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Missionaries and missions agencies come to Liberty for annual Missions Emphasis Week

February 20, 2008 ¦ Mitzi Bible

As a 5-year-old boy, Steve Saint's world revolved around his father. Then he was told the devastating news that his dad had been killed.

"I thought my life was over," he said at Wednesday's convocation service in the Vines Center. His visit was part of Missions Emphasis Week at LU.

Now, 50 years after his father, Nate Saint, and four fellow missionaries were slain by the Waodani Indians in the jungles of Ecuador, it is clear his life has revolved around missions and reaching out to the unreached. That includes the same people who were responsible for his dad's death.

Saint, whose best-selling memoir "End of the Spear" was made into a movie by the same name, went back to live among the same tribe his father had felt a call to reach in 1956. Steve Saint eventually saw many become "God followers," including the man who (he found out just a few years ago) was most likely the one to have slain his dad –- a man he now calls "grandfather" Mincaye.

Mincaye and Saint stood side by side on the stage and, with Saint as a translator, Mincaye told about following God, how his heart had been cleansed of sin "as you use soap to wash your clothes," and how he had been shown the "trail" to Heaven marked out for him through God's son.

The story of the attack on five missionaries made headlines in the Christian community in 1956. LU chancellor Jerry Falwell Jr. said his father's generation "came along when this had just occurred and it was an inspiration to a whole generation of Bible students and graduates."

Now Mincaye and Saint are hoping the rest of the story — the story about God's plan for five men to die so that many more could find eternal life — will be inspirational to students today.

"My Dad thought that he had been called to reach the Waodani with the Gospel message," Saint said. "I don't think that that was God's plan, looking back at it 50 years later. I feel that God chose my dad and his four friends, to go and plan their death to wake up a church in North America that had become apathetic to His children going into a Christ-less eternity."

Sadly, he said, the church is back in that same state. He told students he accepted the invitation to come to Liberty because "I think you're the generation that would make that difference. I think you're the ones that can turn missions into what it can be."

After the service, Saint and Mincaye met with a long line of students to sign books and take pictures in DeMoss Learning Center, where a missions expo has been taking place all week.

For Missions Emphasis Week, students are also learning about mission work through dozens of seminars focusing on missions-related topics and other special events planned on campus.

A Taste of the Nations international food tasting was held Wednesday night at the Schilling Center and a concert by WorldHelp's Children of the World choir took place on Thursday night, also in the Schilling Center.

The Friday convocation in the Vines Center was set to feature the Rev. John Gichinga of Kenya. (Due to inclement weather, the university was closed Friday and the event did not go on as scheduled). Gichinga, until recently, was the pastor of the Nairobi Baptist Church. Under his leadership this influential congregation grew to more than 5,000 people in weekly attendance while simultaneously planting sister churches all over Nairobi. Ginchinga is now heavily involved in counseling and humanitarian efforts throughout the nation of Kenya.

Kicking off the week was Brother Yun, a Chinese believer, who spoke at Monday's convocation on the remarkable arising of evangelicals in his home nation. Yun spent many months in prison for his faith, and is the subject of a best-selling book titled, "The Heavenly Man." In his native tongue, with a translator at his side, Yun shared about his supernatural escape from prison when Jesus told him, "The prison is real, but I am the Truth and the Truth shall set you free." The convocation service began with a Parade of Nations, where international students marched in with flags and represented their native countries.

A detailed schedule of the week's events is available at www.lumissionsconference.com.