

# INTO THE DARKNESS

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75 Years of Free Will Baptist  
International Missions



FREE WILL BAPTIST  
INTERNATIONAL  
MISSIONS

# WELCOME

**I**nto *The Darkness* is an appropriate title for this volume. For 75 years, Free Will Baptists from rural areas, small towns, and the great cities of the United States departed the land of their birth and voluntarily headed *Into The Darkness* to share His Light and Truth. From coast-to-coast, an unrelenting flow of men and women responded to the call to go.

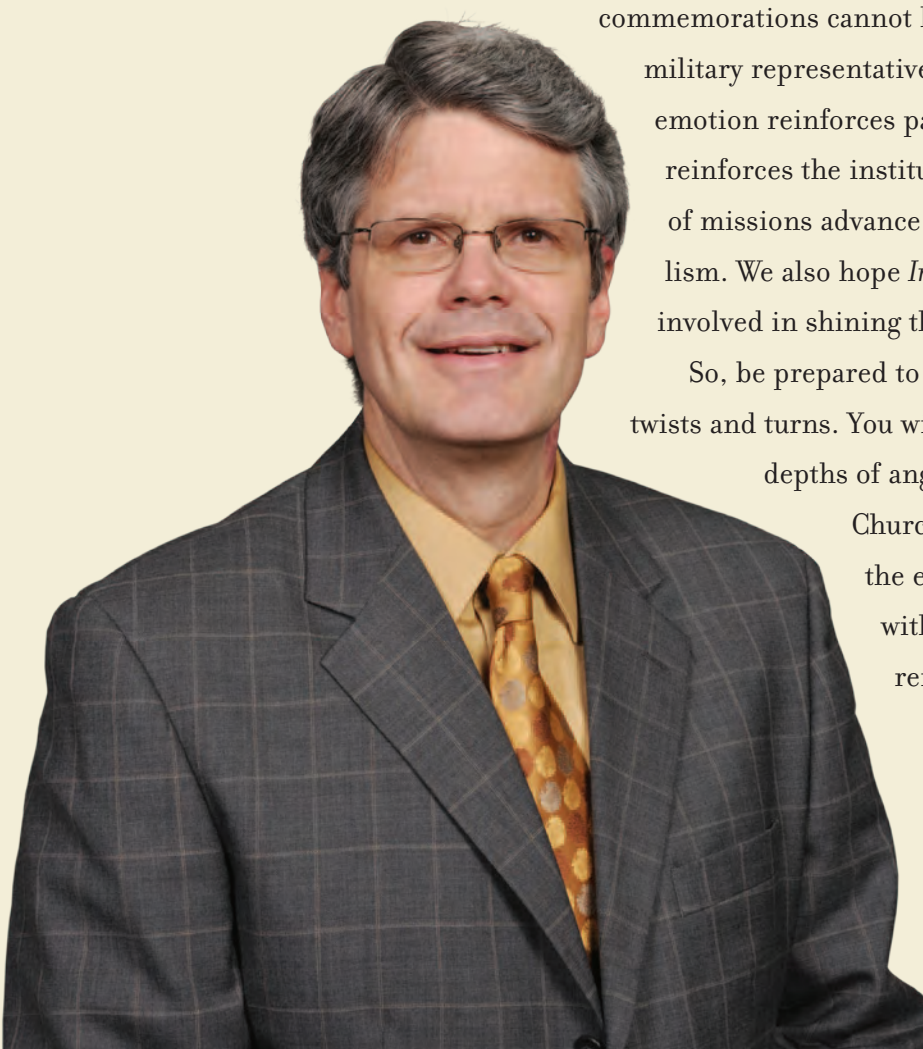
Obedience to God's call led them to tribal peoples in Africa and India. They faced spiritual darkness in the world-class cities of Europe, Asia, and Latin America. With abandon they labored in the midst of civil wars, military invasions, natural disasters, and abject poverty. These intrepid men and women battled discouragement, opposition, and the forces of evil in the attempt to bring worshippers to the throne of God.

In the midst of the darkness *He* has been their Light and Truth. What He promised, He has fulfilled, “. . . and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). *Into The Darkness*, therefore, is a book of celebration. We celebrate the faithfulness of God, and of His servants who answered His call. Celebration is important for any group of people. It can be a powerful instrument to reinforce values and beliefs. Celebration even serves as a vehicle to transfer values and beliefs to future generations.

Lloyd Kwast's model of understanding cultures states that our behavior is based on our values, and our values are based on what we believe. Ultimately, what we believe is based on our worldview. In transference of culture from generation to generation, the younger generation realizes what is considered important, worthy, and of value. A faithful reading of Scripture will always lead us to the conclusion that sharing the gospel with those who haven't heard is of ultimate and eternal value to God. We trust *Into The Darkness* will reinforce that truth.

In addition to celebration, the 75th anniversary of Laura Belle Barnard boarding the S.S. *Potter* in New York City provides us a perfect opportunity for commemoration. In any cultural group, whether a hidden tribal people, a college booster club, a branch of military service, or in our case, a denomination, the importance of rituals and commemorations cannot be overstated. We choke back tears when a United States military representative presents the flag to the widow of a fallen soldier. That emotion reinforces patriotism. A 50th anniversary celebration for a couple reinforces the institution of marriage. Likewise, this celebration of 75 years of missions advance reinforces the ultimate importance of global evangelism. We also hope *Into The Darkness* will deepen your appreciation for those involved in shining the Light.

