

# **Working inside Afghanistan Seminar- Thursday**

## **Missions Conference 2003**

**By John Weaver**

Well, thanks so much for coming today, and I trust that you are here for more than just getting your card swiped. And I know that you being here is an indication that God's working in your life and you're interested in learning about what God is doing in Afghanistan. And just to start off, I would like to tell all of you that God is working in Afghanistan. He is making himself known there, and he is bringing people to Himself. And he has put a wonderful team of workers into various main cities and some of the villages in Afghanistan that are doing some good relief work, some good development work, some good educational work, some good medical work. And most of them share the same desire that we share, and that of sharing the Gospel and saying the Afghan people come to worship Christ.

I'm going to be sharing today for about, say, 30, 45 minutes about some of the things that we've been doing in Afghanistan. I work for an organization called Shelter for Life. Shelter for Life is a Christian humanitarian organization. It's like a mercy ministry type organization. We do relief and development work, and then through that, we're able to also do more practical, hands on, spiritual ministry type, church planning things as well.

If you want to know more about Shelter for Life, since all of you have a computer either in your room or at home, and you have access to the Internet and you guys are an Internet generation, you click on [www.shelter.org](http://www.shelter.org). I didn't bring a whole lot of information in terms of pamphlets and

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brochures because I thought it would be a lot easier if someone were interested. You can just click on [www.shelter.org](http://www.shelter.org). Everybody got that [www.shelter.org](http://www.shelter.org). That's the relief organization that I work for.

I also work for a mission organization. I don't receive a salary from Shelter for Life. I received my support through local churches and through local supporters, family and friends, just like most of the missionaries that are here this week do. The mission organization I work with is called People International. It's a nondenominational Christian church planning organization. We primarily work among Muslims. And I'll be sharing a little bit this afternoon about our work among the Muslims in Afghanistan. Because Afghanistan is 99% Muslim. Almost everybody in Afghanistan, if you were asked them what your religion is, they would say, We're Muslims. People International's mandate is to share Christ's love with the Muslims of Central Asia.

Central Asia being the land of the stans. Okay? Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan We also work in Iran and Iraq and in China and Turkey. So we work in the areas that are right around the Stanland, if you're with me on that. And stan just means land. Like, England is the land of the English, and Scotland is the land of the Scots, and so Uzbekistan is the land of the Uzbekist, and Afghanistan is the land of the Afghans. But we work in Central Asia, planning the church there. And that's a little bit about People International.

If you want to know more about People International, where are you going to go? You're going to get on your computer again and click on [www.peopleintl.org](http://www.peopleintl.org). So if you want to know more about another mission organization, the one that I work with, People International, it's People

intl.org on the Net. And then you can pick and choose with what you want to learn about that. And then if you want information, of course you can download it from the Internet. And then that way I don't have to give you a whole bag of stuff, and then you don't go home and hang it up and make a little dart board thing out of it. Yeah, none of you ever done that, though, I'm sure. So I work for Shelter for Life as a relief worker in Afghanistan, but I am sent out through a mission organization called People International. Buddy with me on that. Hopefully, at the end of this, we will have a time for questions and answers. I know some of you, as I talk through this, may end up with some questions.

Those of you coming in, coming up a little bit front, if you don't mind. That way, either I won't wear out my voice or won't wear out this lapel mic thing as well. Those of you who are just coming in, we're passing around a little sheet, would like you to give us your name and your box number and your extension because I have a gift that I want to give all of you.

Those of you who have been keeping up with current events, you may know a little bit about what happened in the month of September of 2001, not just 911 here, but events that were happening in Afghanistan. And because of what was happening in Afghanistan, I was actually asked to write a book about our work inside Afghanistan.

And that's what we want to give you a copy of for coming to this seminar today. Some of what I'm going to tell you today is actually in this book, but a lot of what I'm going to tell you has more to do with this missions conference and has more to do with the theme of this conference.

Hopefully, as you've been walking around, you've memorized by now three words. You've seen them as you've been walking. They're on these little signs about Nihai, and the first word is seeds. And the second word is growth. And the third word is fruit. And I want to basically tell you a story about our relief and development work in Afghanistan, how that relates to planting seeds, seeing God give forth the increased, and the result being that of fruit. So a lot of the stories I'm going to tell you today are not actually written in this book for security reasons you might understand. It might be unwise to write about local Afghan believers in a book that everybody could have the possibility of reading. So that's why I want to give you the book, because I don't have time to share all that I would like to share.

Anybody stay with me? I'm from North Carolina, and you say it a lot. Are you with me? Okay. I just wanted to make sure that you stay with me. All right? And I come from a church that gives a lot of amen. So occasionally, or come on or something like that, just kind of give it a verbal indication that we're on the same page here. We're tracking together.

Now, let me back up to September of 2000. I know in your little booklet it said that this was going to be about post-Taliban. But I do want to begin the story around September of 2000 and then come up to the present day. And hopefully at the end of this. You'll have a better understanding of what we've been doing in Afghanistan. What God has been doing there through the work of his children. And how you can better pray. We're actually going to break up in groups at the end of this to spend a little time praying about what we've been learning about Afghanistan.

