

Title: Becoming Fishers of Men
Subtitle: Planting churches in the marketplace

by David Gomez

The ~~s~~State of Arkansas is a part of what is well known as the Bible Belt of ~~North America~~the United States. -Within ~~its~~the cities of this region, which spreads across the American South, multiple churches can often be seen lined up along the same city block. -While the physical presence of these churches paints a picture of a region immersed in Christian faith, one might wonder: ~~De~~Does this ~~representation~~faith fill every crevice of our communities? Is there a deeper layer of Kingdom work that remains untapped across our North American landscapes? The answer echoes with a resounding yes. Among these hidden opportunities shines the prospect of awakening and collaborating with the apostolic saints within our congregations—those who are fervently called to evangelize within the marketplaces of daily life.

A Field of Laborers

Among such impassioned individuals are Cody and Leslie Speights, a couple whose journey of faith and love began in the youth group of their local church, blossoming into marriage and a shared life's mission. Supported by Pastor Rick Greer and the leadership at The Church ~~at~~of Burns Park in North Little Rock, Arkansas, they have pioneered a path to reach an untouched field of ~~labor~~potential harvest among young H-2A workers in the fish farms scattered ~~around~~in the outskirts of North Little Rock. The H-2A agricultural program grants temporary visas for foreign workers to provide seasonal labor in places with a lack of domestic laborers. These workers may be in Arkansas for only a season, but Cody and Leslie feel moved to reach them with the gospel.

Commented [PH1]: Added after follow-up with the author

Leslie, shaped by her upbringing as the daughter of missionaries in Mexico, brings bilingual fluency to their mission, making their outreach all the more ~~instinctive~~natural and effective. Cody, an Arkansas native, who sensed a call as a young man, but never grasped a clear pathway to "ministry," found his passion and call when he transitioned into the field of fish farming; ~~and had h~~His heart became impassioned to reach these young, but vulnerable men, ~~some~~some who are thousands of miles away from their homes.

A First-Century Church in 2024

I first met Cody in a somewhat unplanned way. -As the ~~D~~S-district superintendent of the Alliance South Central District, I was visiting The Church at Burns Park on a Sunday morning, when, after preaching, Leslie's younger brother, Nathan, came up to me and invited me to go with him to visit a house church. -Having nothing else on my schedule, I went out with him. When I got to the farm, I could smell ~~the~~delightful hardwood smoke, ~~and~~s the pork ~~but~~shoulder roasts laid on the smoking pit. -As someone who smokes ~~my~~meat from time to time, I knew it was going to be a great lunch. -I soon met Cody. -He immediately spoke enthusiastically about his career in fish farming and then invited me ~~on a~~tour aroundof the

240-acre farm ~~of scattered with~~ ponds and processing facilities, one of two farms that he manages. More importantly, he began ~~to~~ speak with deep conviction about the passion he feels ~~for~~ the call of making disciples ~~of among~~ the young men God has brought under his leadership and care in the farms. ~~Soon after, the~~ ~~This~~ compassionate ~~and~~ care was overwhelmingly evident, not just in Cody, but in his wife, Leslie, as she prepared the long dining table ~~and where~~ these young men ~~had begun~~ to come into their home for a Sunday afternoon meal. ~~Each one, e~~ One by one, ~~each young man~~ came in with a Bible in hand, ~~a gift to them by this couple~~ ~~gifted to them by Cody and Leslie~~, with their names engraved in them. We sat down for lunch, ~~T~~ and there was a lot of conversation and laughter. It was clear that these men felt cared for and safe. After the meal, there was a time of singing and a message of the good news of Jesus by Cody, and Nathan, who was translating. Yet, the most powerful time ~~L~~ witnessed that day, was the time of prayer, mostly ~~lead~~ by Leslie, who poured out her heart in intercession for these men. ~~As I~~ left that day, ~~I thought, T~~ *this is first-century church in 2024.*

A Gospel Opportunity

I have heard testimonies of things that have taken place in the lives of these men. One ~~was~~ ~~regarding a~~ skeptical young man ~~who~~ often expressed his seeming disbelief during the gatherings. ~~Then, one day, he asked for prayer.~~ ~~At some point, h~~ ~~He~~ ~~had~~ received a phone call that his son was seriously ill in the hospital. ~~As~~ ~~Cody and some of the other men~~ ~~they~~ prayed ~~with him~~, a sense of peace came over ~~him~~ ~~the young man~~. ~~Overnight h~~ ~~His~~ son got better ~~overnight~~, and ~~he~~ was released from the hospital the next day. God used this ~~miracle~~ in ~~this man's~~ life, ~~and the~~ ~~as~~ ~~evidenced by~~ ~~came in~~ his receptive posture from that day forward. ~~A difference has been marked in his life forever.~~

Another young man, who had bought a car for his father in Mexico and was anticipating surprising him with it on his next visit, received news that his father had died unexpectedly of a heart attack. ~~In~~ ~~this that~~ moment of great loss and disappointment, ~~he was prayed for and comforted by~~ this ~~new and~~ growing ~~new~~ family of faith, ~~prayed for and comforted him~~. ~~Generosity sparked, and e~~ Everyone, even in their positions of relative need, pitched in to send a love offering to help cover ~~the~~ travel costs for him to be with his family ~~and help cover funeral costs as well as the funeral expenses~~. These men had moved from just merely hearing the gospel together to experiencing its power among them.

Cody and Leslie are not licensed workers ~~with The Alliance~~, at least not yet. They may never be. But, the response of these men to Cody and Leslie's love and leadership is clear. They are coming to faith through their work. Cody's vision is ~~that he would to~~ disciple these men, developing ~~ing~~ them into ~~men-people~~ that live out the mission of Jesus, and ~~to~~ plant house churches among the neighboring 10 to 12 other fish farms that he networks with ~~in the~~ ~~this that~~ region of Arkansas. These fish farm house churches will likely not be ~~come~~ accredited churches, nor do ~~I feel that~~ they have to be. But, ~~as the Holy Spirit moves and Cody and Leslie continue to work, I wonder what will become of this opportunity. what are they?~~ What is God doing? Are Cody and Leslie our local marketplace missionaries? How do we partner with

workers like these? Is there a place for us to have district missionaries who make disciples in spaces that the local church in its traditional form is not present? [I invite you to consider with me](#)—Are there other opportunities around us, like these, where we can unleash and partner with apostolic saints in our churches that have a clear and passionate call to reach the marketplace for Jesus?

