

2015 Annual Report for Eric Belz

1. **Your Ministry:** *Explain your ministry in one sentence for a lay person.*

My ministry is to train African pastors and church leaders to study, obey and teach God's Word well, equipping them to pass this training on to others, and at the same time to equip US pastors to assist in this endeavor.

2. **Strategic Value:** *Tell why your ministry is important or strategic and how it fits into the "big picture."*

This ministry is important and strategic because most pastors in the majority world have no idea what to teach their people. In most cases they have received no formal training, so they pass on false teaching such as prosperity theology, syncretism and works righteousness which hurt the cause of Christ. The training we offer grounds them not only in the truths of Scripture, God revelation of Himself and His will for us in Christ, but it also gives them tools so that pastors can study and teach God's Word well and build their churches on this foundation. This will lead to healthy ministries based on the Word, God's kingdom will grow authentically, and disciples will be made of all nations (Matt.28:18-20), which is the "big picture." The series of nine workshops over three years we offer are effective for long-term change on a trajectory for exponential growth, and they are reproducible and sustainable because they are "owned" and driven by nationals. The multiplication of the trainings to other pastors is embedded in the DNA of the training, so hundreds and thousands of pastors can receive much needed training.

3. **Scriptural Basis:** *Give one or two Scripture verses and explain how they undergird your ministry.*

Obviously there are MANY passages I could reference, but a couple which are fundamental for our ministry are Ezra's commitment as he "set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel." (Ezra 7:10) We long for pastors and church leaders to grow strong spiritually by studying God's Word, and obeying it. The Bible is our foundation and what we base our actions and beliefs on, "so the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim.3:17). Beyond this, we are raising up movements of leaders who can preach the Word well, for it is our authority and is the substance of our message (2 Tim.4:1-5). Finally, we strive to equip leaders who will pass this training on to others, as Paul tells Timothy in 2 Tim.2:2. We desire that solid, expository preaching of the Word would be spread and multiplied through every tongue and tribe and nation, to the glory of Christ by the work of His Spirit.

4. **Motivation:** *Why do you continue to do what you do?*

I cannot imagine a more fulfilling calling than to bring glory to God by equipping leaders to study, obey and teach the Word well, so lives are transformed launching movements which impact communities and regions for the Gospel. The needs are so profound globally and national leaders are so hungry for our training. God has

shaped me in such a way to connect well cross-culturally with pastors and leaders, to develop them so they embrace the truths of Scripture, to empower them to obey His Word, and to release them so they preach His Word with truth and power, and train others to do the same. Pastors and leaders are learning the Gospel, in some cases for the first time, congregations are being transformed, authentic Bible-preaching movements are spreading, and God is being exalted. What could be more rewarding? The work is challenging and eternally significant, and I'm grateful to be a part of what God is doing.

5. **Priorities:** *How do you decide what ministry activities to do and what not to do?*

This is a real challenge. There are so many opportunities globally for us to give this training to leaders, and we want to be strategic and guard against spreading ourselves too thin. For this reason, in addition to training pastors overseas, we also train pastors and church leaders in the US, so they can be mobilized to train leaders globally. In this way, we can reach far more than just our team members could. Also, we work as part of a team (the Global Equipping Division in ReachGlobal / EFCA) to determine where the fields are the "whitest" and leaders are the most ready and in need of our training. Before launching any new network, I work closely with ReachGlobal area and division leaders and our Global Equipping Division to confirm the best steps. All is brought before the throne of God and we submit to the Spirit's guidance. Personally, I also am accountable to my team leader and make sure that my wife supports the work I'm doing, since I tend to "bite off more than I can chew."

6. **Successes and Challenges (Results):** *What are some of the encouragements you've seen this past year and what are some challenges?*

Successes - I have been encouraged in many areas this year.

- A. Team - I am a part of a very healthy, mature team of like-minded missionaries/pastors who are passionate about God being glorified and His kingdom growing. As our vision statement says, we do this "by equipping reproducing leaders globally for kingdom transformation and expansion." It is a joy to serve along with them.
- B. US pastors - I've also been encouraged to see the receptivity of our Bible training among US pastors, many of whom are motivated to help train overseas. I have brought several pastors with me, and in some cases they are now fully facilitating trainings. Even these US pastors share how the training is helping them in their own weekly preaching, sharpening their skills.
- C. Indigenous church and leader transformation - We occasionally hear from church members of the pastors we train who share about the transformation that has occurred in their pastor's preaching and ministry since beginning our course. However, we regularly hear from the pastors themselves about the growth they are experiencing personally and in their ministries as a result of implementing training we offer them. Last month, Pastor Saveny from Cairo, Egypt shared with me, *"Last week I prayed that God would help me to better pastor a church and*

preach the Word. I struggled much with this and did not know what to do. Now you have come and given us the answer. Now I know what I have to do and have hope of preaching well."

- D. Reproduction - The deepest encouragement is not what we hear from people, but what we see in their lives. Pastors not only embrace and implement this training, but they are passionately passing it on to others they know. The things we most value, we share with others. So the fact is that nearly every pastor I regularly work with overseas (about 125 pastors in eight locations) is training other groups of pastors and church leaders in their region. In this way, we estimate we may be reaching 2000+ pastors across the continent. Although I continue to assist with funding the first generation trainings, there is a strong sense of ownership by participants as they prepare for trainings, raise funds, and pass trainings on.