Now, some of you probably think I'm in Afghan, but I am not. I actually was born in Washington, DC. And I grew up in Northern Virginia and then eventually moved to North Carolina and went to high school in North Carolina. I don't come from a Christian family. I'm not the son of a pastor, not the son of a missionary. I'm only here by God's grace, and I never really learned about God's grace until I was in high school. I come from a broken family, and our background was not religious, Christian, or Muslim or any other type of religion. And so I never really learned about God's saving grace through his son Jesus Christ until I was in high school. I graduated from high school, went to a little Bible college in Nashville, Tennessee. And it was at this little Free Will Baptist Bible college where God began to reorient my life and my understanding of the world and what God's plan was for the world. And I fell in love with God's Word and realized that it was God's Word that was transforming my mind and transforming my thinking, and realized during that time that I wanted to be involved in what God was doing in the world.

And I want to read just one particular psalm as we transition to the stories in Afghanistan that God has used in my own life to help me understand what God is doing in our world today. It's Psalm 67, and if you don't have a Bible, that's okay. This is not Bible 101, but I just want to read this psalm, if that's okay. It says, May God be gracious to us, and may God bless us. And may God make his face to shine upon us. And that's a beautiful prayer for us to ask God to bless us, for God to give us grace, for God to smile upon us, and for God to cause his face to shine upon us. And we all know that God has done that through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are forever blessed because of the gift of salvation through Christ.

The interesting thing is that this psalm takes a little transition and tells us why God wants to bless us, why God wants to be gracious to us, and why God wants to interact with us as his children, why he wants an intimate love relationship with us as his children. It says in verse two, so that his ways may be known upon the Earth, that his salvation might spread to all the nations of the Earth. And here's David, thousands of years before Christ ever comes, giving somewhat of a Biblical understanding of what God's heart is for the Earth, that he wants to bless his children and make his children a blessing to the people that are around them, so that the ways of God are known, and as a result, people will experience God's salvation.

What happens when people see God's ways here on Earth? And what happens when they experience God's salvation? Verse three says that people praise God, they give Him worship, they give Him glory, they give Him honor. And this psalm really captures what God our Father is all about. He interacts with us, he blesses us. As a result, he works through our lives, his ways are known. People are affected by that. They come directly into contact or encountering God's presence through the life of his children. And as a result, some experience his salvation. And as a result, they give God praise and they give Him worship.

This was one of the psalms God used to give me a heart for places like Afghanistan and say, well, John, why in the world would you ever want to go to Afghanistan? Well, I've dreamed for about seven years of going to Afghanistan, tried many times and the door was closed, even got as close to the border and lived on the border for about a year and the door closed and had to leave that country. But God continually kept this burden in my heart of this desire to go to Afghanistan.

And there's a couple of reasons why. One is directly from the Word of God, which says that God is not willing any should perish, but he wants all to come to repentance. And the only way people can be saved is if they hear the Word of God and confess that Christ is Lord. Now, putting that in the context of Afghanistan, guess what is true of the country of Afghanistan? There's not one church in the whole country. So I'm thinking, well, there's not a church in Afghanistan then. No doubt God, our Father, who loves all the people of the earth, for God's love of the world, no doubt he would want some people to go to a place like Afghanistan to share his love with the people there.

And then I began learning that there's about 40, some people would say 45 will just say somewhere around 40 different languages that are spoken in Afghanistan, some of which are just dialects of one another. Like, we have hillbilly English over in Kentucky, and then you got North Carolina English and where I'm from, and then you guys have real good Los Angeles English or California English, just all variations of the same language.

And then we go to Britain and you think, well, would you like some sugar in your tea? And you have the English accent. So, some of the languages in Afghanistan are just like that. They're just various accents of the same language. But there are at least maybe 18 to 22 languages in Afghanistan that are really different languages. And guess what? There are about twelve of them that don't have the Word of God written in their language.

So, I was thinking, wow, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out if in heaven there are going to be people from all these different tribes and all these different language groups. And if

there are tribes and language groups in Afghanistan that don't have the Word of God, don't have a witness, well, that doesn't seem like that's God's will. So, it was like the brother was saying the other day, I found myself saying, Lord, I volunteer. I would gladly go and join in with what you're doing in Afghanistan. Should that please you and should you send me there? So seven years into this journey, the door opens up for me to go to Afghanistan because I joined Shelter for Life, everybody stay with me, so now I'm back to where I began. Amen. Thanks.

Shelter for Life. The Christian Relief and Development Organization. I joined them in the summer of 2000 because they were looking for people to send to Afghanistan. One of the things that we do in Afghanistan is to respond quickly in times of emergencies. Afghanistan has been going through a series of emergencies and ways of droughts, earthquakes, and civil wars. And then there was also the war against terrorism that also brought further destruction in Afghanistan. So we as an organization, Shelter for Life, have been given a unique opportunity and privilege to respond with God's compassion to people who are in great need because of earthquakes. We've literally seen earthquakes just take a whole village and just literally knock it all down to nothing, just literally crumble it down to the ground. And when that happens, people's lives are destroyed, lives are devastated. People's, their whole psyche, their whole personality is affected. And what they need more than anything else is someone to come into their time of need and to help them rebuild their lives. And we've been doing things like that. And since we're Christians, we're able to also share about God's love and God's goodness.

