

WorldwideChallenge[®]

THE MAGICIAN'S SECRETS

Jim Munroe draws
on illusion to reveal
the truth.



“If you open your heart to the hungry and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted, your light will shine in the darkness.”

ISAIAH 58:10

PROVIDE ABUNDANCE WITH JUST A CLICK!

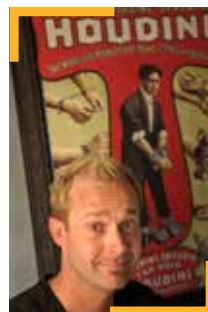
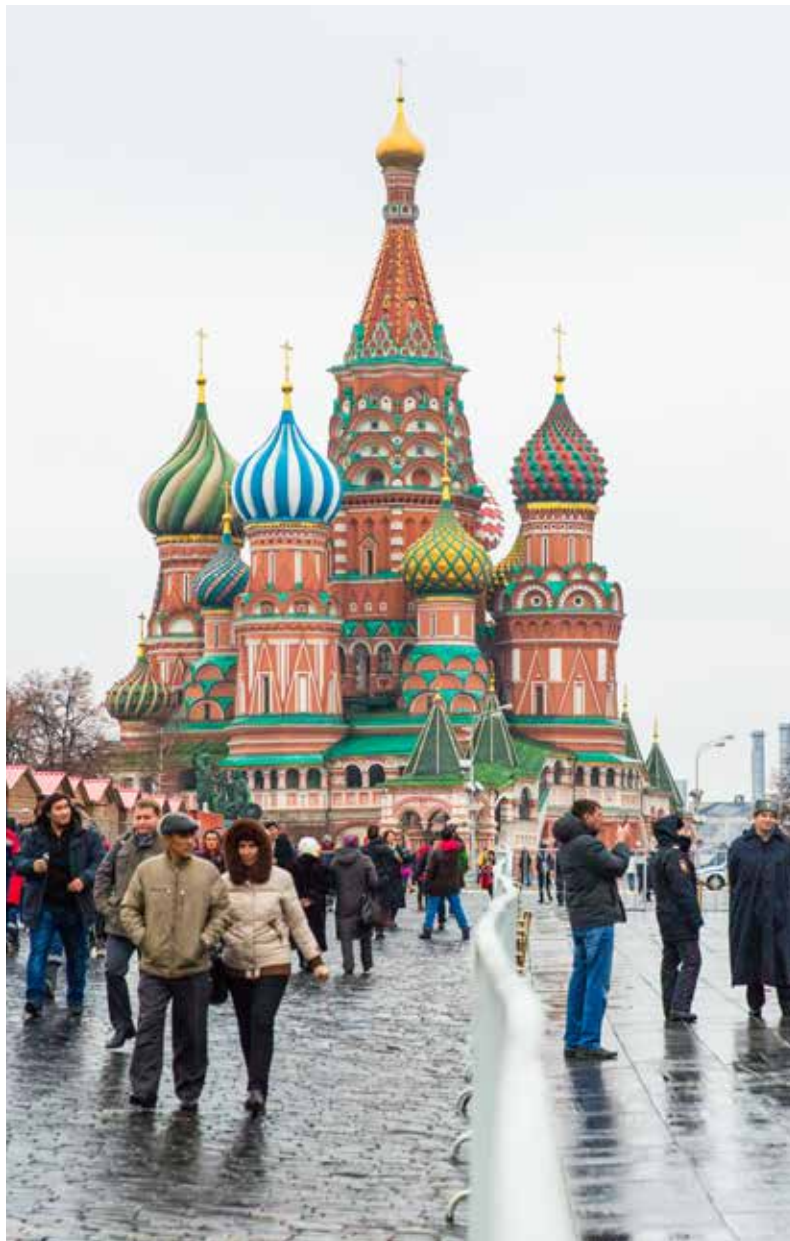


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Becky Thomton

Editor in Chief

Our award-winning photographers take thousands of pictures for each feature—3,000 or more for an international story. We choose and print the very best.



GUY GERRARD

MY SON WAS only 6 months old when he saw the ocean for the first time. He liked the water, but he couldn't really grasp the vastness in front of him. He had the same joy about the ocean as he did about his colored plastic rings. (He did really love those rings!)

A year later, we were back at the water's edge again, and this time he could see further. He still wanted to play in the water, but for several minutes, he just held my

hand and stared at the horizon, taking it all in. The waves washed over our feet, and we both just stood in awe.

The ocean has always made me think of God. The expanse of water before me, and knowing the miles and miles that it extends both far and deep is too much for me to comprehend. The consistent, unrelenting

power of the waves. It's such a visual reminder of what God is like:

"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11).

In this issue, we highlight Jim Munroe (starting on page 28), an illusionist who uses illusion to challenge the way students think about matters of faith. Through tricks, he makes them curious, and it can be a pathway toward acknowledging Christ.

Even if you already believe, it can be easy to lose your sense of wonder about God. In the routines of life, we can sometimes forget just how amazing He is. Our prayer requests become smaller, or we start to rely more on ourselves. God becomes more like a puddle than an ocean.

If this is true of your life, picture yourself at the shore of the ocean. You can't cross it on your own. You can't control it. Like my little boy, you can only stand in awe of it, and delight. I pray that as you read these stories of the amazing ways God has worked, you'll be more in awe of Him today. ●

IN THE ROUTINES OF LIFE, WE CAN SOMETIMES FORGET JUST HOW AMAZING HE IS.

Becky

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Email: www.subs@cru.org
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Email: worldwide.challenge@cru.org
www.worldwidechallenge.org

PRICE: \$13.95 per year; \$21.95 for two years.
International: \$25.95 per year; \$45.95 (USD) for two years.

WORLDWIDE CHALLENGE® (USPS 970-560, ISSN 0745-9241) is published bimonthly by Cru®, 100 Lake Hart Dr., Orlando, FL 32832. Periodicals postage paid at Orlando, FL, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to 100 Lake Hart Dr., Dept. 1600, Orlando, FL 32832.

Worldwide Challenge is a member of the Florida Magazine Association and the Evangelical Press Association, and has received awards for photography, writing and publication design from those associations.

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SPEAK WORDS *of* LIFE

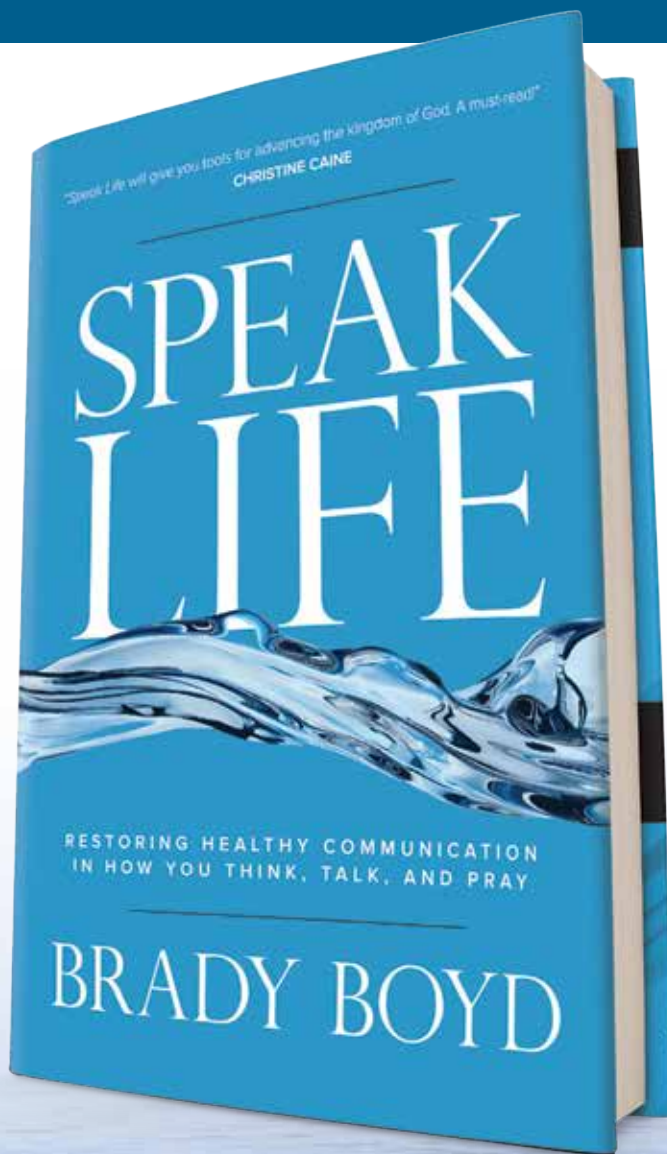
As Proverbs says, “The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18 NIV).

