

a ministry of prairie bible institute

# SERVANT



Issue 107 | Fall 2020

## THE CALL OF CHOOSING TO ANSWER GOD

**CHRISTINE  
CAINE**  
**FROM RESCUED  
TO RESCUER**

**ALUMNI  
IN ACTION**  
**INTO THE  
FURNACE**

**CARMEN  
JOY IMES**  
**GRACE ON THE  
MOUNTAIN**

# The living God

EARLIER THIS YEAR, ELAINE AND I WERE ON VACATION ON THE WEST COAST OF COSTA RICA.

Watching the sunset over the Pacific became part of our daily routine and we made an effort to be on the beach each afternoon to watch as the day came to a close in a blazing display of glory. What a beautiful sight!

I think God gave us the sun as a physical reminder of his life-giving presence. It is a simple truth that there would be no life on earth without the presence of the sun.

One of the great threads that resurfaces regularly throughout Scripture is the phrase “the Living God.” In the beginning, the eternal God created the universe along with living plants, animals, and human beings. This was not a temporary plan. His eternal purpose is to live in relationship with humanity, where we will be his people and he will be our God. At key turning points

**His eternal purpose is to live in relationship with humanity, where we will be his people and he will be our God.**

in many of the stories in the Bible, people turned to “the Living God” (Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Peter, to name a few) and then stood their ground with courage.

For me the story of King Darius of Persia declaring Daniel’s God to be “the

Living God” is one of the most riveting. It was because of Daniel’s unwavering faith even when faced with a horrifying death in a den of lions that King Darius declared:

*“I issue a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to reverently fear and tremble before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring and steadfast forever, and his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and his dominion will be forever.”*

All of the scriptural references to “the Living God” are

- a. in sharp contrast to other gods or idols that would have been present in biblical times, and would still be true today as we are surrounded by idols that come between us and the living God, and
- b. reflective of the nature of God. Not only is he living, but he is also life-giving.

There is no question that we live in anxious times, fearful of the many ways our security might be disrupted. We can choose, however, like King Darius, to turn in trust and reverence to the living God,

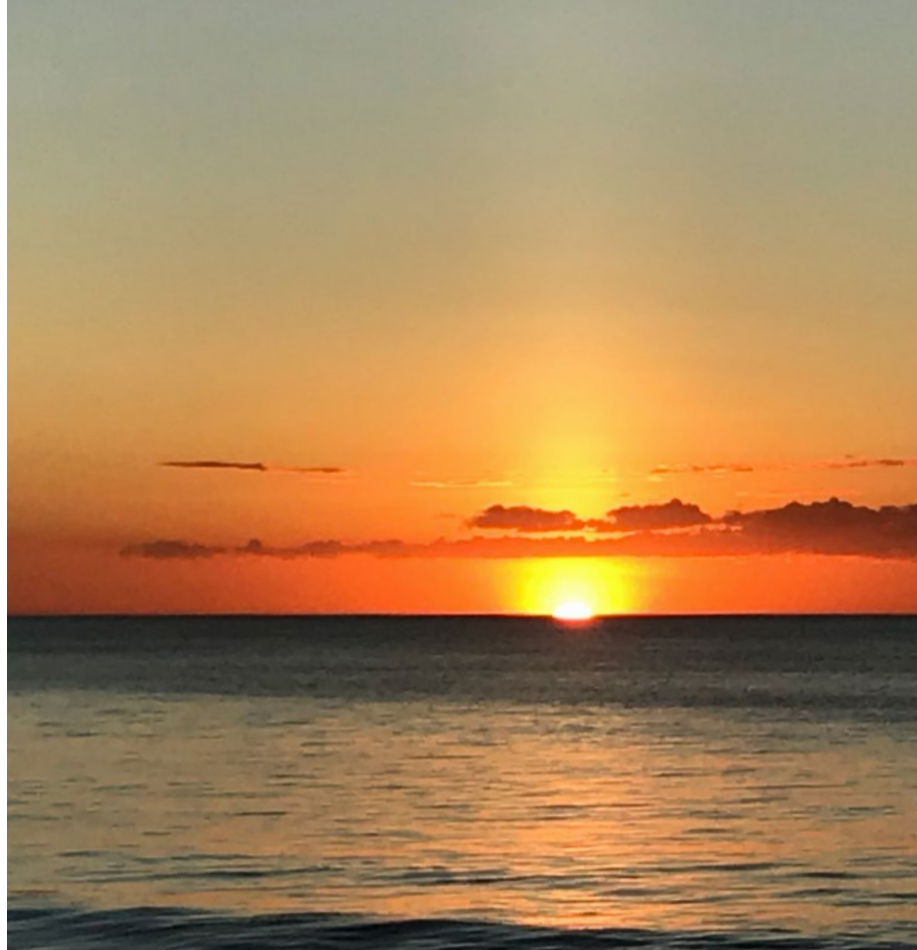
- the One who is living and brings life,
- the One who is alive and moving across the nations of the earth,

- the One who is as reliable as the sun that rises and sets each day,
- the One who, like the sun, is bringing life even at night or when hidden by a storm,
- the One who paints a new masterpiece with each sunrise and sunset.

