

# WorldwideChallenge<sup>®</sup>

## Special Feature

Remembering  
Vonette Bright

## Who Is My Neighbor?

A Croatian family finds  
two ways to answer.





# Thirsty?

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*GAIN expresses the love of Jesus Christ in the toughest places on earth by relieving suffering and restoring dignity.*



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**Becky Thomton**

Editor in Chief

*Becky's first story in Worldwide Challenge told of a 14-year-old from Belize who came to Christ in New York City.*



**WELCOME TO THE RE-DESIGNED** *Worldwide Challenge*®. We hope it will allow you to take a fresh look at stories of how God is at work around the world.

These pages have always inspired me. Years ago, when I was a new writer with the magazine, if I was having a bad day I would come into our proofing and layout room to look over the magazine. This room is where we have the pages of the current and upcoming issues displayed on

the wall in long horizontal lines so the editors can discuss them together.

I would glance along the rows of stories and read an article or two. Sometimes simply looking at the pictures or headlines would remind me of God's great work and would bring the problems of my day into perspective.

And sometimes when I would go back to my desk, the problem I was frustrated about would get a little resolution. A phone call or email I was waiting for would come, or I would have a new idea about an article.

The problems you face are probably bigger than a writer's looming deadlines. Whether they are your own difficulties, or friends

or family who are struggling, we're all living in an uncertain world. In the article "Overwhelmed," starting on page 24, Emilie Vinson writes, "Our world is a broken place in desperate need of the hope Jesus offers."

That's what you'll see reflected in all of these stories: the hope of Jesus, from a sidewalk in India to a high school in Houston.

Why do we tell these stories? To remind you that you're not alone. That God sees you. He sees all of us. He is a good God and sent His Son to die for us. That's a reminder we could all use every day, and you'll find it here.

So take a deep breath and sit down for a minute, pause from mulling over your problems in your mind, and turn the page. God is working in mighty ways in lives all over the world. And He is working in your life today too. ●

**WHY DO WE TELL THESE STORIES? TO REMIND YOU THAT YOU'RE NOT ALONE. THAT GOD SEES YOU. HE SEES ALL OF US.**

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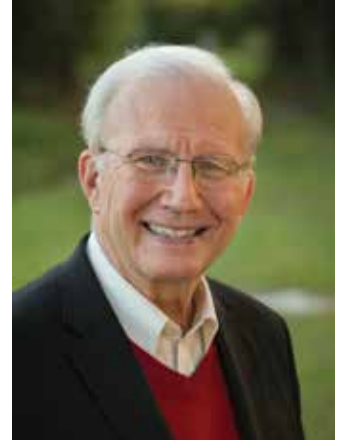


College of Arts  
& Sciences

Christian Leadership to Change the World

**Steve Douglass**

*President, Campus Crusade for Christ/Cru*



# Vonette Bright is now in heaven with Jesus!

I wrote the following thoughts within hours of her death on December 23. I found myself reflecting afresh on what Vonette meant to many others and me. She was a woman who definitely made an impact on people. I am so grateful God put her in my life.

First, Vonette was like a second mother to my wife, Judy, and me. She loved and cared for us, and wasn't afraid to speak into our lives. She believed in us and especially encouraged us as we stepped into the role of leading the overall Cru ministry.

Second, Vonette was deeply loved and respected by her family. Her son Brad and family (his wife, Kathy, and their children, Keller and Noel) actually lived at Vonette's condo for the last several days before she died. They spent time with her throughout each day, holding her hand, expressing their love and praying for her. They were at her side as she drew her last breath. They wept in the hours that followed.

Third, Vonette ministered to people throughout the Christian world and beyond. She started the Great Commission Prayer Crusade. She was instrumental in encouraging Congress and President Ronald Reagan to establish the National Day of Prayer on a set day of the year, the first Thursday in May. And she represented our ministry in more settings than space allows me to mention. She was an author, speaker and the radio personality of *Women Today*. She was an inspiration to

our staff family, donors and partners.

So, what can we learn from Vonette about making a difference? If I had to pick one thing, it would be her willingness to trust God to touch lives. Her humility caused her to be circumspect about what she could accomplish for God in her own strength: *nothing*. But her high view of God and her practice of appropriating God's power gave her confidence to believe Him for *anything* He asked her to do.

Her understanding and modeling of *nothing* and *anything* should inspire us to have the same perspective. We can't do God's will without God's power. But we can do whatever He asks of us with His power.

In the months and years to come, let's honor Vonette's memory in the best possible way—by following her example. ●

*In the months and years to come, let's honor Vonette's memory in the best possible way—by following her example.*

*Yours in Christ,*

*Steve Douglass*



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The body of Christ has prayed faithfully for generations that God would fulfill the Great Commission. We invite you to join a specific prayer initiative, *Pray2020*, asking God to raise up 10 million Christ-centered multiplying disciples by 2020 so that everyone might know someone who truly follows Jesus.

## A GOOD TIME TO BEGIN:

Set a reminder alarm to pray daily at 20:20 (8:20 p.m.) Pray the words of Matthew 9:37-38, and pray, “Lord, **MOLD** our hearts to be one with Your heart. **MULTIPLY** our lives through others. **MOBILIZE** laborers through prayer and ministry efforts.”



#pray2020

pray2020.org

cru

cru.org

PRAY 2020

Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.’ — Matthew 9:37-38





**Nepal**

Fewer than five percent of Nepal's 31 million people follow Christ. The country is slowly recovering from last April's devastating earthquake.

TED WILCOX

“

Each of our stories is part of the gospel, the Greatest Story.”

—DAN ALLENDER



HALLIE MILLER / TELLASIA MINISTRIES

# The Church That Started With One Story

**IN A VILLAGE** in Northeast India, around 5 p.m., a faith healer within the community stopped to listen to a man telling stories on a street corner. He listened to the story of a man called Jesus, who claimed to be God, healing the daughter of a man called Jairus.

“This is a living God who is involved in the lives of his people,” he said, astonished by what he was hearing. “I need to learn about this God because my god is

dead and he doesn’t answer me. I would rather serve a living God than a dead god.”

A crowd of 20 or so people had also gathered, some perched on nearby rooftops. Others, just passersby, felt compelled to stop and listen. The storyteller, Rajendra (left, speaking), belongs to the Awadhi people, as do those who gathered. Few Awadhis follow Jesus, but in this village that’s beginning to change.

Rajendra is a church-planting pastor with little formal training, but passionate about sharing God’s story with his own people.

StoryRunners, a ministry of Cru, helped Rajendra memorize 42 different three-minute stories from throughout the Bible. He learned how to ask his listeners questions about the stories he told, so they could understand who God is and what He had done for them. As part of StoryRunners’ five-week training, he had to find somewhere to tell Bible stories to people who may never have heard them.

Rajendra went back to the same corner on the same day of the week for several consecutive weeks. A group of people formed, interested in exploring God more deeply. Hallie Miller, a staff member with StoryRunners, says, “A house church formed with one Christian and about 25 nonbelievers.”

In the weeks since he completed his training, Rajendra has already seen 20 people choose to begin following Christ. ●

“  
**I WOULD  
RATHER  
SERVE A  
LIVING GOD  
THAN A  
DEAD GOD.**





MATT PAMER

## Meeting Jesus at the Mall

**A** A pounding headache pushed Hilary Millet-Clark away from the bustle of the Meridian Mall, where she worked at a kiosk.

The “He Cares We Care” center in the Lansing, Michigan, mall seemed like a place she could find quiet, and she decided that if she could just sit on one of the couches inside the living room and have a free bottle of water, she could handle getting a lecture from Christians.

Instead of finding judgment, Hilary

found people who showed her Jesus. The film *JESUS* played on a screen nearby while they talked with her and listened. In the midst of a struggle with severe depression, Hilary began a journey toward knowing God personally.

Through the center, 35 others came to know Christ as their Savior, where *JESUS* showed on a continuous loop for the 14 months the center was open.

By reaching people where they live and work, the ministry built up disciples of Christ, brought healing and planted

churches. Its influence remains visible today, five years after it closed.

“So many people like me went in just to vent and ended up coming back again and again and seeing the video and picking up a Bible,” Hilary says. “It all picks up from there.”

Today, Hilary is a church secretary, and she reaches out to people struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts. Her life has been transformed.

