



SOUTHPOINT
BAPTIST
CHURCH

2023

DEVOTIONAL BOOK

CREATED BY OUR MISSIONARIES

SPBC MISSIONS

AN INVITATION

Southpoint Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida follows Jesus' command from Mark 16:15 - "Go into the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere" (NLT). The church as a body of believers supports those missionaries that "Go" into the foreign fields.

We invite you to delve into these devotions lovingly and prayerfully provided by these missionaries. When reading their heart's revelation, pray for them. Pray for them personally and in their mission field. Use these as a daily devotion or read them as a book. However you choose to enjoy their stories, our prayer is for you to draw closer to God, be challenged to grow in Christ more each day, and support missions in your local Church.

With many sacrificial hours, we would like to say a special Thank-You to a number of people:

To the missionaries who took the time to provide these devotions.

To Pastor Terry Collins and Kitty Collins for their support, guidance and love for missions.

To the mission committee at SPBC 2022-23 for keeping in contact with our partners in Christ on the field.

To the congregation of SPBS that support all mission projects.

To Shannon Yates for creating and assembling the book.

To Sharon Peterson that used her time and talent to publish the book.

To Eli Elmore (photographer and former missionary to Portugal) for the cover photo.

MAY YOU FIND PEACE FOR YOUR SOUL IN THESE WORDS

Our Call to South Africa



Matthew 28 : 19-20

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

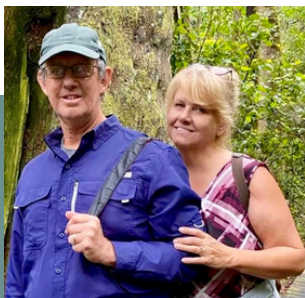
In 1997, 1998 and 1999 we were invited to visit missionaries in Durban, South Africa who were sent out from our home church. We spent several weeks each time with a team to conduct basketball camps, Bible clubs and medical seminars. While visiting, we encountered many children who were without parents due to the HIV/Aids crisis. We began to feel the Holy Spirit impress upon us to do something about it. We surrendered and moved to South Africa in June 2007. Here are some points to consider when seeking God’s call we became passionate about helping orphaned and abandoned children after learning about this crisis. Psalm 119:32 God will give you knowledge and passion for what He is calling you to do.

We were not called until later in life because God knew we would need the maturity and wisdom to handle such a task. We also must know that our passion is not everyone else’s passion. It’s not a conference call. God will equip you with what is needed when the time is ready if you listen and respond.

We believe it is a form of worship to God when we obey and surrender to do the work He has sent us to do. God’s call upon our lives comes from having a relationship with Him and because we love Him, we seek to please Him. Colossians 3:16.

Our call also requires us to be faithful. Over and over again, the Bible emphasizes faithfulness. Living in a foreign country can be challenging. Many times we get discouraged, want to give up or get frustrated but we know we must continue until the end. 1 Corinthians 4:2. We lovingly pursue the call of God because we need love in our relationships with others. Ministry can be difficult at times because we work with many different people from different backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. We pursue the call of God in obedience because our lives are not our own but we are bought with a price. 1 Samuel 15:22.

We have now lived in South Africa for fifteen years! God has taught us many things. We have been able to reach many children for Christ and have made many friendships with other believers as well. We love the people, landscapes and animals here. While we miss our family and friends, there is no other place we would rather be. God has allowed us to experience so many wonderful things while living here. We are very thankful for those who support and pray for us.



Graham Family

Missionaries to Africa

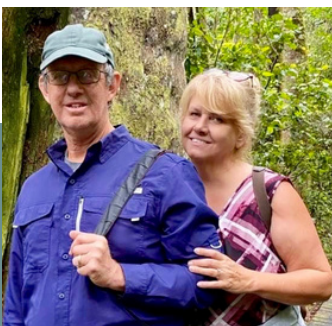
Jesus Is Lord



Being raised in a Bible-believing church, I was taught the importance of asking Jesus in my heart at an early age. Though the concept of asking Jesus in one's heart certainly can be inferred from the Scriptures, specifically Revelation 3:20, one of the most important aspects of salvation is that people must declare with their mouths that Jesus is Lord. Now, to believers, especially those living in the United States, this aspect may not seem unnecessary. After all, new believers have been willing to ask Jesus into their hearts, implying that Jesus has become Lord of those new believers' hearts. Paul made it clear in Romans 10:9 that confessing the Lord Jesus with one's mouth was necessary for salvation. Over the years living in South Africa, I have found that many people are willing to ask Jesus into their hearts. After all, South Africa is considered a Christian nation.

The problem is that although many are willing to believe in Jesus Christ and to ask him into their hearts, many feel other gods exist that can also be trusted and worshipped for salvation, including their ancestors. But to get people to declare that Jesus is Lord and that he is the only way of salvation is problematic. Furthermore, to declare Jesus is Lord in the states or even South Africa is not dangerous; however, believers that declare Jesus is Lord in places such as the central regions of Africa, where Islamic extremists, such as Boko Haram, rule with terror, stating that Jesus is Lord can and has gotten believers killed. These extremists do not seem concerned that believers have asked Jesus into their hearts; on the contrary, they wish to know whether these individuals believe that Jesus is Lord and equal with God.

Thus, it is important that as missionaries we ensure that new believers are willing to declare this important aspect of salvation in addition to asking Jesus into their hearts; and that before moving forward to baptism that they confess with their mouths in front of those in attendance the Lord Jesus as demonstrated in the picture of one of our local pastors Themba, who is baptizing one of our boys, Khumbelani.



Graham Family

Missionaries to Africa

The Power of the Gospel



Psalm 56 : 2-4, 9

2 For they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. 3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

4 In God I will praise his word, In God I have put my trust; I will not fear What flesh can do unto me...

9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: This I know; for God is for me.

