

# Xenos Christian Fellowship is a non-traditional, interdenominational church with mainstream biblical doctrines.

We sponsor neighborhood home groups for all ages led by volunteers.

Like other Christian Evangelical churches, we celebrate the Bible's message of freedom and the hope this brings to all humanity through Jesus Christ. We also dump the confusing rituals and traditions wherever the Bible gives us this freedom. Jesus taught about spiritual life and relationships, not *religion*.

This is why our ministries provide a warm and non-threatening environment where people can seek a personal relationship with God, ask questions, and find out what the Bible actually says. Visit our site to read about our core values to see what's so exciting about this person named Jesus Christ. He was remarkably irreligious and he was all about personal relationships. Jesus brings a newness to life, called spiritual life, and that's when things get really interesting!

The Bible records the amazing history of God's kind intentions for us. He created us with design and purpose. The Bible reveals how to build significant lives that impact our families, friends, and the people we meet. God leads people into maturity and the opportunity to impact the world around us in truly significant ways.



It was for freedom that Christ set us free.



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Listen to teachings: podcasts.neoxenos.org

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Published by the Identity Project at Kent State University and Northeast Ohio Xenos Christian Fellowship

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A t NeoXenos we are light on paid staff, short on leadership, and yet drowning in young Christians—young both physically and spiritually.

Most churches are struggling with fat staffs, few young people, and would love to swap places! However, as we saw at the Fiscal Support Team retreat, our leadership growth has stalled out for over two years and is now impacting our ability to continue reaching new Christians and students. We are still growing 10% anually, which (barely) meets the definition of rapid growth as defined by church growth experts, so we now have about 360 people attending weekly. About 80% of us are Christian converts, not transfers. Still, we should see twice that growth rate since we work among high school and college students.

CATCHING KYLE QUICKLY

BY **JOEL HUGHES** 

Our greatest shortfall is in the elders meeting, which has not grown for most of the past decade while everything else kept growing. Especially paid elder support has frozen at a count of one. Sooner or later that shortage of experienced leadership, educated teaching and oversight will lead to stalled growth.

The elders recently agreed to hire Kyle McCallum as an Associate Pastor this March, which is earlier than proposed at the October Deacon's retreat. There is a pressing need to get him up-to-speed and working as an experienced teacher quickly since efforts to raise replacement elders at NeoXenos has been greatly delayed. The investment in such knowledgeable and experienced leadership is usually lengthy and very expensive, but Kyle's successful experience as a deacon for more than five years and his biblical background will greatly expedite his learning curve. Since Kyle grew up in a ministry household, he naturally understands much of what the Bible teaches and how it applies to Christian ministry.

Right now Kyle is in a great position for the fellowship to hire him as an Associate Pastor. His financial obligations are at an all-time low, since he is newly married and without children. He is successfully advancing in his career as a software development project manager and has paid off his college loans. It means he can afford to take a pay cut so the fellowship can hire him at an entrance-level high school teacher's salary. At the same time, he has been paying for his own seminary education and delivering (almost) exclusively A-grade results, so he knows what is required at this level of leadership

and has proven himself intellectually capable and teachable.

As an Associate Pastor, Kyle will be teaching more, including classes like Basic Christianity and our Leadership Training Course, overseeing ministries beginning with the High School sphere, and shouldering some of the Elder's Meeting burdens which include logistics and strategic planning. He will also get experience during the off-season at teaching Central, as he did last summer. At the same time he must continue with his seminary education, so the fellowship will now take over that expense as part of our investment in his development. The elders also plan to launch a TA Seminar Program this summer to raise up theologically-advanced teachers for LTC and other classes. All told, Kyle will be working more than 40 hours per week.

What does this mean? For one thing, we should expect more exciting growth! Every time we invest wisely in paid staff, growth has resulted. Secondly, as Kyle steps into leadership and eldership at NeoXenos, he will naturally be pulling others from his Millennial generation into advanced ministry opportunities. We are seeing gifted, growing Millennials coming out of college who want to step into this exciting and challenging ministry opportunity, and it would be a tragic waste to turn them all over to Corporate America. Hopefully there will be many more aspiring to careers in ministry, as Paul says: "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do." (1 Timothy 3:1) Who is next?

