

Pathways

Inside the Global Ministry of **Walk Thru the Bible**
Winter-Spring 2019

Rebuilding
Walk Thru's
Canadian Ministry

Advancing
CHINESE MINISTRY
in the U.S.



WEEKLY
DEVOTIONALS
FOR **WINTER**
& **SPRING**

Pathways

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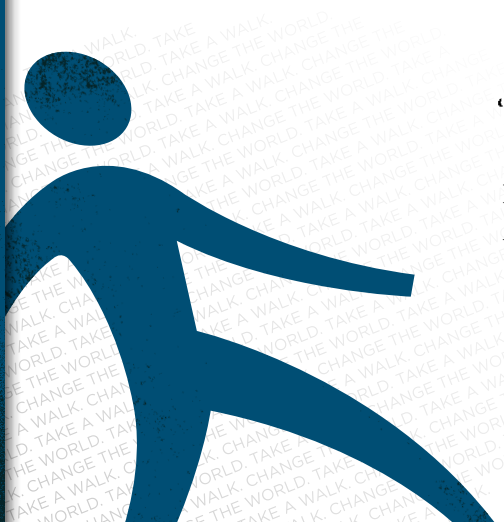
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Walk Thru the Bible ignites passion for God's Word through innovative live events, inspirational biblical resources, and lasting global impact.



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You never know how God will use one life. When I conducted a lackluster training in Ontario many years ago, I thought I was wasting my time. I couldn't have been more wrong. One of the people I trained, Bill Hale, became Walk Thru the Bible's leader in Canada for more than 15 years. He taught more than 400 live events, which makes him one of our most prolific associate instructors. Right up until his death from cancer in early 2018, he was teaching God's Word.

If God can use Bill to impact more than 22,000 lives, how can He use the seven men

and women you'll read about in our cover story? Our ministry in Canada has seen its ups and downs over the years, but I'm excited about the direction it's heading. Our new Canadian leaders are passionate about training instructors and partnering with other organizations to bring God's Word to a culture that has abandoned it.

I hope you're inspired by how God is working through Walk Thru the Bible's ministry in Canada and around the world. In this issue of *Pathways*, you'll read about Dia, who uses our resources to engage her Chinese-American community. You'll read about Boris, our training director in the former Soviet Union who's deeply committed to reaching the next generation with the Bible. You'll read about people God is using to draw others to Himself in their homes, churches, and communities.

You never know how God will use one life. Thank you for allowing God to use your life in partnership with our ministry. As we begin a new year of ministry, all of us at Walk Thru the Bible are profoundly grateful for your prayers, encouragement, and support.

Phil Tuttle
President

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Since she emigrated to the U.S. from Hong Kong, Dia Fong has searched for ways to ignite passion for the Bible in her Chinese-speaking church. After becoming trained to teach Walk Thru the Bible's otLIVE event, she translated the material to Chinese and set out to engage people of every age with a message they had never heard before.

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GUY & MARSHA EAST





Teaching *Revolution* in **Pakistan**

Middle East

68 pastors and church leaders representing 12 countries attended Walk Thru the Bible's Middle East-North Africa conference in Amman, Jordan. President Phil Tuttle taught *Chiseled*, Walk Thru the Bible's new resource on the life of Peter. The leaders returned home with workbooks and other teaching materials to share the new course with people in their churches and communities.

Asia

Walk Thru the Bible's country director for Australia, Al Watson, and his wife, Judy, recently traveled to Japan to teach Old and New Testament training events. Brian and Yoko Broaddus, who serve as Japan's country leaders, say they "give thanks that God is drawing

more youth to Himself through this unique way of presenting the story of redemption."

In Pakistan, Country Director Curnilius Gill and his teaching team recently taught *Revolution*, Walk Thru the Bible's resource on King Josiah, to more than 300 participants across several cities. "We have received so many testimonies about how God



World Race

spoke to them through the course," says Curnilius. "They're encouraged that God is going to do mighty things like He did through Josiah." This year, the Pakistani team has expanded the ministry to a new province. It continues to venture into the country's frontier territory to reach under-resourced, remote churches.

North America

Walk Thru the Bible recently partnered with The World Race to train 400 Racers in *otLIVE*, Walk Thru the Bible's Old Testament overview event. The participants, who ranged in age from 22 to 35, are currently in the middle of their year of missions. Bill Swan, the director of the World Race, says that the training opportunity appealed to him because "not many racers have the context to understand the big picture of Scripture. I thought it could be really valuable. I wanted to get people fired up about the Bible."

Africa

Walk Thru the Bible's Togo team, led by Samuel Eklou, recently partnered with Compassion International to teach the Old Testament to children. More than 85 youth leaders from 29 churches attended *otLIVE* trainings. Each participant returned home with a training workbook and a DVD of the hand signs taught in *otLIVE*. According to Samuel, the group was "fully engaged" and eager to teach the event to the children in their churches.

Walk Thru the Bible's Southern Africa team recently taught *otLIVE* in a small village outside Nkhokakoka, Malawi. Pastor Mwandu, who leads a local church, invited the entire village and chiefs from surrounding villages to attend. The team reports that "old men and women, children, and village chiefs were all doing the hand signs. It was a significant event in the life of the village." Pastor Mwandu said that since the training, ten more members have joined his church, including the chief of another village.



otLIVE children's event in **Togo**



otLIVE event in **Nkhokakoka, Malawi**



STARTING AGAIN:

Rebuilding Walk Thru's Canadian Ministry



“The demise of Christianity over the decades in Canada is almost chilling,” says Pastor Gary Carter as he looks out at the drizzle blanketing Toronto’s North York neighborhood in a damp sheet of gray. “When my parents got married in 1928, 25 percent of Canadians self-identified as evangelicals. When I got married, it was about 12 percent. When my daughter got married, it was down to 7 percent. Now, I suspect it’s as low as 2 percent. There’s something that’s

gone wrong with the harvest.”