“Before that, I was floating. I had no direction,” she says. “Now I not only have a direction, but I have a purpose.” ●

### FamilyLife® // Global

By Rachel Streich

— 35 —

Countries the radio program *FamilyLife Today* reaches each day

— 4 —

Languages the show is currently aired in (English, plus translations into Mandarin, Spanish and Russian)

— 25 —

Minutes in each program, during which hosts Dennis Rainey and Bob Lepine offer listeners encouragement and biblical insight for their marriages and families

— 1,239 —

Radio outlets in the U.S. that broadcast *FamilyLife Today*

— 24 —

Years the show has been on the air, since 1992. Today, its reach continues to broaden with streaming on the Internet.



# When Healing Doesn't Happen

Mallory Kimball doesn't remember much about the day she ran in front of a car. ¶ She and her friend Kristyn, both juniors at the University of New Hampshire, were walking along Main Street when Mallory suddenly stopped. She stared at the ground. Mallory didn't know where she was. Without warning, she darted into the street. ¶ Kristyn grabbed her by the arm of her raincoat, pulling her back to the sidewalk before a car flew past.



Mallory had been experiencing regular blackouts, caused by overreactions in her brain, or seizures. But this particular seizure terrified her. She knew she was a danger to herself and others. Over the next 24 hours, she pleaded with God for another way, but finally she made the heart-wrenching decision to leave college and give up her dream of becoming a nurse.

Two weeks later, Mallory's doctor explained that her brain was "turning to mush". Lyme disease and five parasites were attacking her body. After years of seizures, memory loss, and physical and mental exhaustion, she felt some relief having a name for her symptoms. But now she faced the possibility of never being healed.

Mallory's physical suffering hasn't ended, but she is growing a hope that doesn't fail.

Though she's made progress since her diagnosis, Mallory continues to experience debilitating seizures and dangerous blackouts. She isn't allowed to drive, making it hard to be independent. She struggles with confinement and feeling trapped.

"It has been hard seeing all my friends move on with life, becoming successful, and growing in friendship with each other," Mallory says. "Watching from the sidelines, unable to be a part of it, is one of the hardest and most lonely parts of this trial."

She also deals with memory loss. "Even though I know it's not my fault, it's still embarrassing and I feel ashamed when I introduce myself to people three or four times before remembering them."

Every day is a battle to get out of bed and choose to have joy. There are days when she experiences deep sadness over her condition. But she talks to God about it. "Lord, You've given me this burden to bear, but I'm just tired of bearing it," she prays. "I've seen you use it, but when will it end?"

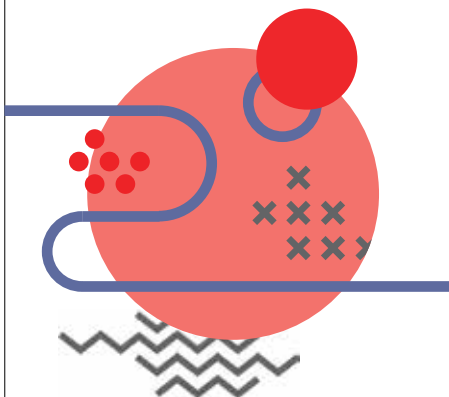
She cries out to God, telling Him about her heartbreak in giving up nursing. She's wept, expressed her

confusion; and in her vulnerability, God brings her peace and hope.

She also finds her hope in salvation, rather than in healing.

"It's a constant mental surrender to God," she says. "That means giving control, but it also means giving Him every hope and dream I've ever had."

People frequently ask Mallory how she's doing, and this creates opportunities to talk about the gospel and her joy in Jesus.



“

## WATCHING FROM THE SIDELINES, UNABLE TO BE A PART OF IT, IS ONE OF THE HARDEST AND MOST LONELY PARTS OF THIS TRIAL.

— MALLORY KIMBALL

”

"I'm actually getting worse. I experience brain damage and that's really hard every single day," she tells people. "I have hopes and dreams, but I'm just feeling myself deteriorate. And at the same time, I can say what has been really foundational in my daily battle for joy is that I get to experience God. I don't fear the future and I don't fear death. And that's because I have the eternal promise of Christ."

Because she has more free time, she has begun mentoring high school girls and investing time in her younger siblings. God has used this to show her that she has other passions beyond nursing: "God just brought out this passion for ministry that I never thought I would have."

Mallory keeps communicating with God, even in her frustration, confusion and sadness. Because of her vulnerability in prayer, God has room to speak gently to her, reminding her that He is always present and that He will sustain her. She has hope in her future restoration, even if that means her healing comes only in heaven. ●



# 5 Years Later

*Spiritual interest remains strong in Japan long after the tsunami.*



**IN MARCH 2011**, Japan suffered its worst natural disaster in recent history—a sickening tsunami with waves of up to 133 feet. The city of Ishinomaki lay in its path.

When Cho Young-Sang, a pastor and a staff member with Campus Crusade for Christ (as Cru is known in South Korea), heard about the natural disaster, he moved his family to Ishinomaki and got to work, visiting victims, bringing aid and praying. “I shared their agony and tragedy. Their sad situation became my ministry contact point every day,” he says.

John Whitehouse, a staff member with JESUS Film®, brought a team of people to help Pastor Cho’s ministry in Ishinomaki. In 2014, 200,000 displaced people were still living in temporary government housing. John says there’s bitterness there, with people feeling abandoned. “They were so touched to see the rest of the world come in, especially the Western world,” says John. “Many of them opened up because of that.”

Cho gathered funds to open a Japanese tea house that doubled as a disaster relief center. The tea house served as a base where people in the area came, and from which volunteers went out to offer any sort of help they could. Cho (small photo, in the tea house) laughs, saying he counted 260 different services they offer, from rebuilding

houses to counseling.

Today, the tea house is still going strong. Not only does the recovery and rebuilding effort continue through the tea house, but people gather there for church.

As Christians have learned about Cho’s tea house, it’s become a model for other churches in the city. Six new churches have been built in Ishinomaki, and 11 new house churches started.

At the tea house, Cho welcomes all, eating together to create family: “Many people are seeking the new way after the tsunami. They are so tired and so open now. We are singing together, reading the Bible together, naturally.” ●



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# A Digital Barn Raising

*How do you solve the world's problems with a smartphone and laptop?*

**A**ton Bridges worked all night, and his wife, Anita, grabbed only one hour of sleep under a desk. They've been coding almost constantly to build a map-based website they're calling Tabernacle.

Twenty-four hours ago, it was just an idea in Aton's head when they arrived at the Global Hackathon in Atlanta. Yet as they partner with a 25-year-old named Webb Smith and graphic designer Chris Jefferson, it's beginning to take shape.

At the same time, 800 coders are gathered in Atlanta and 12 other cities around the world to accomplish similar projects.

Nick Skytland, who works for NASA, regularly organizes hackathons and describes them as the digital equivalent of an Amish barn raising. A community of people with various skills gathers to build solutions, answer questions and meet real needs.

At 11 a.m., Aton (right, at left) and his team join a webcast with all 13 Global Hackathon locations. Throughout the weekend they have been talking to one another online, sharing ideas and solving each other's problems. Each city prays for the other 12.

"What we want to build is like a social network for churches to share resources so their entire neighborhoods are uplifted," Aton says as he explains

Tabernacle. Other ideas in Atlanta were from a 12-year-old boy who built a gaming website to educate kids about Christianity, a father and son building a prayer request website after a family member was diagnosed with lymphoma, and a website encouraging churches to let local chefs use their kitchen space.

These Christian coders are a new breed of missionaries. They don't claim to be the answer to the world's worst problems, but they're finding one solution at a time. Apps and websites tackling the refugee

crisis, homelessness, marital fidelity, spiritual maturity, human trafficking, government corruption, you name it—Christian coders can build something for it.

And something else happened during the Global Hackathon—a sense of community began to form.

Ali Llewellyn, who co-ordinated the event, says, "We know where to find Christians. We also know where to find technologists. What's been harder is to bring together the Christian technologists." Ali credits the Indigitous movement, energized in part by Cru, with creating a space where these specialists are finding one another and beginning to form a movement of their own.

When Nehemiah called the people of God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he knew that the community would be powerfully bound together by the experience of completing the project. Today, the building blocks might look different than they did in Nehemiah's day, but the power of a community with a cause remains the same. ●

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## Legends of the Hardwood

By Rich Atkinson

### “BEST PRESENTATION

of the gospel I’ve ever heard,” an attendee wrote on a comment card after the Legends of the Hardwood Breakfast last year.

Each year during the college basketball Final Four weekend, the breakfast for more than 1,000 people highlights faith and sports, and presents the Coach John Wooden “Keys to Life” Award (below).

“The award goes to a current or former player from the collegiate or professional levels who best exemplifies outstanding character and leadership in the home, on the court and in the community,” says Megan Soderberg, who directs the event for Athletes in Action Basketball, a branch of Cru’s sports ministry.