Now, when I came into Afghanistan in September of 2000, it was primarily because of the civil War, not necessarily because of the earthquakes. I was actually given a project in an area that



was right on the front line. So it'd be like the Taliban were on one side of Biola University and the Northern Alliance, which was like the Afghan opposition fighters, they were on the other side of Biola University. And in the middle there was a mountain and a river. And I found myself kind of plopped down right in the middle of that area in September of 2000, not really knowing what to do except God and his sovereignty had sent us there. He had placed our organization there to help the families that were affected by this war. We only could help the families that were affected on the Northern Alliance side. So we're on this side of the mountain in the river, helping the families that are displaced because of the Taliban.

All of you hopefully by now have heard of the Taliban. Yeah, they're a very ruthless group. But just between us, they're not beyond God's grace. And thankfully there have been people, even from the Taliban and from the Pashtun tribe that have come to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And no doubt Jesus will continually pursue them and bring them to Himself because that's his heart's desire.

Now back to September 2000, when I came to Afghanistan, the Taliban were trying their best to capture Afghanistan. They would go from village to village and loot the village and burn the homes and basically force the families to leave with nothing but the shirt on their back. So here I am in the middle of northern Afghanistan with an organization called Shelter for Life with a team of Afghans, and our desire is to help these families so they are displaced because of the Civil war.

Now you say, John, how in the world did you do that? Well, we built houses and we dug wells and we gave food to orphans and food to widows. To those that could not work. We gave free clothes and shelter kits and everything that you might imagine that someone might need just to start basically from scratch. Men that were able to work. We would hire them to make stoves and to make roads and to dig wells and to help with concrete production and building houses and building the trees because there's no running water there.

So, we would build out houses. Anybody ever been to an outhouse before? Anybody can remember your grandparents or maybe you've been overseas, and you've seen one? We've built thousands and thousands of outhouses type latrines things that we've called them. And we've actually started schools, basically, if you could imagine, because this is really what happened. There were about 5000 families, which in Afghan culture is about 20,000 people because they believe in having big families.

Of course, the ratio is not exactly bounced up because here's a widow who lost her husband and lost her children and so she represents a family but there's only one of her. But now here's Abdullah and his wife Shiringul and they have twelve kids. So how does that balance out with an average of about four to seven per family. So, if you have 5000 families that are displaced, that are homeless, if you could just imagine all of a sudden all of Biola University, of course you guys don't have 20,000. But we'll just use this as an example, all of Biola University being absolutely homeless. And now you're not living on the beach and you don't have anything with you except what you brought today. And there's no hotels on the beach. I mean everything is basically closed. There's no restaurants on the beach, there's no electricity at the beach, there's

nothing at the beach but you and what you brought that particular day. And so that was the privilege we were given in the northern part of Afghanistan was to help families that were literally out in the open, that were homeless, they were cold, they were affected by the war that was going on in a very, very difficult, painful circumstance. And we came in with God's compassion and God's love to share with them.

Now some of you might be wondering how in the world did you share the gospel with those people? Well, let me try to illustrate how we did that. Now all of you are good Bible students. Yes. What is the first thing that Jesus told us that we are? All right. Wouldn't he tell us we were his children? Okay. And John. All right. Okay, what was the first sermon Jesus preached? Most of us would say the Sermon on the Mount. And the Sermon on the Mount. What is the first thing Jesus said? That we are? Very good. You are the salt of the earth. Anybody ate any salt today? If you eat a lot of salt, what does it do? Okay, it could hydrate you, but it could make you thirsty. Okay, hold that thought. We're the salt of the earth and therefore we're to be living in such a way that creates a thirst in people to know the God that we follow. What's the second thing Jesus said that we are? The light of the world and with the light of the world and we're supposed to? Let our light so shine before men.

So, I guess what I want you to understand is before Jesus ever sent the disciples out, before he ever told them to go, quote on quote, preach, he was laying a foundation of who they were to be. And as all of you know, Christianity is far about being than it is doing. So here we are in northern Afghanistan. There are no other Christians there. Keep in mind that these 20,000 people that we're serving, if you were to ask them, have you ever met a Christian? They would all say

no. If you were to ask them, have you ever heard the Gospel, they would say no. If you ask them, do you know who Jesus is? They would have said, well, we think he's a prophet because in our book, the Quran, that's basically what we know about him.

Now, factor into that this group of Christians that are there every day, loving them, sharing with them, feeding them, what did Jesus say if people are hungry, you should feed them. If they're naked, you should clothe them. If they don't have a home, you should shelter them in some way or another, and therefore you get shelter for life. The organization that I work for now, because of us being there, what do you think people are going to do? They're going to ask questions. Yeah. John, why in the world are you here? You're an American. Why are you here? Why are your teammates here? Why are you doing this? And what are we going to tell them? Right? We're going to be able to share the gospel with them.