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zak & elli rozlei

NEOZINE I 4

Growing up in a Christian home, it's like my senses exploded upon arrival—flashbacks of Veggie Tales, Biblical movies, and picture books couldn't encompass the extent of what I was seeing as I sat at the edge of the Sea of Galilee, surrounded by darkness. The mountains taking shape and the waves rough. My mind just repeated itself – Jesus was here. It slowly became real that He was here and as it did, all the old stories I've known for years popped off their pages.

The first morning we started our journey through "the fifth Gospel" (what our tour guide, Mike, calls Israel). We drove up to the top of the Mt. of Beatitudes and made our way to the most peaceful scenery we've ever laid eyes on. The landscape was that of a watercolor - the shades of green fields and the sparkling blue sea melted together and we were at peace. Then, Kyle opened Matthew 5 and started speaking on the talk Jesus gave on that very mountain - the Sermon on the Mount. "It makes sense Jesus came here: to declare his Kingdom from the mountaintop!" Kyle started. We went through how these verses

- "Blessed are the poor... those who mourn... the meek... those who thirst for righteousness... merciful... pure in heart... the peacemakers" - that Jesus meant them to not be the way of salvation, but what it looks like to be a Jesus follower. The topic was relevant not just because of our location, but as our position as Christ-followers today. Jesus said: live like this and you will find a powerful, filling peace. On this mountain, Jesus revealed the secret so many want to know: how to live a full life - and it's the total opposite of what the world teaches! Instead of getting rich - be poor! Don't be proud - be meek! Don't seek

temporary satisfaction – thirst for righteousness! Jesus told them His plan: that they will be adopted into His line and that He will give them to power to live this way. What an amazing way to start the trip!

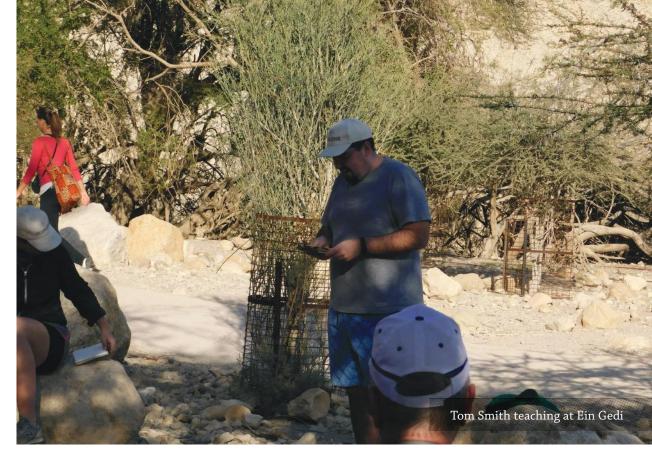
Right after that was the beach where Jesus told Peter: "tend my sheep", and Capernaum, where many events happened such as where Jesus told the centurion his son was healed. and Bethsaida – the home of several disciples and the exact road excavated where Jesus walked and healed the sick people lying outside of the city. Lastly, we saw the Jordan River - which is actually pretty small! The whole country is also really small, just about the same size and population as our little state of New Jersey. This perspective made the recent uptick in anti-semitism seem even more bizarre, given how tiny the country is yet how many enemies it has.

