

WHITEFIELDS

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Courage to Believe

Falsely accused and threatened with persecution, a Christian family finds strength in God's sovereignty.

Lovingly Uprooted

An erstwhile missionary encounters a God who can use failure and upheaval to nurture and restore.

Mustard Seed Discipleship

Three ministry settings.
Three ministry models.
Three key emphases.

Sustainable Impact

Lessons learned from serving overseas in community development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

04



EDITOR'S NOTE

06



COURAGE TO BELIEVE

"I don't know what the future will bring. Although my parents are scared, they are prepared to face the worst for Christ."

10



LOVINGLY UPROOTED

"When I finally approached a missionary colleague about my struggles, he suggested that I go home. I was reluctant to listen. I still thought I could make a difference."

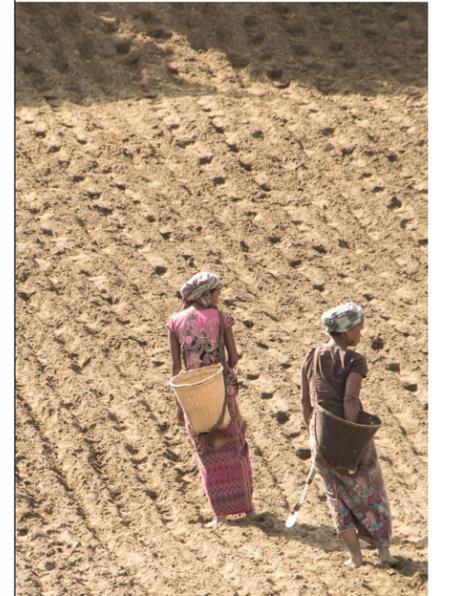
16



MUSTARD SEED DISCIPLESHIP

"In each setting, I saw three key components: deep investment in core individuals, emphasis on servanthood, and fruitful multiplication."

22



MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

"So, my intent has always been to meet people where they're at; listen to their needs with my whole heart; and help them when called to, even when I think I have nothing to give."



What is Christian mission and how is it lived out? This month, we have four different perspectives coming from differing perspectives and experiences. One emphasizes discipleship, another emphasizes ministering to felt needs. Two of our authors share a recent testimony from their missionary service, describing what it looks like to walk together with Christ and local believers in a society hostile to believers. A final author talks about the upheaval of his understanding of his identity and call to missions.

The call of Jesus to all disciples is clear: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mark 16:15) It is up to us, as individuals and communities, to seek the Lord for what His call means in our contexts. It is up to us to obey His summons.