Now, just so you know, because this is a story I actually want to tell you about how God is planning a church among our friends there in northeastern Afghanistan is what we saw God do was he began working among the people that we hired to work for us. And looking back on it, part of us think that the reason was because those are the people we were the closest with, our most intimate companions, so to speak, our friends that we're rubbing shoulders with them every day.

So to run our projects, we had to hire Afghan men to help us with the work that we were doing . On one particular project. A friend of mine who is a Texan, he's from Tejas, as some of you were saying last night at the concert, he's from Tejas and a good brother. And one summer he had the opportunity to do a sanitation project, which meant he was going to take a group of men and

train them to make these outhouse latrines. And he was going to teach them about sanitation and teach them about cleanliness and things like that. And during that process, he became very good friends with two men. Now, my friend Wayne, who's from Tejas, he goes back to America. And then I kind of stepped on in the scene, so to speak, with a new team, and we were able to follow up where he left off with the staff that he hired for this sanitation project.

And there were two men that were very, very interested in Wayne's life because he was being the salt of the earth and he was being the light of the world. And during my relationship with them, again, trying to be the salt of the earth, trying to be the light of the world, trying to love them and encourage them and to be a model before them and praying with them and for them, but not really kind of getting in their face and saying, Jason, can I share the Gospel with you? Have you thought about the Romans road? Surely you know about the Romans road. Everybody knows about the Romans road. And Paul did write the Book of Romans to get the Romans Road out of that, but really he didn't. Just between us anyway, never really had those kind of conversations with actually church, just so you guys will know, shoot me down, because this brother here is going to ask me about my theology later.

Paul wrote the Book of Romans to the church at Rome. The church at Rome didn't need the Romans row. That's why I make that joke. It's a book more about theology than it is necessarily about how to lead someone to Christ. But that's just a whole another can of worms. Just wanted you guys to know that we haven't really been entering into real face to face contact with these guys saying, hey, who do you think Jesus is? It was more of we're with them, we're loving them, we're praying with them, we're sharing with them our own lives and stories and parables, but no,

really, just direct confrontation. We're waiting to see how God is going to work in their lives.

We're wanting God to show us where he's at work so that we can join in with Him. And here was the first indication of where God was at work.

I'm in my office one day, drinking some tea, and two men come into my office. There are two of the men that worked with Wayne the previous summer and they're now working for us as well. I don't know them that well, but we're in a relationship. We're getting to know one another. And they come in and we're going to call them Steve and Nick because you guys can remember Steve and Nick. Steve's real name is Suleiman. And Nick's real name is Nadir. Suleiman Solomon. And Nadir is an Uzbek word because he's a Uzbek and they come into my office, we're having a regular conversation, drinking tea, typical thing you do in Afghan culture. And Steve and Nick ask John, we want to know more about Jesus, will you please give us an Ingiel? And the NGO is the Arabic word for gospel, which we talk about in terms of the New Testament. So basically they wanted to have the New Testament or the writings of Jesus to read about the Savior and the one that we are saying that we follow and that he's the reason for which we came to serve the people of Afghanistan.

So thankfully, God is showing us where he's at work. He's at work at this particular time. And two men who are hungry, who are thirsty, who are asking questions and who the Spirit of God is working in their lives. So we work out a nonthreatening way to give them the Word of God.

Because, just so you'll know, not everybody in Afghanistan is pro Christian. Not everybody in Afghanistan is about us as foreigners coming in and giving out copies of the Word of God.

So we picked a secure place, a secure time to give a copy of the New Testament to Steve and Nick. We give it to them. They begin reading it. They begin devouring the word of God. Daily reading it. Steve begins reading it with his wife. He begins reading it with his children. He begins sharing it with some of his relatives and some of his friends. It's as if God has just opened up his heart. His heart's becoming like a garden. And what are you planning in gardens? You plant seeds. And usually what happens in the garden, the seeds grow and they produce fruit. And so God's doing an amazing thing in Steve's life. He's sharing with Nick as well. They begin sharing with some of their friends and their family. And so now we bring into the picture a guy named Frank. His real name is Faisal Achman. We call him Frank because Faisal Achman is kind of hard to pronounce in North Kologial and English. So we got Steve and Frank and Nick, three men whom, it's obvious God is working in their life. They're interested in the Word of God. They're reading the word of God. They're reading it with their wives. They're reading it with their children. And when we're in conversation with them, it's obvious from their conversation, from the words that are coming out of their heart, that the Word of God is being planted in their heart.

Now, in this process, we realized, well, we need to find other ways to plant the seed in their life. Jesus said a certain sword went out to plant seed. He went out to scatter seed. So we thought, well, why don't we ask the Lord for a way to show them the Jesus film? All of you have seen, or at least have heard of it if you haven't watched it, the Jesus film. And it's in Dari, which is the language that's kind of the national language of Dari. One of the languages that I speak a little bit. I also speak a little Uzbek.