So, be prepared to be surprised. The road *Into The Darkness* has many twists and turns. You will experience the heights of joy and victory as well as the depths of anguish and defeat. In the midst of it all He is building His Church and the gates of hell are not prevailing against it. In the end we hope that this chronicle of the journey will fill you with joy, encouragement, and a passion to reach those who remain in darkness.

James F. Forlines  
James F. Forlines, General Director

## INTRODUCTION

Ralph Winter, a missionary statesman of our generation, wrote, “[God] has given us a clear and simple task to finish: to see that Christ is worshipped and followed in every people. This is the essential missionary task. This we must do with utmost focus and passion until it is finished” (*Finishing the Task*, Mission Frontiers, June 2000).

Free Will Baptists have manifested their obedience to this task for the past 75 years through Free Will Baptist Foreign, and now, International Missions. The journey *Into The Darkness* began with Laura Belle Barnard on July 5, 1935. According to ship records that was the day she left New York City aboard the *S.S. Potter* bound for Bombay, India. Or, more accurately, we might say that the journey began again with her. One hundred years earlier, in 1835, Jeremiah Phillips and Eli Noyes departed as Free Will Baptist missionaries to a different part of India (now known as the state of Orissa).

From 1835 until 1911 Free Will Baptists had a foreign missions presence. A merger with Northern Baptists in 1910-11 left the scattered and unaffiliated Free Will Baptists without a foreign mission organization, and in many ways, without a missionary vision and zeal. Twenty-five years went by without any organized Free Will Baptist foreign missions efforts. God then sent a single, young woman in her mid-20s to awaken the denomination to this “clear and simple task.”

Former president of Free Will Baptist Bible College, Dr. L. C. Johnson said it this way,

“An entire denomination was without a missionary conscience. For a quarter of a century no one had emerged to give an awareness of this responsibility to ‘the other lost sheep.’ The

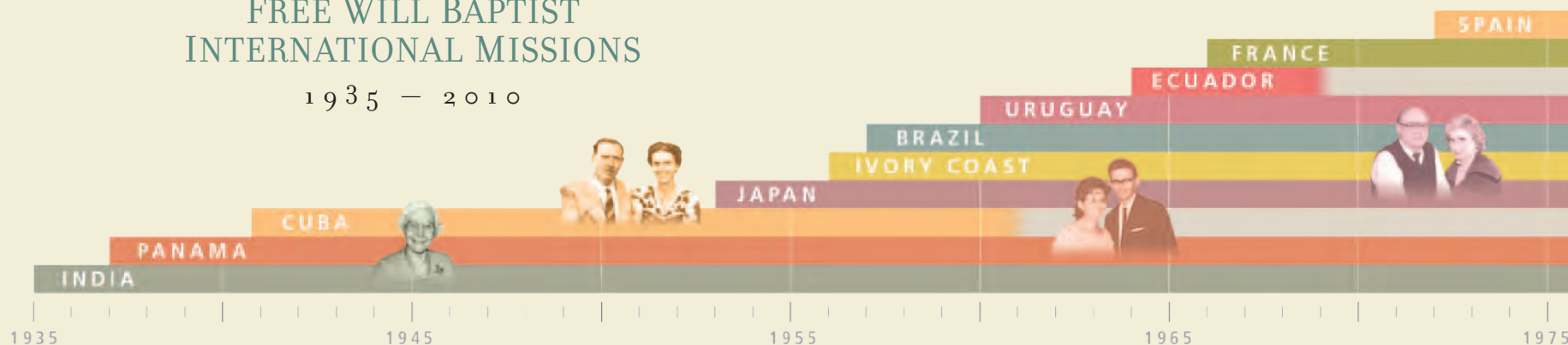
workings of God in Miss Laura Belle’s life, to prick the conscience of an entire denomination, becomes evident even though unusual” (*Touching The Untouchables*, p. 9).

The journey since the *S.S. Potter*’s voyage has been an incredible story of Kingdom advance. More than 300 Free Will Baptist men and women have followed in Laura Belle’s footsteps—leaving their home in the States to take the Light to unreached peoples on five continents around the world. Beginning in the Niligiri Hills of Tamil Nadu in South India, the Light has dispersed and now shines in over 20 countries. In 1935, Free Will Baptists had no churches outside of North America. In 2010, people in over 1,100 overseas churches and mission works worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Nearly 600 national pastors join our current missionary force of 100 in fulfilling our stewardship responsibility of reaching the unreached. Twelve Bible institutes and seminaries around the world are training an additional 400 workers for the harvest fields. This is the story we tell in *Into The Darkness*.

The purpose adopted and pursued by our early pioneer missionaries is still our purpose today. FWBIM has always reached out to unreached peoples with the ultimate goal of planting churches and initiating church planting

### FREE WILL BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

1935 — 2010





movements. In June of 1935, Laura Belle met with the Eastern General Conference in Greenville, North Carolina. She had a clear understanding of their expectations. “I was to make it a definite aim to search out a *needy field* in India where Free Will Baptists would be invited to send further missionaries, develop a work, and *establish churches*” [Laura Belle Barnard, *Touching The Untouchables*, p. 49—emphasis supplied].

The call of reaching unreached peoples (needy fields) has been a defining characteristic of the Mission. It has determined the areas of the world to which we feel called. If another evangelical group is working in an area, FWBIM has chosen to go where no evangelical effort exists. Our goal is not to simply advance the Free Will Baptist denomination, our goal is to advance the Kingdom.