Challenges – Some of the difficulties we have faced are:

- A. Growth Pains – There are far more venues waiting to be launched than we are able to follow through to completion, and so we guard against over commitment. While I try to train US pastors to join us, it can be difficult to mobilize them to the point where they are joining us annually.
- B. Tracking Progress – We try to keep track of all those we are training and how they are progressing, but it can be difficult to determine what their perception truly is, not only of the training but also of expository preaching in general. Also, it is difficult to track with any precision what the pastors are doing with the trainings we give them, since we don't attend trainings they offer. I am hoping to probe more into some of these issues as I continue my study toward a D-Miss degree.
- C. Funding – Indigenous pastors have very little money, struggling to feed their families much less pay for first or second generation trainings. While trying to guard against unhealthy dependency upon western funds, we try to guide them to locally-driven solutions and offer subsidies to offset training costs, transportation, translation of material, etc.

7. **Growth:** *How are you growing and what are you learning from God and Scripture?*
As I prepare for and deliver messages from the Word, growth is inevitable. As I frequently tell our pastor trainers, we give to the people of God out of the overflow of what we receive from God through His Word. As I prepare for and give messages and train others to do this, I am finding my own exegetical and homiletical skills are improving as I apply the tools we teach to pastors. I am learning that what we are doing is not just preaching the Word, but we are training an army of faithful preachers of the Word. As this work grows, I am convinced that this ministry is not about me, but it is all about God, His Word, and empowering others to handle His Word well (2 Tim.2:15). His grace is sufficient to do marvelous works through my weakness, which again leads me to praise Him that He is at the center of all we do (2 Cor.12:9). An example of this is growth I'm experiencing in working cross-

culturally with Africans who have a worldview very different than ours in the West. Even how they read Scripture, from an honor/shame or power/fear sociocultural value set instead of innocence/guilt as we do in the West is very significant. My own understanding of Scripture is increasing greatly in these areas, for example as I studied the Gospel of Mark and discovered many sociocultural constructs which I had never noticed before, but which an ancient Mediterranean reader would have immediately observed. I'm finding I'm being stretched, challenged and growing through my D-Miss courses which are opening my eyes to many missiological issues, such as these value sets.

8. **Future:** *What ministry goals and plans do you have for the next year?*

In our team, I am directing most of the trainings for the continent of Africa, and so I am pouring myself into growing our training ministry especially in these regions. I am hoping and praying in God's time I will find a colleague who can be my partner in directing this work in Africa. By God's grace, I plan to launch new training networks this year in Egypt, Kenya and Congo, and hope to work with partners to move toward networks in Uganda, Burundi, Liberia, Togo, Chad and other places. This year we will graduate two networks in Tanzania and Rwanda as well as maintaining several other networks which are progressing through the three year cycle. I will be doing about 7-8 training trips internationally in 2016, and also several other trainings, mission conferences and meetings in the US. Since I now live in the Pacific Northwest, I am working to train a group of pastors in this area as well as working with other pastors throughout the West. I hope to develop a team of US-based pastor-trainers for Africa allowing me to launch new locations and support our existing ones. I will also continue coaching pastors in each of our international training venues, encouraging them to pass the trainings on to others. I will also be available to our Global Equipping Division team members for assistance in their global trainings as well as various team tasks. In addition to all this, I will be continuing my doctoral work, which is quite consuming, taking at least two-three courses during the year.

9. **Finances:** *What are your financial needs to accomplish your ministry?*

We are very thankful for the many partners, both individuals and churches, who give sacrificially so we can continue training pastors internationally. We cherish the partnerships we share, and pray they continue long into the future.

By God's grace and through the faithful, generous partnership of our support team, we have a satisfactory balance in our ministry account, although this balance is decreasing due to two factors:

- a) As the ministry expands, the number of trips I make is expanding which increases costs.
- b) As the ministry expands, the needs of the African pastors with whom we work also expands, and I must help subsidize their costs to come to the trainings, cover translation costs, etc. We encourage the pastors to take ownership of the

trainings, and yet they have very little, so as a team we have decided some subsidizing from our personal ministry accounts is appropriate. Please pray that God will provide the funds necessary to meet these needs.

10. **Prayer Requests:** *What are your biggest ongoing prayer requests?*

Personally, we would continue to ask for prayer for complete healing for Holly and Alyssa, both of whom are struggling with health issues that leave them very low in energy. Alyssa is only minimally able to attend school, so we are doing a modified homeschool program with her mixed with one class each day which she takes at school. Both Holly and Alyssa are most certainly making improvement, but still have a ways to go before they are fully recovered, so we continue to pray. Since I travel quite a bit, please pray that the family will not just survive but will thrive while I'm away and that we will stay connected as a family even though we are apart. So far, we have achieved a healthy balance and seem to be progressing well.

In ministry, please pray for wisdom in launching new training venues and God's Spirit and energy in continuing with existing ones. Pray for US partners to help us facilitate trainings, and that our African trainers will be faithful to pass the trainings on to other pastors and leaders. Praise God with us for the wonderful work He has been doing, and we eagerly anticipate and depend upon His continued activity.

Submitted with appreciation for our supporters and gratitude to our awesome God.

Erin R. Baly