Now, before I tell you you guys stood with me. Before I tell you about the Jesus film, let me give you a little background here that Nick is an Uzbek, okay? He is an Afghan Uzbek. Now, say again? Okay. He's in Afghan, Uzbek. And just so you'll know, up to this point, there was no indication that there were any real Afghan Uzbek believers in Afghanistan, because the work among them has just actually begun.

We do know now that there are some Uzbek Afghan believers. But a few years back, there was very little being done among them. They were an unreached people group. Now, thankfully, some friends of ours are in the western part of the country, and they're doing a Bible translation project for the Uzbek's that live inside Afghanistan. Nadir, or Nick, represents that people group. What is God? Our father very interested in? He's very interested in redeeming people from every tribe, every nation, or every people group. Okay, so Nadir or Nik represents an Uzbek people group, but he's in Afghan, so he speaks Dari. He speaks the main language. Okay?

Sulaiman and Faizarachman are actually ethnically Shygni, so they come from a people group called the Shignan people. The language they speak is Shygni. And again, Shignan is an area in the northeastern part of Afghanistan where there are no Christian workers. There has not been a Christian witness. They have migrated to the city where we work for business is basically how they ended up coming to where we were actually working. And so here, right in our lap, God has placed a couple of men who are interested in the gospel that represent two of the main unreached people groups in one of the darkest country in the world called Afghanistan.



So, God, again, is doing something sovereignty. He is in control. We just surrender to that and let him use this as it would please him. Thankfully, three men speak Dari. You're still with me? So here we are praying for an opportunity to show them the Jesus film in Dari, because that's the only language that we actually have it in, and that's the language all three of them could understand it in. And God, in the most amazing way, opens up a door for us during Christmas, during Christmas of 2000, to have an opportunity to sit down with Steve and Nick and Frank and show them that Jesus film was one of the most memorable memorable? Is that how we say memorable Christmases of my life? It was a white Christmas. We were snowed in, and we had just a wonderful night watching the Jesus film with them.

Now, all of you who have seen the Jesus film is very powerful. It's the word of God. Act it out. And most of you who've seen it, you probably would remember that at the end of it, there is the sinner's prayer. Okay? Now, keep in mind, we're still taking the attitude that God is working in Steve and Frank and Nick's life and their families and other people that we know. We don't want to pressure them. We want God in his own time, in his own way, to speak to their hearts and to bring them to faith. So at the end of the movie, we don't say, hey, you guys want to pray the prayer. In America, you pray this prayer. We decided not to do that, okay? Because we didn't want them to approach ministry in an American way. And really, there's nothing necessarily special about praying the Romans prayer just between us. It's allegiance of our heart. I mean, Christ is wanting us to come and follow Him and to trust Him.

And I would probably say that there are millions of people who have come to follow Christ who have never actually prayed the sinner's prayer that most of us have prayed in American, that is

okay, okay. As far as we know. Peter, when Jesus told him to come follow me, he didn't stop and say, well, hold on a second, Lord. You forgot to tell me I've got to pray the sinners prayer. And he did repent of his sin. And eventually that is verbalized, but not necessarily in the packaged way that we kind of do it here in the States.

So, again, we're waiting. The seed's been planted. Now, the other way we realized we could plant some seeds in this guy's life is to give them a radio. In Afghanistan, there are no Christian radio stations in the country, but there are Christian programs that are broadcasted into Afghanistan from the surrounding countries on a short-wave radio. There's none of this, you know, FMAM stuff. I mean, it's a shortwave radio, but thankfully you can find these programs. Thankfully, there was an organization, a Christian organization that gave us a whole slew, maybe about 50 of these crank radios.

Some of you may have seen these things. In Afghanistan, there's no electricity, and if you don't have money, at least where I live, there's no electricity. In Kabul, I mean, there is in some of the places, but in the north, there's no electricity. So we thought one of the best things we could do is to give our friends one of these radios that has a little crank on it. You crank the thing up, you know what I'm saying? And then the crank goes back, and the radio plays until the crank stops, and then you just crank it back up again.

But you don't need electricity and you don't need batteries, most of which is two things that are hard to find in the northern part of Afghanistan out in the middle of villages. So with the radio, we also gave them a little piece of paper that it had written on there in their language. What frequencies had these Christians broadcast in their language? So here Steve and Nick and Frank,

and now some of our other friends are listening every day to the word of God in their own language and the privacy in their own home. So if someone were to come in with an AK 47 or come in to try to do something to them, they just turn it off. They're not gathered with a whole group of people. So, it's very non-threatening. It's very less dangerous, as if we were to gather together and draw attention to them. So again, we're just planting seeds in the hearts, and hopefully you guys are still with me.

Paul went out and planted the other guy went out and watered and God did what? God brought forth the increase. God brought forth the fruit. And the fruit is the Lord's responsibility. So, we're going to get to the fruit in just a minute. So, we got Steve and Frank and Nick in this process. The Word of God is being planted in their heart.