Gary rests in the café area of The People’s Church during a break from the training conference he’s come to observe as a member of Walk Thru the Bible’s newly formed Canadian board of directors. Down the hall, Walk Thru the Bible’s Canadian ministry is waking up after several years of hibernation. “The ministry in Canada has really languished and just about died out until now,” says Genny Baxley, Walk Thru the Bible’s

vice president of North American ministries. “We disappeared into the woodwork,” agrees Warwick Cooper, who serves as the chairman of the board and interim country director. In the past 34 years, Warwick has joined dozens of other Walk Thru the Bible instructors in teaching live events across the nation. Now, he’s one of only a handful of instructors still active. In an effort to re-launch the ministry, he’s invited seven pastors and Bible teachers to attend a two-day training conference.

“There’s something that’s gone wrong with the harvest. But the idea of the Bible is that through all of the ins and outs and all the messed up people, God still has a plan.”

How did it come to this?

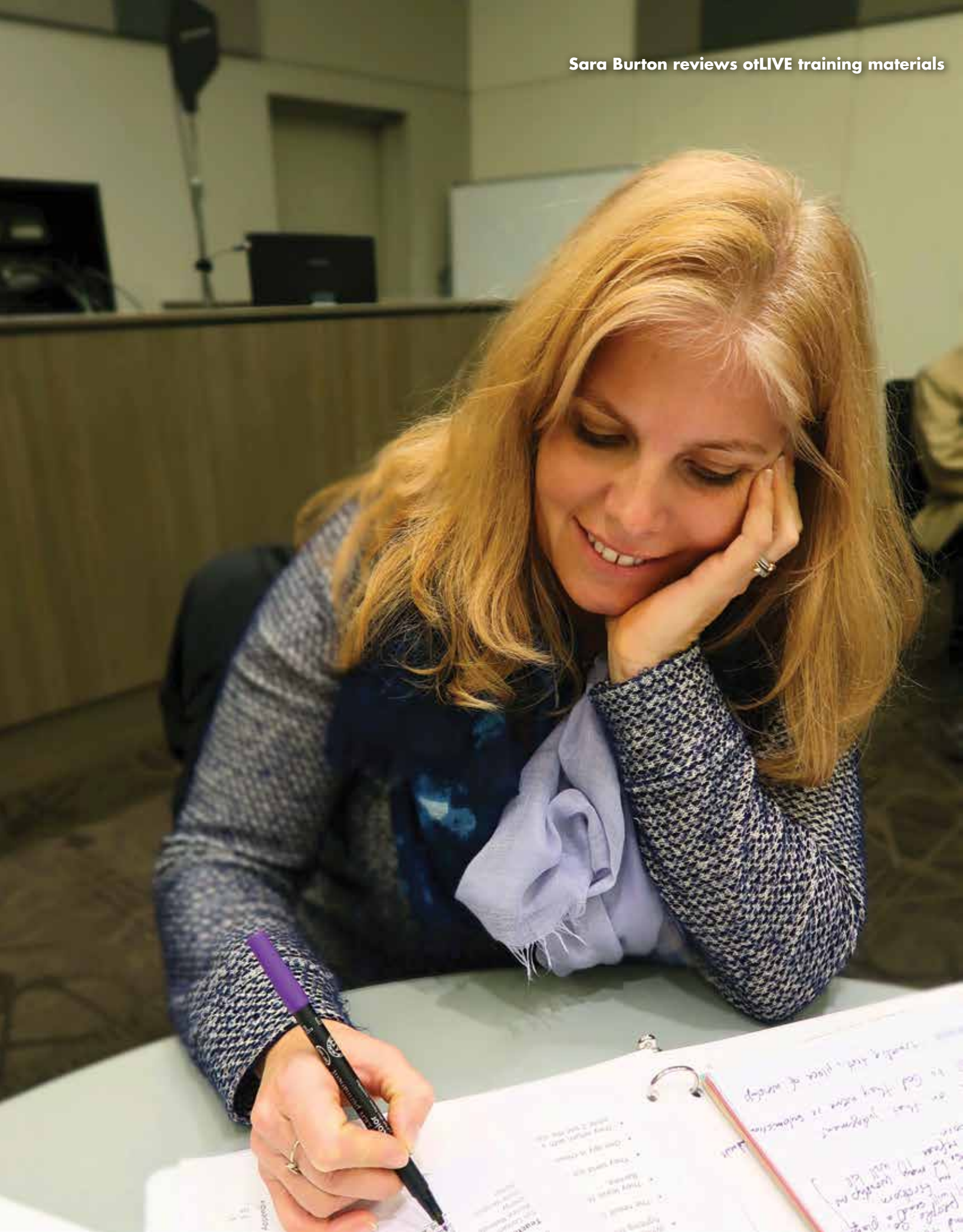
It would be easy to attribute the Canadian ministry’s decline to the passing of Bill Hale in April 2018. Since 1996, Bill served as Walk Thru the Bible’s in-country director for Canada. He taught Walk Thru’s live events to more than 22,000 people across Canada and galvanized others to teach in their own communities. In the absence of a Canadian board of directors, his loss created a vacuum of leadership and initiative.

Ultimately, though, the decline of Walk Thru the Bible in Canada mirrors the decline of Christianity throughout the country. “We know that only about 14 percent of all Canadians, whether they’re believers or unbelievers, engage with the Bible at all,” says Genny. “Walk Thru the Bible in Canada faces a post-Christian culture that’s further down the road of secularism than the U.S.”

