



# PROVISION FOR LEADERS

## Provision for Leaders | From Launch to Legacy

Episode 006 – How Children Came to Matter to a Megachurch Pastor

With Greg Nettle

**Show Notes:** <http://provision.org/podcasts/how-children-came-to-matter-to-a-megachurch-pastor>

Greg: And so my passion for children and my passion for church planting, God brought that into alignment in this unique way that I believe is completely redefining the way we do church planting.

Larry: Welcome to another episode of Provision for Leaders. My name is Larry Winger and this is the podcast devoted to helping you lift your “leadership lid” from launch to legacy. Whether you’re a brand new leader or a seasoned veteran, consider this your all-access pass to “behind-the-scenes” conversations with exceptional leaders from the church, culture and commerce.

It always amazes me how seemingly insignificant events can have a disproportionate impact on the outcomes of a leader’s life. They’re going full speed in one direction when God brings them to a crossroad. That’s at the heart of the story you’re about to hear from my interview with Greg Nettle, President of Stadia: New Church Strategies. So let’s listen in on that conversation.

Larry: So Greg, when Wess Stafford finished writing a book in 2007, I sincerely doubt that he had any idea of the full impact that it would have in so many lives, but what I'd love to have you share with those that are listening to this podcast today, is how God used Wess's book in your life on Thanksgiving Day eight or so years ago, and what's happened since then?

Greg: Yeah, so Wess Stafford wrote a book called *Too Small to Ignore*, and my personal opinion is it's a book that every leader, actually every person, should read. I've given away hundreds of copies, now these days, but for me, my executive pastor when I was the senior visionary leader at RiverTree Christian Church in Northern Ohio, Gary came to me and said, "Greg, you need to read this book," and so I kind of indulged him and couldn't put it down Thanksgiving afternoon, finished it Thanksgiving evening, sitting up in my loft, and God just wrecked my heart.

The story is about Wess growing up as a missionary child in Africa and how God wrecked his heart for children at risk, specifically living in poverty, and his



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

story touched me deeply about our responsibility to care for children certainly living in poverty but also living in the dangers of prosperity, all the children around the world, and that started me on a journey that was quite frankly, life transforming.

Larry: Having read that book, I know exactly what you're saying, and I would highly recommend it as well. It's a must read, but what it did to you went to a whole new level. Can you talk about the paradigm shift that took place because you were in a lead pastor role at a very large church in Ohio, and that's not what you're doing today? So walk us through kind of that ripple effect.

Greg: Right, so for me, I cared about children; but when it came to the church I was leading, I really cared about children as a means to an end. So I wanted to have great children's ministries so that we could reach the parents. I wanted to make sure children loved coming to church so that they would encourage their parents to come to church.

All of these things weren't looking at the hearts of children and the inherent value of children being close to the heart of God. They really were all about building a big church, and that's certainly a pragmatic thing to do and lots of leaders do that still today but what I discovered is that children have an inherent value, that they're very close to the heart of God that Jesus was consistently lifting up the value of children.

So when I finished reading *Too Small to Ignore*, after I finished reading the book, I asked our executive pastor, Gary, to contact Wess Stafford's office and set up a meeting for me to spend some time with Wess.

Larry: So had you ever talked to Wess before? Did he even know who you were?

Greg: No, in fact, I didn't have a good track record with Compassion International, which Wess was the president of at that time. Jimmy Mellado is the president now. But I had said no to Compassion weekends at RiverTree for at least three or four years prior to this because I was afraid that if we started sponsoring children with Compassion International it would drain the general funds of RiverTree.



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

I was afraid that people who were giving money to RiverTree would divert those funds and give them to Compassion kids, and so I really didn't know if Wess would meet with me at all.

Larry: So you're saying the church was not sponsoring, were not involved in any way, shape, or form with Compassion. You were unknown to Wess and you're now asking for an audience.

Greg: That's correct, and so when Gary called out of course to Colorado Springs where Compassion's home based, Wess's assistant, Angie, of course, asked, "Well, why does Greg want to meet with Wess?" And Gary said, "Well, I don't know"; and I had told Gary, "I just think God wants me to meet with Wess," and so that's what Wess told Angie.

And again, Wess, out of the graciousness of his heart leading this global ministry to children, agreed to meet with me, and so literally just about a month later, I flew out to Colorado Springs and spent two hours in Wess Stafford's office.