What do we do when the world around us is constantly speaking the language of fear? Our public discourse is often centered around sickness, war, crime, disaster, or famine. Without realizing it, we can allow this fear-narrative to run in the background of our minds like the chyrons on the news station. Left uncorrected, we can begin to believe that everything is harmful, and no one is to be trusted.

It's no surprise that fear is one of the Enemy's most common attacks. A spirit of fear is certainly not what God wants for us. But since we live in a world which is beyond our control, and we are under attack by the forces of spiritual darkness, it is unavoidable that we will experience fear from time to time. As children of God, what should our response be?

First, we trust God. At the Time of writing, David was in the Philistine city of Gath, but couldn't escape because his own king, Saul, was seeking to destroy him. Truly, there were many that fought against him. Nevertheless, David realized that he did not need to fear. God was for him.

When we are fearful, we must pause for a moment and remember who our God is. He has never once failed someone who trusted in him. "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee."

Olivia and I have to remind ourselves to trust in God. Recently we were in an accident after only two weeks of being in Nigeria. The proceedings of an accident are much different here in Nigeria than they are in the US. There is no police response. In the best-case scenario, there is an argument to determine who will pay (usually no one,) but this time a small mob began to form around our car even though it was not my fault. Before I knew it, one of the men opened the passenger side door where my wife was sitting and lunged across the car to yank the key from the ignition. To say we were fearful in that moment is an understatement. It should be no surprise that despite my fear God protected us like He always does. Some friends came to help, the situation was handled, and everyone left unharmed. Now we have a decision to make. Will we live everyday fearing that something like this will happen again, or will we trust God, knowing He always watches over us?

David's next step was to praise God. I have never been fearful while praising God, yet when I am fearful, praise is the farthest thing from my mind. "I will not fear what flesh can do to me" while I am praising God and His word.

As we live life trusting God, it is natural to think about His goodness towards you and His promises for you in His word. Praising God is the antidote to our fears. What do we do to fight fear? First, we trust, then we praise.

Instead of dwelling on the fear of this world, let's trust God and praise Him for His goodness today.



Young Family

Missionaries to Africa

Make Disciples



Matthew 28 : 18-20

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

All Christians have a God-given responsibility which is to make disciples. Jesus promised that He would build His church in Matthew 16:18. He said “Go ye therefore and teach all nations...”. The word “teach” in the Greek is “mathēteuō” which means to disciple. The question then is “Are we making disciples?” On the mission field we can get involved, busy, and even distracted with many good things but if we are not intentionally seeking to make disciples, we have missed the main objective. Our Lord commanded us to make disciples and that is what He meant for us to be doing until He comes again. Discipleship is more than teaching a set of lessons. It is one Christian setting an example of Christ, sharing the Words of Christ, and praying the power of Christ on another person. As a church planting missionary in South Africa if I don’t aim at disciple-making I will be unable to leave as there will be no spiritual leaders to lead the church in my absence. Therefore, disciple-making is not only commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ but it is practical and critical for sustainable missionary efforts. From day one, many prayers a missionary are: “God please give me some disciples.” The missionary is crying out to the Lord for some young men to pour his life into in hopes they would become mature spiritual leaders that God would call to serve Him in pastoral ministry. In the townships of South Africa, a vast majority of young people grow up in broken homes with very little guidance. The education system is very bad. What chance does a 17yr old boy named Sisipho (means gift in isiXhosa) have? To be quite honest...not much. His mother is an alcoholic. He lives most of his time with his grandmother along with several other grandkids. He only goes to school a couple times a week because the school is overpopulated and alternates the schedule of the students. He is exposed to more wickedness than most kids would experience in a lifetime. Most of his friends will end up on drugs, alcohol, not finishing school and having kids out of wedlock. But, by hearing and believing the saving power of the gospel, having a Bible preaching local church planted in his neighborhood, and having a disciple-making Christian invest personally in his life, the possibilities for this young man are literally out of this world!!! This is what we seek to do on the mission field...change lives!

The biggest, most lasting change that can happen in a person’s life is the chance of being saved and then being discipled by another disciple of Christ. You are a blood bought Christian you also have the responsibility and privilege of making disciples of Christ. You can begin praying and asking God to help you make disciples. If you aim your life in this direction, you will see it happen. It’s a prayer our Lord would love to answer because it is His will.



Hall Family

Missionaries to South Africa

The High Price of Your Salvation



1 Peter 1: 18-19

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot

In Genesis chapter 22, to test his faith, God asked Abraham to take his son his only son Isaac and to sacrifice him on the mountain top. On the trip, Isaac asks his father, "where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham replies in Gen 22:8 -"And Abraham said, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:"

Of course, if you know the story you know that Abraham tied up his son ready to sacrifice him, but was stopped at the very last moment.

The Lord had prepared a ram caught in a thicket.

As I read this story, I cannot help but think the request was unreasonable. I cannot ever imagine being expected to sacrifice one of my children. But you see, that's the very point of the story. It is an impossibly high price to pay.

Of course, Abraham ultimately didn't have to pay that price, but God did.

To save us from our sin, God gave the only thing that was unique. The only thing he could never replace or just create more, he paid the price of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

When God chose to save us from the pits of our sin, he paid the ultimate price. If he could have paid in gold or silver, the price would not have even been expensive to God. But the only price that could satisfy the debt of my sin was the blood of the precious Lamb of God.

Focus Point:

Have you stopped to consider that impossibly high price of your salvation?

Are you still living in the very sin that God paid such a high price to save you from?



Brown Family
Missionaries to Africa

The Sword and The Spring



It is often in our greatest moments of victory that we are most susceptible to self and Satan. This was the case with Samson. Read with me this record of Sampsons great victory in Judges 15...

