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### **Fieldnotes, Volume 3**

Stories of the gospel transforming lives

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GoodSeed® International  
P.O. Box 3704, Olds, Alberta, Canada  
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# Acknowledgments

In this third volume of *Fieldnotes*, we rejoice once more to read about these journeys to faith. We thank the Lord for the work that he continues to do through his Word and we are grateful to all who took the time to share their stories with us. I would like to give my thanks to the GoodSeed staff for gathering these notes from the field.

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General Editor:	Amos Kwok
Editors:	Michelle Hiebert
	Naomi Johnstone
	David Cross
	Jennifer Kwok
Proofreaders:	Alan White
	Janice Cross
	Naomi Johnstone
Book Design:	Rachel Bader
	Michelle Hiebert
	Naomi Johnstone

John R. Cross  
General Director  
GoodSeed International



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# Foreword

A 90-year-old man wrote me an email. “I am just finishing reading your publication: *Fieldnotes Volume 2*. I believe your material is just what I have been looking for in my ministry of outreach.” I started an email correspondence and he related that he was halfway through *Fieldnotes* and was challenged to share it with a friend soon. He asked for more information about the resources we had and in the end, I sent him a copy of *By This Name* to help him get further acquainted with our gospel materials.

He wrote, “Blessings to you as well, dear brother! I look forward to reading the book you are sending. I suspect that I will be wanting to give this book out to my unsaved friends. Thanks to your most generous heart. May our Lord bless you today and every day. YBIC, Richard.”

YBIC. Your brother in Christ. I sat back in my chair and felt a warm glow in my heart. At GoodSeed, we work to encourage believers to become active ambassadors of Christ, to cultivate a lifelong lifestyle of sharing the good news. Here was Richard, turning 90 in a few months, and he was inspired by the testimonies of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who have shared the good news with the people in their lives. Richard was so moved that, though he hadn’t finished reading *Fieldnotes*, he took action to get himself prepared to share the gospel with his friends. I suppose being 90, his friends might not have much time left to hear the most important message

in the world: how sinful man can be reconciled to a holy God and gain an eternal life with the Creator of the universe.

Richard was moved into action by the testimonies of other ordinary believers—men and women who are daily compelled by the love of Christ to share his life-giving message with those they care about. And many have graciously shared with us their stories of how God has used them to make an eternal difference in the lives of friends and loved ones. In this third volume of *Fieldnotes*, you'll meet more of them: from a mother and daughter reaching out to a hurting neighbour, to an ordinary couple sharing the good news via Skype, and even an international student taking the gospel back to his hometown in China. As you read these accounts, may you too be moved like Richard to say, "I feel ready to do ministry."

Amos Kwok  
General Editor  
GoodSeed International



## Note to readers

The following are true-life stories as told to GoodSeed staff. These testimonies were first published on the GoodSeed blog. This anthology contains a mix of stories about people giving away one of our resources or someone guiding a friend through the gospel message.

All names are pseudonyms. Places and locations are as reported, but some details have been redacted for privacy reasons.





# Why shouldn't I put a bullet in my head?

Ian's voice over the phone was laced with despair. "Give me one good reason why I shouldn't put a bullet in my head."

On the other end of the call, Peter could tell that Ian meant what he said. He knew this wasn't a random comment. Ian's suicidal depression was the result of a life gone completely awry.

In those brief moments before Peter answered, he thought of Ian's failing health caused by a workplace accident. He had gone from being very robust and active to being physically and mentally incapacitated. Peter remembered how Ian had lost his job, friends, family and very identity as a result. His friends had abandoned him, his wife had divorced him and his children had turned against him.

Peter also thought back over the last year and the input he had been able to have in Ian's life. He had spent a lot of time with him, helping him meet practical and physical needs. He had Ian in for meals, assisted him with legal matters and had just been a friend. It had taken a long time to gain Ian's trust, and now it looked like Peter finally would have the opportunity to share the gospel with Ian.

“Ian,” Peter said, “I get it. Right now, life really stinks. You and I know that. We’re not in denial about the mess or the

**“When life stinks, you  
have to understand it  
from the perspective of  
the Creator of life.”**

awfulness that you’re going through. We can’t say it’s not bad. It *is* bad. When life stinks as bad as it does right now, there’s only one way you can make sense of it. You have to

understand it from the perspective of the Creator of life. I would love an opportunity to get together and explain it to you. It will take some time, but if you let me, I’d like to do it.”

Peter glanced at his calendar. “Look, Ian, I get back home on Tuesday. I’ll see you Wednesday morning. But you have to promise me you won’t shoot yourself.”

The two men did get together that Wednesday and Peter introduced Ian to *By This Name*. He explained how this book would give Ian that one good reason why he shouldn’t end his life.

They started getting together every other day for about 90 minutes at a time, going through *By This Name* chapter by chapter. When Peter’s friend began teaching a group through *By This Name* at a local coffee shop, Peter and Ian joined them. This gave Ian the chance to sit back and listen, while enjoying the companionship of others in the group.

Once they had started into the book, there was no holding Ian back. He thoroughly enjoyed it. At the end of the book, Ian was saved. The despair and suicidal depression never came back. Although the grief and loss were still real, Ian was now at peace with God.

Peter continued to disciple Ian and took him to a church that readily accepted him as he was. Ian loved to get together with other believers and enjoyed the fellowship. In the past, he had some very bad experiences with the church, but this was all so very different. His whole disposition had changed and he was basking in his new-found spiritual peace.

Ian's health took a turn for the worse and it wasn't long before he passed away. Before he died, Peter contacted Ian's ex-wife. She brought their children in to see him a final time, resulting in an emotional reconciliation.

**"I know God is at peace about me, because Jesus made peace for me."**

Shortly before Ian passed away, Peter sat with him and asked him, "Ian, is God at peace about you?"

Ian nodded. "Yeah, he is."

Peter asked, "How in the world can you say that, with everything that's happened?"

Ian replied, "I know God is at peace about me, because Jesus made peace for me."

As Peter thinks over his friendship with Ian, he realizes how critical it was to first build a friendship with Ian. It would have been so easy to just jump in and throw God at Ian without some context—the right context—but the gospel would have gone nowhere without Ian's trust in Peter. He'd never have opened up. What's more, a quick gospel presentation would have confused him. The time that Peter invested in building a friendship of trust with Ian was well worth it. But he sounds

a note of caution. “Being a friend of the world is compromise; being a friend of sinners is compassion.” Because of Peter’s patience and faithful friendship, Ian was willing to open up and listen to what Peter had to say about life from God’s perspective. And, in the end, Ian’s life had gone from one of suicidal despair to one of hope and peace right up till he met his Saviour, face to face.

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**Romans 15:13 NIV**

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

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# This can't wait!

Wei Min, you need to come home urgently. Your grandmother might not last long!"

When he received the phone call from his parents, Wei Min's heart grew heavy. Not only was he concerned about his grandmother's health, he had a much deeper concern—he was worried about her spiritual state.

As an overseas Chinese student, Wei Min had the opportunity to learn about Christianity and had become a believer just a couple of years ago. Now as he packed to go home to China, he was anxious about how to broach the subject of the gospel with his ailing grandmother. Since coming to Christ, he hadn't found himself in this position before and he was at a loss as to how to talk to her about Christ. One thing he did know—time was short and this would be his one and only opportunity to address her eternal destiny.

Looking for direction in his Bible, he kept coming upon verses which had the theme of "Rejoice!" *How irrelevant*, he thought. What did rejoicing have to do with this distressing situation in which he found himself?

Arriving home in China, he travelled to the hospital to see his grandmother. Shock swept over him upon entering the hospital room. He realized how frail she'd become. She no longer had any strength to move her body. She was unable to talk and her eyes remained closed most of the time.

*This can't wait!* Wei Min thought to himself. But with his grandmother so frail and with so little biblical knowledge, how could he express the Bible's great message of hope and assurance in a way she could understand?

**How could he express the Bible's great message of hope and assurance in a way she could understand?**

He went home to collect a few things so he could remain at the hospital with her overnight. As he grabbed his Bible, an idea formed in his head as to the best way to approach the gospel with his grandmother.

Wei Min recalled his time at a GoodSeed TERM Seminar some months earlier. There he'd learned how to explain the Bible's main message from creation through to the cross, laying down a foundation of understanding to help a person come to a clear understanding of the gospel. During the seminar, GoodSeed staff had taught through the book *By This Name*. Wei Min wished he had a copy with him now. But he remembered how he'd been taught, so he knew he could use the same approach.

When the hospital staff had completed his grandmother's treatment, Wei Min sat down and began to teach his precious



grandmother, starting in Genesis. Even as he finished sharing with her about how the world came into being, he realized he'd captured her attention. Her eyes were fully open, her head was turned toward him and she was listening with rapt attention.

His father, who is not a believer, sat nearby, also listening. He later shared with Wei Min how he was so surprised at how the simple information that Wei Min had shared caused such a change. It had been many days since the dying grandmother had opened her eyes for such a long time.

His father said, "Really! This is happening?!" He was astonished at the transformation taking place as Wei Min began to share the Bible's story.

That first day, Wei Min was only able to get through the account of creation and how Adam and Eve had chosen to sin against God. Seeing that his grandmother was tired, he felt it best to continue the next day.