If we will be held accountable for every word we speak, as the Bible says we will be, then why not learn to speak words that are thoughtful, controlled, attentive, appropriate, responsible, life-giving, and kind? *Speak Life* will lead your way.



BRADY BOYD

is the senior pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is married to his college sweetheart, Pam, and they have two great kids, Abram and Callie. Brady has written numerous books, including *Addicted to Busy* and *Let Her Lead*. He’s also passionate about caring for the people of Colorado Springs and has been instrumental in the opening of numerous Dream Centers in the city.



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GUY GERRARD

Is the Power Out in Your Life?

I had just walked into my hotel room. After putting my bag on the bed, I tried to turn on the nearby lamp. It didn't turn on. I thought the bulb may have burned out, but first I traced the power cord behind a chair and discovered the lamp wasn't plugged in. It is a basic principle that light bulbs must be connected to a power source in order to do their job—provide light.

So it is in the Christian life. We need to stay connected to Christ. Jesus teaches us that in the parable of the vine and the branches in John 15. He is the vine. We are the branches. The branch is totally dependent on the vine for nourishment. Apart from the vine it can do nothing. But, if a branch stays firmly attached to the vine, it can and will bear fruit.

As Jesus elaborates, He uses the word “remain” or “abide.” He says, “Remain in me” (15:4, New International Version). And in the next several verses He repeats the key concept of “remaining in Him.” What does that look like when we put it into practice? (See “Lessons From a Vineyard” starting on page 36 for more about applying John 15 to your life.)

RECOGNIZING OUR DEPENDENCE

For starters, it means we must recognize our complete and utter dependence on Christ. When we start a project or encounter a problem,

a good place to begin is to pray for God's provision or solution or whatever else is needed.

STAYING IN TOUCH

Another indication of our “remaining in Christ” is how often we talk to Him. If an hour passes without talking to Him, are we remaining/abiding in Him as well as we could?

My wife, Judy, is really good about talking to Him as she goes. Sometimes I will overhear her talking when I know she is alone and not on the phone. Often she is praying aloud for God's wisdom.

THANKING HIM

Another evidence is saying “thank you.” If we really think we are totally dependent on Jesus, wouldn't it make sense to thank Him for what He does?

My point is very simple—we are totally dependent on Christ to bear the kind of fruit He intends for us to bear. We know that theologically. The issue is, do we really put into practice what we know? ●

Yours in Christ,

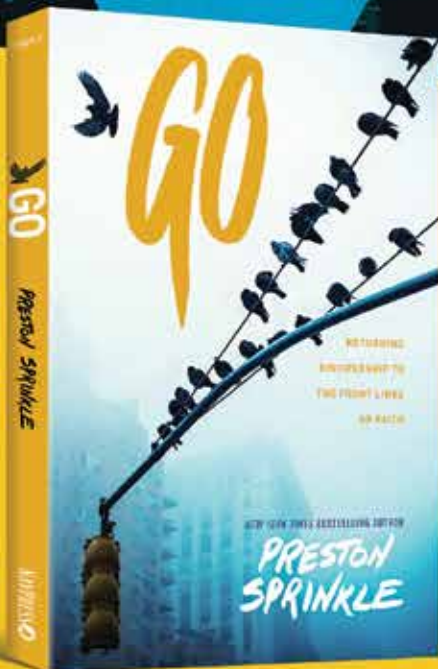
Steve Douglass

If an hour passes without talking to Him, are we remaining/abiding in Him as well as we could?

“

People shouldn't have to leave church to find Jesus.

Informed by the 2015 Barna study on the state of discipleship



Bestselling author PRESTON SPRINKLE unpacks the latest study on discipleship by the Barna Group, as commissioned by The Navigators. **You may be startled, but you probably won't be surprised.**

If you're ready to be part of the change, *Go: Returning Discipleship to the Front Lines of Faith* informs and challenges you to do the work of the church the way Jesus did.

Let's make disciples together. Let's Go.

PRESTON SPRINKLE is the author of several books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *Erasing Hell* (with Francis Chan). He is vice president of Eternity Bible College, Boise extension, where he also serves as a professor of New Testament.

978-1-63146-610-6

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A cyclist in Singapore runs errands to and from the market.

The 270-square-mile island has 186 miles of bicycling paths.

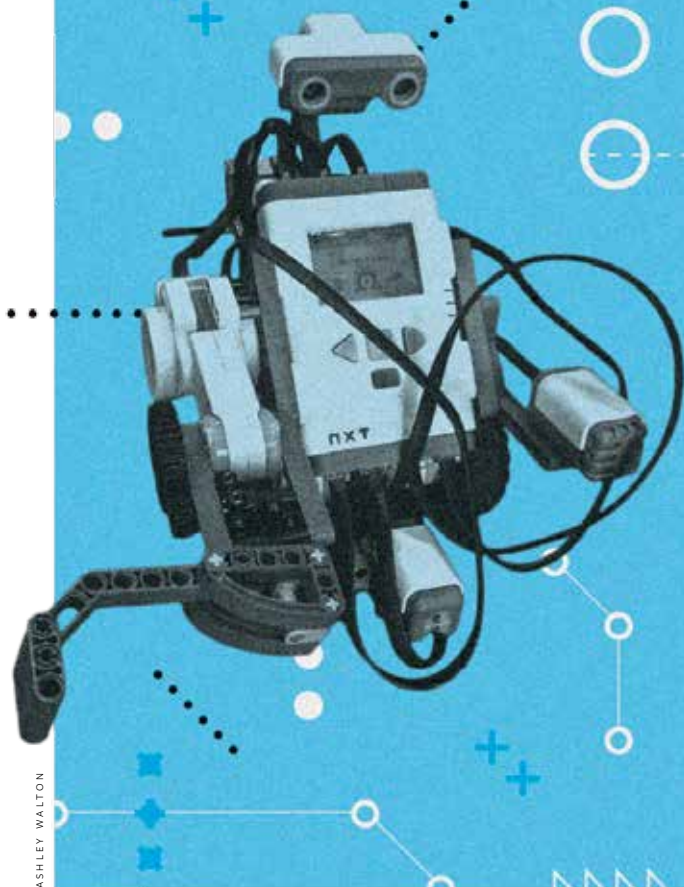
Photograph by Guy Gerrard

“

It is God to whom and with whom we travel, and while He is the end of our journey, He is also at every stopping place.”

ELISABETH ELLIOT





ASHLEY WALTON

Faith, Hope and Love. And Robots.

“We talk through what is on our mind so we can be fully present and enjoy our work, which is actually a gift from God.”

—David Urquhart

DAVID URQUHART’S JOB used to involve smashing televisions. He worked for four-and-a-half years at Mitsubishi Electric using his mechanical engineering degree.

Now he is using that degree for a different purpose—to help inner-city high school students learn biblical truths from engineering and robotics.

David volunteers at two of the 18 Los Angeles S.A.Y. Yes! Centers for Youth Development®, a ministry of Cru®. They offer students and their families educational support, such as help with homework and mentoring, as well as food, all while helping them find hope and forgiveness in Jesus.

He teaches students at Monterey Park to program robots to write their names, launch a ball, and move to the volume of music. But more importantly, David is weaving spiritual lessons for life.

He met some high school boys at the “Man Camp” event at his church and learned about their interest in engineering. Later he met a man from Mississippi who uses robots to teach spiritual lessons. Those two things gave David the idea for the robotics classes.

On Wednesdays and Fridays, he meets with three to five students, and starts each class with a question to ponder and a spiritual truth from Scripture.

“We talk through what is on our mind so we can be fully present and enjoy our work, which is actually a gift from God,” David says.

One student is so passionate about engineering that he uses what he is learning in the class to teach elementary students and to get high school credit.

David is teaching youth about engineering, but also about God—the Creator and designer of everything—and how to follow Him in everything they do, including robotics and life.

It all started when David asked, “How can I use some of my background to develop young men in an area that they are interested in?”

To find out more about helping at a S.A.Y. Yes!® center, go to cru.org and search for “youth development.” ●



Oprah Winfrey's documentary *Belief* interviews people of different faiths around the world. As the team was creating the videos on Christianity, they arrived at a summer camp in Hamilton, Alabama, where they met Chafelmer Mumba (at right, with her brothers).