“It’s an evolution,” explains Gary. “The city of Toronto was once called ‘Toronto the Good.’ The cultural influence of Christianity was so strong that parks were closed on Sundays. They would take the swings and chain them to the side. That’s the city I grew up in in the 1950s.” Over time, Canadian culture has become increasingly less receptive to Christianity. “Canada has become a society of millions of gods,” says Warwick. “When you push God out, you don’t believe in nothing—you believe in everything. It’s crushing us because you can’t survive like that.”

From Warwick’s perspective, the decline of Canadian Christianity is directly linked with people’s view of the Bible. “We’ve lost confidence in the Bible,” he reflects. “Even among Christians, we’ve lost confidence in the authority of Scripture. We’re not sure whether or not it has the answers to life. I’ve talked to seminary students who say the Bible is full of errors. Churches have thrown out the gospel to be more attractive, but it’s proving to be a disaster because then they’re the same as everybody else in society.”

The bright spot is that “we are seeing growth in churches that are standing for something,” Warwick



says. In attendance and impact, churches that value the Bible as God's inerrant Word are faring far better than churches that reject this conviction. But even in churches like his own, most Christians are becoming "more biblically illiterate as the years progress," Warwick believes. "We've given up on adult Sunday school. We've gone into seeker-sensitive mode and found that wanting because we end up with shallow Christians. And we pay a high price for biblical ignorance."

As a counseling pastor at The People's Church, Warwick sees the consequences of biblical disengagement every day. "Christians are just reflecting the same problems of society," he says. "Men are hooked on porn. Marriages are skidding through the years. Premarital sex is a given. There's widespread gender confusion. We're not conveying the answers because we don't read the Bible."

In Gary's experience as a pastor and church planter, apathy toward the Bible is widespread. Evangelical churches have not successfully inspired enthusiasm for God's Word in many of their congregants. "People are coming 17 Sundays a year and the sermon is light," he says. "The whole story of the Bible is confusing to people."

Without engaging with the Bible, Canadian Christians don't just live like their unbelieving neighbors—they also lack any passion to share the gospel with them. "What lifestyle evangelism means to the typical Canadian is answering questions about their faith if someone asks them," Gary laments. "We don't invite people to church." It's not for lack of opportunity. Gary, who lives in a neighborhood full of recently

arrived immigrants, constantly finds opportunities to befriend strangers and invite them to the church he leads. But when the average Christian isn't meeting God regularly in His Word, the motivation to share God with the world disappears. As time marches on, so does the culture.

"There's something that's gone wrong with the harvest," Gary reiterates. "But the idea of the Bible is that through all of the ins and outs and all the messed up people, God still has a plan."

Gary and Warwick, their two fellow board members, and the seven new

"People don't have knowledge of the Bible, so they completely miss the context to their favorite verses."

Walk Thru the Bible instructors are all part of a remnant that works to re-engage and reignite passion for God's Word in Canada. "We're praying for a wave of Bible teaching to spread across our country, a revival of an interest in studying the Word of God," says Warwick. By offering practical tools to pastors and Bible teachers like Warwick, Walk Thru the Bible can play a vital supporting role in renewing interest in the Bible. Genny Baxley and Brian Johnson, Walk Thru the Bible's Dean of

Faculty, traveled to Toronto to train seven pastors and Bible teachers to teach *otLIVE*, a two-and-a-half hour live event that uses hand signs to convey the entire story of the Old Testament in an engaging, creative way. Several traveled from Alberta to attend, while most live in Ontario. Some have taught Walk Thru the Bible's live events for years, while others are first-time trainees. Their backgrounds are diverse, but they're all drawn to the big-picture, interactive teaching method that Walk Thru the Bible offers.

Bill Spangler, one of the seven, traveled all the way from Red Deer, Alberta, to attend *otLIVE* training. Over the past three decades, he's pastored several churches in rural areas. Across the board, he observes a crisis of busyness, fatigue, and apathy toward the Bible. In an effort to engage more people, Bill became trained to teach *Walk Thru the Old Testament* and *Walk Thru the New Testament*, Walk Thru's flagship live events. Since 2012, he's taught more than 40 events across several provinces. "I'm a storyteller," he says. "To be able to paint the big picture of the Old Testament inspires and motivates me. After I taught my very first event, a man who taught a Bible class came up to me and said he would never read the Old Testament the same again. That stands out to me."

Another new *otLIVE* instructor, Sara Burton, leads youth ministry at her church in Brampton, a diverse city in the Greater Toronto Area. She signed up for training to confront the biblical illiteracy she encounters in her ministry. "People don't have knowledge of the Bible, so they completely miss the context to their favorite verses," she says. "The Bible is meant to be studied in a proper

Warwick Cooper,
Interim Director of
Walk Thru the Bible's
Canadian ministry



way, and they don't know how to do that. It really is disheartening."

In Warwick's experience, the big-picture overview that *otLIVE* provides is uniquely powerful. "Attending *otLIVE* may be the only time in someone's life that they're going to sit down and hear the entire storyline of the Bible," he says. "Even if you go to seminary, you don't get that. Just think about the impact that will make. You get inside God's story and see yourself in the story. That's why everyone who leaves a Walk Thru the Bible event is on the top of the world. They said if they had heard this when they were younger, it would have made such a difference."