That night, Wei Min stayed at the hospital with her. As he sat in the room, Wei Min became alarmed as he witnessed the critical condition of her heart, as the heart rate monitor frequently recorded serious episodes taking place. *There are only hours left*, he thought.

**He was astonished at the transformation taking place as Wei Min began to share the Bible's story.**

The next day, he pressed on with greater urgency, teaching his grandmother a few basic stories from the Old Testament,

then moving on to share the message of Christ's death on the cross. After taking an hour to explain the significance of the empty cross and empty tomb, Wei Min's mother asked his grandmother, half-joking, "Did your grandson deliver the message right?"

As his grandmother sought out Wei Min's eyes, she nodded a very definite, "Yes."

More seriously, Wei Min's mother asked, "Do you understand what he is talking about?"

Once again, the slow nod came.

Wei Min questioned her, "So now, do you believe? And do you accept this love from Christ?"

She nodded once more—yes.

*Really? Really? Really? Really?* went through Wei Min's mind at that moment. *Really? I can share the message clearly and someone becomes a believer just like that? Okay, okay, okay!*

**"I can share the message clearly and someone becomes a believer just like that!"** As he prayed with his grandmother, excitement at her understanding filled his heart.

Over the next few days, Wei Min took every opportunity to ensure she really understood and believed. He painstakingly explained the gospel as clearly as he knew, guided by what he'd learned at the TERM Seminar. He was amazed at how his grandmother held on to everything he said. He later described her as "the most

sincere listener I have ever seen!" When Wei Min told her about the Last Supper, she began to cry. Then, when her heart rate began to spike, he hurried on to explain the rest of the story.

During this time, he began to sense a real peace about her. And he wasn't the only one to notice.

One of his uncles, also an unbeliever, had been observing this transformation since Wei Min's arrival. He became quite moved. He also commented on the change that had taken place in Wei Min himself since he had become a believer.

While Wei Min was at home, the uncle stopped by and requested a Bible so he could read this good news for himself. Wei Min was happy to supply him with one and knows that his uncle continues to read through God's Word on his own.

Wei Min's grandmother died not long after he was able to explain the gospel to her. He shared with us, "Now she actually knows more than I do about Jesus and God." He feels a great peace, knowing where his beloved grandmother is now. He also is immensely grateful to God that when the vital moment came to share the gospel, he knew right where to start and how to share.

**One of his uncles, also an unbeliever, had been observing this transformation since Wei Min's arrival... He also commented on the change in Wei Min since he had become a believer.**

Wei Min's final words in his email to us were, "Praise the LORD! HE is almighty and HE can heal our wounds and wipe our tears away from our eyes. REJOICE! HE has conquered the grave and brought life and glory to all of us!"

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**2 Corinthians 2:14-16 NIV**

*But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life.*

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# From India to Latin America... and to faith in Jesus

Often the means by which a person comes to faith in Christ are unexpected and unique. For Dhiya, it meant moving halfway across the world.

Weston and Clara are cross-cultural missionaries in Latin America. As part of their ministry, they teach English as a second language and enjoy welcoming the students into their home. The couple loves building relationships with people and are excited to see their students studying the Bible on their own and with others.

Recently they discovered that their ministry is not just to the Latino community. At a barbecue hosted by their ministry co-workers, Clara met a lovely young woman named Dhiya. She and her husband Rais had come from India on temporary work visas. The missionary felt drawn to the younger woman, but was amazed when Dhiya impulsively took hold of her hands and said, "You need to come to my house!"

Clara immediately felt that this was God's way of opening a door for her to invest in Dhiya's life. She decided to visit the young woman at her apartment. That was the first of many

visits. In the beginning, they would just talk about Dhiya's cultural background.

**To Dhiya, Jesus was just another god—one of many in the medley in which she believed.**

One day Clara arrived to find her friend cleaning her traditional altar. This gave the two of them an opportunity to talk about Dhiya's religion. Gradually Dhiya opened her heart more and shared that her grandmother had been a Christian. Although Dhiya maintained her identity with her eastern religion, she had gone to church with her grandmother many times as she grew up. However to Dhiya, Jesus was just another god—one of many in the medley in which she believed.

Eventually, Clara and Dhiya started reading the gospel of Mark together. But it was difficult for Dhiya, with English as her second language. So Clara decided to use a copy of *The Lamb* instead. She had been previously introduced to *The Lamb* back home in the States by friends who also used it in an ESL program. Weston and Clara had personally found the book very helpful in their own ministry, using it as the basis for family Bible studies.

From the beginning, Dhiya loved *The Lamb* because of its simple English and beautiful pictures. The two women would read together each chapter and then go through the questions. When they came to the end of the book, they read through the prayer—a personal expression of trust in Jesus as Saviour. As they finished, Dhiya said, "I did that!"

When Clara asked her what she meant, Dhiya explained that she had prayed a similar prayer at her grandmother's church in India. But she had not fully understood why Jesus came to die until she had read *The Lamb*. Dhiya went on to say that she didn't realize that Jesus was the one true God until now. She had always had questions about her traditional religion, but never had anyone with whom she could discuss what she was thinking. Now that she knew who Jesus was and why he came to die, she believed Jesus to be her Lamb, her Saviour.

Clara and Dhiya continued to study Mark together. One day Dhiya told Clara that she wanted to get baptized. This was a major decision for her, because in India, baptism is a public statement that one had become a Christian and had left one's old belief system behind. At first, the missionaries were hesitant to follow through with Dhiya's request. Rais was accepting of Dhiya's faith, but was not ready to make a similar decision. Weston and Clara did not want to offend Rais by baptizing his wife.

**Dhiya went on to say that she didn't realize that Jesus was the one true God until now.**

Dhiya loved her husband but wanted to obey God more. And Rais did not resist her decision. He said to her, "You know how serious this is? When you make this decision, you'll have to stick with it."

Dhiya was firm. Yes, this is what she wanted to do. So one rainy afternoon, she was baptized in the backyard of one of the missionaries' homes.

Dhiya loves to continue to learn more about Jesus. She is so amazed that God brought her halfway around the world so she could have someone answer her questions about him. The Bible promises that those who seek God will find him and Clara is thrilled to have been able to be part of that journey for Dhiya.

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**Jeremiah 29:13 ESV**

*You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*

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## Don't stop!

Summer Bible camp. How Megan loved the week-long escape into the quiet of nature! The rustic cabins nestled among the evergreens, the liveliness of the campers, the crackling bonfires in the evening... It was all one big highlight. But there was something that brought even more joy to Megan, and that was watching God at work in the hearts of the campers.

When Megan was asked to be a main speaker at a girls' Bible camp, she was more than willing to oblige. She also knew what she would talk about. Ever since she had attended a TERM Seminar, she had been sharing the gospel using a creation-to-Christ approach. She decided to use the five days of camp to do this once again.

That week there were about 40 girls in attendance, ranging from ages 11 to 14. On the first morning of chapel, Megan looked them over as they sat, whispering and giggling, in their rows in chapel. She was filled with such a love for each one of these bright-eyed girls, from so many backgrounds, with such varied personalities. Megan prayed that God would use her words to bring understanding of his love and salvation.

Megan spent the first few mornings on the Old Testament stories—creation, Adam and Eve’s sin, the flood. The day Megan told the story of Noah’s ark was the only day they had rain, and rain it did. But then the sky broke into a beautiful rainbow in the afternoon. It was as though God was providing the visual aids!

**This girl had grown up in a Christian home but had never understood salvation before.**

Megan’s morning talks were not the only times during which the girls heard the story of salvation, beginning with creation and concluding with Christ. Each evening for devotions, the counsellors read *The Lamb* to their campers. The positive response was very encouraging. Some of the girls had never heard about the Lord before and were eager to learn more. They were all into the book, excited about it and asking questions. “Don’t stop! We want to hear more!” they said when it was time for the counsellors to wrap up the evening. If the girls had their way, the counsellors would have read through the night.

At one of the evening campfire talks, one of the speakers warned of God’s wrath against sin and reminded the girls of the importance of God’s way. Megan appreciated how he clearly summarized the gospel. She was even more delighted the next day when one of the campers told her that she had come to Christ as a result of his talk. This girl had grown up in a Christian home but had never understood salvation before.

Megan tied the puzzle pieces together again for the girls in her final talk of the week. She explained and reviewed just what Jesus had accomplished. At the end, Megan asked the girls, "If you die tonight, do you know where you will go?"

One little girl shot up her hand. "Heaven!"

"How do you know?" Megan asked her.

The little girl's declaration was confident: "Because Jesus covered my sin!"

Later, another girl came to Megan. She said that she had always thought she was a Christian but, actually, had only been saved that afternoon while she was in her seat!

By the end of the week, six girls made clear professions of faith in Jesus. God had been answering Megan's prayers. She knew that he would be faithful to continue to work in the lives of each one of these girls, even after camp. "You just never know what is going on in the lives of these precious ones for whom Jesus came to save," she said. Megan is just glad she was able to be one of God's ambassadors to lead these girls to know and believe him.

---

**Psalm 13:5-6 ESV**

*But I have trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.  
I will sing to the LORD,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.*

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# Can there be hope for such a man?

Sometimes we are tempted to view certain individuals around us as “lost causes,” too far gone or too hardened to ever be reached by the gospel. Terrence was such a man. Hearing how his life has played out, one would be tempted to think there was no hope for him. He was a drunk and suffered from depression. Occasionally, he would explode into a fit of angry violence. And he was serving a long, long sentence in a maximum security prison for a double murder. Can there be hope for such a man?

