

# Perspectives USA

## Rivers of Life through Perspectives

By **JAMES MASON**

**James Mason** has served as CEO of Perspectives USA since 2012. He has pastored in multiple churches and previously worked as Director of Recruiting for Frontier Ventures. James and his wife, Kelly, have three adult children.

For individuals who experience Perspectives, it's often like a river that begins as a mere trickle in the high mountains. Initially, a student might not discern how the waters will shape the landscape of their life. But as the small stream continues its journey, it gathers strength from countless tributaries and swells into a powerful current, shaping everything in its path—shaping every aspect of how the student views God, the Bible, and even their own life and commitments. Ultimately, students are awash in the reality that they can walk intimately with Jesus as he brings his purposes and transformation to all peoples.

In many cases, this river, having shaped the individual, begins to shape new landscapes. It carries soil to nurture other lives, form new initiatives, influence other places and people. Through the lives of the students, the river now carries and deposits silt that becomes the foundation of new life. The force of the Perspectives experience, often subtle at first, grows in magnitude, transforming landscapes far from its origin.

Stories of downstream transformation through Perspectives take on many different forms. For example, there are stories of mobilization multiplication—as students are mobilized to God's mission, they in turn want to mobilize others. They circle around to launch new Perspectives classes. They begin to mobilize their local church and church leadership. They expand mobilization opportunities to Christians in other cultures, languages, or even countries.



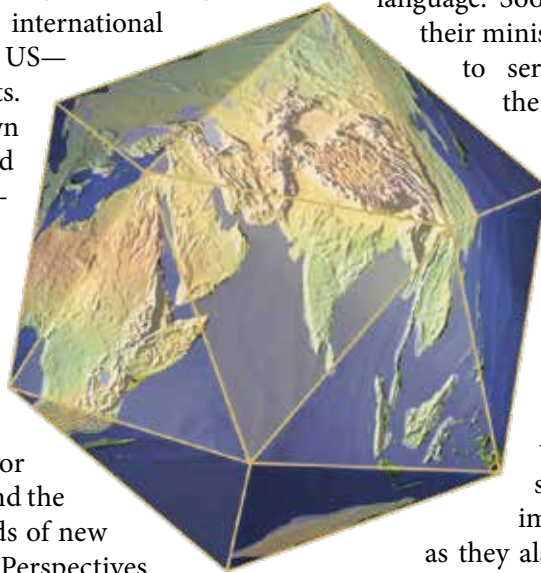
*There are many stories of students making new mission commitments and becoming more involved, all of which are deeply rooted in their own personal journeys of transformation.*

There are many stories of students making new mission commitments and becoming more involved, all of which are deeply rooted in their own personal journeys of transformation. This could be among unreached peoples in faraway places, in churches, on college campuses, or among international communities here in the US—to name just a few contexts. Churches also have their own stories of spiritual change and involvement because of Perspectives. Countless churches have begun sending teams to the unreached, started prayer initiatives, and reprioritized financial investment in “frontier mission” work.

Other stories of influence or impact within the US and around the world are numerous. Thousands of new churches have been planted by Perspectives students among the unreached around the world and in the US. Tens of thousands of cross-cultural missionaries sent from the US report that Perspectives was a part of their ministry journey. Entire academic institutions have redirected their educational priorities toward the frontiers of global mission. Many Christian leaders have been impacted by Perspectives and are now catalyzing Christward momentum through new institutions, ministries, and business opportunities. I’ll offer three story summaries of such impact:

### **Story 1—Retired professionals investing in others**

Melanie Mitchell, one of our Perspectives USA Regional Directors, recounts that she thought she could see the future in her new friends’ lives when she met them in a Perspectives class.



“Sally” was a nurse practitioner and had already been on a few mission trips and “Eric” was in a very successful company. They both had a heart for the world. I imagined them becoming long-term missionaries when they retired. But God had other plans. The couple started meeting Muslims and other immigrants in different communities in their city. With retirement nearing, they sold their suburban home and moved into the urban center to be closer to their new friends. They became very involved in local ministry to various populations in the area which included teaching English as a second language. Soon other friends joined them in their ministry and a church was established to serve the local community and the various cultures in the area.

There are often gunshots and homicides in this area, but my friends tell me story after story of the changed lives they encounter each day. Though I thought their ministry in the US was preparing them for the field, they found the field in their new community. Several years have now passed, and my sweet friends are still very much impacting those around them even as they also now fight the effects of Eric’s early onset dementia. I am so glad they did not wait to retire to begin ministry as I thought they might. Instead, their ministry started one life and step at a time. Only the Lord knows the number of people that now call on the name of Jesus because of their lives. Theirs is a life well lived, and Perspectives changed their lives forever and mine, too!