Now somewhere, actually about a year, at least a full year into this process, they begin asking us if we would study the Word of God with them, if we actually would sit down with them and help them to understand more of what they're learning and more of what they're reading and more of what they're hearing. So thankfully, at that time. There were a couple of us guys that were on the team that were involved in this process at different times. Getting with either Steve or getting with Frank or getting with Nick and just helping them with some of the questions that they had about Christianity and about religion. About what it meant to follow Christ. Some of just the basic teachings that we have in the Word of God that we all have come to know and love as good. Solid. Evangelical American Christians.

Now in this process, what do you think is going to come up where they're going to want to know? How does one become a believer? How does one become a follower of Christ? And they're asking questions about baptism, they're asking questions about heaven, they're asking questions about the Holy Spirit. They're asking questions about the Trinity and Jesus being the Son of God and the death and the barrel and the resurrection. And so we're just really interacting with them and just answering their questions, not trying to knock them over the head with it, just answer their questions now, jumping ahead of time, another, say, four or six months into this process.

So now it's like a year and a half into this process, God really begins working in their life and it really becomes very obvious to us. It's obvious because of the things that they're saying. It's obvious because at times we'll be in their house and it would come time to pray and they would want to pray. Which is very typical for a Muslim. But you could hear them praying in a different way and it was almost like God was doing something in their heart and they were coming to realize that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. That he is the Lord of the earth. That he is the Savior of all men. That he is alive and that therefore we can approach God and have a relationship with Him. You stay with me. Amen.

And so in this process, it got a little bit more intense in terms of discipleship and they came to the conclusion that they wanted to meet every day to read the Word of God together. And so for three months, which was around actually was a little bit more than that. But like June. July. August. And September of this past year. I had the privilege almost every day for about an hour just sitting down with these guys and just reading the Word of God with them and letting the

Word of God speak to them and of course. Answering questions and trying to draw questions out of them to involve them. To engage them in this process of what it means to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. At this point, it's very obvious to all of us that they have come to faith, that they have come to the place like Peter did, where they have confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, he is the Christ, he is the Son of the living God. And it's very obvious that their allegiance is now to Jesus Christ. There's been a transformation that's taking place in their heart because the Bible says we are all born again by the incorruptible seed or the Word of God, okay? The Word of God is a seed that gets into our heart, and God causes it to grow, gives forth the increase, and people come to relationship saving faith.

And so in this process, guess what they now ask? Well, John, we want to be baptized. We actually want to go to a place where we would be actually baptized in the name of the Lord to make public, as we say in our terminology, our faith and our allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. When we got to this place, just so you guys will know, we were kind of wondering, as our team, where is this going to go? How's God going to put this little house church together and what it might look like in terms of who's going to lead it and who's going to be type things, and how persecution may come or not come, and how opposition may come or not come, and how to approach the thing about baptism.

Should they actually come to a place where they want to be baptized, who's going to do it? Where are we going to do it, and all this type of thing. So we're wrestling with all these questions, how to approach this. And so here's what the conclusion was at this point. Steve and Frank are the two guys that have kind of really come to the surface. There's actually been seven

men that have kind of been involved in this process, and some of them, even a couple of their wives have been kind of involved in this process. And they've watched film. They've also come to faith and confess faith in the Lord. Many of them are illiterate. They can't read, unfortunately, but they've watched the film, and their husbands have been reading the Word of God with them. But it was Steve and Frank that kind of surfaced as the two main guys that were really looking potential in terms of, as the Bible says, train faithful men who will be faithful to train others. And so I began during that process to really spend a lot of time with Steven Frank and was actually spending an hour a day just actually with them, just sharing with them and kind of pouring our lives into them.

So, here's what the conclusion was. The conclusion was in September of last year, they really wanted to be baptized. And we talked the thing through and the thought was, well, we don't have any Afghan believers here that have been baptized at this particular point. I've never even met an Afghanistan been baptized in his own country. I have a lot of Afghans that are believing friends, but most of them were baptized in a country surrounding Afghanistan that are baptized in the west. Thankfully, now there are other people that are being baptized in Afghanistan, but there was a stint in history where there was very little that was going on inside the country. So since we didn't have Afghan believers to kind of come and to kind of take over where we were wanting to kind of transition out of this thing so it wouldn't be a white man's thing. We thought the wisest thing would be that one of us should baptize Steve. And Steve should baptize Frank and that those two guys should baptize any of the other guys that actually fully come to faith and come to that place of commitment that they want to be baptized.

So, we're praying about this. We're talking about this. And my first thought was we'll do it on September 11. We'll do it on the anniversary of 9/11, and what a better day to do it? The year before, all type of evil was going on in our world. Thankfully, God has used it for far greater good than that of the evil.

And if you're still wrestling with that at times, I do as well go back and read the story of Joseph and see how Joseph got to a place where he ended up being in a position to save not only his own life, not only all of Egypt, but all of Israel, and really all of us. Do you realize that if Joseph would have not been thrown into that little pit, really none of us would be here? The world would have pretty much stopped. And you realize that if evil men had not nailed our savior to the cross, none of us would be here. There'd be no reason for having this conversation. So sometimes in our world there are things that look like just utter acts of evil straight from the pits of hell, and really they are. But somehow God uses that for even greater good.

