

Foreword by **Pastor Joe Champion**

MissioLOGICAL

Thoughts on missions, leadership,
and reaching the next generation.



By Rob Hoskins

President of OneHope

*25 of the most popular blog
posts from RobHoskins.com*

Foreword

By Pastor Joe Champion

Senior Pastor, Celebration Church (Georgetown, Texas)

So Boudreaux and Thibodeaux, after years of ducking and dodging the call of God on their lives, finally answered Him and became the pastors of two small churches, directly across from one another. One day, they both decided to put up a new sign in front of their church that read:

Da End Is Near

Turn Yo Sef' Roun Now

Afore It Be Too Late!

As soon as their signs got into the ground, a car passed by. The driver stuck his head out the window and yelled, “Both of you are religious nuts!!” Then suddenly, there came a sound of tires screeching and a huge splash. Boudreaux yelled over to Thibodeaux from across the road and said, “Do ya tink da sign should jus say, ‘bridge out?’”

Wasn’t quite sure how I would start this forward for my friend Rob’s new ebook, so I figured sharing an old cajun joke was as good a start as any. There are very few leaders today who have challenged me and my thinking concerning the mission of the local church than Rob Hoskins. For over 20 years, Rob and OneHope have provided the church with innovative tools and strategies that will reach those far from God, and now with such initiatives like Incredible Islands and *The Bible App for Kids*, Rob and OneHope have reached over 1 billion children with the Gospel of Jesus Christ! That is not a typo folks. One billion!

As the newly elected Board Chair at Oral Roberts University, and someone who travels to more continents in a week than most pastors do in a lifetime, I am in awe that Rob has found the time to begin a new blog, full of writings that convey his unquenchable passion for the local church and what he now needs to do to remain relevant, fruit-bearing and most importantly, life-giving.

In a day and age when so many find it easier to stand on the sidelines and write down plays they believe the church should be following, Rob is what I like to call the ultimate player-coach. Every page of this ebook demonstrates Rob’s revolutionary wisdom for worldwide evangelism, and how this wisdom comes at a cost he is still willing to pay today.

For those of you have begun to hear the tires of your churches screeching, or have found yourselves drenched from driving off what was once a clear path of ministry, this ebook Rob has written will be exactly what you need to get your church and its vision to reach the nations back on the right track.



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News

There are many instances in my life that affect me—good or bad. But with a tightly packed schedule, I don't often have time to process or share them with those closest to me. The Rob Hoskins blog has given me a way to think on paper, process my way through some highs and lows in my life, and share them in one fell swoop. Oftentimes these lead to a conversation—whether online or in real life—that allows time and space for processing, celebrating, ministering, discipleship or growth. Often I am on the receiving end of those and for that and for the people who have taken the time to pour into me, I am so grateful. Maybe one of these topics will resonate with you and allow you to start a conversation where you can bless or be a blessing today.

Struck by Lightning

October 14, 2013

The fall is classically the busiest season of my year, with board meetings, budget process, conventions and speaking engagements galore. It's like I'm trying to get everything signed, sealed and delivered before the holidays kick into high gear.

In 2013, on top of all the scheduled chaos, we celebrated my wife's 50th birthday, my Mom's 80th, and my own 28th wedding anniversary. And in the midst of all that, I was "interrupted" by dear friends whose lives have been disrupted by tragedy, sickness, failure and accusation—all situations that were "unscheduled" on my already packed calendar. The recent disruptions in my friends' lives were so instantaneous, violent and unexpected it's almost as if they were struck by lightning.

Lightning strikes with great violence and little warning; it hits the just and the unjust alike. Some might foolishly be playing golf in a storm and bear the brunt of their poor decisions, but others seem to get struck randomly by no fault of their own.

Whatever the case, a lightning strike is painful, disorienting and leaves you wondering if you can survive.

Having weathered some tough life blows that have felt like lightning strikes, I've experienced the healing power of ministry that comes from genuine relationships. Even during "busy season," we must help carry each other's burdens during the painful seasons of life.

I did some research on trees that have been hit by lightning. I discovered that not all strikes are fatal; many trees can heal after a blow. The trees that survive are the ones that have deep roots and hard centers. The deeper your root system and the stronger the core of your life, the better the chance you will weather the tough blows.

Psalm 1:3 says, *"He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."*

And Jeremiah 17:7 affirms, *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."*

Even a healthy tree that has suffered a massive blow needs care. For healing to begin, someone must carefully trim away the damaged, loose bark, painstakingly peeling it back until they reach the area where it is still solidly attached to the tree. The harder the strike, the more difficult this is to do in larger areas. But trimming the bark—painful as it might be—encourages more rapid healing with

minimal wood decay. This exposed part of the tree then needs a protective layer of moisturizing salve to prevent dryness and infection. As long as the root system is intact and the wood core is not penetrated, this tree has a great chance of not only surviving, but thriving.

What a beautiful metaphor this is for the body of believers. When a brother or sister in Christ is dealt a devastating blow, we are called to come alongside and care. No matter how busy we are, we must administer life-giving treatments and walk with them during the long, sometimes painful, healing process.

I hurt for my friends, particularly the ones with shallow roots and soft cores. As I watched the autumn leaves change color and began bringing plants inside as we prepare for the impending winter, I'm keenly aware that my ministry isn't just about important meetings, budgets and being on stage; it is about caring for friends who have been struck by lightning.

No Plot Will Work

November 13, 2013



Photo by Jon Ottoson

This week I received word that a friend and ministry partner had taken his life, leaving behind a wife and young children. I was shocked. I am still in shock. The last time I heard from him was through a note he had sent me expressing bright hopes and dreams for his nation and the young people that he felt called to minister to. His last post on Facebook before he took his life was, “No plot will work.” I read through his posts from the last year, which were a running commentary of highs and lows, expectation and disappointment, great hope and crushing hopelessness. I grieved as I considered his last moments when he saw no plot, no storyline, and no narrative that was going to unfold the way he had anticipated or dreamed. I was saddened to think that in his final moment my brother in Christ couldn’t see the big story he was meant to be a part of.

I admit that the pressure of ministry life is intense, but I would be remiss if I didn’t also tell you that some of the greatest pressures ministers face are often self-imposed. The combination of a minister’s passionate calling, the weight of carrying people’s burdens, the human tendency to compare, a theology of work—any or all of these can work together to create a false state of Messianic identity. They can tyrannize self-expectation to the point of destroying one’s ministry, or shattering the soul.

Satan knows where to attack those who are doing Christ's work. He begins to plant little doubts or mistruths in our minds, trying to convince us that it is our work, our actions and our faith that we must orchestrate to produce the right plot. We begin to think we are writing our own stories and that our decisions control the narrative.

In these broken moments, I am poignantly reminded that utter dependence on Him is our only hope. No plot of our own making will work. In and of ourselves we are lost. He is the Lord of our lives and the Lord of the harvest. Romans 4:18 gives us a prescription for ministry sanity:

"When everything was hopeless, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw he couldn't do but on what God said He would do. And so he was made father of a multitude of peoples."

Modern leadership doctrine has allowed a ruthless egoism to be esteemed as "the standard" for far too many in the Church. I have to remind myself literally every day not to look at the things that are seen, but instead to focus on the things which are unseen, for the things that are seen are temporal but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor 4:18)

The story Christ is writing through our lives is glorious, abundant and eternal. No matter what rough chapters we might face today or tomorrow, **His plot works.**

Olympic Opening Ceremony—Unity

February 7, 2014

Perhaps the most powerful part of the Olympics is the opening ceremony. And not just because of the elaborate staging and glittering pageantry of the show. The Sochi Olympics are reportedly the most expensive Games in history to date—with its opening ceremony expected to top the charts for money spent on the most elaborate spectacle ever produced.

The executive in charge of opening ceremony production shared openly about the years of planning and thousands of hours that have been dedicated to trying to create a perfect and flawless few moments as the whole world watches.

While I appreciate “the show”, for me the most powerful and poignant part is not the programming or even the lighting of the torch, it is when the athletes themselves come marching into the stadium behind their flags with huge smiles on their faces and uncontained joy accompanied by the surging applause of the crowd. The camaraderie of athletes from around the world walking together—a fleeting moment when the world chooses to lay aside its differences, its wars, its disputes, and its sad histories, and symbolically portray the joy that can come from unity.

In that ephemeral moment, the athletes have a universal reason to lay aside their individual passions, politics and allegiances for a greater good—a common ground in the celebration of sport that seems to bind them together in happiness and harmony.

While I know it is predominantly symbolic, I am still moved to see the North Korean team within sight of athletes from the United States, or Iranians in fairly close proximity to Israelis. I know the games will not change the animosities, deep political differences and real issues that nations and people of the world harbor. But for the athletes in the Olympic Stadium and for those of us tuning in around the world—we are treated to a brief utopian moment when peace seems possible and love links us in community.

As believers, we know that the ultimate restoration of God’s true intent for His creation will not come to pass until the eschaton, when our Lord makes all things right. But Jesus prescribes that in the waiting—until Christ He returns—we are to look back and remember Paradise lost, look forward to the eternal bliss to come, and display for the world that we are His disciples by the love that we have for one another (*John 13:35*).

Perhaps in that decree lies the most powerful tool of evangelism—the unity of the Church. Unlike the Olympics’ symbolic depiction of unity, the Church has an authentic unifier as we have been created in God’s image, made to display His love in action to all the world.

As I spend much of my time working with global networks such as the [Lausanne Movement](#), [Empowered 21](#) and the [WEA](#), our “I have a dream” equivalent is to see the global Church come together in unity. Not only so we can coordinate our efforts and collaborate to be effective in our endeavors, but to fulfill the command of Christ as we demonstrate our unity as the Church.

It is a challenge to get the global Church to work together harmoniously, but when we do it is a shining moment. And these shining moments—like the athletes circling the track bring Glory to God as we see the best of Christian character displayed to a world that needs to see and hear and cheer about the sweetness of a loving community that is striving to love the Lord our God with all our hearts as we love our neighbors—both locally and globally—as ourselves—in unity.

“Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”—Phil. 2:2

Visions from Thunderclouds

October 28, 2013



In a recent interview, I was asked what inspired my leadership and vision for ministry. Some thoughts that came instantly to mind were impactful words I've heard from key influencers as well as things I've learned from my **dad**.

- *"Anyone God uses significantly is always deeply wounded. On the last day, Jesus will look us over not for medals, diplomas, or honors, but for scars."* - **Brennan Manning**
- *"God's testing—however it comes—is not to break us but to remake us."* - **Bob Hoskins**
- *"Your deepest life message will come out of your deepest pain."* - **Rick Warren**

These individuals, and many more, have taught me that there is much potential in a cloud. Some clouds threaten jarring thunderclaps and fierce lightning bolts. Others produce a deluge that has you cowering under shelter for protection until it slows or stops.

And although we all know that storms can be rough, sometimes we fail to recognize that the water from those downpours penetrates the ground and ultimately brings forth life. My dad gave me that perspective. In doing so, he taught me to look for the clouds. Because therein lies great potential for vision. For testing. For growth.

I never asked God to send me clouds like cancer, eye problems, financial woes, ministry dissent or spiritual attack on me and my family. But looking back, it's been the really loud storms in my life that have almost always produced a vision and brought about the greatest growth in my life and ministry.

In 1988, two weeks after my first child was born and while Kim and I were preparing to head for a missions post on the Ivory Coast, I woke up unable to see. Doctors determined that I had one detached retina, and another about to detach; there was very little they could do but attempt emergency surgery. A year later, after six surgeries and grueling recoveries from each, I realized that this "storm" of blindness was actually meant for me to be able to "see" something. It was during this hellacious year that I learned to trust Jesus, to have faith in what I could not see—literally or otherwise—and trust in God alone. This storm, which caused me to huddle in darkness waiting for healing to come, was watering the realization that engaging every child and youth with the Gospel was God's vision for my life. This vision had previously been forced out of my purview and was relegated to my blind spot as I was raced toward a foreign mission field.

So when the storm clouds gather, instead of asking “Why?” my Dad taught me to ask another question; I ask “What?” I ask for a vision and look for what beautiful thing God wants to grow after a downpour of any trial and tribulation.

What have you learned from the storm clouds in your life or ministry?

The Faith of Matthew McConaughey

March 3, 2014



Image purchased from Dreamstime 2014

Awards ceremonies give us a glimpse into the ever-changing world of pop culture. Not only do we get to see the winners react, but it is always entertaining to compare established icons and new voices sharing a moment that may encapsulate a lifetime of effort or just their proverbial 15 minutes of fame. Acceptance speeches are particularly insightful. Watching the Oscars, I was struck by the number of sanctimonious speeches throughout the night, and pleasantly surprised that God received some honorable mentions as well.

During his speech, Matthew McConnaughey revealed that he has lived his life always needing someone to look up to—whether that is his friend God, his wife and kids, family that has passed on before him, or the hero he desires to become for himself in the future. While I don't know a lot about him, I respected him a little bit more because of where he placed his gratitude, and the overt care and concern he radiated for his family. While discipline, family values, respect and thankfulness are all great moral statutes to lean into, they represent only a baseline of de facto 'faith' indicative of most Americans—that of **moralistic therapeutic Deists**.

Throughout the night, I was made more aware and thankful that I've been called and saved by God. That I don't have to spend my lifetime chasing a moving target, never able to catch up to or achieve and attain hero status in myself. God already did that when He sent Jesus—He instantly made me a winner. My wish is for every child on this earth to understand the chasm between actual deep, satisfying, truly-makes-you-a-winner biblical faith and the Hollywood version of whatever makes you feel good, the "God in a briefcase" facade of faith.

In Lupita Nyong'o's emotion-filled acceptance speech, the Kenyan actor who portrayed the much-abused slave, Patsey, in one of this year's most stunning movies, "**12 Years a Slave**," said,

"It doesn't escape me for one moment that so much joy in my life is thanks to so much pain in someone else's."

Yes. That line gave me chills.

My faith, my life, my rescue, my freedom are all thanks to the sacrifice, mercy and grace that were given to me when Jesus died on the cross for my sins. Amidst the glitz and glamor and the blinding spotlight that the world is trying to distract us with, I want the greatest drama that ever took place to be the one that outshines them all. For God to receive all the glory, and for Christ to be everyone's hero.

...Had a Great Fall: The Recurring Story of Mega-pastors and Mega-sinners

April 8, 2014



I first met Bob Coy 25 years ago on my summer break from seminary. He was a guest on my dad's TV talk show, "FeedBack," conversing on the subject of evangelism. This young, fiery, hilarious transplant from Las Vegas made quite an impression and practically stole the show. He stood out on the panel of high-minded clergy: they wearing their Sunday best and he in his jeans and t-shirt. He was whimsical and passionate and it was no surprise to me that in just a few short years, he would build Calvary Chapel into one of the largest congregations in Fort Lauderdale—a city infamous for church plant failure.

I've lived in the Ft. Lauderdale community on and off for nearly 3 decades and I've been witnessed to 4 times—every time by individuals who called [Calvary Chapel](#) home. Bob made being a Jesus follower natural: no pretense, no weirdness, no ceremony. His folksy, long-winded, humor-laced, verse-by-verse Bible expositions broke most of the rules for modern day homiletic relevancy. He didn't care and it didn't matter. He could break the rules not only because he was an exceptionally gifted orator, but more importantly because he was just being Bob Coy.

Through the years our paths crossed often as the OneHope offices are just a few miles from Calvary Chapel's sprawling 75-acre campus. A number of our staff calls the church home and several of them have children who attend the school. On several occasions I invited Bob to share with pastors visiting from across America and around the world. Most wanted to know what the "secret" was to building one of the largest churches in America. His answer was always consistent, "I can't tell you." He believed God would give every sincere praying pastor a unique vision for their city.

You can't argue with Bob's formula and the good it has done for Broward County, Florida. I remember when national attention focused on the Boy Scouts losing their [public park accessibility](#) for taking a stand against homosexual scout leaders. Most churches were gearing up to fight and picket. Instead, Bob took an offering and opened up Calvary's fields. I've observed Calvary Chapel as an informed outsider, and although I haven't always agreed with all of Bob's theology, praxis or organizational leadership, I have always rejoiced that Calvary Chapel was in my city, shining as the brightest of lights and seasoning with the most savory salt.

My heart sank last week when I was informed that Bob would be **resigning** from his pastoral position due to moral failure. I hurt for him, his wife, and his kids, the Church and for us—the community of Christ in South Florida and beyond. I’ve experienced this hurt with close friends, OneHope partner churches and even family members far too often in my lifetime and I don’t underestimate the anguish, pain and disrepute that this sin inflicts on us all. I also know that it sets in motion a cycle of response:

Denial or affirmation—“I can’t believe it” or “I kind of thought that/suspected.”

Anger—“How could he be so selfish?” or “I can’t believe they won’t let him stay.”

Justifying—“If only he or we or they would have...”

Depression—“I’m so hurt, sad” or “I just want to give up,” as well as “I miss him, them, the way it was.”

Acceptance—“I’m coping” or “It’s time to move on.”

I’m already seeing the best and worst of these expressions in our community. Most are understandable. But two types of responses are unacceptable for those of us who call ourselves believers: joy and self-righteousness. I’ve encountered both of these unacceptable responses in the few days since the somber announcement, and am painfully reminded that we are all at some level disgruntled, disillusioned and abused people. We all have failures, hurts and disappointments that we carry with us like sores—some open, exposed and raw, others covered and hidden. So when someone like Bob—who seems to have exceeded the expectations of almost everyone around him—fails, a nasty, vile part of our fallen nature wants to revel in his failure in order to feel better about our own.

However justifying or soothing that feeling of condescension might be as it wells up within you, I urge you to identify it and dismiss it for what it is—a Satanic ploy to destroy you and the body of Christ. Any joyful inclination that one might feel in the failure of another is in itself a moral failure. As a friend of mine pointed out to me, “Once you do that, you switch camps—maybe not permanently... but a switch nonetheless. Satan is overwhelmed with joy when we fail—let’s not rejoice with him but in the amazing God that we serve whose very name is Redemption.”

Galatians 6 clearly states what the Christian’s response is and is not to be in this situation:

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.” (ESV)

This week, I have heard members of the Body conjecture as to all manner of reasons why they think Bob fell. Maybe it was governance, dispensationalism, salary, multi-site strategy, lack of

accountability, something in his past life, his friends, denomination, Satan, personality. I have even heard some of the most callous, judgmental and flat out ludicrous “reasons” for why Bob fell.

You know what? He’s a sinner, just like me and just like you. Does this obfuscate him from discipline and judgment by those in authority over him? Absolutely not. He has a long, rocky, uphill road to walk to restore his life, marriage, and relationships with his kids, family and friends. I don’t know if he will ever be restored to ministry—that loss may be a natural consequence of his sin. What I do know is that I pray for him to have a miraculous season of grace as he is first and foremost a brother in faith. The rest of his faith journey, just like yours and mine after any type of sin or failure, is yet to be written by God’s grace.

Many people have been asking those of us close to the leadership at Calvary Chapel for the exact details of Bob’s failure, claiming they need or deserve to know. I feel that since he has confessed and disqualified himself, and since there is no disputing, fighting or defending his actions, more does not need to be revealed, confronted, or publicly disciplined.

Less than 2 weeks ago when my uncle David Crabtree died, I wrote for his obituary: “He was building mega-churches before people knew what they were.” My uncle was one of the single greatest communicators I’ve ever heard. His whimsical humor is legendary. He accomplished a lot. The memories I will hold most dear, however, won’t be of his younger years of ministerial ‘success,’ but of his later life as I saw a deep spirituality, filled with overflowing love for everyone he encountered.

What I didn’t mention in his obituary was that decades before, he had experienced a moral failure and nearly lost everything. Less than a week ago I sat in his memorial service with hot tears flowing down my cheeks as former parishioners, friends, family and his faithful and adoring wife honored him. Not because he was perfect, but because he was forgiven and out of a grateful heart to those who loved him, most of all his Savior, Jesus, his gratitude and grace ran like a river into all of our lives.