After a few days of watching the sun set over the Pacific Ocean, we noticed that we were not alone. Crowds of tourists mixed with the local people to take in the magnificent scene. Many of them were like us, coming every day to watch. It was both cosmic and personal at the same time. It was a moment to pause and worship together, joining with the applause of the surf on the sand for our Creator, the Living God. **Is|**



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*Servant* (ISSN 0848-1741) is published two times a year by Prairie Bible Institute, a non-profit educational organization founded in 1922. **Prairie Bible Institute**

serves the Church by discipling Christians through biblically integrated post-secondary education. *Servant* is dependent on the gracious gifts of Prairie alumni, donors and friends. Its purpose is to edify, exhort and encourage today's Christian. Third class mail, return postage guaranteed. Change of address notices, undeliverable copies send to *Servant* Magazine, Box 4000, Three Hills, AB, T0M 2N0. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Printed in Canada. Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.



## BETWEEN THE LINES

How do people experience the “call of God” on their lives? Some seem to come easily into their destiny simply by using their natural gifts and moving through ever-opening doors. Others meet God unexpectedly and find themselves facing a choice: cling to the familiar or embark on a path to places they could never have imagined. Responding when God says “go” can involve significant readjustments to our journey. Some of these stories are featured in this issue of *SERVANT*.

But what do we do when God overrides the long-anticipated “go” with an unwelcome “stay”? Back in 2009, Prairie’s longest-serving flight instructor Michael Fox wrote for *SERVANT* about the bend in the road that he and his wife Kelli experienced. They married with one goal in mind: mission aviation. There was no Plan B. That is, until a life sentence of serious chronic illness slammed the door shut. Now God was asking Michael to stay home and prepare skilled pilots to go to the ends of the earth to serve and share the gospel, training others to do what he had longed to do. Had all the preparations been a waste of time?

“Sometimes I feel like I should be somewhere else doing something bigger for God,” he wrote. “But I’m learning that my heavenly Father’s desire is to have a meaningful relationship with me, one that does not depend on a geographic location. My identity is *in him*, not in a title or a career.”

Michael has lost count of the number of young aviators he has influenced and of the multitude of places around the world where they are shining a light for Christ. He still thinks about the dream sometimes, but in the meantime he is learning that “when our Father’s leading to stay overrules our desire to go, we can rest content in his wisdom. As our relationship with God deepens in that place, he will use us in ways we never thought possible.”

Pat Massey, Editor  
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 **PRAIRIE COLLEGE**



# When God Says... Stay

ELIZABETH  
LAING  
THOMPSON

***"Come out of him!" Each word a thunderclap. Legion hears as through a tunnel, his ears no longer his own.***

***Fury rises. It blinds him, a rage so all-consuming it escapes in a murderous howl. He doesn't know where they end and he begins—their feelings, his feelings, our feelings, we are many, we are one—he's pinned beneath a towering wave, drowning. Losing what remains of the man he used to be.***

Words pour from Legion's mouth, curses, threats. He shuts his eyes, the only resistance he can manage. He does not want to see the prophet's face as the insults seek home. But even blind he spills words, a caustic flood.

At last *they* dam the flow. He sways, panting and heaving. He waits, *they* wait—we wait, we are many, we are one—for the prophet's response. They long for the prophet's anger, his disgust, for the hatred that feeds them.

But the hateful response doesn't come. Legion opens his eyes. The prophet stands quiet, unmoving, staring them down. The voices inside begin to whine, childish and trembling. They beg

for mercy. "Please do not destroy us, oh Holy One. Send us into the herd of pigs over there." They hurl Legion to his knees as the prophet gives a slight nod. He raises his hands and shouts, "Be gone! All of you!"

A tornado tears through the man. It steals his breath, it stops his heart. Sound roars through his body, his ears—five thousand moans of defeat, five thousand shrieks of bloodlust. Legion falls to the ground and rakes at his ears. A hand closes around his elbow and his eyes open to meet the eyes of the prophet, warm and brown and unafraid. He tenses, waiting for *their* voices to fill the void, resume their babble inside. But his

head stays quiet—too quiet. Unsure, he stumbles to standing, hollowed, drained, an empty vessel.

The prophet points and Legion sees a cloud of dust trailing a stampeding herd, pigs past counting, squealing and screaming as they race down a steep hill and plunge into the lake. He looks back to the prophet and cringes, waiting for the man to send *him* running...into the water where he deserves; into chains, where he has been so many times; into the cemetery where he has lived for so long. Instead the prophet smiles and bends in close to whisper, "Peter is bringing you a cloak."

Legion narrows his eyes, confused, and looks down at himself. With a jolt, he sees he is naked. A rough brown robe covers him and a bearded, broad-shouldered man loops a sash around Legion's waist. He looks up and the prophet shines a smile, warm sun after endless rain, then reaches out a hand to squeeze Legion's arm. "Now come, John has found you a place to clean up. Tonight you dine with me. My name is Jesus."

Days Legion spends at Jesus' feet, drinking in his words—words of hope, truth, new life, tales of fathers and sons, of lost things found. Sometimes Legion listens, sometimes he weeps, and sometimes he remembers how to laugh. But one afternoon a crowd rises on the hillside—angry pig farmers, anxious mothers. Voices rise and boats are called. Jesus is leaving.