Interviewing Chafelmer, nicknamed Cha Cha, the producer asked if there was a traumatic event she'd experienced in her life and what she was expecting God to do. Cha Cha answered honestly that she had been raped during her freshman year of college, and she had a deep desire for healing.

She accepted that her relationship with God is not earned, but is a gift from Jesus Christ. Cha Cha was baptized at the end of the camp, an outward sign of what God had done with her. He gave her hope for her pain-filled questions, and she later got involved with Cru to grow in her faith.

A year later, Oprah called to check in on her before the first episode of the series. That episode, called "The Seekers," features Cha Cha.

Oprah asked Cha Cha how she was doing now. "I was able to share that, when all that stuff had happened in filming, it wasn't just a moment captured on film," she says. "It was a moment that really did change my life."

Cha Cha didn't want the conversation to end there. A little star-struck, she shared how God empowered her to help other young women who have gone through similar events. She's seen God bring healing into their lives.

Now 22, Cha Cha remembers saying, "God's taken something that's really hard, a really trying time, and turned it into something really beautiful, and I'm no longer that person any more. I'm free. I'm happy." •

Oprah and the Gospel



COURTESY CHAFELMER MUMBA

“**GOD’S TAKEN SOMETHING THAT’S REALLY HARD, A REALLY TRYING TIME, AND TURNED IT INTO SOMETHING REALLY BEAUTIFUL.**

—CHAFELMER MUMBA



COURTESY: KASSAHUN SEID

Overcoming Fear in Ethiopia

As a young boy, Kassahun Seid was terrified of dying. Growing up in Wollo, Ethiopia, a confusing religious environment made the thought of death frightening to him.

Kassahun (on right in photo) grew up without his parents, who divorced when he was 1 year old. He lived with his grandparents, who practiced an animistic faith. God broke into the darkness of Kassahun's life when he was 14. One day he found a small booklet called *Jesus Raised Lazarus From the Dead*. Gripped by its message, he welcomed Jesus into his life.

"God took all my fears," Kassahun said. He soon saw God bring his relatives out of spiritual darkness along with him.

Today he helps others move from death to life, one movie clip at a time.

Now 34, he tells university students in Ethiopia about Jesus as a staff member with The Great Commission Ministry, as Cru® is known there. Kassahun says only 0.08 percent of people are evangelical Christians in the northern part of the country, where he works. That's approximately 4,000 in a population of 4.3 million.

He uses Nook tablets and movie clips from the film *JESUS* to tell the story of Jesus' life, taken directly from the Book of Luke. The film allows viewers to hear the gospel translated into their own language.

While on a short-term mission trip in the region last February, Kassahun met three men in their 20s.

"I asked them if I could share a movie with them. They were willing," he says.

Using his tablet, he showed 10-minute

clips from *JESUS* in their language.

He then explained how sin creates a barrier to knowing God personally. He asked them if they believed Jesus forgives sins, and whether they wanted to be forgiven of their sins.

Two of the men agreed with what he had said, and placed their faith in Jesus, becoming the first Christians in either of their families.

God used a piece of paper containing the gospel to give Kassahun hope. Now those words inspire him to bring others out of darkness using modern technology. Kassahun has to face the risk of physical harm, even death by stoning, if he is falsely accused because of his ministry.

He believes the risk is worth taking. Death no longer scares him the way it once did. ●

The Retirement Questions

Jerry and Marianne had long anticipated this day, the finish line. After years of teaching, they were taking the next step in living the American dream—to retire happy.

They moved closer to their grandkids, bought a house, fixed it up and went on a cruise. But instead of putting their feet up, they asked, “OK, Lord, what’s our next assignment?”

In the U.S., the average length of retirement is 18 years. Every day, thousands of Americans venture into this new chapter, a final opportunity to decide what they want their life to be about.

Jerry and Marianne wanted it to be about serving God. Through someone at church, they learned about an opportunity to travel to Honduras with a branch of Cru’s ministry serving teachers in developing countries. Teachers themselves, they were intrigued to learn how they could encourage Honduran educators.

One challenge they had to overcome was not knowing exactly what would be expected of them. “I’m the kind of person who likes to have all my ducks in a row and know what to expect,” says Marianne. “So when they said they were going to train us when we got there, I was really worried.”

After arriving in Honduras, Jerry, Marianne and the other volunteers went line by line through each day’s lessons. But they still had concerns about working through interpreters once the 400 teachers arrived at the conference.

“The first day I felt a little out of control,” says Jerry. “The second day I felt OK. I thought, *This might work. I think I can do this.*”

They soon saw what a difference the conference was making in the lives of the teachers. “When Bob [the conference director] gave the talk on the heart of the teacher, [the teachers’] eyes were really opened to the important role they have,” says Marianne. At the same time, her own eyes were opened to how God was using her. She says, “It caused me to trust God a lot more, to walk me through each day and give me the words to say to these ladies and encourage them.”

“I saw that my life was not about me,” says Jerry. They had always experienced teaching as a self-sacrificing profession, so they counted it a privilege to give back to other teachers.

“I felt like I made a difference, I did something significant, by



MATT PAMER

investing in other people’s lives and not just in my own life,” says Marianne. “We’ve been on cruises, and sure they’re fun, but we didn’t come home feeling that we had changed lives like we did coming home from Honduras. We felt that we made a greater impact by influencing teachers who in turn inspire their students. I couldn’t wait to tell people about it.”

For ideas on ways to make a difference once you retire, visit cru.org and search for “retirement.” ●

When The Student Body President Prays



CHASE REYNOLDS

THE CHALLENGE TO the students: Call one person and ask for prayer requests.

At a Cru® winter conference in North Carolina, Carson Rich and Abby Hamrick decided to dial more numbers than just one.

“Carson, we’ve got to call our cabinet,” Abby said.

So the student body president (Carson) and vice president (Abby) of Appalachian State University sat down in the hotel lobby and phoned the 13 members of their cabinet in the Student Government Association.

Many cabinet members asked for prayers that they could be successful in 2016 or for their next steps after graduation.

THE CHALLENGE TO THE STUDENTS: CALL ONE PERSON AND ASK FOR PRAYER REQUESTS.

The conversations were just a small part in the relationships Carson and Abby have built with fellow students. As leaders on their campus, they’ve used their positions in student government to humbly represent Christ. Carson and Abby recognize that God has put them in their roles of influence for a purpose.

One of the students that Abby called from the conference location was Tori Little.

Tori was a junior who felt like she had missed out on growing in her faith in college and had heard about Cru,

but never felt like she could make time for it. She eventually reached out to Carson and Abby, and got involved in a Bible study. Now she attends church with them on Sundays. Today her relationship with the Lord is closer.

“I thought if the student body president has time for Cru and being involved in learning more about Jesus and growing in his faith, surely I can make the time too,” Tori says. ●

Sowing Seeds of Truth in Russia

“I think Josh McDowell’s books have not ceased to be relevant in working with newborn Christians. They touch and have a big influence on people.”

— Ivan Borichevskiy, Russian pastor



“Josh’s books changed our lives. They introduced us to Jesus, led us to church, disciplined us, gave us premarital advice and helped us raise our children. Now, we are in full-time ministry and reaching more Russians for Christ.”

— Pavel, Russian pastor

“*More Than a Carpenter* was the first Christian book I read. Today there is not a single person in Russian churches that has not been influenced by Josh’s books. They were the first and only books available. And they are still just as effective today.”

— Sergei, Russian Pastor

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who’ve never heard about Jesus.
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CHOOSING



**A pastor
and a group
of unlikely
leaders plant
churches
across Russia.**

BY RACHEL FERCHAK
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM MILLS

THE REJECTED





Cameras flash and camcorders roll, recording the historic dialogue between Christians and Jews in the ornate halls of the Holocaust Memorial Synagogue in Moscow. ¶ Pastor Ivan Borichevskiy stands to address a crowd of 100 politicians, journalists and influential Russians. On the stage beside him sit two prominent pastors, along with the president of the Holocaust Center and a deputy of the Russian parliament.

As the representative of his denomination, Ivan's words carry weight. An occasional smile breaks through his stoic face as he seizes an opportunity to influence Russian leaders with the gospel.

It's a long way from his experience when, as a 10-year-old boy, he stood before his entire school, the target of mockery. His teachers were determined to force him to denounce his Christian

faith and embrace Communism.

"You will never amount to anything," they taunted him repeatedly.

