God’s Grand Design
Living the radical life we have been called to live

DEMONISHING DOGMATISM
Mark Maxwell

THE NEW WAY
Embracing Hope in Karamoja

INNERVIEW
MoveIn with Nigel Paul

issue ninety-four
Embracing the mystery

My dear friend George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilization, recently sent out an email with the subject-line: Must we be dogmatic?

"After almost sixty years of studying the Bible," says George, "there are issues I am still trying to understand. But I meet so many people who are far more interested in whether I am Reformed or Charismatic or Baptist or what I believe about the end times than whether I am a believer in Jesus and saved by his grace. Those secondary issues are not irrelevant, but does this really please the Lord?"

I would like to echo his plea. While the primary pillars of our faith can be held with conviction, fully understanding the mind of the Almighty on lesser issues is one of the great mysteries of all time. Certainty provides comfort and in our quest for certainty we often select our favorite texts and build our thesis about the ways of God, despite the fact that he is infinitely larger than the scope of our understanding.

Godly, thoughtful believers may ascribe to scripture-based positions that seem to conflict, such as the free will of man versus predestination. Accepting that both might legitimately co-exist is a recognition of the whole teaching of Scripture as well as the size of Jehovah. He has the capacity to both predestine the outcome of events and give us a choice in those events.

Our very human problem is that we love to feast at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (the biblical defense for being judgmental). So we look around for places to exercise this god-like ability and spot our fellow Christians, a target-rich destination for our ill-gotten wisdom. We set our sights, unleash our righteous ammunition on one another… and the wrong team wins.

How can we dare to condemn Adam and Eve for their disobedience without including ourselves as we indulge in Sunday lunch reviews of the pastor’s morning sermon? Sadly, we are more like Adam than Jesus. It is my sincere prayer that we will ponder the Scriptures carefully and anchor ourselves in the great truths of the faith. But at the same time, let’s hold with open hands those subjects on which godly people, each with biblical grounding, disagree.

My reasoning is this: I’m guessing that all of the Bible will ultimately be found to be true, not just favorite selections. Where we as Christians differ in our interpretation, most of us will probably be proven partially right and partially wrong, or totally right and totally wrong because we haven’t expanded our understanding to capture the scope of God’s mind. On top of that, I doubt that even the most comprehensive defense will change the plans God has in place.

It seems to me somewhat arrogant to assume that our intellectual limits should confine the ways of God.

While we can have reasonably defensible positions on controversial subjects, it seems to me somewhat arrogant to assume that our intellectual limits should confine the ways of God. We are called to be humble before one another (Eph. 5:21) but even more so before the Almighty. I believe this will result in unity in the church. This is the will of the Father and a passion that filled the heart of Jesus (John 17:21-23).

May we be willing to let go of our desperate hunger for the fruit of the tree that brought down humanity! Let’s embrace instead the great essentials that draw us together, faithfully preaching the gospel, remaining humble and teachable; in short, simply too in awe of so great a salvation to divide the church for which Christ died by those things on which we have yet to hear God’s final word. [8]

Mark Maxwell is president of Prairie. He welcomes your comments. Send them to presidentoffice@prairie.edu
Between the Lines

I was twenty-seven years young when they handed me the editorial keys to Servant. That was twenty-five years ago, which makes me forty-three! Was I hesitant? Yes. Under-qualified? Absolutely. Naive enough to think I could pull it off? No. And so I learned to seek wise counsel, become a voracious reader, and do things before they were due. More importantly, I found Pat Massey, who was and continues to be enthusiastic and encouraging, and we wrapped it all in prayer. It’s been a great ride. And a little like driving a friend’s convertible. You wave at admirers, but you know who gets the credit. This work was dedicated to God from day one and He has used it. I’m grateful. But now it’s time to hand the keys to Peter Mal. I appreciate Peter’s commitment to truth, his enthusiasm and energy. At Peter’s request, I will continue writing my column, and I trust you will continue to support this ministry. May God bless you richly.

Phil Callaway

I thoroughly enjoy your Servant magazine and read it from cover to cover as soon as it arrives. I am amazed and thrilled at how PBI has evolved, transformed and become a truly great learning institute since my graduation in 1953. Bless you all.

Eleanor Wolverton, Courtenay, BC

As a Prairie alumna of 1972, I think there was a priceless truth throughout this issue of Servant (93) and basics that we need brought back to us. I have not heard “The love of Christ constrains us…” in a LONG, LONG time. I have appreciated Servant for many, many years.