## Boats are called; Jesus is leaving. Legion panics.

Legion stands paralyzed as the disciples move toward the water and into the waiting boats. Panic spirals. They cannot leave him alone. Without Jesus to protect him, to fill him, who else—*what* else—will show up to occupy the vacant spaces?

He elbows his way through the crowd and catches Jesus at the water's edge, grabbing his cloak. "Please, Lord," he huffs, "wait. Take me with you. I will earn my keep, I will do anything, just do not leave me alone."

Stepping back from the boat, Jesus motions Legion aside, away from the crowd. "My friend, you must stay."

*Stay?* The word is a spear. Legion feels everything sink. "But I want to go with you and be with you always."

Jesus nudges Legion's head up with a finger crooked under his chin. "Stay here," he says kindly. "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, how he has had mercy on you. How else will they hear of me? You must tell your story and share what you have been given."

As Jesus speaks, Legion feels a spark inside, the smallest of flames. He senses that soon it will blaze large enough to fill his empty spaces, maybe even to light other lights. *Stay. Go home. Tell what God has done.* A purpose, a mission. He looks at the road snaking uphill toward home and then on to the Decapolis—ten cities filled with people who need what he has found. He cannot speak, he only nods as Jesus steps back, soft-eyed and smiling, into the boat. Andrew and John give the boat a heave and they row for the horizon, black silhouettes against a crimson sky.

We don't get many details about Legion's life after Jesus left, only this:

*As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.*

Jesus asked Legion to stay behind because he had an assignment for him. Legion didn't *just* stay behind—he stayed behind and went somewhere: back home to his family and on into ten neighboring towns. Legion told everyone who would listen what Jesus had done for him, and all who listened stood amazed. Ten cities heard about God's power and mercy because Legion stayed home.

Right now God may not be calling you to move to a new city or seek a new job or assume a new role. God always wants us to move forward, but that forward motion often happens right where we are, in the life we already have, among the people we already know. Sometimes God tells us to go *and stay*.

Go back to an old place with a new attitude.

Show his grace to our family.

Share his love with our neighbors.

Have you been twiddling your thumbs and waiting for God to call you to something new and exciting? Maybe God already said, "Go!" a long time ago when he put you in your current situation—but you got there and never really *went*. Your

light and salt in this world—all callings we can fulfill wherever we are right now:

In a dead-end job we don't enjoy.

In a family situation that's not ideal.

In a town we'd like to escape.

In a church full of imperfect people.

Jesus calls us to serve where we are, with what we already have, and with our whole heart, even if we aren't crazy about our current situation or responsibility.

How many times do we unintentionally overlook opportunities for serving Christ in our daily lives? We miss them because we see them all the time. Our eyes and hearts skip past familiar needs, because familiarity has bred blindness. Dullness. Life gets busy, our schedule gets tight, and we accidentally walk past lonely neighbors needing friends. Classmates struggling with depression. Recent divorcees longing for a listening ear. New parents needing a hot meal or a kind word.

It's not automatically better to serve *out there* or *over there*. It's not less godly, or even less brave, to share your faith with a neighbor two doors down than a stranger a world away. It's not more righteous to serve an orphan across the ocean than a foster child across town. All children need love; all these callings—missions near and far—are godly endeavors.


Legion wanted to go somewhere new. He dreamed of spending his days traveling with Jesus, but that wasn't the Lord's plan. Perhaps Jesus knew that no one could be more effective in the Decapolis than Legion. Was he already a local legend? The star of horror stories told around campfires—the haunted man who haunted the

## Have you been waiting for God to call you to something new and exciting?

body arrived, but your heart stayed somewhere else. What if God already has you exactly where he wants you during this time in your life? Sometimes it's not our circumstances that need to change—it's *us* who need changing.

We already have an inspiring call from God and it always rings true and is always challenging, no matter the circumstances. We are called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; to love our neighbor as ourselves; to be

tombs? If so, imagine the amazement and the praise that would have rippled across those towns as Legion returned home carrying his tale of redemption.

As with Legion, God may be calling you to stay home. But staying home doesn't mean staying the same. Even if he *is* calling you to stay, he is still calling you to move forward. To go deep. Love hard. Grow strong...right where you are. 

Based on Mark 5:1-20



# Lessons from the mountain

Over the years God has gifted Prairie with teachers who generously invest their time and knowledge of the Scriptures to impact the lives of countless students. When the riches shared in the classroom are written down and published for an even wider audience, the blessings are multiplied.



Dr. Carmen Joy Imes: "Israel's story is our story too."

Dr. Carmen Joy Imes, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Prairie, has reworked her recent Wheaton PhD dissertation to make it accessible and practical for lay readers. Published by InterVarsity Press, *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters*, is earning a positive response in the literary and evangelical community as a very readable volume for anyone from Bible scholars to those with only a basic understanding of the Old Testament.

Retracing Israel's journey from Egypt to the giving of the law at Sinai, Dr. Imes singles out for reexamination the command not to take God's name

both directions those whose names he bore. The language of "bearing" points to the fact that at Sinai God placed his name on the Israelites to claim them as his own. As such, they carried his name among the nations and were warned not to live in a way that would bring that name into disrepute. Their words and actions, both individually and as a nation, were to represent the glory and grace of the God who had bestowed his name upon them.