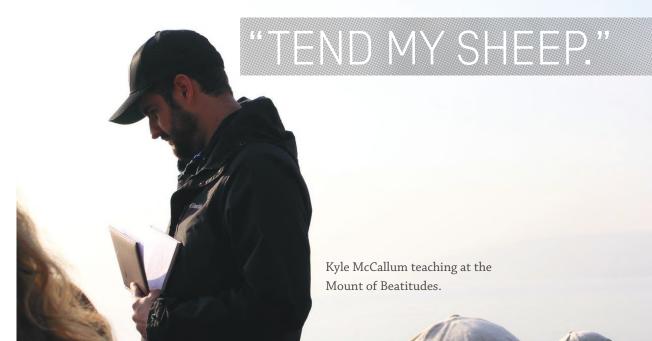
The next morning, after seeing a boat from the first century ("The Jesus Boat"), Joel Hughes taught on Matthew 14 about Jesus walking on water in the midst of a storm. He highlighted how we will always have "storms" in our lives but that they are temporary and Jesus provides rescue in them all. It was funny

to think Jesus could have walked right by the disciples! It was no big deal for Him to walk on that crazy water, but He stopped to comfort them by showing their storms are nothing to Him.

We had all probably heard this passage before, but hearing it being proclaimed boldly while overlooking the very sea Jesus walked on was incredible.

That next few days were full of adventure! With the reminder that there will be storms, we visited places that hosted such storms. Tel Dan was one - the city known for its worship of idols and where Abraham had to travel to rescue Lot (Gen. 14). Also, visiting abandoned Syrian bunkers in the Golan Heights was eery and showed the intensity surrounding the near-history of this land. A favorite was Caesarea Philippi - a city Jesus visited with so many shrines to different Greek gods, known to hold orgies and other crazy ways of "worship". There, we saw a dark cut out in the cliff-face called "the Gates of Hades" that Jesus would have been pointing to when he said to Peter: "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matt. 16:18). The next morning may have been the most









intense - Meggido. There we were, overlooking the vast valley that will be home to the great world war.

Before leaving the Galilee, we stopped on Mt. Carmel for a teaching by Adam Esterle. Well, it was raining so he taught from the bus... but we were still technically up there. He taught on the importance of prayer, taking us through 1 Kings 18. This highlighted Elijah's battle against all of the priests of Baal. Adam encouraged us to be ready for a battle, like Elijah was, by being close to God! You can see the closeness of their relationship through his prayers. So when he had to face the priests of Baal, he was ready to fight. He knew God would come through. Do you feel peace with the Lord like Elijah did?

Jerusalem - After an astonishing view of the city in the morning from the Mount of Olives we entered the Garden of Gethsemane - the place Jesus prayed before being arrested, "My Father! If this cup cannot be taken from me unless I drink it, your will be done." The old trees were gated off allowing us look into the garden where Jesus would have been crying out to his father right before his death for our sin. It made Him so much more personal as my

heart filled with gratitude over His sacrifice. After that we saw the pools of Bethesda- the very place Jesus healed a man who had been ill for 38 years. To him Jesus asked the famous question, "Do you wish to get well?" (John 5:6). Jesus then healed the man, on the Sabbath no less. This highlight's both the incredible compassion of Jesus as well as His unwillingness to yield to tainted rules.

To end the night, we made

our way to Mount Scopus overlooking the Mount of Olives and a gorgeous sunset. As Keith started talking about the Ascension, the freaky calls to prayer started sounding from all around the city at once! It was truly a sight/sound experience. Here, Keith taught from Matthew 24, explaining how the coming of the Son of Man will be unexpected and an interruption to our plans. This is good, though, because God is trying to interrupt our fantasy world and help us live in the reality. He encouraged us to live a life aflame by choosing to participate in the unfolding of God's kingdom on earth. Right now God is doing this inside out through changing our hearts, which we have all seen here at this fellowship.

Later, our group got to drive through the West Bank as we



made our way into the desert to explore Masada - King Herod's massive retreat fortress - before heading to Ein Gedi and the Dead Sea. Ein Gedi is a spring in the middle of the desert and the place David, while in a cave, cut off a piece of Saul's robe while he was relieving himself! Tom gave a teaching on David and his mighty men - what made them mighty and why David trusted them. He challenged us on letting God change our character like He did with David as well as the quality of our relationships - we need allies. Are you closed off or do you have mighty men you rely on? Then, we took a chilly shower in one of the Ein Gedi springs before going to float in the Dead Sea!