We adhere to the confession of the Apostle Paul in Romans 15:20 when he said, “And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation” (NKJV). This is the origin then, of our current purpose statement: We exist to facilitate church planting movements among unreached peoples.

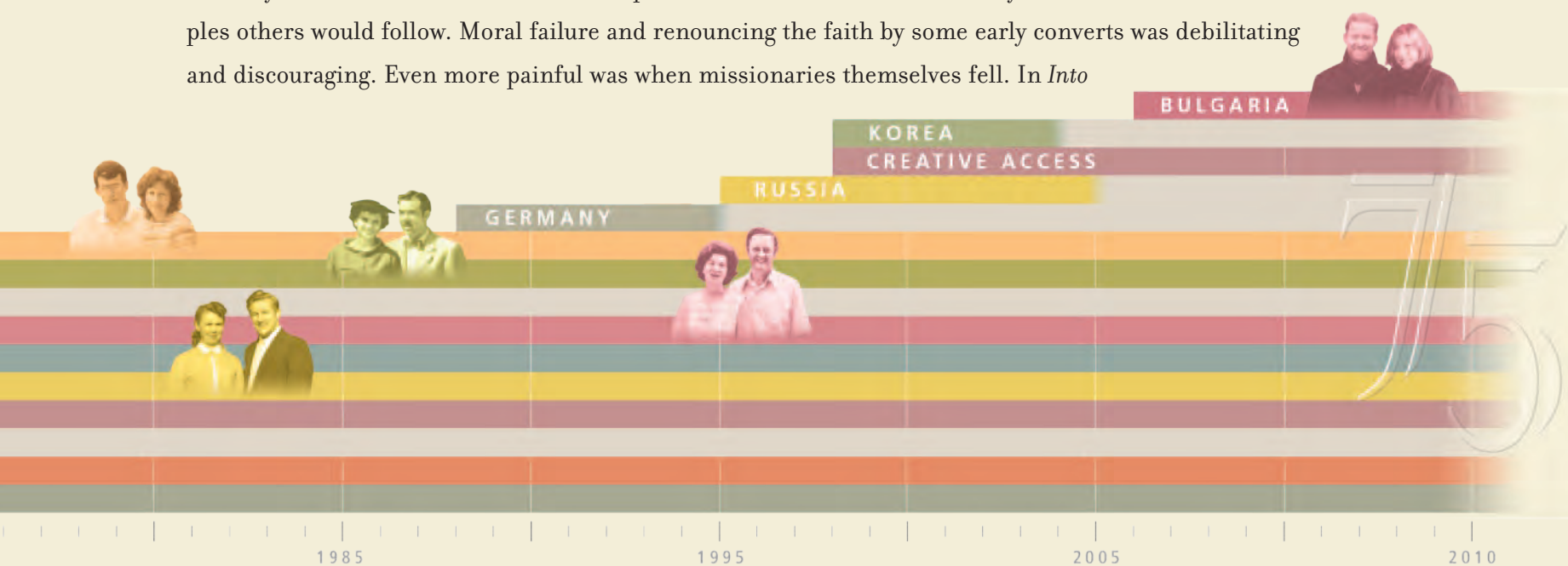
A prime example comes from the experience of Laura Belle Barnard herself. Upon arriving in Kotagiri, South India, Laura Belle learned of an earlier outreach effort to the Harijan (outcaste) people. A Scottish lady, Miss Cockburn, abandoned her outreach in the community. “Apparently, she had become thoroughly discouraged and withdrew, declaring confidently that she had found an ethnic group of subhumans who were decidedly incapable of responding to education or spiritual truth” [*Touching The Untouchables*, p. 15].

This did not dissuade Laura Belle.

When people enter our churches around the world, they usually do not come from the Nazarenes, Southern Baptists, or the Assemblies of God. They come from Animism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Islam, or Catholicism. We do not aim to rearrange the Kingdom, but to advance it.

This has been a laudable, but difficult road. Totally unreached people require much prayer and labor before harvest time. The early years were difficult as our pioneer missionaries painstakingly carved a church from the bedrock of superstition and false belief. Conversions were slow in coming. Leadership training was frustrating at times.

Early converts had few Christian examples within their own cultures. They, themselves, were the examples others would follow. Moral failure and renouncing the faith by some early converts was debilitating and discouraging. Even more painful was when missionaries themselves fell. In *Into*



*The Darkness* we acknowledge the contribution of those whose ministries did not end well. The message of their early years was true and their sacrifice worth noting.

Crucial to the cause was the willingness of pioneer missionaries who paid the price and remained faithful to the call. Wave after wave of missionaries followed the trailblazers. The promise on which they based their ministries was, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (NKJV).

Praise the Lord, on many of our fields it is now harvest time. The attendance in Free Will Baptist churches outside of North America has more than doubled within the past decade. Around the world, children are born into Free Will Baptist homes with parents who are second- and third-generation followers of Christ. The unrelenting faithfulness of missionaries and national pastors is now resulting in an exponential harvest.