Kathy Trowbridge, Adron, PA

Just read your “Family Matters” in Issue 93 of Servant and I appreciated so much how you wrote honestly. It’s too easy for people to give pat answers or say something that sounds spiritual when all we really want to hear is “I’m here for you if you need to talk and I’ll be praying for you.” I know it comes from a place of simply not knowing what to say, but nothing is better than something that causes more pain instead of helping. I’m grateful for a Father who knows our hearts, who understands our hurt completely and who doesn’t shy away from our questions. I can be honest with him and he’s ok with my struggle.

Linette Stanton, Winnipeg, MB
The force of a single drop of water descending the Andes is minuscule. Similarly, as long as individual Christians journey alone—no matter how “radical” they are—their effect will be minimal. But as men and women who are surrendered to the person of Christ join together in churches that are committed to the purpose of Christ, then nothing can stop the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Throughout history, God has chosen to call out a people for himself. Indeed, his intention is that “through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 3:10). He has called us to lock arms with one another in single-minded obedience to one objective: the declaration of his gospel for the demonstration of his glory to all nations. This is God’s design for his people, and it is worth giving our lives to see it accomplished. It is worth it for billions of people who do not yet know that Jesus is the grave-conquering, life-giving, all-satisfying King. And it is worth it for you and me because we were made to enjoy the great pleasures of God in the context of total abandonment to his global purpose.

My friend Mark had spent his entire adult life involved in church programs and serving on committees. Every week his schedule was filled with activity. After joining our faith family, he started hearing people talk about making disciples. That’s when Mark realized that, despite all the good things he had done in the church, he could not name one person outside his family whom he had led to Christ. He had done all the stuff he thought he was supposed to do, but had missed the most important thing. Now, at his workplace and in our community, Mark is intentionally leading people to Christ and teaching them to follow him.

This story should frighten us. The last thing you and I want to do is waste our lives on religious activity that is devoid of spiritual productivity—being active in the church but not advancing the kingdom of God. Yet, if we are not careful, we will ultimately miss out on the great purpose for which we were created.

As Christians, you and I can easily deceive ourselves into thinking that dedication to church programs automatically equals devotion to kingdom purposes. That’s why I propose that we put everything, even the good things, up for reconsideration before God, releasing them wholly to him and asking him to show us his priorities and purposes for each. I’m not talking about biblical essentials and theological non-negotiables. We do not need to change the words of God or the truths of the gospel. But everything else belongs on the table: the ways we minister to children and youth; how we serve women, men, singles and seniors; how we do music and mission; how we approach finances and administration; all our policies, priorities and procedures; all the buildings and land we own or rent. The gospel compels the church to go to God with everything we have and everything we do and ask, “What needs to go? What needs to change? What needs to stay the same?” And then wait for God to answer.

A church is a community of individuals who have lost their lives to follow Christ. Surely it flows from this that we would be willing to lose our programs and our preferences, to sacrifice our budgets and our buildings, to let go of our most cherished legacies and reputations if there is a better way to make his glory known in the world.

I will not soon forget the day in August 2005 when my wife Heather and I fled New Orleans. It was the day before Hurricane Katrina struck. We were used to hurricane warnings so we grabbed some extra clothes and drove out of town. Little did we know that this would be the last time we would see our house—and our neighborhood—in the same condition. Two days later we were at an evacuation shelter where a screen showed news coming in from the city. We sat down to watch the live feeds and as the rays of the sun strike ice and a single drop of water forms. It traces a hesitant course downward, gradually joining with other drops to become a steady stream. The stream gains speed and strength. Thousands of feet below and hundreds of miles later, what were once single drops have converged to become the mightiest river on earth: the Amazon. Flowing into the Atlantic Ocean at a rate of more than seven million cubic feet per second, the Amazon is more powerful than the next ten largest rivers in the world combined.

David Platt

High atop the Andes Mountains, the rays of the sun strike ice and a single drop of water forms. It traces a hesitant course downward, gradually joining with other drops to become a steady stream. The stream gains speed and strength. Thousands of feet below and hundreds of miles later, what were once single drops have converged to become the mightiest river on earth: the Amazon. Flowing into the Atlantic Ocean at a rate of more than seven million cubic feet per second, the Amazon is more powerful than the next ten largest rivers in the world combined.
GRAND DESIGN
news helicopter flew over one drowned neighborhood after another, we suddenly recognized the gas station just a couple of blocks from our house. As the camera continued to pan across the landscape, we saw our neighborhood engulfed in water up to the rooftops. And then we glimpsed a roof we thought was ours…

We sat in stunned silence. Our home had just been swept away.

The levee designed to protect the city had begun to crack as the floodwaters rose. Finally the barricade broke and millions of gallons of water came rushing in. Like others who lost everything in the flood, Heather and I experienced shock and disbelief and wondered if “normal” would ever return.