For the new class of instructors, it's not just the big-picture overview that makes *otLIVE* a valuable tool for their ministries—it's the element of

fun; it's the enthusiasm that the event generates. Jack Strickland, a veteran Walk Thru the Bible instructor who returned for *otLIVE* training, first attended a live event in 1974. "I needed to see that kind of excitement about the gospel," he says. He had just graduated from seminary and accepted a pastoral position. "My presence at the pulpit was so boring even I would have fallen asleep," he admits. When Jack became a Walk Thru the Bible instructor, the interactive format of the live events he taught challenged him to bring the Bible to life in a more dynamic way. He learned to convey the biblical story with contagious energy. As he taught a section of *otLIVE* to the class as part of a training exercise, it was hard to imagine anyone falling asleep. Gary, who has planted 15 churches over the course of his ministry,

encounters pastors who feel deeply discouraged by the overall apathy and listlessness of the people they serve. "The pastors try the laser light show; they try hiring the part-time music person," he observes. But these efforts fail because they're not leading people to the true source of transformation: God's Word. By drawing people deeper into the biblical story in an enjoyable way, Walk Thru the Bible might just "crack that nut and let some enthusiasm out," Gary concludes. "There's nothing better than Walk Thru for breaking through apathy in one day. People remember fun."

When Warwick invites pastors and Bible teachers to become trained Walk Thru the Bible instructors, his selling point is simple. "Your goal is to build biblically-minded Christians," he tells them. "This is a tool that will help."

After two full days of intensive training, the seven trainees are eager to return home and put their new tool to good use. As newly minted Walk Thru the Bible instructors, they're fully equipped to teach an overview of the Old Testament in less than three hours. "They're committed, they're enthusiastic, and they're skilled communicators," Genny says, but she and Warwick are acutely aware of the need for long-term sustainability. "This weekend is a beginning," says Warwick. "This is just the start. We're got to have a strategy that works."

Going forward, three concepts will guide Walk Thru the Bible's strategy for Canada: autonomy, word of mouth, and partnerships. First, Walk Thru the Bible's Canadian ministry will no longer function as an extension of its U.S. ministry. "As Canadians, we're different than Americans," Warwick emphasizes. "We have our own idiosyncrasies, and our ministry can't gain traction as long as it's controlled from another country. It has to be Canada's Walk Thru the Bible." With Warwick leading a Canadian board of directors, Genny has complete confidence in Walk Thru the Bible's "strong and growing leadership" in Canada. "We're fully committing to partnering with Walk Thru the Bible in Canada however we can," she says. "There's a small group of people who will devote time, treasure, and effort to growing the ministry in Canada, and they'll provide leadership and strategy. For the longest time, we just needed someone to come along and make it happen so we can begin to go somewhere. That's what Warwick is doing."

Another key component of Walk Thru the Bible's strategy for Canada is marketing through word of mouth. "We know that people who go to Walk Thru the Bible's events are terribly enthusiastic," says Gary. "These testimonies are off the charts." Too often, though, pastors host *otLIVE* or another Walk Thru event, and that's where the story ends. *otLIVE* may have deeply impacted the people who attended the live event, but the ministry will flounder without new audiences to teach. Gary's vision for Walk Thru the Bible is to gather referrals from every pastor whose church hosts a live event. "If we can get him to spread hope to the next pastor, we've got the country covered," Gary believes.



