



# ignite

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## A SAW MILL & GOD'S GLORY

By Stephen Caldwell

**Mickey Cofer didn't mind sharing a few stories during the 2007 Lightbearers Friends Dinner in Northwest Arkansas. That's why he'd been invited, after all. So he willingly talked about how a backwoods potter from North Carolina ended up as a missionary in rural Asia and about how God was working in his life, his family's lives and the lives of the native people.**

But he really didn't want to talk about the sawmill.

He'd been dreaming about the expensive piece of machinery because getting it would bring jobs and hope into the lives of

hundreds, while saving hundreds of thousands of dollars on a building renovation project in the village where he and his wife, Trina, were living.

He could get the Wood-Mizer sawmill for half-price – just \$18,000 – thanks to the benevolence of the manufacturer. But time and again he tried to raise the money, and time and again he got little or no response. Maybe God had another plan, he decided, one that didn't involve a sawmill. So why even bring it up in Arkansas? Why not just focus on the success stories?



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After deftly changing the subject a couple of times, however, Mickey relented and shared about the need for the sawmill. They had purchased of an old, 130,000-square foot factory that once was the hub of activity for a village of about 3,000 people. It had closed and become the community eyesore, but Mickey and Trina had helped found an organization that was renovating the seven buildings a little at time. One building would be a community center. Others would provide workshop space for craftsmen – painters, potters, metal workers, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, woodworkers – to learn and practice their trades. Mickey envisioned a sawmill in one end of the old factory, providing jobs for the locals and churning out wood for the remodeling project.

“The sawmill will cut our cost in half,” he said. “And they build log cabins in my village, so they do some woodwork. So besides rebuilding these buildings, it will be doing ministry all along. We’re in a forested area, so that’s a good thing. All of our supplies have to be imported from China, Russia or Germany. So that’s why we needed a sawmill, so we can make just about everything.”

As the Lightbearers’ evening drew to an end, Terry Lawson felt the gentle elbow of his wife, Jenny. “Tell the man if he needs a

sawmill we’ll give him \$500,” she said. Like everyone else at the dinner, Jenny and Terry were captivated by Mickey’s journey into missions, and that testimony now was inspiring their donation.

Mickey was at his small, country church when a missionary spoke about taking God’s word into the 10/40 window. He felt led to “go,” he said, but “I had to wrestle with the call. I didn’t want to be a self-appointed man.” So he did what any good country boy would do: He went to the barn to pray. Almost immediately he began to think of specific verses – and they

weren’t the ones he wanted to hear. They were verses like “the wicked and adulterous generation seek a sign” and “the just shall live by faith.”

Mickey left the barn realizing that he needed to be “a missionary by faith,” but he wasn’t finished resisting. First he told his pastor, “I think the Lord is calling me to Asia and calling me to preach.” Then he stood in front of the congregation and asked for their endorsement as a congregation; he figured he didn’t have to go if they refused to send him. If they approved him, then off he’d go.

“I wanted their blessing on me,” he said. “But some old farmer raised his hand and said, ‘I’ll give \$500.’” Within a few minutes, 60 or so people in the church had committed \$5,500.

Jenny was still thinking about that story when she elbowed her husband, and it inspired him to recreate the scene. So he quietly

**“It was a God thing. It was one of the most exciting nights to be a part of. It was like God held that saw back from him until that night so we could be part of it.”**

**Terry Lawson**



told two other men – Gary Renegar and Henry Ho – that he planned to take the microphone and announce his donation toward the sawmill project.

“I’d seen one of these saws in a magazine, and I wanted one for my farm,” Terry said. “And since I couldn’t have one, I thought it would be nice for this missionary to have one. So I said, ‘I’ll give \$500 for this saw will anybody else do it?’”

Gary and Henry quickly joined in, and soon others in the room began raising their hands, as well. With matching funds from Lightbearers, the Cofers soon had \$22,000, enough to cover the sawmill, some smaller equipment and the transportation costs to get it all to his Asian outpost.

“It was exciting,” Mickey said. “I was not expecting that. The Lord does things. You just never know what’s going to happen in a service.”

Mickey trained on the equipment in April and helped load it for shipping in May. Now he and the sawmill are in central Asia. For now, it’s in a village where the Cofers and another missionary hope to start a church, but eventually it will move 30 miles into the factory.

“It is an absolute amazing machine,” said Trina. “The guys are so excited about it. We cannot thank you all enough for affording us the opportunity to have such a piece of equipment.”

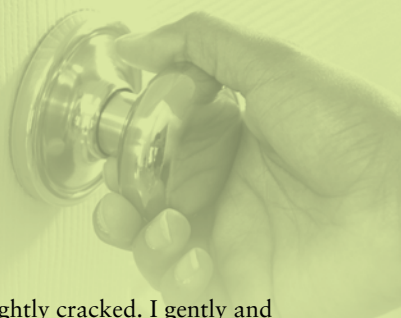
Lightbearers was honored to help with the project, of course, but it was more than a donation to a worthy cause. The event unfolded in a way that only God could orchestrate, bringing glory to God’s name at a gathering in Arkansas and now in remote villages in central Asia.

“It was so fun to watch person after person get on board,” Terry said. “It was a God thing. It was one of the most exciting nights to be a part of. It was like God held that saw back from him until that night so we could be part of it. We were blessed a whole lot more than he was.” 💎

*Stephen Caldwell is the owner and Chief Word Architect of WordBuilders Communications and serves on Lightbearers’ Communication Team.*

# Are you here?

By April Bader



The large, heavy door was only slightly cracked. I gently and slowly pushed it forward so that I could inconspicuously peer around the corner. My dear friend was lying on the bed gazing at the television and hadn't felt my presence in the room. In my mind I wondered, "Here today?" Almost as though I'd spoken aloud, she looked in my direction, and her look alone answered my question: No. She's not here. Not today.