I pray that honor for the Coys, for Calvary Chapel, for the Bride of Christ in South Florida and for all of us who live under the mercy and grace of our Lord. This is not primarily the story of the fall of a mega-pastor; it is primarily the story of mega-sinners, of which I also am one.



Outcome-Based Ministry

When you find something great, something that works, something that has revolutionized your life or your ministry or your marriage or your business, what do you do? You tell everyone you know about it so they can benefit from it too, right? Well, that's basically what we at OneHope try to do with our commitment to begin implementing outcome-based strategies and processes to each of our programs.

Becoming an outcome-based ministry has revolutionized the effectiveness of our efforts—God has blessed this process and we want others to learn about and benefit from it as well. To that end, we try to show and share some of our processes and programs that have been successful because of the Outcome-Based Ministry project cycle of researching, development, testing, tweaking, and measuring for effectiveness. We offer training, share our research for free, partner, network and offer resources to help other Kingdom-minded folk to begin implementing Outcome-Based Ministry into their design, and watch God honor the process with faithful and fruitful ministry efforts that advance the Gospel, which is our ultimate goal in ministry and faithful stewardship.

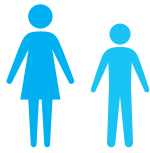
Trifecta

October 21, 2013

What does it mean to live a spiritually vibrant life as a teen? “Strong” teens live a life of integrity, make healthy choices, have a positive outlook, and pursue a spiritual walk. Obviously, there are several factors that play into the spiritual life of teens, but we **found** that the influence of religious texts, family, and faith community are mission critical. We call these three influencing factors the “trifecta.”



59% of the most vibrant teens were Christian.



More females (59%) than males (41%) were vibrant.



Fewer teens from urban areas (28%) were vibrant compared to rural (35%) and semi-urban (37%).



90% of the most vibrant teens have a close relationship with their mother and 76% a close relationship with their father.



97% of most vibrant teens have not had suicidal thoughts within the last 3 months vs. 58% of least vibrant teens.



88% of most vibrant teens desire a life of integrity vs. 27% of least vibrant teens.



84% of most vibrant teens desire a close relationship with God vs. 18% of least vibrant teens.



90% of most vibrant teens desire good physical health vs. 40% of least vibrant teens.

Of the “trifecta,” the factor that was globally the most influential in teens was family. More specifically, teens noted that having positive family experiences played the biggest part in increasing their faith.

Does knowing that good family relationships and positive family experiences are the most important factor in the spiritual growth of a teen impact how we are strategizing and carrying out our ministries? It should.

If family is the primary factor stimulating youth to spiritual growth, then we need to be sure to leverage that influence as the vehicle of delivery for the message.

For example, Scripture engagement ministries ought to incorporate family into their products and programs, while faith communities and churches need to invest in parents by creating a “family ministries” department with a budget to offer parenting classes or promote family gatherings.

For teens not lucky enough to be living in a positive family environment, can strong engagement with scripture products and programs overcome the negative family environment and still produce spiritually vibrant teens?

Findings suggest a partial yes; having a faith community and interacting with sacred texts can still hold sway over a teen’s spiritual life. But the data shows that all three pieces of the PIE (positive family experience, involvement in faith community, and engagement with religious texts) will ultimately produce the most spiritually dynamic teens.

If kids don’t have strong family relationships, then the Church needs to step into the void and be spiritual fathers and mothers to those kids—to spiritually adopt them so that they have a strong family influence. That’s the job of the Church. In societies where families are being torn apart, we have the obligation and privilege to be spiritual moms and dads and help spiritually nurture and raise the next generation.

As Christian organizations and members of the Body, we ought to be concerned about the physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of teens worldwide. Our goal is to build into them a sense of wholeness and purpose that will allow them to stand strong against the forces that would otherwise shake their faith foundations.

Knowing that family is the key factor influencing the faith of this age group, we ought to be intentionally leveraging the influence of family—natural born or spiritually adopted—to grow the faith of children and teens.

Forgotten Russia (Sochi Olympics)

February 6, 2014

When I first heard that the **XXII Olympic Winter Games** were going to be held in the city of Sochi, Russia, I was excited! We have made dear friends working alongside locals there distributing the Book of Hope since 1991. The more I thought about it, though, I found myself cringing in anticipation of how the media will likely portray a false Russia to its audiences.

When you think of Russia, you probably envision Moscow—whose glitz and glitter rivals that of New York City. The upper crust—reeking of petrodollars and steeped in oligarchical traditions—was responsible for the **largest percentage of Rolls Royce sales** of any other city in the world in 2011. One native has said that in Moscow, if it were possible, “the streets would be gold, but outside Moscow, life is very different.”

Travel less than 100 miles outside the city, and you think you have somehow managed to travel back in time. People are living the same way today as they did a century ago. These peasants are nearly immune to the “economy crisis” because they have simply been living in crisis mode for as long as they and their ancestors can remember.

As Sochi prepares to launch a party for the world, the juxtaposition of this celebration against the backdrop of a dying nation is glaring. **Reports and photos** like this are beginning to surface of the Russia they are prepared to display to the outside world. If this is what they will show you, just think of the Russia they don’t want anyone to see, like, the abject poverty that defines the rural areas of this nation. Just imagine the despondency that must be ingrained in a child born amidst these facts:

- *The already high **5.6% unemployment rate has been steadily increasing** since last summer with some areas experiencing unemployment rates nearly double that number. This sentence needs changing– the tenses are jumbled. You can say the unemployment rate has been increasing, but you can’t say the 5.6% has been increasing, because then it’s not 5.6 it is something else. E.g. The already high 5.6% unemployment rate is an average figure, so in some areas it is double that. OR At 5.6%, the unemployment rate was already high at the beginning of the summer, but it has climbed since then and is double that in some areas.*
- *Alcoholism runs rampant. Russia is classified by the World Health Association as having one of the **“riskiest patterns of drinking.”**^[1]*
- *Many children are born with fetal alcohol syndrome, and alcohol accounts for **more than half of all Russian deaths between the ages of 15 – 54.***

- *The average lifespan is in the mid-50s.*
- *If you ask a young girl what she aspires to in life, the third most frequent answer would be “prostitution,” as she will do anything in hopes of being able to change her miserable reality to the “glitz” of the city.*

While the physical needs of trying to thrive in such adverse conditions are many, the spiritual need for bringing the hope of the Gospel to those living what seems like a pointless existence, is even greater. Don’t understand this sentence. Here’s my attempt at clarifying.

It’s hard for us to comprehend the damage that living in these conditions does to the heart of Russian inhabitants. We live in the seen, the finite, and the temporal. But every day, God sees the suffering these people experience without Him. After [Beslan](#), God showed me this suffering[2]. He not only increased my awareness of the plight of the Russian people, but He made a way for us to help.

OneHope has partnered with local pastor Edward Grabovenko, [Union of Evangelical Pentecostal Churches of Russia](#), who is propelling a vision to plant 10,000 churches in Russian villages by the year 2020. It is called the Hosanna Plan. We supply the Book of Hope, a critical component to this evangelical outreach, but Pastor Edward and his teams supply the heart.

The Hosanna Plan is made up of teams of self-supported people who volunteer one year of their lives to spread the Good News of Jesus in Russia. Their commitment is nothing short of sacrificial as they work in extremely formidable conditions, often living on a bus with no running water and eating whatever is available in their region as they plant seeds of hope in a hopeless place. I wish I could tell you the extreme joy and excitement that takes place when one of the Hosanna Plan buses rolls into a city: it might very well be the first experience of joy ever for these forlorn kids.

When the Iron Curtain came down in the 90s, the Church blitzed the country with teams to distribute literature in cities. And then most Western ministries left, and there were few to no churches there to follow up and connect with new converts for continued discipleship and growth.

Thankfully, Pastor Edward’s church in Russia has responded to the call not only to harvest the seeds planted in the 90s, but also to begin reaching tens of thousands of villages previously untouched by the Gospel. They can’t do it alone—they still need us to walk alongside them and aid their efforts.

Over time, Russia has dropped off the radar. It’s not as attractive to give to a nation that is no longer experiencing the immediate adversity of communism, and the country has quietly crept into the category of “forgotten,” with many corners of its vast geography untouched and unreached. This winter, as you watch the Olympics, remember the forgotten people of Russia.

Whether the media decides to focus the lens on the glamorous city of Moscow, the pop-up Winter Olympic Village in Sochi (actually media is barred from the Village. Suggest rephrasing, or attempts to cull heart-wrenching stories of downtrodden locals, I am just thankful that the Games will offer an opportunity to spotlight this needy nation. Maybe this is God's way of helping the global Church remember the forgotten Russia.

OneHope has seized this Olympic-sized opportunity to spread hope around the theme of the Games. Read more about our plans [here!](#)

[1] Keep it down: Russia is recovering from a giant hangover

[2] Hope Delivered: Affecting Destiny Through the Power of God's Word pg 63.

Sexless Japan

February 3, 2014



In Japan, Europe and the U.S., statistics are showing that people are marrying later in life or not at all and birth rates are on the decline; housing reports show an increase in single-occupant households and young people are staying with their parents longer than before. What do these startling trends signify? These unnatural patterns are the inevitable result when individualistic-consumerist secularism drives the moral compass of the “developed world” to gross narcissism.

Japan has long been admired for being on the cutting edge and setting the trends of “modern” life. But as we watch this culture immerse itself to the brink of obsession with material wealth, gaming and online living, we should not be surprised that a steep increase in individualization and celibacy would epitomize the fallout.

It’s hard to believe there are entire cultures abdicating romantic and sexual relationships, but the Japanese media itself has given a name to this strange new movement in its reports, calling it *sekkusu shinai shokogun*, or “celibacy syndrome.” These alarming statistics were published recently in [The Observer](#):

“A survey in 2011 found that 61% of unmarried men and 49% of women aged 18 – 34 were not in any kind of romantic relationship, a rise of almost 10% from five years earlier. Another study found that a third of people under 30 had never dated at all. A survey earlier this year by the Japan Family Planning Association (JFPA) found that 45% of women aged 16 – 24 “were not interested in or despised sexual contact”. More than a quarter of men felt the same way.”