Gary Carter, a member of
Walk Thru the Bible's Canadian
board of directors

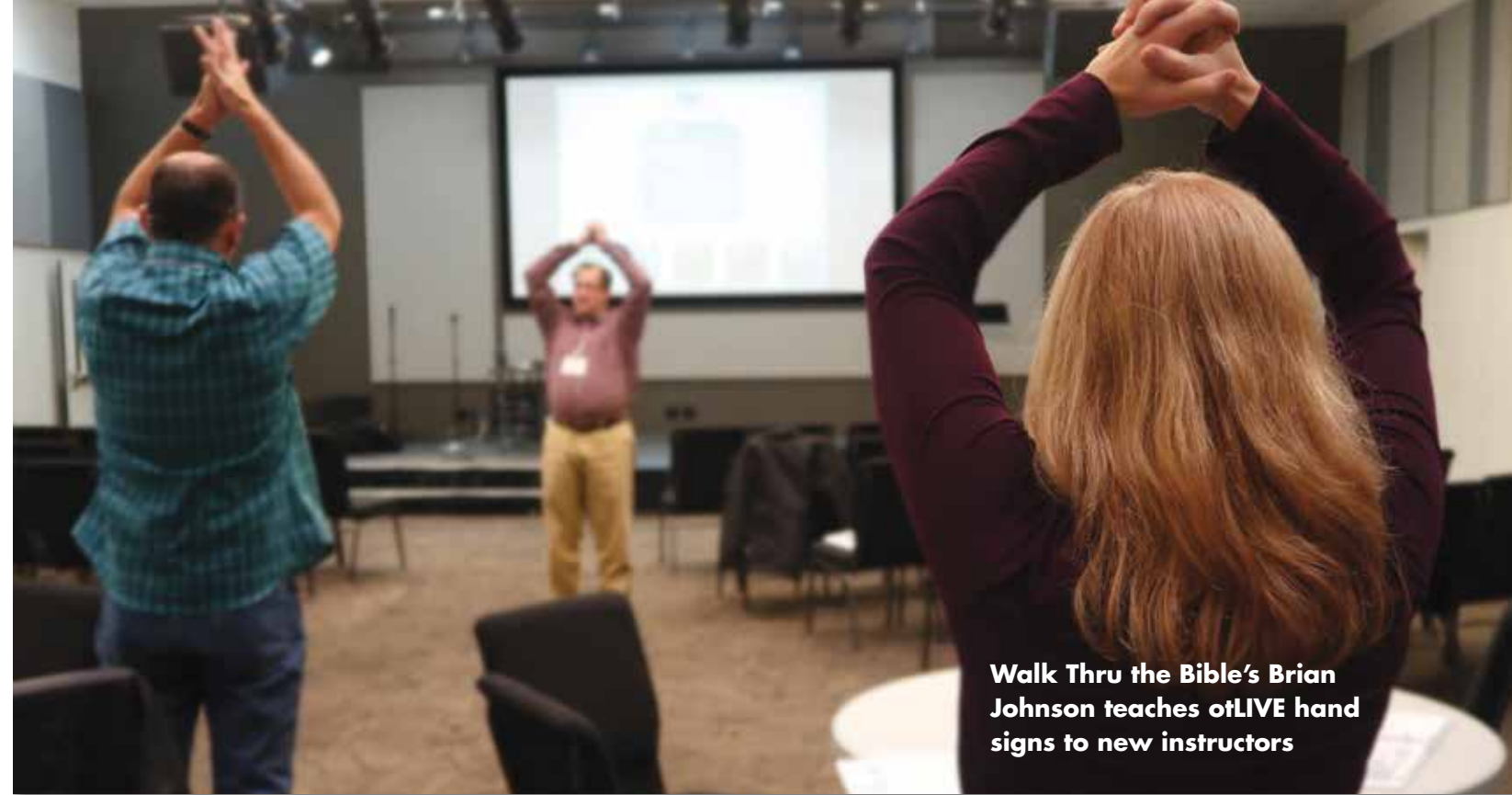


Downtown Toronto, Canada

For Warwick and the rest of the Canadian leadership team, the third critical piece of Walk Thru the Bible's Canadian strategy is cultivating strong partnerships. "My vision is to work with other equally-minded organizations that have a stake in teaching the Word of God to make an impact on society," Warwick shares. "I'm hoping to create events that will result in the increase of biblical literacy across our country. In 2019, this grand vision will grow as other organizations get on board."

Several of the new instructors are already planning to leverage existing partnerships to teach *otLIVE*. Henry Frimpong, who pastors a church in the Toronto area, works bi-vocationally as a program manager for Christian Horizons, a non-profit organization that serves adults with special needs. In this role, he plans daily activities for people in residential facilities. "My hope is to use *otLIVE* to teach the Bible to people with special needs in their homes," he says. "We need a creative way to present God's Word to them. *otLIVE* is one of those key things we can use to get them excited about the Bible. It will help me teach in a simple way that they can understand."

Like Henry, Sara plans to use *otLIVE* in her current ministry. As a youth leader and mother of three daughters, Sara witnesses the struggles of Canada's teens on a daily basis. "Teens are lonely and they hide behind their phones," she says. "In their loneliness, they're depressed and anxious. You can't get out of those things by yourself." She's constantly looking for ways to engage students in a way that introduces them to the Bible while offering them a community. Every year, she witnesses the power of that



Walk Thru the Bible's Brian Johnson teaches *otLIVE* hand signs to new instructors

community at Brampton City United, a large event that brings together all the youth groups of Brampton, Ontario, for fellowship, worship, and prayer for the city's schools. At the event two years ago, the participants heard a presentation from Alpha, a Christian ministry whose curriculum teaches the basics of Christianity. From that presentation alone, the group received 40 requests to teach at local high schools' Christian clubs. Soon, church youth groups began equipping high school students to teach it themselves in their schools.

Sara has witnessed the phenomenal impact of students reaching other students. "But after Alpha, what's next?" she wonders. After learning the basics of the faith, students need resources to help them dive deeper into God's Word. That's where *otLIVE* comes in, Sara says. "I think it would be phenomenal. I'd teach *otLIVE* to a youth pastor who would then equip high school students to take it to their peers. There's already something

happening in these schools, so we'll provide another step forward." Sara plans to teach *otLIVE* to her own youth group by the end of 2018 and work within the Brampton City United network to equip students all over her city. By partnering with other organizations, she aims to encourage and connect students. "If I can inspire them through teaching *otLIVE*, it will go way further than that two and a half hours," she says, "and when they do the event together, it creates a synergistic effect."

By partnering with local organizations and initiatives, Walk Thru the Bible's newest instructors will expand their sphere of influence and provide support where God is already working. At the end of the training conference, the seven instructors—Sara, Henry, Bill, Jack, Henry, Dan, and Rick—returned home more equipped and excited to produce Kingdom fruit where God has planted them. "I believe the

impact will go far beyond these seven people," says Genny. As Warwick continues to lead trainings and recruit more leaders, she's hopeful that the seven will soon become hundreds. "I'd love for Walk Thru the Bible in Canada to train instructors all over Canada, not just in the big cities, so that instructors in the most far flung places will have access to training," she says. "I want to see a passion for the Bible reignited in this great country."

After a long rest, Walk Thru the Bible's Canadian ministry is gaining strength. "We're heading in the right direction," says Warwick. "It's going to be a lot of work, but that's what we're here for. As long as Walk Thru the Bible stays true to the Word of God, Canada will need Walk Thru the Bible."

CANADA



Several generations ago, the vast majority of Canadians identified as Christians. Today 1 in 4 Canadians claims no religious affiliation, and only a small percentage of the population is biblically literate. Attitudes toward evangelism and biblical teaching range from apathy to outright hostility. But while many churches—particularly those that deny the infallibility of the Bible—are being hollowed out, churches that preach the Bible as God’s Word are growing steadily. God has given Walk Thru the Bible the opportunity to support churches and leaders who are committed to faithfully teaching His Word.

Prayer Needs:

- **National team.** Pray for Pastor Warwick Cooper as he works to revitalize Walk Thru the Bible’s national ministry in Canada. Pray that God will provide new team members to share the load and reach more Canadians than ever before.
- **Encouragement.** Pray that God will grant Canadian Christians boldness to live counter-culturally in an increasingly secular environment.
- **Unity.** Pray for opportunities to connect with and bring together Christian denominations through trainings and live events.
- **Spiritual multiplication.** Pray that Canadian pastors will have the training and resources they need to make disciples and expand their ministries.
- **Spiritual maturity.** Pray for opportunities to help lead new Canadian Christians to spiritual maturity by equipping them to live out God’s Word.