The first thing, I walked into his office, I sat down on his couch in his office, and I started crying. True story. I'm not a big crier, but I said, "How could I have missed this? How could I have gone to seminary and gotten my degrees? How could I be leading a megachurch? How could I be leading people to Jesus, discipling them, but not have understood God's value for children?"

And Wess was so gracious with me and so gentle, and we spent two hours talking together. Obviously, we found out that we were kindred spirits, and he believed that God had sent me there as well. So at the end of our two hours together, Wess suggested that we pray together; and we spent time in prayer, and at the end of that prayer time I said to Wess, I said, "Look, I know how subjective this is, but I sensed while we were praying that I was supposed to ask you to mentor me," and I said, "It's fine whatever you want to do." I said, "That's just what I sensed that I was supposed to ask during our prayer."

And Wess said, "Well this is amazing." He said, "While we were praying," he said, "I sensed God saying to me that I'm supposed to pour my life into this young man," and that began a journey for the next several years where I would fly out and meet with Wess, and Wess came and spent time in my home and ended up teaching at RiverTree several times.



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

I began traveling with him to various locations around the world; and to this day, he's one of my closest friends and mentors.

At the same time that was going on, God was giving me a vision and several others in the state of Ohio about planting churches. In fact, if you remember, I flew out to California and met with you and shared the vision with you. Do you remember that?

Larry: Absolutely.

Greg: And I said, "Here's what I think God's doing," and you were so just like Wess in so many ways, were so affirming and encouraging to jump into that vision with us as a Provision family and Stadia church planting at that time.

Larry: Yeah, I wish I had known at that moment how pivotal that conversation was, but God knew, and I'm glad that the time we spent together was affirming because you turned around and kick started this amazing partnership alliance of church planting churches within the state of Ohio and did some things that had never been done before in that part of the world with churches that were getting planted faster and healthier than we'd ever seen.

Greg: Yeah, that's been a really fun journey. In the state of Ohio, we had this vision statement to make it hard to go to hell in Ohio, and it was very sticky, and a lot of churches jumped on board. Kingdom Synergy Partnership was born out of that, and to this day, we planted more than 20 new churches in the state of Ohio in areas like Cleveland and Cincinnati and Columbus and Dayton and Youngstown; areas that really need to hear the good news of Jesus.

So God was doing all of those streams, bringing them all together in my life in this idea of caring for children with no other reason than children matter, as well as planting new churches, which you don't count in your weekend attendance, but obviously it's the most important way to advance the kingdom of God. And so had those two parallel tracks running at the same time.

Larry: Yeah, and your plate was full already, and now you started doing this initiative in the state of Ohio which I know took a lot of leadership energy; and you gave it, and it paid huge dividends. But was God tugging at you in new and different ways because of the church planting initiatives?



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

Greg: I think He was tugging at me in expansion of His kingdom, how do you leverage out your leadership capital? I spent 25 years at the helm of RiverTree as the senior leader and certainly had wonderful leaders around me and eldership that made RiverTree the wonderful church that it is today and high-impact player that it is.

But with that, over the ensuing years, RiverTree began to embrace this idea of caring for children, which completely transformed the way we did children's ministry and do children's ministry at RiverTree today. But we began, for instance, we had our first Compassion International sponsorship weekend and we've sponsored several hundred children that first weekend. We today sponsor more than 3,000 children through RiverTree people as part of Compassion.

Larry: So I have to ask the question, your great fear was 3,000 people sponsoring kids, we're going to see a dip in our offerings. What's the reality?

Greg: Yeah, not once did the bills go unpaid, and we had a \$10 million mortgage at that time with Church Development Fund, Larry, and so I was deeply concerned and responsible for that; and what we watched was as we invested in things that are close to the heart of God, and I believe new church planting and caring for children, I don't think you can get much closer to the heart of God. And as we invested in that and then more and more heavily, God entrusted us with more, and I just think that's a Biblical principle.

I have this great story that I love to tell. When I transitioned out of RiverTree a couple of years ago to become the full-time president of Stadia, I'm jumping ahead in our story a little bit, but when I made that transition, the church asked me what I wanted. The elders asked me what I wanted as a transition gift after 25 years at RiverTree, and all kinds of things go through your head. A trip around the world for my family would be nice, a new motorcycle, a new truck. You can start imagining things.

And I was on a trip down into Bolivia visiting a church plant that Stadia and Compassion had partnered together to plant; and while I was down there I called my wife at home, Julie, and I said, "Hey, I think God once again just spoke into my life." I said, "I think I'm supposed to ask for a church plant as my transition gift."