Judges 15 : 14-19

14 And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. 15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith. 16 And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men. 17 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramathlehi. 18 And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? 19 But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.

It is always in great victories that I find myself exclaiming, "I have done it!". How easily does our flesh default to self? We forget so quickly who gave the victory! One thousand Philistines fell before Sampson! That is incredible, but Samson's true strength is revealed in verse 18... "And he was sore athirst." Great and mighty men are found to be men still. Samson, in his pride, is reminded that he needs something outside of himself! This realization of his weakness prompted his confession to God, "Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" His prideful declaration gives way to his humble acknowledgment of his weakness.

Friend, we NEED God. Especially after moments of great victory!



This "new" jawbone reminds me of the precious word of God! Sampson took it and slew one thousand men and then threw it away! But God shows Sampson that the same thing that slays the enemy will quench our thirsty soul! The Word of God is truly the Sword and the Spring! IN SHORT, WE NEED GOD! We cannot afford to forget who gives the victory and who quenches our thirst!

Coker Family

Missionaries to China

“Follow Thou Me”



John 21: 1-22

Jesus had come to restore Peter to fellowship. God in his grace gives Peter the opportunity to confess his love for Him three times. Remember, Peter had denied his Lord three times! Unfortunately, our gratitude for the grace of God and his love for us is often overridden by our comparing and contrasting outlook in our lives. We are too busy wondering why the brethren seem to have it so easy to be thankful for what God has done. We wonder, “why did God allow this in my life? I mean, I am thankful for God's grace, but why did this lot fall to me?” look what Peter says...

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

Before God's call on my life to go to the foreign field, I served at my home church for 8 years. During this time, I watched God call several young men into specific service, such as missions, pastorates, and evangelism. I was always excited about what God was doing in their lives, but I must admit, I also had feelings of jealousy and comparison that accompanied my excitement. I would think, “why isn't God opening up those doors for me? I mean, after all I have been faithful in my service for the Lord”. It wasn't until I learned to be content where God had placed me, that God began to stir my heart for his call in my life to missions. God is more interested in our personally walk with him than we may realize.

Thankfully our Lord is long suffering...He desires for Peter to walk with Him and for us to do the same. He has a purpose and a plan for our lives that is FOR US. He knows us better than we know ourselves, and He knows what we need and when we need it. We cannot fulfill God's call in our lives if we spend our lives comparing God's will for us with God's will for others. Jesus desires to drive this point home with three words in verse 22....“Follow THOU me.” The first time in verse 19, we find “Follow me,” but in verse 22, we find “Follow THOU me”....It is a great day in life when you learn this blessed truth.



You cannot go wrong serving Him right where you are and finding contentment where he has currently placed you! Jesus tells Peter that if he wanted John to hang around until His second coming he would do so! In the words, “What I call John to do is none of your business!”...FOLLOW THOU ME. Don't miss God's plan for your life because you're comparing your life with others! Be faithful where you are and when the time comes God will lead you where He wants you.

Coker Family
Missionaries to China

An Hundredfold



Mark 10 : 29 - 30

29 So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother [a]or wife or children or [b]lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, 30 who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.

An elderly gentleman from my home church once remarked that because missionaries left their parents, brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews to serve on the mission field, God had promised to richly repay them when they reached heaven. This dear man meant well, but he had misquoted the verses. Jesus said anyone who leaves his or her family and land for His sake and the Gospel’s would receive an hundredfold NOW in this present time. I have personally experienced God’s “hundredfold.” God has allowed me to see children, young people, and adults come to Christ and then go on to serve Him. I have had the privilege of ministering to them as a friend, teacher, and mentor. Some of these young people have become like children to me. Pastor Tambunan's children also call me “Aunt” Karen. Now that they are married and have children of their own, their children call me “Grandma.” Yes, missionaries do leave their families, but God gives them new families, new lands, and new people. We are truly blessed “an hundredfold.”

Someone once said that we can never outgive God.

This is not only true regarding finances, but everything we give or give up for His sake and the Gospel’s is multiplied in returned to us.



Karen Werth

Missionary to Indonesia

Forbid Them Not



Mark 10 : 13-16

13 Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." 16 And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

"The children aren't so important. You won't reach the parents through the children, and you can't build a church with children." These words from a colleague just days before, echoed through my mind as I stood looking into the face of Herni whose lifeless body was laying on a bare, wood-slatted bed. At that moment, it didn't matter whether or not a church could be built with children. It didn't matter whether or not the parents could be reached through the children. All that mattered to me was Herni. Because she was saved, she was now enjoying heaven! In her twelve short years on this earth, she had been reached with the Gospel through the Sunday School ministry that had been started here in Jakarta.

The disciples of Jesus also once thought children weren't important. When parents brought their children to Jesus, the disciples thought they were doing Jesus a favor by stopping them from reaching Him. However, Jesus wasn't just a little upset, but He was much displeased by their actions. Jesus commanded His disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him. Then He went on to say that unless we receive the kingdom of God as a little child, we shall not enter therein. Children are humble, teachable, and ready to believe. Oh, that adults would have the faith of a child. A child who trusts Christ as Savior is not only a soul saved but a whole life that can be used to serve the Lord. The Sunday School at Pondok Aren where Herni received Christ cared about children and their parents. Two weeks after her death, Herni's mother trusted Christ. Several years later, the mission work which had held Herni's Sunday School became Grace Baptist Church of Pondok Aren.

Children are important to Jesus. Not only can they believe and be saved, but their parents also can be reached and Sunday Schools can grow to become churches. What can you do to encourage the children's ministry of your church?