Chris Chu
September 2021



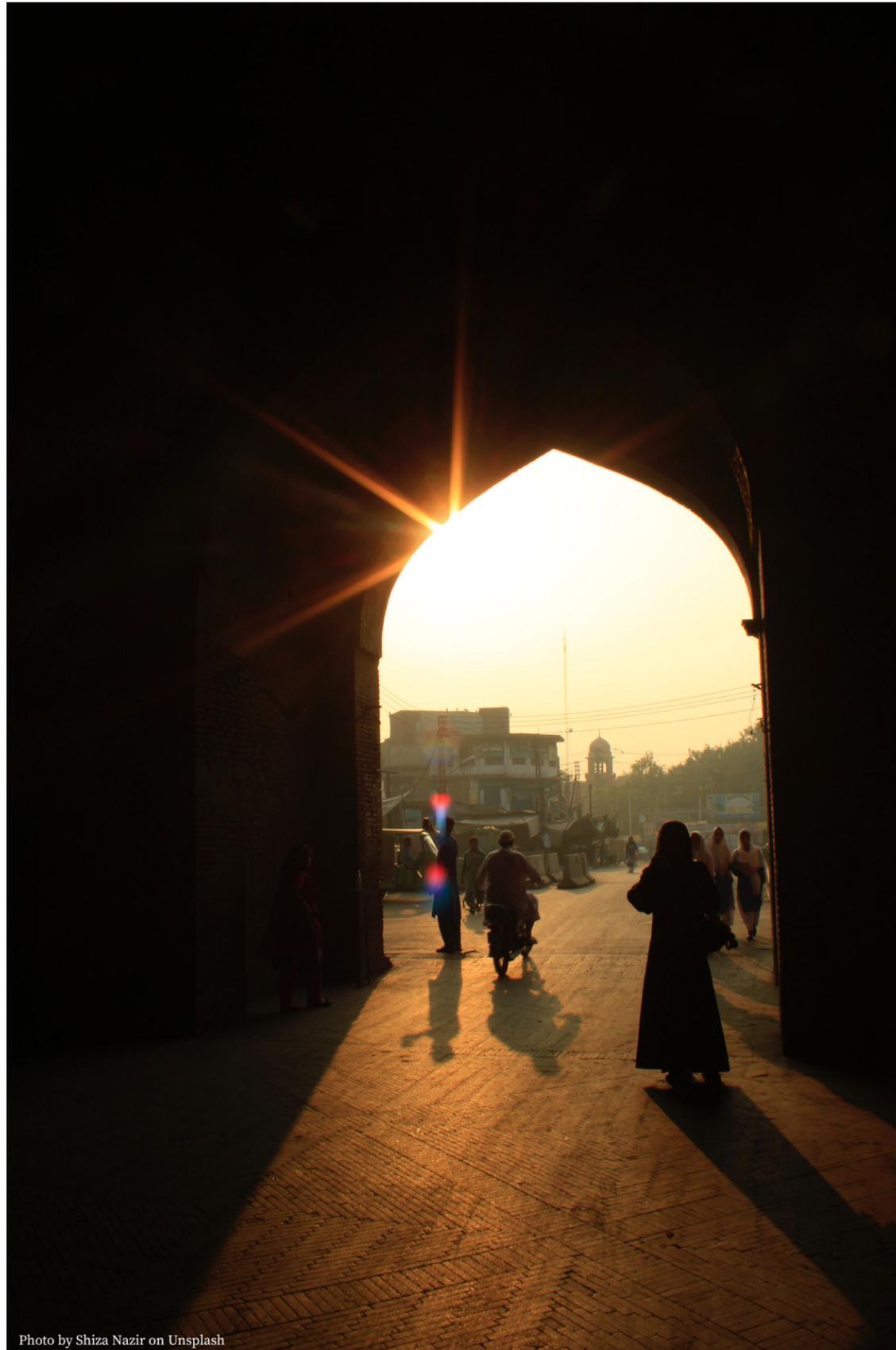


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Courage

TO BELIEVE

G & C are GOI field workers on assignment in a creative access nation.

This article was edited from its original form published in the Chinese GOI magazine.

In February of this year, there was an incident in my country in which some local Christians were arrested and accused of blasphemy while sharing the gospel in a park. One of the participants managed to run away from the police. A few days later, a local Christian named Y asked to meet with us. We know Y well, as we have been supporting him and his family for a while. He told us that the young man who was arrested lied while being interrogated, saying that Y and his wife would know where the escaped fugitive was staying.

Y's family panicked, worried about the interrogations and forced confessions they might face from the police. The whole family went into hiding. It was midnight when I contacted them, and I could

