids are separated from their biological parents, if not by death then by horrific circumstances, and the reality of their situations is irreversible. But we avoid calling and thinking of our Children's Homes as orphanages for one main reason:

***Our kids aren't waiting to find a home;
they are home.***

When I first went to Haiti, the kids we worked with mainly came from parents who couldn't care for them at the moment—but they would often come back. Very few were rescued slave children. After C2M moved to Onaville and built the current compound, things started to change. We were soon taking in children who had been sold and traded, and that dynamic required a different response from us.

Adoption is the goal in an orphanage, but adoption is difficult in Haiti. Because of this, we made it a priority to create an environment where restavek children could live long-term, and without a move-out date. Our goal has been to give these kids the tools they need to live well in Haitian society, starting with a foundation of stable relationships, both among peers, and with the adults responsible for their care. We wanted to give them a home.

Below are stories from two former restavek kids—child slaves—who have found safety, peace, and hope through the ministry of God's church in Haiti.

Fabian

We teach in our Mercy Network churches that abuse, in whatever form it takes, is unacceptable—to the degree that if you have a neighbor who's abusing a child, you need to be involved in putting an end to it. Well, one man from the church saw a girl, Fabian, being beaten terribly. He walked in his neighbor's gate, threw her under his arm, walked out to the road, and brought her to us. He told us no one deserves to be beaten like that, especially not this child. Fabian struggled to trust adults when she came to us; her dad gave her away, and every man she had known was an abuser. But after four years, we've seen God do a remarkable healing in Fabian's life. She now thinks of Pastor Poyis and our staff as family.

Maria

Maria was sold when she was around five years old, and she was enslaved for almost ten years before she came to our home. It's amazing what God can do in a child's life when they're in an environment where they're safe, provided for, and loved. Maria has been with us more than three years now, and she's reached a point where she feels comfortable talking to and spending time with all the staff at the compound. She no longer lives in fear, but in peace and joy, surrounded by a loving community.

We consistently return to our four pillars as we minister to rescued restaveks, invest in our Mercy Network, and consider every other opportunity that comes across our path as well. We care for restaveks because God cares for the orphan; our care comes as an extension of the body of Christ; and we share Christ with them while meeting their physical, tangible needs. We meet them where they are, because Jesus did the same for us. Our time together with our Haitian staff and pastors is biblically focused, and we make a priority of building compassionate relationships among our pastoral team as we seek to support indigenous ministry that happens in a church-centric context. Similarly, there is no caring for the

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orphans of Haiti without offering them the gospel message, in the context of stable and loving relationships within God's church. God's message to the broken is one of hope, and He designed His church to be the means of spreading that grace around the world. Our pillars are our best effort to keep that foundation at the forefront. This is nothing original—as we see in the Great Commission, it's how God meant to reach the lost all along. My hope is that this book would encourage us into greater love for the Church, the lost, and Jesus Himself as we seek to understand what it truly means to live in light of the Great Commission.



CHAPTER ONE: WHAT IS MISSIONS?

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”

—Romans 10:14–15

It used to be that people would come to the church when they were hurting. In our Judeo-Christian society, people looked to pastors and even Christians in general as a source of peace and comfort. But that doesn't happen as often anymore. Western culture has been secularized to the degree that the things of God are an afterthought. Many people would rather invent their own religion, devoting time and love to their favorite pastimes rather than worshiping the Lord. As believers, we have a fresh opportunity—to stop waiting for people to come in, and instead go out, find them, and extend hope to them through the gospel.

Faith and works go hand in hand (James 2:26). And these works are things we do primarily as individuals, not as a

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collective group of God's people. In Matthew 25, Jesus says, "as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." You didn't feed me, you didn't clothe me, you didn't give me something to drink, you didn't visit me. All of these statements are admonitions to the individual, not to the church. It's easy to think that we can give money to the church, and then the church will do those things for us. But it's convicting when we remember that this passage is in the first person.

We need to fix the root of the issue rather than focus on the externals. The heart directs the conduct, so we need an internal change before trying to redirect our actions. The church in America today does a good job in relaying biblical information. The church helps Christians live rightly, and it serves and cares for its own. But in Matthew 28, we see we are meant to make disciples *as we are going*. As you are moving through life, there are people you will encounter who will become your mission field. There's nothing in this passage to say this kind of opportunity will fall into your lap as you sit in a pew. The reality is, it's up to us, as we are going, to make disciples.

The church has a tendency to pull in and circle the wagons when we feel we're under attack. I have come to believe that is not the heart of Jesus. Jesus told us the world would hate us because it hated Him first (John 15:18). Many of us have never known persecution, but it's possible that will change in the years to come. We need a perspective that pushes us to press into the culture, despite resistance. They will hate us because they hated Christ first. For us as Jesus' followers, this means we need to act with conviction as we remember that ministry is not self-contained; only part of it is within the church. We have a powerful call to go out into the world, making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

In the parable of the talents, the one who held onto the talent was condemned. It was the servants who invested their resources who were blessed. Stewardship is about investment. Where the Pharisee asked, "Who is my neighbor?," the Good Samaritan invested his time and resources to help a stranger. Jesus' message is that our

neighbor is anyone who is in need. It's not just loving the person next to you; it's so much more.

If you're obedient, then God will give you what you need to continue on. Faithful obedience always precedes the blessing, and complete understanding or perfect knowledge is not a prerequisite for obedience. Yet it can sometimes be challenging to know what obedience looks like practically. In a culture that is redefining what it means to be a person of faith, we need to be faithful to ask: What are the characteristics of ministry in Scripture? What should a pastor be, and what is missions meant to look like in the life of every believer? And how does all of this work practically from a biblical perspective?

BIBLICAL MISSIONS

Because of the peace and hope we've received in our own salvation, we seek to make Jesus known wherever we go. Whether in our local communities or in a foreign country, our heart is to see the lost come to Christ. But to do that effectively, we need to start with a vision of what missions is—and the first place we turn is to the pages of Scripture.

Here are some characteristics of missions found in God's Word.

Missions has a purpose. God designed for His people to play a role in the salvation of others; our job is to share the good news of forgiveness in Christ.

- "For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"
—Acts 13:47
- "I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." —Acts 26:17–18

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Missions is active. Like every calling in Scripture, when the Lord asks something of us, we have an opportunity to respond.

- “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here I am! Send me.’” —Isaiah 6:8

Missions happens in community. The Lord calls each of us individually to a life of missions, but we share the same mission with our fellow believers. We teach, share, and send the good news together.

- “And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” —Romans 10:15
- “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” —2 Timothy 2:2

Missions means meeting people in their weakness.

Jesus gave His life for us when we were “still sinners” (Rom 5:8). We have an opportunity to love others like He loved us, sacrificing our personal comforts and desires to meet people where they’re at as we share the good news of salvation.

- “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.” —1 Corinthians 9:22

Missions is our responsibility. God calls us to live as missionaries of the gospel in this world.

- “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” —Matthew 28:19–20
- “And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.’” —Mark 16:15

Missions is God working through us. God calls His church to live as messengers for Christ in this world. We share the good news, and God works through us, His children.

- “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”
—2 Corinthians 5:20
- “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.”
—1 Corinthians 3:6

Missions involves dying to self. As we strive to live our lives in faithfulness to God’s Word, we commit to sacrificing ourselves—our time, resources, and comfort—for the glory of Christ.

- “But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” —Acts 20:24
- “So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.” —1 Thessalonians 2:8

Missions is temporary. Our call to evangelize the lost is limited to the present age. There will come a day when all will have heard—and responded. Our responsibility is to reach those we can while we have time.

- “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”—Matthew 24:14
- “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’” —Matthew 9:37–38

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Missions is global. We are responsible to share the gospel with everyone we encounter, but missions uniquely focuses on preaching salvation where the message has never been heard.

- “I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation.” —Romans 15:20
- “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” —Matthew 28:19

Missions is an act of worship. We honor God by speaking of His goodness, mercy, and love. Everything we do in evangelism and missions should flow from a heart of worship for the one who saves.