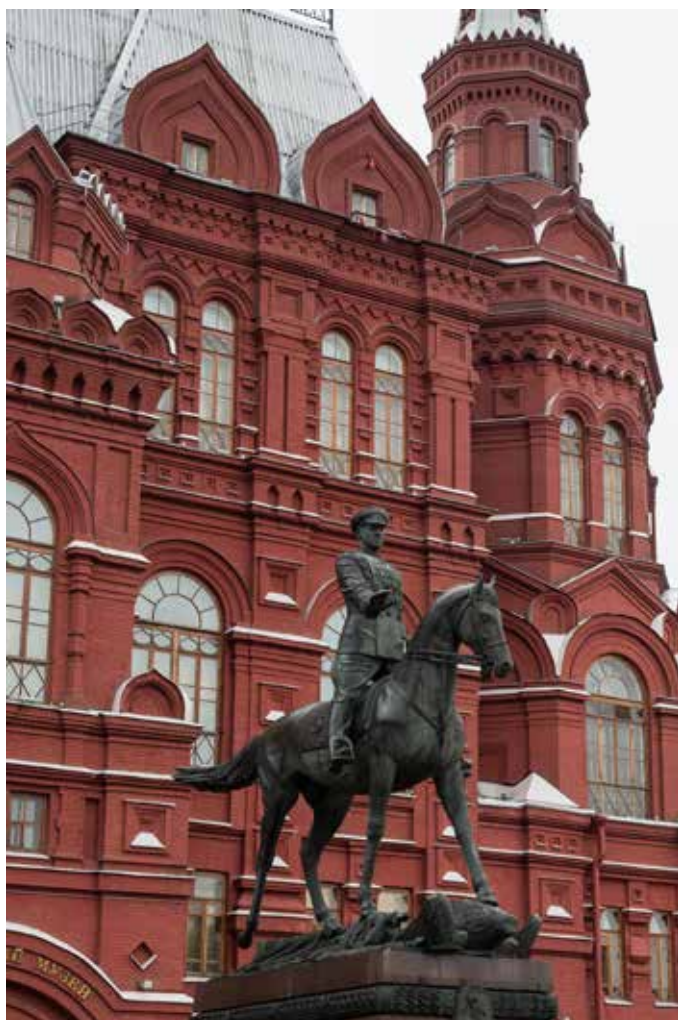
As the only Christians in their town in the former Soviet Union, Ivan and his family endured persecution. In the eyes of his government, Ivan was an enemy. To his community, he was a worthless nobody.

But God would show Ivan that He had big plans for him, as Ivan learned to empower others struggling to realize their significance.

After the teachers berated Ivan at school, that evening he shut the door to his room, turned the lights off and prayed.

"I asked God why I had such troubles in school, why people laughed at me," Ivan says. As he awaited God's response, a bright light filled the room.

"I had an encounter with God," Ivan recalls. "God came into that room, and He



A film crew interviews Pastor Ivan Borichevskiy at the Holocaust Memorial Synagogue (far left). Modern Moscow contrasts with older, Stalin-era architecture (above). The State Historical Museum (left) pre-dates both.

gave me a feeling of lightness.”

The next day Ivan faced his classmates again. But now he had something to say.

“Communism teaches that there is no God. And I know that there is a God. I met God,” he declared. “You will never make me believe that there is no God.”

“Stop! Stop! That’s enough!” his teachers cried out, shaken by his certainty. He was never pressured into Communism again.

After graduating from high school, Ivan developed a passion for taking the gospel to the youth of his country. But the USSR was in turmoil. On Christmas Day 1991, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev resigned. A new flag rose above the Kremlin in Moscow, signifying a new era in Russian history, especially for Russian Christians.

Christianity was no longer illegal.

The doors of Russia opened to foreign

missionaries and humanitarian aid. Josh McDowell, founder of Josh McDowell Ministry™ within Cru®, recognized deep spiritual and physical needs in Russia. He established Operation Carelift to deliver emergency supplies to Russians, along with the gospel.

In a country of 148 million people, Ivan was just another person struggling to get by. He worked as an unpaid youth minister and used his car as a taxi at night, weaving through the chaotic Moscow streets. But his vision remained clear: Get the message of Jesus to the youth of Russia.

Once Josh heard about this determined young Russian, life would change for Ivan.

"I asked God, *When I meet young people, let me have the ability to see their potential,*" says Josh. "And when I met Ivan, that's what I saw in him, a tremendous potential."

Josh was moved to support his ministry. "I was in deep shock," Ivan says. "I understood that it was God. I understood that God wanted me to be working in this field and dedicate my life to ministry."

Josh gradually took on a unique role in Ivan's life. A few years prior, Ivan's father died unexpectedly of cancer caused by the Chernobyl disaster. "God made it so a

person from another country would come and be like a father and care for us like a dad does," Ivan says.

In the last 20 years, Josh has nurtured Ivan's passion for getting the gospel to every household in the world's largest nation. "He wasn't doing things the way everyone else did in Russia," says Josh.

"He was coming up with new ideas and he would listen, which was rare. I invested money and time into him because he really seemed to have an incredible future." Ivan, the worthless boy from Belarus, has become a vital change-agent in the Russian church.

He now pastors a church with five campuses in the Moscow area. In 2011, his team identified 100,000 villages in Russia without a church or access to the gospel. "There are millions of people who have never touched a Bible because they've never had the opportunity," Ivan says. "For 70 years they were told there was no God. Now we can preach freely,

"For 70 years they were told there was no God. Now we can preach freely, hand out Bibles and open churches."

—Ivan Borichevskiy





Pastor Ivan prays for a woman (opposite page) during a worship service at the New Testament Church (above). Pastor Ivan's church has five campuses in Moscow. The newest campus, in a rented club in Moscow's city center (right), attracts younger people.



hand out Bibles and open churches.”

In his Moscow office hangs a large, multi-colored map of Russia. Clusters of pins represent where teams of evangelists under his leadership went into more than 20,000 towns and villages, and planted 1,200 churches in the past five years. But 80,000 villages remain unreached.

Ivan’s methods are unconventional. Rather than recruiting the obvious leaders, he’s entrusting Russia’s rejects with reaching the world’s largest nation.

His churches focus much of their evan-

gelism among the rejected and marginalized: the orphan waiting to be adopted, the elderly woman without a way to provide for herself, the drug addict whose addiction has ripped his family apart. People from desperate situations know that Ivan believes in them and sees their potential to contribute to a rapidly growing ministry.

And he’s finding leaders where few would ever look—in Russia’s rehabilitation centers.

The Rehabilitation Centers Ministry started the day Ivan’s church opened its doors. The rehab center resembles a dor-

mitory, attached to the church building. On one afternoon visit, Ivan opens the door to each room, greeting residents. A new arrival lies asleep in her bed, sick from withdrawal. Mismatched curtains block out natural light in rooms that accommodate between eight and 12 people. Metal bunk beds fill the floor space, and pictures of family and friends are taped to the white walls. Residents eat, sleep, work and attend Bible studies according to a strict schedule. No one is allowed to be alone.

Ivan’s church runs eight rehabilitation





When addicts become Christians, they find freedom from addictions. The inner change is visible to others. Broken families and damaged lives are restored.

Alexey Sulev (right), like many others, has gone through one of Pastor Ivan's church's rehabilitation centers and then entered Bible school. Pastor Ivan prays with another of those students (above). Bible school students live in dormitories attached to the church (left).





— ALEXEY
SULEV

“He gives second chances.

He takes your skills and knowledge and helps th



They learn skills to help them live independent and healthy lives in society, while restoring their physical, emotional and spiritual health.

Pastor Ivan (left, at left) and Pastor Alexey meet at the latter's church plant, launched through Rehabilitation Centers Ministry. A man passes out gospel materials in Staraya Kupavna (below).

centers for nearly 200 drug addicts and alcoholics in various stages of a nine-month recovery program. They learn skills to help them live independent and healthy lives in society, while restoring their physical, emotional and spiritual health. But the program faces challenges.

“Not everyone is willing and able to support this work spiritually and financially,” says Ivan. “There is difficulty in the re-socialization of people [from the rehab centers].”

But the team firmly believes in this program. One-third of the leadership in Ivan's church came out of these centers.

Pastor Alexey Sulev is one of Ivan's unlikely leaders. Alexey was a drug addict from Staraya Kupavna (pronounced STARA-ya koo-PAV-na) on the eastern side of Moscow. His life was falling apart when he checked into rehab.

Lying in bed experiencing severe withdrawal, he noticed something different about other men in the center. They laughed. They had joy.