A terrible stroke had left my friend with severe physical and mental disabilities. Although she'd come far through rehabilitation, her memory remained fickle. Today, her emotionless face and hallow expression communicated that she couldn't quite put together who I was.


"Here today?" This familiar question that I asked so many times of my friend surfaced during my time leading a team for Lightbearers in Niger. Only this time the quest was aimed at me, and the Lord was doing the asking: "April, why is it that are you here one day and gone the next? Why is it that you are a 'missionary' on day and not the next?"

Why do I think that crossing five time zones will make me any more a missionary than crossing five city blocks? The reality is that it doesn't. A person isn't a missionary on one day and not a missionary the next any more than a soldier is only a soldier when he goes away to war. We aren't a Christian one day and not the next. It is who we are.

It was easy to let my heart ache for the physical needs of the Nigerien people, and the urgency of their spiritual needs was evident, as well. Yet, my heart's desire is to become as intentional and determined to do the Father's work right here as I was while traveling to the other side of this planet. My prayer has been simple: "Father, let my eyes be opened to those same urgent needs right here!"

The Father challenged me to be right here, right now because He is the same God here with the same plan.

I could always tell if my friend recognized me because her eyes would fill with tears. I knew that in that moment she was taking it all in. The difference between the two of us is that I have a choice. The choice is mine. The choice is ours.

Here today? 



*April Bader serves on the staff of Lightbearers and recently led a team of volunteers to Niger, West Africa in support of our mission partner there.  
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# sparks

> BRIEF NEWS, BIG IMPACT

## Lightbearers' Gatherings

Dallas – Oct. 11

Northwest Arkansas – Oct. 18

Watch your mailbox for details.

## A huge thank you

for all who help with our "Extreme Makeover" project at the University of Arkansas. The house looks amazing! A link on our Web site will lead you to some of the before, during and after photos.



## Need a missions or discipleship speaker for your organization?

We're always excited to share! [info@lightbearersconnects.com](mailto:info@lightbearersconnects.com)

## On the road:

Kevin McCollum will be the chapel speaker for Global Outreach Week at Oklahoma Baptist University from Sept. 15-17. He will also preach at Heritage Church in Shawnee on Sept. 14. Please pray for him as he attempts to ignite hearts for the Gospel in Central Oklahoma.

## More Goers...

Joe Lynn Henley and Ross Cully will represent Lightbearers in North Africa from Oct. 1-15. Please pray for them as they make final preparations and while they are on the field.



## a final word

by Kevin McCollum, *Lightbearers Executive Director*

# Our Mission isn't Cheap



James Hannington died as a martyr in 1885. His call for others to follow in his work came in his final words: “I have purchased the road to Uganda with my blood.”

The First Century church father Tertullian observed that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” In other words, the most hardened and infertile soil of missions must be tilled by those willing to pay a huge price to prepare the ground. Often this means martyrdom.

On Aug. 25, hundreds of Hindu extremists in India began a swell of brutal attacks on Christians in their state. The attacks came as retaliation for the assassination of a Hindu guru who was a vowed enemy of Christ-followers. Although Christians were not involved in their leader’s death, the extremists capitalized on the opportunity to unleash their bigotry en masse on innocent men and women, leaving a wake of lootings, burnings, injuries and deaths.

One of our partners was in the center of the turmoil. As the director of a Christian children’s home and the overseer of dozens of churches, he became an immediate target. When several hundred Hindus raided a nearby Catholic orphanage and murdered a teacher, our partner decided to escape on foot to the mountains (literally) with the children.

It’s easy to get casual in our commitment to stand in the gap for our brothers and sisters who suffer daily for the cause of the Gospel. We are casual because we don’t suffer this type of persecution. Since we don’t suffer persecution, stories like these don’t seem real.


Imagine seeing a riot in front of your neighbor’s house because he has a cross on his door – the same cross displayed on your door. What would you do?

Hebrews 10:34 commends those who “joyfully accepted the plundering of (their) property.” How could they respond this way? The Hebrews writer gives the answer. They “knew that (they) had a better possession and an abiding one.” Christ.

As we mobilize and connect resources for our partners in the 10/40 Window, it’s with the realization that it’s only Christ who is sufficient to meet their needs. Our service only undergirds Christ’s ultimate sacrifice, which gives Him authority to call us into suffering for His name sake.

I had intended to fill this column with an exhortation for you to give financially to Lightbearers as we look to fund several key mission projects and prepare for a housing expansion over the next few weeks. This is a vital and timely need, and you are key to meeting it. Yet, with my mind sobered to the needs of those I’ve met in India, it seemed more appropriate to share their plight. In reading this story, I pray that God would ignite your heart for the cause of Christ, reviving embers cooled by the comforts of life.

I received the following text message from our partner in the midst of the chaos:

*“Our believers and pastors are now taken refuge in the forest and it is raining. We with our children at the home are in fearful situation. Not only we but all Christians need your prayers.”* 

 **LIGHTBEARERS**  
ministries

**mobilize+connect** money prayer manpower

**Our Purpose:** To mobilize and connect money, prayer, and manpower to projects of Great Commission ministries in the 10/40 Window.

**Our Mission:** To build renewable sources of finances, prayer, and manpower through discipleship housing and donor development.