- “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” —Isaiah 52:7

CASE STUDY

Connect 2 Ministries got its start because of a God-given burden for the church in the US. Over my years in ministry, I came to believe that the church in North America had lost its passion and purpose. Church activities thrived, but outreach ministries struggled. Through many providential conversations, I came to see that some of the pastors I knew and loved felt the same way about their own congregations. So, in partnership with them, C2M was born.

The goal from the beginning was to help churches take people overseas. This cemented itself when a good friend of mine, a church planter, said “Some of us with smaller churches can’t afford to hire a missions pastor, but we could sponsor someone like you to help us prepare and take a team, lead them while in country, and send them back to us

with a first-hand perspective of the power of gospel ministry.” To that end, this is how the first five years of C2M unfolded.

2008

We started Connect 2 Ministries in 2008. It was a difficult year to start an organization because the economy was down, and everyone was struggling. However, God used the unstable economy as part of our growth. We started providing partnerships with churches, pastors, and missionaries and sharing our vision. It was amazing to watch as people joined us to support the church in Haiti, even when it required financial sacrifice.

2009

We took our first team to Haiti in 2009. When we started taking teams, we would work alongside Haitian Christians on church and community projects during the daytime hours, and in the evenings, we discussed issues of biblical worldview with one another. We talked about why suffering exists, the unchanging goodness of God, and how we know we can trust Him in every circumstance. God was doing some truly amazing things, and we had a front row seat. Late in December of 2009, I left for Haiti with a team from Crossroads Church in Santa Clarita. At the end of the trip, having preached in a Haitian church on Sunday morning, I flew with the team back to the US that evening—and the earthquake happened two days later, on Tuesday, January 12, 2010.

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2010

Because of my connection with the Red Cross, I turned right around and went back to Haiti. Over the coming days, I met with 350 pastors in Port-au-Prince to get a feel for what they saw as the needs and how we could help the city rebuild itself. There were 1.8 million people in tent cities. The gangs were raping women, stealing food, and trying to seize permanent power in the midst of severe instability. This set of circumstances gave us a vision: to rebuild twenty churches on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, and provide them with food and medicine to distribute, so that people would leave the tent cities and go to the churches—for the resources, but in our minds the goal was that they would find true hope through the message of Jesus in the process. Giving tangible help was a vehicle for offering spiritual help. So many people came to Christ during those weeks. Our pastors built relationships in their communities, and people started to fill the churches because of it.

2011

After helping rebuild and establish these churches, we started to focus on understanding the culture, evaluating it, and then forming a strategic plan to refocus cultural norms in a biblical way. We wanted to outline the practical steps needed to help the church grow in evangelism, and that involved identifying the neediest parts of society. The government started moving people out of the tent cities in Port-au-Prince as a step toward rebuilding Haiti's capital. In the process, about 800,000 people found themselves displaced and homeless in the rural areas surrounding the city. That's when we went out to Onaville. As we interacted with these people and got to know more of the Haitian culture, we began to hear an unusual word: *restavek*. That's when we realized we had an opportunity. I asked our pastors at a conference how many of them knew the word *restavek*. They all raised their hands. Then I asked how many of them knew *restaveks* personally—all of them. "What does Jesus think about that?" I asked. So

we started looking for answers together. I showed them Matthew 5:16, which calls each of us to “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” We began to talk about what it would mean for the church to be doing good works in the community, and that’s how our ministry to restaveks was born. From the beginning, we were not there to end slavery in Haiti, but to show the light of the gospel through Christian faithfulness.

2012

Two years after the earthquake, we had been working with Pastor Poyis consistently. He took me out to Onaville, which is a rural town outside Port-au-Prince, and he showed me a tent city of about 800,000 people. The government had decided the tent cities weren’t going to disperse on their own, so they started driving people, tents, and belongings to the surrounding areas and dropping them off. Poyis told me, “I would love to be able to plant a church out here and see these people come to Christ.” So we found and purchased some land and started construction on the first church. I asked Poyis, “What do you want to see this church accomplish?” and he said, “I want to see it be able to redeem this community.” That’s where the name, Mission Église Chrétienne Rédemptrice or Church of the Redeemer, came from. The land became home to our full C2M compound, but we decided to build the church first to make the statement that the church is the core of every community. Then we built the medical clinic, and the dorms, and everything around it. Two years later, Mission Église Chrétienne Rédemptrice officially opened its doors.

Through this period of growth, we ended up rebuilding and building sixty churches overall in Port-au-Prince and the surrounding communities. Part of our strategy was to have a church in the US sponsor the rebuilding of each church in Haiti. This formed a network of partnerships that would grow into the ministry we praise the Lord for today. One year, the

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Lord allowed us to take thirty-five teams of supporters to Haiti in the span of twelve months. There was even a time when we had three teams there at once, with around sixty-five Americans on our campus. It has been an incredible blessing to watch God do amazing things like this in the process of reaching so many lives for Christ. But the blueprint for our ministry isn't something we created; God gave us His plan for missions through His Word.

MISSIONS AND CULTURE

Between 2010 and 2020, Haiti's religious climate saw a dramatic shift. Before the 2010 earthquake, polls showed about eighty percent of people in Port-au-Prince identified as Catholic, and less than twenty percent attended evangelical churches. Ten years later, the numbers were split at fifty percent for each category. We witnessed some of those personal changes firsthand in our Mercy Network churches. People often came with testimonies of misdirected worship that had been arrested and refocused on Christ, by God's grace. As one man said,

“We did our sacrifices; we paid the spirits; we paid the Vodou priests to protect us. Then the earthquake happened, and all of our gods had no power. We needed to find something with more power.”

That's when they would come to Jesus. We held frequent pastors conferences over those years, because the culture had instilled some widespread and deeply held errors in people's thoughts of God. Many believed God was the reason for the earthquake—that God was angry with them and sent it as a punishment. Among other things, this highlighted some theological issues that we worked to unravel in our pastoral training.

It became clear that Haitian Christian culture was very much like Vodou or African culture, in that it was transactional. It centered on pleasing God through works. If you didn't, you made Him angry, which is a self-focused way of thinking about God. We worked to show how God's relationship with us is all about Him, not about us; He is good and kind and merciful in reaching out to us, sinners, and we had nothing at all to do with building that relationship. Our actions would keep us from Him, but He looks at the works of Christ instead. We stand on Christ's obedience, and that is a message of hope, not fear.

The early pastors conferences looked like a whiteboard session featuring a large T column chart. Haitian culture on one side, biblical mandates on the other. In Haiti, pastors are authority figures, not servants. This led us to reexamine the teachings of Jesus. He comes as an authority, yes, but what were His actions toward His people? He served; He washed their feet, He reached out to them in their weakness, and He sacrificed His life for them in love. This concept of relating to your congregation through love and servanthood was a new one for them. Most Haitian Christian churches have a platform where the pastor preaches, but it is also where he sits throughout the early parts of the Sunday service, looking out at the congregation from a large chair. One Sunday, Pastor Poyis decided to just sit with the people. He said the impact of that step was amazing.

“Since I've been sitting with the people, they come up to me and say they're praying for me. They've never prayed for me before.”

When he was the authority figure, they didn't feel a need to intercede on his behalf, but once he came down among them, they related to him. They were compassionate toward him and began to ask God to help, strengthen, and guide him.

One seminary in the US discovered that after twenty years of teaching in a third-world country, what they had done was just add good theology on top of bad indigenous

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theology. When it came down to it, the people they were teaching would revert to culture rather than what they'd been taught. Syncretistic religions allow for contradictory propositions to be true simultaneously, which means the first step must be correcting errors before introducing good theology. You have to undo the cultural preconceptions before laying the foundations of a biblical worldview. God does the rest, through the power of His Word.