“How can I be like them?” he asked his brother, also a participant in the rehab program. His brother responded by explaining the gospel. Two days later, Alexey gave his life to Christ. He turned his back on drugs and poured his energy into becoming a



em grow.”



“YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND THE NEED.”

Helping the gospel spread in post-Communist Russia



COMPLIMENTS JOSH MCDOWELL MINISTRY

IN NOVEMBER 1989, as Russia was nearing the end of Communism and its atheistic rule, the people were ready for God.

Russian pastors asked for help in meeting a specific need from Josh McDowell, founder of Josh McDowell Ministry™, a part of Cru®.

These pastors invited Josh and his wife, Dottie, to a luncheon on their first visit to Russia. During the meal, the pastors stood to ask Josh for copies of his books *More Than a Carpenter* and *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. They needed resources to help explain the fundamental truths of the Christian faith and how people change from skeptics to believers.

“I’ll do my best to somehow give you 5,000 copies of each,” Josh said.

“You don’t understand the need,” they said, shaking their heads. “Our people have been schooled in scientific atheism, and believe that the Bible is a fairy tale and Jesus is not real. We need 250,000 *More Than a*

Carpenter books and 50,000 *Evidence* [books] to help combat their thinking”

Those prayers were answered within three months.

Josh’s books were the only Christian books available in Russian at the time.

“Today, there is not a single person in Russian churches who has not been influenced by Josh’s books,” says Sergei Shashin, who directs Jesus Film Project® in Russia. “Josh’s books were revolutionary.”

Throughout the last 25 years, changes have taken place in Russian society and Christian ministries have had to adapt. Money, success and a faster-paced lifestyle have smothered people’s hunger for God, especially in the cities.

But Josh’s resources continue to be effective in Russia. JMM partners with New Life Russia (as Cru is known there), JESUS Film Project, Christian organizations, and churches.

Since the birth of Josh’s ministry in Russia, 16 million copies of his books have been distributed there. ●



pastor. Alexey met Ivan while attending a church that he pastored. Recognizing his potential, Ivan gradually gave him responsibilities. When Ivan started a new church, he asked Alexey to pastor with him.

"He gives second chances," Alexey says of Ivan. "He takes your skills and knowledge and helps them grow."

Ivan helped Alexey become a pioneer who returned to his hometown to build a church around a rehab center. "They know who I used to be," Alexey says. He returned to show his hometown that God changes lives, and freedom comes through Jesus.

Alexey and Ivan believe that by transforming the lives of drug addicts and alcoholics, they can reach whole towns and eventually all of Russia. When addicts become Christians, they find freedom from addictions. The inner change is visible to others. Broken families and damaged lives are restored. They know Jesus has delivered them, and this fuels a passion to take the gospel to others still struggling.

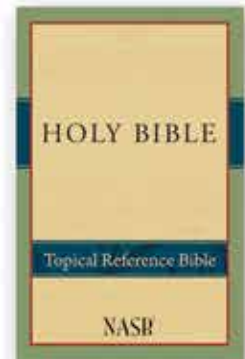
Of the 200 people who went through the rehabilitation program in 2015, more than 100 became Christians. Half of them entered the Bible school program. Since 2011, three new churches have been planted through the rehab program.

With Ivan's support, Alexey has now launched a rehab center at a two-story house in Staraya Kupavna. The center is known as a place of hope and healing. Against all odds, leaders are being found in unlikely corners of Russian society. ●

Pastor Ivan enjoys fishing with his three sons near their home to rest from his busy schedule (opposite page, left). In Pastor Ivan's office, a map shows the nearly 20,000 towns and villages evangelistic teams have visited since 2011 (above).



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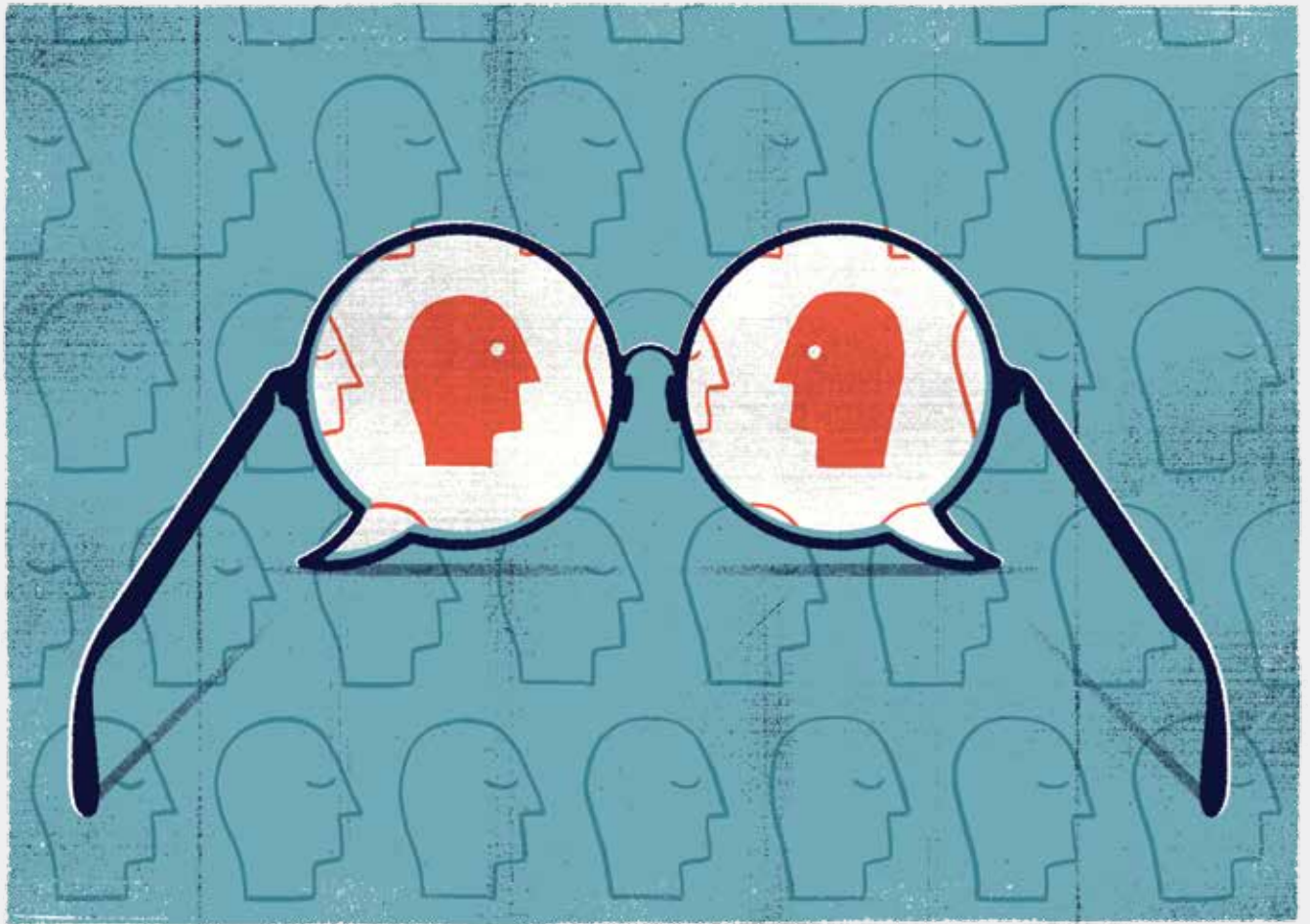
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Continuing the Conversation

BY
RICH
ATKINSON

**Changing
how we
see people
when
talking
about Christ**

SHAWN CRAMER CONDUCTED spiritual conversations with college students on campus for about a year and a half before his epiphany: His conversations didn't advance further faith discussions with any of these nonbelievers. While wanting to initiate conversations, even with strangers, he wanted those conversations to lead to more later.

So, Shawn began mulling over how to change his approach. He had been bold in telling students at the University of Denver about Jesus, but he neglected to build relationships with these non-Christians, even though that was his desire.

"Something has to change," said Shawn, a Cru® staff member. "The gospel runs on relational tracks. And if there is not any relationship here, I don't know how well the gospel is being heard."

His mentor, Michael Brown, listened and helped Shawn think about making changes. Shawn's immediate goal was to increase both the quantity and the quality of the gospel conversations on campus.

In Shawn's new evangelism approach, he adopted principles from Doug Pollock's book *God Space*.

One way we can build relationships in our evangelism, explains Doug, is by seeing others as Jesus sees them, what he calls putting on "Jesus glasses."

