

## DAY 1

# THE GREAT PURSUIT IN SENEGAL



Twenty-five Senegalese islanders crowded into a classroom. Sitting in front of a film projector, their eyes were glued to the screen. As they watched the *JESUS* film, International Mission Board missionaries Moses and Beth saw clear emotion on the faces of the islanders.

After the film, 15 people came forward during a response time. They'd heard the clear presentation of the gospel. They wanted to know more. They wanted to know this Jesus — the One who'd suffered and died for their sins.

Moses was immediately grateful that he'd braved his fear of the water to take the gospel to those who had never heard the truth. Because he did, new believers were added to the Kingdom that day.

When Moses first started doing ministry on the islands, he was hesitant. He couldn't swim.

Moses wasn't usually hesitant to follow God's will. He obeyed it when he felt God calling him to salvation in his early 20s. He listened to God's voice to travel to the United States from his West African home to attend Bible college. After college, he followed God's call to seminary and to marry Beth. And when the Lord led the couple back to West Africa — specifically Senegal, the place where his wife served as a Journeyman — they obeyed.

But ministry on islands when you can't swim — that seemed like a different story.

In the beginning of this ministry, Moses clung to God's promises in Isaiah 43:1-2, and he clung to his very own orange life jacket, and stepped into the small, wooden canoe.

For the past two years, he's seen ministry on the islands pay off. He visits unreached islands but encourages a growing church plant on another island nearby.

The people on these islands have many needs. They live in an area where animism and fear dominate the religious landscape. It's not rare for them to sacrifice animals to appease their ancestors.

Making a decision for Christ can cost new believers everything.

After conversion, most families try to bribe their son or daughter back to their traditional faith. When they don't recant, because they've rejected the worship of their ancestors or won't bow a knee to false gods, their families reject them.

Still, off the coast of Senegal, the gospel has prevailed. Moses has seen people come to faith and a young but growing church planted. The gathering of new believers on the neighboring island stands strong, despite persecution, meeting together in homes.

Moses has found that training leaders in the rural mainland and remote island churches is best done through partnership. Churches from the U.S. get involved with the training on short-term trips, making it an effort highlighting the cooperation of Southern Baptists.

**Praise God for churches in the U.S. who partner with Moses and Beth to do ministry on the islands.**

**Pray for Moses and Beth as they continue to minister among the unreached in rural Senegal.**

**Pray for new believers to stand firm despite persecution.**

*Last name withheld for security.*

## DAY 2

# THE GREAT PURSUIT IN CENTRAL ASIA



The smells are familiar as Gary Warrior and his friends enter the small restaurant. A large cast iron pot of *plov*, rice pilaf that is popular throughout Central Asia, cooks on an open fire at the entrance. Gary asks to sit in a booth, a place where he can pull a curtain and speak to his friends with a little privacy. The booths are often used for business discussions, but Gary will center his conversation on the Bible. Gary orders extra kabobs for his friends, who don't often get to splurge on meat. The drink is tea, always tea.

In this booth, with the scent of onion and grilled meat lingering, the men discuss their faith in Christ, truths from the Bible and how these truths affect daily life.

These kinds of meetings are important to the men who are growing in their faith, but they are also important to Gary. After more than 20 years living in Central Asia, he spends much of his time supervising missionary teams and sharing his knowledge and experience concerning missions in Central Asia.

Even as he leads others, he says, "I want to keep my hand on the plow." Staying involved in evangelism, discipleship and church planting will always be his personal call from the Lord.

Over the years, Gary and his wife, Ann, have seen God work to fulfill His purposes among Central Asians. Every new believer and transformed life points to God's work among the lost.

Frank is one of those believers. As a new Christian, Frank was more than eager to learn all he could about Jesus. He was also bold about discussing his faith with others. Frank was quick to invite friends to talk with Gary about stories from the Bible, and more have come to faith.

"Don't waste this time! Tell us the next story," they'd say. "They were so hungry to hear," Gary remembers. In the restaurant, in a private booth, they'd talk for a couple of hours.

