

Gary and Debbie SEEVERS

A passion for evangelism

By Janet Walker

Since Gary SeEVERS committed himself to Christ at age 16, the word that best describes his life and ministry has been *evangelism*. Anyone who talks with him for even a short time quickly recognizes that, although he values education and training and has a list of academic achievements, his passion in life is to bring people to Jesus.

This combination of evangelism and academics makes him a perfect fit for the work God has called him to do as provost of Global University, the distance-education ministry of AG World Missions.

“At Global University, we don’t just educate people,” SeEVERS says. “We don’t just prepare them for ministry. We help propel them into ministry so people are won to Jesus and equipped to train others.”

Studying and soul-winning

Gary and his wife, Debbie, joined the Global University staff 13 years ago, but Gary’s love of soul-winning was cultivated much earlier. As a teenager, he was active in the evangelistic outreaches of his home church, Way of Faith Assembly in Fairfax, Virginia.

“We set up platforms in front of strip malls and sang and preached,” Gary says. “A team of us would travel to small towns throughout the Shenandoah Valley and knock on doors and share the gospel. We saw numbers of people saved.”

During high school, Gary was called to missions. After graduation, he enrolled in Bible school classes at Way of Faith, which served as an extension site of Valley Forge Christian College in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.

During his first year of study, Gary initiated an outreach at Lorton Prison, a facility for the Washington, D.C., correctional services, in nearby Lorton, Virginia. As a sophomore, he moved to the main campus of Valley Forge and participated in ministry

continued on page 27

“When a church emphasizes a well-rounded ministry approach, it will grow, prosper, multiply and fulfill the ministry God has called it to do.”

(Above) Gary SeEVERS studying in his office at Global University in Springfield, Missouri, and (right) ministering in Niger.



Gary and Debbie SEEVERS



Gary teaches a class in Malawi.

in Pentecost

at local churches. He and a classmate, Marshall Haley, eventually planted a church in inner-city Baltimore, Maryland — a two-hour drive from Valley Forge. From the four people in attendance at the first service, Patterson Assembly of God grew to more than 70 over the next 18 months.

Gary graduated from Valley Forge with a double major in missions and pastoral studies and a minor in Christian education. While all students were required to accumulate 36 Christian service credits in a four-year span, Gary earned 200 credits in only his first two years. By graduation he had accumulated more credits than any student in the history of the school.

Learning and ministry

Gary and Debbie married in 1981 and soon joined the staff at Way of Faith Assembly. During the next few years, Gary continued his education, earning a master's degree and beginning a doctoral program.

"I always felt God directing me toward some area of missions that would include a blend of teaching and equipping others as well as a preaching ministry," he says. "I thought that would be an ideal combination for me."

Gary found a way to apply that combination when he and Debbie began ministry with International Correspondence Institute (now Global University) in 1995. Global University offers a complete training curriculum for believers around the world who are serving at all levels of ministry and leadership in the church.

During his time at Global University, Gary has ministered in more than 50 countries preaching, teaching and setting up training plans. In each country, he works with missionaries and national church leaders. They describe their training needs and goals, and Gary assists them in developing or implementing a plan using the Global University curriculum.

Gary always encourages a national church to start with evangelism-level courses.

"When a national church focuses only on the upper levels of education (the degree levels), it begins to stagnate or decline," he says. "But when a church emphasizes a well-rounded ministry approach, it will grow, prosper, multiply and fulfill the ministry God has called it to do."

The emphasis on learning and ministry was heightened even further about five years ago when Global University implemented a service learning requirement in its courses. Each student enrolled in a course

must apply a principle from it through practical ministry to people within their context. Gary believes this concept sets the stage for more effective ministry.

As an example, he tells of a young student in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, who sensed God's call to ministry. When the time came to do the service learning requirement in his New Testament survey class, he prayed about what he should do.

Sensing the Holy Spirit's leading, he visited a nearby breakfast kiosk and asked the owner, "If I buy everyone's breakfast tomorrow, may I talk to them?" "Sure," replied the owner, "you're buying their breakfast."

The next day he bought breakfast for those eating in the kiosk, gave them some tracts and shared the gospel. Seven people accepted Christ that morning. Over time he disciplined them and then strategically placed them in Assemblies of God churches throughout Ouagadougou.

"The key of the service learning requirement is to take people from the course to the community," says Gary. "As a result, many more people accept Christ and more students develop maturity through experience."

"For 19 years this ministry was based in Brussels, Belgium. Considering today's exchange rate of the euro, our ministry budget would be at least 60 percent higher in order to maintain the same worldwide ministry impact we're having right now."

Because of the present financial challenges in Europe, missionary leadership's foresight to move Global University to the United States has greatly increased its cost-effectiveness. Consequently, its reach has expanded significantly.

In early 2008, Global University's enrollment topped 400,000 students from more than 180 countries. Over the years an estimated 2 million-plus people around the world have accepted Christ as a result of their studies.

The passion for souls the Holy Spirit imparted to Gary Seever's heart when he was just a teenager has carried through his life and ministry for more than three decades. This passion, along with Gary's deep belief in and commitment to training national leaders in the Word of God, is helping bring people in many nations to Christ — truly a global influence. **tpe**

JANET WALKER is assistant editor of the *World Missions Edition of Today's Pentecostal Evangel*.
E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.