The Temple Mount was a sharp contrast to the previous day at the desert. Oppression and fear consumed it not just because of the 3-4 different police around at all times, but because it is a place of severe tension. Muslims and Jews fighting for a claim on the temple, "God's house", was so sad to see. If only people could understand that Jesus wants to live in our hearts they could experience such freedom! This day really gave us a sense of gratitude for the personal relationship God wants with us instead of restrictive religion.

The rest of the trip flew by as we visited various sites in Jerusalem. However, we had the chance to see the Valley of Elah where David and Goliath had it out! (And we got to reenact it! It was so realistic.)

The last full day in Jerusalem held a fitting end to the trip: in the Garden Tomb. Here, we saw a grave that is considered by many to be the most probable location as the place Jesus was buried and from where He resurrected.

We all sat in a little chapel built into the hillside, took communion, and prayed. We prayed for many things that seemed so much more possible while remembering so vividly that Jesus did in fact raise from the dead - right here! Everything seemed possible knowing God has resurrection power and He's given it to us - that's a conviction I hope to develop coming away from this trip.

Keith talked about resurrection in that chapel near the empty grave. He reminded us that our faith is based in FACTS - the FACT that Jesus died AND rose from the dead. These facts can infect others - this is the kind of faith we wanted to take home to all of you! We need to know these facts, know the Bible, and pray we can be infected with the power of His resurrection, able to face whatever comes our way - even death. Resurrection gives us a new way to deal with

death, gives us hope, and is the answer to our failure. This power gives us the ability to be radical by recognizing Jesus's resurrection power in us - Acts 1:8! Facts build faith which gives us hope that leads to confidence, fearlessness, and moving in the right direction. Sure, there will be setbacks, but we can be prepared through the life-giving hope made possible by Christ's resurrection.

Do you remember reading through the gospels and having it impact you for the first time? Do you remember how it made your eyes feel more open than ever before? That is what it was like journeying through Israel, "the fifth Gospel," with dozens of our closest brothers and sisters in Christ. We encourage you to take the time to listen to the teachings given there in order to gain some of this same experience - you won't regret it.

# the MORLD is full of DARKNESS

he darkness we see
every day can be
subtle. Materialism,
political divisiveness, lusts of
the flesh and the eyes are all
themselves rooted in darkness,
although they make take some
discernment to recognize.

It is sometimes confusing to recognize darkness from light – Satan often doesn't present clearly polarized decisions between right and wrong, good and evil. However, in my experience, darkness has never been as easily recognizable as it is in the youth detention facility. Confusion about adulthood, responsibility, sexuality, racism and eternity abound here, and the opportunity to serve those

pray and relate to them. Light hearted and painful questions alike are asked: "Why do you drive such a cheap car with such tiny wheels?", "Why do all white people look alike?", "If I pray to my grandma, will she answer me?", "Is my cousin who got murdered in Heaven?" What about evolution, creation, "Why is it that God won't let me out of jail?"

The questions indicate a level of pain and confusion that Christians don't have to feel. God has sent us the Comforter, and his Word which clears up this confusion and anxiety. The Church has a unique opportunity in Akron to share the Good News with the people who may be the

"We are the lights of the world."

Matthew 5:14

who have nothing to offer has been given to each of us.

A ministry known as True North has taken the lead on serving these kids in the juvie, as it's affectionately known. Girls and boys alike are kept here on a short to mid-term length, until they're released or sent to more long-term facilities. Volunteers visit once per week and conduct a bible study to those interested,

most in need of hearing it. These kids are in need of role models, steady figures in their lives that they can count on. In most cases, they've never had a reliable father figure in their lives. They are children that need to be cared for, as we all need to be cared for.

