

# Radio's Quintessential John Doe

by Phil Hoppersberger

**A program** translated into eighteen major world languages. Almost 1,000 new church-plants around the world. All from one man's radio program—and his inspiration from a great broadcast pioneer.

But you don't know him.

Probably never heard his name.

Despite his global impact, few people in North America would recognize his voice... but that's about to change.

Dick Woodward, pastor and founder of the *Mini Bible College* (MBC) radio program, a survey of the entire Bible that is broadcast around the world, is the quintessential John Doe. Few outside of Virginia know him, but everyone knows his mentor—J. Vernon McGee.

"I was a youth minister," says Dick, "in a large liberal church and I was going down the tubes spiritually. Some concerned friends sought help from my Bible Professor—Dr. J. Vernon McGee. He asked Ray Stedman, a pastor in northern California with a new church-plant, to come down and help straighten me out. Ray offered me a youth minister position," says Dick, "but he didn't even have a building! I had a plush office, a huge youth center and all kinds of perks in the liberal church I was in. Needless to say, I declined."

But Ray was determined.

"He told me that a call from God often involves a pull from the front and a kick from the rear. 'You got the pull from the front,' Ray said. 'Now I'm going home and am going to pray that you get a kick from the rear!' That same weekend, while I preached the gospel, the liberal pastor's daughter got saved and did I ever get a kick from the rear—right from the pastor and right out the door! So I got on a bus and went to San Francisco to be Ray Stedman's youth pastor."

Today, with the support of *International Cooperating Ministries*, a church-planting, church-building, and pastoral training ministry, the MBC radio program is broadcast internationally into 18 languages and over 40 stations in North America. Dick credits McGee with making it possible.



Dick and Ginny Woodward with their grandchildren

"He knew I was struggling," says Dick. "One night outside of Biola University, McGee told me he needed a driver for eight weeks for a series of messages he was preaching in a neighboring town. I became his driver and our friendship took off. It was only years later that I learned from him that he never needed a driver. He just wanted to help straighten me out."

"That touched me deeply," says Dick.

"That this busy man of God made time for me like that. It was precious.

MBC may not have happened if not for him."

In 1974, as his influence grew within the Virginia Tidewater area, Pastor Dick Woodward appeared on a local television show that eventually became a Sunday morning forum for his *Mini Bible College* survey. The survey would become his trademark and lead to the development of the *Mini Bible College* radio program. Dick had a specific audience in mind as he developed the program.

"Like McGee's *Thru the Bible*, it's directed to lay people, but instead of a five year program, we get through the entire Bible in just 18 months. That's critical for developing countries where there's little Christian influence or time to hear broadcasts. I'm convinced if we want to see the Great Commission accomplished, we need to train lay people. That's our objective as we go through the Bible book by book. We want to see lay people everywhere, whether in Kalamazoo or Bombay, equipped to articulate their faith through a comprehensive grasp of the Scripture."

These accomplishments are magnified even more when you meet Dick Woodward—and discover he's not moved in almost 20 years.

Crippled by a spinal cord disease in 1982, Pastor Dick Woodward is confined to his bed for 20 hours a day. Only with the help of a hoist, operated by an angel disguised as his wife, Virginia, can Dick leave his bed. Difficult to believe, but Dick Woodward works for eight hours each day! Thanks to a voice-activated computer, he's producing literature, booklets and commentaries to augment his MBC broadcasts, which in 2000 was completely redeveloped, including a new announcer, format, digital editing and expanded program schedule.

McGee would love it!

Hard to get your mind around the irony. A man, paralyzed for years, unable to scratch his nose, is reaching the world in such a way that leaves every other "able-bodied" believer without excuse for not doing more.

Without much fanfare, Dick Woodward has put a dent in the Gates of Hell that few since Studd or Moody have accomplished. Quiet dents, but like J. Vernon McGee's mark on Dick Woodward's life, they are undeniable impressions.

Eighteen languages. One thousand churches. One man... only now you *do* know him.

Phil Hoppersberger writes for Great Commission Ministries and lives with his wife and two children in Laingsburg, Michigan.

## International Cooperating Ministries

**Languages Translated:** Today the Mini Bible College, a ministry of International Cooperating Ministries (ICM), has been translated in 18 languages (Arabic, Bengali, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Mandarin, Marathi, Nepali, Oriyan, Punjabi, Portuguese, Shona, Spanish, Tamil, Telegu, Russian, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese)... and goes out on over 60 stations, 320 programs a week.

**Future Plans:** ICM, in this coming year, 2001, is trusting God to open doors to begin translation work for broadcasts in the Mongolian and Banjara (India) languages.

**Mini Bible Radio Broadcast Response:** On average, 4,500 overseas letters are received every month from those who say they are coming to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus through the broadcast.

**Mini Bible Radio Stats:** The radio program is a daily (M-F) 13-minute feature. In addition to radio, the program is also offered via Internet and television.  
[www.icmmbc.org](http://www.icmmbc.org)