It is no secret that while many evangelicals believe in the authority and inspiration of the whole Bible, they

Christians, Dr. Imes traces the theme of name-bearing forward into the pages of the New Testament where Jesus (Yahweh in the flesh) adopts the vocation of representing God to the world, his highest goal being the glory of the Father. Christ's commission to the church then becomes the bearing of his name among the nations.

Out for less than a year, the book is already in its sixth printing and has received many positive reviews and been featured in numerous interviews and articles. Adopted as a textbook for high school, college, and seminary courses, it has become a requested resource for churches and Bible study groups across North America. Each chapter contains pertinent discussion questions and ends with suggested additional resources for further study.

Dr. Imes believes that the Old Testament has enduring value for the life of faith. "The command to Israel to 'bear God's name' is a theme that continues throughout the rest of Scripture," she says. "The story of Israel turns out to be our story too and that changes everything about the way we live." ❧

**The Old Testament can seem outdated, violent and confusing, and that misunderstanding often leads to a neglect of its message.**

in vain (Exodus 20:7), arguing that it should be interpreted more broadly than a prohibition of some kind of blasphemous, unholy act of speech.

In Hebrew the command reads "You shall not bear (or carry) the name of Yahweh your God in vain..." The High Priest bore the names of the tribes of Israel on his breastplate and the name of Yahweh on his forehead, representing in

often feel stuck when it comes to the Old Testament. It can seem outdated, violent and confusing, and that misunderstanding often leads to a neglect of its message.

*Bearing God's Name* is helping believers rediscover the beauty of the Old Testament narrative and the lavish grace of God that courses through its pages. In order to show its continuing relevance for



To order your copy of ***Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters***, please see **Page 08**.



# KEEP SERVANT COMING

PLEASE SEE PAGE 8  
TO DONATE

For 31 years SERVANT has gone out free of charge to Prairie alumni and friends in 59 countries around the globe. We hope it has been a blessing to you!

Things have changed in three decades, however, and the harsh reality is that the production and mailing of SERVANT now consumes nearly \$90,000 out of Prairie's General Fund every year.

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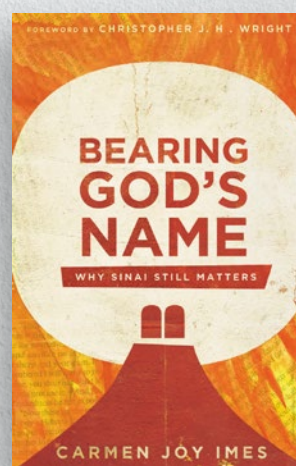
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## **UNDAUNTED:** DARING TO DO WHAT GOD CALLS YOU TO DO Christine Caine

Bestselling author and global evangelist Christine Caine shares how God rescued her from a life into which she was born unnamed and unwanted. Despite a past marked by abandonment, childhood abuse and crippling fears,

God gently invited Christine into a new adventure of undaunted living, fueled by faith, love and the courage to embrace a calling she never saw coming.



## **BEARING GOD'S NAME:** WHY SINAI STILL MATTERS

Carmen Joy Imes

Rather than dividing the Bible into a dichotomy of rigid law and abundant grace, Prairie's Old Testament professor Dr. Carmen Joy Imes highlights the continuity between Sinai and Calvary. Sharing insight into the story of Israel's exodus and response to

their divine calling, she illustrates that the Old Testament is not a dry, ancient document, but one that holds practical inspiration for our walk of faith today.

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## QUOTE WORTHY

**PETER MARSHALL**  
 "Most of us know perfectly well what we ought to do; our trouble is that we do not want to do it."



**HELEN ROSEVEARE**

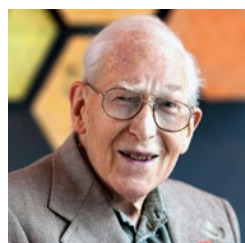
"When you come into the presence of a Holy God, you cannot possibly be okay with your sin. You have two choices—run and hide or come clean."

**JIM ELLIOT**  
 "When the time comes to die, make sure that all you have to do is die."



**DAVID BRAINERD**  
 1718-1747

"A successful man is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at him."



## MEDITATION

**J. I. PACKER**  
 1926-2020



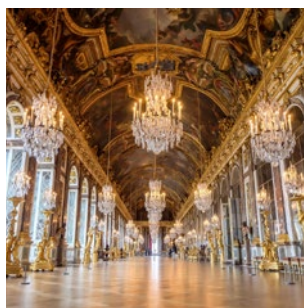
"Wait on the Lord" is a constant refrain in the Psalms, and it is a necessary word, for God often keeps us waiting. He is not in such a hurry as we are, and it is not his way to give more light on the future than we need for action in the present, or to guide us more than one step at a time. When in doubt, do nothing, but continue to wait on God. When action is needed, light will come.



## NOW YOU KNOW

On special occasions, the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles was lit with as many as 20,000 candles.

*Google Arts & Culture*



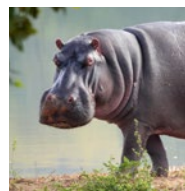
Napoleon was once attacked by thousands of rabbits.

*The Vintage News*



A baby puffin is called a puffling.

*Audubon Project Puffin*



Hippos produce a natural skin moisturizer and sunblock.