We are the lights of the world. Mt 5:14

A deliberate and consistent

effort to share the Gospel to those in need is the life that Christ calls us to. There is an overwhelming amount of work to be done with True North and with other service ministries, but the work is finite and when it's over, comes with eternal rewards. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved:

- 1. Prayer A consistent and reliable prayer for the kids and the volunteers would accomplish much. Many times, all we can accomplish with the kids is prayer, and God is faithful with answering prayer.
- 2. Volunteer There are many different opportunities of all varieties to serve with True North. There are logistical needs, such as cleaning, transportation, facility maintenance, and many others. There are Bible studies that need run at Dan St. in Akron, and other long-term facilities in Cleveland and Massillon, and both men and women volunteers are needed. Kids are taken to the True North farm in Green to work on the farm, and volunteers are needed

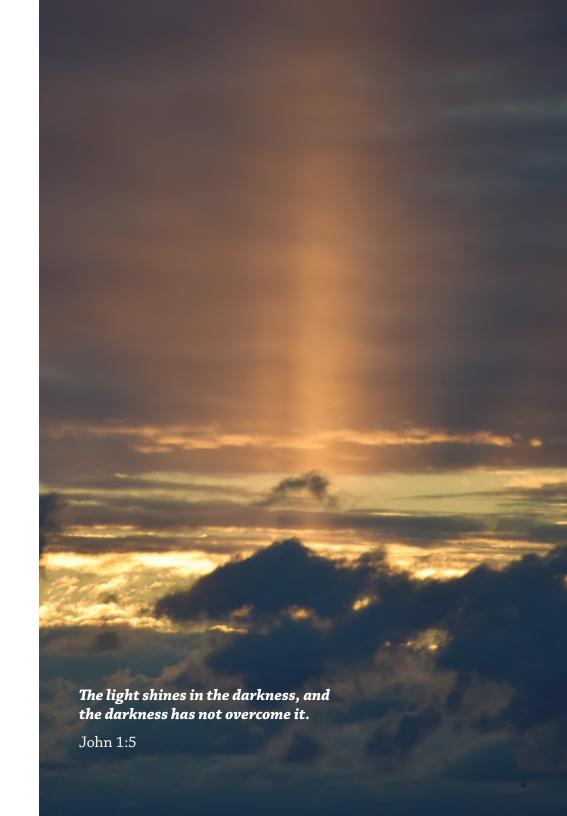
for that. Mentorship, a type of regular discipleship is another need. The needs of the poor are many, and the Body's diversity of gifting, burdens and interests can all be used to accomplish His purpose in the World. There is a plurality of opportunities for whatever service you feel comfortable with doing.

It's such an exciting opportunity to be a part of God's plan for eternity in this way. I don't have much to offer these kids, but what I do have, they need. I would encourage you to think about serving in this way, and I'm asking that you pray for them and for the volunteers. We know that God is at work in this ministry, and His will is being done. The darkness of the world is heavy, but the illumination that Jesus provides is more powerful.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:5

## Chris Baker

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# SPIRITUAL PARENTING

What future waits for our restless teens?

by Keith McCallum

T WAS A BIG TOPIC AT OUR FISCAL SUPPORT TEAM RETREAT IN EARLY FEBRUARY, BUT EVEN BIGGER IN EVERYDAY LIFE AT NORTHEAST OHIO XENOS—FROM SINGLES TO MARRIED COUPLES—THE ISSUE OF DISCIPLESHIP.

As depicted in the New
Testament, discipleship should
play a central role in Christianity
everywhere. According to the
earliest Christian history,
the NT book of Acts tells us
Christians were first called "the
Disciples" because discipleship
characterized that early
community.



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Discipleship is even more relevant today as a badly-needed framework for parenting.

Modern American culture

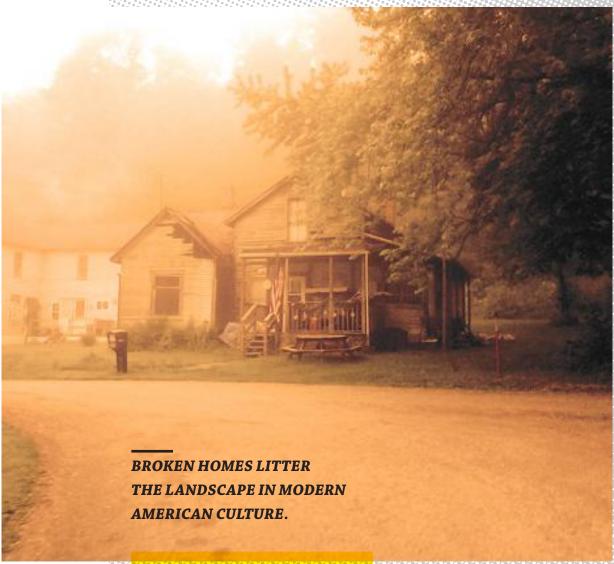
cover to cover. A Christian's early experience with discipleship pays big dividends later in parenting. For those already