This begs the question: What happens to a country when its young people stop having sex? Naturally, birth rates will decline. And for Japan, population 126 million, which already has one of the lowest birth rates in the world, projections indicate that “celibacy syndrome” could cause it to

plummet by one-third over the next half-century! Behaviors like social isolationism and an unnatural regression of adult relationships, are resulting in the sterilization of procreation, and threatening to become the normal rather than atypical behavior in this society.

Yet one of the Bible's most powerful messages prescribes the exact opposite of this alarming trend. We are commanded to love: love the Lord your God, love your neighbor, love one another, husbands and wives are instructed to love each other, and we are even encouraged to love our enemies! The Bible promotes loving, healthy social structures as a blueprint for building flourishing communities. I'm not trying to push for an increase in global sexual activity. I am simply shedding light on a new trend that swings unnaturally to the extreme opposite of the morally unbound, sexually ravenous and increasingly indulgent society we have grown accustomed to living in. Sometimes I wonder if we've been pushing too hard for virginity when really the message we have been trying to get across is that of biblical purity.

We highlighted the tensions Japanese young people are experiencing in our short film, Paper Flower, produced in 2011 with our partner, Toy Gun Films. But even after the film experienced great success, we felt called to keep speaking into these sensitive, yet relevant issues. The result was a series of six short films that follows the lives of two girls as they navigate the immense cultural pressure to succeed and maintain societal status while dealing with topics including family honor, school, suicide, social media, morality and heterosexual relationships—especially in the context of Enjo-kōsai or “compensated dating,” frequently practiced in Japan. The film series has proven to be an effective tool for the local church to employ as they address some of the direst issues Asian teens and youth are facing.

As a developed country, Japan is not facing the overt poverty issues prevalent in many other areas, yet spiritually they are one of the poorest nations in the world. Knowing where their moral compass points has given us a good indication of starting points for discussion, and provided us with relevant on ramps to minister to the spiritual and societal needs of this nation.

Sources:

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Stereotype of Stereotyping

December 2, 2013

I chuckled to myself as I read through the characterizations of different nationalities charted in the [Lewis Model](#). Being a world traveler, I can conjure up faces and personalities of friends and co-workers for each country I've visited abroad, as well as how I've had to adapt to them and "their way of doing things"—whether it meant slowing down and making time for greetings and effusion in Africa, or being careful to follow the rules of decorum in Asia.

Lewis writes, "By focusing on the cultural roots of national behavior, both in society and business, we can foresee and calculate with a surprising degree of accuracy how others will react to our plans for them, and we can make certain assumptions as to how they will approach us."

Knowing that a great deal of diversity and subcultures exist within every culture, does taking the time to generalize like this make any sense? Anthropologists believe that it does, stating that despite diversity there is a foundation of shared values, attitudes, and institutions that binds nations together.

As the African proverb states, "He who looks from the bottom of a well sees only a portion of the sky." The value of generalized analyses, like the Lewis Model or our [Attitudes and Behaviors of Youth study](#), is that they provide us with a starting point to better understand how to interact with—and in our case, serve—people from different cultures.

We use research like this to give us—or a ministry partner we are resourcing—a bird's eye view of the intended ministry demographic. Next we hone in to gather location-specific input from children, youth, leaders and educators in each of the countries we serve. Finally we start crafting age-specific, customized Scripture engagement programs and products.

We look to contextualize our products and programs by starting with the wide, generalized studies. Once we have a starting point established, we can begin to look deeper into the specifics of subcultures and their contexts. Understanding what our audiences need and how they need to receive it is crucial to the effectiveness of any ministry endeavor.

Sources:

The Lewis Model Explains Every Culture In The World

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Behind the Scenes Story of the *Bible App for Kids*

January 16, 2014



Through the Roof *Bible App for Kids* Scene

We have been blown away by the feedback we've received since the Thanksgiving Day release of the *Bible App for Kids*, which was downloaded over 2 million times in just 44 days! Some of the stories and photos you have shared of your kids engaging with the stories of the Bible are beyond what we ever imagined as outcomes from this project in such a short amount of time. One mom wrote:

"My kids go to a Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) public school where they are allowed to use their devices for educational purposes using only school-approved learning apps. My 2nd grade daughter's teacher approved the use of the Bible App for Kids in her classroom! So—the Bible is now in the public school! Of my four children, this is the last one I would have ever expected to talk about Jesus or her beliefs at school, so I feel like this app gave her the confidence to testify who and what she believes in. That is powerful to me and I am so thankful to OneHope and YouVersion for creating this app."

A dad wrote to tell us that he: *"Walked in on my son tearing up as he watched Jesus die on the cross" while using the Bible App for Kids.*

We were also excited to see photos of kids and families reading the Christmas story in a whole new way this year using the new app! Many of you have been asking, "How did you decide which stories from the Bible to use—or not use—in the *Bible App for Kids*?" Without going into details and giving away which stories are coming up for future release, here is a peek into how we narrowed down not only which stories would be included in the app, but which six stories needed to be included in the initial launch.

Knowing that younger children are not yet cognitively developed enough to firmly grasp timelines or parallels, but that they are fully equipped to grasp the mechanism of story, we launched the *Bible App for Kids* with a basic framework of the big-picture story of the Bible. The current and future stories in the app can each stand alone, but have been intentionally selected and ordered to build a foundational biblical framework and present a biblically sound meta-narrative. The ultimate goal of the app is to show that God has a purpose and plan that originates from the beginning of time.

To narrow down our story selection, we began with the quintessential 75 story options we use for building biblical literacy in our *Stories of Hope* program and narrowed it down to the 58 stories that coincided with stories we had recently selected specifically for *Incredible Islands*—a digital ministry tool launched this week! At this point, we utilized the expertise of theological editor Adam Poole, MDiv and Ph.D. candidate, to help us whittle the list down even further.

“These 40 stories of Scripture were chosen based on the pivotal role they play in communicating the meta-narrative of Scripture, as well as their importance in conveying God’s plan of redemption that is accomplished through the person and work of Jesus Christ,” said Poole.



A Happy Sunday Bible App for Kids Scene

We started...in the beginning with creation. Next up was depicting the entrance of sin into the world, which set us up for the need for a savior and segued nicely into the birth of Jesus. The next story, *Through the Roof* illustrated one of Jesus’ miracles while He was on earth before the story of His death on the cross. The final story in our launch was the *Happy Sunday* where the tomb was found empty!

While biblical accuracy was a non-negotiable, we knew that in order to attract and keep the attention of media and gaming saturated kids, the delivery would need to be as wonder-filled as Disney, as fun as Angry Birds, and as engaging as ABC Mouse and Leapfrog or else our efforts would be in vain. To that end, we needed help from experts to make the look, sound and feel of the app engaging for every child. Here are a few of the talented people who helped make that happen:

- Writer Bob Hartman worked closely with a team of editors and a theologian to make the Bible stories not only easy for children to understand, but also to ensure biblical accuracy.
- **Jason Moore** composed beautiful, original music for all of the stories.
- For pre-literate and aural learners, **Kevin Kilpatrick** creatively narrated all of the Bible stories using special voices for the different characters.
- Senior illustrator **Rob McClurkan** sketched illustrations, determined style, and provided the art direction for the later phases of the app’s development.
- Production artists **Ian Dale** and **Melanie Matthews** traced style in layers and shapes to accommodate animation, colored illustrations and output them for the animators and developers.

We are excited about our partnership with [YouVersion](#)—the creator of the world’s most popular Bible app with more than 100 million downloads—to develop this new app for children and youth. We expect the *Bible App for Kids* to reach millions of children around the globe as plans for translation into other languages are already underway! If you haven’t experienced the *Bible App for Kids* yet, be sure to download it for free on the [App store](#), [Google Play](#) and [Amazon](#).

We fully believe that God’s Word has the power to change hearts and lives. This app was developed to leverage a technical medium not only to help kids engage with God’s Word, but to keep them coming back to the app again and again to help them build Scripture exposure and deepen their experience with the stories in God’s Word.

Know Thy City 4 Steps Toward Effective Urban Ministry

August 29, 2013



Photo by [Kim Daniel Arthur](#)

*You're the God of this City
You're the King of these people
You're the Lord of this nation
You are
You're the Light in this darkness
You're the Hope to the hopeless
You're the Peace to the restless
You are
There is no one like our God
For greater things have yet to come
And greater things are still to be done in this City*
-Chris Tomlin "God of this City"

I am moved each time I hear this song affirming that our God is indeed God of this City. For those of us who are trying to be a light in our community or called to penetrate cities that have banned, blocked or removed the welcome sign to Christians and the gospel, we need to be reminded of who truly reigns.

I believe God gives you geographical favor. He places you where He wants you to have influence. Or He places a desire in you to affect another geographical location. For those of you who have a heart for Africa, China, El Salvador—wherever it is that you can physically leave, but it just won't leave you, you know what I'm talking about. That dilapidated building, the smell, those haunting eyes, you just can't stop thinking about how to help, envisioning your next trip there. That's God putting His City-love into you.

You cannot effectively reach your City if you do not know who lives there. So here are some tips to help you quickly bridge the gap between the theology of the City, and how to effectively reach yours:

1) Understand your City. Know thy City. Study it, research it, experience it. Here are a few general principles that are pretty much true of any city in the world to get you started:

- The origins of the City are rooted in sin. It goes back to Cain (Genesis 4) who rebelled against God, left to start over, and relied on himself for his own safety and well-being.
- The City is a magnet. It is the best of everything in one place—food, art, sports, drama, education, medicine—and we all want the best. So we go to the City to get it.
- In the City, everything is for sale, even humans. Commerce thrives because greed is insatiable. Man in the City often loses himself and becomes merchandise of the City.

