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## Why here?

After months of preparation, in the fall of 2006 our church began conducting services at a satellite location. West Garfield is ground zero for everything inner cities of America have become famous for. The work is being led by Jamie and Andrea Thompson. This spring Andrea reflected on the mission.

As the Chicago winter lightens its blow and the snow starts to melt, I am reminded why I was hesitant to let Payton play in front of our house last summer. For a moment I wish the snow would stay. It slowly uncovers the ground — a smorgasbord of trash, liquor bottles, broken glass, used condoms, and dime bags. The blinking blue light of the police camera outside my window, high pitched voices of people spilling out from a late night party, the sound of someone selling CDs and DVDs on the street (some porn, most bootleg), this is where we live. Why here, God? **Why must we live here?**

Coming home from church, we find our street blocked with yellow tape. A car is being examined by the police. Someone got shot...a few houses from my home. I hope and pray that some youth who went home ahead of us from church is okay. Why here, God? **How can my kids play here?**

Jamie was walking home from church in the middle of the day. As a group of guys walked past him, one of them grabbed Jamie and pushed him to the side. "Get the @%## out of my way!" one yells. I thank God nothing more happened. Why here, God? **How can we possibly be safe here?**

At 12:30 a.m. I look out my window to see a party let out. It looks like a crowd of at least 80 people. A fight breaks out and the crowd gets louder. The police finally come — I count at least 25 squad cars and about 50 cops. I watch as someone throws a snowball at a cop. Some resist as the police bring out their clubs and break up the fight. Why here, God? **I don't belong here.**

A homeless man passes by with his shopping cart filled with all he owns in the world. Jamie and I acknowledge him and say hello. Surprised at our greeting, he makes an attempt to communicate back but isn't making any sense. He looks so joyful, as if he was invisible his whole life and finally found someone who can see him.

*He is why God brought us here.*

A lady, who lives on our block, kneels at the altar after our service. The smell of alcohol radiates from her

dose. He is homeless — locked out of the house by his wife; he has been in and out of rehab. I watch him sit in our Bible study surrounded by men praying over him.

*He is why God brought us here.*

A young man headed for a life of gangs and drugs kneels with Jamie in our home. After hearing the gospel for the first time, he prays and trusts Christ as his Savior.

*He is why God brought us here.*

Thank you Lord, for bringing us here — to this mission field of souls. I am humbled to be your tool to bring hope to such a dark place.

Let's never forget that we worship the God who made Himself flesh to dwell among us. He came to the worst neighborhood in the universe — Earth. He stepped into the dirt, grime, depravity, and violence of our world. He didn't

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clothes. Tears stream down her face. A life of brokenness, years of alcohol abuse. She prayed and trusted Christ as her Savior.

*She is why God brought us here.*

As I bring groceries in from my car, a five-year-old boy runs up to help with my bags. Neglected, he has on the same tattered clothes he's worn for a week. He lives in a drug house, physically affected by the drugs his mother used when he was in her womb.

*He is why God brought us here.*

A man addicted to cocaine. His father dead at 25 from a drug over-

come to live, He came to die. He taught us that if we try to save our lives, we will lose them, but if we want to find life to its fullest, we should give our lives away.

C.T. Studd said "To raise living churches of souls among the destitute, to capture men from the devil's clutches, to snatch them from the jaws of hell, to enlist and train them for Jesus, to make them into an almighty army for God — this can only be accomplished by red-hot unconventional unfettered, Holy Ghost religion, by reckless sacrifice and heroism in the foremost trenches."