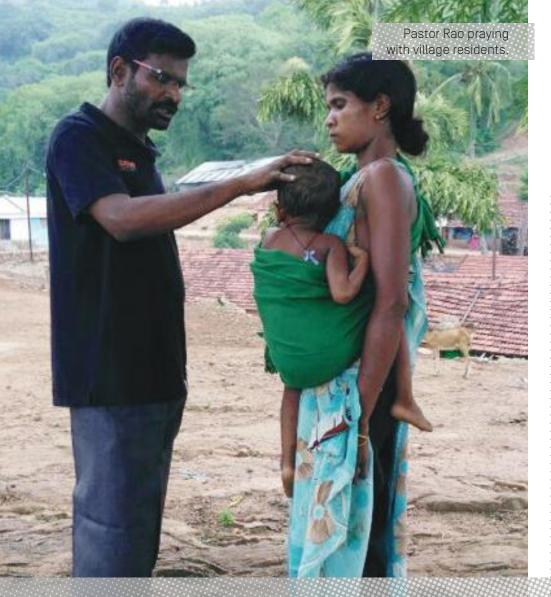
Discipleship is even more relevant today as a badly-needed framework for parenting.

is in an uproar and widely confused over what parenting and families should look like, considering the overwhelming number of divorces and singleparent homes—approaching or exceeding the majority of parenting situations. Obviously the wisdom of our culture is incapable of building intact, stable love relationships that children need to thrive and mature. Christian discipleship, on the other hand, actually heals broken relationships and models mature character, since the Bible depicts how love behaves from

parents or even empty nesters, discipleship can help rewrite the past under God's authority.

Beginning after the KSU Spring Break, NeoXenos elders will be teaching an eight week course on discipleship and how it pertains to Christian parenting. The course will have limited seating, with priority given to home church leaders, parents and graduates of the Leadership Training Classes. Sign-ups will be available at the book table at Central Teaching, beginning Saturday evening, March 11.





BEAUTIFUL WHEELS

When Pastor Rao prayed for a motorcycle we were able to provide it.

In 2013, a group of 4 men from NeoXenos traveled to India to witness India Gospel League's (IGL) growing ministry. In addition to teaching at a Pastor's Conference, they traveled up steep mountains roads to visit a village transformed by the Adopt-a-Village program.

By: Kalie Brooks The team returned with a huge ask: Can NeoXenos raise \$75,000 over 5 years to sponsor an unreached village in India? This holistic program provides clean water, schools, vocational training, medical camps, Bible teaching, and much more.

The people of NeoXenos said yes, and were matched with the most remote village in the program, a place called Sariki.

Since then, the village and church in Sariki are growing spiritually and economically. A recent evangelism campaign saw the gospel shared with 1,000 people. Twenty people came forward to receive Christ, while 150 others showed interest in learning more.

In the past year, a farmers' group started meeting to help improve agricultural efforts. Eighty women attended a candle-making training to learn how to generate income for their families. Other women have been trained in tailoring, or making crafts or food to sell.

Adopt-a-Village staff and leaders also gathered for training on communicable diseases, preand postnatal care, accessing government subsidies, running Women's Transformation Groups, and character development. 2016 also saw a long-time local opponent of the gospel in Sariki receive Christ.

But the people of Sariki are not content to keep these benefits to themselves. Another important aspect of the Sariki ministry is outreach to other villages in the region.