- We are currently experiencing the largest and fastest migration of urbanization in the history of mankind. For instance, China plans to move 250 million rural residents to towns and cities over the next decade.
- The City is filled with people, and God loves people. In order to reach them, we have to understand City life.

People are flocking to the City. **Tim Keller**, pastor of **Redeemer Church** in New York city says, “It is imperative that the Church understands how to reach out to the expanding cities of the 21st century.” That means creating an urban interpretation of what Church looks like instead of simply duplicating the suburban church model in the big City. Here are three basic steps you can take toward preparing for ministry in any City around the world:

2) Instill a robust faith. Not only must you and I have a strong faith deepened by knowing God’s Word, we have to be intentional about instilling deep faith through Biblical literacy into our children, the next generation. Chances are great that they will end up living in the City, and we want to send them in prepared to stand strong.

1 Peter 3:15 says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

3) Be purveyors of hope. Many go to the City for a new beginning, to live out their “destiny”, and often at a great price. Their leaving rips apart the rich fabric of family and tradition, and seekers find unmet expectations, hard living conditions, and a sad, lonely reality. These deflated aspirants need to hear a truly fulfilling message of hope.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. -1 Peter 1:3

4) Above all else, love. The City—teeming with people—is often a lonely place. The Church was invented to be a community of love and place to belong. We need to have proximity, exude peace and extend welcome to all.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. -1 Peter 1:22

So, what’s your “City”? Write it down. Research and find out everything you can about it. Build your faith and that of your young people, then intentionally craft ways you can specifically begin to spread the aroma of God’s love in the rapidly expanding urban mission field.





Next Generation

We pray for, study, and seek to reach, teach and train up the next generation of the Church NOW. That's why we are so focused on reaching children and youth with the truth of the Gospel, and connecting them to churches that can continue to disciple their newfound faith. We're trying to change the game by stacking our team with powerful players—we see the ceilingless potential the next generation possesses, and we want to try to leverage their passion and potential for the Kingdom. Knowing that a lot of where the “next generation” spends their time and what influences them has been key in where we focus on our ministry efforts. We've stumbled across a lot of very interesting research, stories and have closed our eyes and trusted that God will catch us as we leap into the digital age, creating digital ministry tools for churches and parents to use to “speak the language” of the digital natives we are raising up.

This Changes Everything: Bible App for Kids

November 28, 2013



It's here! It's available today! I have been waiting for this moment for a long time. There are only a few times in my life where I have stopped and said, "this changes everything." When I distinctly heard God's call on my life. When I held my first child. When I lost and then regained my sight. And today.

Today, we are launching the *Bible App for Kids*. Today's kids love technology—we're raising a **generation of digital natives**. At the same time, the church is losing a generation. Kids are not engaging with Scripture and we're finding ourselves on the verge of biblical illiteracy. We've been dreaming of how to close that gap, to figure out how to leverage technology to reignite kids' love for spending time in God's Word. So we approached our partner, **YouVersion**, the creator of the most downloaded Bible app of all time—with more than 100 million downloads—and we worked together to develop a world-class Scripture delivery tool called the *Bible App for Kids*.

Specifically designed with children ages 4-10 in mind, the *Bible App for Kids* makes the Bible come to life with animation and activities that are fun yet powerful mechanisms for conveying the Biblical metanarrative in a way children can easily understand. This app is so well done that it will keep kids coming back again and again—especially as new stories are released monthly over the next two years.

It's been a long time coming, and we're excited about the potential the mobile nature of the *Bible App for Kids* presents. It has the capability to take the Gospel to places where the printed Word cannot go. The *Bible App for Kids* throws the doors of possibility wide open for translations into many languages and because of the visual nature of the storytelling, it also reaches pre-literate audiences. Translations to other languages are already underway and planned for future release.

We have a lot to celebrate this Thanksgiving with the release of the *Bible App for Kids*. Not only are we thankful for God's Word, but we're thankful for YouVersion's success in celebrating its Bible App's 100 millionth download in July. At OneHope, we are looking forward to reaching our billionth child with the Gospel in just a few months into 2014. The launch of this app is a celebration of two Kingdom-minded ministries combining the gifts, talents and favor the Lord has blessed us with. We are excited to see how this tool impacts the Kingdom in a mighty way on Thanksgiving Day as we anticipate a large number of downloads, but more importantly as we pray that the message of God's story sinks deep into the hearts of every user and that they find their place in God's story.

This is a game changer. And one I'm really excited about.

Open Letter To The Church: Warning! You Are Losing A Generation

November 11, 2013



I'm not Paul, but if he were around today writing letters to churches, I imagine that he might pen something like this:

To all of God's churches both at home and abroad, I pray for you diligently. I wish you peace and God's presence and blessing always. As a co-laborer with you in Him, it is my heart's desire to be God's faithful servant in spreading the good news of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, I am writing to you because I don't want you to be uninformed about the astonishing rate at which we, God's holy church, are at risk of losing a generation. Evidently, one half of US teens attend church, but global statistics report that a glum one third of all young people attend religious services of some kind. The steep decline in teens engaging in their faith community increases the anguish in my spirit for the path we are on and for future generations.

Where, oh church, have we gone wrong? Why are our own tweens and teens choosing to extricate themselves from the body of believers? Are we going to sit idly by as we watch our children wooed away from the lasting things of the Lord by temporary bedazzlements such as globalized networks proffered by a social media saturated world? By no means!

If a successful capitalist impacting the community for good were to have three children being nurtured into the honorable family business, and two of the heirs walked away from a secure and noble future, would not that caretaker stop and take notice? Do whatever it takes to bring the children of promise home, pleading with them not to forsake their inheritance, but rather reminding them of their special calling to carry on the valuable, family business?

So should we, as caretakers of the heirs sit up and take notice when the children of promise begin to walk away from engagement with the body of believers ergo failing to carry on the future of the Kingdom.

I ask, then, what must we do to engage?

What purpose then do the Scriptures serve, if we fail to read them? We are to impress them upon



the hearts and minds of ourselves, and of our young. We are to write them on our doorways, lavish them upon our children as they flow from our lips, and teach our young to absorb them into their beings.

I strenuously contend that the church must awaken and be strengthened with the power according to His unending supply of might, to make every effort to regain our vigor as we compel the young to carry on the important work that our forefathers in the faith have begun.

My dear family, our faith in God grants us kinship. As we are sons and daughters of the most High, heirs of a King, so should we treat each other. Remember that we are special, set apart, called, and that we are to train up the next generation thusly. When others see children obey their parents and parents treating their children gently, they will wonder, “what makes them different than us? And how can we be a part of this?” And all are welcome to the family! Our interactions should mirror that of Christ’s treatment of us, and cause us to grow each other up in our faiths.

In the words of Paul, “Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”

What are you doing to engage the next generation with scripture, with the church, and holistically factoring family into your ministry?

Facebook—Does It Help Teens Like Or Dislike Themselves?

September 3, 2013

While the popularity of Facebook ebbs and flows depending on the newer forms of social media (such as Snapchat, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, and whatever the “next big thing” will be...) it’s a pretty regular platform for youth to interact on. No matter what the latest and greatest social networking tool is, almost 94% of teens retain and remain active on their Facebook accounts. ([Pew Research](#))



Stats: How are teens engaging with media?



65% have watched MTV or music videos at least once a week in the past three months.



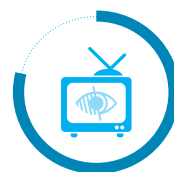
76% have surfed the web.



73% have chatted online or texted.



72% have watched at least one hour of TV once a week.



78% admit that TV has at least a little influence on their life.



63% admit that the internet has at least a little influence on their life.

OneHope’s [ABY global data](#) shows that 1 out of every 3 teens say that the Internet has at least some influence on their lives. Add those statistics to some alarming new studies that indicate Facebook is making people feel bad about themselves, and we find ourselves staring into a vast and uncharted digital space that could hold huge potential for ministry.

A recent two-week [study](#) led by the University of Michigan found that Facebook users wound up feeling worse about themselves and their mood darkened the more they browsed the social site. A plethora of studies are being done to determine social media’s effect on well-being, producing mixed results. One study will tell you that viewing your own profile can be self-affirming, it will even increase your life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement, and political participation. At the same time, another study unveils the dark side that alleges social media evokes envy of others’ activities and profile, leaving users with diminished self-images, or that users with low self-esteem don’t really benefit from “embellishing” their online image.

I don’t need additional studies or statistics to read the writing on the proverbial Facebook wall of teens and youth. They are lonely. They are struggling with self-image. They are afraid of missing out if they don’t stay socially engaged or keep up an aggrandized image. They are empty and looking for something or someone to fill a void. We have an answer for that. We even have apps for that! We have a Book that is way more fulfilling than any Facebook post they are perusing for answers. We have an incredible opportunity to meet teens where they are, which is in a dark, lonely corner staring at a screen and not too happy with what is staring back at them. What are you doing to meet teens where they are?

Parents vs. Kids —Internet Impressions

November 18, 2013

It seems like a baby's footprint at the hospital is barely dry before their digital footprint is stamped online. While there is not as robust an amalgamation of research on Internet use by children in their single digits as there is for tween and teen usage, studies are beginning to emerge. Some analyses suggest that children begin using the Internet around 3 years old, while others estimate it's closer to 2! Many little ones are spending so much time online that they don't know how to do "normal" kid things, like play outside, use their imaginations, concentrate in school, or make friends in real life. And parents are finding themselves at a loss as to how to parent these digital natives when they are not digital natives themselves.

PARENTS

75% have implemented restrictions on screen time for fear of "web-linked issues" (which include, but are not limited to, things like pornography, cyber bullying, Internet addiction, weight gain, or predators preying on children).

73% believe their child spends less than 1 hour online per day.

In fact, these kids are already starting to get a guilt complex about how much time they spend online; one study shows that 35% of children think they should spend less than 1 hour/day online and 72% self suggest that their time should be limited to under 2 hours!

Believe only 1 in 5 kids have had a "negative" experience online.

Think "my kids would never look for inappropriate content online".

Think "even if my child saw something inappropriate online, they would never try it".