So, we're rejoicing a year later on the anniversary of September 11 because we're seeing that God has put the world's attention on Afghanistan. People are crying out for salvation of Afghanistan, workers are coming to Afghanistan, and God is working in Afghanistan. So we're thinking this would be a good opportunity to make a statement. Well, I just wanted to share that with you, just so you'll know that sometimes you think crazy things, and that was a crazy thought that was kind of being presumptuous. We didn't do it on September 11, primarily because there were other reasons. One was in Afghanistan on Wednesday, which was September 11. 9/11 anniversary was on a Wednesday. That's a very busy day in Afghanistan. There's donkeys and camels and people going to the market and going to the bazaar and going back and forth. And that's not the day you

want to do something. You don't want everybody and their brother coming to and following you and wondering what the world is going on. So we decided to do it on a Friday. We did on September the 13th, which was a Friday.

And the reason why we did it on Friday, which was the wisest thing to do, is because that's their holy day. Friday is their Sabbath day. And so we did it on Friday. And we get into our truck, and I picked up Steve and Frank along the way, and we had a little cassette tape that was in Dari, at least in their second language. And we're singing and worshiping. Listen to the Bible in Dari. Having a wonderful time making our little car, little house of prayer. Just having a wonderful time worshipping. We drive about an hour outside of the city and we find a place, just absolutely beautiful place, the foot of the mountain where the little river is flowing there in the valley. And this is where they want to actually go and to be baptized.

And so here we are, September the 13th. I've only been in the country for two years, and as Jesus said, I am no doubt entering into the fruit of a lot of labor that's been going on before me. No doubt this is the answer of a lot of prayers that even predate my existence as a human being. But yet God and his sovereign mercy allows us to be a part of what he's doing at that particular time. And so here we are in a river, an Afghan, two Afghans and an American. And I kind of felt like writing a song and giving it to DC Talk. They Sing the Song just two honks and a Negro praising the Lord. But I haven't actually wrote it yet, but I'm thinking about it. Just an American and two Afghans down in the river.



And it was one of the most, again, remarkable days of my life to see God's hand of mercy and seeing this process of seeds and growth and fruit and seeing how God would take one out of the kingdom of darkness by using his word and by using the witness of his children. There have been some other things that have happened in these men's lives. Some of them actually have had dreams and visions and different things. But it's just been amazing to see how God has actually just used his word humanly. Looking at it. It's just a book with words on it, but it is the very word of God.

And to see God open up these men's hearts and understanding and bring them to faith. And here we are two years later in this process at the river. So I talk with Steve and I pray for him. They knew what we were going to do and had the privilege of laying my hands on Steve and baptizing him in the name of the Lord. And then he did the same thing to Frank. And here we just sat there after that, just sat there in the river. And I just watched the countenance of these two men as it was if the Spirit of God was just comforting them and encouraging them and giving them great joy in his presence, and they just began praying, oh, God. And really, they basically were praying what the theme of this thing all is. God, let this be the first fruits of what you want to do here in our country. Let us plant these seeds and let us share the good news, and let us take this to our family and to our friends.

And where we were actually at, you couldn't physically see them, but you knew that beyond the mountains there were all these other villages that were scattered back there. And to see these two men pray, oh, God, may you use us to reach these villages and to share the word of God with our fellow Afghan countrymen, it was just very much an overwhelming day.

I know I should say this, some of you, since September 11, have been praying in one way or another for Afghanistan, even though you may not have been praying for a lot of specific things. So you've been involved in this as well. You've been a part of this as well. What God is doing in Afghanistan and what Steve and Frank would probably want me to tell all of you is not only thank you for praying, but please now pray more than ever. Please pray for them. As I said, thankfully, their wives are involved in this process. Their children are being involved in this process. These are all grown men. They are heads of their house. Usually in a culture like this, the head of the house becomes a believer or becomes involved in something the family is going to follow. And if he's stable and has somewhat respect in the community, God can use that for him, to use his influence to share with people. And God is basically doing that through Steve.

Steve right now, actually is in charge of a carpet weaving program. He has 50 ladies that worked for him in a carpet weaving program. And it's amazing to see him interact with them and how he treats them with respect and dignity. And it's amazing to see how God's Word has changed his life. And I want to invite all of you to pray, to pray for these men, that God would protect them, that God would continue this seeds in this growing and this fruit process, that there would be thousands and thousands of Afghans in the northern part of Afghanistan that would come to be followers of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So that, in a nutshell, is the story I wanted to tell you to illustrate that God is working in Afghanistan.

Now, just to add one more thing to it. In terms of praying for laborers, it's amazing to see now how God has opened up the whole country. All the borders are open. If anybody wants to go to

Weaver. Mission Conference 2003.

Afghanistan, there's really nothing hindering them right now. There's church after church and organization after organization that is now being involved.

And it's amazing to see that labor is that God's raising up for the country. But will you still continue to pray? Ask the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers to the fields that are white in Afghanistan. Please ask Him to use Steve and Frank and Nick and these guys in this process of Him sharing the word of God with the people of Afghanistan.