Terrence’s story began with his father Malcolm. At an early age, Malcolm was exposed to the Bible and believed its simple message as a child. But life quickly choked out his fledgling faith and he never developed a walk with the Lord. As an adult, he became addicted to alcohol. Eventually, his marriage fell apart and he became estranged from his children. Terrence was so ashamed of his father that he even changed his name.

Years later, Malcolm became involved in a Bible study where *The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus* videobook was being used. As a result, he came back to the Lord and began a much-delayed journey of walking with his Saviour.

But for Terrence, he remained alienated from his father. His life took a difficult route. Like his father before him, Terrence struggled with alcohol and was abusive in his relationships. One day, in a fit of rage, he committed murder while intoxicated. Terrence was arrested for his crimes and the court sentenced him to a long prison term.

**He could  
now stop  
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with hope.**

It was through this horrific situation that Terrence was reunited with his father. Malcolm longed to give his son the same hope he had received. He wanted to give Terrence *The Stranger* book but the prison authorities would not allow it. They did, however, allow Terrence to order his own copy online. He read through the book, allowing the Bible to speak for itself. And

God worked a miracle; as he finished reading it, Terrence put his trust in Christ for salvation. He was now a believer. He could now stop wallowing in the past and look ahead to the future with hope.

Shortly after, Terrence was moved to a maximum security prison where he found out that the chaplain was using *The Stranger* to lead a Bible study. He was amazed and thrilled. He grew in his faith and it wasn't too long before he signed up for a theology class while in prison. Since then, Terrence has continued to grow in his walk with the Lord.

Though his journey through life has been filled with storms and littered with bad choices, Terrence was not beyond the reach of the loving God of the Bible. His story is a blessed

reminder that God's Word is powerful, able to reach to the uttermost. What's more, his father Malcolm has given copies of *The Stranger* to his estranged wife and Terrence's brother. Both are reading the book and expressing interest in what they are learning. We pray that God would give them understanding and belief. We know he is a God of grace and mercy, who desires to welcome any person as his son or daughter.

---

**Colossians 1:21-22 NIV**

*Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.*

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# Arranging their lives around the gospel

GoodSeed staff member Tom hung up the phone and stared at the hastily scribbled notes in his small notebook. Joy gripped his heart as he considered all that the Lord had been doing through the faithful witness of one couple, Ron and Laura. Tom had conducted a training session some years ago that the two of them had attended. It had made such an impact that they went home and began rearranging their lives so they could be more active in sharing the gospel.

Laura had told Tom over the phone, “Ron used to work construction on job sites long distances from home, which made it difficult for him to be involved in these studies. But God has helped us rearrange our lives so that he now has a job only two minutes away.”

Laura said, “This is the easiest thing we have done with our lives...but not the quickest.” Sharing a clear gospel with others takes time, but the results are worth it. Both Ron and Laura felt that the tools provided by GoodSeed gave their outreach a greater impact.

Laura said, “When you learn to share the gospel [with these tools] it simplifies your life ... you know what to do!”

Tom marvelled at what the couple had done. He smiled as he reviewed the stories they had shared with him.

### Jayne and Will

First there was Jayne, Ron and Laura’s neighbour. Jayne had a young son, Will, who was struggling through cancer treatment. As she bared her heart to Laura regarding her son’s rare childhood cancer and the special treatment centre they hoped to get him into, the mother also shared how young Will had been asking difficult questions. Questions about life, God, death... Jayne didn’t know the answers herself, but she desperately wanted to know how to comfort her son. Laura stepped through that open door of opportunity and offered to read *The Lamb* to Will. Jayne appreciated her willingness, and so Laura and Will read through the book together, resulting in the young cancer patient trusting Jesus as his perfect lamb.

**Laura stepped through that open door of opportunity and offered to read *The Lamb* to Will.** Soon, Laura was able to invite Jayne to attend a study of *The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus*. At the end of the study, Jayne became a believer too. As they reviewed the chapters that wrapped up the gospel story, they noticed Will hovering in the background, listening to their discussion. Later, Will’s grandmother arrived for a visit and sat down to chat with

Will. Laura shared, “The things he was saying were echoing the review!” Little Will was teaching his grandma the gospel.

Now, Ron and Laura are teaching Jayne’s husband and mother through the content of *The Stranger*. Jayne herself hopes to hold a Bible club in her home, taking her son’s friends through the story of *The Lamb*.

Tom was amazed at the open doors they were seeing. But there was more.

### Shan, Greg and Tim

Laura teaches English at a nearby university. Through one of her Chinese students, she had an opportunity to lead a *By This Name* study with a Chinese family: Shan, Greg and their son, Tim.

Shan shared that she had attended church simply because she enjoyed the music. She’d

convinced her husband to join her, but neither of them had gained any real understanding of the gospel. But upon studying *By This Name* with Laura, both chose to trust Jesus for their eternal salvation.

**Greg is teaching his next-door neighbour through it, just as he himself had been taught.**

Now Greg has taken his copy of the book and is teaching his next-door neighbour through it, just as he himself had been taught. When someone suggested to Greg that he should consider being a pastor upon his return to China, he responded, “I think I’d like that!”

## Keong

As Tom continued reviewing his notes, he was taken by another story that Ron and Laura had shared. Keong was a middle-aged Chinese man. Laura, along with the help of new

believer Greg, had taken Keong through *By This Name*. Keong had asked numerous questions, often because his limited English made it hard for him to follow. One day he showed up at their study with a new Bible he'd purchased. "Do other Chinese people know about this ancient book? Here I am, 42 years old and I'm just now hearing about it!"

years old, and I'm just now hearing about it!" He asked to go through *By This Name* a second time, this time looking up verses in his new Bible.

"What do you think?" Laura asked during one study session.

"I believe," came Keong's quiet reply.

"Do you want to pray and tell this to God?" Laura asked him. Leong's prayer was simple: "Xie xie, YAHWEH." "Thank you, YAHWEH," he had said.

Tom was thankful to the Lord for these testimonies. God had promised that his Word would not return void, and these accounts were abundant evidence of God's faithfulness. Laura's parting words on the phone were: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16 NASB).

Indeed, Ron and Laura are good examples of believers taking their faith and their roles as ambassadors seriously. They had reordered their lives for the sake of the gospel and the Lord has blessed their efforts with fruit.

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**Titus 3:4-7 ESV**

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

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## A message from Bethlehem

The faint sound of the Muslim call to prayer from Bethlehem's mosque blended curiously with the warbling of a bird outside the open window. Nasir's fingers hovered over the computer keyboard. He looked at the screen and read what he had written so far:

"Dear sir, I am so honoured and glad that you wrote to me. What I said about the book was not just nice comments. It was the truth."

*Now how to articulate just what he felt.* He thought back to when he had first received a copy of *All that the Prophets have Spoken*. He remembered meeting Dale at a wedding of a mutual friend. They began talking about how Nasir had come to Christ. As a parting gift, Dale had given him a copy of *All the Prophets*, saying it had been written with the Muslim worldview in mind. This had immediately triggered Nasir's interest. While Nasir had not been raised Muslim, he lived in the West Bank, in the heart of the Middle East, and knew from experience that reaching Muslims with the gospel was a challenging task.

It hadn't taken Nasir long to read the book. He had emailed Dale to tell him that he thought it was very helpful and

useful, and that he would appreciate it if Dale could send his regards to the writer. Nasir was convinced that *All the Prophets* would be extremely helpful to Muslims—to help them understand the reason Jesus had come to earth. He

**“I live with 98%  
of Muslims and  
this book will  
open their eyes.”**

wanted to encourage the author and to find out whether the book was available in other languages.

Dale had passed Nasir’s email on to John Cross, who ended up responding directly to Nasir. Now Nasir had the opportunity to tell him just what he thought of the book and its potential in the Middle Eastern world he called home.

He continued typing:

“Your book is an awesome book and it will have a great impact on the people who read it. I can say that because I live with 98% of Muslims and this book will open their eyes. It is so clear and easy to understand.”

Nasir paused again. John had asked him how he had become a believer. He thought back to his upbringing in a traditional setting and how he had considered himself a Christian simply because he went to church and performed the ceremonial rituals that were required of him. He had no idea what real Christianity was until he won a scholarship to a Christian university in the States.

He smiled as he remembered the culture shock of those first months:



“I hated the rules, the worship and the church. It was totally different from what I came from. Many people were preaching the gospel to me but I thought that I was a better Christian than they were.”

He paused once more, shaking his head over how confused he had been. Then he smiled again and continued typing:

“One day, after two and a half years of fighting, God got hold of me and I started to read the Bible. After that I got saved. Since then all my life has changed. An 180 degree change occurred in my life and, since then, my goal is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ wherever I go.”

And that was why he was so excited about *All that the Prophets have Spoken*. Here was a resource—a tool—for his culture, his people, his time. John had told him that it was translated into Arabic and this only made Nasir more excited. He wanted to give it to his neighbours and friends. To see it distributed across the Middle East. To see many lives transformed by the gospel through it.

**Here was a resource—a tool—for his culture, his people, his time.**

But there was something more he wanted to tell John. As he brought the email to a close, he wanted to emphasize just what *All the Prophets* had done for him personally:

“Thank you so much for this great book. It helped me a lot, as a Christian even, to understand God’s plan in a better and more organized way.”