But now we see it in a new light altogether.

For us, the flood depicts the radical call of Christ to Christians and the church. When Jesus calls us to abandon everything we have and are it’s almost as if he is daring us to put ourselves in the flood plain. To put our lives, our churches, possessions, plans and dreams in front of the levee and then ask God to break it. To sweep away whatever he wants, to leave standing whatever he desires, and to remake our lives and churches according to his will.

At one of the first meetings I had with the leaders at Brook Hills after becoming their pastor, I began with a list of questions: how can we effectively mobilize the people of this church to accomplish the Great Commission? Do we need all the staff and committees we have? Does our budget reflect the desires of God? Are our facilities the best use of our money to accomplish God’s purposes? Are our programs the absolute best way to advance the gospel?

In the ensuing discussion, it was not uncommon to hear questions like, “What’s wrong with having a fall carnival for children?” “What’s wrong with having a basketball league?” We soon realized, though, that asking what’s wrong with certain programs and activities would get us nowhere. The conversation would change only when we asked, “Are these programs and activities the best way to spend our time, money and energy for the spread of the gospel in our neighborhood and in all nations?”

All of a sudden we found ourselves open to letting go of good things in order to achieve greater purposes. Our perspective had radically changed. None of us, including me, had all the answers. But in honestly asking the questions, we began to grasp how much the good things in the church had a hold on our hearts. We saw a dangerous tendency to value our traditions over God’s truth, defending a program because that’s what worked before, not because that’s what God had said to do now, and how prone we were to exalt our plans over God’s priorities and value our comforts over others’ needs. I cannot claim to know what a church should do in every situation. But might there be better ways to marshal God’s resources for his glory in a world where millions are starving and more than a billion have never even heard of Jesus? Some would say that’s not a fair question. I’m convinced it is a question we cannot avoid.

Studying the book of James together as a church, we were confronted with the reality that those who have received mercy extend mercy. Grace in our hearts overflows in goodness from our hands. At the same time, we were going through the budget process. On average, for every one hundred dollars a North American Christian earns, he will give five cents through the church to a world with urgent spiritual and physical needs. This does not make sense.

Knowing this, our pastors decided to drastically change our spending to better align with the will and ways of God. Along with reallocating resources for needs around the world, we committed time and money to share the gospel in tangible ways in a particular part of our city. Several individuals and families left their comfortable neighborhoods and moved into the area. Others began downsizing for the sake of a greater vision. It was not an issue of giving up bad things, just good things that were preventing far better things from happening.

There is no end to the possibilities when God’s people come together in absolute surrender and obedience to God’s purpose. You and I have been joined in the church by God’s grand design for something far greater than any of us could imagine or achieve alone. Let’s live “radical” together in eager anticipation of the day when we will see his face and, as a community encompassing every nation, tribe and tongue, enjoy his beauty for all of eternity. [5]

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To receive a copy of Radical Together by David Platt, see the enclosed envelope.
Reaching for joy

Tim Neufeld, lead singer and co-founder of Starfield talked with Servant about his new group and upcoming album.

YOU’VE HAD A VERY SUCCESSFUL CAREER WITH STARFIELD. WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST MEMORY FROM YOUR TIME WITH THEM?
My greatest memory would have to be an event in Amsterdam where we got the chance to perform with a band called Delirious in front of 35,000 people. A day later we saw some of the video footage and were just shocked. It was that keen realization that things had changed. We were a long way from playing in little Mennonite churches on the prairies of Canada! A humbling experience to say the least.

HOW DID YOUR TIME WITH STARFIELD DEVELOP YOUR MUSICAL CAREER AND PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE DOING TODAY?
There were days as a band we felt invincible, like we could take on the world, and there were other days we wanted to crawl into a hole together and die. What I know now is that the hard lessons of humility and service are best learned first: before the music, the career, or anything else that might follow.

WHAT MUSICAL JOURNEY HAVE YOU BEEN ON THE PAST FEW YEARS?
A journey into Bluegrass! It’s been in my family for at least four generations, but I didn’t realize I would have so much fun exploring it, playing it, and ultimately making it. There’s something about this genre that brings people out of their shells.

YOUR NEW BAND IS CALLED “TIM NEUFELD AND THE GLORY BOYS.” DESCRIBE WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT.
This new band is what I like to call “a musical journey towards the joy.” So much of my musical experience, and Christian music in general, is painfully serious. It always seems to be about the most intense 10% of the Christian life. In contrast, most of our biblical instruction in regards to discipleship, especially in the New Testament, is written about the joy—both the pursuit of it and the enjoyment of it. Things have seemed out of balance to me for a long time. Ask any worship leader what the most difficult song to find for a Sunday morning set list is, and they’ll tell you it’s an upbeat, joyful praise song. We’re working to change that :)

YOU HAVE A NEW ALBUM COMING OUT IN SEPTEMBER. TELL US ABOUT IT. WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT?
It’s a ten-song bluegrass-infused worship project titled ‘The Joy.’ All I can say is that I’m super proud of how it turned out, I think people are really going to dig it, and I’m having more fun than I’ve had in years!