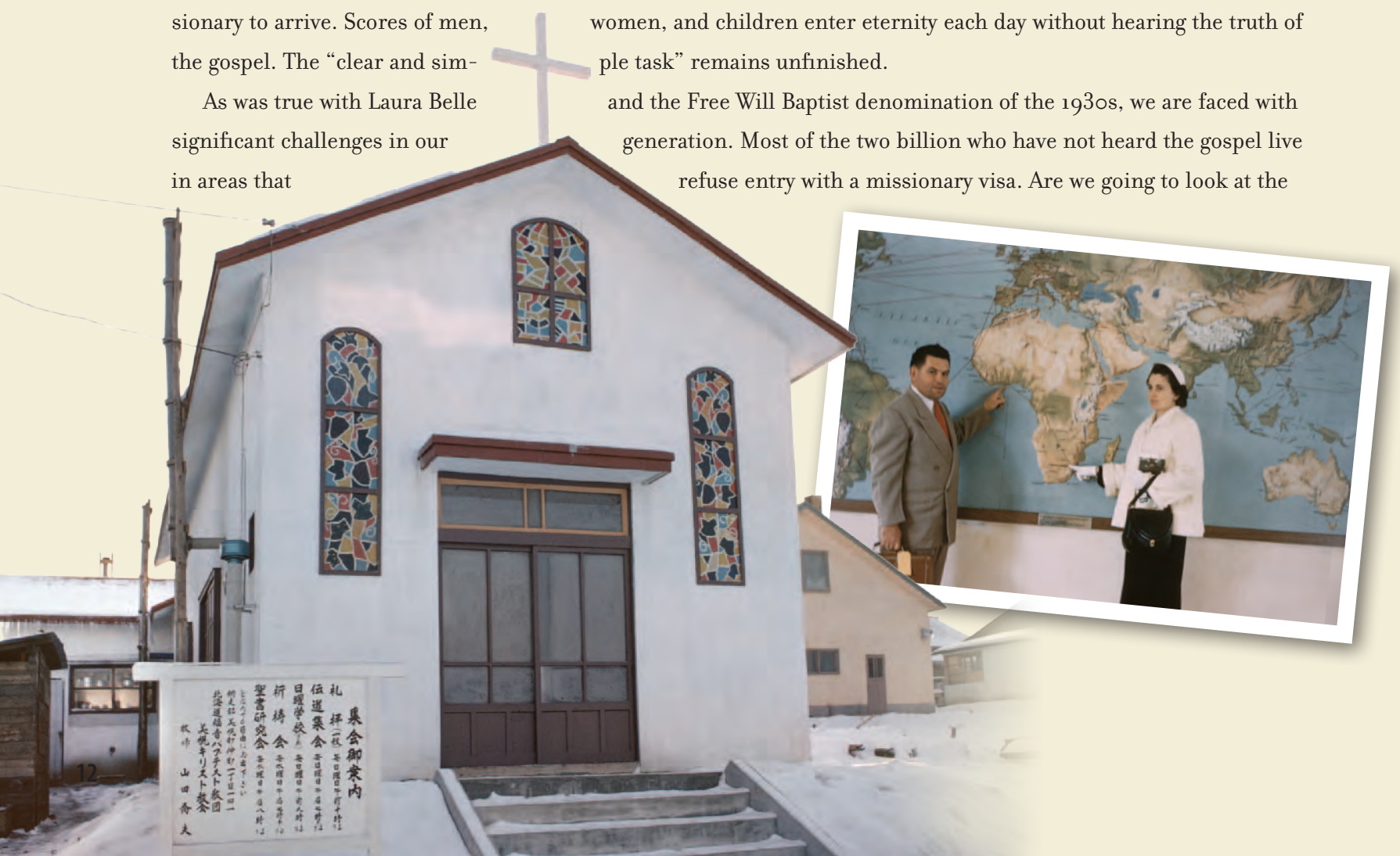
As you read through *Into The Darkness* these are not the only changes you will recognize. Laura Belle would stare in disbelief at a sign on the front door of the church in Kotagiri which reads, “Please turn off your mobile phones.” In her day they did not even have electricity.

Some of our earliest missionaries served seven-year terms. It was just too expensive to make the long ocean voyages to and from the field more frequently. Visitors to the field were almost non-existent. Phone calls had to be arranged well in advance, or were only made in extreme circumstances because of prohibitive costs. Banking systems around the world were undependable and untrustworthy, making financial transactions and channeling support extremely challenging.

Things have certainly changed. Today, hundreds of Free Will Baptist teens and adults visit, see, and assist the works around the world firsthand. With the advent of the Internet, every missionary now has access not only to e-mail, but also to free video conferencing. Worldwide banking and property laws have strengthened, aiding the advancement of the Kingdom.

But, with all the changes, some things remain unchanged. Almost two billion people still have no access to the gospel. Cities, towns, and villages all over the world are waiting for the first witness, the first church, and the first missionary to arrive. Scores of men, women, and children enter eternity each day without hearing the truth of the gospel. The “clear and simple task” remains unfinished.

As was true with Laura Belle and the Free Will Baptist denomination of the 1930s, we are faced with significant challenges in our generation. Most of the two billion who have not heard the gospel live in areas that refuse entry with a missionary visa. Are we going to look at the





challenges and say, “It’s too difficult?” or, “It’s too dangerous?”

This is *our* challenge. This is *our* calling. *Into The Darkness* is not only an attempt to chronicle the provisions of God and the faithfulness of His people in the past. The book, and the stories it contains, is meant to serve as an appeal—a challenge—to the current generation, and others who will follow, to continue piercing the darkness until the words of Jesus are fulfilled, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and

then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14—NKJV).