Not only had it given him an easy-to-use and clear resource to share the gospel with his own people, it had also strengthened his own faith and equipped him to be better prepared to share Jesus with others. For this he was grateful.

The muezzin's call to prayer was over now and the bird had taken its singing elsewhere. As the afternoon shadows lengthened and the warm breeze brought the heightened sounds of city traffic, Nasir finished his email:

“God bless you and keep you. Keep up the good work.

Your brother in Christ,

Nasir from Bethlehem”

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**Psalm 86:9-10 NIV**

*All the nations you have made will come*

*and worship before you, Lord;*

*they will bring glory to your name.*

*For you are great and do marvelous deeds;*

*you alone are God.*

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# The best weekend of my entire life

It's an idyllic village nestled in an out-of-the-way corner along the north Atlantic coast. On this early spring evening, a group of about 15 people, ranging from teenagers to middle-aged, have just completed a weekend retreat. They are eagerly anticipating an upcoming missions trip to Central America. The weekend has proven to be pivotal in their preparation as they have spent two and a half days together, getting to know each other and being established in the message of the gospel.

"I wanted to join the mission team to increase my faith in God. This weekend has done that for me." This comes from Vicky, one of the teenaged participants who is typically very reticent about expressing herself in public.

Samuel, a man in his 50s, is even more enthusiastic: "This weekend was literally the best weekend of my entire life."

What made this weekend so special? For one thing, it was a great group of people. It was also a well-planned event. But the backbone of the weekend—and the highlight for everyone—was what they studied together: the gospel itself, from creation right through to the Cross.

Evan is an elder in the church and one of the missions team leaders. He takes discipleship very seriously and to prepare for the upcoming missions trip, he wanted to do something special. He wanted to somehow give the group a comprehensive overview of the Bible—yes, in one weekend. A Google search brought him to GoodSeed’s website and he was drawn to the Worldview Rethink course with *By This Name*. He wanted something that

**He wanted to somehow give the group a comprehensive overview of the Bible—yes, in one weekend.**

“put the pieces of the puzzle together” and the course seemed to fit the bill perfectly. Evan also loved the modern look and feel of the materials. The missions team was a varied audience and *By This Name* would appeal to all. He decided they would go through the full curriculum at the retreat, fitting it into six consecutive sessions.

A lofty goal? Perhaps, but as Evan says, “The theme for the weekend was ‘Growing, learning and enduring together.’ The whole idea of the weekend was for our mission team, who will experience tougher conditions down in [Central America], to be able to grow together in the Word of God, learn together to have a solid foundation in the gospel before we go, and also ‘endure’ with each other for the weekend in somewhat cramped quarters, an environment away from home we are not used to, as well as getting through a large volume of information (an entire book on the Bible’s primary message!) in a single weekend. In the end, this brought us much closer together as a team and certainly accomplished and exceeded our expectations.”

But that does not mean the team did not rest and have fun. On the contrary, the schedule allowed for leisure, games and even a movie night. Evan's wife and some other team members' spouses came in and prepared all the meals for them. This ended up being a great help and meant the team could focus more on the weekend.

It was a very focused time. With over 15 hours of material to cover, there wasn't much time left for group discussion or questions. At first, this seemed a little unfortunate to some of the participants. But by the time the weekend was done, everyone was glad they had moved through the course at the steady pace they had. It kept the continuity of the story moving along.

One of the participants described the experience as "saturated with God." It was like an immersive soak in the Bible's message of redemption and salvation.

**One of the participants described the experience as "saturated with God."**

The way they moved through the curriculum was very straightforward. Evan explains, "I and another team leader (who was also a good reader) each had a leader's guide which shows some text in grey and some in white. I read the sections in white and she read the sections in grey. This worked really well. The other thing we did, right from the beginning, was have our 15 team members read the Scripture verses when they came up. We did this by just going 'around the circle' so the next person to the left knew they were up for the next Scripture verse. This also worked really well."

This interactive method was a big success. Evan goes on to say, “Even though we had a mixed bag of youth and adults, everybody got to participate. Especially the first night, it was so powerful reading all those Scripture verses about how glorious, wonderful and powerful God is.”

The other thing about going “around the circle” with team members reading Scripture verses was that it kept everyone focused and engaged. They knew their turn to read would be

**The feedback was phenomenal ... it was a life-changing experience for many.** coming soon, so they couldn't afford to let their mind wander. Having two leaders, each reading in turn, kept it varied enough so that people did not get bored. It also helped to watch the included video clips in which John Cross, author of *By This Name*, explains key concepts using visual aids and video footage from Israel.

As Evan reminisces about the weekend, he says, “The feedback we got from our mission team participants was phenomenal. I would go so far as to say it was a life-changing experience for many.”

The impact was great for both young and old. Take Vicky for example. She said, “I thought that, as a youth, I might not get that much out of this weekend and it would be more the adults who get the most out of it. Well, I have got so much out of it and I really understand the Bible's message now.”

Samuel also shared his experience in a debrief session. Already in his fifties, he said he had been attending church for much of his life and for the last five years had been trying to read the

Bible to figure out what he believed and why. He said that it was this course that finally pulled all the pieces together for him.

Evan says, “It was an excellent weekend and I am hoping to be able to take more people through the book either in groups or individual settings in the future. I pray that God will put people in my path to do so!”

As Evan’s testimony reveals, this missions group retreat is just one outflow of what God is doing in this Atlantic village. The white steeple of their church has graced the horizon for almost two centuries. The congregation likes to recall the richness of their history but, most of all, rejoices that the passage of time has not erased their spiritual vitality. In an era of megachurches, 150 regular attendees may seem insignificant, but there are those who know better. Statistically, the church should be dying and the building relegated to a historical trust society for safekeeping. Instead, people keep coming and learning of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. And then go out with that same gospel to share with the world outside—to Central America and beyond.

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**Romans 15:5-6 ESV**

*May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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# I don't want to be a Christian

The voice on the phone had a note of concern. “Mom, before you come over, I want to let you know that Mei Ling is coming over shortly. She’s really hurting and she’s coming over to talk.”

After her daughter hung up, Haley paused for a moment. She had been about to leave for Stephanie’s home to see her new grandson for the first time when the call came. Mei Ling was Stephanie’s neighbour and Haley had met her almost three years earlier. They had become well-acquainted with each other as they both were passionate about gardening. Mei Ling had shared a little about herself over the course of their friendship. Her parents were believers, but Mei Ling had never shown any interest in her parents’ faith. Though her parents had tried to take her and her siblings to church, Mei Ling had turned down their offers. Since she had been a child, she was more interested in herself. Now Haley wondered what was causing Mei Ling so much grief. All of a sudden, she felt the very strong urge to take along a copy of *By This Name*.

Haley arrived at Stephanie’s home which was some distance away. It wasn’t long before Mei Ling knocked on the door.

Over coffee, Mei Ling poured her heart out to Haley and Stephanie. Her life was full of trouble.

As Haley listened, she knew she didn't want to give her friend words of empty comfort. She knew that trite clichés had no value. "I wanted to offer her real hope." Haley wanted to share with Mei Ling the true hope found in the God of the Bible.

She decided to lay it on the line. She said to Mei Ling, "This world is full of trouble and we don't have a lot of hope in this world."

**"I don't want to  
be a Christian.  
But I've got some  
big questions for  
your God."**

Mei Ling's eyes flickered. She piped up, "That's me. I have no hope! You are so lucky, you have hope. You have your God, you've got your religion."

Haley gave a measured response. "We're not lucky ... It's just that we've chosen to put our hope in the living God."

Mei Ling shook her head as if to preempt Haley's invitation. "I don't want to be a Christian. But," she added with an edge to her voice, "I've got some big questions for your God."

Though Haley was unsure where Mei Ling was headed in the conversation, she replied confidently, "Well, God is a big God, and he can take your questions. He's not angry that you're upset. There are some big questions in life and there are pretty big answers." Then she added tenderly, "Why don't we find out those answers together?"

Mei Ling took a moment to consider Haley's offer. Then she nodded. "Yeah."

And so arrangements were made. Haley, Stephanie and Mei Ling would meet every Wednesday to do a study of *By*

*This Name*. The three women faithfully met each week, though they had to skip some sessions due to illness or other reasons. But Haley made sure the study continued.

As she had been taught, Haley used the leader's guide to lead the study. She followed the notes, playing the videos when the guide said to do so and pulling out visual aids whenever it was indicated. Haley had borrowed the visual aids from her church and they were a big help. "I'm a visual learner," she said, "so having the veggies or the brazen altar set out on the table helped a lot. Even though we'd seen them on the videos, the visual aids made such an impact when we saw them on the table."

The study made good progress as Mei Ling attended faithfully. Haley continued to lead, making sure her friend understood the unfolding gospel story by using the questions in the workbook.

"She's a very smart lady," Haley later commented about Mei Ling. "She rarely answered incorrectly—perhaps three times [throughout the study]." To keep the study objective, Haley never asked her friend if she believed what she was learning. She simply asked if Mei Ling understood. That was one of

Haley never asked her friend if she was believing what she was learning. She simply asked if Mei Ling understood.

the key instructions in the Worldview Rethink leader's guide: remain objective throughout the study and let the Holy Spirit do the work of convicting a person's heart.