Missions means having a heart for the lost and putting feet to that compassion. Our ministry to others, whether in local or international contexts, flows from the grace we've received as children of God. Culture will always be a hurdle, but it's one we must confront with wisdom as we work to fulfill our Great Commission calling. As we reexamine what it means to "go and make disciples," we take some critical steps toward becoming the leaders, the churches, and the individuals God would have us be.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

At its core, "missions" means cultivating a heart for the lost. It involves seeing others with the eyes of Christ, treating people as souls in need of the love of the Savior. We know how Jesus loved us. It was sacrificial, with no thought for His own comfort. We follow Him, which means that missions is not optional for Christians—it is essential. Yet all too often, we fall into thinking we can somehow do ministry without making any dramatic sacrifices. In a modern world where most of life is easy, our tendency is to think the same should go for everything we do. Here are some questions I encourage you to ask as you think about missions.

- Why is it so hard for us to envision loving others as Jesus loved us?
- Do you believe what the Bible says about missions and sharing the gospel with others? What's holding you back from living it out?

- Matthew 28:19–20 gives us a clear responsibility—does your life live up to its calling?
- How can you personally live out the Great Commission? What unique opportunities has God placed in your life?



CHAPTER TWO: WHY WE GO

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

—2 Corinthians 5:20

Our mission is to reach the lost with the gospel, but that often involves some preliminary steps. For us at Connect 2 Ministries, it has meant knowing the specific needs of the people of Haiti. The majority of people in Haiti, whether Christians or not, believe there are spiritual forces at work. As a culture, Haiti is very open to supernatural occurrences, and part of that reality is due to the country’s complex religious history. Probably anyone who comes and hears the gospel in one of our Mercy Network churches has been exposed to Vodou in one way or another, and it’s a topic that arises consistently when we talk about evangelism.

Vodou is one of the most prominent religions in Haiti. It finds its roots in West African beliefs and practices brought to Haiti through the slave trade, beginning with the arrival of enslaved West Africans during the 17th and 18th centuries. These Africans were forced to convert to Catholicism by the French colonizers, but the result was a hybrid of African and

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Catholic practices rather than a pure conversion. Vodou is a syncretic religion. Blending different beliefs and practices—those the enslaved brought with them from Africa with those of the Catholic church—eventually formed the foundation of Vodou in Haiti.

There are many facets of Vodou, including ancestor worship, herbal medicine, and divination practices. The religion is inherently occult and dark in its essence. Vodou has been associated with black magic, witchcraft, and social and political turmoil since its inception. In addition, where Christianity preaches a message of redemption accomplished by free grace, Vodou is transactional. People pay money to keep harm from coming on them, and they work hard to appease the spirits associated with Vodou. It's a religion of fear, not of hope.

Educated people in Haiti are, by and large, less likely to be involved in Vodou, but that's a small segment of the population. So it's an encouraging surprise whenever we see someone come to Christ from this background. That's the testimony of one of our Mercy Network pastors. Beyond our churches, the exact number of people who leave Vodou and convert to Christianity is difficult to determine. But even without a precise idea of its reach, it is clear Christianity has had a significant impact on Haitian society and has challenged the role of Vodou in Haitian culture—yet we know that in ministry, it's not a guarantee that we'll witness this kind of transformation firsthand. If we want to persevere regardless of the outcome, we need a clear reason for why we serve to begin with. The question for us as Christians is, why do we go?

THE NEED IN OUR HEARTS

Remembering our own salvation is always the starting place. We know as Christians that love is behind all of our evangelism, and we can never love others rightly without an eternal perspective. Everything we do in ministry, from

discipleship to foreign missions, starts with our relationship with God—our acts of service, faithfulness, and trusting obedience flow from the love we have experienced because of the cross. And Scripture explains that motivation for us in so many ways.

TEN WAYS WE LIVE OUT OUR SALVATION THROUGH MISSIONS

Christlike love means knowing and loving God. The first way love shows up in our lives is in our love for God. We love Him because of the lavish way He has loved us.

- “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” —1 John 4:8
- “Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.” —1 Peter 1:8

Christlike love is a mirror of God’s love for us. God’s love for us is the source of all our love for others. We understand what genuine love is because we have been loved so deeply and personally by Him. Our love is a small picture of that reality.

- “We love because he first loved us.” —1 John 4:19
- “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” —1 John 4:11
- “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” —1 John 4:7

Christlike love means laying down your life. Christ laid down His life for us in every sense. Loving like Him means following His example and laying down our lives too.

- “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” —Romans 5:8

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- “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” — Ephesians 5:2
- “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” —1 John 3:16
- “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” —John 15:13

Christlike love means living like Christ. God is love, so to love like Jesus—simply and profoundly—means to live like He did.

- “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” —Galatians 2:20
- “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” —2 Corinthians 5:14–15

Christlike love means caring for others. Apart from our love for God, our love for others is the primary way we show ourselves to be followers of Christ.

- “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” —Romans 13:10
- “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” —John 13:35

Christlike love means Christ lives in us. The love we show in our lives is the love of Christ in us. We love because He enables us.

- “So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints

what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” —Ephesians 3:17–19

- “So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” —1 John 4:16

Christlike love is a sign of unity. The love of Christ binds Christians together in unity. When we love our fellow believers well, we act as a testimony to that end.

- “My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.” —1 Corinthians 16:24

Christlike love is continual. Loving like Jesus extends to the smallest aspect of our lives. Following Christ’s model means exercising love in every attitude behind our actions, whatever that might look like.

- “Let all that you do be done in love.” —1 Corinthians 16:14

Christlike love means we live in confidence. Because God has given us everything in Christ, we live boldly and confidently, knowing His love is our strength.

- “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” —Romans 8:37–39
- “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” —Romans 8:32

Christlike love is our highest calling. Love is meant to be the distinguishing aspect of a believer’s life. Above all else, we are called to love well.

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- “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” —Colossians 3:14
- “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” —Mark 12:30–31
- “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” —1 Corinthians 13:13

THE NEED OF THE LOST

Understanding the love God has shown us in Christ is a prerequisite to exercising genuine love ourselves. He is our source, our model, and our strength as we seek to love Him and others well. But a second, and incredibly powerful motivation in ministry, is remembering the need of the lost. One of the central goals of Connect 2 Ministries is sharing the hope of Christ with those around us. Whether in conversations with our friends in Haiti or in America, we desire for Christ to be the focus and for that to bring powerful transformation. The way we started was by identifying practical areas of need. That journey led us somewhere we never could’ve expected.

The country of Haiti has faced its share of darkness. Children are routinely traded and sold into slavery, and corruption exists in every corner of human life. Poverty, disease, and oppressive government conspire to create a society more characterized by defeat than hope. As Christians, we know that spiritual realities are inseparable from daily life—which makes Haiti’s long and fraught history with Vodou a source of deep concern.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

You may have heard talk of Haiti's "deal with the devil." The idea gained momentum after the 2010 earthquake, when some evangelical leaders claimed that the earthquake was divine punishment for an alleged pact Haitian revolutionaries made with Satan in 1791 to overthrow French colonial rule.¹ This claim refers specifically to the Bois Caïman ceremony. A pivotal event in the Haitian Revolution, this Vodou ceremony occurred as enslaved Africans united and resolved to fight for their ethnic freedom by "throw[ing] away the image of the God of the whites...[and] listen[ing] to the liberty that speaks in all our hearts"—a voice that led many to swear "to kill all the whites on the island."² From its earliest days, the course of Haitian social and political life has been bound up with Vodou, and that relationship is and has since been marked by the same brutality and violence.

MODERN POLITICAL DYNAMICS

In contemporary Haiti, political candidates often seek endorsement from prominent Vodou leaders. Such endorsements can sway public opinion and mobilize voter bases, especially in rural areas where Vodou is most prevalent. Vodou and politics became even more closely connected in 2003, when President Jean-Bertrand Aristide recognized Vodou as an official religion.³ This was more than a symbolic gesture—it was a calculated statement that gave Vodou legitimacy in political affairs. By acknowledging it as a religion, Aristide lent Vodou formal credibility.