This task demands the same spirit, creativity, and tenacity that existed in our earliest missionaries. If governments will not allow missionaries to enter with missionary visas, we will have to find other ways. Some will enter providing humanitarian aid. Others will teach in schools or hold various occupations. Some will start businesses. Some will birth creative alternatives.

Though the means of taking the gospel has changed through the years, and will most certainly change as we head into the future, the purpose itself should not. “We exist to

facilitate church planting movements among unreached peoples.” Winning people to Christ, making them disciples, and gathering them together to form a church will always be the call.

As we face this challenging future, new colleagues are coming alongside us. Free Will Baptists from our churches around the world are sensing the need and answering the call to reach more than their Jerusalem, and are reaching into *their* Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Over the next 25 years, this may be one of the most exciting developments we will see. By the time we celebrate our centennial in 2035, more Free Will Baptist missionaries may originate from our works internationally than from North America. If current growth trends continue, more Free Will Baptists will be worshipping in churches internationally than in the U.S.A.

Perhaps before the next 25 years have elapsed, we will all be gathered around the throne of Heaven to worship the Lord together. The Apostle John had the unique opportunity to see that scene in advance. He records it for us in Revelation 7:9-10, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

As we look, we will see a Bengali man from India, a Lobi woman from Ivory Coast, and a Frenchman from Châteaubriant. Scanning the crowd further, we will see a former Shinto priest, a mountain villager from Panama, and a senorita from Alpedrete, Spain. Thousands upon thousands of our brothers and sisters in Christ from all over the world will be present because of the sacrifice and commitment of Free Will Baptists who were obedient to send and be sent.

*Into The Darkness* tells part of that story. Praise the Lord with us for those who will gather around the throne as a result of the labors of those whose story is contained herein, as well as those whose story is being lived today.





# SPAIN

## *A Mighty Fortress*

*For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for  
thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.*

P S A L M 31 : 3

Loria and Mercedes Hernandez, native Cubans and Free Will Baptists, were distressed. Displaced from their home during Cuba's communist takeover, they relocated to Spain in 1969, where they hoped the same language and similar culture might become an opportunity for the gospel to penetrate Spanish souls as well. It did not take the Hernandez family long to discover that Spanish hearts seemed as impenetrable as the austere castles built there almost a thousand years earlier.

As a constitutional monarchy, Spain stands like a fortress, proud and strong, on land that rises sharply above the Mediterranean and Atlantic waters that all but surround the Iberian Peninsula. Much of Spain rests on this plateau, crossed with mountains and cut with deep valleys. It is a dramatic, colorful, and exotic presentation of life. Nearly 40 million people call this land south of France and the Pyrenees Mountains home. Most of the population inhabits Spain's urban centers since farmland is poor, rocky, and generally unsuited for agriculture. Though the land produces enough food for the country, with 50% of its exports being food and wine, the people are growing increasingly dependent on imports and the ever-flourishing tourist industry. Spaniards are proud workers—many from an affluent background with a high literacy rate and emphasis on education and success. Their families form the bedrock of their society, placing moral premiums on family duties and relationships.

While Loria and Mercedes Hernandez appreciated the important role family played in shaping the Spanish culture, they learned the source of its strength stemmed from the country's strong Catholic roots. More than 90% of Spaniards claim the state religion as their own, though fewer than 27% actually practice it. In fact, spiritual apathy plagues the Spanish people as a whole, with individuals disillusioned by empty ritual and promises promoted by the Roman Catholic Church over the centuries. Though an influx of Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other cults attempt to infiltrate the culture, the greatest barrier to Christian growth is hearts turned cold to spiritual matters altogether.



**ABOVE:** The Aqueduct in Segovia, Spain, was built without mortar or cement by the Romans during the first century.

**RIGHT:** The Alcazar (castle) of Segovia served as the frequent residence of monarchs during the Middle Ages.

**FAR RIGHT:** The Alcazar of Toledo has served as a fortification since Roman times. Almost totally demolished in 1936 by artillery fire, it has since been rebuilt and serves as a museum.



## Mission Facts

Spain has five churches with three non-missionary pastors. The country's vast immigrant population has presented some challenges, but even more opportunities. Social outreach ministries are thriving. Strategies for reaching North African immigrants are being implemented.

It was the desperate need for evangelism and spiritual help that led the Hernandez family to petition the Board of Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions for assistance in May of 1971. They shared the gospel with some neighbors and friends, and a few accepted Christ. But no evangelical support group other than their home-based Bible study existed to strengthen the new converts. To make matters worse, the Hernandez family


faced another relocation—this time to Australia—because of financial difficulties. Uruguayan missionary Paul Robinson made a trip to Spain to survey the situation. The need was more than obvious, but so were the difficulties facing any prospective missionary. He concluded, “A tremendous ministry is awaiting somebody who has the courage to go and do a lot of planting.”

As God began to move, Free Will Baptists stateside and around the world began to pray for Spain. Though the Hernandez family was forced to leave, God called Dock and Norma Jean Caton of Oklahoma and Lonnie and Anita Sparks, who transferred from Côte d'Ivoire to begin working in Spain. The Catons began working on the western side of Madrid while the Sparks worked the eastern side in Alcalá. Through trial and error, these and other missionaries who joined them slowly discovered the keys to best reach Spaniards. Through the years, literature, home Bible studies, outdoor evangelistic campaigns, and children's classes were used to reach the lost. However, they found the most effective outreach to simply be friendships and participation within the community itself. As Lonnie Sparks said, “We certainly visited people and invited them to come, but many times it has been clear that their coming was God's doing.”