Last year it was presented to Danny Miles, head basketball coach at Oregon Tech.

This year’s event will be in Houston on April 2. ●



LINDSAY GILMORE

## When Hope Is Strange (and So Is Milk)



Sometimes hope comes in something as simple as a glass of milk.

To the children living in extreme poverty in the Durban Backlands of Georgetown, Guyana, both tasted foreign at first.

When Allison Baptiste was invited to lead a S.A.Y. Yes! Center for Youth Development® after-school program, an extension of Cru’s inner-city ministry, the 25 children between ages 6 and 16 who gathered could barely read.

Most had been abused in various ways, were only having one meal a day, and were living in dire conditions and with no fathers present.

Three times a week, Allison and a small team of volunteers, many rushing straight from a full day of work, welcomed the children to a room in a public school for a snack and some personal attention.

“When we first tried giving them milk, they didn’t like it because they’d never had it at home,” remembers Allison. Over time, they came to enjoy it.

Small crafts give the children a taste of accomplishment, tutoring gives them a taste of success, and Bible lessons about Jesus give them a taste of worth.

“If lives are really changed, it will spill over into the community,” she says. “I believe God will do it, but it will be in the time to come. Sometimes it takes a lifetime of work in these children’s lives.” ●

“  
**SOMETIMES  
IT TAKES A  
LIFETIME  
OF WORK.**

— ALLISON BAPTISTE



COURTESY AMELIA SIMONS



# Pass or Fail

My time as a journalism student reached its climax. My last grade was posted. I scrolled through the list of grades on my computer screen until I reached what I was looking for.

## ZERO.

This small number felt brutal. It meant failure. What had I done to deserve a 0?

After realizing that I had pressed pause instead of record on all my video footage, I had redone the news story that comprised my final project. I spent hours in the dreary computer lab editing scenes. I completed the project right before the deadline. Unfortunately, I made a typo dating the video event incorrectly as December 24 when it should have been December 14. So I earned the standard 0 for a fact error.

Over the course of three and a half years in college, I had never made the basic mistake of incorrectly writing the date of a news event. Although it was just one wrong number, this fundamental error caused me to question whether or not I was a good writer. I didn't even

want to walk across the stage to receive my diploma. I felt like my failure had disqualified me.

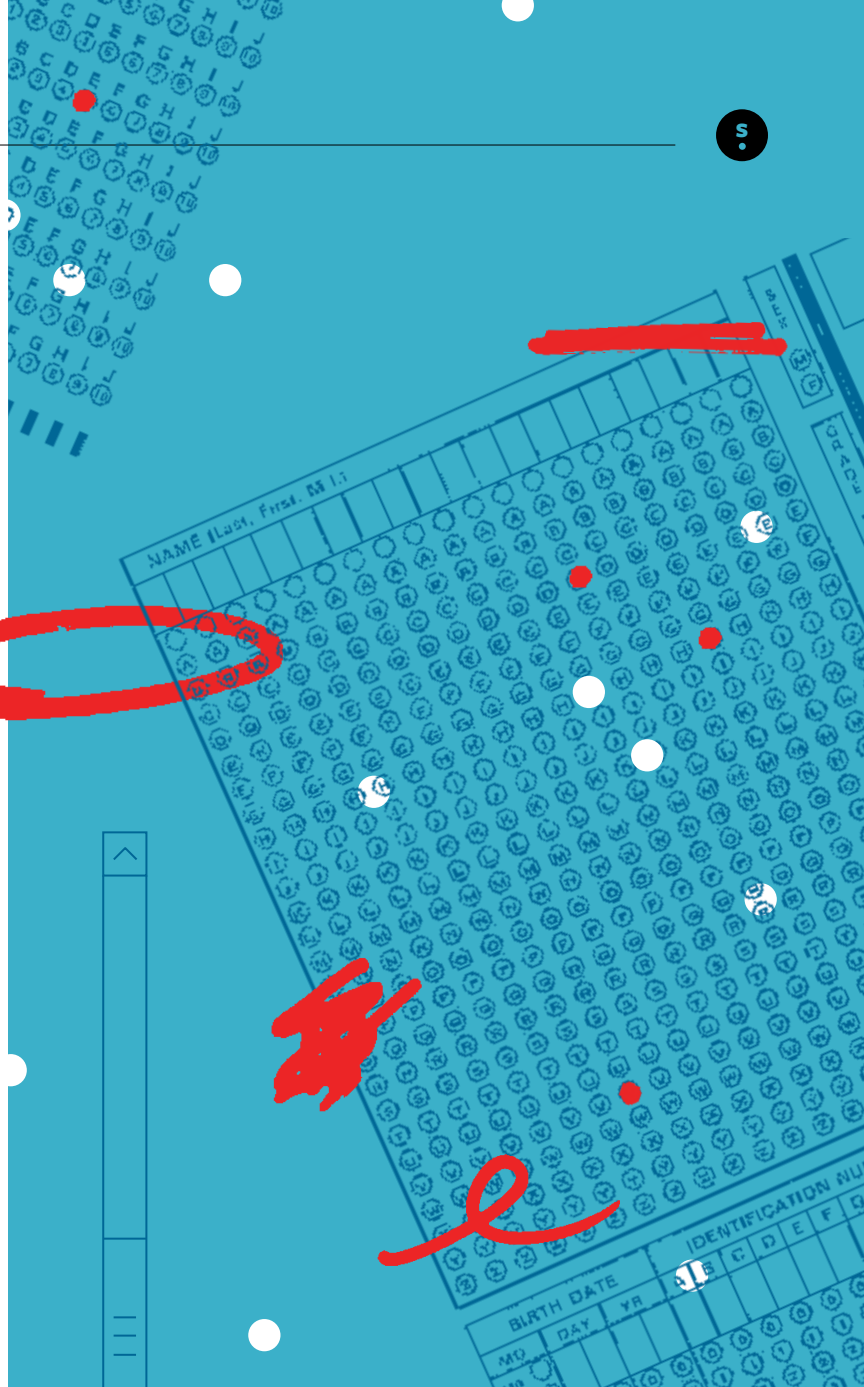
Remembering this painful disappointment now reminds me how counterintuitive it is that God doesn't give us a 0 when we mess up. He forgives every mistake we make, big or small.

In Psalm 73:26, Asaph declares, "My flesh and heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

No one likes failure. But some of us struggle to ever get past our failures. We allow them to cast shadows over the truth of who we are and where we're at in life. This failed assignment didn't stop me from graduating, just as God's love for me doesn't end when I miss the mark.

The Lord gives me hope and encouragement to move beyond failure. I hold onto the truth that what we receive from Him is not what our performance deserves. ●

ASHLEY WALTON





GUY GERRARD



*Remembering  
Cru's co-founder*

# Vonette Bright

BY  
JUDY  
DOUGLASS

## HER WAY WAS PAVED EARLY.

Vonette Zachary's mother was certain Vonette was destined to lead. In Vonette's own words, "I was a typical first-born, independent

and bossy." Her mother prepared her with social graces and hospitality secrets. Vonette had to practice her speaking pieces for church to learn voice projection. Surely she would be speaking someday.

Vonette was sure she was to teach. After her home economics degree from Texas Women's University and marriage to Bill Bright, she began teaching in a Los Angeles school, focusing on helping girls to become young ladies. She then directed her master's thesis to the same emphasis for boys: "You, the High School Man."

Vonette's marriage to Bill almost didn't happen when she realized she couldn't rescue him from his fanaticism for Christ. A conversation with Henrietta Mears, Bill's mentor, introduced her to a personal relationship with Jesus, and she married Bill with joy.

God began bringing it all together.

She determined to partner with Bill in leading the new ministry, Campus Crusade for Christ (now Cru). She shared her faith and disciplined young women. As the staff grew, her emphasis changed to helping staff members be good representatives of the Lord and the ministry. Her classroom and thesis content became

training manuals for the young men and women joining the mission.

Vonette became a model for our staff women—always seeking to be in God's "spot marked X" for her, a concept learned from Henrietta Mears. That spot became prayer in the 1970s. She felt that women could make a great impact on the world, especially through prayer.

Our co-founder called other women leaders together to pray and to mobilize prayer. She formed the Great Commission Prayer Crusade and initiated training materials to teach people how to pray specifically in the Spirit. Eventually she paved the

way for the whole nation to pray together every first Thursday in May as she forged a team to pass a Congressional bill declaring an official National Day of Prayer.