*NBC News*



# CHRISTINE CAINE EMBRACING THE CALL

*Born in Australia of Greek heritage, Christine Caine shared a comfortable life with her husband Nick and daughters Catherine and Sophia. Despite being unwanted at birth and a victim of childhood sexual abuse, she found deep fulfillment as a global evangelist and was content to share her passionate love for Jesus with the world. But God had more in mind. Christine was stunned when she and Nick were called to embrace a vision that neither of them had ever imagined: bringing rescue and healing into the dark world of human trafficking and modern-day slavery.*

**SERVANT: YOU'VE SAID THAT OUR HISTORY DOESN'T DETERMINE OUR DESTINY. WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?**

**CHRISTINE:** I am living proof that you can start bad and finish good. I was left at birth in a hospital, unnamed and unwanted. Later, I was adopted, but then abused as a child. In spite of all that, God had a specific plan and purpose for my life. The same is true for each of us. Nothing that you do or experience can thwart the promises and purposes of God for your life.

**HOW DID YOU REACT WHEN YOU LEARNED THAT YOU HAD BEEN ABANDONED AND THEN ADOPTED?**

I was thirty-three years old when my mother told me I was adopted. It was a shock, but I was surprised that while

questions raced through my mind, I wasn't completely shattered. An assurance rose within me and I told my mom, "Before I was formed in my mother's womb, whoever's womb that was, God knew me. He knitted together my innermost parts and fashioned all of my days before there

**EVEN AS THINGS SEEMED TO BE FALLING APART, THE TRUTH OF GOD'S LOVE WAS HOLDING ME TOGETHER.**

was even one of them. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Even though I've just found out that I was adopted, God has always known, and he has always loved me. And since that has never changed, therefore *nothing* has essentially changed.

I may not be who I thought I was, but I still am who God says I am. And I am more. I am loved. I am his." Even as things seemed to be falling apart, the truth of God's love was holding me together. I knew he loved me unconditionally, whether I was adopted or not.

**YOU'VE DESCRIBED YOURSELF AS "BEING ASLEEP" PRIOR TO A VISIT TO AUSCHWITZ. IN WHAT WAY?**

I remember walking through Auschwitz, seeing the heaps of discarded eyeglasses and suitcases and human hair and being confronted by the reality of it all. I saw all the shoes and imagined them on the feet of my daughters, on my husband, parents, brothers...me. They had walked someone to the same places as me and the people I knew and loved—work, school, wor-



ship, home. And then they had taken the longest walk of all, to this place, only to be taken off one last time just before stepping into a death chamber. I stood before those shoes a long time and wept. In that moment the accounts of Auschwitz no longer seemed distant or far removed from my life. Every person killed during the Holocaust seemed to crowd around me. Real people, not just numbers. Thousands of people shut their eyes and allowed this to happen. They continued living comfortable lives while others were ripped from a normal existence, tortured and killed for no reason other than their nationality, their genes, their associations. It was an awakening. If I had lived back then, would I have summoned the courage to stand up against this evil, willing to risk my life to save others? I felt a powerful conviction that I could no longer sit on the sidelines of humanity's suffering and injustices. I had to stand up and be counted, to do what was needed in my generation. "God," I prayed, "if anything like this happens in my lifetime, don't let me sit back and pretend it doesn't concern me." God was listening because in the months to come, he began to awaken me to modern-day atrocities I had no idea were taking place—the horror of human trafficking.

#### **HOW DID A21 BEGIN AND WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TODAY?**

My journey began in 2007 in an airport in Greece where I saw posters of missing women and children. When I discovered that many of them were potential victims of human trafficking, I began to learn more about this global crime that enslaves millions around the world. Once I was made aware of the horrible injustice that men, women and children are facing *right now* in the 21st century, I knew I had to do something. Nick and I conducted research, traveled the world to learn from experts, and opened the doors of our first aftercare facility in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 2008. Today A21 has eighteen offices in fifteen nations, combating modern-day slavery through a strategy of Reach, Rescue and Restore. We reach the public by equipping people to understand human trafficking through education, prevention materials, and awareness campaigns. Then we rescue, working with authorities to secure the freedom of victims and the conviction of traffickers. Lastly, we empower survivors through legal

support, holistic aftercare, safe accommodation, and relocation services. Over the last twelve years, we've seen awareness prevent trafficking on a massive scale, hotlines and professional training lead to the identification of victims, and countless lives that were once enslaved restored to freedom and independence. Our team believes that change is possible and that together we can abolish slavery everywhere, forever.

## **WE KNEW THAT GOD HAD CALLED US TO THIS WORK AND WE WOULDN'T LET FEAR OF FAILURE STAND IN THE WAY.**

#### **WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU AND NICK FACED?**

At the very beginning the consultants we brought in to help us do a feasibility study told us we were doomed to fail and we shouldn't bother. That was a massive challenge, one that could have stopped us cold. But we knew that God had called us to this work and we wouldn't let fear of failure stand in the way.

#### **WHAT PART HAS PRAYER PLAYED?**

Once I saw those pictures of missing girls in the airport, I began to pray for them, particularly a little girl named Sophia, the same as my youngest daughter. I had no idea then that God was going to direct me to start A21, but prayer has been a part of our story from the beginning because it's foundational to my life. Everything I do begins with prayer. It's a declaration of my dependence on God, my way of saying, "God, I need you. I want your direction, your will and your help in everything." Prayer is how I stay connected to God and strengthened for what he's called me to do.