KIDS

1/3 say they accept their parents' restrictions, but 2/3 are actually annoyed or upset by the limits.

Actually spend an average of 2 hours online every day.

Actually 64% have.

Actually, 57% have accidentally accessed something inappropriate, and 9% have searched for it deliberately

Have revealed numbers that might shock parents (see below).

Missiological

- 1 in 4 youngsters have viewed animal cruelty
- Nearly a quarter (24%) have accessed eating disorder/ “thinspiration” sites
- 20% have looked at self-harm images
- 18% have looked at “soft” porn sites
- One in ten (11%) also viewed suicide sites and child abuse images
- 6% have been exposed to violent porn

While most (77%) have not acted on what they saw–17% said they thought about trying it.

Of those who imitated what they saw online, 6% restricted their eating, 3% self harmed and 3% considered or tried suicide.

As a parent, these numbers are frightening. As a believer, I feel called to help tip the scales in the favor of parents and the church. Increasing awareness of potential dangers is one thing, encouraging proactive parenting and helping provide appropriate alternatives is another. We know how much children are exposed to through the Internet. That’s why we have partnered to create Bible-based, child-appropriate digital content such as the *Bible App for Kids*, *Incredible Islands* and *more!*

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Our Children in the Digital Age

Children using the internet from age three, study finds

Technology: ‘Digital natives’ tap into the wisdom of the crowd

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Why Is It Hip For A Kid To Be An Atheist?

January 6, 2014

Take a look at the Pew Research data and you will clearly see how the number of religiously unaffiliated Americans—sometimes referred to as “nones”, because they claim no religion—is growing with each passing generation. In his new book, “[God’s Not Dead: Evidence for God in an Age of Uncertainty](#)”, [Rice Brooks](#) reveals that, “the term new atheists has been given to a group of skeptics who have sought to revive the arguments against God and repackage them for a new generation.”

Not only are adults increasingly claiming no religion, but their children are following suit as well—and at younger ages. Our youth have found their voices, and they aren’t afraid to use them. Young people do not hesitate to make their thoughts known on social media or put them on a t-shirt and wear it with pride.

Our [ABY data](#) infers that the “atheism trending younger” tendency is not just a Western “thing”, but rather that it’s a global phenomenon.

- 35% of youth do not believe that God created the universe
- 16% of youth do not believe there is a God (29% are unsure)
- 35% of youth do not know what will happen after death
- 14% of youth do not practice any type of faith/religion

So what is turning off each successive generation to belief in God, church and religious tradition? Some complain that organized religion is too suffocating, hypocritical, judgmental, or anti-gay. Others don’t want to enter into the complicated mess that is religion and politics. Allegations of fiscal infidelity and abuse within the church aren’t helping either.

But are any of these really the root cause of what has made it so attractive and trendy for each successive generation to move away from rich, religious traditions? What can we do to help the next generation return to faith?

Research shows that the most influential factor in a child’s life is family, followed closely by church and religious texts like the Bible. That throws responsibility to parents and church leaders—who might be stepping in as spiritual parents for kids who don’t have family who are believers.

A recent Fuller [study](#) analyzes why high school graduates seemed to walk away from their faith after leaving youth group. What they found were gaps where family and church were failing to intentionally talk to youth about next phases of life (like college, a career, new job) and inadequately preparing them to step into these next phases with their faith strapped on tight.

Going a step beyond what research tells us, I would say the most important thing we as parents, church leaders and influencers can do is to instill a sense of destiny into our children and youth. Parents, pastors and Christian leaders need to give each and every boy and girl in their circle of influence a vision of where they fit into God's big story; how they are each a part of something bigger than themselves with a clear path and defined meaning for their lives.

Parents are the most influential people who can help their children wrestle through some of the basic objections to their faith that they are sure to be confronted with during their late teen/early adulthood years—especially after leaving high school. It is so important for our young people to have more than a subjective experience with their faith. They need to understand the reasons why they believe what they do and actively understand the hope that is in them. [1 Peter 3:15](#)

To help drive the idea of spiritual destiny home and give kids the ability to dialogue with “family”, we develop programs that not only introduce children and teens to Bible stories, but to a Big Story. Some of our most important partnering is done through the local church where discipleship and mentoring programs ensure that spiritual parents are in place for every child. The family voice is powerful. We need to be sure kids hear it.

Sources:

Atheism Rises, Religiosity Declines in America

Agnosticism/Atheism on the rise among “Millennial” generation

Behold, the sic types of atheists

God's Not Dead: Evidence for God in an Age of Uncertainty

Nones on the rise

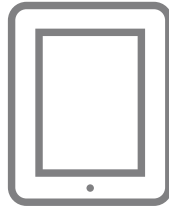
More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Key Finding from the 2012 General Social Survey

Three Spiritual Journeys of Millennials

What makes faith stick during college?

Print or Digital? Pew Study Offers Surprising Insight

September 26, 2013



I traveled over 125 days last year, so being able to carry a library's worth of books in a device weighing 1.46 pounds is invaluable to me. I still harbor nostalgia for holding a printed book in my hands—studying the cover

art, noticing tattered corners, hearing and feeling the familiar swooshevery time I turn a page. As we seek to provide 21st century methods for delivering the most important Book of all into the hands of children and youth around the world, we keep a very close watch on reading trends.

- In a head-to-head competition, people prefer e-books to printed books when they want speedy access and portability, but print wins out when people are reading to children and sharing books with others.
- 94% parents of minor children say it is important to them that their children read print books—81% percent say it is “very important,” and an additional 13% say it is “somewhat important”.
- The prevalence of e-book reading is markedly growing, but printed books still dominate the world of book readers.



We anticipate that the reading preference among children and youth will make the change from paper to digital in the near future. We've already begun to transition our ministry practices accordingly by creating digital media outlets such as the Bible-rich interactive online *Incredible Islands* game and coming late 2013 in partnership with YouVersion is the *Bible App for Kids!*

Sources:

In a digital age, parents value printed books for their kids
The rise of e-reading

One To One Billion—Celebrating A Ministry Milestone

February 19, 2014



Yesterday a little girl was handed a copy of the *Book of Hope*. It happens every day—it's happened millions of times. Yet, for me, it has not become commonplace. Not yet. In fact, each time it happens—whether I know the back-story of the recipient or not—it becomes even more deeply meaningful. Not because it adds a number to our count, but because I know the power of the Gospel story contained in those paper pages has the power to change the individual who reads it. It is an investment into the eternal.

We know the story and significance behind this particular gifting of the Gospel that took place yesterday because it was a major milestone for the ministry. Liu Chunxue was the one BILLIONTH child to be reached with a relevant Gospel message since the outset of our endeavors in 1987. The weight of this moment is not lost on me as Liu Chunxue was handed a booklet containing the Gospel message and bursting with Scripture passages taken directly from the Bible.

Why is this snapshot so particularly poignant? **Because it took place in China.** Consider that Liu Chunxue is a girl—in a culture where females who cannot carry on the family name are sometimes considered the “less significant” gender. Consider that Liu Chunxue received a booklet containing portions of the Bible—in a country where the Bible was once been banned and its followers have endured persecution.

This event became increasingly more momentous when people realized who handed Liu Chunxue her *Book of Hope*. It was a man named Dima.

Almost 22 years ago, when Dima was 17 years old, he received his own copy of the *Book of Hope* in Russia. At the time, Dima was immersed in a culture where rampant drug and alcohol use were the norm.

“I think about the power of a book, of getting into a country and giving that book to children, the opportunity there,” said Dima. “My life was transformed, and for the first time, I knew real joy.”

Today, Dima is a pastor working in China. And yesterday, he got a chance to hand 15-year-old Liu Chunxue the book that had helped change his life, and has the potential to change hers too. While it's incredible to stop and think about a number like one billion, our focus isn't on big numbers. We desire to affect individual lives, like Dima, and Lord-willing for Liu Chunxue as well, by introducing them to Jesus through teaching the Bible.

We have always believed that if we could share God's Word with every child, the world would be drastically different. We are pausing to celebrate what God has done through the people and partners who make this ministry possible, but we can only stop for a brief moment—then it's right back to work as we plan how to reach nearly 100 million more children with the Gospel this year. The time is short, the world is big, previously closed doors are opening and the fields are ripe for harvest!

Watch the incredible moment [here](#).

Click [here](#) for more on the BILLIONTH milestone!



“ONE BILLION
 boys and girls have had God's Word placed into their hands and hearts
 because OneHope's supporters prayed and gave... **CONGRATULATIONS** on this milestone achievement!”
 —**DR. GEORGE WOOD**, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God

“OneHope is doing a REMARKABLE JOB
 of reaching children with God's Word. **I thank God for them.”**
 —**STEVE DOUGLASS**, President
 Campus Crusade for Christ

“We CELEBRATE this amazing milestone
 with you... and look forward to seeing God guide you to **BOLDLY** reach another billion young people!”
 —**DR. ROY PETERSON**, President, American Bible Society

“It's AMAZING that OneHope has helped
1 billion of the greatest underdogs in the world...children!”
 —**MATT KELLER**, Lead Pastor
 Next Level Church
 through the ministry of OneHope. **HISTORY HAS BEEN CHANGED**
 “One billion children in our exhausted world have
 heard the grace and freedom of the Gospel
 Thank you!”
 —**TULLIAN TCHIVIDJIAN**,
 Senior Pastor, Coral Ridge
 Presbyterian Church

AFFECT KIDS' LIVES —
1 billion lives—
What a blessing to stand
 —**KEVIN PALAU**, President
for eternity.
with them.”
 Luis Palau Association

 **OneHope**
 GOD'S WORD. EVERY CHILD. www.OneHope.net

Technology And Kids—A Study In Contrasts

November 14, 2013

Since OneHope develops relevant Scripture engagement products and programs geared for children and teens, we closely monitor what is trending globally in pertinent arenas such as education, technology, psychology, spirituality and communication.