Seeing how God was using women to make an impact on the world, Vonette became an articulate spokeswoman for her staff sisters. I remember the session at our summer staff conference when she declared our mission would only succeed if we equipped and empowered our female staff members to make greater contributions to all the ministry was doing toward fulfilling the Great Commission.

She paved the way for many women on our staff who now hold leadership positions and thousands who are making greater contributions than ever before.

And she paved the way for me.



GREG SCHNEIDER

*Bill and Vonette Bright (above, at left) and the board of directors gather at Arrowhead Springs, California, in 1989. Vonette (left, second from left) leads a Bible study at UCLA.*

Because I worked directly with Bill Bright for my first 14 years as a staff member, I knew Vonette well. I took her children to piano practice. She often asked me to help with her entertaining—even though I frequently spilled tea or punch.

When Steve and I got married, we moved to Arrowhead Springs and became neighbors to Bill and Vonette—what a privilege! Once I invited her to lunch, but didn't have enough to pay, so she treated me instead. She was always gracious, hospitable and helpful.

Vonette was a proper and fairly formal person, and I think my casualness frustrated her. She gave me input on dressing for various occasions—sometimes that worked out, sometimes not. She taught me so much.

Vonette has been a treasure in my life—a friend, a mentor, a social educator, a spiritual model. She has opened windows and doors for me in ministry, paving the way for far greater opportunity and fruitfulness than I could ever imagine. ●



CRU PHOTO ARCHIVES



**1926**

Vonette Zachary is born on July 2 in Coweta, Oklahoma.



**1947**

Henrietta Mears leads Vonette to place her trust in Christ.



**1948**

Vonette graduates from Texas Women's University with a degree in home economics.



**1948**

Vonette marries Bill Bright in Coweta on Dec. 30.



**1951**

Vonette and Bill sign a contract surrendering their lives to God on June 1.



**1951**

Vonette co-founds Cru (then Campus Crusade for Christ) at UCLA. She leads 50 women to faith the first year.



**1955**

Their first son, Zachary, is born on July 11.



# Across the Generations and Around the World

Cru staff members remember Vonette Bright (with the year and place they joined).

## 1 Marcy Klencck

1959 / Minneapolis, Minnesota

Vonette's walk with the Lord was beautiful. She was a mentor without even knowing it. She was kind and sensitive to how she treated people. She became softer, falling in love with Jesus and wanting her life to count for Him. I wanted to be like that.

## 2 Nan McCullough

1968 / Arrowhead Springs, California

My husband, Sam, and I felt like Bill and Vonette were our spiritual father and mother. They showed us how to do ministry together as a couple. She gave me confidence. After watching her ministry, I thought I could do it too. I stepped out boldly because of her example.

## 3 Thelly Thomas

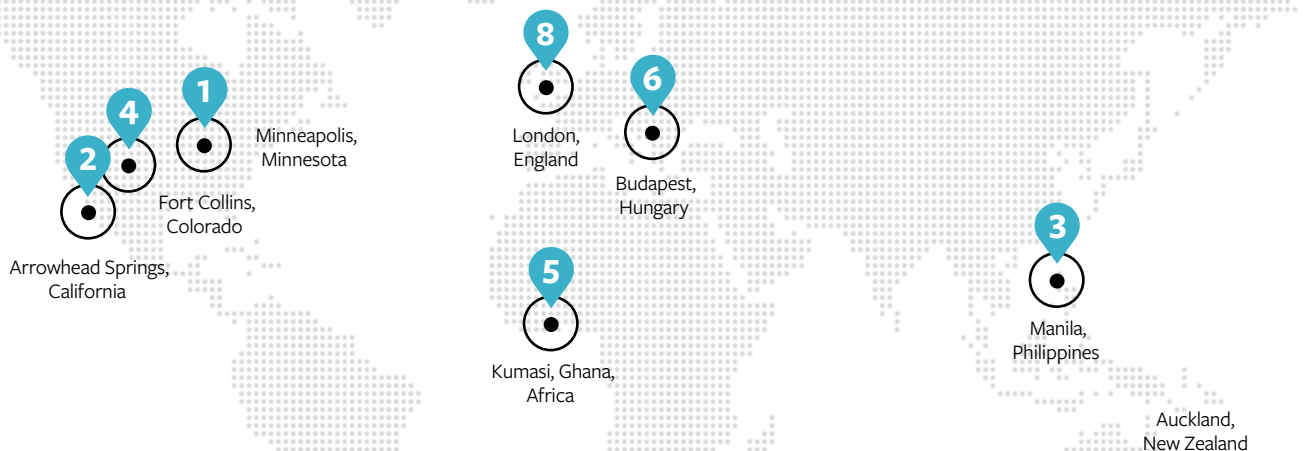
1968 / Manila, Philippines

She launched the Great Commission Prayer Crusade. It's an example of how she thought prayer was important. In the early days, she had a notebook or a book that encouraged us to pray for different areas and different people in our lives. That was helpful as far as how you focus your prayers.

## 4 Kathy Harl

1977 / Fort Collins, Colorado

I first heard Vonette say she didn't think you should retire from ministry. It gave me some things to think about. I admire how after Bill's death, she didn't retire. She kept on writing books and having a ministry with women.



## 5 Elizabeth Adadevoh

1981 / Kumasi, Ghana, Africa

Vonette was a partner with Bill in evangelism and discipleship, and ministry in the lives of leaders. She portrayed herself as a leader. She was not dragged into this. She was doing something she loved. She stood out as a good role model to me.

## 6 Bill Babione

1991 / Budapest, Hungary

In 2012, we had the 20-year anniversary of the Albanian ministry. We didn't think Vonette would come, but she was there. She was full of passion and interest in what God had done in Albania. She told our staff she had prayed for Albania for years before the fall of Communism. That was really significant to them.

## 7 Nicki Osbaldiston

1994 / Auckland, New Zealand

As the wife of a leader, Vonette continues to inspire me with her devotion to her Lord, her husband and her service to others, particularly the lost. Time spent with Mrs Bright has always been so rich as she shares her heart, inner beauty and wit. And oh, the stories she can tell!

## 8 Mark Daniel

2003 / London, England

Vonette was traveling in Europe a few years back, and she stayed with us whilst she was in the UK. We were apprehensive—it was a bit like having the Queen come to stay. We needn't have been concerned. Vonette was a delight to have in our home. What a special lady she is. God has used her enormously—what a legacy she leaves!



**1958**

Their second son, Bradley, is born on March 8.



**1972**

Vonette founds the Great Commission Prayer Crusade.



**1988**

Vonette helps draft legislation that leads to Congress unanimously approving a National Day of Prayer.



**1993**

Vonette launches the *Women Today* radio broadcast.



**2003**

Bill Bright dies on July 19 at age 81.



**2012**

Vonette publishes *A Passion for Prayer*.



**2015**

Vonette Bright dies on December 23 at age 89.



Vonette spoke about prayer often, inviting others to engage with God (left). She joined the National Day of Prayer signing ceremony (below, in red).

CRU PHOTO ARCHIVES

# National Day of Prayer

BY  
PHILIP  
LONG



**B**eside a bonfire, a young woman named Vonette Bright picked up a stick representing her request to God. When she laid it on the fire, she asked that God would make her a woman of prayer.

Years later, Vonette chaired the National Prayer Committee that petitioned Congress to set a specific day for the National Day of Prayer.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Vonette organized prayer movements around the country alongside Billy Graham, other ministry leaders and her husband, Bill Bright.

While the National Day of Prayer

already existed, it had yet to become law that it be observed on the same day each year. Vonette learned that President Dwight D. Eisenhower doubted Americans would mark the day faithfully until this happened. Spurred on by this thought, Vonette said, “This became my goal.”

President Ronald Reagan, who visited with the Brights when he was governor of California, was a supporter of the bill. He told Vonette that if they could get the bill through Congress, he would sign it.

Chairing the National Prayer Committee, Vonette convened 72 leaders of prayer movements nationwide, and enlisted the help of her son Brad, who majored in political science. After much

prayer and many phone calls, both houses of Congress passed the bill unanimously.

President Reagan signed the bill into law on May 8, 1988, declaring the National Day of Prayer would be the first Thursday in May.

Shirley Dobson has chaired the National Prayer Committee since 1991. The annual event has exploded under her leadership, with an estimated 40 million participants. Shirley credits Vonette for laying the groundwork.

“It’s my heart’s desire,” Vonette said, “that what’s gone on before will be a platform on which greater things will be built, to bring about a spiritual awakening in this country.” ●



# The Final Word

Quotes from  
Vonette Bright

## PRAYER

“Prayer is the greatest privilege and most revolutionary power available to the Christian, and God’s Word promises us its effectiveness. Campus Crusade was born in prayer, and prayer is still our lifeline. History records the impact of what prayer has accomplished.”