A banner at the top of the page features a microphone on the right side, set against a dark background with bokeh light effects. The text "PROVISION FOR LEADERS" is written in a teal and white font, with a microphone icon integrated into the word "PROVISION".

## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

And so Julie said, "Hey, it's your gift so I'm good with that, and we'll support that." I came back told the elders. They said, "Well how much will that be?" And I said, "It'll be \$80,000 to plant a new church," and they went "Wow. It's a lot of money," and they said, "But let's see what we can do."

Well, in the end, RiverTree ended up giving the people of RiverTree in special offering, gave us \$160,000 and we were able to plant a church in Bolivia and one in Columbia, which are just thriving churches today. And I have to tell you, there's no greater gift. I think about what would I rather have: a new truck, or would I rather see two new churches planted, caring for hundreds and hundreds of children? And I mean there's just no comparison. The churches win out every time.

The reason I tell that story is because during that time, I came up to my home office one afternoon, and laying on my laptop keyboard was an envelope that said, "For God's Churches," and I opened the envelope, and there was \$197 in the envelope, and it was from my daughter Tabitha who was 14-years-old at the time, and it was all the money that she had saved from babysitting. It was all the money that she had from anything.

And my first response as a dad, as she was giving that towards the church plants that I had asked for, was, "Oh, Tabitha, you don't want to give everything you have," which was kind of shocking to me that I thought that but right on its heels, as I thought how close this church plant was to my heart was, "Oh Tabitha, you've given so much to this and as your dad, I'll give you anything that I can that's good for you. I mean, you just ask me, and if I can do it and it's good for you, I'll make it happen."

And then it struck me because that's exactly how God feels about us when we're generous towards things that are close to His heart. Oh Larry, I so loved that you sponsored that child. I love that you help plant churches, and, Larry, you just ask, and if it's good for you, I'm going to make it happen.

I really believe that's how God responds; and so it's no surprise to me now in hindsight when I look back at RiverTree and I look at churches and share these stories today, and I tell them, "Listen, if you invest in things that are close to the heart of God and you teach the church, your people, that God has entrusted you



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

to lead to be generous, God is going to entrust you with more. I've just watched it happen over and over and over again."

Larry: That brings chills and you're right, that's how we deal with our children. That's how we take pride in their values, in the way that they get the big picture that they're not the center of the universe and I love the way God used that book of Wess' as a wedge to kind of get in there and open your heart to new ideas, new thoughts, and ultimately to a new direction for your life.

We've skipped ahead. That's great, but do you mind walking through some of the steps from leading at RiverTree to now Stadia and you've alluded to the Compassion relationship? Let's kind of fill in those blanks.

Greg: Well, I'd been at RiverTree 23 years at that point. We'd sponsored several thousand, a couple of thousand plus, children with Compassion. We'd planted a bunch of churches in the state of Ohio and in different other places, and at that point, still wrestling with "Okay, God what's next," I had always said I would never leave RiverTree as its leader unless God gave me a crystal-clear call to go somewhere else.

And over the years, you wrestle with those things; but God had given me a crystal-clear call to come to RiverTree years ago, and so I always said I wouldn't leave without one. But in that process, Larry, you actually approached me about becoming the next president of Stadia church planting, and right at that time, it was funny when you asked. You knew I was the senior leader at RiverTree and how busy I was and we all are, and again, if you remember, I had been journaling. You said, "I think God's calling you to become President of Stadia," and I said, "I know."

And because I had been journaling a couple of months before that, I was laying on our bedroom floor actually and I was journaling and I got the strongest sense that God was saying, "You're going to become president of Stadia," and you and I had never ever talked about that. I'd never had a discussion with anyone about that. I didn't aspire to that in any way, but I went out and I told my wife again.

"Julie," I said, "Hey, this is the weirdest thing but I just sense God saying this to me." And so when you asked that, it didn't take a whole lot of prompting, I don't think.



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

Larry: No.

Greg: And it was just simply, yeah, God told me that that's where I'm supposed to head, but God had not released me from RiverTree and so that made things a little bit tricky, as you can imagine. I came back and talked to our elders and said, "Here's what I think God's calling me to do." And then again, our elders being very generous at heart, said, "We agree and we think to leverage out kingdom impact that you should become president of Stadia."

So for the next two years, I served as the visionary senior pastor leader of RiverTree Christian Church, which at that time then I believe we had four or five campuses at that point, as well as the president of Stadia, and that worked pretty well for about a year.