YOU’VE WRITTEN SOME MEMORABLE SONGS THAT WE SING IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY. ARE THERE SONGS ON THIS NEW RECORD THAT YOU BELIEVE WILL ALSO APPEAL TO CONGREGATIONS?
To be honest, I’m always surprised when a song that I played a part in writing is sung in ANY churches, never mind many! I would say the same kind of healthy insecurity would accompany these songs. I always hope people would connect with them in a way that might translate to a congregational setting, but I never count on it.

In this issue, we asked some professors and friends to answer the question:

“What is the purpose of the Church?”

The catch was that they had to answer as a tweet (limited to 140 characters).

Bruxy Cavey @Bruxy
Pastor, The Meeting House
To continue being God’s truth “enfleshed” in our world, the #Show&Tell of God’s love.

Brian Doerksen @briandoerksen
Songwriter, Worship Leader, Music and Worship Arts at Prairie Bible Institute
To be a sanctuary where all generations and cultures can receive communion in community and offer broken hallelujahs of lament and praise.

Kelly Steffen @prairiepastors
Program Coordinator, Pastoral Ministries
The purpose of the church is to go into the world to proclaim the gospel that the world might be saved through Christ.

Follow us @prairiecolleges

Tim & The Glory Boys will be live in concert Nov 14, 2014. Visit www.prairie.edu/events for more details.
First Auca follower of Jesus passes away

Dayuma Caento, the first believer in the Waodani (Auca) tribe of Ecuador, passed away on March 1, 2014, at about 80 years of age. Her people became known internationally for the massacre of five young American missionaries in 1956. Fleeing her violent culture, Dayuma was befriended by Rachel Saint, sister of pilot Nate Saint. She became a Christian and taught her language to missionaries who were seeking to reach the Aucas with the gospel. Later on, she opened the way for Rachel and Jim Elliot’s widow Elizabeth to live among the tribe. Dayuma led much of her family to the Lord and helped Rachel translate the New Testament.

“A beautiful daughter of Christ has joined him in heaven today,” said Nate Saint’s son Steve who also lived for a time with the tribe that killed his father. “Dayuma...made God’s story known to these people in a way only a Waodani could. Praise God for her life!”

The event that launched a massive movement of young people toward missions continued to make news in the decades that followed and still influences lives and hearts today.

“People who do not know the Lord ask why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries. They forget that they too are expending their lives...and when the bubble has burst, they will have nothing of eternal significance to show for the years they have wasted.”

NATE SAINT

Now You Know

Between 2011 and 2020 more than 140 million girls will become child brides. *

27°C (80.6°F) is considered a cold day in northeastern Brazil. **

A woman dies every two minutes from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes somewhere in the world.*

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* World Health Organization/UN
** Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

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Five young men (LR: Peter Fleming, Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Nate Saint, Roger Youderian) take to the skies with MAF pilot Nate Saint at the wheel. Their first contact with the elusive Auca Indians is friendly, but days later the men are speared to death. News of the tragedy goes global, inspiring many to commit their lives to world evangelization.

Remains of an aircraft uncovered in the sands along the Curaray River are identified as the lost plane of the slain missionaries. MAF pilot Bill Clapp reconstructs the frame which is now on display at the headquarters of Mission Aviation Fellowship in Nampa, Idaho.

A deep personal interest in missions and aviation prompts astronaut Patrick Forrester to take a piece from Nate Saint’s plane with him into space aboard the shuttle Discovery. His intent is to honor Saint and missionaries around the globe.

The Nate Saint House, built in Shell Mara in 1948, is restored and dedicated to the memory of the missionaries martyred in Ecuador. Once a residence, guesthouse, radio center, airbase and home base for Operation Auca, it now houses the offices of MAF.
This past spring, the Canadian Bible Engagement Study (CBES) revealed some eye-opening statistics about current use, beliefs about, and attitudes toward the Bible.

The primary driving force for conducting the study was to raise awareness about the importance of Bible reading and reflection, fuel the development of culturally relevant biblical resources, serve as a benchmark to measure progress, advocate for Bible engagement, and ultimately do what we can to help Canadians be informed and transformed by the Scriptures.