## OBEDIENCE

“Jesus requires your total and prompt obedience to what He asks. Delayed obedience is really disobedience. God wants us to follow all His commands—not just those we think will suit our interest. Don’t hold back—obey God completely.”

## EVANGELISM

“Quite frankly, I would never tell another person about Christ if I waited until I felt like it. We tell others about God because of the wonderful model we have in Jesus Christ—and because He commands us to tell others about Him. Don’t wait for your emotions to give you permission—that may never happen. Instead, be obedient.”

Vonette and Bill celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary (bottom). Vonette and Mary Graham record a Women Today radio program (right).



CRU PHOTO ARCHIVES

## MARRIAGE

“What makes a marriage work? First, consciously commit yourselves to the Lord and to each other. God established marriage as a partnership. Second, establish God-centered priorities. A vital spiritual life must be your main focus. Third, develop ‘other-centeredness.’ Be self-less in a self-ish world. Fourth, build a godly home for your family. God brings order out of chaos when you remain faithful to Him—and your spouse.”

**We believe Vonette would have wanted the Lord to have the final word. One of her favorite verses of Scripture was Matthew 6:33.**

*“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.” (New Living Translation) ●*



WORLDWIDE CHALLENGE ARCHIVES





# Who

*A Croatian family*

# Is

*practices hospitality*

# My

*at their apartment and their country's border.*

# Neighbor?

BY EMILIE VINSON



PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
TED WILCOX







*Petra Malović (holding bag, opposite page), with two of her daughters, donates clothes for refugees passing through Croatia (bottom, left). A woman bikes through downtown Zagreb (opposite page, bottom left), near the well-known St. Mark's Church (opposite page, bottom right). The Malović family walks past a Croatian castle (previous pages).*

## Petra Malović is at her daughters' elementary school when she hears the news. The refugees will arrive in Croatia within a matter of days—thousands of them—traveling with only what they can carry.



They flee conflict in the Middle East, moving north through Europe. Most enter Croatia three hours east of the capital city, Zagreb, then take buses to the northern border. There they wait to enter Slovenia.

Petra and her husband, Hrvoje, decide to drive to the nearest border with their three daughters, ages 11, 9 and 6. Perhaps they can help.

They stop at church on the way, loading their trunk with red boxes of food and water, donations for the refugees. There are also raincoats and packs of striped children's socks. Their daughters, Mia, Dora and Emili, carry some of their own stuffed animals to give to children they meet.

As staff members with Fokus (as Cru is known in Croatia), Petra and Hrvoje's job is to reach students with God's love. But beyond that, they've developed a lifestyle of loving their neighbors—whether neighbors are refugees at a nearby border, or the woman in the apartment below.

"That's my life motto," Petra explains. "I'm available. God will bring me the ones

that He needs. I just need to be out there with my eyes open."

One afternoon, Petra's phone rang. It was her neighbor Kristina.

"I'm making a cake and I need six eggs," Kristina said. "Do you have six eggs?"

"I do," Petra said, inviting her friend to come pick them up.

So Kristina walked from her second-floor apartment up to Petra's third-floor apartment.

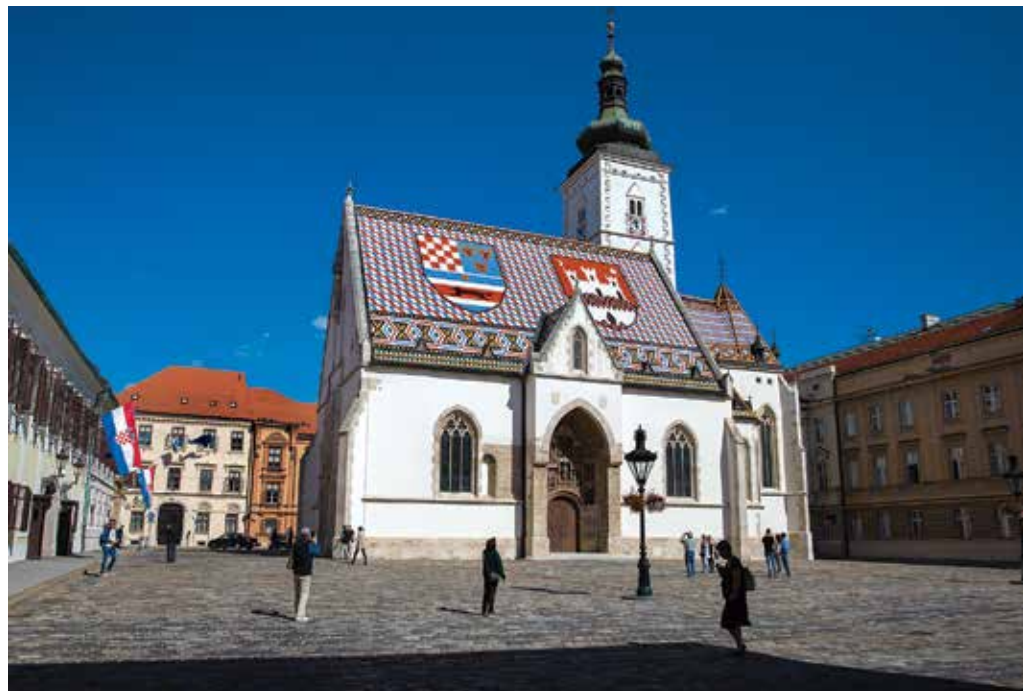
"I'm going to buy you eggs," Kristina promised when she arrived at the door.

"If you buy me eggs, we are no longer friends," Petra said, her stern response betrayed by her spunky grin. "I am giving you eggs. And when I need eggs or something else, I will come down, and I will get it."

Petra prayed over her family's apartment building for years, asking God to bring her people to whom she could show His love.

"I was walking all around the neighborhood, desperately trying to find people













who I could meet,” she says. “I would search different parks. I prayed, ‘Lord, I know there are people here who need You, who are searching for You. Please lead me to them. I cannot find them.’”

She was looking for people to live alongside. But developing close relationships can be difficult. “People go out to movies,” Petra explains. “But they don’t have a community in their home, discussing their values and things like that.”

Her love for people began early. As a child she remembers starting conversations with strangers while she waited to be picked up from music school. Now this trait helps her meet new people to share life with.

“I have this desire to meet them,” Petra says about her neighbors. “In my mind, the more doors there are, the more people there are, the more I love it. There is something in me that just loves close communities. In my head, it’s like a picture of heaven, where everybody will be in community, being there for each other.”

Petra’s daughters attend school within walking distance of their home. When her daughter Mia’s first-grade class needed a parent representative, Petra volunteered. *Perhaps it will be a good way to meet other families in our neighborhood*, she thought.

That Christmas, she invited 10 of Mia’s classmates to her home to make gingerbread houses. Once decorated, they were sold at the school’s annual Christmas fair. The money raised helped children in the school who came from poor families.

The following year, she was asked by the teacher to help the 30 children in Mia’s class make gingerbread houses. A year later, teachers asked if she would assist three classes with the project. So she held three workshops, inviting other parents to her home to teach them how to bake gingerbread houses.

And then she got a call.

The school had a parent council, and its president was leaving. Several parents would be suggested as candidates, and

would Petra allow the school to suggest her as one?

“I said sure,” Petra says, “I knew that all these parents in the parent council needed to vote for the person to become president. I thought, *There’s no way somebody would pick me.*”

After the first round of voting, there were two candidates left—one of them was Petra. As another round of voting took place, she prayed, “Lord, I don’t know what You’re doing. But if You want me in this position, then You put me there.”

When the second round of votes were counted, Petra won by five votes. She called her husband that night and said, “I think I’m in way over my head.”

She began working alongside Marko, the professor of religious education at the school,



*Petra walks her daughter Dora to school (opposite page). After school, Petra meets with other parent volunteers (opposite page, bottom right). One evening, a small group she leads gathers in her living room (opposite page, bottom left and above).*









“

**I'm  
available.  
God will  
bring me  
the ones  
that He  
needs.  
I just need  
to be out  
there with  
my eyes  
open.**

”

— PETRA MALOVIĆ



*A woman in traditional Croatian clothes in Zagreb's Old City (above). Petra, her husband, Hrvoje, and their daughters play in a park (opposite page, bottom). The sun sets over Zagreb rooftops (opposite page, top). Refugees entered Croatia from Serbia on their way to a transit camp (previous pages).*

on a project called Mary's Meals. Their goal was to raise 60,000 kunas (roughly \$10,000) for a school kitchen in Africa.

