

Dear Friends,

May 2021

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

When the COVID-19 world gives us lemons, God provides a way to make lemonade. That is precisely what we are doing with our Novo international ministries that I oversee in supervision and staff care. For me, it has meant less global travel and more Skype/Zoom calls with field staff. My communication is now “third-shift” from 10:00 PM-5:00 AM, with maybe an afternoon call after I roll out of bed. For the Novo field staff it has meant less in-person ministry and increased on-line ministry. What seemed like lemons at the start of this COVID chaos has concocted some excellent lemonade this past year, instead.

Central Asia Leadership Training

We began a multi-month process of on-line training in Gospel Movements with 21 key Russian leaders. These leaders represent over 8,000 Bible study groups aimed at becoming small churches across territories in the former Soviet Union, most of which are Muslim-based areas. These leaders are penetrating Chechnya, Dagestan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and other Muslim-dominated populations in Central Asia. We provide the training, while these leaders move forward in ministry. It is less than ideal to do this virtually, but it is working.

We introduced the process and main Gospel Movement principles in March 2021. We will have these leaders prayerfully and honestly assess all domains of their lives and ministries to get a starting place for the work that will be done together in the months ahead. If finances are bad, let’s talk about it. If marriage or family is being neglected because ministry is booming, let’s put that on the discussion board. Everything in life and ministry is relevant and open for discussion.

We have significant church denominational leaders, multi-country strategic leaders, and network-wide trainers in our group of participants. Please join us in asking big of God in the months ahead. We are bridled by not being able to do this in-person, but God is able to circumvent the COVID restrictions. Novo staff seek to be skilled facilitators of growth, nearly invisible to set the table for these guys and the Holy Spirit to laser in on the areas where they need to focus for growth to thrive in life and ministry.



During nine-hour training blocks, Novo staff roll up their sleeves and help these leaders to dig into their life stories, to discover areas of strength, to learn some life lessons, to experience healing from past wounds, to get clear on who they are, on what God wants them to do, and to develop long-term vision, strategy, and action steps. Ultimately, we want to prepare them to become facilitators in providing this

leadership development process to hundreds of their Gospel Movement network leaders across the former Soviet Union and Central Asia in the areas of character growth, spiritual formation, leadership development and emotional health for the transformation of ministry leaders across this region.

God is introducing Jesus to Muslims in some most unconventional ways. **The growth of Bible-oriented fellowships is rapid and leadership development is lagging far behind. Developing leaders for an expanding Gospel Movement is what Novo staff do.** God is in control of the process. What seems like our own limitations and deficiencies, due to COVID restrictions, only serves as an opportunity for God to manifest His magnificent design for the nations of the earth at this unprecedented time.



Lemons to Lemonade

COVID-19 has given us lemons, but God has given us lemonade. In spite of the losses and deficiencies God is at work in the world, your life and mine. May we look to the Father as the Giver of all good things. May we dwell on the things that are honorable, pure, right, lovely, of good repute, excellent and worthy of praise. There is much to be thankful for in our personal lives. Speak your blessings out-loud! God's Kingdom is advancing in ministry. Proclaim His praise! May we see with spiritual eyes all that the Lord of Hosts is doing, both in the world and within us during this time of turbulence.

The world will always give us lemons, and this past year has been more evident of this fact than ever. However, God promises to always give us lemonade (Romans 8:28). Thank you for your participation with me this past year in making lemonade out of lemons, as we at Novo extend Jesus's influence into some of the darker spiritual regions of this earth.

For Making Lemonade,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Cathey".

Mark Cathey
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