I remember being in a Provision family board meeting and sharing that my life was getting a little bit stressful and just people chuckling. And so finally when I was two years into the dual role, my life had become pretty much unmanageable, and so I went again to the elders. Actually, the first person I called was Wess Stafford and said, "Hey here's what I'm wondering, I've been asked to become full-time president of Stadia now, which would mean leaving my role at RiverTree." And Wess Stafford, without hesitation said, "Well, of course, you're moving to Stadia. That's what God's been preparing you for your entire life."

And I went, "Really?" Because I really thought I would be at RiverTree the next 20-25 years, and as we prayed through it with our elders for six weeks, fasted together, sought wise counsel, I went to a life coach. We did just a ridiculous amount of steps because of the implications of the transition.

At the end of six weeks together, the elders in an elders' meeting said, "We affirm this call of God on Greg Nettle's life to be President of Stadia, and as a result, we're sending him to Stadia." And it was this amazing moment, and so the transition from RiverTree to Stadia went extremely well.

Jason Lantz, who's the new leader of RiverTree, is just knocking it out of the park. He's one of my closest friends. My wife and I, RiverTree's still our church home. My wife leads worship there and I still preach occasionally, but



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

obviously I had a very full plate; so I have no need to control anything at the church.

Larry: So at the end of the day, that's a huge, life-altering decision you were facing. How did you make that decision? What were the factors that went into it?

Greg: Larry, I'm a firm believer in the call of God, and I know how subjective that is; but I'll go back to the sheep know the voice of the Shepherd and will come to Him when He calls to them; and so I think if we cultivate this idea of listening to the voice of God, I really do believe God speaks into our lives today.

I think in any decision that affects other people when you have other counselors speak into our lives, and so over the years there were times. I remember there was a time when a church twice the size of RiverTree came after me pretty hard, and I mean we were right down to the end and just about ready to say yes, and I had this dream in the middle of the night and sensed God saying, crying out to me saying, "You cried peace, peace when there is no peace," and I kept hearing that over and over.

I had to get up in the morning and look up in the Bible where that even is. It's from Ezekiel by the way, and at that point, I knew that that wasn't a transition I was supposed to make. And so I do think there's no easy way to make those decisions. It comes with prayer and fasting and wise counsel.

For me, it's also watching do the values of what you're heading are, is it going to be a good fit? Is it going to advance God's kingdom? And I know sometimes you have to move into transitional situations and challenging situations as well. But one of the things that had happened right as I became president of Stadia and was doing the dual role, so new church planting remains the single most effective way of reaching people with the good news of Jesus Christ. That's true throughout the United States. It's true around the world.

But the other thing that's also true that I learned was there's something called the 4/14 Window, and it simply says that 85% of those who make a decision to follow Jesus do so between the ages of 4 and 14. That statistic is true throughout the United States. It's also true around the world.



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

That has staggering implications for church leaders in the way we do church. So the question is, what would happen in church planting if we planted new churches that strategically and intentionally cared for children? And Tom Jones, our executive director, and Brent Foulke were so instrumental in this transition, Fernando Puga in Ecuador on the Compassion side and then ultimately Wess Stafford.

But one of the things I loved about Compassion and one of the reasons RiverTree --we partnered with them-- is they only work through the local church. And so that's a wonderful strength but it's also one of their biggest challenges because in some of the deepest areas of poverty in the world, some of the fastest growing areas of poverty in the world, there literally are no local churches.

And so Compassion can't have their ministries there, and so we said, "Well what if Stadia would plant the new churches in those areas; and from day one, Compassion would launch their ministries to children out of those churches, and 200 children would be sponsored by churches in the United States?" And we said, "Well, let's experiment with this."

And so this is the five-year anniversary by the way of that experiment which started with four churches, new church plants in Ecuador. And it was just nothing short of magic. It just exploded with growth. As you can imagine, combining church planting with caring for children, and so those four churches have today, by the end of this year, I believe we will have planted more than I think it's 120-130 churches throughout South America with Stadia and Compassion, which has just been this incredible journey.

And so when we talk about that transition from RiverTree to Stadia full time, all of that played into that because that was all happening during my first two years of being on staff with Stadia. And so my passion for caring for children and my passion for church planting, God brought that into alignment in this unique way that I believe is completely redefining the way we do church planting.

Larry: So you talked about around 100 or more churches in this five-year period of time and if I'm not mistaken, every one of those churches has kids that have been sponsored – usually 200 to 250 – is that roughly right?