We have been whiplashed by the sharp contrast in studies that are coming out about the role of technology in child development. Some major developers clearly believe technology is essential to child development. Or maybe they just see a “new market” to tap into. [Educomp](#) recently revealed that they will be releasing more than 230 apps for toddlers, and [Apple](#) recently launched its [Apps for Kids](#) store. Technology is increasing its reach to younger and younger people.

Samsung is releasing a tablet, the Galaxy Tab 3, just for kids. It is being rolled out in South Korea and possibly the UK, India and Africa before making its way to the US market. With technology pieces being produced specifically for children, the ability to advance the Gospel to younger people increases as well. Hence why we have begun developing church-friendly, Bible-rich digital ministry initiatives like [Incredible Islands](#) and [Bible App for Kids](#).

But on the other side of the debate psychologists and parents contend that too much technology introduced at too young an age is bad for kids. There is an outcry that screen time of any sort is detrimental to infant, toddler, and elementary aged children’s cognitive and social—and in some cases, physical development.

Japan is planning to introduce “fasting” camps for youth meant to “detox” or break them from Internet addiction, which is being blamed for causing sleeping and eating disorders as well as depression in young people.

Since we are raising the first generation of digital natives, they are basically an experiment. We won’t know about lasting effects of technology until more time has passed. What we do know is that, for better or for worse, kids are increasingly immersing in the technology pool at younger and younger ages. That is why we have placed a significant focus on developing [digital ministry tools](#) to support parents and churches by providing them with quality, age-appropriate, Scripture-rich content that is a good digital option for kids to engage with.

Kevin Kelley, author of “What Technology Wants” describes the dynamic pull of technology as, *“The technium also wants what every living system wants: to perpetuate itself, to keep itself going. And as it grows, those inherent wants are gaining in complexity and force.”*



Technology itself isn't evil. It's simply a tool, and a very mesmerizing, captivating tool at that. But it won't monitor itself, and children aren't yet equipped to self-supervise or restrict themselves in this arena. Parents, partnered with Christian influencers in the Church, need to work on becoming more intentional about helping kids learn to be smart and safe digital citizens. Good parenting—with great Church support—ought to guide what healthy technology boundaries look like.

Sources:

Educomp unveils 231 apps for toddlers

Samsung launches a tablet for kids

Japan To Introduce Internet 'Fasting Camps' For Addicted Kids

Kelly, Kevin. What Technology Wants. New York: Viking Penguin, 2010. Print.

Parents Urged Again to Limit TV for Youngest

Introducing Apple's New "Kids" App Store



Missiology

Having a foundational knowledge of what you believe, why, and how to propagate the vision for reaching the entire world with the truth of the Gospel is key to reaching your audience. Whether it be parents, pastor, teachers, youth or social workers, the Church at large, or just regular Joe you and me, it's imperative that our hearts are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and the truth found in God's Word to build a solid missiological statement that guides how we spend our time, where we spend our resources and talents to share the Good News right here in our communities as well as around the world. While there is so much more to this category than space for it in this book, I've highlighted a few of the most critical missiological points that a lot of people seem to miss, gloss over, or passively accept from previous generations. God has given us geographical favor—placed us right where He wants us in His ultimate plan to do our part to help achieve the Great Commission. Have you taken the time to find out what part you are supposed to play in God's great design?

Who Likes Sunday School?

January 23, 2014



Image purchased from iStock

My dad stood in front of a group of believers and fired; *“Raise your hand if you like Sunday school.”* People shuffled uncomfortably, and a few sidelong glances were exchanged before a few hesitant hands went up. He shocked everyone to attention as he replied, slightly tongue-in-cheek, *“Well, I don’t like Sunday school either. I never have.”*

I love dad’s way of getting people’s attention! He then enlightened the room on the origins of Sunday school and how, instead of adapting and changing with the times, we have simply maintained an old system. Evangelical Robert Raikes began “Sunday school” in Great Britain in the late 1700’s. Underprivileged children were unable to afford an education, and many had to work during the week. The only day left for “educating” was on Sunday, so the Bible was literally used as a textbook. This idea spread to America, and as the years went by, parents insisted that their children attend Sunday school even if the parents themselves did not attend church. The onus of religious upbringing of the young—in the minds of parents—was placed on the church.

Fast-forward to today, where anyone can easily access the plethora of research and in-depth findings being released about how kids learn; everything from Piaget’s cognitive stages of development to Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development are just a few clicks away!

Yet, with the ubiquity of information available to us, we continue to maintain weekend programming that has not progressed much beyond the 18th century prototype. Sure, we now have colorful environments and current music, but we are still using an outdated paradigm. If we were really honest with ourselves, it isn’t hard to see why many children are spiritually impoverished, biblically illiterate, and not loving or learning from Sunday school.

Based on the original intention of Sunday school as compared to what we know about current learning styles, coupled with the incredible influence that media, technology, and family have on children, I have compiled a list 5 reasons why the old system isn’t effective:

1. Not optimized for learning.

Most Sunday school programs are designed for the most highly effective form of management. Kids are expected to “behave” under a one-size-fits-all definition that doesn’t

allow for the wide variety of learning styles and unique personalities in the room.

2. Not creative.

Every week is the same. Sure, it's a different story, but what kids "want" and "need" is determined by someone else, sometimes a whole team of someone else's, with no input or feedback from the kids themselves.

3. Not relevant when it's not tech-savvy.

For digital natives who spend an average of 4-7 hours online every day, children's programming that is not digitally augmented is not speaking their language.

4. Not measured.

Most Sunday schools simply execute their weekly program without ever gauging whether or not learning took place. Unless you are measuring success, how do you know whether kids are learning week to week, building their biblical literacy, growing in knowledge, practicing spiritual disciplines and bearing fruit?

5. Not family-centric.

In most instances, parents have no idea as to what went on during the Sunday school hour other than by guessing from a craft or coloring sheet that may or may not come home with their child. The old model of Sunday school pandered to the 18th century practice of lax parenting, but we know from current research how critical the parenting role in partnership with the church is to the spiritual growth of children.

In a media-saturated world, culture is winning, while time spent on the spiritual development of children is drastically decreasing. Even in the best-case scenario, a child who attends an hour of programming at their local church every single weekend only receives a total of 52 hours per year spent on spiritual development. When you compare that to their 4 hours spent online daily, 52 is a drop in the bucket compared to a number like 1,460.

It's time to create a new paradigm that bridges the gap and helps expand the influence of the church, in partnership with parents, to increase focus on spiritual development by creating digital tools that can be in the hands of kids and accessible throughout the entire week.

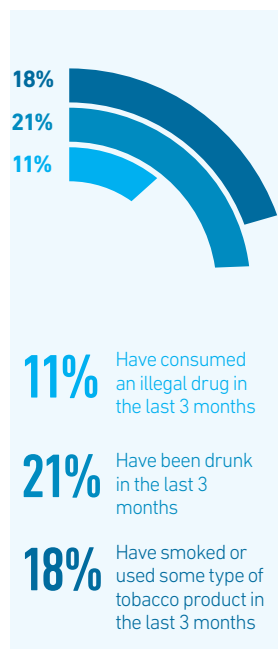
Sources/for further reading:
History of "Sunday School"
Different learning styles

Saying Yes To Dinner Saying No To Drugs

June 26, 2013

It's a new year. Many of us have made resolutions to get rid of bad habits and replace them with good ones. For those of you who are parents—at any age or stage—we hope that if you aren't already eating at least three meals a week together as a family, that you'll start this year. Research shows that doing so drastically reduces the chances that your kids will succumb to harmful or addictive behaviors such as drinking, smoking, or doing drugs.

Substance Use



Spiritual State of the World's Children

Sadly, the UNODC reports that nearly 200 million people are using illicit drugs such as cocaine, cannabis, hallucinogens, opiates and sedative hypnotics worldwide. In December 1987 the UN General Assembly decided that the problem was so rampant, that they instituted June 26 as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in hopes of raising awareness and fighting the problem.

Our Spiritual [State of the World's Children](#) research shows that globally, 11% of teens admit to using some type of illegal drug in the past 3 months, the greatest of which reside in Hispanic and European countries. I've traveled the world, and trust me, no country is immune to the burgeoning drug trade and the havoc it wreaks on its addicts and the society that lives among them.

According to our [research](#), there is a direct link between a teen's relationship with their parents and their drug usage. For instance, compared to teens who say they have an excellent relationship with Dad, teens that have a less than very good relationship with their father are:

- Almost four times likelier to have used marijuana.
- Twice as likely to have used alcohol.
- Two and a half times as likely to have used tobacco.

And compared to teens who say they have an excellent relationship with Mom, teens that have a less than very good relationship with their mother are:

- Almost three times likelier to have used marijuana.
- Two and a half times as likely to have used alcohol.
- Two and a half times likelier to have used tobacco.

Did you have any idea that simply eating dinner—or any other meal—together as a family at least three times a week can be the best anti-drug campaign ever launched? Studies show that one of the greatest combatants of drug usage in adolescents is a quality relationship between parents and their teens. Making family mealtime and keeping the lines of communication open a priority in your home sends the message that you care about knowing what’s going on in your tween or teen’s life and gives you a comfortable atmosphere for staging important conversations.

Parents who actively and regularly engage with their children have the advantage of knowing what is going on in their lives and are the best anti-drug strategy not just in January when you make a resolution to spend more time together as a family, but every single day of the year.

According to the [National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University](#), children who make it to age 21 without using illegal drugs, abusing alcohol or smoking are virtually certain never to do so. Their studies conclude that parents have the greatest influence on whether their teens will choose not to use.

As you move forward, build these family meal times into your regularly scheduled programming. Something as simple as saying “yes” to dinner could be pivotal to helping your kids say “no” to drugs.

Source:

<http://www.casacolumbia.org/newsroom/press-releases/2012-family-dinners-white-paper-finds>

God Said Turn Right

September 23, 2013

I always drive the same route to work. One day while sitting at a red light a few blocks away from the office on a double-booked kind of day, I distinctly heard the Holy Spirit tell me to, “Take a right” Not one to argue with the Lord, I clicked on my blinker and made the right turn. My curious eyes drank in the new sights on a road I’ve never driven before. My unexpected right turn landed me in an urban community, called Avondale, made up of nine hundred residences that house over 3,000 people—mostly Hispanic and African American with a few Anglos mixed in.