Karen Werth

Missionary to Indonesia

Seed Planting



Jonah 1

When faced with being asked, feeling led, or even being called to do something for the Lord, how should you respond? Often, we can look at Bible Characters for Guidance in our lives.

Such is the case with Jonah (Jonah 1). When God said go, Johan said no! In fact, the Bible indicates that Jonah went the opposite direction from where God wanted him to go. He went to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish hoping to escape what God was calling him to do. God caused a powerful storm to arise that almost tore the ship apart. The sailors were in a panic and started crying to their gods as they threw stuff overboard. Jonah was sound asleep in the cargo hold. The captain came to him and wanted to know how he could sleep at such a time. He even asked him to call out to his God hoping that they would be saved.

Sailors, being a superstitious sort, cast lots to see who was the culprit that caused the storm to come upon them. Naturally, blame fell on Jonah.

They began questioning him about where he came from, who he was, what he did, and why the storm had come against them. Jonah told them he was a Hebrew and that the God he worshipped had made the land and the very sea they were trying to navigate. He had already told them he was running from his God; they were terrified and asked Jonah what they should do. Jonah told them to cast him into the sea, but they tried to row to safety and begged God not to let them die because of Jonah. Ultimately, they were left with no other choice but to toss him into the sea. When the storm calmed, the men made a sacrifice to God and vowed to serve him. However, God had something else in store for Jonah. Jonah was swallowed by a great fish where he too vowed to return to God, to serve Him, and to do as the Lord had asked him to do. Eventually Jonah obeyed God and went to Nineveh.

Have you ever wondered what would have happened if Jonah had simply said yes? In the end, Jonah did as God had commanded him to do. But it would have been so much easier for him to simply have said yes to God. But Jonah said no when God said go. It's safe to say that when God calls our name, we could learn from Jonah that saying "no" to God is just not the right thing to do.



The problem for Jonah was that he
first looked at the task,
then himself, and finally at God.

Price Family

Missionaries to Bolivia

"You've Got The Wrong Guy"



Exodus 3

Have you ever felt like you were the wrong person to serve God? Or, that God couldn't possibly be calling you to do something larger than you think you can do?

Or, that you were not qualified for the task at hand?

Moses was faced with such a dilemma when God first called to him from the burning bush in Exodus 3. Moses started out well when he responded with the words "here am I". Yet, when God told him what He wanted him to do; he changed from a positive attitude to one of doubt. God had promised to deliver His people from the bondage they suffered in Egypt. God wanted to use Moses in the process of that deliverance. Have you ever been in a situation like this? Many Christians are all for God saving the World. But they just don't want to be utilized by God to do that great work. Often, like Moses they think God is calling the wrong person.

When God told Moses He wanted him to face Pharaoh, Moses began offering excuses. He said, "who am I"? When God answered that question, Moses then said, "what shall I say". From there he told God that "they will not believe me". Then he questioned God about his qualifications by saying that he wasn't eloquent and that he was slow of speech and tongue! In essence, Moses didn't want to do what God had called him to do and offered every excuse he could possibly think of as to why he couldn't or shouldn't do it. At the end of the day, Moses set about doing what God had called him to do. However, he lost something in the process of questioning of God.

You see, God sent Aaron as Moses' helper. As Moses was offering his objections, we see probably the scariest words in the Bible in Exodus 4:14 which reads "...the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses...". Oh, Moses had a favored position among God's Chosen People. However, before he became "that guy", he angered God with his excuses, self-doubt, and questioning.

Moses said, "you've got the wrong guy".

Have you ever wondered what it would have happened if Moses simply would have been obedient without placing obstacles between himself and God? It's safe to say that when God calls our name, we could learn from Moses that saying "you've got the wrong guy" is just not the right thing to do.



The problem for Moses was that he
first looked at himself,
then the task, and finally at God.

Price Family

Missionaries to Bolivia

“Here Am I Send Me”



Isaiah 6

Have you ever simply said “yes” to God? Isaiah did. (Isaiah 6). Isaiah saw God sitting on His throne with his robe filling the temple as he was being attended to by angels. They were called seraphim and were proclaiming the holiness and majesty of God. As Isaiah watched them, he felt the temple being shaken to its foundations by their voices and the temple was filled with smoke. When he saw the glory of God, he saw the depravity of himself.

He basically said that he was undone, doomed, sinful, and that he had filthy lips. He even said that he lived among filthy people. Yet, in all of this he had caught a glimpse of “The Most High”. As his sins were forgiven, he heard the call of God asking who He could send as His messenger to the people. Isaiah didn’t say “no” like Jonah. He didn’t say “you’ve got the wrong Guy” like Moses. He simply said, yes with the words “Here am I, send me”. “Here am I, send me” is really the only proper response to the call of God. Isaiah saw God for who He is. Then he saw himself for what he was. Then, he recognized that others needed to hear the word of the Lord. You see, Isaiah looked up at God, then he looked inward, and then he looked outward. When we are faced with the call of God on our lives, we could learn from Isaiah that saying “here am I, send me” is the right way to respond to God.

The problem for Jonah was that he first looked at the task, then at himself, and finally at God. Then the problem for Moses was that he first looked at himself, then the task, and finally at God. But Isaiah? Well, he looked at God, then saw himself for what he was, and finally he recognized the task needed to be done. Look upward, look inward, then look outward. That is the way it should work in our lives too. We need to first and foremost look at God and recognize His holiness. Then, we need to look inward at our own condition. Then, we should look outward, to the task at hand.



Jonah said “no”. Moses said, “you’ve got the wrong guy”.
But Isaiah, he said “yes”.

How will you respond when God calls your name?