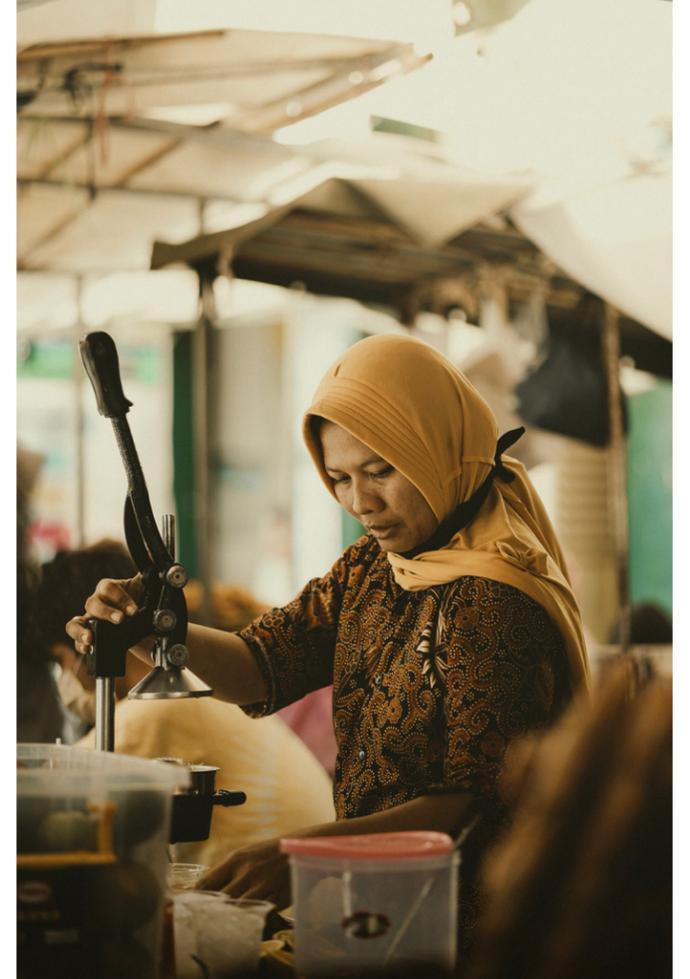
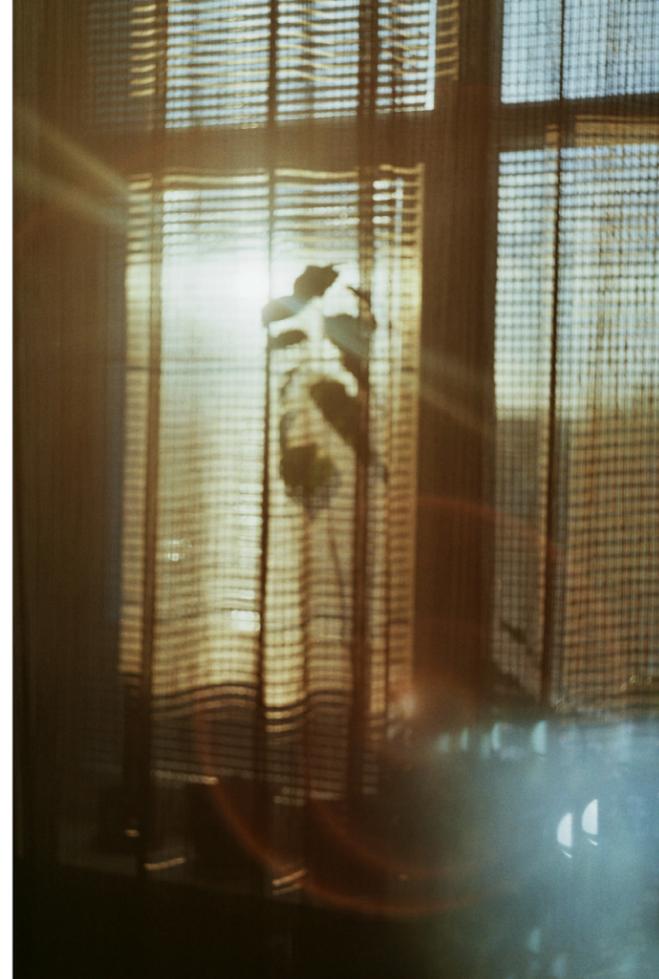
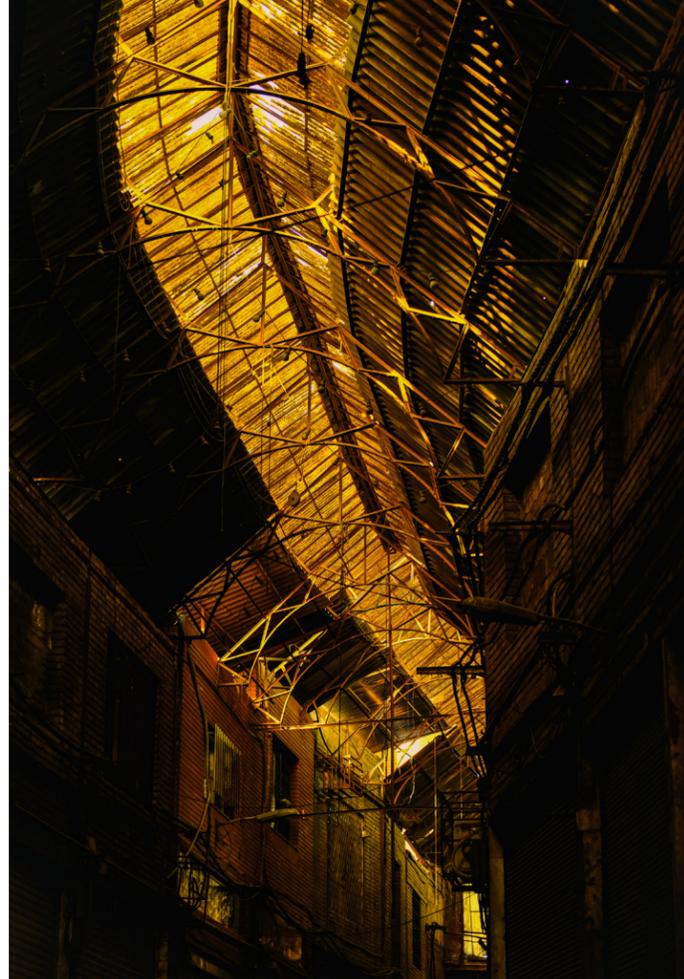
hear children crying on the other end of the phone. I learned that Y's family had left their home and was hiding in another place. Y was afraid and at a loss as to what to do. Indeed, they knew both the young man who was arrested and the one who ran away. Y's family had taught the two young believers how to share the gospel, and had previously taken them into their home to live together for a while, but Y's family eventually lost touch with the young men and had no idea where any of them might be.