#### **WHAT DOES TRUE COMPASSION MEAN TO YOU?**

Being moved in our innermost being. Not only that, but the Bible tells us that when Jesus was moved with compassion, he took action. For our A21 team, to have compassion is to take action in every way that we can to fight human trafficking.

#### **IS THE CALL OF GOD JUST FOR A SELECT AND GIFTED FEW?**

Absolutely not. God has a specific and unique purpose for every single one of us and he calls each of us to further his kingdom here on this earth in a specific way. Our mission is to discover what that is

and pursue it; to stay on mission all of our lives, knowing that while the outworking of our calling may change from time to time, the overall mission remains the same.

#### **WHAT MIGHT KEEP US FROM SAYING YES TO SOMETHING NEW?**

I think fear is our greatest enemy and it holds a lot of us back. Fear of failure. Fear of what people might think. Fear that we

don't have what it takes, that we're not enough. But I've learned that the Christian life isn't one of comfort and ease. God invites us to live abundant, passionate lives for him that will inevitably include some challenges and pain along the way.

#### **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE LIFE OF FAITH?**

Faith is believing God. It's trusting him with all my heart. I have spent thirty years putting all my confidence in him and he has never failed me. People have failed me, of course, because they're people, but God never has. When my prayers aren't always answered the way I wanted and trusting is a challenge, I go back to all I know to be true about him, and place my faith in him once more. The Bible assures me that he is good, he does good, and he works in all things for my good, even when the circumstances look bad.

#### **WHO IS CHRISTINE CAINE?**

I hope that the outworking of my faith is evident in what I do. I live to share the gospel and see people give their lives to Jesus. I am a modern-day abolitionist, so I fight for justice for people trapped in slavery. Therefore, the way forward for me is simple and can be found in Micah 6:8, "*Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God.*" That is what I try to do every day. ✎



To order your copy of **Undaunted**, please see **Page 08.**

# HELL <sup>and</sup> HOPE <sup>on the</sup> NINEVEH PLAINS

TIM KIKKERT  
WITH PAT MASSEY

*Photo courtesy of Samaritan's Purse*

We were discussing plans for the day when my colleagues and I were interrupted by the sound of a huge explosion. Since the front lines of the fighting were only a few miles distant, we weren't surprised—until the ground where we sat shook and the pressure from the blast reverberated in my chest. A cloud of dust rose into view over our protective walls and it brought home very tangibly the reality of my new normal. I could only shudder at how terrible the impact must have been to the target area if we could feel it so strongly where we were. The peace and security of home and family seemed far away indeed.

My parents raised six children on a farm near Grimsby, Ontario, and my days were filled with the freedom to roam, the discipline of farm chores, and the fun of playing hockey and soccer in community leagues. It was in my teen years that God and faith took on a significant place in my life.

When it came time for college, I was applying to different schools when I came across the one-year Explore program at

Prairie College. Learning more about the Bible with the great outdoors as a classroom and the chance to learn skills like rock climbing, water rafting and mountaineering struck me as a pretty sweet deal and I was soon stretching my boundaries in the beautiful Rocky Mountains.

The plan was to stay for one year, but I ended up completing a four-year degree in Outdoor Education and Leadership. A lovely young girl from Sweden was studying at Prairie at the same time. Because I was away on location for much of the year, however, we didn't connect until after my graduation in 2009 when Linn was in her final year of studies and I was working for the college.

The next year a devastating earthquake struck the island nation of Haiti. I was intrigued by the work being done by the Red Cross and their disaster relief teams and began to look into similar opportunities. When I discovered that the international aid organization Samaritan's Purse did relief work with a Christian purpose, I applied and was eventually assigned to Haiti at the beginning of 2011. Working as a general logistics officer, I helped respond to an escalating cholera outbreak and began learning about supply chain and inventory management.

Linn and I were newly married in 2013 when Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines. I joined Samaritan's Purse's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) in their initial response and eventually both of us were stationed in the Philippines. Coming back home to Ontario a year later, I worked primarily as a carpenter while remaining on call for disaster responses as a logistics and operations specialist.

Looking back at my time at Prairie, I could see how my training had prepared me for this role and given me the skills to be adaptable in highly dynamic and often insecure environments. Over the years I had responded to floods and tornados in Canada and the US, a cholera outbreak in Haiti, and typhoons in the Philippines and the Caribbean. But just before Christmas of 2016 the call came for an assignment that made me think twice.

In late 2016 and early 2017 the world was focused on the rise of a militant Sunni Jihadist group that was sweeping over the Middle East in a tidal wave of slaughter and destruction. They called themselves the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The city of Mosul, situated next to the ruins of ancient Nineveh and itself now in ruins, was a final stronghold, and after pushing ISIS out of the eastern part of the city,



coalition forces were locked in a battle for the western side. Hundreds of thousands of civilians were still trapped and it was inevitable that the ensuing firefight would result in tremendous loss of life. It was indeed the personification of hell on earth.