### **Story 2—Single Moms, Hispanic believers, and a movement of Bhutanese churches**

Six Lhotshampa Bhutanese churches are now meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, thanks in large part to Perspectives! Cindy Hensley, who expanded her vision through Perspectives, said, “Hearing the instructors’ passion for the unreached inspired me to connect with refugees in my city.”

In 2009, Cindy and a church friend, both single moms, while promoting a Perspectives class at an inner-city

Hispanic church, met a Bhutanese family from the 5,000 Lhotshampa refugees in the area. The Bhutanese women requested to join the class, leading to a weekly family night and the formation of new friendships.

Local Christians, including the Hispanic pastor and Bhutanese believers, engaged with the Bhutanese community through home visits, driving lessons, job assistance, and prayers for the Holy Spirit's guidance. As home Bible studies began, they discovered Bhutanese Christians who had come to faith in refugee camps. As the young believers grew in faith, several Bible studies combined to form a church. Cindy's church and the Hispanic church provided funds to assist a Nepalese pastor to lead this flock while attending seminary. He is also a Perspectives alumnus.

Cindy recalls Dil Maya, a young Hindu mother initially bound by fear, who chose to follow Christ after joining a Bible study. Cindy enthusiastically notes, "Our Bhutanese friends eagerly share the gospel with their community and beyond. This is all the work of God!"

### Story 3—Learning, Mobilizing, and Welcoming (told by Jennifer Frye)

"The first [Perspectives] class I took was in 2012. The class was lively and engaging, with students from all walks of life. Everyone seemed eager to learn and to be on mission. I felt like I'd found my tribe! There were many impactful moments—when I understood God's overarching plan of redemption told throughout Scripture, the multitude of times God's love for the nations is mentioned in Scripture, and how people from honor/shame cultures think so differently... I realized how much I had to learn ... I will never forget that first class in 2012. I'll also never forget my sweet communion with God every morning as he revealed himself to me as a loving, missionary God.

The next three years, I helped facilitate classes and my husband, Dave, joined me to learn, grow, and handle all our A/V technical needs. In 2015, God began redirecting me and several other Perspectives alumni to something new that enabled us to put into practice what we were learning.





We discovered something amazing. More refugees resettled in Worcester, Massachusetts than in any other city in New England. According to Acts 17:26–27, we knew that God was moving them on purpose, so the church could rise up and welcome them so that they could find him.”

*God prepared us for that time when so many refugees were arriving from Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere in need of friendship and help.*

At the same time, a new refugee ministry in Boston was hosting a training. Twelve Perspectives alumni traveled 1½ hours to attend all-day training on three different occasions. God showed up and did something we didn’t expect. He was gathering us and calling us to welcome refugees, many of whom were from unreached people groups. Others were Christians who had lived under great hardship and persecution. Most were Muslims. Our group began meeting weekly to pray, learn, and plan. We sought to understand the needs of refugees in our community. We partnered with a resettlement agency founded by Muslims who knew we were Christians propelled by the love of Jesus and they welcomed us with gratitude. After learning the ropes, we began training other followers of Jesus to serve cross-culturally by befriending families, setting up their first apartments, teaching English and driving, and praying with them. Before long, we became a 501(c)(3)—Worcester Alliance for

Refugee Ministry, WARM. God prepared us for that time when so many refugees were arriving from Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere in need of friendship and help. Since then, we have expanded to western Massachusetts and changed our name to Welcoming Alliance for Refugee Ministry, still affectionately known as WARM. I praise God for using Perspectives to launch cross-cultural missions right in our own backyard and allowing Dave and me to minister and trust God together.

The Vision of Perspectives USA is: *The body of Christ awakened to pursue the fulfillment of God’s global purpose within every people for his glory.* As we pursue this vision, hundreds of staff and volunteers can observe and participate in the transformative “downstream effect” of Perspectives on people’s lives. This committed tribe of mobilizers works countless hours to facilitate a transformational discipleship experience. They do this, in part, by organizing and administering a 15-lesson course. But our team goes far beyond “running classes.” We also give deeply of ourselves to people—to our fellow teammates and especially, to students. We do this through prayer, encouragement, instruction, accountability, equipping, and servanthood. As the students engage deeply in God’s ancient purpose and, as they experience the vibrant Perspectives community, they become a nurturing and unstoppable river of life! 🏡