"During the project, the whole school united," Marko says. The story made national news. It was the only school in the country to ever raise that amount of money without government help.

And the project opened doors for Petra. It allowed her to work alongside other parents who lived in her neighborhood and build relationships with them.

Now, besides her work in the school, she leads two small groups for women. She uses a curriculum called *Soaring*, developed by Cru. *Soaring* is an evangelistic, life-coaching course that helps women identify and celebrate their uniqueness. They develop deep community with each other and consider God as their life foundation.

Two women from the school, along with several neighbors, are part of the groups.

One of the neighbors is Martina, who lives in building number 19, down the street from Petra and Hrvoje. She and

Petra met while walking their dogs.

"She was very friendly," Petra says, remembering how they would often talk as they walked. Martina was eager to talk about life but hesitant to discuss faith, telling Petra she was investigating energy-related spirituality.

"And then sometime in December or January, I did not see her for a very long time," Petra says. So she called, and learned that Martina had injured her back.

As she recovered, Petra visited and loaned her some books about God. This time, as Petra talked about her work with Fokus, things were different. "She started reading the Bible," Petra remembers. "I shared the gospel, and about God—how God is there and present."

Petra and Hrvoje invited Martina to celebrate Easter with them. And then Christmas. She'd come over for lunch and invite the Malović family to her home.

"We became much more than friends," Petra says. "Now she grows by herself. She's into God's Word, praying to Him, and trusting."

And when Petra's washing machine broke in the middle of a hectic week, Martina took half of Petra's laundry home and washed, dried and folded it.

"This is the thing I always dreamed of," Petra says. "Not to have a broken washing machine, but that I would be part of the community in such a way that we could rely on each other."

Still, living in a community brings its challenges. For Petra, one of those is walking alongside others who aren't committed to moving forward. "I love practical helping," she explains. "I wouldn't be good at listening for five years about how you are depressed. There's something in me that wants to move things. Even if you are in the most despair, there are certain things you can do to move forward. It's like, chop, chop. Let's make a plan." But others aren't always on her timetable.

Yesterday, loving her neighbors looked like inviting women into her home to eat Nutella pie, talk about life and how they see God working. Today it looks like delivering supplies to refugees who landed 15 minutes from her family's doorstep.

When the family arrives at the border,

there is confusion. Long lines of vehicles wait to cross into Slovenia. Police direct cars to move along, while refugees wait in groups on the side of the road.

There are tents for these things, the volunteers say, when Petra and Hrvoje arrive with food and water. This one for food. That one for water. That brown one for clothing.

As a family, they move from tent to tent, handing out the things they've brought. Like the families in their building or the parents at school, these are their neighbors. ●

Contact the writer at [emilie.vinson@cru.org](mailto:emilie.vinson@cru.org).







Petra and her family take God's call to love their neighbors seriously. Who in your life is God asking you to consider as your neighbor? What steps can you take to show them His love?









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**O V E R W H E L M E D**

**BY EMILIE VINSON**

**ILLUSTRATION BY MATT CHASE**

*Navigating  
the tension  
between caring  
too much and  
not caring at all*

**T**he police called her “The Banana Lady.” I know her as Christine.

We met in Opatovac, Croatia, at a refugee transit camp during a week when the European refugee crisis was making global news. We stood in a field littered with tents, empty water bottles and dirty blankets dropped by refugees as they moved on.

Christine, a 48-year-old mother of two from Switzerland, had been working at the border for seven days when I met her. Each morning, she bought 200 to 300 kilos (between 450 and 650 pounds) of bananas and



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delivered them to the refugee compound, where thousands waited to continue north by bus.

If there was time to sleep, which wasn't often, Christine slept in the backseat of the black truck she arrived in. There were no showers in the camp, so she hadn't showered since she arrived.

I don't know if we share the same faith, but I wish my heart had responded to the refugee crisis the way hers did.

When Christine heard about the refugees' slow trek through Europe, she drove 12 hours through two countries to go help. This issue was stumping politicians, causing friction at borders and changing the face of Europe, but she made it a personal one.

"I know they appreciate what you do," I told her as we talked.

"Well, they don't know me," she said, "but they are my refugees."

*They are my refugees.* I spent a solid week chewing on that sentence.

#### **THE DAY I STOPPED SCROLLING**

I first heard about the refugee crisis via Facebook, when a friend's status update included a picture of Aylan, the little Syrian boy who washed up dead on a beach in Turkey. Three years old.

And I won't lie to you. I just kept scrolling.

It was too much. I had a nephew the same age. I was already having a rough week. Someone said it was the largest displacement of people since World War II. Even if I chose to let my emotions engage, what could I possibly do about that?

That one picture surfaced in my newsfeed numerous times. I scrolled and scrolled, actively ignoring news articles, pretending everything was fine. Ignorance is bliss.

My heart wasn't moved until I found myself in a refugee transit camp in Croatia. I stood on concrete with my notebook and pen, yards away from the buses arriving, filled with refugees.

Scrolling was no longer an option.

I couldn't hide from the father holding his sleeping son on one shoulder and

a duffel bag with all their belongings on the other. I couldn't close my ears to the mother, screaming for her children to follow her so they wouldn't be separated.

#### **THE HARD PART ABOUT BEING HUMAN**

This was a tragedy I couldn't avoid, but tragic things happen every day. Shooters devastate school campuses, families die in head-on highway collisions, children are trafficked for sex. Our world is a broken place in desperate need of the hope Jesus offers.

And yet we are human. There is only so much pain our hearts can take. There are only so many issues we can respond to before feeling overwhelmed. The brokenness in the world can push us to despair, or to the opposite extreme, when we choose to disengage and remain ignorant of what happens outside of our immediate environment.

How do we acknowledge our limits, while still following Jesus' call to step into others' pain and offer hope? How do we care for the hungry, the weary, the broken, while still caring for ourselves?

#### **THE TENSION WE LIVE WITH**

Maybe you're like Christine, and it's easy for you to engage—to step into the mess, willing to give however God leads you. Or maybe you respond the way I did—with a desire to escape avoidable pain.

There will always be tension between caring too much and not enough. But

**How do we care for the hungry, the weary, the broken, while still caring for ourselves?**



let's consider a few ways to live in this tension, asking God how we can respond.

### **THE CHOICE WE HAVE**

It's possible to experience "compassion fatigue" when we think about all the difficult things that happen in the world and vie for our attention. There's only so much we can care about at once—only so much we can do.

While this response appears to insulate us from pain, it also robs us of opportunities to draw close to God through prayer over things like the refugees' situation. We miss out on the joy we could receive helping others.

What does choosing to live in this tension look like for you? Perhaps it means not scrolling past a painful news story online. Perhaps it means choosing to engage in that pain through prayer.

### **THE CALLING WE'VE BEEN GIVEN**

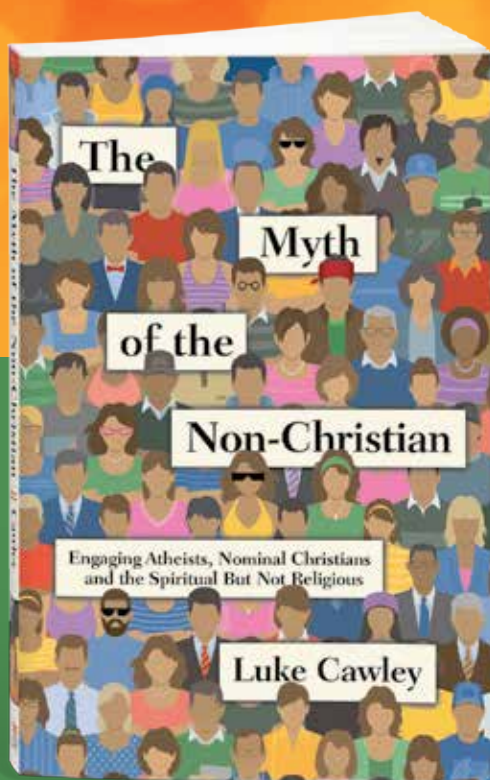
Rather than get hung up on how much you can't fix, consider some actions you *can* take. Here are some suggestions:

- ▶ Check the news daily or weekly. Pray specifically over the stories that move your heart.
- ▶ Ask God today to show you one or two issues He is asking you to own. Follow through on the direction He gives you.
- ▶ What is your church responding to, locally and globally? Join in.
- ▶ Look into ministries in your area and get involved on a local level.

In Matthew 25:40, Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." May this be our motivation as we seek to be His hands and feet in the world. ●

**Perhaps it means choosing to engage in that pain through prayer.**

Contact the writer at [emilie.vinson@cru.org](mailto:emilie.vinson@cru.org).