God continues to work in mysterious ways. Free Will Baptist and other evangelical churches planted in the past decades have experienced slow, difficult growth. Even Christian Spaniards were difficult to motivate toward kingdom mindsets and action. So God brought movement and energy through an unexpected group: immigrants. Thousands of refugees from communist-riddled countries in Central and South America, as well as Eastern Europe, flooded the once secluded peninsula. Some immigrants brought with them a strong Christian faith, and eagerly sought out friendship and support from local evangelical churches.

Missionaries are encouraging Spaniards to embrace their brothers and sisters in Christ as welcomed members, instead of viewing them as a threat to their culture. Jeff Turnbough, missionary to Spain, explained it best: “For years we asked God to move in Spain. We thought that would be through Spanish believers. But as often happens, we may not have been looking where God was working. No doubt immigration in Spain is a problem for the politicians, but it may be one of the greatest praise items the people of God have seen in recent history.” Through the immigrants' weakness and dependence on Christ, God demonstrates to the proud Spaniards what true strength really is. May they all find refuge in Him, the Mighty Fortress Who never fails.



 S P A I N	
CAPITAL .....	Madrid
LARGEST CITY .....	Madrid
AREA .....	505,370 sq. km.
POPULATION .....	40,525,002
CURRENCY .....	Euro
PER CAPITA INCOME .....	\$34,700
RELIGIONS	
Roman Catholic .....	65.2%
Non-religious .....	30.9%
Islam .....	1.2%
Evangelicals .....	0.4%

Sources: CIA World Factbook, Joshua Project



# INCREASING BORDERS

## *The Jeff and Susan Turnbough Story*

*And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.*

I C H R O N I C L E S 4 : 1 0

The young, Christian family was nervous and excited at the same time. They searched all over Villalba, Spain, for a new home. At last, the Lord led them to one with an especially large living-room area. “We felt God might use the space as a gathering place for Christians,” the husband explained. “Of course, we did not have any idea how to invite or even find evangelical Christians around us to start up a group. So we began to pray that the Lord would send us some help.”

Meanwhile, Jeff and Susan Turnbough were ministering on the other side of Madrid during their first term of missionary service to the country. Both attended the University of Madrid for language study, and moved into the Dock and Norma Caton residence while they were on furlough.

Jeff and Susan had great expectations for what God was going to do through them in Spain. Both came from Christian families, and both had fathers who pastored in Free Will Baptist churches in the States. Both came to know the Lord at age nine. Both felt strongly called to the mission field during their tenures at Free Will Baptist Bible College, where Jeff earned two degrees: a B.S. in Music and Christian Education and a B.A. in Biblical Studies and Missions. Susan earned her degree in Bible, Christian Education, and Missions. Over the years, Jeff furthered his training with an M.A. from Grace Theological Seminary and a Doctorate of Missiology from Biola University. Susan spent two summers volunteering in the Ivory Coast, and gained experience through initiating children’s churches in Tennessee and Alabama.

Fully equipped for the good works God called the couple to do in Spain, they looked expectantly for signs of God’s movement among the people. They were surprised to find it on the opposite side of Madrid from where they were initially stationed.



“We decided to buy some Christian books, literature, cassette tapes, and other media to sell or distribute in the weekly open-air markets we were having,” Jeff remembered. “When we set up our stand in Villalba, we were encouraged by several different Christians who approached us and told us how glad they were we were in the city. Four or five non-Christians actually asked us what we believed and stayed to listen to the whole gospel presentation,” he continued. Then God led the family with the large living room right to the Turnboughs.



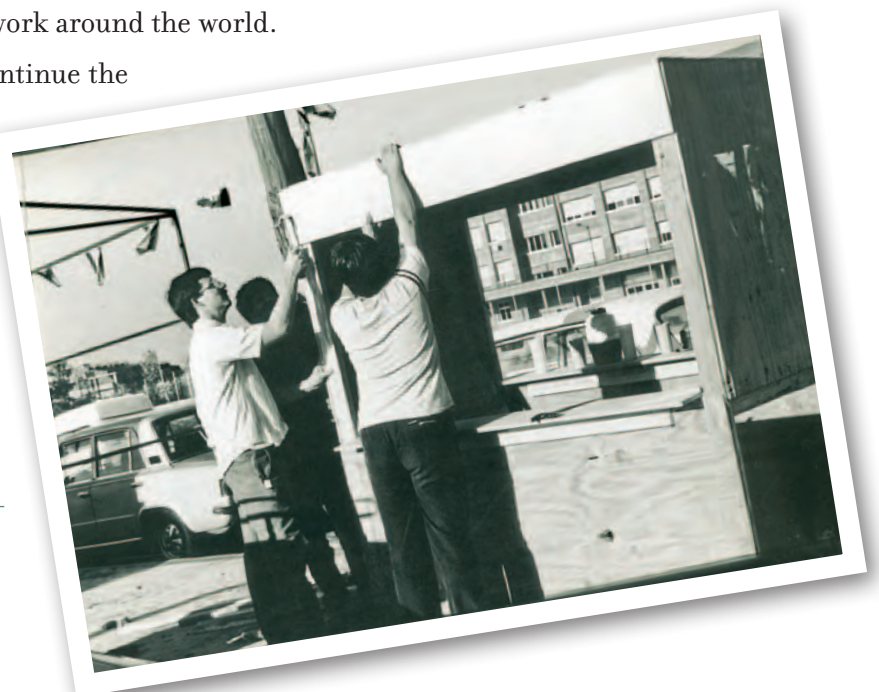
“We expected three to come to our Bible study the next day,” Jeff said. “Instead, eight came. We began meeting in the home of the young Christian family who had visited us the day before. And right before our eyes, God began building the first Free Will Baptist Church of Villalba.”