After a time when the Warriors were back in the U.S., they wondered if the men were growing in their faith and sharing with others. When they returned to Central Asia, the men reported, "We think about 10 people in the village are ready to be baptized. We'd like to start a church."

Gary and his team members are now working toward the baptism of new believers and praying about local leadership in the mountain region where Frank lives.

"One day there will be a church in that village," Ann said confidently.

"Yes, there will be!" Gary responded without hesitation.

They've watched God work in Central Asia for more than two decades. They know He will continue His good work.

**Pray for a strong, healthy church plant with national leadership in this mountain village.**

**Ask God to strengthen Central Asian believers and make them bold in their witness.**

**Praise God for the faithful service of Gary and Ann and ask for more opportunities to see fruit of their work.**

*Names changed for security.*





## DAY 3

# THE GREAT PURSUIT AMONG THE DEAF



Two years ago, there was no church-planting movement among the Deaf in Slovenia. The Bible didn't even exist in Slovenian Sign Language. Before a church could be planted, Deaf Slovenians needed a Bible translation they could understand. International Mission Board missionaries know how important this is, and much of their focus is on Bible translation for Deaf people groups.

Shortly after the Slovenian Sign Language translation was completed, Deaf Slovenians responded to the gospel and Deaf-led worship and Bible study began.

Ray, a Deaf man who grew up in communist-governed Yugoslavia and moved to Slovenia as an adult, had questions about the faith.

"I kept an imaginary notebook in my back pocket all my life," he later told his missionary friends. He filled this imaginary notebook with weighty questions like "Who is God?" "What does it really mean to follow Him?" and "What purpose does He have for me?"

But with no Scripture in his heart language, Ray couldn't find answers.

When he met IMB missionaries who work among the Deaf, he saw the gospel communicated through their hands and faces. Now, he could understand.

The missionaries and their partners from other European countries hosted a Bible translation event. At this event and others like it, people from the local Deaf community were invited to come together to learn, in their heart language, what the Bible says.

"I trust Jesus now! I know Jesus now!" he told the missionaries after a season of Bible study. He pulled out his imaginary question-ridden notebook, pretended to toss it in the air, and signed, "I found the truth!"

Ray's wife, Rachel, also put her trust in Jesus, as well as their friends, Dasia and Gabor.

Now, they're not only involved in the Scripture translation project, but all four new believers have been baptized. They gather weekly to share Scripture with other Deaf people. This group is moving to become the first Deaf church in Slovenia.

IMB missionaries among the Deaf are seeing similar response to the gospel, once people understand it in their heart language. They are also witnessing Deaf church planters and Deaf believers taking ownership of reaching Deaf in other cultures. Though different people groups speak different sign languages, many Deaf Christians recognize their unique giftedness to reach others with the gospel.

**Pray for the Deaf Slovenian Christians as they set healthy roots for a church and as they reach others with the gospel.**

**Thank God for IMB missionaries among the Deaf and ask God to send more workers, both hearing and Deaf, who will plant their lives among the Deaf cultures.**

**Pray for Scripture translations in every sign language so that all Deaf will have access to the gospel in a way they can understand it. Ask God to plant Deaf-led churches among the lost.**





## DAY 4

# THE GREAT PURSUIT IN BRAZIL



Danilo Miranda moved hurriedly through the Rio de Janeiro airport. He was on his way across the world to attend a Global Senders Forum. The conference highlighted the IMB's and other sending organizations' commitment to globalization. It was a fitting conference for the IMB missionary who is originally from Brazil. Danilo's ministry in Brazil has been focused on mobilizing the church in Brazil to fulfill the Revelation 7:9 vision.

The unexpected blessing of hurrying through the airport that day was seeing his friend, a newly commissioned Brazilian missionary headed to Africa. The new missionary greeted Danilo, and they embraced before praying together. Danilo reflected with joy, thinking about his friend who is headed to Africa as a global missionary partner on an IMB team, largely because of Danilo's encouragement and training.

At the Global Senders Forum, Danilo met with leaders from Africa. He told them about another friend who wanted to take the gospel to the least reached in their region, just as others through Africans on Mission are preparing for ministry on other continents.