# EVANGELISM IS NOT ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL.

There's no such thing as a non-Christian. Evangelism trainer Luke Cawley shows how we can contextualize the gospel in different ways to connect with three key demographics: the spiritual but not religious, committed atheists and nominal Christians. Filled with real-life stories of changed lives, this book is a practical and hopeful resource for helping people encounter God.

*"I've been equipped and inspired anew by this book to better understand and connect with the many different kinds of people who don't yet follow Jesus. Ditch the one-size-fits-all approach to being a witness; let this book help you do the things that may actually meet our friends' felt spiritual needs."*

**JAMES CHOUNG**  
national director of evangelism,  
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA









**S H E L T E R**

**F R O M**

**the**

**S T O R M**

**A Houston mentor helps a student discover true security.**

**BY RACHEL FERCHAK**

**PHOTOGRAPHS BY GUY GERRARD**

---

Tateanna Washington thought she heard firecrackers.

*Pop!*

*Pop, pop!*

She looked up to see smoke rising. A black car sped away.

“I just stood there,” Tateanna says, frozen in shock and fear. She was waiting for the bus to take her home after her first day as a senior at Benjamin O. Davis High School in Houston, Texas.

“I started crying,” Tateanna remembers. “My friend had to hold me.”

*continued on page 39*





*Marcheta Jones prays with coach Traneisha Allen at Benjamin O. Davis High School in Houston (opposite page, left). Davis senior Tateanna Washington (opposite page, right) is one of the girls Marcheta mentors. Houston (opposite page, bottom) is the U.S.'s fourth-largest city.*

*continued from page 37*

She had just witnessed a drive-by shooting.

This would have been upsetting enough, but for Tateanna it was one more traumatic event that threatened to topple her. Growing up in inner-city New Orleans, she experienced violence. At age 5, she endured sexual abuse from family members. At age 8, the floodwaters of Hurricane Katrina broke into her home, trapping her family on the second floor for a week. She watched as lifeless bodies floated by. And on that day outside her high school, those memories flashed in her mind.

When the shock of the shooting wore off slightly, she called her mom and sister to take her home. But being at home didn't help. She needed someone to sit with her, someone to listen to her. She needed Marcheta.

Within minutes Tateanna's friend and mentor, Marcheta Jones, arrived at her door.

"If she wouldn't have been there," says Tateanna, "I think it really would've been a breakdown moment for me."

Marcheta (pronounced mar-KEE-ta), a staff member with Cru's high school outreach in Houston, took her to Denny's and let her talk and think. Marcheta didn't push her to talk about the shooting, allowing her to change the subject and get her mind off the trauma.

By the time Marcheta drove her home, Tateanna calmed down.

The women first met during Tateanna's junior year at an after-school Cru meeting,

where students from different spiritual backgrounds meet weekly to discuss the gospel. Marcheta oversees the ministry at Davis, where she hopes that all 4,500 students—many of whom deal with neglect, abuse, poverty and violence—will have the opportunity to know Jesus.

"I want them to know there's a Father who cares and loves them enough to die for them," Marcheta says. She hopes that by changing the lives of teenagers through the gospel, whole families can change.

When Marcheta talked to Tateanna about mentoring her, Marcheta asked, "What do you want to expect from me?"

"I just want you to care," Tateanna said, tears in her eyes. "I just need somebody to care."

Unlike anyone else in Tateanna's life, Marcheta has been consistent. "I had to show that I wasn't going to leave her, that I cared for her," Marcheta says.

That opportunity arrived one week after becoming her mentor. Marcheta hadn't heard from Tateanna for a week, which was unusual.

"All of a sudden, I hear from her," Marcheta remembers. "And she said, 'Can you take me to court in the morning?'"

"What do you mean, 'court'? Why?" Marcheta asked.

"Well," Tateanna replied. "I got arrested on Monday."

"You got arrested?"

"I stole something."

"What did you steal?"

"I stole some pads."

"Why?"

"Because my mom wouldn't buy me any. And I've been messing up my clothes."

"Why didn't you call me? I could've bought you pads."

"I didn't want to bother you," Tateanna said. "I know I should've

**"In high school ministry, it's hard to see the good, when there's so much bad," Marcheta says. "These girls are too young to deal with some of the things they do."**



**“She didn’t look down on me,  
and that makes me want to  
cry, because a lot of people  
have looked down on me.”**

— TATEANNA WASHINGTON

talked to somebody, but I was just frustrated with my mom and I just needed some pads right then.”

Tateanna had never been in trouble with the law; it was her first offense. “When I told [Marcheta], she was disappointed. But she gave me a hug and said it was OK,” Tateanna says. “She didn’t look down on me, and that makes me want to cry, because a lot of people have looked down on me.”

Marcheta took Tateanna and her mom to court the next day.

“My heart was so broken. I just couldn’t believe it,” Marcheta says. “But that’s a part of inner-city ministry. You just don’t hear about stuff like that in suburban schools.”

Since then, Marcheta has driven Tateanna to two more early-morning court appointments in downtown Houston, standing beside her each time.





“She fights for us,” says Tateanna.

Through their friendship, Tateanna is learning not to be swallowed up by everyday battles. Marcheta believes this survivor is ready to be a leader.

Marcheta also grew up in the inner city. Raised by her mom in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Marcheta felt abandoned and rejected by her father.

“When I found the Lord, He reversed that abandonment feeling. I feel so loved and so wanted now,” Marcheta says. “I want my girls to experience that, because I know what it’s like to feel rejected by someone who is supposed to love you.”

Now, Tateanna is one of 10 young women being equipped to follow Jesus

through the trials of inner-city life. Marcheta refers to them as “my girls.”

Every Saturday, these women squeeze into Marcheta’s living room for “D-Group,” short for Discipleship Group. This particular Saturday, the girls have sleepy eyes from their monthly sleepover. They’re laughing about who fell asleep first and who woke up last. They replay cellphone videos of Tateanna dancing to the Disney song *Let It Go*.

“In high school ministry, it’s hard to see the good, when there’s so much bad,” Marcheta says. “These girls are too young to deal with some of the things they do.”

One girl came to faith in jail while serving two months for driving while

*Cru student leader Dayana Vasquez (opposite page, far left) is one of the Davis High students Marcheta battles for in prayer every morning in her “war corner” (opposite page, right). Marcheta spends informal time with her girls doing everyday tasks like shopping (above).*

**“A lot of times, people are afraid to share what they’ve been through. But for me, I realize I have been through it for a reason, so I can help other people who have been in my situation,” says Tateanna.**

sion after spending time in the hospital for suicidal thoughts.

Eight of the girls come from broken homes, and many are struggling to rebuild relationships with parents. Some have dealt with homelessness, physical abuse or witnessing violence. All while trying to navigate high school as young Christian women.

But Marcheta and her girls are fighting to be light in their dark surroundings. They pray for one another throughout the day via group texts. They study the Bible together, tell others about the gospel together, and help each other resist peer pressure. They love Jesus together.

Marcheta spends regular time with each girl—concentrating on helping them have a healthy relationship with Jesus, equipping them to mentor others.

Just three weeks after the drive-by, Tateanna sits beside Marcheta at a shaded table outside of Sonic. Cars buzz by on a nearby intersection. Cups of Snickers Sonic Blasts in hand, Marcheta asks, “So how’s Tateanna doing?”

“Tateanna, for the first time in a long time, actually feels great,” Tateanna says. Although she remains on probation for theft, and still battles sleepless nights after the shooting, she has joy and confidence in her voice. “The prayer has been really helping. I’ve just been having a new thought about everything, and I’m just trying to be like Jesus.”

“Girl, that’s what I’m hoping for,” Marcheta says.

During this time, Marcheta challenges Tateanna to leadership in Cru at Davis. Within Marcheta’s first year at Davis, she saw over

intoxicated. Her father was deported four years ago, and her mother was recently incarcerated. Another desperately wants American citizenship and dreams of getting a college degree. One is overcoming depres-

150 students indicate decisions to follow Jesus. Cru is influencing Davis High School, but the movement depends on students like Tateanna, who are passionate about investing their lives in others.

Before she really understood the gospel, Tateanna hated herself. “I was just a lost soul. I was depressed,” she says, showing the scars of cut marks on her arms. “Coming to Christ, I never thought I would be here today, telling my story, strong.

“A lot of times, people are afraid to share what they’ve been through. But for me, I realize I have been through it for a reason, so I can help other people who have been in my situation.”