In early 2015, another NeoXenos men's team met the pastor of Sariki at a conference in India. They learned that Pastor Rao was walking up to 15 kilometers a day (over nine miles) through rough mountain terrain to share the gospel with neighboring communities. He was living the prophet Isaiah's statement: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7).

The men's team realized that Pastor Rao needed more than just his feet to carry the message—he needed some wheels. They asked the church to buy him a motorcycle, and again, NeoXenos raised the funds.

Pastor Rao preached the gospel in this primitive village and 10-15 people received Christ! He has also planted churches among the tribal people in nearby villages Thadivalasa and Kumbimada. All of these tribes are in great need

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!"

Isaiah 52:7

Since then Pastor Rao has started churches in six neighboring villages. One tribe was extremely hostile and severely beat him twice, threatening him with his life if he returned. He did, and the village leader received Christ! He has been welcome there ever since.

With the help of his motor bike, Pastor Rao recently discovered an extremely remote, primitive tribe in the village of Dhulibadra. They are unreached by any government structure. No schools. No health care. No running water or electricity. "They were all naked," described a shocked Becky Stanley, IGL's Director of Childcare and Rural Development.

and the current Adopt-a-Village gifts cover costs only for the programs in Sariki and two to three of the surrounding villages.

To address these urgent needs, India Gospel League has requested a one-time gift of \$10,000 from NeoXenos. This is in addition to the \$75,000 commitment and would go toward serving women and children in the tribal communities near Sariki.

Specifically, the gift would be used to provide educational materials for school that IGL has started. The money would also provide skills training for villagers, and run medical camps since malaria is rampant.

God is working among the people in the region surrounding Sariki, and NeoXenos has the great privilege of participating. When Pastor Rao prayed for a motorcycle, we were able to provide it. A set of wheels allowed Pastor Rao to bring the good news of peace and salvation to the least reached in India. What might this new gift make possible? There's only one way to

find out. Let's say yes once again.

If you would like to contribute to the urgent needs of these mountain tribes, please contact Darlene McCallum, the Adopta-Village coordinator, at darlene@iglworld.org. Or you can call the IGL office at (330) 650-5900.



**Top:**Skills training for women.

Bottom: The day care and school in Dhulibadra.





# Spring is almost here, and you know what that means.

That's right, it's time for Xenos' very own Basic Christianity course! But don't let the name fool you. We will be navigating through tough spiritual questions and issues that Christians everywhere need to know how to address. We will learn together, discuss together, and have a blast together. You don't want to pass up on this opportunity.

Teaching the class is Xenos' newest full time minister – Kyle McCallum. Kyle brings a wealth of teaching experience from high school and college ministries, and he plans on promoting an engaging, discussion-based atmosphere. Kyle is a part-time

extreme weather enthusiast, so expect a few weather analogies during class.

Making his teacher's assistant debut is "High Life" college home church member and Cleveland sports enthusiast Tommy McCartney. Tommy will be the main point of contact for class payment, turning in assignments, and class handouts.

Basic Christianity is a seeker-friendly course open to any who wish to deepen their understanding of core Biblical teachings and concepts. If you are interested in taking the course, email Tommy McCartney at tmccartney23@gmail. com. Class starts Wednesday, 04/12/17 and will be held every other week. Below are details:

# Class dates/topics:

	_
04/12	Introduction, human
	nature, God's solution
04/26	Theology proper,
	Christology
05/10	Pneumatology, spiritual
	growth
05/24	Understanding the Bible
06/07	Ecclesiology, Satanology
06/21	Final Exam

# Grading: Price

Final exam (50%)	Couple = \$40
Quizzes (25%)	Single = \$25
Homework (25%)	Student = \$10

# Where:

4345 Eastwicke Blvd., Stow, OH.

# What you will need:

- Bible (Study Bible preferred but not required)
- Notebook or computer
- · Pen/Pencils
- Binder or folder to hold class handouts
- Payment due second week of class
- Required books (to be announced in class)
- RECOMMENDED: Note cards or note card computer program for verse memorization