"That's our role — to connect," Danilo said, sharing multiple stories like the one above, where God orchestrated encounters that developed into productive, mutually beneficial, relationships.

Catherine, Danilo's wife who grew up as an IMB missionary kid in Brazil, explained, "We see how important it is to have these cross-cultural teams working together. It reflects the body of Christ to the world. And it teaches us so much about working with people who are different from us but have the same faith and the same goal of reaching the lost and starting healthy churches."

This passion for globalization started in Danilo when he was just a teenager and discipled by IMB missionary Mark Johnson. After seminary in the U.S., he and Catherine returned to Brazil to work among Indigenous peoples in Brazil.

In his current work, Danilo spends time in churches and with the Brazilian Baptist conventions, training others to be healthy senders. He knows the Great Pursuit requires partnership and unity to carry out the Great Commission. That means "all nations to all nations."

In Rio, he connects easily with other Brazilians while keeping a focus on the lost in the uttermost parts of the world. Whether he's talking with students, young pastors or families considering a call to leave Brazil for the sake of the gospel, Danilo leads them to consider how God might use them to spread the gospel. For many, the time is right to learn a new language, travel to unfamiliar lands and bring the gospel to people who have never heard.

**Pray for the Mirandas as they walk alongside potential global missionary partners and prepare them to go.**

**Pray for the local churches the Mirandas partner with. Pray they'd grow into healthy sending churches.**

**Thank God for the investment Mark Johnson made in Danilo Miranda's life. Ask God to send more mentors who will invest in new missionaries.**

## DAY 5

# THE GREAT PURSUIT ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN ISLANDS



David York still gets tears in his eyes when he remembers God speaking to him through Ephesians 3. In the isolation of the pandemic, David asked God for a vision for the work on the islands where he and his wife, Regan, serve with the IMB.

God gave him a renewed heart for the church during his study in Paul's epistle. David said he went to his wife and said, "This is what I want to see," pointing to the passage from Ephesians. "I want to see healthy and maturing churches. I want to help churches know what their aspirations should be." David, who leads strategies for IMB's work on a cluster of islands in Southeast Asia, prays for new churches in new places. As believers gather, he prays they will know the gospel's power.

"The same gospel that saves us, sanctifies us. Our team of missionaries and national partners want to see a gospel-centrality among the churches," David said.

Missions among peoples who populate these islands can be challenging. Though many share geographic similarities, people and culture vary widely on the more than 17,000 islands in Southeast Asia. Large cities loom on some islands, while thousands remain uninhabited and unexplored. Travel among the thousands of islands is difficult, as is the trek through jungles, over mountains and across coastlines. The islands represent concentrations of Hindus, Muslims, animists, mystics and cultural Catholics with little knowledge of the truth of the **God's Word**.

Among one cluster of islands where the Yorks serve, five people groups are represented. All are considered unreached with the gospel. The larger group of islands is home to more than

125 unengaged, unreached people groups. Many of the people are known by name only, as missionaries and national believers have had little-to-no access to them. This means the people have little-to-no access to the gospel.

Many years ago, God opened the doors for long-term missionary presence on these Southeast Asian islands. The work of missionaries who served decades ago has led to deep relationships and strong partnerships today. David considers his work with national associations of churches to be a blessing. By serving them, more leaders are trained and equipped for Bible study, evangelism and cross-cultural missions. As more leaders share the same vision and are equipped for the missionary task, more island people groups will have the opportunity to repent of their sins and put their faith in the One, True God.

David said of national churches, "We are working with them and through them to reach this cluster of islands."

Still, the work to reach the millions of lost on these islands remains.

**Pray for David and Regan as they cast a vision of gospel multiplication for missionary teams and local churches.**

**Ask God to send more workers to these islands where the gospel remains largely unknown.**

**Thank God for healthy churches on the islands and pray that more fellowships will become multiplying, gospel-centric families of faith.**

*Names changed for security.*





## DAY 6

# THE GREAT PURSUIT IN NORTHERN AFRICA



As Jay looked into the valley below, he noticed dots of flickering lights, the tiny glow of open fires from the villages at the base of the mountain. In the dark of the night, they were the only light except for the stars above. Jay pointed out the fires to Timothy, his national partner.

