

“Fifteen years of civil war devastated our country and its people. After twenty years of prayer, spiritual renewal has begun in the training and multiplication of our national pastors and churches. Something is happening here in Liberia that is beyond what we have could ever have hoped for through our Christian leaders being equipped through GBTF. God has empowered us from within our own borders!”

—James Togba

Field Coordinator, African Baptist Mission of Liberia

“In the wake of our national genocide in 1994, I personally assisted our churches in replacing slain pastors with faithful yet untrained men to carry on scores of devastated churches. In 2012, I was introduced to Dr. Snavely, and the Global Baptist Training Foundation, who believes in the power of training nationals. The equipping and empowerment of our indigenous leaders have eternally transformed our movement.”

—Denys Rutayigirwa

President and Legal Representative, Baptist Union of Churches in Rwanda

“As a native Christian and minister in Myanmar, I have come to recognize that our national believers must assume responsibility for reaching our nation for Christ. We can no longer depend on or expect Westerners to come and evangelize our culture as effectively as we can ourselves. The time has come for us to reach our own nation with the gospel. With organizations like Global Baptist Training Foundation to assist us with preparation, our pastors are starting new church plants among our people in the north.”

—Thang Dong Lian

pastor, Biblical Baptist Church, Yangon, Myanmar

“Paul told Titus to appoint elders in every city on the island of Crete. . . . Two thousand years later, God’s plan to reach the nations still hasn’t changed! There is still an urgent need to train local, indigenous church-planting pastors who can carry the gospel message most effectively among their own people. This much-needed book sounds a clear call to align our twenty-first-century missionary strategies with the strategy seen in the pages of the New Testament. This is a book every pastor and missions pastor should read!”

—Scott Wilson

Lead Pastor, First Baptist Church, Melbourne, FL

“Every church must be committed to local and global missions, taking the gospel to our neighbor and the nations. Dr. Bruce Snavelly knows what it takes to get the gospel to those all over the world. This book is an excellent resource for pastors and those in the pew with a heart for world missions. It clearly shows why and how to equip local leaders to plant and pastor churches. I highly recommend it!”

—Kyle Mercer

Lead Pastor, Two Cities Church, Winston-Salem, NC

Indigenous

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Missions Aimed at Training
National Pastors Globally

by Bruce Snavely

foreword by Michael Woodward

WIPF & STOCK • Eugene, Oregon

INDIGENOUS

Missions Aimed at Training National Pastors Globally

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Foreword

I NEEDED TO READ THIS book. As I took time to reflect on what I read over the weekend, I'm still weighing its message.

As a pastor I have tried to imagine what ministry might look like if I had no pastoral training at all. What if that opportunity was virtually absent?

As a pastor I also tried to imagine someone else from a totally different culture coming in to shepherd the people of our church: learning the language, figuring out the customs, translating the Bible, and leading, all without drawing the suspicion of those around them.

Then I reimagined all of this using the ideas Dr. Snively reflects on in this book. What if someone offered the practical wisdom and the doctrinal foundations of our faith to someone who actually lived in that very culture in order to reach it with the gospel? What would it look like if we taught and equipped pastors who lived out their faith right in their own neighborhoods?

Now, let's be clear—this is no attempt to supplant the previous pioneer mission philosophy we have historically carried out. Rather, this book offers a refreshed biblical vision that must be pressed for consideration. It is about striking a balance between the pioneering model upon which we have relied and one of reaching existing national believers to exponentially advance the gospel. While reading, I wrote down three towers that challenged me.

The first one is the concern Dr. Snavelly demonstrates for Christ's Great Commission churches to extend their greatest reach. The training of indigenous believers is one of the most neglected resources in the twenty-first century. Are we extending our greatest reach as equippers, organizers, teachers, and churches? Is our vision for this reach wide enough, real enough, and really potent enough?

The second tower is the concern Dr. Snavelly has for diminished pastors who are on foreign fields serving beyond their educational reach. I am humbled by the turnout of pastors who flock to training opportunities when offered. There is a great thirst among the nationals not merely focused on a desire for learning, but their great desire for leading. They aren't necessarily looking to become scholars but longing to be more effective shepherds.

And lastly, Dr. Snavelly directs us to reconsider and reframe our own concern for cultures who are without Christ and are simply beyond our reach. "Here I am, send me, I will go" has been reshaped to "Train me where I live and send me, I can go . . . because I already know the language, the culture, and our people."

Indigenous is indeed a call to rethink global missions.

—Michael Woodward

Lead Pastor

Ocean State Baptist Church

Smithfield, Rhode Island

Introduction

MY SON-IN-LAW PLAYS HOCKEY on the weekends to unwind from his business demands. On one of those weekends the team goalie suffered a cardiac situation that left him with mere moments to live while on the ice. An ambulance was called, but without immediate intervention the man had no hope of living. Just before he perished in front of his entire squad surrounding the goal crease, a cardiac specialist who was playing on the opposing team stepped forward and began life saving measures. He performed an on-ice procedure sufficient to allow the victim time to get to the local hospital where he had immediate surgery ultimately giving him a second chance at life. However, without that doctor on the ice at just that time, the young man would never have made it to surgery. Thankfully, because God had someone on the scene to minister to this man's urgent need, his life was graciously spared.

What you are about to read about training nationals is predicated upon the same principle. All over the globe are hundreds, if not thousands, of indigenous believers in Jesus Christ who are present and capable of reaching their families and friends with the gospel of Jesus Christ. They already know the language, understand the culture in which they live, and care deeply about the destiny of those around them. With training and minimal support, nationals are positioned to offer immediate and effective ministry.