"If you had asked me to guess, I wouldn't have been able to tell you one way or the other if she was believing," said Haley. Then, when they were more than halfway through the book, Mei Ling testified, "I believe there is a God and that he wants me to trust him!"

Haley's heart quickened. This was what she had been waiting to hear. The information about God was starting to make sense

**"If you had asked me to guess, I wouldn't have been able to tell you one way or the other if she was believing."**

for Mei Ling. "But what do you believe about Jesus?" asked Haley. Instantly, Mei Ling changed the topic of conversation. Haley wisely refrained from probing further.

Then the study reached the paramount chapter 14. This critical section of the book ties together the foundational Old Testament

accounts with the stories of Jesus so that the gospel made sense. Haley was concerned. She had an appointment later that day which meant she didn't have the luxury of time, but she was determined to complete the entire chapter in one sitting. In faith, Haley began working through the chapter. About one third of the way through, Haley could sense the change in Mei Ling.

"All the pieces of the puzzle are coming together," Mei Ling told Haley. In the kitchen where they were having the study,

all the visual aids were laid out on the table and they had such an impact. Haley was really thankful when they completed the chapter in time and she was glad to see Mei Ling still very eager to continue to study. "I don't want this to end!" commented her friend.

The next week at Stephanie's house was the critical decision-making moment: Chapter 15. This was the point in the book where the reader is asked,

"Will you trust Jesus as your personal Saviour—the one and only God-man who paid your sin-debt?" In the leader's guide, there is a line drawn across the page with a note to the leader that reads:

"Unless your student insists, do not continue to read the content in Section 1 below this line." When she got to the line, Haley hesitated.

Mei Ling looked up. "Why are we waiting? Let's move on." Haley could sense the eagerness in her voice.

"Mei Ling," said Haley cautiously, "I have to stop here and ask you a question. If you are not trusting in Jesus, then the rest of this section is not for you."

Her friend shot her a look of astonishment. "Of course I believe! How could I not? Jesus died on the cross for me. He paid the penalty for me." Then without warning, Mei Ling started to weep with tears of joy and relief.

**"Of course I believe!  
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The study halted for a moment. Stephanie jumped up from her chair and disappeared into another room. She returned with a parcel in her hands.

"I can't wait. I gotta give you this!" She handed Mei Ling a Bible.

"This is for me?" she asked in amazement. "How did you know I wanted a Bible?"

"I didn't!" came Stephanie's quick reply. "But I had faith," she added with a warm smile.

Mei Ling touched the cover of the Bible. "My very own Bible," she said in awe.

After they had settled down, Haley continue with the final chapter and finished the book. When they were done, Haley

**"It began with  
the realization  
that God is real.**

**Then he sent  
Jesus... And he  
died for me."**

asked Mei Ling, "When did you believe? Was it in an instant when you went from unbelief to belief? Or was it a process for you? Can you put a finger on a day?"

Mei Ling sat back in her chair and thought for a moment. "It was a process," she said. "It began with the realization that God is real. Then he sent Jesus... And he died for me. I realized there's nothing I can do."

Haley remembered that Mei Ling was going to visit her mother for her eightieth birthday in less than a month's time. "Are you going to tell your mom the good news on her birthday?"

Mei Ling shook her head. She said, “I will be phoning my mom as soon as I get home!”

After they shared a happy laugh, Haley told her friend that for months now, many people had been praying for her as she went through the study. Haley revealed that she’d even told the staff at GoodSeed about their study and they had been praying too.

“Do you think even John Cross was praying for me?” asked Mei Ling in surprise, referring to the author of the book. She was profoundly touched by the thought that so many people were concerned for her.

**“It was so exciting to see someone being born again. Such a powerful experience.”**

Haley asked, “Mei Ling, remember what you said four months ago, before we started studying together?”

Mei Ling shook her head. Haley said, “Remember you said, ‘I don’t want to be a Christian.’”

“I said that?” Mei Ling pointed to herself.

Haley nodded. She reminded her friend how she had said that she had some big questions for God. “Did God answer your questions?”

A big nod came from Mei Ling. “Oh yeah.”

Haley later related, “It was so exciting to see someone being born again. Such a powerful experience. I thought about it for days. She kept saying, ‘Thank you, thank you,’ over and over again. I told her, ‘Don’t thank me. Thank the Lord. He’s

**She'd always felt she didn't do enough to give her children a solid foundation in biblical truth.**

using me, he's using all the people involved in making the book, to help you understand the gospel.'"

Haley could see the work of the Holy Spirit going on in her friend's heart. Mei Ling shared that she now knew she had to forgive the people who had been hurting her all these months. "I know I have to do that," she said. "Jesus forgave me. I will have to forgive as well."

"Forgiving is not easy," Haley said, "Not for new or old believers. But God will give you the strength to forgive. It won't be dependent on your own power."

"Yes, you're right," said Mei Ling with a nod. Haley was encouraged to see that her friend was understanding spiritual things.

But the study didn't just benefit Mei Ling. Stephanie later said, "Mom, I learned so much from this book. After going through the study, I feel equipped to lead my own study."

For Haley, this was equally moving to hear. She recalled her younger days when she was a backslidden Christian. When her children were young, they had attended Sunday school and had been involved in church life, but she'd always felt she hadn't done enough to give her children a solid foundation in biblical truth. So Haley was very grateful that her own daughter had also benefitted from the study.

Now as Mei Ling looks ahead to the future, she's very eager to continue growing her faith. She's praying for the opportunity



to share the gospel with her husband and two adult children. She knows how to do it too, after experiencing how Haley led the study.

As for Haley, she's just thankful the Lord allowed her to be part of Mei Ling's spiritual journey. She's thankful for the time she's invested in learning the material. She feels equipped to share the good news about Jesus Christ at a moment's notice. She doesn't consider herself an expert teacher but now has the confidence to share. "If I can do it, then anybody can do it!"

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### **2 Corinthians 5:19-20 ESV**

*In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.*

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# It was the Bible stories the kids kept talking about

W elcome to Bible time! I'm so glad you are here! Every day we will hear a story from God's Word, the Bible." Audrey held up her Bible for the children to see, and then continued, "And the stories will help you understand what the Bible is all about. Make sure you come back every day to get the big picture. It is like climbing the mountain. When you get to the top, you will see the big picture!"

The small classroom was filled wall to wall with children and their leaders. They sat cross-legged on the floor and looked up expectantly at Audrey. She stood beside the table full of visual aids—everything from stuffed animals to flannelgraphs to cut-outs of the cross and tomb. It was day one of Vacation Bible School. The children Audrey was teaching were from varied backgrounds—some churched, but many from broken homes and foster care. She had five days, one short session a day, to teach them the Bible's story and help them understand the gospel.

Audrey had put a lot of prayer, thought and preparation into these Bible times. The purchased VBS curriculum had

included material for a Bible time each day, but somehow it didn't seem to be what was needed. Isolated Bible stories are just not suitable for children who know nothing about who Jesus is and what he did. They only had one week with these children and she couldn't see how to adapt the assigned stories in a way that would clearly explain the gospel. The material also seemed watered down, missing key aspects of the gospel. Audrey decided to go back to square one and, with the blessing of the church leadership, made her own curriculum for the week.

**Isolated Bible stories are just not suitable for children who know nothing about who Jesus is and what he did.**

So here she was, before the first group of expectant children, ages 6 through 12. All she had was her Bible, a worn copy of *The Story that Matters*, the visual aids and her notes.

Her approach was uncomplicated. She simply read aloud *The Story that Matters*, having divided up the material into five sections, one for each day. While she read, she made use of the visual aids to illustrate the concepts. She also made sure to write out unfamiliar words (such as God's personal name Yahweh) on the whiteboard behind her. The visual connection was like "velcro for the brain" for the children and helped move the story along and keep the children's interest.

On Monday, Audrey read the first nine pages from *The Story that Matters*, covering the events of God's perfect creation, as well as introducing God's character, angels and Heaven.

This is also where the book explains just what the Bible is: a one-of-a-kind, special book and letter from God.

In a culture where children are constantly bombarded by multi-sensory gadgets and technology, it may seem doubtful that Audrey's quiet reading of the book would interest any of the children, especially the young ones. Don't children need stimulus and excitement? On the contrary, all of the children were very engaged, from start to finish. There wasn't any fooling around. Even the children with short attention spans or behavioural issues were attentive. The word *boring* wasn't even mentioned.

**Even the children with short attention spans or behavioural issues were attentive.**

On Tuesday, Audrey read until page 27 of the book, now covering the story of Lucifer's rebellion, Adam and Eve's disobedience and God's rescue plan. She used the visual aids of a lamb and an altar to explain the need for a sufficient substitute to deal with man's sin problem.

On Wednesday, Audrey opened the time by saying, "In our Bible story yesterday, we heard how things went really wrong, but how God had a rescue plan—what a comfort! Our world needs healing. There are bad people out there, but what about you and me? Aren't we good enough to go to Heaven, God's perfect place? Let's hear from the Bible."

It was on this day that Audrey read until page 39, which covers the Ten Commandments and the coming of Jesus to earth. The children now understood God's standard of perfection, and they also learned about Jesus being the Saviour. Audrey

finished that day's session with a recap: "We can never be perfect on our own. We all need a Saviour. Jesus is our Saviour. He is God."

At the end of each Bible time, there was a brief review time for each of the leaders with their small groups. The questions asked were simple ones, clarifying that the children had understood the material covered. The leaders were blessed by the teaching as they sat with the children. One of them shared later that she had expected it to be boring but ended up being blown away by it.