Price Family

Missionaries to Bolivia

Swifter Than A Shuttle



Job 7 : 6-7

6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, And are spent without hope.
7 O remember that my life is wind: Mine eye shall no more see good

Job understands that life is short! He compares life to a weaver's shuttle and to wind. In Job's time, people used to weave cloth by hand. They would use a shuttle to help them weave. After years of experience, many of the weavers were able to do their tasks with amazing speed. Their shuttles would fly in and out of the cloth. Job realizes that his life is moving quickly and says that life is like the wind. It is there one moment and gone one moment.

We need to remember that life is short and we only have one shot at living it so we should probably live it for Jesus! Are you numbering your days? Are you living for eternal things? What are you doing with your life?

Do you realize how short your life is?



“No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.”

— William Borden

Bloom Family

Missionaries to Ecuador

Pure Words



Psalms 12 : 6-7

6 The words of the Lord are pure words: As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. 7 Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

God's words are pure and perfect. They are without fault, holy, and inspired. The Bible compares them to silver that has been purified seven times. After mining silver and removing it from the ground, it is often mixed with impurities, so it must be purified. People take the silver and melt it down. They will then remove the contaminants and let it cool. If they repeat this process seven times, the silver will be very pure.

The Bible tells us that the word of God is pure and perfect, like silver purified seven times. The Word of God is perfect. We can know that His book is without errors. We should trust what God has to say!

Do you trust the Word of God and obey it?

While many have doubted the accuracy of the Bible, time and continued research have consistently demonstrated that the Word of God is better informed than its critics. In fact, while thousands of finds from the ancient world support in broad outline and often in detail the biblical picture, not one incontrovertible find has ever contradicted the Bible.

— Norman Geisler



Bloom Family

Missionaries to Ecuador

Wave after Wave...

Contentment in the Storm



Philippians 3 : 7-8, 10

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ... 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

As Christians, we believe that if we are faithful, God is faithful. If we obey, God will bless. These teachings are true; however, our interpretation of God's faithfulness and His blessings are sometimes incorrect. What does God's faithfulness look like? What are God's blessings? I learned the answer during our first year on the field. When God called our family to the mission field and we said yes, I expected God's blessings. Guess what? They came but not in the way I expected. His blessings came in wave after wave of trials and difficulties. So much so, that I thought to myself, "I'm drowning, I can't do this". It was a year of adaptation to life without our extended families and their abundant help. It was a year of learning to live without our Southpoint church family and that kind of strong Biblical teaching. It was a new financial climate, going from abundance to depending and relying fully on God. Then COVID... and living in total isolation while being thousands of miles away from everyone we really knew and loved. I questioned God, "Why are you allowing all these storms? All I want to do is be faithful and obey. Why this?" My questions took me to my knees and to the Word. I sought God's face like never before. He WAS faithful and taught me a valuable lesson during that first year on the mission field. What was the lesson? I need to be okay when "bad things" happen. I need to be okay even when I feel like I am drowning. You see church, we want it easy. We have been taught that "blessing" should mean ease, comfort, and material pleasures. Even though that is sometimes true, blessings can come in the form of hardship, uncertainty, and trial too. It is in those times that we grow spiritually. It is in those times that our faith increases, and we learn to depend on God and not on ourselves. It is through these difficult circumstances that we are shaped to look more like Jesus. Isn't that what we should long for? What can be a bigger blessing than coming to know God more and learning to really trust Him and depend on Him alone? Comfort will not get us there. Let's face it, Christ didn't have it easy. His earthly ministry was blessed and yet encompassed great difficulty. He did not have an abundance of things; he didn't spend his days in ease and comfort. He spent his days serving others and sharing the gospel. He was misunderstood, persecuted, and eventually crucified. What do we want more? To be like Christ, to really grow to trust Him and His sovereignty, or comfort and things to be easy? So, if difficulties and trials will allow me to look more like Jesus... bring it on. If uncertainty and life's storms will draw me to God and increase my faith...bring it on. I need to be okay when life does not go according to my plans.

I need to be okay when life seems out of control.

I need to be okay drowning. Instead of complaining,

I need to give thanks. Instead of trying to fix the situation,

I need to turn my eyes to God and patiently wait on Him.



Eastwood Family

Missionaries to Dominican Republic

Akari - Light That Reflects Jesus



Matthew 5 : 16

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Ever since we started on this mission journey, our family verse has been Matthew 5:16. When we moved to the Dominican Republic, all our students were so intrigued by the fact that we were from America, that I had worked in the medical field, and left my carrier to come teach them. Our light seemed to shine bright, and we always tried to point everyone to God as being the source of this light. Recently, however, this verse started to take on a deeper meaning. I teach high school science. I am blessed to teach my students about God's Creation. The more I study God's Creation, the more I fall in love with our awesome creator. My twelfth graders' slogan for their senior year is Akari, which is a word derived from Japanese culture meaning "light." One day I was preparing to teach them on Spectroscopy. I had heard about this branch of science, but I didn't know a lot about it. As I studied, I was encouraged by what I learned. This new found knowledge brought deeper meaning to our family verse and the class slogan, and it greatly encouraged my personal faith. Allow me to share this lesson with you. Spectroscopy is the study of light. It analyzes light's electromagnetic spectrum that results from its interaction with matter. In other words, matter emits a light and scientists can divide the light into its different wavelengths (think prism) and then tell you what the matter is made from. For example, a star, that is light years away, emits a light. If you study that light, scientists can tell you what the star is made of. How? You see hydrogen emits a specific wavelength (color), and helium, which does the same. So, if we break light down into its different wavelengths, we can tell what is making the light. Isn't it crazy that we can tell what things are made of even when they are millions of miles away? Let's look at the verse again. "Let your light so shine..." The scripture tells us that we all reflect a light. What does your light reflect? What does your light say you are made of? Does it point to God and fruit from the Holy Spirit? Does it reflect love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness? It goes far beyond doing good and giving God the glory. You are always emitting a light and the light you emit tells others what you are made of. Do they see a "new creation in Christ"? Do they see the fruit of the Spirit? Do they see Jesus? I am thankful that God taught me this lesson. As a "missionary" and a teacher, others are always looking at me. They are constantly evaluating the "light" that I emit. Obviously, I am far from perfect. I will have bad days. However, I want my testimony, my reputation, to be one that not only glorifies God but allows others to see what God is made of.

