



What Might Happen

You just never know what you are setting in motion through a simple act of faithfulness. A single unassuming, unpretentious, inconspicuous deed can be the precise moment God begins a movement that results in something that is, as the Apostle Paul would say, “exceedingly beyond what we could ever ask or imagine.” Indeed, the history of the Covenant Church is more about simple acts of faithfulness that God takes and amplifies than it is about strategic plans. Here are two stories that illustrate.

In 1980 the community of Calumet Park, Illinois, was an area in transition from majority European American to predominately African American. The Covenant church there had dwindled to about twenty longtime members. One Sunday, an African American single mom showed up for the first time with her three children. She was both working full-time and going to school. It would have been easier to stay home on a Sunday morning, but her faith, and the faith of her children, was her unmistakable priority.

Shortly after the family attended that church service, Pastor Matt Zatkalik called on them to extend a welcome. Nothing fancy. No brochures. No free coffee mug. Just a personal expression of genuine interest. That visit, one simple act of pastoral faithfulness, impressed that mom and she decided to stay. Her name is Debbie Blue, the founding executive minister of our Department of Compassion, Mercy, and Justice.

Matt could have watched a football game instead of summoning the reserves to make a pastoral call. He could have mowed the lawn. But instead, that one simple act of pastoral ministry set a trajectory in place in Debbie’s life, who in turn has brought such important influence to our mission and ministry all over the world.

Soon thereafter, Matt and the church decided to go “all in” in reaching the community. They worked with the Central Conference and Oakdale Covenant Church to call Oakdale’s associate pastor, Don Davenport, to join the team and eventually to become the lead pastor.

To celebrate Don’s coming, Matt recounts, several African American Covenant churches brought their choirs to a special service. He says, “I will never forget—while looking up in praise to God—that the volume of the organ, the movement of the congregation, and the energized voices of the choirs were *disturbing the dust on the rafters and it was falling off*. That was a sign to me that this was a new day.”

Example two. When Life Covenant Church of

Oklahoma City started in 1996, it met in a two-car garage in an industrial park. The most advanced piece of technology they owned was an overhead projector. Over time, Bobby Greunwald started to attend. He was a computer software entrepreneur who had ridden the high-tech boom to significant personal success. Through the church, and the personal ministry of pastor Craig Groeschel, his heart increasingly softened to God. He left his career behind and went on the staff of the church to direct their technology initiatives.

While sitting at an airport, Bobby toyed with an idea he couldn’t get out of his head. At the time it seemed preposterous, given where computer speeds and capacities were then. Maybe he could develop software so people could download a copy of the Bible. And maybe he could get multiple publishers to make their versions available—for free. And maybe he could incorporate versions from as many languages as possible so conceivably anyone in the world could access the word of God. And maybe if mobile phones ever developed enough capacity, people could even download it right to their device. All fanciful, futuristic stuff, better ignored for the practicalities of the moment.

Only he didn’t ignore the impulse. He played with it. He tested it. And that simple faithfulness resulted in what is today YouVersion.

The numbers are staggering. One hundred versions of the Bible in forty-five languages. Forty million downloads in more than 130 countries. Eleven billion minutes spent reading Scripture. The trends are accelerating exponentially. Go to youversion.com to download. You will join one out of every seventeen iPhone users.

Bobby simply says, “We want to help the world to fall in love with God’s word.” He adds, “People spend a total of 300 million minutes of game play every day in Angry Birds. We’ve got plenty of room to grow.”

Matt Zatkalik’s story is deeply personal. Bobby Greunwald’s is highly technological. Yet both paid attention to the prompting of God, with no idea of what might actually unfold. There is a term for what unfolded in both cases: who’daveverthunk.

You just never know what you might be setting in motion today by simply being faithful. ■

Gary Walter is president of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

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