**ABOUT ONE IN SEVEN CANADIAN CHRISTIANS, OR 14%, READ THE BIBLE AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK.**

The majority of Canadians, including those who identify themselves as Christians, read the Bible either seldom or never.

**ONLY 18% OF CANADIANS STRONGLY AGREE THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD, DOWN FROM 35% IN 1996.**

Canadians who strongly agree that the Bible is the Word of God are ten times as likely to read the Bible frequently and six times as likely to attend religious services weekly as those who just moderately agree.

**THE MORE FREQUENTLY CANADIANS ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES, the more likely they are to strongly agree that the Bible is the Word of God.**

**EVANGELICALS WERE A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE STUDY (7%) BUT ACCOUNT FOR ALMOST HALF (43%) OF FREQUENT BIBLE READERS.**

Comparatively, 13% of frequent Bible readers are Mainline Protestants, 11% are English Catholics and 4% are French Catholics.

**ONLY 6% OF CANADIANS AND 11% OF CHRISTIANS TALK TO OTHERS ABOUT THE BIBLE OUTSIDE OF RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK.**

Those who have conversations about the Bible at least once a week have more robust Bible engagement and religious commitment. For example 63% of these who have weekly conversations about the Bible attend religious services weekly. And 57% read the Bible a few times a week compared to 9% of the general population.
**INNERVIEW**

**Nigel Paul**

How might the kingdom of God feel the impact if ordinary Christ followers all over the world intentionally left their comfort zones to live among the unreached urban poor? Meet Nigel Paul, a thirty-something visionary missionary kid and founder of MoveIn, a grass-roots movement that is gaining momentum in Canada and beyond. As hundreds of Christians purposefully take up residence in crowded and impoverished high-rise communities, they are living out the gospel with a cup of cold water in one hand and the saving message of Jesus Christ in the other.

**SERVANT: TELL US ABOUT YOUR LIFE JOURNEY.**

I was raised in Zambia, Pakistan and Canada as an MK. Watching my parents care for the broken influenced me a great deal so I’ve always had a passion for ministry and intercultural relationships. I was quite the entrepreneur as a kid. Even in boarding school in Pakistan I would collect rocks and polish them and sell them at school.

**HOW DID THE VISION FOR MOVEIN FIRST BEGIN?**

I started a book selling business after university and then took a year off to work as an assistant to George Verwer of OM. We travelled to over thirty countries and God really began to open my heart to the world. I just couldn’t go back to a “normal” life after that, so I joined a team of Christians in Toronto who were planting a church in a predominantly Muslim community. It occurred to me that this could be replicated across Canada and in other parts of the world. After all, that’s what God did. John 1:14 as translated in The Message says, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.” By 2009 the concept of believers moving into needy urban communities had taken shape and the first teams began to form in Ottawa and Toronto. About 700 people attended our first conference. I thought it was a disaster but the next day a lot of them came back to visit different parts of the city and at the end of the day they broke into teams to pray about actually moving into these neighborhoods.

**DOES A MINISTRY LIKE THIS TAKE THE SAME SHAPE IN EVERY SITUATION?**

No, it’s extremely flexible and organic. The only requirements are to move into a neighborhood that is unreached, urban and poor and to commit to pray weekly with your team. Other than that, every team does things differently. Some meet their neighbors by having a bicycle repair workshop in the park on Saturdays. My team spends time tutoring kids and doing neighborhood cleanup. Some do children’s ministry. Some are fighting human trafficking. There’s such a wide variety in how people are demonstrating Christ to their neighbors. Teams are forming in England and Germany, Sweden, Indonesia and India, so it will look very different in different cultures. The main format is the same—you move in and you pray weekly.

**WHAT ARE SOME COMMON CHALLENGES THAT THEY FACE?**

Oh, surface things like bedbugs, cockroaches and slow elevators. But once you’ve been there a few weeks, that’s just life and you get past it. The real challenges are ongoing: families and friends who don’t get the vision and put a lot of value on safety and security: “Why aren’t you buying a house?” “This isn’t a safe decision.” “What’s wrong with this neighborhood? Can’t you love your neighbor here?” It can add a lot of pressure to someone who is considering a move and they don’t get the support they need.

**WHAT ELSE?**

Time management is difficult. You’re working full-time or you’re a student but you’re really trying to be invested in the neighborhood. How do you balance these
things? Most people have to pare down the amount of other socializing, entertainment and hobbies because they need more time in their schedules to spend in the community. And of course there is the huge spiritual challenge of being in dark places. Our neighbors know that we are there to pray and share the gospel. We are often speaking and praying into various situations where there is no light. That can be very draining. This is why we go in as teams and ask God to fill us with his Holy Spirit and to empower us so that his light shines through us on a daily basis.

