

Test Alumni Spotlight: Danny Lightner (M.Div. '06)



Current Title: Integrated Programs Director, [Family Legacy Missions International](#)

Family: Sarah (wife) and 6 children: Grace (14), Hannah (12), Josiah (10), Caleb (9), Lydia (6), Elijah (3)

Favorite professor: Dr. Haddon Robinson

Favorite class: Biblical Preaching

Favorite memory: When Dr. Joe Stowell (then the President of Moody) came to speak for a pastor's conference. One of his messages on remembering God's call on your life and the importance of staying on mission is still burned in my memory today!

Where are you currently serving as a missionary and what is your work there?

I serve with Family Legacy Missions International in Lusaka, Zambia. Family Legacy is a ministry to the orphaned and vulnerable children of Zambia. We operate 22 private Christian



schools scattered across the capital city, serving 12,500 children and their families. We also operate a residential care facility composed of 65 individual homes, serving 650 children full-time. I oversee all of our academic, social services and discipleship efforts to these 13,000 children.

Left: Kyle teaching at their children's Summer Camp program, with their translator

Have you always been a missionary, or did you serve in other positions before becoming a missionary?

When I was at GCTS, I was also serving as a full-time Youth Pastor in Derry, NH. After I graduated from GCTS, I remained as a Youth Pastor for another 4 years, until I became an Adult Ministries/Discipleship Pastor at a church in Des Moines, Iowa. I served at that church for 6 years, and that is when we decided to go on the mission field.

The Lord continued burdening my heart (and my family-members' hearts as well) for orphaned children through the reading of God's Word, other books we read, conferences we attended, sermons we listened to, etc. It became clear that we needed to follow this prompting, or it was going to feel like disobedience! I found the "Director of Discipleship" position at Family Legacy (headquartered in Dallas, TX) through Google when I searched for the two things that God had made me passionate about, "Discipleship" and "orphans". I



took a vision trip to Zambia to see the ministry first-hand in March of 2016, we were officially hired in May of 2016, and we had all of our support raised and we were on the field by October of 2016! God was certainly in the entire process!

How has God woven together your time at Gordon-Conwell with other life events to lead you to where you are now?

My passion for discipleship and mission was fueled by a friend of mine who I met at our church in Des Moines, IA. I don't think I ever would have ended up at that church without my degree from Gordon-Conwell (there was a lot of competition for the job). So if it wasn't for my degree from GCTS, who knows where I would be now!

What do you love about your work? What are some of the hard things about life as a missionary in your context?

This ministry/work that I do utilizes my gifting very well. I love to write, and I have the opportunity to write a lot of curriculum, devotionals, seminars, content for trainings, etc. The people of Zambia are very hungry for good Bible teaching, as many of them have not had any kind of formal Bible training. It is really fun teaching people who have a strong desire to learn! I also love that God is using Family Legacy to change the identities of the children we serve: from "outcast" and "unloved" to "child of God" and "accepted"!

Living in a developing country certainly comes with its challenges. We frequently experience power outages, water shortages, fuel shortages and other such inconveniences, which can make ministry more difficult. The sub-par quality of internet and mobile devices also prohibits the kind of communication that I was used to back in the USA. But we are very thankful that Zambia is a country that is open to the gospel, so we consider ourselves very blessed to preach Jesus openly, which is certainly not the case with many of our brothers and sisters around the world.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your past and current work?

GCTS certainly taught me to think critically and biblically, and I had many opportunities to improve my writing! Preaching and teaching classes were invaluable, as I have used what I learned in those classes almost every day of my ministry career.

And GCTS still continues to influence me and my staff in our ministry here in Zambia! During COVID, when our schools were closed, I utilized the time to do some theological training with our discipleship staff. I needed something simple that I could forward through WhatsApp to the staff, and that they could listen to and interact with on their phones. I found the free "Dimensions of the Faith" courses on GCTS's website, and I led our staff through the "Theology Survey I" course with Dr. David Wells. It was a great resource, and we plan on using more of those courses in the future!



What piece of advice would you give to alumni who are considering the mission field?

Never view any of the hurdles as too large for God to overcome. Don't let the enemy keep you off the mission field by convincing you that it would not be possible for you. I had many of the same objections for a long time: my family is too young, I think support-raising will be too hard, I have no idea how well I would do at living in a different culture, your children will be missing out on all the opportunities that America provides, how will you educate your children, and on and on the list of hurdles goes. God is the master at getting you over those hurdles. In fact, it is those same hurdles that are going to increase your faith and your dependency upon the Lord. So, if He is laying missions on your heart, choose to walk by faith, and not by fear!