Capital: Ottawa
Population: 36.9 million (#38 in world)
Land area: 3.8 million sq. miles (#2 in world, slightly larger than the U.S.)
Language: English, French
Religion: No affiliation 23.9%, Catholic 39%, Protestant 20.3%, Other Christian 6.3%, Muslim 3.2%
GDP per capita: \$48,300

Source: CIA World Factbook, Christianity Today

FUTURE HOPE

Advancing Chinese Ministry in the U.S.



“I often struggle to help my students, both children and adults, to see the Bible in unity,” Dia Fong reflects.

It’s certainly not for lack of experience or education on her part. Since 1997, Dia has worked in full-time children’s ministry. She currently serves as a volunteer with Child Evangelism Fellowship in Asia Pacific and in the U.S. She’s earned a Master of Divinity degree and a diploma from the Children’s Ministries Institute.

Since she emigrated from Hong Kong to the U.S. 30 years ago, Dia has searched for ways to help fellow believers become more biblically engaged and transformed. “I’ll talk to friends who have been

Christians for 40 years, but they still focus on the New Testament,” she says. “The Bible is one book. If they don’t have the foundation of the Old Testament, it’s quite difficult to understand the New Testament. They need people to encourage and guide them. They need inspiration. For years I was looking for a tool to help them understand the big picture of the Bible and increase their interest.”

Last year, Dia found what she was searching for.

Near her home in eastern Maine, Dia works for a small church whose pastor came across *otLIVE*, Walk Thru the Bible’s live event that uses hand signs to teach the big picture of the Old Testament. “I mentioned it to my husband, and he said he had attended one of those events about 40 years ago when he lived in California,” Dia says. “He said he remembered the



event taking up most of a weekend, and people today didn't want to spend that kind of time. But when I told him we could do *otLIVE* in one morning, we both decided to try it out."

"So under God's provision, I attended *otLIVE* in Eastbrook, Maine, last September," she says. "I could never forget that morning because we walked through the Old Testament in only three hours! I said to myself that this was something I could use in ministry." In March 2018, Dia went through training to become an *otLIVE* instructor. "The training is intensive, and the teaching is very solid," she says. "I learned from classmates how to teach in different styles. One of my classmates is teaching the event in Kenya. She told me that people walked five hours to go to her class. They were so hungry for someone to teach them."

Encouraged and inspired by the stories of her fellow instructor's students, Dia began to consider the people in her own circles who face obstacles to engaging with the Bible. She found her mind wandering back across the country to her home church in California, where she and her husband had lived for many years. The church is "very Chinese," according to Dia, mostly comprised of first-generation immigrants from Hong Kong. Many of the older people preferred to learn in Cantonese. "I kept thinking about how to teach this class in Chinese so that my senior friends would benefit from it," says Dia. "Some of them accepted Christ when they were old, and they had no one to teach them how to study the Bible." Weak eyesight, poor memory, and limited English skills discouraged most of them from improving their biblical literacy.

Dia knew that her friends in the church's senior fellowship group would benefit from *otLIVE*, but she didn't know what kind of response to expect. Still, she decided to try. At her first Chinese-language *otLIVE* event, she taught 17 people ranging in age from 55 to 90 years old. The outcome was even more positive than she hoped for. "During the entire class, their faces lit up with joy. It was a packed two-hour session, but none of them wanted to take a break," she shared after the event. "They just wanted to keep going. Most of them can't stay standing, so they sat down and learned the hand signs to *otLIVE*. Some of them said it was the first time they knew what the entire Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, was all about. The hand signs helped them overcome struggles with memory. After the event, we all had lunch together and they couldn't stop talking about it."

In addition to teaching *otLIVE* in Chinese to the senior fellowship group, Dia also taught *otLIVE* in English to a large, multi-generational group at her home church. "People kept asking when we were going to teach the New Testament live event," she says. She's excited to see young faces in her audience, because they're becoming more rare these days. "Chinese churches in the U.S. are shrinking because they're losing the young generation," she reflects. "The churches are huge, but they're empty inside." She's always focused on teaching children, but she also sees the strategic importance of teaching older people as well. "We reach the older generation to give them a strong foundation to teach younger generations. If they don't study themselves, how can they teach others? *otLIVE* equipped us to teach more effectively."

"During the entire class, their faces lit up with joy. It was a packed two-hour session, but none of them wanted to take a break."

Whether she's teaching a 9 year old or a 90 year old, Dia credits *otLIVE* with giving her the tools she needed to convey the big picture of the Bible. "*otLIVE* helped me to see the Bible in a big framework," she says. "Everything is put together. It's as simple as 40 hand signs and keywords. When I'm teaching using this tool, it's like I'm showing people a door. Once they go through this door, they can choose to go deeper and deeper to explore what God wants to tell them through the events and people in the Old Testament. When they know God the Creator, they will know who they are, the true purpose of life, and their future hope. *otLIVE* makes it very easy to tell people about all these things."

What's next for Dia? "If the Lord is willing, I'll be trained to teach *ntLIVE* in 2019."

Living with Compassion

WEEK 1
January 6-12

Luke 15:11-32

THE GOD WHO RUNS

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

IN WORD

No other religion pictures its deity like this. No other faith can claim a God who zealously pursues His children. All other deities are distant and elusive, demanding that their disciples come to them, usually on a long and arduous path, often with arbitrary rituals of appeasement.

But not the Father whom Jesus portrays. He is a God who runs after His children. Never mind the child’s past. All of his rebellious arrogance is no longer an issue. Neither are the rags and odor he’s wearing when he returns. The return is all that matters, and the Father enthusiastically runs to His child and escorts him into His household.

