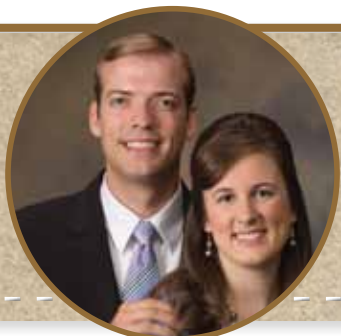


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ISSUE FOCUS **Career**

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Not Miserable, but Full of Joy!

By Jeremy Dion

You will make known to me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever
(Psalm 16:11).

When I was nine, I was greatly frightened in my childish mind by what I thought was a near-death experience. As a result, I could not go to sleep that night as the realization of my personal guilt before God weighed heavily on my mind for the first time in my life. The Lord graciously turned my heart to repentance as my dad showed me familiar verses to whose truth I had been previously blinded.

Forgiveness and peace flooded my heart as I prayed that night. A few years later I participated in a homeschool program at my church that was focused on the lives of several missionaries. It wasn't until after I finished my part and sat down that I realized the importance of the song we had just sung—"Lord, Send Me Anywhere." For some time the Lord had been working in my heart about surrender to Christian service, and yet I had always feared that if I surrendered my life to Him, He would somehow mess it up and I would be completely miserable. That night I finally surrendered, and almost instantaneously I began to realize the joy of giving the Lord full control! Throughout my teenage and college years, the Lord began to prepare me for ministry in a third-world country by exposing me to a wide

variety of hands-on experiences—working at my dad's machine shop, building our family's house, and constantly working with my hands on various building projects.

My wife Caroline was also privileged to grow up hearing the truths of the Gospel. From an early age she accepted the truthfulness of the things that she was taught and even expressed sensitivity to the things of the Lord; however, not until she was about twelve did she personally grasp and accept Christ's work on the cross as her only hope of salvation. Caroline remembers even before she was saved talking about



Jeremy got to experience the bush road firsthand during his internship.



Jeremy had evangelistic opportunities in PNG during both his internship and on a survey trip.

missions with her older brothers. This childish interest was intensified and developed during her teenage years, and by the time she started college at Bob Jones University in 2005, her desires were focused on majoring in something she could use on the mission field. Because of her upbringing on a ranch in southwest Texas, she felt especially fitted for life in a rural area or developing country. The Lord led her to study nursing as a practical tool that would be useful in such a setting. During her college years Caroline had the wonderful opportunity of traveling twice with the BJU Musical Mission Team to Europe and going to Papua New Guinea in the summer of 2008 to work with missionary nurse Jennifer Pearson. Each missions experience aided in clearing away romantic ideas of missionary life and replacing those ideas with a real understanding of truly knowing and serving the Lord.

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Reclaiming England for Christ

by Clay Gibbons

How great is our God? Our God is able to do abundantly more than we can even imagine. His plans are perfect, and He knows our needs and our wants better than we do. Danielle and I are excited to serve our Lord; we are privileged to be called to do what we once only dreamed of doing.

My journey to England began about 20 years ago in North Carolina when a faithful man of God and a member of a local Baptist church showed compassion on my family. At this time my entire family was without Christ and attended another church in town that did not preach the Gospel. This man invited my brother, my sister, and me to attend vacation Bible school. During VBS, a Gospel invitation was given at the end of a service, and I accepted Christ as my Savior. Soon after, my parents were saved, and our family joined Acorn Ridge Baptist Church. Over the next several years, I was discipled and grew in grace and knowledge of Jesus. During my high school years, the Lord gave me a burden to one day serve in the ministry. I became interested in the United Kingdom, and while in my first year of college, I made plans to spend the summer there working with a missionary. This trip, as well as another trip I attempted after my senior year, never worked out; the Lord had other plans for my summer. I had always hoped for an opportunity to serve in England but never really believed that would become a reality.



Clay plans to work with British pastor Martin Wickens for his first term in order to gain valuable ministry experience.

My wife Danielle accepted the Lord as her Savior at The Wilds Christian Camp as a young camper. Her need for a Savior was made evident during an evening service where the Gospel was clearly presented and she realized her state as a helpless sinner. Her love for England developed in a Middle Ages class, which focused on England and which she took in the eighth grade. As a teenager she had a serious fascination for England and an even stronger desire to be there. She did not understand why she had such a great desire for this country but knew God would use it for His good purpose and turned it over to Him. God has turned Danielle's desire into a burden to serve the people of England.