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

Greg: Yeah, so the numbers are really fun. So for every church that's planted, we start with 200 children sponsored, and then they can go on from there to sponsor up to 300, 350 children. For every child sponsored, it gives that local church credible access to 30 adults in that community, and so you do the math. We've sponsored now through those local churches, it'll be more than 20,000 children at the end of this year and times 30 people in every community, and it's literally transforming the communities through the outreach and impact of that local church.

The thing that I didn't expect was how it's re-energized our church planting in the United States because children have inherent value in the heart of God. God blesses things that are close to his heart. When we plant new churches that intentionally care for children, God's hand of blessing is just all over them. And so now Stadia requires our church plants to have an intentional strategy or plan of how they're going to care for children in their local context.

Larry: So I'm very anxious to hear how that works out. I mean what are some of the ways you're seeing this churches focus on that age group to elevate the value of children?

Greg: Well it's interesting. In some areas, it's a very natural thing because in a traditional kind of church plant, you have family units that are coming into that church, and it's very easy for them to start ministering in the community to other children. They may go out and work in the local school system to be mentors and read to children, to pack backpacks of food for children on weekends, and that's very natural when you have children within that church community to make those connections in schools.

But we have a church that launched a couple of years ago down at Columbus, Ohio, at the Ohio State University, and the church is specifically called to love the students of the Ohio State University, and so that church is made up of a lot of young adults and a lot of college students, many of whom, most of whom don't have children.

But again, that church specifically and strategically has said, "Okay, we're going to pick a school in our local area and we're going to care for the children of that school," and they began serving lunches and packing backpacks and



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

tutoring, and that church is just this beautiful light in that school system today and now the school system calls that church to say, "Will you sponsor this event? Will you chaperone this event? Can you come help us this way?"

And so we're watching it across to every demographic that when you care for children of the community, people care that you care for their children. Now I'll come back and just reiterate it again, we do this not to grow the church to reach the adults. That's a byproduct of what happens and it's a very good byproduct. But we do it because children matter.

Larry: I've heard you say that all children are at risk, and we kind of get that in an international context because of poverty and the way it ravages children and their families. But could you talk for a minute about how you see children in the U.S. at risk?

Greg: Well Larry, there are dangers and diseases that I think we all see that stem from poverty, and what I would contend is that there are dangers and diseases that stem from prosperity as well. So I might have a little 6-year-old girl, Gazelle, living in Bolivia in abject poverty, and she doesn't know if she's going to have food to eat. She doesn't know if she's going to be safe tonight when she goes to sleep. Dad's AWOL because he's an alcoholic so she's growing up in a home with her mom and her older sister on a dirt-floored hut, she can't even begin to think about Jesus.

On the other hand, I have my daughter Tabitha who is now 17, and she is growing up in the relative prosperity of the United States; and so she goes to bed at night and her dangers are a sense of entitlement, thinking about all of the things that she wants and thinks that she needs, "Oh my gosh, I need that new pair of shoes, for the dance Saturday night."

She has so much going on in her life. She has all the dangers of social media and the internet, and so she's thinking maybe I don't even need that, or maybe she forgets to think about God. And so she's far away. So yet, in the middle, you have this line of enough and what's enough to live and to flourish.

Gazelle in poverty isn't close enough to the line of enough to think about Jesus, and the further you move into prosperity, the more dangerous it becomes as you move away from enough and you stop thinking about Jesus or about God.



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

And so the idea is how do we rescue children from prosperity? How do we teach them to care about others? How do we teach them that they're blessed to be a blessing to others? And what we've discovered is, as my daughter Tabitha sponsors little 6-year-old Gazelle, which is a true story in Bolivia. It pulls Gazelle towards the line of enough and it moves Tabitha down towards the line of enough, and both become less spiritually at risk.

Little Gazelle I visited in Bolivia two years ago. She was eight years old at the time and she had just given her life to Jesus, had become a follower of Jesus, and I think about that. That was because Tabitha, when she was 14 years old, made the decision out of her babysitting money, to sponsor for \$38/month this little girl in Bolivia at a brand new Stadia church plant, and as a result, Tabitha now today sponsors at 17-years-old, three children on her own, and she's helped to raise the money in a whole other church plant. That's another story with ten other children, to plant a church. And so I love what God's doing in both of the hearts of these children.

Larry: Greg, you're an incredibly busy man and I know that you're in the midst of leading a high-impact church planting organization, you travel, you mentor church leaders across the country and yet I know you place a great priority on leading your family and discipling your children. Talk a minute about how you keep that priority in check.