Shawn agrees that Christians should desire to see as Jesus sees if they want to make a lasting difference spiritually among the nonbelievers they meet. To do that, he has used an acronym, B.L.E.S.S.,

ILLUSTRATION
BY
MATT
CHASE

which stands for **Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve** and **Story**. It comes from “Discover Your Mission Now: 5 Simple Practices to Change Your World” by Dave Ferguson, an online resource.

BEGIN WITH PRAYER | To continue the conversation with non-Christians about Jesus, we need to start by connecting with God. As someone has said, “We need to talk to God about people before we talk to people about God.”

Doug offers a faith challenge, or “faith experiment” expressed in prayer, as a take-away in his book: “Lord Jesus, as I interact with others today, help me to see them as You do.” Try this for a month, and journal what God does and how He directs you.

Shawn prays before he has a spiritual conversation with someone: “God, You are the Author and Perfecter of this person’s faith, and I know You are at work. Will You help me to tune into where You are at work and go in the same direction that You are going?”

During a training time with students in Colorado, Shawn held up his glasses and said, “Lord, help me to see like Jesus sees.”

Seeing like Jesus sees means recognizing a person’s felt needs, both physical and spiritual. With the feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew 14:13-21, Jesus focused on the physical, felt need of the people by providing more than enough bread and fish.

LISTEN | Focus on the other person.

Listening will help you continue the conversation. Active listening involves more than hearing the words others are saying. It is seeking to understand and clarifying what they are saying and how they are saying it, understanding their felt needs and where they are on their spiritual journey.

Listen for clues about where they are on a faith spectrum. Do they have any spiritual understanding of God? Do they have any interest in Christianity? Have they ever heard the gospel? Active listening involves the ears, mind and heart.

Nick Gillispie directs Cru at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He stresses holistic evangelism by asking, “What does it mean to be a community of people that blesses our campus?”

“Pollock’s book talks about delivering cookies and giving out water as a way to

build goodwill and spiritual curiosity,” says Nick. “I think that is something we embrace through B.L.E.S.S.”

EAT | Share a meal and continue a spiritual conversation.

At Bowling Green, a small group of believers invited non-Christians from their residence hall, named McDonald, to a Thanksgiving meal in their dorm lobby by walking through other dorm lobbies to gather students. They called their meal “MacGiving,” a blend of the dorm name and Thanksgiving.

Another small group on that campus connects through “Taco Tuesday.” It is the same idea as the MacGiving outreach, but with tacos instead of turkey and stuffing.

SERVE | Paying for the meal or coffee of the person behind you in line is one example from “Fifty Ways to Serve This Week,” a list developed by Cru staff members at Bowling Green that encourages students to serve Christians and non-Christians alike. (See all 50 ideas at cru.org/50-ways-to-serve-this-week.)

Serving people on campus and helping meet their practical needs can help start and continue spiritual conversations.

STORY | Shawn would like students to have two stories to communicate: their story of meeting Christ and their continuing story—a recent example of how their life is different because of God.

“We are finding that it is more winsome and attractive in the life of the students than an outdated conversion story,” he says. “They [non-Christians] are mostly thinking, *How does this make my life different now?*”

Shawn met Brendan at the first Cru meeting of the school year about three years ago. Since he did not grow up in a Christian home, Brendan asked challenging questions as he considered the claims of Christ. Christians welcomed him into community. But Brendan wrestled with the claims of Christianity for 18 months before he committed his life to Christ.

Relational and conversational evangelism is more than just a method—it’s modeling Jesus to non-Christians in order to continue the conversation about Him. ●



YOUR FIVE NEXT STEPS

God Space by Doug Pollock offers many ideas. “What is your dream job?” is one of 99 “wondering” questions that will help your evangelism to be focused on the other person by showing genuine interest in them.

Pictionary for Christ is a way for artists or stick-figure illustrators to learn one-verse evangelism using a napkin or a piece of paper. Developed by The Navigators®, this is a clear, visual way to present the gospel. Visit cru.org to see Romans 6:23 illustrated step by step by typing “one-verse evangelism” in the search box.

Short films with spiritual messages are included on the JESUS Film App available online from Google Play or the iTunes App Store, or at globalshortfilmnetwork.com. Some of these include conversation-starter helps.

The C.S. Lewis Institute (at cslewisinstitute.org) has discipleship resources that engage both the heart and the mind. Resources include audios, videos and online study guides.

The Connecting Points blog (at connectionpoints.us) by Randy Newman, who serves as senior teaching fellow at C.S. Lewis Institute, exists to help Christians engage people’s hearts the way Jesus did. ●





**JIM
MUNROE
DRAWS ON
ILLUSION
TO REVEAL
THE TRUTH.**

THE MAGICIAN'S SECRETS



**BY
LUCY KINCAID**

**PHOTOGRAPHS
BY GUY GERRARD**



A countdown ticks on a screen in the front of a dark auditorium. Tension-building music blasts slowly at first, then speeds up. Before the performer appears, his voice bellows through the speakers:

“And now that we’re all feeling in sync and you realize this is exactly where you’re supposed to be, I want you to know we’re going to have a lot of fun here. Welcome back to the world we like to call ... The Maze.”

A man with spiked blond hair dressed all in black except for his pink tie steps out from the back of the stage. He doesn’t say a word. He raises an eyebrow as he looks at the audience. Then he steps down to the crowd of college students and points to his first volunteers.

The “magic” begins.

Jim Munroe’s fast-paced performance baffles college students around the country. A new ministry of Cru®, The Maze is an illusion show with crazy tricks, like guessing the



numbers on a lottery ticket and pulling a string out of his stomach, yet it also has a message that threads through them all and leads into Jim's personal testimony.

The Maze exposes the illusions in people's lives that distract them from the truth. Jim's show points toward the "man behind the curtain" and authenticity behind disguises.

One of Jim's recent destinations was a small private school in Sewanee, Tennessee. The University of the South is a Hogwarts-like campus with stone towers, rose windows and arched courtyards. Some students regularly don their graduation robes signifying their status and GPA. But beyond this beautiful, highly intelligent exterior, there is a brokenness that goes deeper.

Paul Hilliard, Cru leader at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and The University of the South, notices this when he shares the gospel with students on both campuses.

"You can just clearly see the deception that people have," he says. "You see it here in terms of what they're struggling with and in their inconsistent or skewed worldviews."

Jim arrives at Sewanee the day of the show, just as the high-ceilinged cafeteria starts to buzz with the lunch crowd.

Dressed in his black casual wear, Jim approaches a group of students sitting at a round table.

Holding three forks, he asks them to choose one. With his right hand he grips the end of the chosen utensil between his thumb and index finger. With the other hand he clenches his fist below the prongs of the fork, opening and closing as he grunts. He appears to use all his strength to harness a gravitational pull. With each clench of his fist, the fork bends.

Clang! The fork snaps, and the top lands on the wooden table. The stranger has just destroyed this fork with apparently no force but his mind. He rubs his eyes as if all of his mental energy has been drawn out of him.

And instead of the expected shout, there is silence. No

Students walk to class at The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, where The Maze came to campus during the spring semester (right). Jim Munroe prepares for the show backstage (bottom). While at home in Texas, Jim plays basketball with his son, Gavin (opposite page, right).

JIM'S MAGIC POINTS TOWARD THE "MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN" AND AUTHENTICITY BEHIND DISGUISES.









Jim performs a fork-breaking illusion in the cafeteria the day of The Maze show (top). At the show's start, he brings two students onstage to pull a string, which he had swallowed, out of his stomach (opposite page, left). Jim visits with a student outside the auditorium after the show (left).



“IT PUTS PEOPLE INTO A MOMENT OF QUESTIONING.”

— JIM MUNROE

yells of “Oh, my gosh!” or “How did you do that?!”

The skeptical group just stares. Students involved with Cru hand out fliers to the show with no clear

sign of whether these friends care. But as Jim continues his loop around the cafeteria, one student picks up the fork to inspect it. A sense of wonder begins to peek from his face.

“It puts people into a moment of questioning, which is where we want them to be,” Jim says.

This inquisitiveness drove Jim’s passion for illusion when he was a child living in Southern California. He was hooked when he saw a show at the age of 5.

“Magic to me is a big artistic chess match,” he says. “I always wanted to figure it out. It frustrated me in a good way when I couldn’t.”

Jim was a skeptic—not just of magic but of life.