We sympathized with Y's fears, and we also empathised with his children's fear of losing their parents. How could we help them? We knew deep down that God alone is our greatest help. We were humanly limited, so all we

could do was to comfort and walk beside our local friends. G told Y: "We don't know about tomorrow, be it good or bad, but we fully believe that God has a wonderful plan. We are all in His plan, and our lives exist to accomplish God's will." We then began to pray together. G closed his prayer by saying, "I pray that God will take care of this family and strengthen their faith. Lord, remember what they have done for You, protect them, and open the way for them." After we finished the call, I had to leave on a business trip, so I made an appointment to meet with Y upon my return.

A wonderful thing happened. Y and his wife said that after praying with us, they felt a sudden courage to face everything that was about to happen. Their daughter told

Left: Photo by Omid Armin on Unsplash
Center: Photo by Julia Rekamie on Unsplash
Right: Photo by Farel Yesha on Unsplash



us, "My parents plan to go back to face the police. I don't know what the future will bring. Although my parents are scared, they are prepared to face the worst for Christ." Before hanging up, G reminded her to erase her cell phone, restore the phone to its factory settings, and be ready to protect herself and others.

There were no negative consequences after Y's family returned home. We could not meet in person upon my return, but we were able to use other means to communicate securely. In April, Y's wife contracted COVID-19, though she was grateful that she had no symptoms. Though they still live by faith, the family is safe. The young man who was arrested was imprisoned, lost his job and income, and his family experienced financial difficulties. Instead of being angry at his false accuser, Y gave the man's family some financial help and also sent supplies to him in prison. Y also invited us to pray for the man's family.

Y and his family had great faith in God. He had trained his children how to share the gospel, and on school holidays, he and his wife would take the children to remote

villages to share the good news of Jesus to those who would receive them. The children have become expert evangelists after years of training. We have to help this family continue. We think that the Evil One does not want Y's family to be here because they are too effective in their evangelism, as everyone who hears them believes in Jesus. We are convinced that God is pleased with Y's family. (I still remember that five years ago, C accompanied Y's daughter and watched her preach the gospel in a mosque.) Though they forgot the power of God for a while, perhaps because of their fear, they turned back to God immediately after being reminded of His grace.

