

Big Life Plants 7,000 Churches in Difficult Nations

From his experience in the **mission field**, John Heerema has found that men often think too small. So he and his ministry team have strived to dream big in their vision for reaching the lost.

They founded an organization called Big Life Ministries, and the impact it has made in a relatively short time has inspired a book, *A Big Life: Ordinary People Led by an Extraordinary God* by Peter Hone, with a foreword by the late Charles Colson and an afterword by Mike Huckabee.

Since its inception in 2000, Big Life has planted more than 7,000 churches in some of the most difficult places on earth to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Heerema, the executive director of Big Life, says that each time the ministry has set a goal, the Lord has far exceeded it.

“From the beginning, John had always tried to think God-big, but over the years, he was discovering that thinking God-big was something that everyone in Big Life could aspire to but never achieve,” the book says. “God’s big was beyond imagining.”

The ministry began working in the Middle East, shifted its focus to India after its travel visas were revoked because of 9/11, and now works in several countries in the **10/40 window**—an area between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator that includes North Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Many of the governments there forbid spreading the gospel, and the people often suffer from poverty, starvation and disease.

More than 90,000 former Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists in this area have accepted Christ through Big Life. Included in this

number are criminals, murderers, bank robbers, prostitutes, alcoholics and even radical jihadists.

Big Life's strategy was cultivated in the field. They call this approach "Acts in Action," alluding to the book of the Bible that chronicles the first churches and missionary work in the New Testament. Rather than sending out seminary-trained missionaries to live in other countries, Big Life equips ordinary local believers to plant churches and reach their communities for Christ.

The ministry's work has attracted a number of prominent supporters. One of them, Oliver North, said, "Big Life is doing what the Apostle Paul did. ..."

Many **missionary organizations** have strayed from the biblical model, but after 2,000 years, the old approach has become new again.

"What makes this story so thrilling for me is that it represents the new wave of missions in the world," Colson said.

As the book winds down, it says, "The story of Big Life is an object lesson in what God will do through obedient people."