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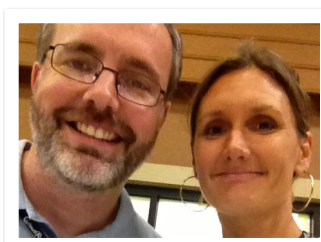
GREAT
COMMISSION
CHURCHES

CHRISTIANITY IN

action

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CHANGING LIVES



Patrick and Shelley Coleman,
founders of CR at River
Ridge Church

CELEBRATE RECOVERY

By Andy Tuel

Andy Tuel is a campus pastor at River Ridge Church in West Virginia. River Ridge Church is a multi-campus church located in Charleston and Teays Valley.

"Can we start a recovery group at River Ridge Church?"

At first, a recovery group didn't seem like a big need. After all, isn't that what we do on Sunday mornings? The gospel being proclaimed and taught should be enough, right? But soon after, God began a work that opened up a different avenue of authentic healing called Celebrate Recovery (CR), a 12-step biblically based recovery program. CR reaches people where they are with their battles and is unapologetic in claiming the loving power of Jesus Christ through a recovery process.

The recovery process has two aspects – Support and Steps. The support group meets for two hours every week, one hour with worship, a bible based lesson or personal testimony, and the second hour breaking into gender-specific groups and discussion. The Step Study is a more intensive discipleship program rooted in the Bible.

Since 2011, the program has grown from a few leaders praying about the ministry to having a multi-campus presence with two weekly support meetings and step studies at both campuses. CR also reaches out to communities. Nationwide, CR has seen 85% of the people who go through the program stay with a local church and nearly half serve.

We have seen Celebrate Recovery permeate our community groups, Sunday services, and have heard this ministry's impact in baptism testimonies. At River Ridge Church, we exist to reach spiritual seekers with the gospel of Jesus Christ and grow believers in both their love of God and love of people. Celebrate Recovery is an integral part of people experiencing the freedom that comes through Jesus Christ. For more information about Celebrate Recovery, visit www.celebraterecovery.com.



SERVING SINGLE WOMEN

By Joy Hill

My senior year of high school, I attended a regional conference. The entire time I was distracted by my impending graduation, college, and guys. During the last session Mark Darling told a story about a woman obsessed with getting married. This strongly resonated with me. Then Mark said, "I challenged this woman to stop worrying about getting married for the next 10 years and instead worry about the women around her." I felt the Spirit of God whisper, "That is going to be you. I am going to ask you to give Me 10 years of service in single women's ministry before you get married."

Over the next decade God reoriented my values. I went off to college that fall, and God got my attention in a big way. He shook out my hypocrisy, self-centered attitudes, and extremely flirtatious behavior. I also was able to help lead small groups, house churches, and saw many friends come to salvation.

During college I was asked to speak at a women's event for the first time. Before I spoke I felt incredibly nauseous, not because I was nervous, but because I felt the Holy Spirit almost shaking me to get up there and say what He laid on my heart. I have been blessed to be able to speak all across the country to single women at conferences and retreats. I wrote the booklet *With A Whole Heart*, and have been encouraged to see the way that collection of stories has inspired women to live more fully devoted to Christ.

God proved Himself faithful to the promise He whispered to me all those years ago. In 2011, I married my best friend, Cody. Our first born son is Keeper, and we are expecting our 2nd baby this spring. We serve in Manhattan, KS where Cody is a Campus Staffer at K-State.

MISSION USA

UNITED UNDER HIS NAME

By Dave Brunelle & Rayfield Benton

The Rock Community Church is in an urban area of greater Cleveland, Ohio.

Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, “The most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o’clock on Sunday morning.” This breaks our heart at The Rock. We believe this is only a taste of the grief that the Father must feel when He sees His children dividing along racial lines. We sensed that He wanted to do a new work among us. Since that time, Jesus has been leading us to become a multi-ethnic church.

In the beginning all we knew to do was to pray and fast. We sought God for next steps that would move us as a Kingdom outpost to demonstrate Kingdom values

and become a multiracial congregation. This is defined as a church where no one racial group makes up more than 80% of the congregation. This was a God-sized goal, but worth it for the glory of Jesus. We asked God to change our hearts and congregation, to tear down strongholds of racial division, and to unite us with people who sensed the heart of God for a racially united Church.

Other steps included learning from authors and pioneers on this topic. We casted vision and preached about it; held honest, sometimes very challenging, discussions; branched out into different musical styles; and celebrated diversity within our local body of Christ wherever we could find it.

The journey has been long and hard and it



is far from over, but God has transformed our Kingdom outpost into a Christ-centered, ethnically diverse congregation of African-Americans, Latinos, Filipinos, and Caucasians. He has led us to what we feel is an even greater fulfillment of the Great Commission. Jesus has received even more glory as we, a diverse group of people, unite as one under His name.

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

By Darren Stewart

The Holy Spirit is stirring hearts at Grace Community Church in Universal City, TX. Even before our “Just Sow It” encouragement, we have been praying and watching for the movement of the Holy Spirit so we can join in. And God has been doing a lot.

Believing every Christ-follower should be able to tell their story in a brief, genuine way, we have been training and practicing following the Spirit as He leads us to engage the people who come into our lives every day. Then, we trust Him to take that conversation wherever He will.

Since January 2013, 103 people have made a profession of faith in Christ and over half have obeyed the Lord in baptism. They have come to Christ in a variety of ways: through vacation Bible school, small groups, friends in our circles of influence, family members, and at our weekend message, worship gathering, and subsequent invitation. There is only one way to God, but there are many ways to Christ.

We have no fool-proof plan or program. We have simply been moved to ask God to make us alert and WILLING to obey the Holy Spirit when He prompts us to act. Our actions do speak very loudly, but when the Holy Spirit first came upon the



disciples as recorded in the book of Acts, they SPOKE. People need to hear what God is doing today, and they need to hear how they can find forgiveness and a new life through Christ.