**I am just one person but God can use me to bring the hope of Christ to many, many lives.**

**HOW IMPORTANT ARE PRAYER AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO OTHER TEAM MEMBERS?**

George Verwer taught me that “prayer is at the heart of the action and a world-wide prayer movement must run parallel with any kind of world-wide mission movement.” At MoveIn we believe that prayer is not something we do so that our ministry goes well, but rather prayer is the ministry that we do and the time we spend with people flows out of that. Prayer defines the team, holds it together and is what God uses to orchestrate these relationships and situations with our neighbors. This vision would not exist without prayer. And accountability with the team is absolutely vital because this ministry can be discouraging at times.

**TELL US ABOUT JESSIE’S ROLE IN THE MINISTRY OF MOVEIN.**

Jessie works full-time as a nurse and part-time on the vision team, travelling and speaking with me. She has her own role, ministry and voice and a passion to encourage health care workers to be present and prayerful in the workplace. The beauty of MoveIn is that it’s a family ministry. We meet neighbors together and we’ve planted a church with new believers. Jessie is discipling teenaged girls and she’s led a girl to Christ who’s led another girl to Christ and it just keeps on going.

**I’M SURE YOU SEE BROKENNESS ALL AROUND YOU. WHAT KEEPS YOU MOTIVATED IN THE MIDST OF POVERTY, CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND BEDBUGS?**

It’s knowing that our humble efforts make a difference in the lives of real people. I am just one person, but it’s so amazing that God can use me, he can use you, to bring the hope of Christ in many, many lives. The key is to feel the need and then just respond day after day.

**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN BELIEVERS ARE WILLING TO LIVE OUTSIDE THEIR COMFORT ZONES?**

When God gets hold of someone and they become abandoned to him, the fruit they will bear over their lifetime—despite much discouragement—will often be off-the-charts. But when a believer never leaves their comfort zone, their whole lives may come to naught. Saying, “Yes, Lord, I trust you with this step,” begins a radical journey of being available for all that God wants to do. I think most Moveln-ers, just simple people, really, are an example of this. And yet through them whole families have come to Christ. We’ve seen neighbors go from being suicidal to being full of joy and more and more lives set on a course of whole-life discipleship. Heaven will look different because of it and praise for the Lamb will be greater.

**NOT EVERYONE WILL BE CALLED TO MOVE TO A MAJOR CITY. WHAT CAN I BE DOING TO BRING THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST INTO MY OWN COMMUNITY?**

The first thing is to have an intentional mindset, choosing to be present in the life of that neighborhood. Commit to pray regularly for neighbors. Ask others to join with you. Get to know people and find ways to meet them. Get involved in the community, go to birthday parties, grocery shopping, have people over for tea. You can’t be the presence of Christ if you are not involved in their lives. Whether we live in the suburbs or downtown, the most important thing is to enter into the lives and concerns of those around us and be prayerful. We join with the Holy Spirit to communicate the Good News.
As they pile small rocks one on top of another to form a simple altar of thanksgiving, the staff relate their stories, stories of small victories, of life winning out over death, of hope coming to a long-neglected people. Anywhere else an anniversary celebration like this might be just a normal event, but here it’s especially poignant.

Why? Because this is Karamoja.

Despite the natural beauty of this remote and windswept corner of northern Uganda, an underlying feeling of heaviness covers the land like a blanket. In a region isolated by language, culture and geography, the lives of the Karamajong revolve around their one treasure—their cattle. Locked in a never-ending battle with each other for both livestock and survival, these nomadic herders have been trapped for generations in a cycle of violence and retaliation.

Life is made even more difficult by a harsh climate and low rainfall that plague the area with recurring drought and chronic food shortages. The most vulnerable victims are the children, approximately 20% of whom will die before their fifth birthday. It can be heartbreaking to be a mother in Karamoja. Even becoming a mother is to run the risk of danger, for more women die in childbirth here than anywhere else in Uganda.

For these warrior nomads, death is a way of life.

Recognizing the dire situation, the Christian international aid agency Samaritan’s Purse responded by introducing a project focused on improving the lives of mothers and young children in the region. Based on the highly successful Care Group model, its goal was to teach the basics of health and nutrition to key women who would pass on their new knowledge to others in the community. A young Canadian health worker and Prairie alum was recruited to get the program off the ground.

Trained as a teacher and practical nurse at Prairie Bible College (06/08), Keren Massey worked in public health in Mozambique before earning a Master’s degree from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (UK). In April of 2012 she arrived in Uganda to begin preparing materials and identifying the people who would bring the program to life. The project itself had exciting potential. But after decades of hand-outs, the people had become totally dependent and Keren knew it would take a miracle for them to break out of that cycle and take responsibility for their own lives. It seemed impossible.