**One of the leaders shared later that she had expected it to be boring but ended up being blown away by it.**

Thursday was a special day as Audrey finished reading the rest of the story. This is where the book explains how Jesus is our Lamb who died in our place and paid for all our sins. The significance of the cross and empty tomb are clearly explained, as well as what it means to trust in Jesus as our Saviour.

Audrey did not put any pressure on the children to respond. She just let the concepts soak in as she finished the time by saying, "The Bible says Jesus took all the punishment our sin deserves. That is why he can forgive us. Jesus is our Lamb."

Friday was when Audrey took the time to review everything they had read through the week. Using her visual aids, she began walking through the Bible's story. The children immediately responded, revealing just how well they had understood as they helped Audrey retell the story.

Audrey read a few pages from the last chapter of *The Lamb* to help conclude the review time. Then she explained the key verse of the day, the latter part of John 3:15: “Everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.” Because of the foundational lessons through the week, this verse now made sense to the children. They understood what it meant to believe in Jesus, what he had accomplished for them and what eternal life is—being with God in his perfect home forever.

Once again, Audrey did not put any pressure on the children to respond. There was no appeal for raised hands. Instead there was just a simple explanation that everyone needs to make a choice: whether to believe in Jesus as their Lamb or to reject God’s message of love and salvation. Each child was sent home with his or her own personal copy of *The Story that Matters*.

**Audrey did not put any pressure on the children to respond. There was no appeal for raised hands.**

Reports came back from the VBS staff and leaders that the Bible times had definitely been a success. On the whole, the 100 children who attended that week showed that they understood the message of the gospel. There is a lot of fun squeezed into a week of Vacation Bible School—games, crafts, songs—but it was the Bible stories that the kids kept talking about.

One woman had brought her granddaughter to VBS, choosing to volunteer as a group leader so she could be with her during the week. The grandmother was quite sure her granddaughter wasn’t a believer when the week began. By the end of VBS,

however, she was convinced that her granddaughter had put her faith in Christ as a result of the Bible lessons. The grandmother was very enthusiastic about how the gospel was shared, especially as it impacted her own family specifically.

When asked whether she had any encouragement for others who may want to use the same approach in children ministries, Audrey says, “Just have courage to do it. If you have any experience with VBS, you know the challenges. If it turns out great, then good! If it only turns out good, then it’s still good!” Audrey is thankful that God blessed her efforts to share his truth with these children and prays each will make their own decision to trust in Jesus as their Lamb.

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**Luke 18:16 ESV**

*But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”*

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# Peace at a cost

Sometimes the journey of walking with the Lord is not a straight or smooth path. And when the difficult choices affect our children and other family members, we often find ourselves agonizing over the best way forward. Marthe, a Creole woman in Haiti, shared a part of her journey with us.

Marthe had come to understand the gospel many years previously, but she had little support for her faith. Her husband belonged to a Christian cult; her parents and other relatives were entrenched in a different belief system that was not welcoming toward the biblical worldview.

Each choice she tried to make in following the Lord brought criticism and a great deal of pressure from those she loved. After a while, it seemed easier for her to simply keep the peace and “not stir the waters to change things.” So, for several years, Marthe shoved her Christian beliefs to one side to remove the conflict from her life. But while her relationships with her family eased, her heart was not at peace.

As Marthe's three sons grew and learned more about life, Marthe began to find herself reawakening to the gospel message. She saw that in her efforts to keep conflict out of her life, her boys were growing up ignorant of the life-saving message of the Bible.

She began to study her Bible more and asked the Lord to guide her about what she should do.

The next day her devotions were entitled "Pleasing God," based on Galatians 1:10 (ESV): "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."

"When I saw this, I took it as the sign and the assurance I was looking for," Marthe shared, "and I decided that I wanted to please God."

When Marthe shared with her husband her desire to please God, he was open to her wishes. He told her that whether she wanted to stay with her family's traditions or make the

**In her efforts to keep conflict out of her life, her boys were growing up ignorant of the life-saving message of the Bible.** change to follow God, he would support her choice. The decision was entirely up to her.

Marthe knew her change in heart would result in upheaval for her children, as it would affect which courses they took in school, where they went to church, the

traditions they followed and what milestones and holidays they celebrated. Marthe knew her sons needed to somehow

understand her beliefs, since those beliefs would bring about life-altering changes to their own lives and likely result in conflict with their extended family.

A friend had given Marthe a copy of *L'Agneau* (*The Lamb* in French). She saw that it contained a clear gospel explanation, so over the course of the next 10 days, she began reading one chapter of the book with her sons each night.

"Sometimes, I read and other days I let the CD play and I asked the questions at the end. They liked it and even asked if I had other books like it when we got to the last chapter." The truths

laid out in the book became the basis for talking about the departure their mother wanted to make from their previous religious practices.

The Lord worked in her children's hearts and they agreed to go along with their mom on this new path she was taking.

Communicating her decision with her mother was as difficult as she thought it would be. Her mother didn't understand Marthe's new way of thinking. However, Marthe has chosen to leave that strained relationship to the Lord. She wisely stated, "I'd rather be wrong by trying to please God than [be wrong by trying to please my family]. I know that God is big enough to take care of my children and my mom (and any other members in my family) on the level they are spiritually, so I leave whatever else regarding them to Him."

**"I know that God is big enough to take care of my children and my mom."**

Marthe continues to journey in her faith, revelling in her newfound realization that true peace comes from God, not from seemingly peaceful circumstances.

Marthe concluded her testimony with a verse she'd recently read during one of her Bible study sessions: "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28 NKJV).

"That [verse] gave me the sense of peace I was waiting for."

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**Romans 5:1-2 ESV**

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

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# Skyping the gospel

Is there life on other planets? Are there other universes?"

"How do you hear from God? Does he have a voice I can hear?"

"What can I do to be safe from the devil?"

The questions came thick and fast. The Chinese man sitting on the couch across from Jon and his wife Denise was sincere—and confused. He so wanted to know everything there was to know about God. But Jon and Denise knew that before they could delve into answering his questions, they would need to cover the basics. He needed a foundation in who God is and what Jesus had accomplished on the cross.

They had first met Yong Liang at a Bible study and were struck not only with his earnest desire to know God but also with his complete biblical illiteracy. The group was just wrapping up a study on the book of Job. Within minutes, it became obvious that the young Chinese man was floundering in his attempt to follow the discussion.

Jon and Denise approached Yong Liang and asked if he would be interested in going through a study that would give him

the whole story of the Bible and increase his understanding of God. Yong Liang was beyond excited at the idea. So Jon and Denise began going to his apartment on a weekly basis to go through the Worldview Rethink curriculum with him and his wife.

Yong Liang considered himself a Christian. That's why he had come to church and then to the small group Bible study in the first place. But his "Christianity" was a blend of Eastern

**His "Christianity" was a blend of Eastern thought and his own efforts to be good enough for God.** thought and his own efforts to be good enough for God. He was constantly asking what he had to *do*. His desire in life was to be a good person.

For the first few lessons, it was difficult to stay on track. After each lesson, Yong Liang would bombard Jon and Denise with a barrage of extra questions, many of which would be answered later in the book. Others could only be properly answered in the context of Christian discipleship and therefore needed to wait until he understood the gospel. Jon and Denise learned to defer the questions and not let themselves get sidetracked. Yong Liang had also only come from China three years earlier so communicating in English was sometimes a challenge. Jon and Denise used the workbook to help his comprehension.

It did not take long for Jon and Denise to realize that Yong Liang's wife was only sitting in on the lessons because of her husband's wishes. She disagreed outright with the notion of a Creator, and her skepticism started to negatively affect the

study. When she dropped out by her own choice, Jon and Denise were able to focus entirely on Yong Liang and his search for truth.

When they started going through the Law, breaking down each commandment and its implications, Jon and Denise immediately perceived that conviction was settling in. Yong Liang was becoming more and more heavy-hearted as they progressed. At the end of the lesson, after emphasizing the fact that no amount of good works could outweigh our sin, he looked up with anguished eyes and asked, "Then is there no redemption for my sin?"

Jon and Denise assured him that God had made a way, and it would be revealed as they continued the study.

**He was desperate to continue the study so they agreed to try using Skype once a week.**

But then they learned that Yong Liang would be relocating four hours away for work purposes. He was desperate, though, to continue the study so they agreed to try using Skype once a week.

And it worked. Although occasionally a poor connection made it a struggle, every Thursday night Jon and Denise would sit at their dining room table with their laptops, leader's guide, workbook and visual aids spread out before them.

In this manner, as the weeks went by they came to the end of chapter 14 of the Worldview Rethink course. Only one chapter remained and before progressing, Jon and Denise wanted to discern how well Yong Liang had understood the material. So they emailed him a list of 10 questions to ponder and respond to.

To their dismay, they learned that some friends of his had persuaded Yong Liang that baptism was still necessary for salvation.

The following week, Jon and Denise opened the email from Yong Liang and saw that he had answered most of the questions with perfect understanding and perception. They couldn't

have asked for better answers. Except for the last one. When asked where he would spend eternity if he died tonight, Yong Liang had replied, "Hell."

That evening, when Jon and Denise made their Skype call, they asked Yong Liang why he had answered that question the way he did. To their dismay, Jon and Denise learned that during the week, some friends of his had persuaded Yong Liang that baptism was still necessary for salvation.