Each believer faces differing circumstances and different forms of suffering. It can be difficult for outsiders to imagine and understand. I still remember when we first came to know the Lord, the church often trained us to distribute gospel tracts, give three-minute testimonies, visit the sick in the hospital and sing hymns. In the past, we were free to walk in groups and collaborate with our brothers and sisters for the sake of the gospel. Now we live in a much different context. Here, fellow travellers of the Way seldom talk about ministry publicly, nor do they frequently contact each other. Mobile phones and social networks bring us great convenience, but also risks. Local Christians still find safe

ways to connect with each other and walk together despite difficult circumstances. We try our best to materially support needy local believers, but more often than not, we simply encourage them to focus on the Lord and grow in intimacy with Him. Dedication that depends on money is limited, but those who look to God receive grace and blessings without limit.

Walking with others may be beneficial, but walking with the Lord is the key! No matter where we are, we never forget to look up with faith. May the God who loves us strengthen all that this earth does for the gospel and fill it with his glory, for His own name's sake.



Photo by WC

LOVINGLY UPROOTED

for planting & rebuilding

WC is a former independent bivocational missionary from Taiwan. He is currently enrolled in graduate studies in seminary.

The idea that one day I would dedicate my life to serve God was seeded in my heart during my sophomore year of college; ever since then I have been praying to seek the will of God. After college, I worked with a mission team to plant churches in rural villages in Taiwan. Two years later, I got a job at a well-known computer company that allowed me to relocate to Africa, where I thought I could pursue mission work and fulfill my calling.

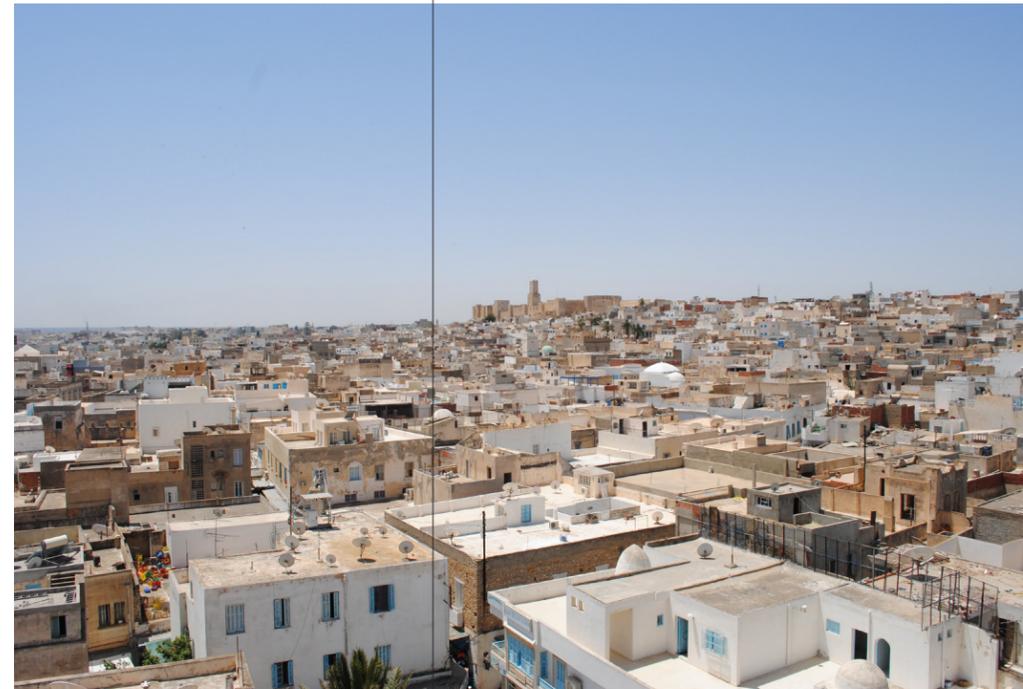
I did not have a passion for technology, but I was looking for an opportunity to serve in global missions. I imagined myself having a successful career as a product manager while having a ministry in a local church in a Muslim country. After six months, I began to realize my own naïvete. My bosses described me as someone from a different world, and

my inner critic convinced me that I was useless and incompetent at work. I resigned from my job with the computer company and looked for opportunities to pursue missions full-time in the same country. I was alone, unprepared, disconnected with church, and assumed I was indispensable to God's mission. Though it seemed that I amounted to little in the business world, I thought that I might at least be useful in the Kingdom of God.