¹ Bertin M. Louis Jr. "Haiti's Pact with the Devil?: Bwa Kayiman, Haitian Protestant Views of Vodou, and the Future of Haiti," *Religions* 10, no. 8 (2019): 464. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10080464>.

² Laurent Dubois. *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789–1804: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016); official "History of Haiti and the Haitian Revolution."

³ Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 13.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Whenever leaders use religion to manipulate and control people—preying on the human need to believe and put faith in something—abuse is sure to follow. This is the story of Vodou and public life in Haiti. The politicization of Vodou has created exploitation, and it comes at a cost to the nation's citizens. Because of the stronghold of Vodou, people associate authority, political or otherwise, with fear. This causes tension in everyday life, as the power of Vodou blends with the authority of public officials to create an oppressive tone of control.

PROTESTANT CRITICISM OF VODOU

Protestant pastors and believers in Haiti rightly view Vodou with hostility. Vodou is often seen as synonymous with witchcraft, sorcery, and idolatry—all practices that are condemned in Scripture.⁴ The rituals, symbols, and pantheon of spirits in Vodou are frequently acknowledged as demonic by these groups, reinforcing the idea that Haiti has dealt dangerously in occult practices.

THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS

The Protestant critique of Vodou is a matter of theology. Evangelical Christians believe in a strict rift between good and evil, God and Satan, with no room for the syncretism that characterizes Vodou. Thus the worship of spirits, or loa, in Vodou is idolatrous and in direct opposition to the worship of the biblical God. Additionally, Christians acknowledge practices such as animal sacrifice, spirit possession, and

⁴ 1 Samuel 15:23.

divination as occult activities, further cementing the belief that Vodou is inherently satanic.⁵

Within Haiti, Protestant Christians see Vodou as incompatible with their faith—yet fear of Vodou priests and practices remains. Vodou commands authority because it deals in fear; but there is One who is more powerful than any occult activity or Vodou ritual. He reaches out to us in love, offering strength, peace, and true freedom to anyone who would believe. “Light cannot dwell with darkness,” and that truth has guided our ministry in Haiti.

Despite the darkness, there is light. The hope of the gospel shines brightly wherever it is heard, and sharing God’s truth is our primary goal as we minister to people in need.

MISSIONS AND CULTURE

We share about our experiences with Vodou because missions starts with knowing the truth. Sharing Jesus requires understanding God’s plan for salvation and our need for a savior, but it also involves understanding the culture around us and distinguishing truth from error. We are called to be in the world, not of it, because God has chosen to use His Church as the means by which cultures are transformed. There is a challenge in this calling—we see confusion in the culture around us while simultaneously looking beyond it to the hope of God’s transforming power.

THE SOURCE OF OUR HOPE

Vodou is a cruel master, and that shows in the fruit it bears in Haiti. Poverty, oppression, instability, and superstition all describe a culture distant from the knowledge of God. The opposite is true of God’s Church. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and He calls us as Christians to follow in His steps. We live in a broken world, and we see that reality in the suffering around us. But as

⁵ Deuteronomy 18:10–12.

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Christians, we can face the trials of life with hope instead of despair—knowing we are not lost amid the darkness but found in Christ. Sharing that hope with those who are broken and hurting is at the heart of our calling.

In order to do missions, or any gospel ministry, well, we need to understand and remember the source of that hope.

Our hope is in who God is. We trust in God’s character and nature; belief in Him gives us hope.

- “And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.” —Psalm 39:7
- “The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in him.” —Lamentations 3:24
- “For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.” —Psalm 71:5

Our hope is in Christ. Christ has made it possible for us to have a relationship with God. He is our priest, mediator, and savior, and because of that, He is our hope.

- “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.” —Hebrews 6:19
- “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.” —1 Timothy 1:1

Our hope is in the finished work of Christ. Jesus is also our hope in eternal life. Because of His resurrection, we can live without fear—of death, or anything this life may hold.

- “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” —1 Peter 1:3

Our hope is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables our hope in the kingdom of God.

- “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” —Romans 15:13
- “And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” —Romans 5:5

Our hope is in our salvation. We have a sure salvation because of Christ’s work on the cross; what better cause for hope?

- “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” —Psalm 42:11
- “Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” —Ephesians 1:18

Our hope is in God’s promises. God has proven Himself faithful, so we rest in His many rich promises to us.

- “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” —Jeremiah 29:11
- “Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope!” —Psalm 119:116

Our hope is in God’s Word. In Scripture, God gives us Himself. We hope in His Word because we hope in Him.

- “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” —Romans 15:4
- “You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word.” —Psalm 119:114
- “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope.” —Psalm 130:5

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Our hope is in God's sanctifying work in us. Despite the trials of life, God is at work in us. He is making us more like His Son—an act of grace that inspires joyful hope.

- “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” — 2 Corinthians 4:16–18

Our hope is in God's love. Whatever comes across our path, we know that God loves us. His covenant, steadfast love is our hope.

- “Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love.” —Psalm 33:18
- “Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.” —Psalm 33:22

Our hope is in God's power. Our help comes from the Lord; like the psalmists, we hope in His sovereign power.

- “Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.” —Psalm 33:20
- “Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.” —Psalm 146:5
- “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” —Isaiah 40:31

Look to Christ, and share His love with others. When you do, you will be amazed to see what God will do with the ordinary faithfulness of His people.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

All throughout Scripture, God uses His people's weaknesses to accomplish His purposes. Our weakness should be the last thing that keeps us from missions. When we think about going and reaching the lost, we might instantly think of the challenges—there's no time, finances are tight, family comes first, or I'm simply not adequate as an evangelist. While there may be some truth in all those claims—we'll never face a challenge-free gospel opportunity—they all miss the point of missions. Ultimately, none of it is about us. It's about pointing people to Christ, and when we recognize that, we're on our way to living lives that are truly on mission for Jesus. As you reflect on the real reason Christians "do missions" in the first place, I invite you to ask:

- Can you think of any biblical examples where people were called to step outside their comfort zones to fulfill God's call on their lives?
- What's preventing you from engaging in missions? Are all these "challenges" really the hurdles we make them out to be?
- How often do you pray about God's direction for you in terms of serving others and getting involved in missions? In what ways do you need His wisdom today?
- Think about the eternal impact you can make by sharing your faith with others—what would change in your life if you started approaching interactions with other people from a gospel perspective?



CHAPTER THREE: MAKING MISSIONS OUR REALITY

“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching ... always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

—2 Timothy 4:2, 5

Once, when I was teaching a seminar in Haiti, I started to describe three characteristics of a healthy church. As I was speaking, I began to use the illustration of a three-legged stool—a common image in the US—but Poyis jumped in and suggested I use three stones instead. He told me that every Haitian child, first thing in the morning, goes outside to check if the three stones are up or down. I asked, “What are the stones for?” Poyis replied,

“In a Haitian home, checking the three stones is a daily ritual because it shows something very important. When the mom stands the stones up outside, it means she will put a pot on top, place

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some sticks underneath, light a fire, and cook food for the day. When the stones are down, there's no food to cook. In a Christian home though, when the children see the stones down they know that God will give them the faith to live until tomorrow.”

Can you imagine if we lived like that? If the very first thing we looked for every day was God's provision? Regardless of whether it's food or something else we're asking God to provide, what would it look like for us to live every day relying on the Lord? In the Lord's Prayer, this is exactly the kind of dependence Christ is talking about when He calls us to ask that God “give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). How would that change our lives?

I think that unfortunately, because of our culture's wealth, we tend not to live by faith. George Müller is a famous example of radical faith—the Christian evangelist and orphanage director in Bristol, England, who prayed for daily food for his children and received it in providential ways from God. His faith was connected with him knowing his need for God's provision. Today, we often rely on what we have or our own ability to provide rather than resting in the Lord. It is easy to cry out to God when you see the reality of your own need. It is much harder when you think everything is fine, and you can keep it fine in your own strength.

Scripture gives us a full picture of what it means to live by faith. And oftentimes, these definitions make radical claims on us.