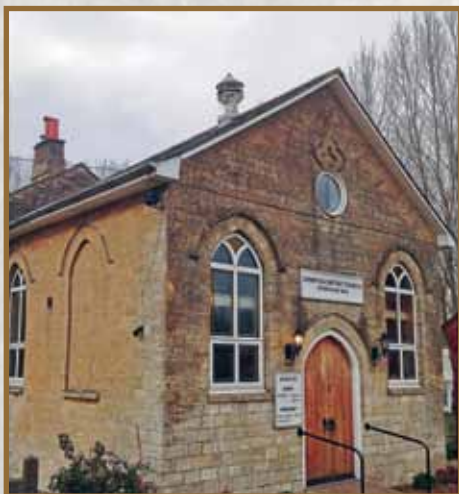
Following seminary we moved back to North Carolina to pay off debt and help in our home church until the Lord directed our steps. After a few preliminary positions dried up, Danielle and I really began seeking the Lord's will for what was next. We both had a desire for England in our hearts, and we decided to pursue that further by contacting GFA to see if there was a need. Dr. Patterson put us in touch with Pastor Martin Wickens, a British pastor in the UK, and we went on a survey trip to England in December 2012.

Following our trip, the tremendous spiritual need in the United Kingdom became clear to us, and with the Lord's grace we can point people to Christ there. England was once a place of great Bible teaching and preaching, yet now it is spiritually desolate. Atheism and Islam claim

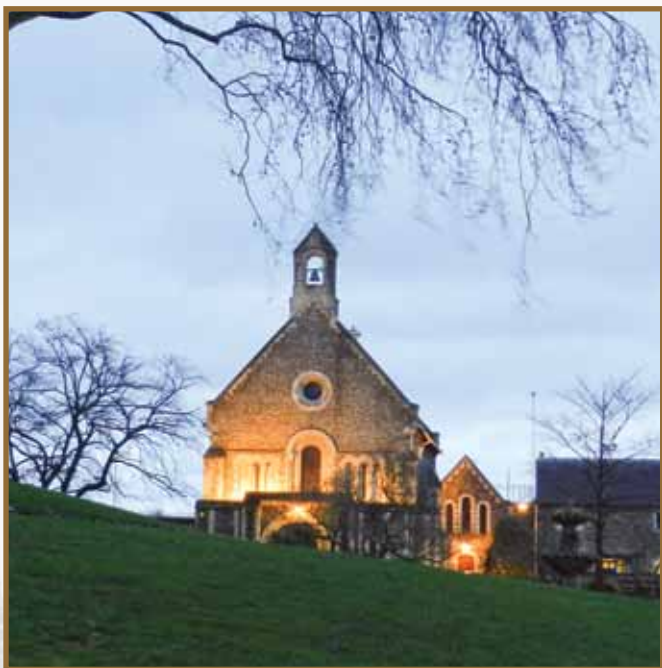
thousands of converts every year while church buildings sit empty.

In August 2013 we began deputation, and Lord willing we will soon be serving in England. Once we arrive, we plan to spend a year with Martin Wickens, the pastor of Brimpton Baptist Church in Brimpton, England. After learning from Martin and working alongside the people of Brimpton Baptist, we plan to branch out and plant a church in another location in England. Our goal is to target our evangelism on the large international college population at its many universities. Finally we would like to initiate or help in the training of faithful men for the pastorate.

We know that leaving our home and our family will be difficult, but we long to serve the Lord in the place He has called us. We yearn to share the love of Jesus with the millions who are lost and dying, and we look forward to bringing glory to Christ as we serve Him in the United Kingdom. This is what God has prepared our hearts and minds to do, and we look forward to making it a reality. ➡



During their first term, the Gibbons plan to minister at Brimpton Baptist Church with Martin and Carrie Wickens.



Because atheism and Islam are on the rise in the UK, many church buildings in England stand empty.



The Gibbons plan to target their evangelism on the large international college population such as in Oxford.



Despite once being a place of great Bible teaching and preaching, England is now spiritually desolate.



Atheism and Islam claim thousands of converts every year in the UK.



Clay and Danielle and their children Eloise and Emory are on deputation for England.

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➡ Not Miserable, but Full of Joy! p. 1



The Dions plan to minister in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

In 2009, as part of my undergraduate missions major at BJU, I went to Papua New Guinea to work with the Randy Smith family for two months. In the process of preparing for this trip, I met with Caroline and asked her about some of her experiences from the summer before. Little did I then know that the Lord would use that first contact about PNG to draw our lives together! The Lord used my summer in PNG to solidify my burden for a bush-type ministry. After my return, Caroline and I continued our relationship long distance as she served for a year in China. We were married in the summer of 2011, and in 2013 I finished an M.A. in Bible and Caroline an M.A. in cross-cultural studies. In all of this I have learned that there is nothing more joyous than submitting to and serving the Lord. Certainly I have never experienced any of the misery of following the Lord that I once dreaded as a child!

Along with personal ministry among the people of Kiari, I look forward to playing a major role in training many of the believing nationals through Bible school classes, especially those men who feel the call to ministry. In a culture where stability and faithfulness are rare, perhaps the greatest need for believers is to be “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6). Caroline will help teach the women and children in various settings and will put her medical skills to good use as opportunities arise. As we anticipate our future ministry, we desire to learn a greater “fullness of joy” as a result of dwelling in the Lord’s presence and submitting to His leading and in doing so to be an example to the national believers. ➡

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