

LIVING A NEW KIND OF AMERICAN DREAM

By Brandy Campbell | Photos by Jason Wallis

Pastor's passion for the poor fuels river of generosity from his church.



Pastor Platt prays with a family from a Child Survival Program center in India.



What's a pastor supposed to do when the darkness of poverty haunts his thoughts?

This question troubled Pastor David Platt during a mission trip to Delhi, India. So many people swallowed up by starvation, disease and modern-day slavery.

"Families with three, four, five or more children living in eight-by-twelve-foot shacks," Platt writes in his book, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith From the American Dream*.

"We dodged piles of human feces that littered the ground as we walked on the outskirts of the community. Water was limited, food was scarce, and the urban slum continued for what seemed like miles with no end."

Platt felt driven to do something — to live out his faith and truly help the poor whose plight he could not get out of his head. More than that, he was compelled to challenge his 4,000-member congregation at The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Ala., to do the same. Eventually, their collective effort would help hundreds of the very lives Platt had despaired over in India.

HIS APPROACH? LIVE IT FIRST, PREACH IT SECOND.

So Platt challenged his congregation to scale back and sell their possessions — but only after he and his family moved into a smaller house and began to focus on giving. When he instructed the people of Brook Hills to care for orphans, he did so as a father who had adopted a son from Kazakhstan and had an adoption in process for a daughter from Nepal.

Meanwhile, as a sponsor with Compassion, Platt's involvement with Compassion deepened as his life progressed. He liked how Compassion works through established churches in developing countries to reach those with the greatest needs. He encouraged his own church members to become more involved with child sponsorship, where they could invest personally in rescuing children from poverty.

HIS CONGREGATION RESPONDED.

"It's been amazing," Platt says. "Doctors selling their homes and cars. College students deciding maybe building a career and riches isn't the ultimate goal, but rather building resources in poverty-stricken communities is." All because, through his actions, they could finally see the words of the gospel come to life.

Platt also challenged the staff at Brook Hills to examine the church's spending habits. Over several months, they trimmed expenses and produced a \$500,000 surplus. Normally, that money would help them feel secure in times of economic uncertainty. But was security really what the church needed?

"For so long, we saw those funds as something to use on a rainy day," says Platt. "But why would we hold on to this for some potential future need when there are dire present needs all over the world?"

He learned that Compassion had several Child Survival Program (CSP) centers in India that needed funding. Platt remembered the despair he had seen in the country where 42 percent of the people live in poverty.

What better, more practical way to live out the gospel? Platt presented the idea to the church to fund 21 CSP centers in India with the surplus funds. They agreed.

GENUINE FAITH — TANGIBLE HOPE

Platt has since taken several groups to India. He says they've seen the same ray of hope that he saw with Compassion. While his previous trips to India had depressed him, when he visited CSP centers with his church groups, he saw "a different India."

"There, I saw wonderful, tangible, specific, sustainable ways to address real, deep, urgent needs," Platt says. "It was a bright light in the middle of the darkness."

Over and over, he saw women who had nothing, whose babies should have died, rescued by church-based staff in the Child Survival Program Centers that Brook Hills had funded. He saw businessmen and businesswomen, schoolteachers and stay-at-home moms who make up his congregation every Sunday help rescue mothers and babies.

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While in India, Platt met with many of the pastors Brook Hill partners with through Compassion. He saw that Compassion, and specifically the Child Survival Program, was enabling these churches to help the poor beyond their physical needs and offer them the hope of God.

"It was important to me as a pastor to hear that what Compassion is doing is allowing them inroads in these largely Muslim and Hindu communities," says Platt. "And we would have never seen that work, had that automatic relationship with these churches, without Compassion. Because if we want to have a long-term impact on urgent spiritual and physical needs, we can't bypass the local church."

Today, Platt says Brook Hills is considering ways to make its partnership with these 21 churches in India permanent and personal, perhaps through small-group sponsorships.

"This partnership has only heightened our desire to serve," says Platt. "We want to be a part of sustainable fruit in what we do around the world, not just hit or miss. I can think of no better way to do that than through Compassion." ✨

Compassion's Child Survival Program helps church-based staff connect with mothers in need. Staff visit mothers in their homes to provide medical, nutritional, and spiritual help. Go to rescuebabiesnow.org to learn more.

FACT CHECK



THE TRUTH ABOUT INDIA'S CHILDREN

India

Of the world's malnourished children, nearly one in three lives in India, and about half of all childhood deaths are attributable to malnutrition.



In India 57 Child Survival Program centers serve more than 3,100 mothers and children.



Every year in India, **1.5 million** children die before their 5th birthday because of unsafe water, inadequate sanitation, or poor hygiene.



OF EVERY **1,000 BABIES BORN ALIVE, 52 DIE BEFORE AGE 1**

NEARLY HALF OF ALL CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 5 ARE MALNOURISHED

SPONSORS HELP COMPASSION'S LOCAL CHURCH PARTNERS PROVIDE:

**NUTRITIOUS FOOD
PRENATAL CARE
HEALTH CARE
EDUCATION
FAITH**

- ★ nearly **30%** of all newborns have a low birth weight.
- ★ about **46%** of children younger than 3 are too small for their age.
- ★ **74%** of children younger than 3 are affected by anemia.



- ★ only **15%** of mothers receive complete prenatal care.
- ★ only **58%** of pregnant and nursing mothers receive iron or folate.
- ★ about **30%** of adult women in India are underweight.