Samaritan's Purse was constructing an Emergency Field Hospital just east of Mosul, making it the closest trauma centre to the fighting. When I was asked to join the team in a support role, I knew I wanted to be involved, but with a wife and young daughter, there was no way I could head into that context unless Linn and I were both confident that God was inviting us to respond. The greatest cost is often paid by the family at home and my hardest assignments were always the ones that took me away from my loved ones the longest.

As we prayed together and talked over the details, we were given peace and I was soon on my way to the barren plains of Iraq. Home for the next five weeks would be a small fortress of one-foot thick blast walls, barbed wire and armed security where I would manage the inventory, storage and distribution of medical supplies, ensuring that the hospital was always well stocked.

It didn't take long for reality to hit home. As mortars and bombs were launched from opposing sides and coalition planes flew overhead we became used to the sounds of multiple explosions and their powerful impact. The pace of the fighting and rhythm of life at the hospital followed a predictable pattern. With every fresh bombardment, we knew there would soon be an influx of patients. Those with serious injuries were brought to the trauma bay for stabilization and prioritization in preparation for surgery. Often several severely wounded people would arrive at the same time and force difficult decisions as to who should receive interventions first. Some were so badly injured that the only thing we could do was try and make them as comfortable as possible for their last moments.

With so many patients coming in at once, I was kept hurrying back and forth from the supply room to the ER, ensuring that the medical staff always had the necessary supplies on hand. On one particularly busy day, my smartwatch logged that I had travelled over twenty kilometers.

As the fighting raged on week after week, we became intimately versed in the evils and atrocities of war. Professionals who had spent their entire careers in

emergency medicine declared that they had never experienced anything like what we were seeing daily: gunshot wounds, amputations, victims of IEDs and targeted drone strikes, and even a mass casualty when a suicide bombing took place in a crowded restaurant. In this war, ISIS was not just carelessly killing civilians; they were specifically targeting them. I had assumed that most of the patients would be those engaged in the fighting, but the reality was that the majority of those we treated were women and young children.

In the aftermath of a natural disaster, one could be sympathetic to all those affected and bring a small bit of redemption and goodness to their suffering by responding to physical needs. But man-made conflict where one side seeks the complete annihilation of another is a very different matter. The horrors of which humans are capable were on full display, and witnessing the results of hate and wanton destruction first-hand was a terrible experience.

Nevertheless, the medical staff treated everyone with first-class care and I saw the love of Christ evident in the efforts of so many of my colleagues. Even suspected ISIS fighters were given kind attention and nurses who had already worked a full shift continued to sit with patients so that they wouldn't be alone. Support staff played music into the night to cheer those who were in recovery and to comfort those who were dying.

In all this there was a clear sense that there was a larger battle being fought. It was evident that what we were witnessing was pure evil and there were days, as the wounded continued to pour through the

## SEEING GOD WORK in SUCH a PLACE WAS TRULY a SACRED THING.

doors, when the darkness threatened to overwhelm us. But I also witnessed the truth that God's love was greater than all the forces of evil and that his presence was there in that place.

As our staff met in the mornings to pray before work, calling out to God for healing, strength and justice, it was driven home to me that we do not pray to a God who does not understand, but to One who suffered and meets us in the midst of our suffering. As deeply as I was affected by the tragedy all around me, seeing God work



Tim, Linn, Audrey (4) and Maja (2): *"The greatest cost is often paid by the family at home."*

in such a place was truly a sacred thing and deeply humbling. As I did my supply rounds, I was often struck by the fact that the hospital tents felt more like a church than some buildings with tall steeples.

One morning a ward nurse related how she had been caring for a male patient when he began crying out repeatedly in Arabic and gesturing wildly. A local translator was called in to find out what was wrong and his expression quickly turned to one of surprise. The patient explained that as the nurse was tending to him, he had seen a vision of a Man walking up to him. Realizing that his vision was of Christ himself, he began to call out in Arabic—"Saviour, Saviour!" As our local staff talked and prayed with him, he became a believer in Jesus right there in his hospital bed.

It is inevitable that certain memories will always stay with me. The camaraderie and friendship of others who respond to these calls creates a unique bond that extends far beyond the assignments. Being in such harsh environments brings on some drastic culture shock and stress and it has been those consistent, understanding relationships that have helped me through.

Other memories are not so positive. To this day when I am near a construction site and hear the concussive sounds of heavy equipment, I am brought right back to that small fortress where round after round shook the very ground beneath us. My time at the field hospital was shrouded with the unspeakable realities of the pain we inflict upon each other, but just as vivid is the memory of how the presence of God was inescapable in that war-torn place where the very air seemed thick with the love of Christ. The light shines brighter in dark places, no matter how small the effort, and that, too, I will never forget. ❧

# At home and away

## Prairie classrooms go global

Despite a season of great uncertainty, students are grateful to be back in the classroom and well into their college experience at Prairie. Recognizing that for various reasons some individuals would be unable to travel to campus, in the summer Prairie began researching and fundraising to develop a new method of class delivery. The Board of Directors approved an investment into new and innovative “HyFlex” technology which enables students to join a live class via Zoom from the safety of their home.

The needed technology came with a high price tag, but as alumni and friends were approached to help cover the total cost of \$130,000, generous hearts gave that much and more. Then it fell to Prairie’s outstanding tech team to research and install equipment, instruct faculty in its use, and continue to troubleshoot and fine tune as classes began.