The truth was that at the time I was quite damaged mentally and physically, and I contracted vitiligo from bouts of depression. Instead of taking time off to rest, I hung on to ministry activity. When I finally approached a missionary colleague about my struggles, he suggested that I go home. I was reluctant to listen. I still thought I could make a difference.

The Holy Spirit was revealing who I really was. The facade I had built for myself as a “good Christian” had eroded, and my true inner self was wracked by guilt and shame. I finally returned to my home country, restless and defeated. After many sleepless nights, I went to talk to my church elder. At last, I admitted that I was at “rock bottom,” and that I was incapable of saving myself, much less others. That was the turning point of repentance that led to the path of my restoration. I embarked on a long journey to discover the love of God that was rooted in the work of Christ, not in my own performance. Ten years after getting baptized, I felt like I was finally embracing the true gospel of God’s grace through Jesus Christ.

Since then, God has been walking with me through a Christ-centered transforming life group, Bible and counseling classes, a part-time job with a NGO, and life within my church community. By His grace, my relationships with God, self and others are being restored. The Lord lovingly uproots in order to plant, and destroys so that He might rebuild. Weakness, vulnerability and even failure surprisingly serve as vehicles for the body of Christ to experience God’s love and faithfulness together.



Clockwise from upper left:
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"Weakness, vulnerability and even failure surprisingly serve as vehicles for the body of Christ to experience God's love and faithfulness together."

If my identity is not planted in the truth and grace of God, it is built on lies that will forever demand that I prove myself. If I consider myself capable of resisting temptations by my own will and of fighting my sinful nature alone in the dark, I am certain to face losing battles with consuming despair. The good news is that Jesus Christ is the sole redeeming Lord who makes everything new and adopts me as His child. He gives strength to those who rely on him and live in accordance with His Holy Spirit.

I am still on the journey God set for me. The pale white patches on my skin and the scars I carry from Africa still ache. They serve as reminders to keep me walking in the way of God, so that the lesson is not wasted and the pain was not in vain.



Photo by WC

FOR YOU, GOD, TESTED US; YOU REFINED US LIKE SILVER. YOU BROUGHT US INTO PRISON AND LAID BURDENS ON OUR BACKS. YOU LET PEOPLE RIDE OVER OUR HEADS; WE WENT THROUGH FIRE AND WATER, BUT YOU BROUGHT US TO A PLACE OF ABUNDANCE. (PSALM 66:10-12)