I did some research on the population that existed within half a mile of my ministry headquarters office, and the statistics for its tenants were disheartening—not only had they been labeled as “Struggling Urban Diversity” by the Percept Group, Inc., but there was also a very low population of married people and two-parent families.

I felt sure that as the president of a global ministry delivering a biblical message of purpose and hope to children all over the world, God had intended for me to take that right turn in order to discover this patch of needy children located in my office’s back yard. We did further research on the demographics of Avondale and found that it was ranked in the bottom 1 percent of US neighborhoods for safety—not exactly the best conditions for children to grow up in. We even went door to door to personally ask the residents what kind of help families in their community needed. Next, we did exactly what we would have done in any other corner of the world; we created goals and designed a program—called “Cultivate”—that would achieve the desired outcomes for this specific community, then we sought out partner ministries and churches to come alongside our efforts to “Cultivate” and sustain the relationships and work we were starting in Avondale.

To make a long story short, the crime rate has dropped 26 percent since we launched the Cultivate program for Avondale, and the stories of individual lives changed continue to pour out of this once neglected and desperately dangerous sector. Had I not been prompted to take a right turn and deviate from my typical commute to work, I would have never known about the parcel of needy children right in my ministry’s own backyard.

I’d like to challenge you to stop and pray for a minute. Ask God to show you the specific “right turn” He wants you to take in order to discover the ministry opportunity He has placed in your vicinity that you might be missing by sticking to your regular route.

This story was originally featured in my book, *Hope Delivered*.

Is God's Word Enough?

October 17, 2013

When I told my new neighbor what I do for a living, he laughingly responded with, “Well, why would you want to do that?” He’s not the first person to react that way; some Christians are skeptical too. Our vision at OneHope is to see every child and young person around the world engaged with God’s Word. That’s a tall order, but so far, nearly 1 billion children and youth have been reached with God’s Word through multiple mediums, outreaches, partners and programs.

Three things have helped us become a more fruitful ministry:



Research

After visiting the “Christian” nation of Swaziland and seeing that most Swazi’s were Christian in name only, we launched our first major research initiative called the Attitudes and Behavior of Youth (ABY) project. This quantitative study--to our knowledge, the largest on this topic ever conducted—examined the daily life of teens and trends around the world. From 2007-2011, more than 152,000 13-19 year-olds in 44 countries on 5 continents answered questions about their lives.

The analysis from this [ABY study](#) revealed that there is a global “teenage” norm that crosses cultural, regional, and religious boundaries. Information like this is revolutionary for anyone working with children or teens; that’s why we freely share our research and findings.

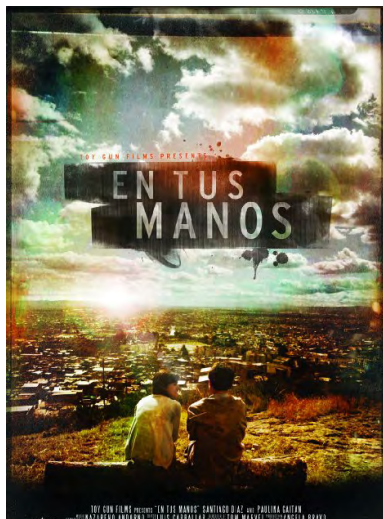
Not only does our research help us innovate cutting-edge Scripture engagement tools, but it has also created natural inroads to relationships with amazing local partners here in the US and around the world.

We use this research to give us a bird’s eye view of the intended ministry demographic. Next we hone in to gather location specific input from children, youth, leaders and educators in each of the countries we serve. Finally we start crafting age specific, customized Scripture engagement programs and products.



Outcome-based Ministry

We have implemented an Outcome-based Ministry (OBM) model to ensure that our work is really changing lives. Being an outcome-based ministry means that we start with the end in mind. Then we research and customize, test and record. It’s a lot of hard work, asking, listening measuring, but we are about life-transformation.



We do whatever it takes to help successfully reach kids with God's Word in a way they can receive it. We create visual mediums like trading cards or the GodMan film for pre-literate/illiterate audiences or areas the printed Word cannot go, and even step into highly-competitive arenas to create online games like [Incredible Islands](#), films like [En Tus Manos](#), and mobile apps like the [Bible App for Kids](#) (coming late Fall 2013).

OneHope's Scripturally-based message of God's love is always the same, but as we find what is currently captivating children and youth, that's where you'll find us researching, re-thinking and retooling the mode of delivery.



Partnerships

We cannot do this on our own. That's why we form new partnerships so that we can work with and through local churches, ministries, and organizations to amplify Kingdom reach.

I understand first-hand the awful problems kids around the world are facing. In Swaziland a little girl in a red sweater approached one of our team members at a gas station and offered to sell herself to him for \$2 so she could buy herself some food. This little girl, along with billions of children around the world are, indeed, facing some of the World's worst problems. If we truly want to make a lasting, life-altering change in the lives of young people around the world, we have to take care of the root of the problem, not simply assuage the symptoms. That's why we give God's Word to children.

God's Word is powerful. It holds THE answer to every problem, and there is no justice-social or otherwise-without first introducing young people to Jesus Christ. There are billions of children and youth in the world today, many whom have not yet received God's Word. When I think about the power of God's Word to change lives, and imagine how different the world could look like if we actually reached every child with God's Word, the answer to my neighbor's retort then becomes, "how could I not?"

Live Dangerously

Part 1

October 1, 2013

I wonder if Peter was the first person to stand in the center of crowded city streets wearing a sandwich board proclaiming, “The End is NEAR!” Even if he never carved those actual words onto an animal skin and paraded it around town shouting predictions of doom and gloom to the masses, he DID etch those words into an everlasting document that is still relevant to us today.

“The end of all things is near...”—1 Peter 4:7a

His words sound less like a warning shouted in fear of the unknown “end” to me, and more like an excited shriek of enthusiasm—an animated call to join him on an adventure to live dangerously while waiting for his Savior’s promised return.

Paul, profound influencer and spreader of the Gospel, may have informed Peter’s call to action with his exhortation in *Romans 13:11 – 12*, “*And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.*” If Paul was urging people to revival in his day, how much closer are we to it actually being “morning”?

Should knowing that the clock is ticking elicit a carpe diem mentality in us? Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die? No, instead we should be inspired to live like we are dying, to live dangerously. Living dangerously doesn’t mean living recklessly, it actually means the opposite—living diligently. The more dangerous the undertaking, the more disciplined the preparation. An Ironman triathlete trains for years before competing, because the chances of his body shutting down and dying on the course are great. This isn’t strictly true! The longest I ever saw an IM triathlete train was less than a year. Most are 6 months. And it’s mainly so they make the cutoff not because it’s deadly. A Mount Everest climber prepares and practices for the climb years in advance, studying the terrain and taking measures to remain safe and mount the summit in order to be successful. Neglecting to prepare can end in death and failure to complete the mission.

The same goes for the incredible task of sharing the Word of God. It is a dangerous undertaking because of the power the Word has to transform lives (*Hebrews 4:12*). So, are you in? Do you feel the urgency of the ticking clock when you hear Peter’s call to live dangerously? Are you anticipating the return of Christ passionately living out the moments preparing for that great day and, like Peter, living dangerously and inviting others to join the adventure?

Live Dangerously

Part 2

October 2, 2013

After Peter proclaims “*the end is near*,” he doesn’t leave us hanging and hopeless. Knowing that we have a huge task ahead of us, he gives us the pep talk of our lives, outlining the exact steps we need to take to live dangerously in the waiting (*1 Peter 4:7 – 11*).

- 1. Pray:** Mentioned first, prayer should be the precursor to any decision we make and the first reaction to every circumstance. Talking to God provides us with clarity and insight; I like to think of it as the “look” before the leap.
- 2. Love:** God intended for us to have loving relationships—to live in community. You can’t live dangerously as a loner; you need to surround yourself with a loving community to support you as you seek to fulfill God’s plan and vision for your life.
- 3. Serve:** Don’t be scared of your gift, don’t hide it or fail to use it because you are afraid others are better than you are in your area of gifting. Remember the parable of the talents in *Matthew 15:14 – 30*? The servant who buried his gift had it taken away. Instead, be confident that you have been given a gift for such a time as this—stay focused and use it.

So, the end is near + here’s how to live in the waiting = what does that mean for us as individuals?

The task of evangelizing and ministering is weighty, a great undertaking. Time is ticking, and those who have not been proselytized have everything to lose. The more you have to lose, the less risky you play it. Is this true? I think the less you have to lose the higher the risks you’ll take! If you truly believe that the Word of God is more powerful than a two-edged sword, able to change lives completely, would you treat it any differently? Many have believed so fiercely in the power of this document that they have invented ways for it to be accessible to more people around the world than at any other time in history.

We have been called to live dangerously as we relentlessly spread the truth in the Word of God to every corner of the earth. Adding drama to the mission is the fact that the end is near! But if we are individually and collectively praying, loving, and serving, then we are not alone in our adventure. Peter ends with, “*So that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever.*”

That is reason enough for me to passionately live out the adventure.



Conclusion

I hope this compilation of my thoughts from the blog over the past year have helped challenge your thinking. Sometimes it's more satisfying to act or emote, but it's imperative that we, the Church, take the time to think, pray, strategize and execute effective ministry plans. These plans require wrestling through the why and how of ways to personally, corporately, and as a local and global church be fruitful for the Kingdom.

I pray that between the letters and lines of these words, you more clearly recognize the God we seek, and have a fresh sense of effective ways we can do that together. I hope that you will continue to read, process, dialogue, stretch your thinking and grow in effectiveness. I am humbled that you took the time to read this ebook and excited about what the future holds as we take steps toward mission fulfillment of God's Word, Every Child.

Be sure to visit RobHoskins.com for his full catalogue of blog posts and connect with him on Twitter [@RobHoskins!](https://twitter.com/RobHoskins)