Bible translation is something that is going on as well, and that's something you can be praying about. There are radio programs in the four main languages, which are Uzbek, Tajik, Pashtu, and Hazard. The four main languages, there are radio programs that are being broadcasted into the country on the shortwave radio. So there are ways to get the word of God in the hands of people, at least either through their ears or through reading the Word of God. But there's still a lot of work to be done in Afghanistan. You got all that?

We're going to break up in a minute here and pray. Is anybody still with me? Okay. All right. Now, can I tell you just a little bit about myself in terms of maybe a request or two? And then we'll break up and spend a few minutes in prayer. And then those of you who want to stay, after we pray, we can do some question and answer. Some of you may not have another place to go to, but that's fine if you do.

Now, just to tell you a little bit about how you could be praying for me, part of the reason why I'm home is because of the opportunity that was given to write this book has given a lot of

opportunities to travel and speak and share about Afghanistan and to do a little bit of mobilization and things like that. After writing the book and coming home, I realized I'm 33 years old, I'm not getting any younger. And I kind of realized that I was kind of interested in this one particular sister. Yeah, in the Lord. I actually have four sisters myself, but four younger sisters, and so we've been pursuing a relationship with one another. She's in a seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. Her name is April. April Zais. I know she would appreciate your prayers as well, and our desire would be to get married and to go back to Afghanistan one day. So that's part of the reason why I am home, so you could pray that God would give us wisdom in our relationship. And relationships aren't easy. They require a lot of work, and she's full time in school, and I'm traveling all the time, and so it's been kind of challenging to balance how to pursue a relationship. And so I feel somewhat challenged in that what's the word? Mechanically or technically or emotionally or whatever challenged in this way. So, if you could pray for us, April, I really would appreciate that.

Two more requests that maybe some of you might could identify with. There's a guy named Seth, a very close friend of mine, who's in Afghanistan, and he actually is working for a project that we've started that is an institute. We basically, when you read the book next week, you'll catch this whole story. We started an institute in Afghanistan where we're teaching computers, and Seth is an American brother who's there teaching computers, and he would really appreciate your prayers. He's doing well with language, and he's working with Steve and Frank and spending some time with them so you could pray for Seth. When you also pray for Steve and Frank.

There's a lady there named Joyce. This is an inspiring story, which I had time to tell. She's 61 years old. She's a British sister, loves the Lord, and has been in the medical missionary for about 31 years. And I know she would appreciate your prayers as well as she interacts with the ladies. She has a health program that she's involved in. And then my responsibility at the end studio is to teach English and to train Afghan teachers to take over the institute. But I can't do that since I'm physically here. But that's kind of the project that we're working on now. So, you could add Seth and Joyce to your list of things to pray for in April and myself and Steve and Frank and laborers and anything else the Lord might bring to your mind. Is that cool?

So, if you guys wouldn't mind it, according to the watch, we've got about ten minutes. If we stop at four, could you maybe get with someone next to you or getting a little group, or if you don't mind, and spend a few minutes praying, and then when you stop praying, if you want to stay, I mean, I've got plenty of time.

I'd be fine to do some questions and answers. If you want to stay, please stay. But let's pray for a few minutes, and then maybe I'll come to the mic and just close out our time of prayer. And then those of you want to stay, you can stay. And if you haven't signed that sheet, please sign the sheet either now or later. But let's spend a little time in prayer. Let's make this a house of prayer for the peoples of Afghanistan.

You guys might not just close this out in prayer before we go, and then if some of you want to stay, you can stay. Is that all right? Yeah. Let's pray.

Father. We do love you. And we're amazed at Your love for us and all Your grace that You've shown to us and Your mercy that you show to us every day. And Lord, we praise you for the gift of salvation. We praise you for your son Jesus, our Savior. And Lord, we praise you for the privilege of knowing you and being a part of what you're doing in this earth. Lord, it's so amazing how you are on a passionate pursuit, Lord, for all the peoples of the earth willing that none should perish. And thank you that we know that one day you will receive your bride from every tribe and nation and kindred and tongue those that you have redeemed by Your own blood. And thank you that we know we're a part of that number. And God, may we live our lives, Lord, may we give all that we have, all that you have entrusted to us back to you in act of worship, Lord, to see that day come. And thank you for the privilege, Lord, of being here this week. Thank you for these students, Lord. It's amazing what you're doing in their lives. Thank you for the work that you have begun, that you will be faithful to complete. Lord, thank you that you love them with an everlasting love. And Lord, I just know you have great things in store for them. And Lord, we know that this life might involve trials and difficulties and sufferings, but we confess it doesn't compare to what we one day will receive as we are in Your presence forever and have the joy of being there with all the Redeemed. And Lord, so I pray you would scatter them. Would you make them the seed, Lord. Would you make them the salt of the earth? Would you make them the light of the world and send them forth? God, I pray, scatter them forth to be Your blessing, that Your ways may be known on this earth, that Your salvation may spread to all the nations, the earth, that all the peoples may praise you and give you worship in Jesus name, amen. Amen. Thanks so much for coming, guys. Gals as well.

And if you want to stay, I'll be glad to entertain some questions.