I want them to see God's unconditional love, gentleness, grace, and mercy? I want them to see his transformational power and righteousness. I want them to see a faithful servant that puts others first. I have heard it said that we are the only Bible some people will ever read.
Are we sharing Jesus and his gift with our light?



Eastwood Family
Missionaries to Dominican Republic

A Posture of Surrender



Galatians 2 : 20

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Our Christian journey lasts a lifetime. Salvation is a one-time decision, but sanctification is a lifelong process. We have an encounter with Jesus. We say “yes” to Him because we want the promise of heaven. However, do we want to endure sanctification? We want to go to heaven, but we want to live our way. It is not until we get past this way of thinking that we can really enjoy the relationship that God created us for. God requires TOTAL submission. For some this is a quick journey. For others, it takes longer. However, we all eventually come to the realization that God wants to be more than our Savior. My journey started at 5 years of age. I remember that day like it was yesterday. A little girl, playing in the backyard, sliding down the slide. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit convicted me. I was a sinner. I did bad things. I needed forgiveness. I wanted to go to heaven. I said “yes” to Jesus. I grew up in the ministry. My dad was a pastor. I grew up in church. As a teenager, I rebelled and went my own way. I set God on a shelf and did my own thing. That didn't work since I was already His. God pursued me and I ended up submitting to Him again and rededicating my life to Him. Later in my 20's and 30's I went through another “rebellious” time. You see, what I wanted and what God wanted for me were different things. What I wanted was not necessarily bad. In fact, it's what most people strive for. I wanted good schools and a nice neighborhood for my boys to grow up in. I wanted nice cars and a beautiful home. I wanted a prestigious career with a six figure income. I wanted to travel and explore the world. I wanted to go to church on Sundays and sing my heart out. All good things, right? But guess what... God wanted more for me and from me. Wait...more? Yes, more. He wanted TOTAL surrender. God wanted me to live in a third world country and wanted my kids to attend school there. God wanted me to drive an old, beat-up car and live in an apartment. God wanted me to be a teacher and work for barely nothing. He wanted me not only to sing on Sunday morning but to lead worship and youth groups. I learned that God doesn't want one “yes” or a convenient “yes”. He expects a continual “yes”. He wants us to live in a continual posture of surrender. When I felt called to the mission field, I was scared of what my “yes” would mean. Perhaps that is why I ran from His call for so long. I am so glad that He relentlessly pursued me, and we finally submitted. I decided that I was done with a quiet “yes” or saying “yes” only when it was comfortable and convenient for me. I wanted my life to scream YES! I wanted to stop living and let Christ live in me and through me. After all, He is worthy. He is trustworthy. He said “yes” first. He left heaven and did what He didn't want to do...He died on a cross for me. It isn't enough to say “yes” once. We must say “yes” constantly...daily...moment by moment. Even though I am a missionary and I moved to another country to share the gospel, I must submit daily to Him and what He wants and let go of what I want.

I can share that the more I say “yes”, the more I am drawn to God, the creator and master of the universe, and am blessed to experience a sweet and deep communion with Him. His ways are perfect and so much better than my ways. To truly live, we must die to self and live for Christ...

Total surrender yields total satisfaction.



Eastwood Family

Missionaries to Dominican Republic

Transforming Power



II Corinthians 5 : 17

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away behold, all things become new.

I love the way God's Word has a way of showing us the way "home". It was about two years ago that I met André. He was one of the young people that was participating in our teen outreach, at our church in the favela, in São Paulo, Brazil. He came from a very difficult home life. We received a donation of several hundred Bibles to give to our people. I was giving the Bibles to each of the more than 20 teens that day. One afternoon, I approached André and asked if he would accept a Bible. He said, "Pastor Mark, I will take one of your Bibles, but I don't believe in your God." I developed a friendship over the next year just letting God soften his heart and allow the Holy Spirit to work in André's heart.

God began working on transforming André and speaking to his heart. It was almost a year later that our pastor from Texas was preaching at our church in São Paulo for the anniversary of the church. André had attended each night, even though he still didn't believe in our God. In that final service, André walked the aisle and said, "I need to get saved."Fast-forward to 2022, André is moving to another state and planning on getting married. He is a new creation, a new André, a young man that will make a huge impact in life. Always remember that our God transforms lives.

We just have to be willing to share and let Him do the rest.

"The Bible was not given for our information
but for our transformation."

-Dwight L. Moody

Paul, says in I Corinthians 3:6,

"I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."



McCutchen Family

Missionaries to Brazil

Bought But No Key



Luke 6 : 38

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.

For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

For us to make sure it was God's will and timing for us to leave Ecuador and return to the US, several doors needed to be opened. We asked God to sell our house and everything in it without advertising. "When it is not God's time, you cannot force it. When it is in God's time, you cannot stop it."

(1) "Out of the blue" as the saying goes, a couple from the church we were working in asked us "are you ever going to sell your home?" We said, "one day when we leave Ecuador we will. BUT we do not know when that will be and we have no plans for it at this time."