He held what he describes as an agnostic, borderline atheistic worldview before he encountered Jesus at a church service that his girlfriend dragged him to in college.

After this, the journey wasn’t always a smooth one.

His best friend with whom he started The Maze died tragically in 2007. Jim’s marriage hit a hard spot. And in 2008, a doctor entered Jim’s hospital room holding a clipboard and said, “You have leukemia.”

Pictures of a man with a bald head hooked up to IVs flash on the screen as Jim tells this story to the quiet audience. The lights dim. The only flashy things left are Jim’s sparkly black sneakers.

At this point, Jim reveals what illusionists are supposed to keep hidden. The mysterious persona falls away.

Though he tells his story at each of the nearly 65 shows he performs each year, it’s not a breeze.

“The hardest thing to do is to stand on a stage and be real, especially with an audience that some would consider to be hostile to your worldview,” he says.

In 2009 he received a bone-marrow transplant from the one donor out of more than 9 million who was a perfect match. Her name was Jennell, which means “the grace of God.” Three days after his birthday, he received



the transplant. New blood pulsed through his veins. The donor had to sacrifice so he could live.

Jim unfolds this glaring parallel to the life-giving power of the gospel.

He also uses the opportunity to encourage students to become bone-marrow donors with the organization Be The Match®. Eight times a semester, representatives from Be The Match come to Jim's shows to help students sign up.

After pacing the stage and emphasizing his story with hand gestures, Jim invites the audience to pray with him, asking Jesus to take hold of their lives.

"Every time I go out to talk to people about Jesus," says Jim, "I pretend I'm talking to myself when I was 19 or 20 years old. A not-trusting, skeptical, broken kid. Someone who thought they had all the answers. That's who The Maze show is geared for."

For some students at Sewanee, it was the first time they prayed and meant it. They saw the truth behind the world's deception. Out of the crowd, 50 indicated they received Christ, marking so on comment cards that Cru staff members can use for future discussions.

"That's blowing my mind," Jim responds when a staff member tells him.

Now The Maze moves forward with more than just one man. There are always two or three other illusionists who help bring the show to life.

Back on stage, the final scene of the show begins. But this time it isn't a trick. There's no illusion.

Jim brings up a student volunteer who pulls out a large knife, a roll of duct tape and a red marker from a black bag. With the marker, Jim traces his hand on a wooden block. Next, he stabs the spaces between his fingers with the knife. The student secures the bag over Jim's head with tape.

Now blind, Jim again stabs the spaces between his fingers, slowly. He pauses to slide his hand slightly away from the outline. The audience gasps. He starts again and speeds up as the knife makes a rhythmic pounding. It slows down after a few seconds and stops. Applause.

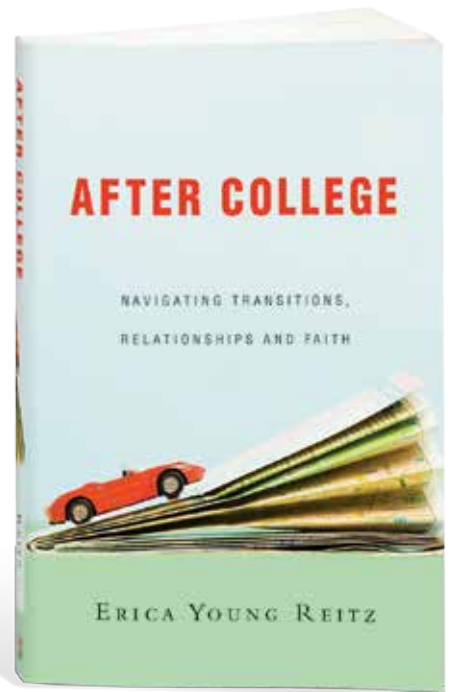
The last moments of the show are real. Just like in having a relationship with Jesus, Jim doesn't want students to settle for anything less than what is true. ●

Jim swallows a piece of playing card that he later restores to one piece as students stop eating lunch to watch (right). Jim speaks during a show (opposite page, right). The audience reacts as he performs The Maze (bottom).



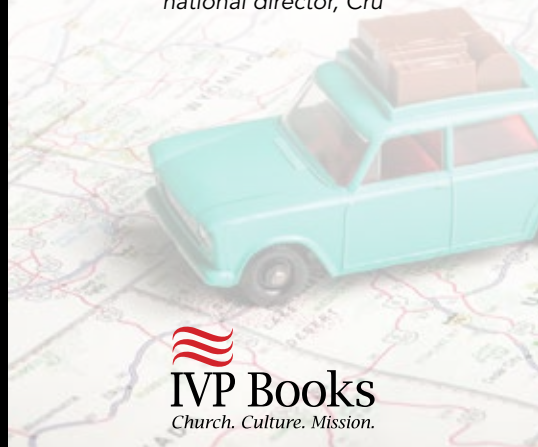



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JEN NIXON, campus field ministry
national director, Cru




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What does working in a vineyard have to do with dependence on God?

BY ROSS MCCALL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GUY GERRARD



Lessons From a Vineyard

When I was 25 years old I joined a kibbutz in Israel's Negev desert. In these communal settlements in Israel, backpackers volunteered to work, often outdoors, in exchange for food and accommodation. ¶ I was a vinedresser in a vineyard during pruning season. I spent hours each day on my haunches, back arched uncomfortably, fingers catching on sharp branches until my skin tore, clipping row after row of vines. It was painful work.

The spiritual symbolism of my work was lost on me at the time, but reading Jesus' words to His disciples on the night before His death puts me back in that vineyard.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, New International Version).

These verses, and the memories they evoke, point me toward the heart of my struggle to follow Christ, and to the heart of the Master Vinedresser.

WHY ARE WE BEING SO HARD ON THE BRANCHES?

Inexperienced vinedressers often fail to prune aggressively enough. Convinced they're sparing the vine, they end up damaging its fruitfulness instead.

"You need to clip more, you're being too gentle," the Bedouin Arab shouted at me as he watched my clumsy attempts at pruning.

"But I don't get it," I said. "If I do that, there's nothing left."

"It looks that way, doesn't it?" he replied.

I was clueless about how best to tend the vines. But I pruned each branch to within an



inch of its life, trusting the counterintuitive technique of those who knew how to nurture vineyards.

Frequently I don't know what's best for my own growth either. But God does. The Good Vinedresser knows His vines, His branches and the conditions they're growing in. He knows what they need and when.

I felt we were being cruel to the branches. In the same way, Christians frequently confuse pruning with punishment. Growing as believers is meant to *be* good, not just *feel* good.

But perhaps we expect punishment from God, either because we see Him as a harsh master, or see ourselves as dead wood, deserving to be thrown away and burned.

When we sin, there are natural consequences. When I lie to someone, for example, the trust between us is damaged. But pruning is about increasing our fruitfulness, keeping us growing into the likeness of Jesus, not punishing our transgressions. As a writer I entrust my work to an editor who helps me recognize elements to cut out, but also highlights what needs bringing out more strongly, so the message becomes clearer. It doesn't always feel nice, but I trust the intentions of the editor and believe the process is for my benefit.

Likewise, God is intent on me being fruitful, so He draws my attention to whatever might inhibit that, offering me deeper awareness of my motives and patterns of thought or behavior. He doesn't delight in causing me discomfort. He's just more committed to my growth than I am.

WHY DIDN'T I COME DURING HARVEST TIME?

I was so frustrated. Pruning was laborious work, painful for the branches and for me. The fruit wouldn't come until long after I left the vineyard. I envied those who would see it.

In reality, though, without pruning, there would be no fruit to gather.

Fruitfulness refers to the work only God can do within us. We tend to confuse it with being effective in our labor for Him. We focus excessively on our output, because we want to be judged according to our effort, not our ability to remain dependent on someone else's finished work.

A fruitful Christian isn't simply someone committed to personal evangelism, seeing people coming to Christ.

God defines the fruit He's producing in us in Galatians 5:22,23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. As we increasingly manifest these characteristics, those of Christ Himself, people will be drawn to God. People are more attracted to those who are more like Christ. But this is the work of the Holy Spirit in us; our part is to submit to His methods, to place ourselves in His hands.

WHY CAN'T I MAKE MYSELF GROW?

I wasn't a Christian when I left my job as an advertising executive in London and travelled to Israel. It was more of a prison break than a pilgrimage. But I failed to foresee that Israel might be a bad location for avoiding God.

The journey that took me to the kibbutz was a desperate search

to become more than I thought I was. I wanted to live a life worthy of a novel, but feared I was a dull, short story. I knew who God was, but chose to branch out from Him and seek satisfaction in other places. It didn't work.