- Hebrews 11:1—“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:7—“We walk by faith, not by sight.”
- Galatians 2:20—We say with Paul that “the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

- Ephesians 2:8–9—Faith “is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
- Hebrews 11:6—“Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”
- Mark 11:24—“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received[a] it, and it will be yours.”
- Romans 1:17—“The righteous shall live by faith.”

I’ve been blessed to know faithful believers who live this way. I have a friend who was serving at a mission hospital in Ethiopia in the 1970s. This hospital was specifically built to deal with leprosy, and it was staffed with doctors, nurses, and other personnel. Sadly, trouble came when a group of rebels attacked the hospital and killed a number of doctors and nurses. They also kidnapped one nurse and held her for ransom. The rebels contacted the government asking for guns and resources in exchange for her life. At this point, the government quickly contacted my friend, because he had personal experience that would allow him to mediate between the government and this gang. The negotiation went on for quite a long time, until finally my friend was able to visit the nurse. She was about seven months pregnant at the time and in bad shape after having been taken through the forest on camelback. My friend went home and prayed with his wife all night long. He came back in the morning with a strong sense of guidance from the Lord. He told the government they needed to get the nurse out immediately, but that to do it, he would need to negotiate by giving the rebels someone else as a hostage. That someone was my friend’s son. The trade happened, the nurse delivered her baby in safety, and my friend’s son stayed with the rebels for a couple of months before he was finally released as well.

At its heart, this is the story of one faithful believer who exercised radical faith in serving the Lord. Whether we live in developing countries or in the wealthiest zip codes in the

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world, we are called to live by faith in God, the only true source and provider. And that faith is the first step toward making missions our reality.

CHANGING OUR MINDSET

The writer of Hebrews tells us that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith means trusting that God will keep His promises, even when it seems counterintuitive. And walking by faith requires a deep understanding of God’s Word combined with a willingness to follow His direction. But what does it look like, in a practical sense, to walk by faith? Here are a couple of examples.

When God called Abraham to leave his home and journey to an unknown land, He promised that he would become the father of many nations (Genesis 12:1–3). Abraham didn’t know where he was going or how God would fulfill His promise, but he trusted in God’s plan and obeyed His call.

When Paul faced imprisonment and persecution, he persevered and trusted God. In his second letter to the Corinthians, he described what this means by stating that “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Paul understood that his physical circumstances did not define his spiritual reality, and he placed his trust in God’s promises rather than his situation.

When we trust in God’s plan, we are able to surrender our fears and worries to Him, knowing that He is in control. This gives us an opportunity to experience His peace and joy, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Jesus tells us in the gospel of John, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have

tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). God strengthens us as we rely on Him.

James calls Christians to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22), which means we must put our faith into action. This means serving others, sharing the gospel, and living a life that reflects God’s love. Walking by faith is at the heart of that testimony, because as we do so, we demonstrate both trust in and obedience to God. We show the world that we believe God’s promises, even when circumstances threaten to overcome us, proving that our faith is worth more than anything the world can offer. Missions starts with powerful faith.

PRACTICAL STEPS

At Connect 2 Ministries, one of the main ways we invite our supporters to partner with us is through prayer. As Christians, we believe prayer is powerful and effective—a God-given resource for us, both when things go well and when we come to the end of ourselves. Every day, we find new reasons to come before the Lord in prayer, both to praise Him for what He’s done and to ask expectantly for all He will do now and in the future. Our Lord hears, answers, and blesses our prayers. He gives us access to Himself in a personal way, and that truth is a gift and comfort to us every day. And one of the best ways to cultivate a life of prayer is to develop a strong understanding of why, as believers, we pray.

WHY WE PRAY

We pray because God listens. God makes it clear that when we come before Him in prayer, He hears us as His children. Jeremiah records God telling His people, “you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you” (Jer 29:12). Our prayers never go unheard because God promises that He listens. We know that “if we ask

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anything according to his will he hears us” (1 John 5:14), and Scripture constantly affirms that “he hears the prayer of the righteous” (Prov 15:29). As we strive to cultivate lives of prayer, we can confidently say with the psalmist, “he hears my voice” (Ps 55:17).

We pray because God answers prayer. Scripture also tells us that God is pleased to answer the prayers of His children. In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus says that “whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith” (Matt 21:22). The connection between faith and answered prayer is compelling. Jesus is not saying that our faith earns us whatever we want. Rather, He is communicating that God desires His people to come to Him, trusting expectantly for a response. God rewards that attitude in the way He answers each request we bring to Him.

We pray as a means of peace. God offers us peace when we submit our concerns to Him in prayer. Paul encouraged the Philippian church to “not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6–7). Peace is a byproduct of prayer. Speaking to God is an act of trust in itself, and that posture of faith fills us with security inasmuch as it is an act of reliance on Him. When we pray, we submit our circumstances and desires to the one who already holds them in His hands.

We pray to receive God’s favor. The Lord blesses His people when they pray—first, by giving salvation, and then through continual forgiveness and lovingkindness. Our first real prayer is necessarily a prayer for salvation; God promises “that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21), and He blesses us

immeasurably through that initial communion with Him. He also shows us continual mercy and favor as we pray after. God promised in the Old Testament that “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron 7:14). The same invitation stands for us today.

We pray because God desires it. The Bible speaks to us clearly and compellingly: Christians are called to pray. Paul called the church in Rome to “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” (Rom 12:12), and he wrote elsewhere that believers are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). All of these exhortations emphasize how important prayer is. As people who have a relationship with God, Christians must be people who communicate with God personally.

We pray in order to submit our emotions to God. The Bible gives us a reason to pray, whatever the season we might be in. James writes, “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise” (Jas 5:13), highlighting the versatility of the calling. We offer all our emotions to God through prayer. He is our Lord in happy times as well as in trials, and prayer offers a way for us to remember and submit ourselves to that reality.

We pray to avoid temptation. God gives us access to Himself so that we can resist and triumph over temptation. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told His disciples to “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt 26:41). Sometimes that means praying that God would “deliver us from the evil one” as we read in the Lord’s Prayer. And sometimes that means crying out, with the suffering man in Mark’s Gospel, “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24). Regardless, prayer offers us

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access to God, who is always willing and able to keep us from stumbling.

We pray because we are confident in God's relationship to us. We can come to Him with confidence because of Jesus, our Great High Priest. We can “with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16), knowing that Christ is our only way to the Father. And as Christians, prayer is an opportunity to talk with God in the context of an intimate, personal relationship. Jesus emphasizes this familial context when He says, “when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matt 6:6). God is our Father, and talking with Him is our privilege as His children.

We pray in unity with other Christians. God consistently urges His people to pray from a state of communion with other believers. His heart is for unity in and through prayer. Since the Old Testament, prayer has been modeled for us by saints who walked with God in the past. The psalmist who wrote, “I, O Lord, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you” (Ps 88:13) describes a truth as real then as it is now: that God cares for His people, and draws us all to Himself in the same way.

We pray as an act of ministry. Our prayers have an impact beyond ourselves. When we pray for others, we take an active role by bearing their burdens and encouraging them to trust God, our common source, for the outcome. Paul calls us to pray “at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints” (Eph 6:18). The connection with others is strong here and elsewhere in Scripture. Paul writes similarly to

Timothy, urging “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (1 Tim 2:1).

Cultivating a life of prayer is one of the best ways to grow a heart for others, whether those within the church or the lost in need of rescue. As we come to know the Father in a closer, more personal way, it becomes infinitely easier to step outside ourselves, see the needs of others, and meet them in a radical way. Like with anything, we tend to become passionate about things when we understand them. Prayer is a great example. We begin to pray more when we’ve experienced its power. In 2 Corinthians 1:4, we read about comforting others “with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God,” and there’s a unique empathy that comes with that kind of personal experience. From a personal state of understanding, we naturally start to encourage others toward the same end.

SUPPORTING MISSIONS TOGETHER

One of our core beliefs over the years has been that ministry is a community effort. The Great Commission is a call to all God’s people, and making disciples is not something we do in isolation. That’s why we try to encourage not just individuals, but families, to make missions a regular part of life. Here are some practical things you can do to get started.