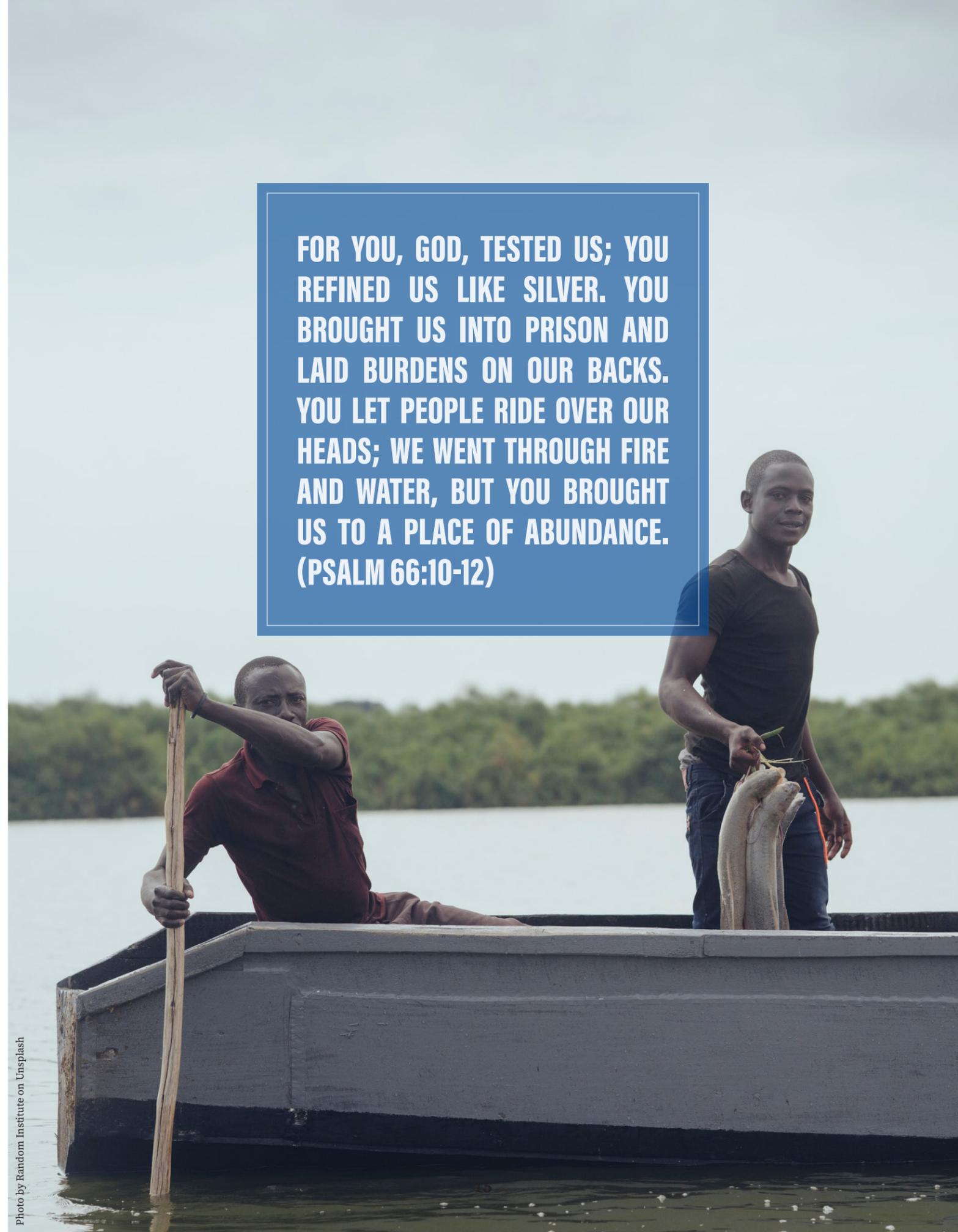


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MUSTARD SEED DISCIPLESHIP

Andrew Lie, GOI's 2021 Immersion Intern, is currently a third-year university student.

The GOI Immersion internship is a 3-6 month program that embeds interns alongside missions practitioners in various fields, providing experiences and guiding reflections for individuals who are interested in pursuing career missions.

For more information, email info@goimission.org.



Photo by Caroline Apecho



Photos by William Huang

This summer, I had the privilege of visiting three different communities around the world through the GOI Immersion Internship. I was able to experience three different models of ministry—a network of simple churches, an addiction recovery community, and a sponsorship/discipleship program for young adults. Which ministry model was the “best”? The answer is that each model was suited for the context in which they serve.

I first visited N, a discipler of Chinese background in the Western USA who has planted tens of “simple churches” over the last two years, some of which are multiethnic. According to Robert Banks, “[Simple church] involves face-to-face meeting of adults and children who are committed to developing a common life in Christ. They meet weekly in a house, apartment, or other convivial space.” Simple churches tend to be small, gather around worship and the study of God’s word, and are oriented towards evangelism and multiplication. N had planted a traditional church that was home to multiple congregations and

"Jesus touched many, but focused on investing in a few for the purposes of healthy multiplication."

several hundred congregants, yet after a few years, she decided to phase out the church because she felt it had departed from Jesus’ discipleship structure.