Nevertheless this couple asked if they could look at our house even though we said we had no idea when we would be selling. After looking at it, they said they wanted to buy it. But we said, "we are not planning on leaving now and don't know when we will.". But they said, "when we sell our house we will pay you for yours and then you live in your house until you are ready to leave Ecuador." We said, "BUT we have no idea when that will be." "It doesn't matter," they said. "The house will be paid for." So they sold their home and deposited the money into our bank account and we still lived in the house. They had a house but no key. Their family began to ask why don't you have a key? Their family did not understand the situation. And to be sure, it was not a normal situation. We had never experienced anything like it before. As time passed where this family was renting a home, their landlord decided not to renew their lease and so they asked to move in with us. So we lived together for a time until we left Ecuador! We prayed together, ate together, fellowshiped together and shared the house as only God can work out! They are our family. To this day, when we return, it is like walking into our own home again. Although they have made some improvements it is essentially the same! We really feel at home! Only God!

(2) We also asked God to sell our truck without advertising it. A pastor's son-in-law came to our home carrying the exact amount of cash we were thinking of for the truck. No negotiating or anything. SOLD!

(3) Also there was a need for someone to take over the leadership of the Bible Institute! God also provided that through a couple in one of the Quechua churches. It was truly amazing how God took care of every one of our petitions.

We have tried to serve God faithfully through these 50 years as missionaries and truly He has given us blessings of the likes we have never seen before and "men have given into our bosom" in such a way it is hard to describe.

Praying you experienced the bounty of God in your life!
Running over, running over, my cup is full and running over. Since the Lord saved me, I'm as happy as can be! My cup is full and running over!



Brown Family

Missionary to Ecuador

Be An Encourager



Ephesians 4 : 29

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Recently I was teaching Spanish to a high school class and we were the studying Spanish Alphabet. It brought to mind just how much we use our vowels, consonants, syllables and distinct sounds that distinguish our language, whatever it may be. These letters, combinations of letters, and sounds from our words and we use this to communicate. Paul wrote Eph. 4:29 to the church in Ephesus because he heard that the church people were saying unkind things about each other. They were making wrong choices in their conversation. Is it possible that some faithful Christian families in our churches today are saying unkind things to and about each other? Some Christians who are not using their words the way they should as a child of God. God not only tells us WHAT NOT TO SAY but WHAT WE SHOULD SAY!

This verse was used by a family to teach their children to speak kindly to one another! When a comment was made, they would ask each other “ Is this edifying? ”.

First let us look at some KEY words in this verse:

- Corrupt – signifies bad words, disrespectful, vulgar, lying, gossip, slander, malicious, etc. God doesn't want us to let any bad words come out of our mouths.
- Edifying – building up, positive reinforcement, encouragement, say nice things to each other, give compliments, be cheerful, tell the truth, help one another, be respectful.
- Minister – serve and give to others
- Grace – when God gives you something we do not deserve it, it is “a gift”
- Hearers – those who are listening to us. Examples: spouses, family, friends, co-workers, strangers, neighbors, church family, waitresses, clerks and the list goes on.

We had the opportunity recently to share this lesson with a Christian Ecuadorian woman in Canada through a video call. She in turn shared them with her aunt when she called her in Ecuador! These words cross lands, borders, seas and mountains because they are from God! Put away things from our old life and put on those of our new life in Christ, our Redeemer! When our words came out of our mouth, they should be like little presents all wrapped up to be given away! Are our words like this? Is it edifying?

My words have the power to heal or to hurt. Every time I open my mouth

I have a choice to make – to encourage, uplift, and give hope or to undermine, discourage and judge (no matter how slightly). People have shared stories with me of their repressed desires that were dismissed by a careless word, a sarcastic comment, or fear of failure. Many have had high hopes that were dashed against the rocks or reality by folks who meant to be practical but killed a dream in the process.



Brown Family
Missionary to Ecuador

Advanced Gospel



Philippians 1: 1-6

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy. For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Each of the epistles that Paul wrote have a greeting. It is easy to read over these greetings to get to the “meat” of the message, but when we do so, we miss something important. What’s in a greeting? Normally, we might think that it is nothing more than a formality, but we can actually learn a lot from a greeting.

Leslie and I have 4 daughters. If we go pick one of them up from an activity, perhaps a birthday party, how I introduce myself says everything. I would not say, “Hi I’m Patrick, I am a missionary to Argentina” or “I’m Patrick, I graduated from Bible College in the southeastern United States”, or even, “I’m Patrick, I am the son of Ric and Susan.” While each of those greetings are true, none of them serve a purpose to explain what I am there for. “Hello, I’m Patrick, I am Ivy’s dad.” That greeting makes clear the motive. Notice how Paul and Timothy introduced themselves in Philippians. “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ...” Paul didn’t bring up his calling as an apostle, or as the missionary who started the church in Philippi. Paul called himself (and Timothy) “servants of Jesus Christ”. When you think about it, that is all we really are. We are servants of Jesus. No matter what God is leading you to do, no matter where you are in this world, we are all called to be His servants!

After Paul greets the church, he thanks them for their “fellowship in the gospel”. Paul was in one location (at that time, he was in jail) and the church was in another location, Philippi, but both labored in the progress of the Gospel! Paul tells the church that he is confident that God will complete what He had started in that church. Paul believed that God was using the Philippian church and that they were in the midst of God’s “completing” work as they labored in the Gospel.

God has a place for each of us in the ministry. It may look different for each of us but the outcome is the same. The Gospel is advanced, the work that God is doing in us is furthered toward completion, and God is glorified! As servants of Jesus, let us continue on in advancing the Gospel.



Henry Family

Missionaries to Ecuador

Using Our Gifts



1 Corinthians 12 : 12-18

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefor not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?

If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

Our bodies have many members, and each member is important. There are so many members of our bodies that we go sometimes years without even acknowledging their existence, it usually takes a problem for us to acknowledge them. Each member of the body is important, and each member of the body has a specific function. With that in mind, when one member of the body isn't functioning correctly, the whole body suffers! Everything in your body may be working correctly, but if one problem occurs, let's say gout outbreaks in our big toe, the whole body suffers for it!