Over time, more converts were added, and the church began to outgrow their facilities. As they made plans to purchase or build a sanctuary, the Turnboughs were thrilled to transition the church to national leadership. They were eager to repeat the experience in Majadahonda, Spain, where a previous outreach attempt by other missionaries failed to take hold. But God simply had other plans.

“The Villalba church began to struggle and asked us and the McVays to return and assist them,” Jeff said. Surprised again at God’s direction, both families immediately returned to help strengthen the church and work through a 13-year court battle over the new sanctuary’s construction. In God’s perfect time, the church was stabilized and a new facility was acquired, becoming the very first Protestant free-standing church building in the one-million-plus population of Villalba, Spain. Jeff completed his dissertation for his doctorate degree by conducting a large research effort into the lives of first-generation Spanish converts. His work provided keen insight into more effective outreach strategies for the Spanish communities around them.

As the Turnboughs grew in knowledge, experience, and the love of Christ, God expanded their influence from Spain to include France, Bulgaria, and Russia. Jeff became regional director for Free Will Baptists in Europe and Russia, and worked diligently to unite efforts in these countries, providing needed cohesion, accountability, and leadership. After two years, he was promoted to deputy director for field operations where he works with regional directors and field leaders to develop strategy and to oversee Free Will Baptist work around the world.

The Turnboughs’ two children, Matthew and Melissa, continue the legacy of leadership forged by their parents. Both earned Biblical Studies and Missions degrees from Free Will Baptist Bible College. Matthew and his wife Brooke labor as career missionaries in Spain, and Melissa serves as a nurse at a New York City hospital, where her husband Mason is a doctor.



**FAR LEFT:** Jeff Turnbough baptizes several converts in the Mediterranean Sea.

**LEFT:** Short-term missionary Mark Riggs greets Jeff and Susan Turnbough.

**UPPER RIGHT:** Jeff Turnbough preaches to the Villalba congregation.

**RIGHT:** Jeff and members of the Villalba church put together a book and literature booth.





**TOP:** Missionaries and Christian laymen prepare for an outdoor evangelistic campaign.

**MIDDLE:** Ron Callaway prepares to baptize a young girl in a swimming pool as Jeff Turnbough stands by to assist.

**RIGHT:** Pastor Juan Carlos of Cuba preaches at the church he began in Colmenar Viejo, Spain.





**TOP:** Anita Sparks plays the organ as the choir sings at the Alcálá de Henares church begun by the Sparks.

**MIDDLE:** A Christian layman faithfully shares the gospel message with someone on the street.

**LEFT:** Ron Callaway teaches a Bible class at the Alcálá de Henares FWB Church.



# HERE AM I

## *The Dock and Norma Caton Story*

**D**ock and Norma Caton had a heart for missions. After years spent in study at various colleges, Dock felt prepared to take his knowledge and passion to places where the message of Christ was not heard. Their first missions experience occurred in Brazil. “Long before we realized it, God was preparing us to go to Spain. Even as far back as high school, God prepared us through Spanish language classes,” Dock explained. “In Brazil we found it easy to respect and deeply love the Latin lifestyle which we felt would be greatly similar to that in Spain. God was directing us to those open doors.”



The Catons began working in Majadahonda, an urban center on the western side of Madrid. High property costs led them to use home-based churches and Bible studies to begin their efforts.

The Catons spent the next two terms faithfully ministering in Majadahonda, but little visible fruit resulted. Centuries of bad theology mingled with bitterness toward the Church created a hostile environment for typical evangelism strategies. It was a long, slow process, but the Catons were committed to plowing the field. As God saw fit, He raised up even more laborers to plant, water, and harvest.

After their second term, God called the Catons back to the United States where they worked with the growing population of Spanish-speaking residents in the Wheaton, Illinois, area.



**TOP LEFT:** Norma Caton plays the organ for a church service.

**LEFT:** Dock Caton uses a whiteboard to illustrate a Bible class lesson.

**ABOVE:** Norma and Dock Caton stand with their daughter in front of the Alcálá de Henares church building.



## THE SPIRIT IN SPAIN

*The Lonnie and Anita Sparks Story*

*The king's heart is in the hand of  
the LORD, as the rivers of water:  
he turneth it whithersoever he will.*

PROVERBS 21:1



Three terms—almost 18 years—were spent among the Koulango people of the Ivory Coast. Lonnie and Anita Sparks weathered enormous difficulties in language, culture, and spiritual opposition to witness a tremendous moving of God's Spirit among the Ivorian people. So when God began calling the committed couple to a new work in a new country, it is no wonder the decision came only after much agony and prayer. Lonnie asserted, "Missions is God's work. He has said: 'I will build my church' [Matthew 16:18b]. We are His vessels, living sacrifices in His hand. He will do the work!"