Greg: Well I struggle with it, as you know Larry, and constantly recalibrating. In my journal, I journal regularly, in the front of my journal I have my rules to live by, and rule number one is the most important thing I can do today is deepen my relationship with God.

Rule number two is the most important person that I can treat kindly today is my wife, Julie. And Rule number three is the most important people that I disciple are my children.

Several years ago – gosh, this was quite a long time ago -- I was visiting missionaries in Africa, and this young man who had just become a father, asked me, he said, "So what are you doing to intentionally disciple your kids?" And I was trying to act all spiritual and wise and I couldn't come up with much and I hadn't given it much thought.



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

And today, that's a whole different ball game. I've begun to think very intentionally, very strategically. I mean we're sending Tabs now on college visits. We're taking her where she's taking the ACT test. She's in dance classes. We're very intentional about all of that. It certainly seems like we should be very intentional and strategic about helping our children follow Jesus just as much.

And so I remember before Tabitha was entering her freshmen year of high school, and I took a couple of weeks that summer and spent time putting together a strategic intentional plan, I thought, "Okay, I've got Tabs in my home four more years. By God's grace, hopefully, she'll go to college, and but I've got four years. So what's the plan look like, Greg, to intentionally disciple Tabitha in these last four years?"

And I obviously went over that with my wife, and then we sat down with Tabitha. The interesting thing when we sat down with Tabitha was how excited she was about this. It really mattered to her that we had given this thought and that her spiritual life was a concern for us.

And so we implemented that plan with things like well, we want to read Lee Stroebel's *The Case for Faith* and *The Case for Christ* together, which by the way, Tabitha is a visual learner so we ended up using the videos and not the books.

I wanted her to take Dave Ramsey's *Financial Peace University* with me and to discuss finances as one of the things in her spiritual preparation. I wanted to take her on two more international missions trips with me. There were some more Bible memory verses I wanted to memorize with her. And hopefully, I'm hoping that her senior summer, I'm trying to save enough money to take her on a trip to Israel because I know how much it impacted my life to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. I don't know if that'll happen, but that's part of the plan.

Larry: So in essence you were creating a life curriculum for your kids. I wish more parents would do that. You've discovered that it's never too early to start, but also never too late. You now have a head start with Elijah.

Greg: But Elijah, so I've been able to be much more intentional with him to think through kind of okay, we have at a younger age, what's the plan for



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

Elijah's spiritual development? But you've met Elijah several times, and you know, he's just a train down that path.

Larry: That's so great. Greg, I know you are a visionary and you're always looking out into the future and listening to God. To the extent that you can see down the road, what do you see as the future for Stadia, as a movement both domestically and internationally?

Greg: Well Stadia's vision is to make sure that every child on the planet has a church. I think about growing up in a little town in Clinton, Ohio, in a little church of less than 200 and I walked forward to an invitation hymn when the organist was playing and gave my life to Jesus when I was 11 years old.

And then I fast forward to my daughter, Tabitha, when she was 11, responding to an invitation at RiverTree that another church had planted in our area years ago, and she gave her life to Jesus at 11 years old; and I often think back, how different would my life have been without that church in Clinton, Ohio, that cared for children?

And I think about RiverTree and how different Tabitha's life would be if that church wasn't there. And I think about little Gazelle living in Bolivia, that if that church never had been planted, how different her life would be for all of eternity. And so, Larry, my dream, I want to see millions, millions, millions more in heaven and growing up in a better life in this world and making an eternal impact all around the globe; and I believe with all of my heart, the future's extremely bright for the church, for church planting, for children, but it happens through planting churches that intentionally care for kids.

Larry: Well when you go down the list of what would it be like...I would just add, what would it be like if, Greg, you had not listened to God and responded to the call to lead this movement of church planting? And I'm so grateful to Him for you and for your friendship and for what you're doing in the world. Thanks for this time too in this interview.

Greg: Thank you, Larry. It's been a pleasure.

Larry: Well now, this is your chance to join and expand the conversation. Take a minute to go to the comments section of this podcast at [Provision.org](http://Provision.org) and tell us



## PROVISION FOR LEADERS

- If you're a Christ-follower, when did you make that decision?
- Was it in the "4/14 window"?
- What's your story?

And if you'd like to get Provision for Leaders automatically delivered with each new episode, please subscribe to our channel today on iTunes, Stitcher Radio or Google Play.

Finally, I like the quote by Frederick Douglass who said, "It's easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

Until next time, remember to walk humbly and lead boldly.