The first step was to recruit staff. Since trust of outsiders was non-existent, it was vital that both supervisors and teachers be selected from among the local people. The group drew on their own tongue and culture as well to give a name to the project: “Erot Ngolo Kitete”—The New Way.

In communities across the district, neighbor groups were asked to select one of their own to be their “Leader Mother.” Every two weeks these women would gather in Care Groups to be trained in some vital health issue such as pre-natal care or child nutrition. Then, after practicing the lesson on each other, the Leader Mothers would return home to share it with their neighbors.

“There was no way this should have worked,” Keren admits. “Getting community cooperation usually required some sort of financial incentive, but we offered no payment and made it clear that change would only come if they themselves decided to make it happen. Because so many improvement efforts in the past had
simply fallen flat, discouragement and hopelessness were deeply entrenched and everything in the culture was against us. The constant challenges kept us wondering how each new phase could possibly take shape, but time and time again God made a way. The scripture he gave me was Isaiah 43:19, “Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth...I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”

The turnover of staff was almost nonexistent. They had come to see their role as a mission, not just a job. This project was different: it would become part of the history of their people and they were excited to be playing an integral role.

Instead of being the lowest rung of society, suddenly women were gaining respect as leaders and teachers. “I grew up in Karamoja,” commented Mercy, one of the supervisors, “and life is very hard for us as women. This program is the first of its kind in our area. Now women have been given a chance to speak for themselves; now they can read and teach the other women. It’s a big opportunity. We are the change makers, changing our communities for the better.”

The role of Leader Mother was originally reserved for those of child-bearing age. But as the project developed, elderly women in the villages pleaded to be included, prompting the birth of a new category: Leader Grannies. Even the men had high praise for the program. They began to brag about the new things they had learned from their women and envied the clean home of a neighbor whose wife was a Leader Mother. Hope was coming, they said, and one community leader told his people, “This is now our program. If it does not succeed, the responsibility will be upon us.”

Trust was slowly being built and old ways were being left behind. By the time a year had passed, that hope had become a real possibility and the staff gathered to celebrate.

“After so many years of suffering and dependency,” says Keren, “the Karamajong have been cast in the role of the victim. I want to help the women especially to see themselves as beloved daughters of God who can make a real difference in their culture. You are the leaders in health for your family and your community,” I tell them. “That’s a big responsibility but I know it’s one you are strong enough to carry.”

Every two weeks, more than 36,000 women are being taught new and better ways of caring for their families and themselves—new ways that in time will become the norm. Emotion is close to the surface as the blond Canadian envisions the day when real change becomes visible and women and children begin to survive.

“As the women of Karamoja awaken to their own value and self-worth,” she says, “that can only point back to a loving Heavenly Father. We want these women to realize that it wasn’t Samaritan’s Purse or a Leader Mother who brought hope and change; God is the one who gives hope, he is the one who gives joy. We want them to know that God cares about their suffering and that he has not forgotten this part of the world that’s been so often neglected and stigmatized and beaten down. His eye is on them, his heart is for them and he truly offers a new Way.”

Keren Massey is presently serving in Liberia as Health Sector Manager for Samaritan’s Purse. To learn more about their work, go to www.SamaritansPurse.ca

“DISCOURAGEMENT AND HOPELESSNESS WERE DEEPLY ENTRENCHED, BUT TIME AND TIME AGAIN GOD MADE A WAY.”
STUDENT PROFILE: MARY NOBLE

Season of change

Arriving on Prairie campus as a freshman, I had no idea that four years later I would leave with a bachelor’s degree and a transformed life.

I knew that learning more about God and his Word was bound to change me, but never could I have anticipated experiencing Jesus in such a deep way.

It didn’t take long for me to discover that living a crucified life is much messier than it appears on the surface. But through this messiness, the beautiful healing work of salvation shines through. As I encountered Christ through the lives, the words and the penetrating questions of my professors, I began to see that God uses dreadfully messed-up people to accomplish his purposes and I wanted to learn more. I had planned on just one year of Bible college but soon found myself committed to a full degree program!

The Freedom Session class was something else that surprised me. This Christian 12-step recovery program is offered to Prairie students who will utilize it in ministry but also to those who want to personally experience the healing of Christ in their lives. I joined up with a passion to move the “messy people” that I knew into deeper wholeness. Little did I know that it would be an absolute wrecking of my own life. I was appalled to discover my sinfulness next to God’s holiness, but in the end I could truly say I was not the same person I used to be. Transformation was happening.