Yet the Sparks realized that God's kingdom work was never the easy path. Nor was it a comfortable one. With their two sons, Paul and Noel, the Sparks family left the African coast to initiate a Free Will Baptist outreach in Spain. Within two years, God used the Sparks family to begin a church in Alcalá de Henares.

While Lonnie preached and ministered to families, Anita worked alongside him handling the music, children's ministries, and visitation, and serving as a general hostess for all new contacts. The Sparks also initiated a letter campaign, explaining to the community who they were and sharing the gospel message. Lonnie said, "We have marveled at the way God has given us contacts in a land where this is often difficult. He's kept us busy doing meaningful things. We've been thrilled time and again at how the Lord has brought people out to hear the Word."

Just as God worked in the Ivory Coast, the Sparks witnessed His hand at work in Spain. They labored for three more terms, strengthening the Alcalá de Henares church and in another area with Mark and Juli Riggs.



**RIGHT:** Lonnie Sparks questions a young convert before baptizing her.

## HEART FOR GOD

*The José Manuel Parrón Story*

José saw and experienced enough ritual; he was ready for something real. Upon his first visit to the Free Will Baptist Church in Alcalá de Henares, he realized the search was over. Through the Sparks' teaching, Jesus and His gospel of hope became more real than any of the empty Catholic doctrines he learned as a child. He wholeheartedly gave his life to Christ.

Though only a teenager, young José felt the mighty Spirit of God in his life. Fueled by a passion to share Christ's gospel with other Spaniards, he actively visited homes, distributed literature, and obtained permission to show the *JESUS* film, preaching whenever given the chance.

As a young adult, he enlisted in the air force, where his faith remained firm. Despite the peer influence to attend mass before induction into the service, José opted to remain outside. Military leaders and friends marveled at the strength of his convictions.

After his time in military service, José dedicated his life to preaching.

A bivocational pastor, he served the Alcalá church where he first heard the Good News of Christ. Later, he began a new work in the city. José Manuel's wife Carmen and son and daughter work faithfully beside him, shining Christ's light and love in a spiritually dark place.





### SAM & JUNE McVAY

(1996–present) formed a church-planting team with Jeff and Susan Turnbough after completing language school. The McVays are currently involved in various ministries and praying for God to lead them to the right area to begin a new work.



### ANTHONY & LEA EDGMON

were appointed as career missionaries in 1997. They began their ministry in Villalba then joined the Alpedrete team in 2005. The team chose Alpedrete as one of the many towns in Spain whose history has never included a Protestant church.



### TIM & KRISTI JOHNSON

Appointed as career missionaries in 1997, Tim and Kristi Johnson began their ministry in Villalba. In 2005, they and the Edgmons formed a team to plant a new church in Alpedrete. They host a variety of events and classes at the outreach center and began worship services in February 2006.



### MARK & JULI RIGGS

(1989–1993) worked with the Sparks to start a church in Santurce. They returned to the States in 1993 and submitted their resignation. However, they returned to Spain independently to work among the Basque people.



### MATTHEW & BROOKE TURNBOUGH

were appointed as career missionaries in 2005. They assist in the music program, teaching English, and leading discipleship classes at the Villalba church. They also coordinate an outreach program for immigrants.



### DWAIN & DEBBIE CROSBY

(1987–1996) began their ministry in the Mostoles church. When the Spain field council approved the opening of a work in Majadahonda, the Crosby's moved to this suburb to begin a new ministry.

**FAR UPPER RIGHT:** Lonnie Sparks assists a convert down the steps of the pool for her baptism.

**FAR RIGHT:** Norma Caton holds a child while a home Bible study group sings.





### DENNIS & TRENA OWEN

appointed in 1979, helped open the work in Móstoles. During their second term they moved to Villalba and worked in the Villalba, Móstoles, and Alcalá churches. In 1990, ministry opportunities led them to Uruguay. Dennis' health led the Owens to resign in 2007. They live in Florida.



### STEVE & LINDA REEVES

(1985–1994) ministered in Villalba after finishing language school. Steve was involved in teaching at the Bible institute, and he and Linda worked with the children and youth. The Reeves resigned in 1994 due to Steve's medical needs.



### LYNN MIDGETT

was appointed to missionary service in 1982. She began her ministry by working in the Mostoles and Villalba churches, and later moved to Majadahonda to begin a ministry. Due to her father's failing health, she decided to submit her resignation in 2005 to help care for him.



## DIVINE STRATEGY

### *The Carmen Bolano Parrón Story*

The seven-year-old girl was devastated. Her mother, Petra Bolano, searched for words to comfort Carmen after learning her father suffered a horrific accident on the construction site where he worked. He was not coming home.

Carmen, her six brothers and sisters, and Petra realized they faced a difficult life ahead. But Petra, true to her name, was a rock of strength. Finding any work available, she labored alone to provide for her large family.

For a while, they lived near Petra's parents in a small village. But when she realized the children's education was suffering, Petra moved the family to Alcalá near her sister and

better schools. She was unaware the sovereign hand of God was gently guiding her to Him.

At the same time, God was moving in the hearts of Free Will Baptist missionaries to start a work in Alcalá. Eventually, a friend of Carmen's sister invited them to a Bible study. Not long after, she attended the church started by the Sparks family. Starting with Carmen, the entire Bolano family turned to Christ, including Petra.

In God's providence, Carmen went on to marry José Parrón, the first young man from the Alcalá church to answer the call to preach. Petra's third daughter, Juli, married Mark Riggs, missionary to Spain.