Jon and Denise took the time to carefully review material and remind him of the simple truth they had covered many times already—how Jesus had paid his sin-debt in full and there was nothing more for him to do but accept it by faith. Yong Liang saw his error. When Jon and Denise asked him again where he would spend eternity if he died tonight, he said with a big grin, "Heaven!"

"And how do you know that, Yong Liang?" Jon and Denise asked. "Because Jesus really did pay my sin-debt," came the confident answer.

The remainder of that evening was spent going through the last chapter of the course, and Yong Liang found the concept



of his new relationship with God as his Father freeing and exciting. He thanked Jon and Denise for giving him the foundation to understand God and the Bible, and said that he might be too excited to sleep that night!

Jon and Denise continue to meet with Yong Liang regularly, going through the book *By This Name* for reinforcement of the gospel, as well as guiding him through the book of John and doing discipleship with him. Over the months, Denise has also been able to build a very good relationship with Yong Liang's wife and learned that she has contact with other Christians. Their prayer is that one day she will open up to the truth and want to learn about the Bible—this time with a seeking heart.

When Jon and Denise look back at their friendship with Yong Liang, they are thankful for his dogged determination to push through to the end of the study, despite the obstacles. They are also thankful for technology like Skype that made it possible to bring Yong Liang to the conclusion in his search for truth. Most of all, they are thankful to God for his saving grace and the way he draws and saves each soul who truly seeks him.

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**Hebrews 11:6 NKJV**

*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

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# All the good deeds don't matter

## Part I: Dave's story

**D**ave describes his coming to faith, not as an “epiphany story” like some might tell, where they have a moment where everything just clicks together and they suddenly “get it.” Instead, he likens himself to crock pot, rather than a microwave oven, where he had to take a “step-by-step process of learning things before I finally got it. It took years to get to that point.”

For Dave, it started with a relationship goal. He and his wife Kelly were dating when they decided to do something that would help them build a foundation together. They found a Christian financial management course and began to attend classes together.

Unfortunately, their instructor was not a gifted communicator. He stumbled and mumbled his way through the material so badly that finally one day, Dave turned to Kelly and said, “I could teach this course better than that guy can.” Kelly’s challenge came swiftly, “Well, why don’t you?”

Using the same course material from the class that he and Kelly attended, Dave began teaching his first class of 12

students. After a number of weeks, they reached a point in the material where the issue of tithing was addressed. Dave hit a wall. “I realized I was kind of a hypocrite teaching this course. I didn’t even have a church that I belonged to, let alone actually tithing.”

So Dave began to research. He read the Bible. He began to search for a church, a place where he and Kelly could fit. In the course of all this searching, he met a gentleman who gave him a book to read—*The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus*. It took a little coaxing, but eventually Dave cracked open the cover.

**“This book is the clearest explanation of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us.”**

separated from God prior to that and how the veil was torn from top to bottom of the day of Jesus’ death ... After reading the book, I started to really understand ... how we inherently have a sinful nature. Reading that book established ... for me that Jesus is that bridge between us [and God] and our new connection with God.”

What Dave learned upon reading the book changed everything. “This book is the clearest explanation of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. [It explains] how we were

Dave is passionate as he relates his newfound understanding. “When Jesus died for us, his blood covered us, so when God looks upon us, he’s not looking at this sinful creature in front of him, he’s looking at Jesus in his purest form.”

“What happened needed to have happened so that we were able to have this connection. He made that sacrifice in our place on the cross.”

Dave pauses in his explanation as the emotion of his words hit home. "It's pretty ... well, hmm ... it causes you to pause when you think about it."

As Dave looks to his future, he goes forward with full assurance. "All the mistakes that I've made, all the mistakes that I know I'm going to continue to make, and all the mistakes I don't even know I'm making on a day-to-day basis, he's already covered those for us, and all we have to do is accept that gift freely. There is nothing that I can do, beyond accepting that gift. All the good deeds, it doesn't matter. It's good you do them, but that doesn't matter in the big picture. That relationship is established by Jesus stepping in for us, saying, 'Hey I got this for you, if you're just willing to take it.'"

**"All the mistakes that I've made, he's already covered those for us, and all we have to do is accept that gift freely."**

## Part II: Kelly's story

Looking back, Kelly can see that she was a natural-born people pleaser. While it proved beneficial in guiding her towards good decision-making as she grew up, her built-in drive to be a good person also clouded the gospel from her view for many years.

Kelly explained, "I grew up in a loving home but not a religious home. I didn't know truly who God was or who Jesus is. I thought that I was a good person. I thought that was good enough. I didn't want to disappoint my parents.

**“I think I was slow to it; I was on a simmer. God was very patient with me.”**

I would say that was my main focus, my moral compass. It was how I knew what I should or shouldn't be doing. I would think, *Would this upset mom and dad or would they be proud of me?* I thought I was making

good decisions. I thought that compared to that person over there, I wasn't doing so bad. But I didn't know what I didn't know.”

As a married woman, Kelly was introduced to *The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus*. “I had never understood Jesus' story. I had heard parts of it. I knew the Easter story, but I didn't understand the background. I didn't understand what it meant.”

Slowly, Kelly began to gain a greater understanding of the Bible's message through reading *The Stranger*. “That book helped me understand exactly what Jesus did for me and it was a very humbling. I think I was slow to it; I was on a simmer. God was very patient with me. He put people and experiences in my path and waited for me to get there. And I am so excited to be there.” As she completed the book, Kelly put her faith in what Jesus did for her on the cross.

Later, Kelly's faith was tested when her father passed away. “I knew that it was okay. I knew where he was and I knew that I'll go to be there too. And I got to thinking, even with my dad gone, I know exactly what he expects of me still. I know what would disappoint him and I know what he would want from me. I want to know God like that.”

“I know that when my body is done here on earth, that I will get to go and be with God and Jesus in Heaven. I know that I get to be with God forever and no matter what I’ve done or what I do, I know he loves me and he forgives me. Knowing that makes me want to live the life he wants me to live. I crave going to church and hearing his Word. I crave going to small group. I crave learning more from the Bible because I know what sacrifice he made. I know the joy that [the disciples] must have felt when he came back [to life] and the joy it’s going to be for us when we get to be together forever.”

---

**Galatians 2:16 ESV**

*We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*

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# Quietly passing along the gospel

Ken and Maryanne Stacey are a couple of volunteers who live in an area with a high volume of internationals who desire to learn English. They are often in contact with a mostly male population from the 10/40 Window of Asia.

For the last 12 years, the couple has been effective by simply befriending the internationals who came to study English. Maryanne said, "We do what we as believers would consider to be normal kindnesses and then let them see the love we have for them. [They often] start to wonder why we love them when there is no 'payback' for us. All through this process we are open about our faith in Jesus, and we are looking for open doors to conversation about him."

And often those doors do open. Maryanne says that when that happens, she and Ken gladly share the good news of the gospel with their "sons." But it's not necessarily a simple matter to do so. Many of those they interact with come from cultures very hostile to the gospel. For them to be seen with a Bible or any Christian literature could invite persecution.

**“We do what we as believers would consider to be normal kindnesses and then let them see the love we have for them.”**

unnecessary attention to their method of relaying the materials. In this way, they have passed on Bibles, Christian teaching and more recently, *All that the Prophets have Spoken*, GoodSeed’s tool written specifically to those from an Islamic cultural background.

When they learned about *All the Prophets*, the Staceys desired to pass digital copies to two men they had befriended, one from Egypt and another from Yemen. One young man had been actively searching for the truth. The Staceys were thankful they could pass on *All the Prophets* to help answer his questions. The other gentleman was an eager-to-learn believer, actively sharing his faith with others. The Staceys hoped *All the Prophets* would help him be a more effective ambassador by strengthening his foundations in the gospel.

They are eager to have access to more translations of *All the Prophets*. While currently available in several major languages including Arabic and Farsi, they have had many opportunities where they wished they had the book in one of the regional languages.

The reason for the Staceys’ passion to share the good news with these men was summed up by Maryanne when she

So the Staceys have discovered that quietly passing Christian materials to these men via thumb drives is very effective. The couple is even careful to use a flash drive that looks discreet, to avoid drawing

wrote, "It is a true joy to see those without hope come to faith in Jesus ... [When they do], they gain that hope that we are so familiar with as believers."

---

**2 Corinthians 4:6-7 ESV**

*For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*

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# Reaching the unreachables with the gospel

Many say, ‘Christianity in Africa is a mile wide and an inch deep.’”

The words spilled out of Rodrick as he shared his burdened heart for Africa. He explained how many Africans claim Christianity as their religion, not because of a true understanding of the gospel, but because of its social and cultural roots in their history, going back to the arrival of Protestant missionaries in the 1800s.

But Rodrick is not one to only sit and bemoan a sad situation. He is a man of action. When he was introduced to the material found in *What are Christmas and Easter All About?*, Rodrick immediately recognized its potential for helping the church in his native country of Malawi. Rodrick’s help was vital in bringing *Khisimisi ndi Nyengo ya Pasaka—Zitanthauza Chiyani?*, the Chichewan translation of *Christmas and Easter*, to completion.

From his involvement in the translation and distribution, to teaching the book in churches, conferences and through radio broadcasts, Rodrick has been a tireless champion of the simple gospel message that’s taught in *Christmas and Easter*.