Pray Together. Prayer is the most powerful thing we can do as Christians, and the best thing you can do to get your family involved in ministry is to pray together. Sponsor a child as a family, and commit to praying for them on a regular basis. You can even write them letters to show your support in a really practical way. Fill your mind with thoughts of others, and bring your burdens for the world before the Lord in prayer.

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Make It Real. Kids are pragmatic, so it can be helpful to do something that will make the reality of foreign missions tangible. You can identify with those in poverty by skipping one meal in a day, wearing the same clothes for a few days in a row, or not having light in your room in the evenings (which often are all realities for Haitian children). We know one family who lived one mile away from a lake, so they turned the water off at their house for a day and only used what they carried from the lake themselves. They would go to the water, fill a container, and then walk back to the house and use only that water communally, all day. That's a typical thing that would happen in Haiti, so through that one creative experience, this family had made the abstract notion of poverty real to their children in a memorable way.

The essence of compassion is care for others' suffering. Without understanding, there is no compassion. So how do we become compassionate people? We can begin to understand what's going on in Haiti in a small way by experiencing what they experience and understanding life as they live it, not as we live it. That's the reason we take teams. Like so many have said before us, poverty and suffering don't have meaning until they have a face and a name. Once you have a personal association with these abstract realities, they become more real. It's true in whatever context you find yourself.

We have an American partner who is a great example in this regard. This friend of mine used to work for a crisis pregnancy center, and over time, she began to feel that she wanted to support the moms by providing not just medical but practical help. She brainstormed many ways to achieve this, and ultimately ended up starting her own second-hand store with clothing, toys, and other baby supplies. The shop runs on donations so that when a mom from the crisis pregnancy center comes in, she can find what she needs for almost nothing. That initiative was born out of being in a context where our friend was seeing needs and thinking creatively about how she could fill a gap personally. She saw the

opportunity only after understanding the need—as soon as the need had a face, a name, and a story.

Jesus Himself gives us the example of the good Samaritan—the man who saw a need and responded to it by sacrificing his own time, energy, and resources to provide a solution. He engaged with suffering personally because he saw it as a personal opportunity (Luke 10:30–37). Something similar happens when a person comes on a team trip with us to Haiti and meets one of our restavek children. They've instantly made a meaningful connection. Now the concept of suffering has flesh, and scars, and a story. But until that point, it's all academic. At some point, you need experience. Pray with your children, your families, and your friends—take the time to pause and understand the suffering others live with. By making these abstract ideas more real in our own lives, we can help each other grow into hearts of genuine compassion for those in need. It's hard to think of a bigger gift to give.

TRUSTING GOD WITH THE RESULT

Making missions our reality is more about a heart-attitude than a plan for tangible success. Often, we won't see the effects immediately, but there's blessing in the process itself. Over the years, our four core pillars have been the guiding principles in ministry. We are biblically focused, church centric, passionate about pursuing compassionate relationships, and rooted in indigenous ministry. There's a simple reason for that. The challenge in ministry is that if you take too broad of an approach, you end up exhausting your resources quickly and reaching less people as a result.

We have seen many organizations come into Haiti and do just that. While they've been incredibly responsive to need, doing it without guiding principles means you spend your resources rather than investing them. It's impossible to feed everyone or deal with all the areas of hurt and need in a third-world country. You need a framework that tells you where to begin and where to stop.

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We think of our four pillars as rails that give us the boundaries of our organization. They allow us to say, “This is what we’re going to deal with” without running our resources dry trying to do everything. For us, that means we will work with as many churches as we can work with personally. We’re not interested in anonymity, because accountability is the way to build a lasting and trusted presence in a community. Those churches then respond to needs in their communities, and we support them by providing food, money, and intangible support.

Originally, we started with fifty churches, and it became evident that model was too broad. We ended up with our twelve Mercy Network churches after assessing which churches were consistently acting on the practical mandate of the Great Commission in their communities. These men were quick responders to local need, and that testimony has continued as the Lord works through them to this day.

Next, we had each of those pastors pick one or two people to bring under them and then teach them the same principles we were sharing. So our guiding priorities have helped establish a network of discipleship, which has worked well in the country of Haiti. Haitians are used to community; that’s their culture. The whole process of living life alongside other believers and responding to need in a collective way is at the heart of our four core values, and our goal has been to allow that spirit of unity to drive everything we do within our practical parameters. Our core values give us the structure to exercise incredible creativity and freedom as we try to be the hands and feet of Jesus in Haiti.

Yet every day, thousands of children die from starvation around the world. That means thousands died yesterday, thousands will die today, and thousands tomorrow. By contrast, we live in a place where we throw away enough food to end child starvation. Statistically, if we took all the money we spend on dog food alone, we could stop world hunger. When we think in those terms, it’s especially shocking that child slavery still exists only 700 miles off the coast of Florida. We see a dramatic need to fill that gap and

say, in very practical terms, “This is not right!” We feel a need to end it, and that desire is not wrong.

And yet, we believe that God has not called us to fix Haiti. There’s no fixing Haiti. Suffering is an inescapable part of life on earth, and denying that would be foolish. Jesus Himself said “you always have the poor with you” (Mark 14:7). But despite that reality, we take up the responsibility of acting generously and compassionately toward the needy—just like Christ did with us.

Our goal for our kids in our Children’s Homes is that they would grow up feeling safe and being able to trust. We give them education. We want them to have a trade, so that when they get married, they have a way to support and raise a family. And for that one child, slavery is broken. We can’t fix 300,000 children, but we can help one, or ten, or now more than 120 children, as God gives us capacity and opportunity. We pray that these small-scale acts of faithfulness to the gospel model would bear even greater fruit as God does what only He can.

So when it comes to the question of “How should we respond to poverty?,” the answer is not to fall into discouragement or to think unrealistically about solving global suffering. God desires that we do His will—He handles the rest. In 1 Corinthians 3:6–7, we read the familiar story that Paul “planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” We may never see a return on our investment—but that’s beside the point anyway. Our only responsibility is to be faithful stewards of the time, resources, and opportunities God gives us. He handles the rest.

Making missions our reality means remembering the Great Commission call in our lives, orienting our hearts to trust God more, praying for strength, and obeying His Word. Making missions our reality looks like radical faithfulness in the opportunities in front of us, combined with prayer that God would use His church as a beacon of hope to those who need it most.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

We will never thrive spiritually if we are not, first and foremost, walking in obedience to God's gospel call on our lives. In my many years of ministry, I have always seen the two go hand in hand. Your involvement in missions affects your own spiritual growth and your relationship with God. God calls us to go—and to make Christ known as we are going. We grow as a result.

- When you think of a gospel opportunity that is unique to you specifically, what comes to mind?
- How would your life need to change for you to act on those opportunities?
- What's keeping you from taking those steps?
- How can you partner with other Christians to grow together in this area?



CONCLUSION

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb ... and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

—Revelation 7:9–10

Standing on an empty lot, Pastor Poyis and I stared at the walls of a new church. The roof hadn't been installed yet, but we expectantly discussed his vision for the church and the impact it would have beyond its physical building. Pastor Poyis shared with me that he wanted to name the church “Connect 2 Ministries.”

“Let's pull back.” I said, “The church needs to have a Haitian name, not an American one. The church's name should be related to your heart for the community. What's your desire for this community?” Pastor Poyis said, “I would love to see it redeemed.” And so, out of the heart of Pastor Poyis, the church was named Mission Église Chrétienne Rédemptrice, or Church of the Redeemer. Today, the once empty lot now provides food, water, fuel, clothes, and other basic necessities, as well as free medical services. With each

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resource given, we also make it a point to share the love of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

Our philosophy in ministry has been to help meet practical needs, but never at the expense of caring for people's spiritual needs. Our tangible care for the people of Haiti is intimately connected with the true care and healing offered in the gospel. Our own salvation is always the starting place. Every aspect of the Christian life flows from being broken before Jesus. Once you're called into that relationship, everything else will fall into place. You begin to see the needs of people around you, and you see them with a right perspective, because the Holy Spirit convicts you in truth. The heart of redemption is relationship. If you know Him, it will change you, and our desire to see the lost redeemed cannot be separated from that reality. Salvation only comes by knowing Jesus Himself and pursuing relationship with Him.