Our prayer is that we act and speak to those the Lord brings into our lives on a daily basis, in a way that will say “God is real and alive and can meet you today.” Please pray that with us.

INTERNATIONAL

STATESIDE MISSION INITIATIVES

By Robbie McAlister

Robbie has pastored at Riverbend Church since 2005, after he and his family returned from ten years as international missionaries in the former Soviet Union.

For many years Riverbend Church has had various missions initiatives. Two years ago the Lord led us to increase our cross-cultural footprint as part of our annual Acts 1:8 plan. We asked what we could do to increase our vision for the world, and decided to focus a whole weekend on nothing but our cross-cultural missions work.

We had a seminar on world religions to understand the challenges of ministering among other peoples both in our own country and around the world. We

invited our multi-cultural congregation to bring a favorite international dish and enjoyed a truly cross-cultural meal together. Missionaries we support came and shared about ministry in Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa and even international ministry in our own country. This was especially educational for our families who are trying to help their children catch a world vision from a young age.

We closed out our weekend with our faith promise Sunday. This included a visionary message and taking up faith promise commitments: people prayed and committed to an amount above and beyond their tithe that they believed God for over the next year that they gave to the church's cross-cultural missions vision.



Robbie and Criss McAlister

It was really exciting to hear testimonies throughout the year how God provided in amazing ways so people could fulfill their faith commitments. In our first year we almost doubled our missions giving. We praise God for that!

By doing a missions weekend, we feel God is helping us take greater steps toward making Christ's last command our first concern.

MAKING JESUS FAMOUS IN INDIA AND NEPAL

"...I will send those who survive to be messengers to the nations...to all the lands beyond the sea that have not heard of My fame or seen My glory. There they will declare My glory to the nations." Isaiah 66:19 NLT

In Nepal I often meet kids who try their English on me: "What's your name?" they ask. I answer, "Michael." They can't get it, until I say, "like Michael Jackson." Immediately they laugh, because they know Michael Jackson – he's famous here. But when I ask, "Have you heard of Jesus?" they don't have a clue. They've never heard of Him! How is this possible? What did Michael Jackson ever do for them, compared to what Jesus did for them? Yet he's famous, but Jesus is not. Not yet!

Look at what God has promised: "...I'll send the survivors of judgment all over the world: Spain and Africa, Turkey and Greece, and the far-off islands that have never heard of Me, who know nothing of what I've done nor who I am. I'll send them out as missionaries to preach My glory among the nations." Isaiah 66:19 MSG

Notice who God promises to send missionaries to: Those who...

- "have never heard of Me"
- "know nothing of what I've done"
- "know nothing of who I am"

This is why we are targeting India and Nepal – two of the least reached nations. Every week our Indian team and their disciples reach over 3000 lost people with the gospel. In 2013 our number of training



for trainers groups grew from 150 to over 600 groups. In Nepal, we are building the same kind of team, to multiply the same kind of training groups. We need your help! Please pray, please send, please come on a short or long term mission. Help us make Jesus famous!

INSIDE GCC

GCC PASTORS CONFERENCE 2014

lead well, teach well, pastor well

JUNE 16-18, 2014
KANSAS CITY MISSOURI

We want to - lead well, teach well, pastor well. Our focus is to equip pastors to excel in their work. We will hear from pastors throughout our association who are examples as servant leaders in their own churches and communities.

In addition, we are honored to host guest speaker Josh McDowell who has served with CRU since 1961, and has over 50 years experience as a speaker, teacher and author. Josh will host a seminar on effective communication that will be followed by an interview session.

Mark your calendar and join us for this year's Pastors Conference!

MEET A GCC PASTOR

THIS EDITION: JOHN MEYER

John began a personal relationship with Jesus Christ at Iowa State University in 1977. After two years of post-high school searching, John's life was transformed by the lives and vision of the believers in the Great Commission campus ministry there. Their example of a simple, pure, and whole-hearted devotion to Christ became a life-capturing purpose he also wanted to follow.

John became a pastor after 6 ½ years of college, graduating with a double major in biology and computer science. A year later he married the love of his life, Carol Knox, and was blessed with four sons. After four years leading the student ministry in Ames, they moved to Fort Collins to help a church-planting team already there. Since moving in 1989 the church has grown and played a significant



part in planting seven other churches.

John currently focuses on church coaching in the Mountains West Region of Great Commission. His passion is helping pastors succeed through growing and deepening their church in an ever more challenging culture.

John's favorite verse is Romans 10:11 (NASB): *"Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."*

Live the life you will want to look back at forever.

LEAD WELL, TEACH WELL, PASTOR WELL

JOHN HOPLER - DIRECTOR, GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES



"The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching." 1 Timothy 5:17

In Great Commission Churches, we believe that the Scriptures gives clear instruction on how the church is to function. We see throughout the New Testament that the church was led by a plurality of elders – men of Christ-like character who love God and serve people in the church. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter: 5:1-5).

This year at the Great Commission Churches Pastors Conference, our theme will be "Lead Well, Teach Well, Pastor Well." As elders of the church

of Jesus Christ, it is our sincere desire to excel in our work. Our prayer is that elders throughout the Great Commission church movement will continue to grow in their faith, character, and skills so that the churches will be more and more a glory to Jesus Christ.

You play a major role in this process too. Your prayers, your encouragement, and your counsel to your church's elders are greatly needed to see your church grow and develop. What steps can you take in helping the elders provide more Christ-like leadership to your church?

May God grant you grace to serve the Lord and His church. And may God cause 2014 to be a year where GCC elders grow in leading well, teaching well, and pastoring well.



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