I then had the privilege of joining the community at His Mansion Ministries in New Hampshire. His Mansion combines an intensive Christ-centered community life and discipleship model with counseling, coaching and teaching to walk with residents towards recovery from addiction. In addition, His Mansion has a second discipleship program for servant leaders. The servant leaders, some of whom are former residents, invest into the lives of the residents and walk alongside them as they go through inner healing.

The final stop of my journey this summer was the nation of Uganda, where Gospel Operation Africa (GOA), an affiliate of Gospel Operation International, started a program called Wings of Dream. Wings of Dream sponsors students who otherwise would not have been able to attend high

school and university. The program itself does more than just provide funding; the students attend a weekly fellowship where they are discipled as a community, and learn about how they can take what God has given them to contribute back to their communities.

Comparing the three experiences side by side, each model ministers to different populations using different models. However, I found that there was a major underlying similarity that laid the foundation for each ministry—discipleship. In each setting, I saw three key components: deep investment in core individuals, emphasis on servanthood, and fruitful multiplication.

Jesus touched many, but focused on investing in a few for the purposes of healthy multiplication. By contrast, some ministries seem to focus on gathering large numbers of people at the outset. A reading of the gospels indicates that Jesus heavily invested in three core disciples, spent a lot of time with a broader inner group of twelve disciples, sent out seventy-

two disciples, and preached to crowds of thousands. Investing in the few for healthy multiplication seems to be viable even in mission fields facing constant change. It is even possible to disciple believers in small groups, and call each participant to disciple small groups of their own, in countries and communities that are hostile to the gospel.

Servanthood and humility are essential to Jesus' model of discipleship. While washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus said, "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you." (John 13:15) Jesus wanted His disciples to replicate His humility, not just his methods and strategies. Jesus came down not to be served, but to serve. We too should be ready to serve and disciple others.

Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed that will grow into a large tree, instead of an acorn or pine cone that is sizable from the start. Meeting the many is important, but finding the few is key. Regardless of the context, investing in the few, serving others, and healthily multiplying is essential as we fully lean into His will and make disciples of "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth."

**JESUS WANTED
HIS DISCIPLES TO
REPLICATE HIS
HUMILITY, NOT JUST
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STRATEGIES.**





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MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

Erin is an International Speech-Language Pathologist with a heart for meeting diverse needs in a diverse world. She has worked with communities, universities and governments in South America and the Caribbean to create locally-sustainable health care programs.

Here, Erin offers her personal reflection on the nature of missionary work.

To me, missionary work is ministering to the needs of the people. It is a call to my soul to respond to the needs of those who have been calling upon Him to help them. It is allowing the Lord to move through me, using the skills he has gifted me to do His work. In fact, I had no idea that the organizations I was drawn to help were faith-based until after I started doing the work. And only after I am home, do I hear of some of their prayers being answered. This is credit to the Lord, in that he's used

me to meet the needs of these people. So, my intent (no matter where I am led) has always been to meet people where they're at; listen to their needs with my whole heart; and help them when called to, even when I think I have nothing to give. (My experience includes creating sustainable programs that help children with special needs in developing countries.)

A few things I've learned along my journey:

I keep little to no expectations of people, situations, or settings.

Having expectations may lead to disappointment, and it can also close me off to possibilities that might not even have been imagined.

I speak and act in truth from my heart.

Staying truthful to myself keeps the goal of meeting people's needs at the center of every situation. If I am not speaking and acting from my heart, how can I gain anyone's trust?

Other ideas worth contemplating:

- 1 To have a sustainable impact. I believe in building relationships with local leaders, government, and those influencing infrastructure—but those relationships take the longest to build.
- 2 Immerse yourself in the community that you're trying to impact. Live, breathe, and do as locals do. Only when we experience and live in their shoes, can we understand their needs which facilitates more productive conversations, genuine help, and deeper trust.

- 3 Stay humble and open to learning, only then can seeds be planted. Experience has taught me that sometimes a non-believer can help you through the toughest of times better than a believer. Let's not write off those relationships.



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