This is what it means to comfort others with the comfort we've received. We have a permanent hope because Jesus bridges the gap between us and God, restoring us to the only relationship that can ever satisfy our souls. The troubles we face in this life are "light and momentary" compared with the joy promised to us at the cross (2 Cor 4:17). That paradigm is key. The cross was a place of suffering in history; it represents a burden that was literally carried and physically experienced. Yet the cross means joy for the Christian, because it reconciles our two opposing realities. We are eternal beings in finite bodies, created for joy and relationship yet living a shadow of that purpose, even in our best moments. Without an understanding of suffering and a way to embrace it with joy, we have no way to live well amid that tension. And we certainly have no grounds to share hope with others.

WE NEED A CHANGE

As Christians today, we often replace knowing Scripture with knowing God. Even the demons believe (Jas 2:19); their

theology is better than anyone's, but that kind of knowledge doesn't change you. Jesus changes you. James makes it clear that "faith apart from works is dead," and as Christians, we are measured by how we live (Jas 2:26). Our works don't save us, but they testify to the reality of salvation in our lives. Without that heart transformation, we can never serve others in a truly effective way.

When you understand the reality of the gospel and have genuine faith, you will act on it. As believers, we are "a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17); we've been rebuilt and have received a new heart that wants to act out our internal transformation. But the Christian life was never meant to be lived in isolation. Even though our relationship with God is something completely individual, it's also a status we share with all other Christians on earth. You are personally accountable before God for what you do with your talents. Yet the church in this world is a collective network of believers all responsible before God as well. United in our individual calls, we have an opportunity to come together and "stir up one another to love and good works" (Heb 10:24).

Because of this, God connects our personal transformation with life in the body of Christ. We can cultivate and fuel the change He works in our hearts by committing to grow in community with other Christians. Believers encourage each other as peers, and God gives us shepherds expressly to guide us in growing into Christlikeness. A good pastor will hold his people accountable to acting out their faith. But to do that, the shepherd needs to know his sheep and the sheep need to know their shepherd.

There are some practical realities that influence that relationship. It's easier to know your sheep in a smaller congregation, and the congregation comes to know and trust their pastor more deeply in this personal context. Regarding actions, the shepherd moves his sheep if their direction or behavior needs correction. This is beyond simply telling them to move, act, or change. He guides them through it personally. Information without transformation is useless, and that is what Scripture would

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have us understand about life in this world. We join ourselves to a local congregation, submit to the leadership of a shepherding pastor, and develop close relationships with other Christians as a means of living out what we know and believe.

Thinking about that God-given framework shows us we need a change. Whether we have been involved in many churches through the years, or never developed these kinds of Christian relationships at all, we have an opportunity to learn and grow. We need to cultivate a life of faithful obedience, because without works, we have good reason to question whether our faith is real. Scripture is not a replacement for Jesus. When Jesus left earth and returned to heaven, He gave us the Holy Spirit to dwell with us in His place. God reveals Himself to us through His Word, and the point of Scripture is to give us Christ, not just knowledge. God's heart is to draw us into relationship with Him, and that relationship is the foundation of everything we do. The book is not the end; the relationship is the end.

Throughout biblical history, how many people had the written Word? How many could even read? For all of time, God has drawn people to Himself and saved the lost by the power of the Holy Spirit. We can not ignore the amazing gift we have in being able to read and know the Bible. But we must never use it as a substitute for cultivating a personal relationship with God. Jesus calls us to pray, and that is at the heart of His ministry as our High Priest. We can come before God ourselves, because Jesus stands in the gap between us. We need to cultivate a heart for prayer if we want to grow in faith and faithfulness to Jesus, our Lord. Once relationships—with God and with His saints—are in the right state, we will truly start to see the kind of radical change God desires.

THE BIBLICAL MODEL

Merriam Webster defines the word “serve” as: “to furnish or supply with something needed or desired.” Servants, then, are those who meet the needs or consider the desires of others. That’s the example we see in Christ, and that’s the path we’re called to walk as His followers. When we look to the needs and desires of others, we are actively striving to fulfill both the first and second greatest commandments: to love God with all our hearts, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. And thankfully, God doesn’t expect us to do that in our own strength. We have the Helper, the Holy Spirit, and the perfect teacher—Jesus Christ Himself, who showed us what it means to live this way. Examples are powerful, and watching and imitating what others do is one of the best ways we learn. The Bible gives us practical examples for that reason. Christ is first and foremost, but God also gives us pictures of fellow saints who served the Lord in different situations. We see good and bad models in the pages of Scripture, and those stories give us a framework to consider as we live our own lives.

In thinking about what missions means to the believer, consider the following examples of service from God’s Word.

Luke 10:33–34

“But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.”

The Good Samaritan is one of the first examples that comes to mind when we think of “service.” He saw a need “as he traveled,” in the midst of living his own life. He had goals and things to accomplish, but when he noticed someone who was hurting, he made that his priority. The Good Samaritan is not just an example of remarkable generosity, but of faithfulness in the ordinary. He acted on

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an opportunity that arose in the course of his normal life. God used him right where he was, and he was responsive to God's leading.

Acts 20:35

"In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Paul spoke these words to the church at Ephesus. He mentions the example he had shown them personally, with the goal of encouraging them to act in compassion and generosity toward others. Paul's model is Jesus, who told us that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." By mentioning his own service to the weak, Paul is saying (as he so often did), "follow me, as I follow Christ." When we consider the examples of saints who came before us, we are doing the same.

Acts 16:33

"And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family."

Immediately after hearing the gospel, the Philippian jailer acted in mercy toward the disciples by washing their wounds—caring for their practical needs. It's compelling to think about the proximity between the two events. The first sign of this man's conversion, even before his baptism, was his heartfelt service to his fellow Christians. Our hearts and our lives should testify to the same compassion, knowing that the only reason we care for others is because we have been so loved by God.

Acts 9:36

"Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity."

Tabitha is remembered in this passage for her good works and the way she helped the poor. Before we learn anything else about her, we hear that she "was a disciple," or a follower. She followed Jesus, and that showed up in the way she lived her life toward others. As John 13:35 says, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another."

Acts 10:2

"[Cornelius,] a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God."

The two things that marked Cornelius's life as "devout and God-fearing" were his generosity and prayer. The two go hand in hand. He had a consistent, personal relationship with the Father, and from that flowed his giving heart toward others. Knowing God must be the foundation for everything we do in serving others in the same way that it was for Cornelius.

2 Corinthians 8:1-2

"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part."

Paul highlights something important about the generosity of these saints: they gave "in the midst of a very severe trial" and it was only through "the grace that God has given." Their giving was lavish and completely empowered by the Lord. Even though the saints in the Macedonian church were poor and suffering under trials

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themselves, their giving reflected a deeper reality—that they saw God as the source and sustainer of all their life and ministry.

Romans 15:26

“For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.”

Paul, writing to the church in Rome, shared about the generosity of the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, placing their giving in an immediately larger context. In fact, their charity was the reason for his trip to Jerusalem in the first place. Paul traveled there to bring “aid to the saints,” being supported financially and spiritually by individual congregations, yet all working to serve the Church. When we serve, we are helping the universal church in the same way, whether our ministry occurs locally or globally.

Acts 11:29

“So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.”

The earliest followers of Christ are remembered for their service. Their ministry occurred without compulsion; no external standards decided how or what each of them should do to help others. They served on an individual basis in both senses—identifying unique needs and meeting them as they were personally best equipped to do so. For us, the pattern is the same. God has given different resources and giftings to each person, and prayerful discernment must guide our ministry to others.

Acts 4:34–35

“There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the

proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need."