Why does Jesus give us such a picture? It seems too good to be true. We know we are not worthy of such attention from the Father we’ve deeply offended. We know He has every right to close His door to us. We know this because, if we were in His position, that is exactly what we’d do.

IN DEED

Jesus’ portrayal of the Father is contrary to human nature; this is no human

father. He is contrary to our expectations, contrary to the man-made gods of this world, and contrary to the interpretations with which we and Jesus’ hearers have understood God. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, we hide from Him. We know His anger should rightfully burn against us. We don’t think He’ll be glad to see us.

But our God runs to us. That’s what the incarnation and the cross are all about. In spite of our rags, the lingering smell of the pigsty, the empty pockets, and the embarrassment that colors our faces, He throws His arms around us and kisses us. There is nothing appealing about us that compels Him to do so; it is just His nature. May we daily give thanks for such a Father. We can base our lives on the knowledge that we are irrevocably His.

over the death of their brother. Mark 1:41 says He was “filled with compassion” for a leper.

The sick, the hungry, the prodigals of this world are all objects of His concern. In Jesus, we see the compassion of an infinite God in the heart of a human body. What an overflow of emotion! We feel the physical stress from our finite emotions and are overwhelmed by them. How much more does the compassion of God exceed the limits of human expression! We are amazed at the implications of boundless love incarnate. The infinite is expressed by the finite. The Son of God and the Son of Man are one.

IN DEED

The amazing thing about Jesus’ compassion is not just that it is an expression of

God’s emotions in a human form. What is really amazing is that His emotions are also expressed through us when His Spirit reigns in our hearts. We have access to a love beyond ourselves. When we come across the really unlovable, we may ask Him to love them through us. When our human nature recoils at the offensiveness of others, we may trust the Holy Spirit to minister to them in spite of our own impulses.

Jesus’ compassion reaches into lepers’ wounds. It goes to the side of the road where victims lie. It sees needs and seeks to meet them. It welcomes offensive prodigals back home. If Jesus is love incarnate, and His Spirit is in us, we will love with His kind of compassion. This compassion will come from beyond ourselves. All we have to do is ask Him for it.

To access the rest of this 16-week devotional series, visit www.walkthru.org/pathways/winter2018-devos.



A VISION WORTH FOLLOWING

Boris Volkov
Training Director for CIS

Every day, Boris Volkov thinks about how to ignite passion for the Bible in the hearts of young people. A native of western Siberia, he heard the gospel for the first time at 17 years old when missionaries organized a large evangelistic event in his village. In 1991, as the Soviet Union was collapsing, the son of a Communist party leader committed his life to Christ.

A decade later, Boris was working at a small engineering firm in southern Ukraine while leading youth outreach efforts on evenings and weekends. His leadership caught the attention of Yuri Shelestun, Walk Thru the Bible’s regional director, who invited him to join the ministry full time in Kiev. “Long before Yuri called me, I had a real respect for Walk Thru the Bible,” says Boris. “In those days, there was an enormous lack of high-quality biblical resources for spiritual growth. When I was first introduced to Walk Thru the Bible’s resources, I still remember the feeling that the pieces of the puzzle were being assembled.”

Boris has spent the past 12 years helping others assemble the missing pieces in their own knowledge of the Bible. As Walk Thru the Bible’s training director for the former Soviet countries, he focuses on equipping pastors and leaders to teach God’s Word in their communities. By far, his greatest challenge is reaching young people. “Younger generations consider the Bible to be old and irrelevant,” Boris says. “They have Bibles that sit on bookshelves. They’re disengaged.” Undeterred, he strives to “present a vision worth following” to the young people he meets and trains.

In May 2018, Walk Thru the Bible’s European leaders gathered in Kiev for the launch of *Revolution*, a new resource on the life of King Josiah. Boris and his team collaborated with other churches and ministries in the area to bring in more than 500 people for the launch, most between the ages of 18 and 23. By expanding partnerships with youth-oriented leaders, Boris plays a central role in widening Walk Thru the Bible’s audience.

In light of the success of events like the *Revolution* launch, Boris is searching for more opportunities to raise up young leaders to teach events and train instructors. “I’m kind of an emeritus youth minister,” he says. “I’m full of energy, and I’m a challenge-taker. But since we are focusing and intensifying our force toward youth, we need to become younger as a team.”

While recruiting younger coworkers remains an ongoing challenge, Boris is encouraged by the impact that *Revolution* and other biblical resources are making. “When we split the Bible into stories, it becomes more tangible for youth and releases the energy of transformation,” he reflects. “They learn principles and incorporate them into their lives. If we can reach younger generations, we can reach the landscape of communities and greater society. If we change churches, we can impact communities. If we impact communities, we can impact societies.”

MORE THAN A TOUR

More than a year has passed since Steve and Tina Hood visited the Bible lands, but they still remember their experience in vivid detail.

In October 2017, the Hoods joined two leaders and 25 other participants on *Walk Thru the Bible Lands*, Walk Thru the Bible's first tour from the U.S. "It's something we've always wanted to do," says Tina. "We wanted a tour to help make the Bible come alive, and we had a lot of confidence in Walk Thru to make it more than just a tour."

Steve and Tina agree that visiting the area surrounding the Sea of Galilee was one of the highlights of their eight days in Israel. "They took us up to the Golan Heights and we could see the entire Sea of Galilee," Steve remembers. "That's where Jesus did most of His ministry. We were standing right where He preached the Sermon on the Mount and drove out demons from the herd of pigs." Tina appreciated the fact that "the Sea of Galilee is the Sea of Galilee, so you didn't have to guess or assume where it all took place. You knew Jesus and His disciples were there."