There has been no shortage of challenges and obstacles. Poverty and high printing costs are barriers to making the book easily available. Literacy levels are uneven. The average Malawian may afford to buy a single book but purchasing multiple copies for giving away is sometimes a bridge too far.

**“Jesus said that we would have trouble.”** Rodrick has also endured other challenges common to a developing country. On one trip to teach and distribute books, he was set upon by thieves, who stole his laptop with his translation notes a number of *Christmas and Easter* books and the money he had, among other things. He was thankful to get away with his life.

These hardships have not taken Rodrick by surprise. “Jesus said that we would have trouble” was his matter-of-fact comment on these and other difficulties he has faced. He has continued to press on.

Last spring, Rodrick secured airtime on three national radio stations, where he read *Christmas and Easter* as part of the broadcast. These broadcasts aired for several months and were heard by more than one million Africans. Here are just a few comments he received:

“Having attended your training programme...and having listened to the Easter Radio programmes; the content of [*Christmas and Easter*] has continued to be fresh to my mind and heart. I have also read the book over five times now...I am grateful to God for your ministry through which I have experienced growth in my spiritual life. Christmas and Easter make a lot of sense to me, now.”

“My preaching experience has improved since I received a copy of *Christmas and Easter*. I have been using it as a tool for preaching. Thank you for such a gift!”

“How can I have access to the book that was read on the radio? Please, send me a personal copy and a few others for my friends. Are there other books in addition to the one you helped us go through via the radio?”

“My understanding of God’s Word has been improved through *Christmas and Easter*. Please come to my church and teach the hungry souls.”

As Rodrick reaches out to his fellow Malawians, his vision for the future only continues to expand. Despite the challenges of illiteracy and poverty, demand for the books remains very high. The 15,000 printed and distributed so far have only been a drop in the proverbial bucket among a population of 12 million Chichewa speakers. Not only does Rodrick desire more copies of *Khisimisi ndi Nyengo ya Pasaka—Zitanthauza Chiyani?*, he would love to see other GoodSeed materials translated and printed, so Malawians can deepen their understanding of the Bible’s message. He also sees how radio broadcasts can be very effective in reaching large numbers of his countrymen.

“My preaching experience has improved since I received a copy of *Christmas and Easter*. I have been using it as a tool for preaching. Thank you for such a gift!”

Rodrick shared, “This ministry can be a tool for reaching out to the ‘unreachables’ with the gospel. Placing a book in someone’s hand has been a great ministry. The reading culture is slowly being restored among Malawians through the use of these books. What a blessing to experience people’s lives being transformed. What a blessing!”

Please pray for Rodrick and many others like him who press on through difficulty because of their passion for sharing a clear gospel with their people.

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## **2 Timothy 1:8-9 ESV**

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.*

---



# An understood gospel is a powerful gospel

**It changes lives and it can change yours**

In this book, we encountered many different people whose lives were changed. There were those whose faith grew along with their understanding of the Bible. There were those who invested time in studying the message of the Bible and came face-to-face with the Saviour. Then there were others who determined to be sharers of the gospel and were greeted with great joy as they witnessed, firsthand, friends and loved ones coming to faith.

In “Skyping the gospel” (page 69), Jon and Denise asked Yong Liang 10 questions to check his understanding of the main message of the Bible:

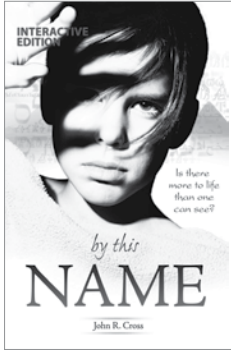
1. According to the Bible, who is Jesus?
2. What is the significance and consequence of us being sinners?
3. God, through Jesus, did something in order to make us acceptable to him. What did Jesus do?
4. Is there anything else we should do, or shouldn't do, in order to be acceptable to God? Why?
5. Why did Jesus have to die?

6. Do you believe that, when Jesus was dying on the cross, he was dying in your place for your sin, as your substitute, paying your sin-debt you should have had to pay?
7. Has God clothed you in righteousness?
8. Why did you answer question #7 the way you did?
9. If you were to die tonight, where would you spend eternity?
10. Why did you answer question #9 the way you did?

Yong Liang's clear understanding of the gospel led him and many others to put their faith in Jesus.

In the book of Romans, Paul wrote to the believing Roman church, "I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome" (Romans 1:15 NIV). Understandably, there are those just like Yong Liang who need to hear the gospel, but why would the believers in Rome need to hear the familiar message of the gospel preached again? Perhaps it is because the gospel has the power not just to change lives, but to refresh and energize even those who have journeyed a long time with God. Perhaps reviewing the gospel story causes us to pause in worship as we reflect once again how glorious, wonderful and powerful the Lord is.

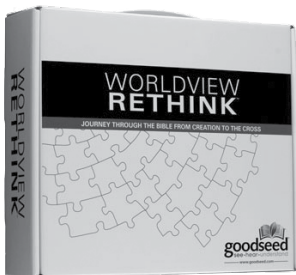
## Recommended reading



We invite you to read the gospel message in *By This Name* and marvel again at God's love for you. *By This Name* is our recommended resource. It is a guided tour of the Bible's main message, providing a clear and comprehensive explanation of the gospel. Following the Bible's historical narrative, it helps to layer down your biblical foundation, adding clarity to

your understanding of Scripture and strength to your faith. *By This Name* is also particularly suited to those who are from an eastern worldview, who have been influenced by New Age, post-modern or post-Christian ideas.

## Recommended for small groups

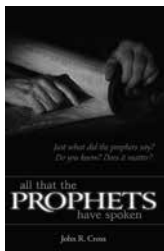


In many of the stories, you read about those who shared the gospel with others by leading them through a Worldview Rethink course. This course helps you share the gospel one-on-one or in a small group in a simple, effective way that you can learn

very quickly. The curriculum provides all you need to say and do, so that preparation is easy and even someone new can share with confidence.

## Other featured gospel resources

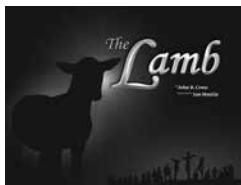
The following books all share the gospel using the same historical narrative from creation to the cross, but each addresses a particular worldview.



*All that the Prophets have Spoken* is the gospel message written for people with an Islamic worldview. It specifically answers questions that arise from this worldview.



*The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus* is the gospel message written for people from a Christianized worldview, whether Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox. When they hear the word *God*, they think of the God of the Bible. This content is available as a book and videobook.



*The Lamb* explains the gospel to children in a way that they can understand. The engaging illustrations make it an ideal book for use among the elderly as well.



*The Story that Matters* provides a clear explanation of the Bible in 45 minutes. This brief booklet is ideal for a mass evangelistic giveaway and for those with English as a foreign language. We recommend those who read this to move on to reading *By This Name*.

## TERM Seminar

This GoodSeed seminar focuses on rethinking evangelism and discipleship. Believers look into Scripture to see what it has to say about sharing the gospel clearly, both in message and method. They also learn practical ways to share the gospel with friends and loved ones in their everyday lives.

# The gospel message in many languages

This edition of *Fieldnotes* featured stories from different parts of the world with different language resources meant for the international audience. We currently have gospel resources in 25 languages that together are spoken by more than three billion speakers today.



Albanian, Amharic,  
Arabic, Chechen,  
Chinese, Czech, Dutch,  
English, Faroese,  
Farsi, French, German,  
Hebrew, Hungarian,  
Korean, Lithuanian,  
Luxembourgish,  
Mongolian, Portuguese,  
Romanian, Russian,  
Spanish, Thai,  
Turkish, Ukrainian

Many individuals and families who have had a burden for a particular language group have come alongside us, providing contacts, advice and financial support to help us produce high-quality translations of our resources. Patiently praying for these projects, they supported our translation teams, sometimes for years, as the translators laboured to make the message of the gospel clear in the target language. We are thankful to the Lord for all these champions and supporters.

If you desire to come alongside us in prayer, partnership and support so that Christian brothers and sisters like Rodrick in Malawi (page 85) will be able to reach out to more people with the gospel, please contact us to learn how you can help.

# About GoodSeed

GoodSeed® is a not-for-profit organization that exists to clearly explain the message of the Bible in as many languages as we can. We invite you to contact us if you are interested in ongoing projects or translations.

## **GoodSeed International**

P.O. Box 3704  
Olds, Alberta T4H 1P5  
Canada  
Tel: 403 556 9955  
Fax: 403 556 9950  
Email: [info@goodseed.com](mailto:info@goodseed.com)

<b>Australia</b>	1800 897 333 <a href="mailto:info.au@goodseed.com">info.au@goodseed.com</a>
<b>Canada (English)</b>	800 442 7333 <a href="mailto:info.ca@goodseed.com">info.ca@goodseed.com</a>
<b>Canada (French)</b>	888 314 3623 <a href="mailto:info.qc@goodseed.com">info.qc@goodseed.com</a>
<b>Europe (Germany)</b>	49 (0)5231 9435144 <a href="mailto:info.eu@goodseed.com">info.eu@goodseed.com</a>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	0800 073 6340 <a href="mailto:info.uk@goodseed.com">info.uk@goodseed.com</a>
<b>USA</b>	888 654 7333 <a href="mailto:info.us@goodseed.com">info.us@goodseed.com</a>

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