“Each of those fires represent a family or a group of people who probably haven’t heard the good news,” Jay told Timothy. Together they read Psalm 19 about the heavens declaring God’s glory. They discussed the reality that, while the people gathered around those fires knew there was a God by looking up at the stars, they had no one to tell them how God loved them through His Son Jesus Christ.

The IMB missionary said that Timothy went back to their group “fired up” to share with a group of new friends — including Abel who had received the gospel shared by Timothy on an earlier trip. With boldness, he told his friends the creation to Christ story, modeling for Abel what faithful sharing looked like. The guards around the fire professed faith in Jesus! Today, Timothy and Abel continue to share the good news with those around them.

Jay Janill and his wife, Ella, missionaries in Northern Africa, met Abel months before this night when they trekked to the surrounding mountains on a scouting expedition with Timothy. Trekkers are required to hire security guards and a park guide to lead them and ensure their safety in an area that can be volatile. Abel was the park guide, and he showed an interest in spiritual conversations. They gave him an SD card for his cell phone that contained the full audio and digital Bible, stories from Scripture and the *Jesus* film. Everything was translated into his language.

The next time they went out to camp, Abel was again their guide. And the next time they went. And the next time. Each time they met with him, they realized how much he was listening and reading the Word of God. In time, Abel confessed his faith in the Lord, and Timothy continued teaching him and encouraging him to share with others.

The Janills say that most in the area where they serve have been exposed to religion that some refer to as Christianity. “But truthfully, they don’t know Jesus,” Ella explained. “If you ask them who Jesus is, they have no idea.”

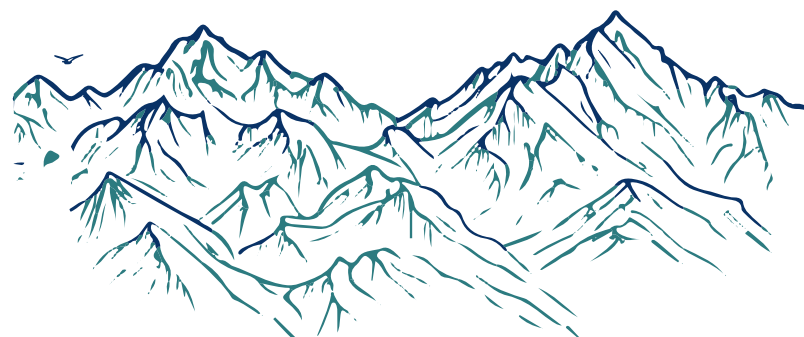
For each one like Abel who hears and believes, they pass hundreds of others on the cobblestone streets of their neighborhood who do not know truth and have not had access to the gospel.

**Thank God for Timothy and Abel and other believers who are following Christ at the risk of persecution.**

**Ask God to lead Jay and Ella and their children as their ministry continues in a region that is often characterized by violence and unsteady political situations.**

**Pray for believers to be able to safely gather for worship and fellowship.**

*Names changed for security.*



## DAY 7

# THE GREAT PURSUIT IN SOUTH ASIA



*Read this following testimony from IMB missionary explorer John Pratt.*

When I'm searching for an unengaged, unreached people group, I ask the Holy Spirit to show me someone open to the gospel. One day, that simple prayer led me to the water's edge, where an old man fished from strings tied to his hand. He asked why I was there.

The short answer: Jesus.

The long answer: As a missionary explorer, I find and research people groups for whom there is no strategy to reach with the gospel. We call them "unengaged and unreached" or UUPGs. It's part of IMB's Project 3000 initiative, a renewed commitment to find the remaining 3,000+ people groups who don't have access to the gospel. Missionary explorers work with local partners to research these groups, learn their culture and share the good news.

I told the man we were looking for a specific people. To my surprise, he said, "I am that people!"