What better picture of Christian life? No needs existing among fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, because those who have support those who lack. Mercy and kindness controlled these relationships, and that example is a wonderful picture of the gospel. Radical service (like selling land and houses to meet the needs of other believers) only makes sense when we remember that Christ did the same and more for His people.

As Christians, much of what we do is not original. We love because He loved us; we give because Christ gave all for us; we serve because we have been served so well. And that model couldn't be more beautiful. Our Christian witness is a reflection of the ultimate care and love we have in Christ, and the same is true for the lives of every believer who's ever lived.

GOD'S POWER THROUGH MISSIONS

There is a man who lives near the Connect 2 Ministries compound in Haiti who was once a strong practitioner of Vodou. As part of his practice, he would levitate to cross the street and get to other places. One day, he tried to levitate across the ministry compound and church, but it was as if he hit an invisible wall before he fell to the ground. He tried this on a couple other occasions with no luck, then went to seek out the man in charge of this land. Someone pointed him to Pastor Poyis, of whom he asked, "What is this building? It's more powerful than the Vodou I have." Pastor Poyis proceeded to share the gospel with him, and this man repented and was saved that day—he is now a faithful member of our church, Mission Église Chrétienne Rédemptrice.

In every good thing we do as part of our ministry in Haiti, it is always God's power at work, not ours. God used our

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compound as a means of saving this man. He has used our staff to share light and hope with countless in their communities. He has used the church in America to support the work of the church in Haiti. Our responsibility is to be faithful. God does the rest. The details of ministry He leaves to us, and that is the measure of our faith. What we do with the time, resources, and talents He gives speaks directly to the state of our hearts. Our decisions in Haiti, like your decisions as you live your life, are a picture of the effort we are investing in putting feet to our faith.

People often ask me why we decided to make our Children's Homes a permanent home for restavek kids rather than pursuing adoption. It's a fair question. In an ideal world, every child would have a stable family with loving parents. But that's not our reality. Adoption is not always reliable or feasible. It can be an extremely long and expensive process which is a challenge for many families, let alone those already struggling to provide for themselves. In addition, many children have complex medical, emotional, or social needs that make adoption difficult. In either case, we have pursued ministry in Haiti believing that we can bridge the gap this leaves by providing education, community, and love through our Children's Homes. Caring for these children as long as they need is how we steward our God-given resources.

The kids in our Mercy and Regency Homes receive training and education that will equip them to be self-sufficient in Haitian society. Through our vocational training center, children will learn hard skills like carpentry, masonry, welding, baking, and sewing—specific, technical abilities that are in high demand in many industries and can lead to stable, well-paying livelihoods in the future. The rest of our kids' experience, from school classes and sports games to church events, helps them develop soft skills (like communication, teamwork, and problem solving). All of these things help prepare kids to build strong friendships, communities, and eventually families of their own.

The benefits of this holistic approach extend beyond the individual child. By providing these children with the skills

they need to build successful careers and relationships, we are investing in the future of Haiti. Children who receive education and training are more likely to be self-sufficient, contribute to society, and support their families. They are more likely to break the back of slavery in their nation.

By investing in the infrastructure and support systems necessary to make it possible, we are taking a step of faith. Every building we construct and every VBS we sponsor is an act of belief saying, “with God, all things are possible.” In our Children’s Homes, we want to provide more than temporary housing while kids hope for an adoption that might never come. We want each of our children to know that with us, they are home.

Our passion for ministry starts with a passion for Christ. He has given us a home, so we share that hope with others. The best advice I can give for any Christian is to pursue Jesus. Whatever your ministry, field of influence, or personal resources, your witness for Christ hangs on how well you truly know Christ. Fall in love with the Savior. There is a mystical side of our relationship with God that can be scary. It requires vulnerability, and a complete surrender of ourselves to Him. We don’t set the terms; but in that position, there is freedom.

Once your heart is broken for Jesus, Jesus breaks your heart for the lost.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I met my dear friend George Middleton in the early 1970s in East Africa. I was on a short-term team from California, and he was a missionary in Ethiopia at the time. God used that relationship in such a foundational way. George had a remarkable gift for seeing opportunities to be about Jesus wherever he went. For three months, George poured into me, teaching me true spiritual vision. I will be eternally grateful for George's investment in my life.

My family has been an amazing lifeline. They have been so patient with me as I have pushed the envelope, going wherever and whenever I felt I needed to go to be a part of what God was doing around the world. I am forever grateful to them for their long-suffering and patience with me. I love you all—Nancy, my amazing wife; Justin, Stephen and Caitlin, my children. Thank you for allowing me to GO.

To my very dear friend, Frandy Poyis, my brother and co-laborer in Haiti. Pastor Poyis has been such an amazing student and leader of his people. I believe that only eternity will reveal the incredible impact Frandy is having in the church in Haiti, in the lives of his people, and in the personal stories of countless children whom God has rescued from slavery. I love you, Pas.

My highest and deepest thanks is to my savior, Jesus Christ. He is my source and strength, and I have nothing

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apart from what He's given. Praise God for His faithful, loving care in the lives of His people.



APPENDIX A: IMAGES OF MINISTRY



Rescued restaveks heading to church.



Restavek child holding the hand of an American volunteer.



School children in class.



Pastor Poyis and our rescued restavek children.



Celebration at the Children's Homes.

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Early photo of an American short-term team with Haitian children.



Greg and Pastor Poyis at the compound.



Medical Clinic.



Moms with children waiting for clinic services.

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Road outside the C2M compound in Onaville.



Onaville hillside.



Onaville rooftops.



Street vendors in Onaville.

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Mercy Network pastors and American volunteers in prayer.



Greg with the American solar installation team in the Onaville compound kitchen.



Pastor Poyis at the Regency Children's Home building site.



Regency Children's Home, completed.

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Mission Église Chrétienne Rédemptrice.



Onaville campus, home to our Regency Home and community school.



Greg Barshaw with one of our rescued restavek children.



APPENDIX B

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Which story or example from the book resonated with you most deeply? Why?
2. What are some practical ways you can step outside of your comfort zone to connect with people who need hope?
3. How does this book define “missions,” and how does this compare to your previous understanding? Has your perspective on missions changed after reading this book?
4. The book argues that missions should be a priority for every Christian. Do you agree or disagree? What obstacles might prevent someone from embracing this view?
5. In what ways did the book challenge your current approach to sharing your faith? What specific changes do you feel called to make?
6. How can investing in others’ lives lead to personal spiritual growth? Share an example from your own experience or from the book.
7. What insights did you gain about navigating cultural differences while sharing the gospel?

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8. How does the concept of “investing” apply to missions work? Discuss the balance between financial support and personal involvement.
9. What role should local churches play in supporting and encouraging missions work?
10. The book is called *Go, Engage, Invest*. How do these three actions work together to create lasting change in people’s lives (whether in ourselves or others)? Which aspect do you find most challenging?



For answers to your questions or information about how to get involved, visit our website, connect2ministries.org, or email info@connect2ministries.org.

“As Christians, we are called to GO.”



Greg Barshaw is the founder and CEO of Connect 2 Ministries. Early in his career, he studied physical therapy and worked in construction, biomedical manufacturing, and the aerospace industry. While Greg has used these skills in many different ministry contexts, his passion has always been for people.

Connect 2 Ministries was established to help local churches rediscover a passion for lost people, and to support international churches and pastors by fostering a sound biblical foundation in ministry. Connect 2 Ministries worked extensively in relief efforts after the 2010 Port-au-Prince earthquake and has continued working with churches, orphans, and the disabled population in Haiti.

“Greg’s heart bleeds the gospel, and the ministry he has begun in Haiti is simply the result of his love and obedience to the Lord. I trust that this book will bless many.” –Dr. Tom Halstead, Dean of Biblical Studies and Professor at The Master’s University

“I loved every aspect of the book, especially Greg’s high view of the local church and Scripture. I walked away not feeling guilty but convicted to do something!” –Todd M. Smith, Pastor of Crossroads Community Church



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