After praying together outside Sonic, Marcheta drives Tateanna home, to a one-bedroom apartment shared with her mom and stepfather. Leaving the safety of Marcheta’s friendship, Tateanna knows that behind the door she faces strained relationships, restless nights, and fear of what the world will throw at her. But she hopes life won’t always be like this. ●

Contact the writer at [rachel.ferchak@cru.org](mailto:rachel.ferchak@cru.org).



**Tateanna Washington tells others her story, hoping they will see the power of the gospel. How has God worked in your life? How can your story communicate the gospel?**

*Marcheta’s disciples dance in her apartment, where they meet weekly to study the Bible (opposite page, top). Justine Brizuela (opposite page, bottom left) is one of the group’s 10 members. Marcheta walks Tateanna home (opposite page, bottom right).*







The Senses





BY RICH ATKINSON

ILLUSTRATION BY  
ALLY PAMER &  
ASHLEY WALTON

When I was growing up, my parents surprised my brother, sister and me with a white rabbit as an Easter gift. We came up with an “original” name for our new pet: Easter.

Just like chocolate and jelly beans, the Easter bunny can sometimes be the only other thing people know about the holiday.

Obviously, the true meaning is about so much more.

Yet engaging the culture with the message of the gift that Jesus offers of love, forgiveness and new life doesn't have to be blurred. The Apostle Paul writes about the power of the message in his letter to the Christians in Rome: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

So how do we make the message relevant without diluting it?

*Continued on page 46*

Here are five ways to communicate the gospel message  
in your home, church and community.  
Think about using all of your senses to experience Jesus.

## Hear

On an audio Bible, listen to the gospel stories from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Hear the people shouting to crucify Jesus. Reflect on what Jesus went through to die for your sins. Remember how His death on the cross gave you new life if you have accepted Him as your Savior. Before Jesus died on the cross He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He was a perfect, sinless sacrifice dying a death we deserved.

Music is also a powerful way to tell the story of who God is and what He has done. One of my favorite Easter memories has been going to Easter dramas. A church I attended in Portland, Oregon, had a huge Easter production, which had Jesus rising from the dead during the song *Arise My Love*. Consider contemporary songs that communicate the Easter message, including *God's Not Dead* by the Newsboys, *At The Cross (Love Ran Red)* by Chris Tomlin, and *Happy Day* by Tim Hughes and Ben Cantelon. Or perhaps you connect better through more traditional Easter music like *Christ the Lord Has Risen Today*, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, and the Hallelujah Chorus from George Frederick Handel's *Messiah*.

## See

*The Story of Jesus for Children* film, adapted from the film *JESUS* and the Gospel of Luke, is available in 158 languages. One year, my wife and I helped show the film to children involved in the Awana program at our church. Instead of having them watch the movie in one sitting, we showed the film in three segments over three weeks. My wife and I still joke about how we remember the children saying, "Aw, you always stop at the good part."

Other movies that you can show at your church, in your home or community include the animated version of *The Ten Commandments* (with Christian Slater and Ben Kingsley, and the song *I Am Willing* by Jeremy Camp), or the animated film *The Prince of Egypt*. Teenagers may prefer the recent motion picture *Risen*, about a Roman army officer (Joseph Fiennes) who searches for Christ after His resurrection.

The films *JESUS*, *Magdalena: Through Her Eyes* and *The Story of Jesus for Children* are available in DVD formats and can also be streamed for free at [jesusfilmmedia.org](http://jesusfilmmedia.org) or the Jesus Film Media app.

## Touch

For children especially, having a tangible activity with a gospel message can help. You can help them make gospel bracelets or necklaces using beads with colors like black, red, white, gold and green, and explaining the plan of salvation with Scripture verses. Many options are available online. You could also use a wordless book, or even a colorful basketball or soccer ball, like the ones sold by [J316Ministries.com](http://J316Ministries.com), as a way to present the gospel during a sports outreach.



?

After reading through these Easter ideas, what one idea do you want to implement to help you reflect more about the meaning of Easter?

## Taste

Serve a Passover Seder meal and read the Passover story in Exodus 12. The bread and bitter herbs of the meal can help you understand how the Old Testament Passover story is a foreshadowing of Jesus the Messiah coming and being the Passover lamb to save us from our sins. You can schedule a Passover presentation at your church through Jews for Jesus ([JewsforJesus.org](http://JewsforJesus.org)).

## Smell

Make and bake Resurrection cookies that help explain the gospel story to your children. As each ingredient is prepared for the recipe, the object lesson is explained through each step, and the Scripture lesson that goes with that point is read. For example, have each child smell the vinegar and tell him about when Jesus was given vinegar to drink on the cross (John 19:28-30).

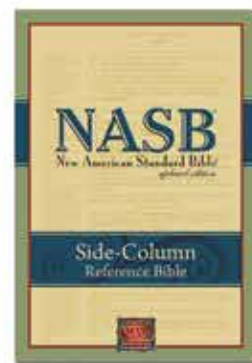
Once the oven is preheated and all the cookies are on the cookie sheet, turn off the oven and leave the cookies overnight. In the morning, the cookies are ready and have hollow centers to remind the children of the empty tomb. (The recipe is in the article "Easter Cookies: A Memorable Way to Teach Kids the Resurrection," at [Christianity.com](http://Christianity.com).)

Each year, we celebrate Easter as a fresh reminder of what Christ has done for us. I hope these ideas help make Easter more meaningful in your home, church and community. But whether you use them or not, I hope Easter comes alive for you. ●

Contact the writer at [rich.atkinson@cru.org](mailto:rich.atkinson@cru.org).



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/// **FamilyLife Blended™**



**FamilyLife®, the family ministry of Cru, has been dedicated to equipping, encouraging and restoring families since 1976. In 2012, FamilyLife Blended was created to encourage those in stepfamilies.**

“Stepfamily ministry is essentially about bringing stability back to the home, bringing the family back to the Lord and breaking the generational cycle of divorce,” says Ron Deal, who directs FamilyLife Blended.

Family dynamics in stepfamilies include loyalty issues, dealing with loss, and perhaps grief because of the death of a parent. Children may experience new holiday traditions, different parenting styles and different bedtimes.

Ron adds, “Sixty percent of remarriages end in divorce.” He uses the illustration of a blender mentality versus a crockpot mentality in how a stepfamily forms. A blender mentality is when you

just immediately blend the stepfamily unit together, but in reality that meshing together is more like crockpot cooking—it takes time. For stepfamilies it can take from five to seven years. ● By Rich Atkinson

**100 Million**

Americans have a step relationship: either a step-parent, stepsibling, or step-child. That’s a third of the U.S. population.

**40 percent**

of families (an adult with children) are stepfamilies.

**1 in 2**

It is estimated that one in two of us will have a step relationship in our lifetime.

**PRAYER POINTS**



**Pray for** 1,100 couples to have renewed commitments, restored marriages and changed lives during the 22 Weekend to Remember® Conferences happening across the U.S. in March and April.



**Pray for** the moms attending the MomLife Bootcamp retreat (April 17-19 in Tyler, Texas) to find rest, refreshment, and renewal in their walk with the Lord and role as moms.



**Pray that** the Stepping Up® video series continues to help men grow into all God wants them to be.





# COMPLICATED? *nope.*

## THE GOSPEL IS SIMPLE.

You only need to know four basic truths ... Four Spiritual Laws:

- 1 God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.
- 2 All of us sin, and our sin has separated us from God.
- 3 Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin.
- 4 We must each receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

## SIMPLE, YES ... *but the effects are profound!*

Sarah was a sorority sister...

She attended a Cru event and wanted to place her faith in Jesus — but didn't quite "get" the Gospel. A Christian friend walked her through Cru's booklet, "Knowing God Personally" — based on the Four Spiritual Laws — and Sarah is now growing in her faith every day! She's one among multitudes who have come to faith in Christ through the many proven-effective ministries of Cru.

## COMPLICATED? *Nope.*

Estate planning is simple. You only need to know a few basics ... like what you believe ... and what's really important to you. We'll help you with the rest of the details. We can help you discover how you can leverage your resources to provide for your family and to place the simple truth of the Gospel in front of more people who don't yet know Jesus. To make the greatest Kingdom impact you've ever made — greater than you ever thought possible — simply contact us today.

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To learn more, contact a GCF Giving Counselor toll-free at **800-449-5454** or email [info@gcfccc.org](mailto:info@gcfccc.org).



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TED WILCOX

Waterfall in Croatia

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

“

LIKE COLD  
WATER TO  
A THIRSTY  
SOUL,  
SO IS GOOD  
NEWS FROM  
A FAR  
COUNTRY.”

—Proverbs 25:25