The story only gets better. Take a look at my research notes:

### **Entry #1**

This is Lahud. I've been searching for someone like him for four weeks. He catches fish to feed his granddaughter and his wife. He picks up plastic trash to sell. He once heard of Jesus in a movie that had "a man on a cross who made all evil enemies run away."

After we shared the gospel, Lahud asked what sacrifices he needed to worship Jesus. In his cultural understanding of religion, he needed to do something to receive. We explained God's Son, Jesus, was the final and perfect sacrifice.

### **Entry #2**

When we returned the next day, Lahud was excited because he didn't think we'd come back. He said the more he thought, the more he believed what we told him was true. I gave him an audio Bible with videos and Bible studies because he and his family are illiterate. We listened to the first chapters of Matthew and discussed them while we fished.

### **Entry #3**

I went fishing with Lahud again! He listened to the audio Bible for two straight days without stopping. The first thing he did when he walked up was point to his rib and tell the story of creation.

"Because you came and showed that you loved me and kept coming back, I believe in the God you told me about and that what I am hearing in the Bible must be true," Lahud affirmed.

He has already been threatened multiple times for talking about Jesus in his community.

### **Entry #4**

Today, we shared the gospel with 20 of Lahud's people group. Four women and two more men prayed to trust in Jesus. That's now SEVEN new brothers and sisters!

**Let's praise God for these new believers.**

**Pray for Lahud to be bold in his faith, despite persecution.**

**Also, keep asking the Holy Spirit to show missionary explorers where UUPGs live so all peoples hear the gospel.**

*Names changed for security.*

## DAY 8

# THE GREAT PURSUIT IN EUROPE



Air from the blood pressure cuff released with a whoosh. The young nurse gently patted the elderly woman's hand and asked a few medical questions, pausing to write down notes for the doctor at this free clinic in an Armenian church foyer. It wasn't long before the women from different countries chatted like old friends and bowed their heads to pray.

Across the room, International Mission Board missionary nurse Ginny Wheeler couldn't stop smiling at the exchange. She's been mentoring this nurse from Greece, Penny, to use her gifts for God's glory and purposes. Ginny invited the young Greek to work alongside medical volunteers from the U.S. to see firsthand how healthcare strategies directly impact lives. It's a lesson she learned early in her missionary career.

When Ginny and husband, Cade, began serving in Eastern Europe in 1998, she wasn't sure how nursing could be used in that area of the world. It didn't take long, however, for Ginny to realize that while she couldn't practice in a hospital setting, there was still a way to put her nursing to use.

"My medical skills opened doors to communities. It helped build trust," Ginny pointed out. "I became convinced of the biblical model and importance of caring for needs as we share truth. Healthcare strategies became a big part of our **church**-planting efforts."

She now uses these skills to facilitate missionary teams and national partners around the world in considering the soul, body and mind as they minister. Penny is just one of several young professionals Ginny mentors. When the Wheelers moved to Greece a few years ago, they encountered a generation of believers with a growing passion to reach the nations.

Penny said that was about the time an influx of refugees from a variety of world crises flooded her city. She and others in her church wanted to do more than just "feel good projects." The veteran missionaries invited the Greeks to join them in meeting human needs while learning how to be a multiplying church.

"For me, nursing has always been about showing love and care," Penny said. "It was mind blowing when Ginny showed me how to share the gospel while using medical skills. It was my dream come true!"

The pair of nurses simultaneously turned to greet a mother and child walking into the clinic. They placed steady hands on the woman's shoulders and flashed smiles at the toddler. As Penny wrapped the blood pressure cuff around the woman's arm, she began sharing the gospel.

Ginny quietly faded into the background, allowing Penny to not only minister cross-culturally but also mentor a local church member serving as translator. The missionary's heart burst with joy as she watched the young Greek fully invest in the great pursuit of all nations proclaiming Jesus' name.

**Please pray for Ginny as she mentors national believers.**

**Ask God to provide opportunities for IMB teams to care for the hurting with relevant health strategies.**

**Pray for wisdom as Ginny and her partners embrace this task that opens access to the gospel in some of the hardest places in the world.**

*Names changed for security.*