"*Apart from me you can do nothing,*" says Jesus (John 15:5, NIV, emphasis mine).

This verse is explosive. I need to be reminded of it daily. People who don't follow Christ still live good lives, pursue careers, have families and leave legacies. But we were made to become more and more like Jesus, and that's utterly impossible without leaning into God.

Spirit-filled living involves believing He will grow us into who we're meant to be, and trusting that the fruit will come.

This is backbreaking work, just like my time



**FREQUENTLY I DON'T
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BUT GOD DOES. THE
GOOD VINEDRESSER
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BRANCHES AND THE
CONDITIONS THEY'RE
GROWING IN. HE
KNOWS WHAT THEY
NEED AND WHEN.**



in the vineyard. It's a struggle to decide who's in charge of our lives: the Master Vinedresser, or just us.

I was in Israel searching for what only God could offer—fulfillment, purpose and peace. But I couldn't find them apart from Him. I could not be my own vine.

Since becoming a Christian, I've also tried branching out from God. I've tried reading more, praying more, trying harder not to sin. These things are good, but can also become ways to live according to my own effort. Christian discipleship is not a workout, or a self-help program. The branch is designed to be directed by the vine, not the other way around.

When Christians believe they can grow without radical submission to God, the source and director of life, they sacrifice the intimate relationship He promises and are left with nothing but rules and rituals.

God invites us to be honest about our weakness and call upon His strength. In Him alone lies the power to change. ●



On the Vine

Consider these questions as you meditate on the words of Jesus in John 15:

What is the heart of the Vinedresser toward me?

What areas of my life might the Lord be pruning?

How do I respond to the Vinedresser when I sense Him pruning me?

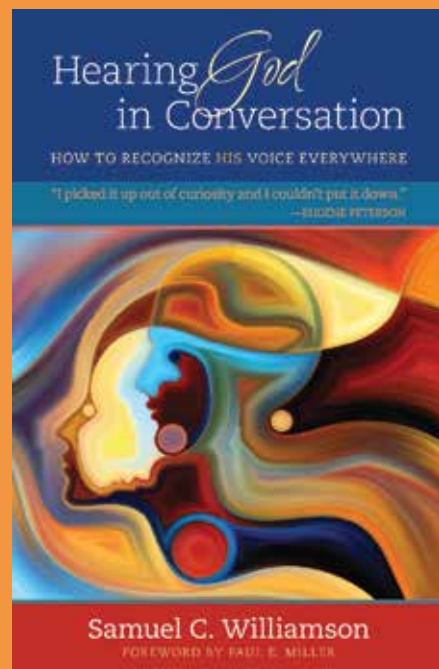
How have I been branching out from God?

Pray this simple prayer after reading John 15:

Jesus, show me where You're producing fruit in me. Lead me into community with people who can help me see what You're doing in my life. Help me to trust You and to feel safe in the hands of the Master Vinedresser.

“I picked it up out of curiosity and I couldn't put it down.”

—EUGENE PETERSON



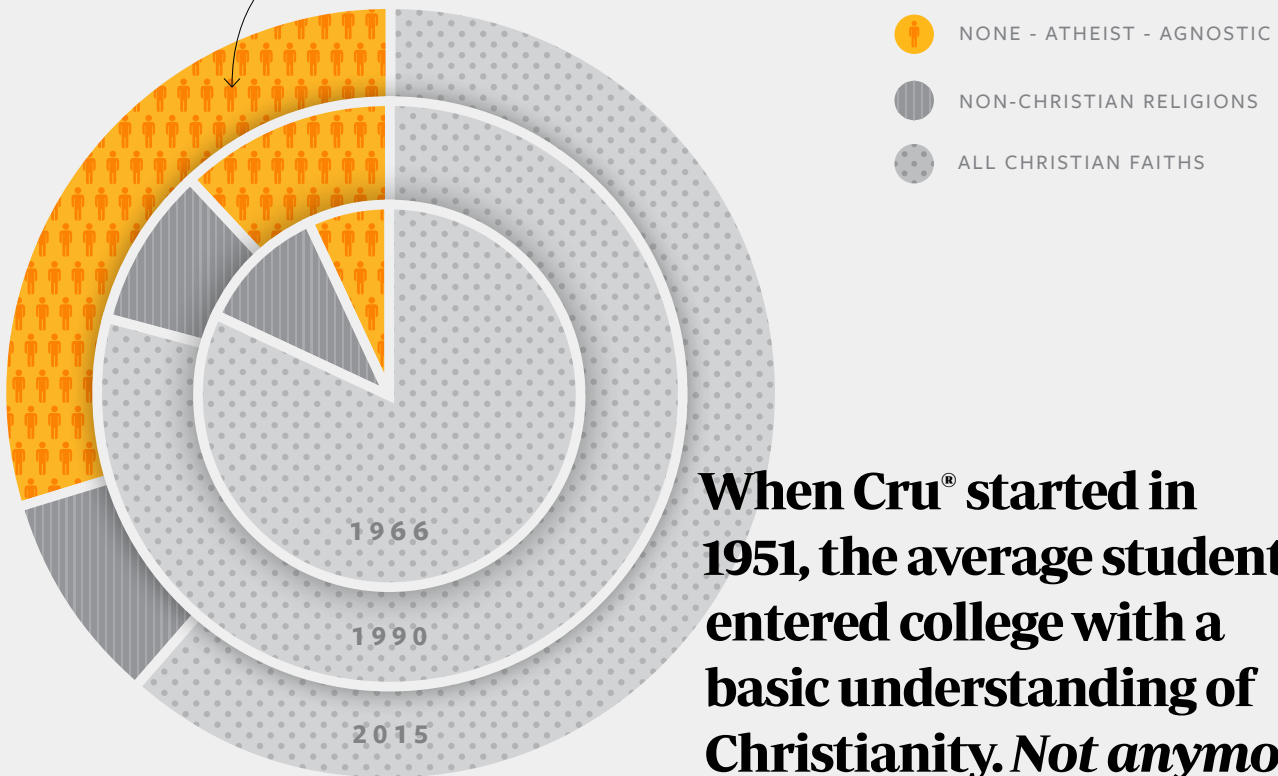
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Over the last 65 years, a growing number of incoming college freshmen identify as atheist, agnostic or as followers of no religion.



When Cru® started in 1951, the average student entered college with a basic understanding of Christianity. Not anymore.

FOR TODAY’S STUDENT, truth is relative. Many consider labeling any belief system as absolute truth represents intolerance.

Faced with a generation unsure of how to define the word “God,” Cru’s campus ministry can no longer begin spiritual conversations with non-Christians by saying, “God loves you.”

“We have to first act as ‘Cojourners,’ exploring the world of the person we’re talking to,” says Cru staff member Ryan McReynolds.

One emerging tool is the Perspective Cards smartphone app, which helps people identify their beliefs and explore Christianity.

The app feels like a game, suggests “next steps” for someone’s faith journey, and follows up with them through email.

Molly Tolbert, a Cru staff member, recalls using the app to talk to an international student at MIT. The student was impressed with how the app made communicating his worldview more straightforward.

“Working with college students, it seems more natural to use a phone than something on paper,” Molly says. “It’s like we’re speaking their language.”

As we listen and learn, we build trust that allows the gospel message to meet nonbelievers where they are.

“Most people are dying for someone to listen to them,” Ryan says. ● By Mary Leigh Keith

● **PRAY** that Ryan’s team will be able to locate 5,000 Christians who want to help build spiritual movements on college campuses using digital tools.

● Molly’s team is noticing a decline in students’ motivation to talk about their faith. **PRAY** that Christians would have a renewed passion for talking about Jesus.

● **PRAY** that Christians would adopt a posture of listening to and understanding nonbelievers first.

Based on surveys of incoming college freshmen in the United States, collected by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at UCLA.

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- 4 A free copy of the Family C.A.R.E. Guide.
- 5 Opportunities for tribute gifts to honor your loved ones.

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You're sending a lasting and powerful message to the world about Christ through your forward thinking and generosity. You'll solidify the values you want to pass on to your children, and generations to come. Thank you. We look forward to hearing from you.



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Russia's State Historical Museum in Moscow

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We pray that this issue will encourage you and challenge your faith.

“

FOR HERE
WE DO NOT
HAVE A
LASTING
CITY, BUT
WE ARE
SEEKING
THE CITY
WHICH IS
TO COME.”

—Hebrews 13:14