Walk Thru the Bible Lands was more than a vacation for the Hoods—it was an opportunity to encounter God in a different way. "We had a lot of time spent in meditation and prayer," says Tina. "That was an amazing part of the tour. Even on the bus, we had quiet time to reflect on what we had seen." When the group visited the north shore of the Sea of Galilee in Capernaum, they prayed and worshiped. "It was powerful," says Tina. "We were sitting there on the beach and we

knew our Lord and Savior had been there." This was the same shore where Jesus, after His Resurrection, prepared a meal for Peter. "It was very moving," says Steve. "I felt very close to the Lord. He was speaking to me."

Since they returned home in Indiana, Steve and Tina have read the Bible through a different lens. "It's a matter of being able to put things in better perspective," Steve reflects. "Whenever you can see something for yourself, it makes it real and familiar." For Tina, it's little details that illuminate the biblical story. "The cities the Bible talks about are closer together than I realized, so it makes more sense to read about Jesus and His disciples walking from place to place," she says. "It also became clear why Jesus used the illustrations He did. The story about a woman who couldn't find her lost coin made more sense when you saw the rock floors of the houses."

For Steve, the trip was worth every penny. "Our leaders did a fantastic job. The quality of the history and teaching we were able to experience was very high," he says. "I would recommend *Walk Thru the Bible Lands* to anyone," agrees Tina. "We always felt safe. We stayed in nice hotels, and we ate quite well. But it was more than that. It brought the Bible to life like never before, which in turn drew us closer to God. It was more than just a tour."

If you're interested in traveling to the Bible lands with Walk Thru the Bible, visit:
www.walkthruthebibllelands.org.





TREES IN AN APPLE

Guy & Marsha East

Nearly fifteen years ago, Guy and Marsha East were searching for ways to extend their ministry impact beyond their local community in Westfield, Indiana. When a friend introduced them to Walk Thru the Bible, they latched on to the concept of spiritual multiplication. “We were fascinated by the idea of teachers teaching teachers,” Guy remembers. “This multiplication effect was something we’d never really seen before.”

Walk Thru the Bible’s spiritual multiplication strategy, laid out in 2 Timothy 2:2, appealed to the Easts because of their particular passion for equipping under-resourced pastors. “Walk Thru’s ministry to under-resourced pastors touches my heart,” says Marsha. “I think about how fortunate we are to have the things we need to know at our fingertips. I’m struck by the number of people who don’t. How can they teach the truth if they don’t know the truth?”

“You have the informed and able who are helping the uninformed and

unable,” says Guy. “This is God’s Kingdom at work. The Kingdom grows constantly, so there is always a new influx of pastors. Walk Thru the Bible’s materials are needed, relevant, and available. It will be amazing to see the ministry’s impact in heaven one day.”

“This ministry changes the world with biblical truth,” agrees Marsha. When she and Guy think about their son and his family, who serve as missionaries near the U.S.-Mexican border, they’re grateful for ministries like Walk Thru the Bible for providing opportunities for biblical learning and discipleship in difficult environments.

From their perspective, one of the most pressing tasks facing Walk Thru the Bible’s ministry is sharing biblical resources and training opportunities with an even wider audience. “I think the biggest challenge is how to let a new pastor, or an under-resourced pastor, know about Walk Thru’s resources,” says Guy. “The impact that electronic media could have globally

could ignite even more of a wildfire. This is a time-sensitive thing. We’ve got to get the Word of God out as quickly as possible.”

Guy and Marsha are excited to see the fruits of Walk Thru the Bible’s ongoing efforts to digitize its resources and update its channels of communication. Even now, though, “It’s amazing to see what Walk Thru does with such a small budget,” Guy concludes. “It would be amazing to see what would happen if the budget were twice what it is now. What if it were 10 times as much?”

The Easts’ enthusiasm for Walk Thru the Bible’s ministry has grown as the spiritual multiplication effect continues to run its course, creating extensive networks of trained leaders who are equipped to train others. “There’s a saying that applies to the number of lives impacted by Walk Thru the Bible’s ministry model,” says Guy. “You can count the apples on a tree, but you can’t count the trees in an apple.”



As I reflect on 2018, I think about the stories I heard and the people I met through my role at Walk Thru the Bible. For the second year in a row, I had the opportunity to travel to Amman, Jordan, for our ministry’s annual Middle East-North Africa conference. This year, we hosted 68 men and women from 12 countries. I won’t remember all of their names and faces, but I’ll remember the passion they exuded when they worshipped God every morning. I’ll remember how hungrily they studied the biblical resources we shared with them. Many face a severe shortage of practical resources to equip them to preach. Others experience relentless persecution in their everyday lives. They cling to biblical truth because they know that God’s Word will sustain them. And they know that Walk Thru the Bible will walk alongside them and help them live out God’s Word.

For me, the most rewarding aspect of my job is meeting people whose lives have changed because of Walk Thru the Bible’s investment in them. With your faithful support, our ministry touched more than three million lives this year. There’s no way to measure the impact that these three million will go on to have in their homes, churches, workplaces, and communities. That life transformation couldn’t happen without you.

Thank you for the many ways you’ve partnered with Walk Thru the Bible to ignite passion for God’s Word in 2018. As we move into 2019, I’m excited to see what doors God opens to expand His Kingdom through our ministry. I pray that you’ll be a part of it.

Sincerely,

Michael Gunnin
Vice President for Advancement



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IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *PATHWAYS*:

In Kenya, more than 20 percent of the population is between 15 and 24 years old. Young people enjoy a higher level of education and global connection than previous generations, but many lack a solid biblical foundation. Walk Thru the Bible is working hard to equip youth leaders to make disciples and influence their society with the Word of God.



Discover more about Walk Thru the Bible at
WWW.WALKTHRU.ORG