Moving into the Pastoral track, I began to see God leading me in a new direction; preparing me for a life of ministry and making me step out in faith. My dean taught me so much about being on mission as a small group leader and what it meant to love my girls like Jesus did...sacrificially, honestly, always pointing them back to God. As serving him became my primary goal, other things faded into the distance.

The heart of my experience here at Prairie has been community. I have never been in a place where I have learned to live, love, work, explore the Bible and pray in community in such depth. I am learning what it looks like to lay your life down for the needs of others, putting them first. No program is as important as changed lives. Prairie has taught me what it means to “know Christ and make him known.” When I truly know Christ, my relationship with him will compel me to share him with others. I want the staff and faculty to know that at least one life has been transformed through their devotion to Christ. And as they invest themselves year after year, I know that many more students will become agents of change in a world that desperately needs redemption.

The heart of my experience here at Prairie has been community.
Due diligence

Here we are in our early fifties. And—I kid you not—we’re expecting. The news came without warning at a Thai restaurant one Friday in April.

I was halfway through a mouthful of #34 (Lemon Grass Chicken—easy on the spice) when she grinned and handed me a gift bag. Inside was a coffee mug. On the side it read: “Don’t mess with me, I’m the Grandpa!”

My wife Ramona held up a daintier mug (“Promoted to Grandmother”) and let go a muted scream. That’s when I realized they didn’t buy the mug because it was on sale. Were it not for the lemon grass chicken, I would have screamed too.

“Raelyn, you shouldn’t have,” was all I managed. My son Jeff sat beside his wife looking like he’d just scored an overtime winner at the World Cup. There was hugging and congratulations and more hugging. Jeff and I high-fived and I said, “Waytago!”

My son Jeff sat beside his wife looking like he’d just scored an overtime winner at the World Cup.

So there you have it. Lord willing, we’re going to be grandparents.

Everyone exudes superlatives while telling me how wonderful it will be. I listen to grandfathers my age, many of whom still have their original teeth, and they say, “You just wait it’s the bestest thing ever you will not believe how awesome they are you just feed them chocolate and send them home and let their parents deal with it and I hope you have twenty-five I have two dozen myself did I mention they’re the bestest?” And then they faint because they haven’t taken a breath in a minute and a half.

When this happens, I think three thoughts: 1. Over-enthusiasm often indicates that someone is hiding something. 2. What does a grandparent do? My own grandfather lived at the airport. We picked him up there each Christmas which gave him time to stock up on chocolate and presents. 3. I really should help resuscitate this poor fellow.

Off the record, I couldn’t shake the feeling that there’s less here than meets the ear. I have spent years around little kids. Yes, they’re cute. But they make messes and noises and trouble. Of course they bring joy, but they also bring frogs, insomnia, and poverty. Will having more of them around help this?

My wife just laughs when I talk this way. “You’re such a big softy,” she says. “You just wait. They’ll melt your heart.” But this is coming from one who cannot be trusted to think rationally now that grandchildren are in the picture.

The maternity nurse let me borrow the other eight. I just want to see the look on my mother’s face when she walks through the door.

RAMONA: “No. It’s when The Baby is due.”
ME: “Due?”
RAMONA: “Yes, due! To be born.”
ME: “Oh, that’s right. Well, what am I supposed to do in November? Sit around in a snowdrift and wait for the baby?”
RAMONA: “Some pastors take six-month sabbaticals.”

Along about noon, Raelyn emailed us a video. I clicked on it and my heart completely stopped. I was watching a grainy image of a tiny little person moving about. My grandchild. I turned up the sound and listened to its heartbeat. I couldn’t stop grinning. And every single morning now I pray for this baby. Then at lunch. Then at bedtime. And sometimes at night I read Psalm 139 to Ramona, about how God is forming this child, body and soul. It’s awesome, breath-taking work.

My son Jeff sat beside his wife looking like he’d just scored an overtime winner at the World Cup.

I visited my friend James who doesn’t know much about grandchildren. I’m not convinced he thinks they’re that great. I told him I was pretty sure this one was a boy and that the heartbeat sounded a lot like mine and that there are two kinds of people in this world those who can count and those who can’t and those who don’t care because being a grandparent beats them both.

Next thing I knew, he was trying to resuscitate me. [S]
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Whether we look overseas or in our own backyard, it is clear that the life-giving message of Jesus Christ is the greatest need of the world. Your gift to Prairie allows us to continue equipping students with the biblical foundation and practical skills to Know Christ and Make Him Known—wherever they go next.

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“Prairie equips graduates to reach out medically and spiritually all over the world. The international practicum is an amazing opportunity to practice health care in a different country and experience overseas missions.”

Jennifer, PN Student