HyFlex technology breaks down the boundary between the virtual classroom and the physical one as all of the learning activities are offered in both, and students have the option of attending face-to-face or online (or both) on any given class day. Professors can interact with the in-person students as well as those online during the class.

According to Prairie’s Registrar Douglas Lewis, there are nineteen students taking advantage of HyFlex remotely this fall, some from as far away as Brazil, Korea and Uganda. Their comments have been encouraging: “It’s almost



like we’re in the room. It has been a wonderful experience.” “It’s amazing that I can attend classes despite the time difference and physical distance. The timely uploading of the classes and chapels is making me feel less distant.” “Studying at Prairie is a dream come true. For a long time I have longed to study in an environment that honours God. I feel like I am at home even on Zoom.”

**HyFlex classrooms enable professors to teach both on-campus learners and distance learners the same course at the same time in the same classroom.**

“Learning how to include remote students as part of the overall class is a work in progress,” says faculty member James Enns. “It was a challenge to learn which buttons to push to activate the technology at the start of each class and then monitor it alongside teaching material and responding to in-class dynamics, but as we share ideas with each other, we are finding the most optimum ways of making the technology serve us.”

According to Glenn Loewen, Prairie’s Dean of Education, “HyFlex classrooms enable professors to teach both on-campus learners and distance learners the same course at the same time in the same classroom. It allows us to deliver online education in real time to 1) students who cannot be on campus because of the virus restrictions, 2) students in other colleges for fulfilling collaborative agreements, 3)

students who have decided to take their courses from a distance, 4) students in another classroom on campus because of requirements for physical distancing.”

Students now have three options for completing their schooling at Prairie: the traditional in-classroom experience, on-line HyFlex delivery in conjunction with a real-time classroom, or online education taken at any time on the student’s own schedule. ■



# The ring

*THEY SAY THAT IF YOU LINE UP ALL THE BOOKS IN CHAPTERS END TO END, YOU'LL BE BANNED FROM THE STORE.*

My oldest son's favorite book series by a country mile was *Lord of the Rings*. He read all three of the thick tomes by the time he was ten. By his fifteenth birthday he had read them three times and was on his fourth. *Crazy*, I thought. He read them between playing basketball and ice hockey and table tennis. He read them when he should have been studying. He read them when he should have been snoring.

And when I told him they were making three movies about them, well, have you ever peeled a kid off the ceiling? It's not easy, but it's fun. Shortly after we attended the first movie together, Stephen turned sixteen. It's that time in life when dads and sons have whispered conversations about life and love and being all grown up.

One night, I spoke to him of the importance of reaching this milestone. How, like his favorite hobbit Frodo, he would be faced with great temptations and opportunities as he journeyed through the darkness of earth. I told him I had a small gift for him, as a "covenant between us that you will walk the way Frodo walked, choosing to do the right thing, though it cost him everything." I talked of putting God first. Of faith. Of purity. Stephen nodded his approval.

And so we convened for a family ceremony. The children gathered wide-eyed as I opened a wooden box. Inside was a big fat cigar. No, no, I'm kidding. It was a genuine replica of the ring—a rather expensive one, I might add. White

gold, complete with elvish engravings. I read a short verse of Scripture: "So honor the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly" (Joshua 24:14).

Then I said, "For sixteen years that's been our prayer for you, Stephen. That you would honor God and serve him."

my eyes. The ring. White gold with elvish etchings. Good as new.

Oh, me of little faith.

Do you know what my prayer had been all this time? That he wouldn't be too disappointed when his prayers weren't answered. Here I was, praying that his

**Here I was, praying that his hopes wouldn't be dashed. Here he was, asking God to do the impossible.**

We prayed together, committing him and his future to God. Then I took the ring, hung it from a gold chain placed about his neck, and kissed his forehead before he squirmed away.

There the ring stayed.

Until the night Stephen arrived home from school carrying small pieces of the chain. It had busted. The ring was gonzo, we knew not where. We searched everywhere. Along sidewalks and hallways. Through classrooms and cars. Nothing. It was permanently gone, I was sure. Hanging about someone else's neck. Adorning another's jewelry case.

So Stephen began to pray.


His younger sister and brother joined him too. At suppertime, they prayed that we would find the ring. At breakfast they prayed believing. I hated to doubt, but I'm a grown-up. It's what we do best.

Months passed.

Winter came and went. The dazzling white snow that covered the field through which my son sometimes trudged to school began to melt. And one evening I noticed a particularly wide grin stretching across his face.

The boy had been walking home from school when a glint of reflected sunlight caught his eye. He held his hand out and opened it. I couldn't believe

hopes wouldn't be dashed. Here *he* was, asking God to do the impossible, something he has delighted in doing since the dawn of time.

If you've been praying a long time without seeing results, don't give up, okay? Steve will tell you that good things come to those who persevere. And each time he looks at that ring I hope it reminds him to honor God and serve him wholeheartedly. I hope it reminds him that those who ask receive. And to never stop believing in the God of the impossible. 



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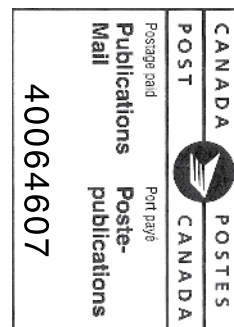
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