The Bible says that your local church is like a body, and like your body, it has members. Just like each member of your body is important, so is each member of the church. Just like each member of your body has a specific function, so does each member of the church. God has gifted everyone of His children with specific gifts to carry out a specific function in the local church, so that the church as a whole can glorify God. Just like in our bodies, when a member isn't able to complete its function, the whole church hurts! So it is important, and that God has a place for you to serve (use the gifts He has given you) in the church.



How could you use what God has given your to better glorify God and serve the church family?

Henry Family

Missionaries to Ecuador

A Windy Day . . .



Psalm 19 : 1

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament sheweth his handywork.

It was a windy day. Quite normal for Porirua New Zealand. We had been busy passing out tracts and flyers for our upcoming event at our church. Then it happened. A burst of wind came through the area where we were passing out tracts. As we looked down the street where we just finished, we saw many of our tracts flying in the air! The wind had blown them out of the mailboxes!

In Psalm 19:1, I am reminded that nature itself speaks of the Creator God. Just in our little corner of the universe, there are billions of stars and billions of planets. The Milky Way galaxy is estimated to be 100,000 light-years across and it appears as a spiral galaxy in structure. In 1990, NASA launched the Hubble telescope. It currently sits in low earth orbit. One shot the Hubble took was called the Hubble Ultra Deep Field. It focused on one unremarkable spot in the sky. From man's perspective on earth, it was about the size of a quarter. In this shot, it revealed as many as 10,000 galaxies of different shapes, sizes, and colors! Each of those galaxies containing billions of stars and planets. With all of man's advancements in technology and telescopes, we have never seen the extent of the vastness of this great firmament that God has placed us in! Just by its existence it speaks of the God that created it!

On Christmas day 2021, NASA launched a new telescope into space called the James Webb Telescope. Where Hubble sits in low earth orbit, the Webb was positioned 1.5 million kilometers away from earth. Hubble uses a single mirror of solid glass 2.4 meters in size. The Webb's primary mirror is 6.5 meters across, involving 18 hexagonal sections that fit together like a mosaic. This allows the Webb 6.25 times more surface area to capture light! In July of 2022, NASA began releasing images from this new more advanced telescope. We are seeing stars, galaxies and planets that no human has ever seen! It all points to the awesome handiwork of God! David points out in Psalm 19:1, that nature itself cannot help but speak of the awesome God that created it! By its mere existence, it points to an awesome, all powerful, loving God who not only created the universe, but made it so we can live in it.

Back to that windy day in New Zealand. We left the area a little dejected, after having walked hours and hours passing out those tracts and flyers, to see many of them blown on the ground by the wind. We found out later, that one of those tracts, that was blown out of the mailbox by the wind and flown in the air, had landed near the feet of a lady. She picked it up, and decided to come visit church! It turned out, that she was a saved lady, but out of church. She began attending, and eventually joined our church! It wasn't too long until she began bringing her two young daughters with her.



Within that first year, her daughters came to know the Lord in salvation! All because God used the wind to bring that gospel invitation to the place it needed to be. The day God used the wind to save two young girls was a day I won't soon forget.

Guenther Family

Missionaries to New Zealand

Come and Die

Luke 9 : 23

23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Micah meditated on this and sought to live this out. What does this mean? How do I die daily? "I can only die once", Micah thought to himself. What God wants from us is to put our fleshly desires and will aside and do the business of our father. On a practice level, what does that mean? Micah often would start his day off by praying, "Lord, what do you want me to do today". After a mission trip to China where Micah interned with some Missionaries there, he was sitting on his bed in Texas and told the Lord that he would do whatever the Lord wanted if he would show him. Ten minutes later, Micah got a call from a business man in the Middle East. He called and said, "God is opening doors for people to come to the Arabian Gulf to share the good news. Would you like to have lunch to discuss this More?" Micah hung up the phone and just knew that God was inviting him on a journey into one of the most unreached countries on earth. He decided in his heart that he would follow the Lord in that dark place no matter the cost because of one simple reason. God answered his prayer. Micah knew it could be no coincidence that the phone call was by happenstance right after he prayed for direction.

Every day, God is inviting us into his plan.

We can either put our agenda aside and die to ourselves or
we can continue about our own personal business.

It a daily choice.

Undisclosed Missionaries

Trust

Proverbs 3 : 5-6

How do you teach someone to trust? This seems to be the question that needs answered in today's society. The pollution of sin has eroded away the family structure and the Biblical chain of command leaving many in today's world wondering, "Is there anyone that tells the truth and can be trusted?"

Webster's Dictionary of 1828 defines trust as, "Confidence; a reliance or resting of the mind on the integrity, veracity, justice, friendship or other sound principle of another person."

My daughter, Melody, has been helping me learn how to teach trust with a simple exercise I started doing with her many months ago. I have been asking her to jump out to me from a chair or short step; and at first, she couldn't do it without me just picking her up. She had no concept of trusting, but once she was getting the idea of what I wanted from her (to jump into my arms) and what I would do (catch her and keep her safe) trust started to be taught and learned. Now, she would only do it as long as she was holding on to me, after a little while just holding my thumbs, and now while only holding one finger she will jump into my arms with full assurance I will catch her. Though she already knows that I will catch her and no harm will come to her, she is not yet able to jump out without holding on to me. I hope to get her to trust me completely as God wants us to trust Him completely in everything-and all the time-beginning with salvation.

You see, God is not trying to make us have blind trust with no proof or evidence of his trustworthiness. No. History (His Story) is full of records that He always keeps His Word. He is faithful in doing what He said He would do. His promises are sure. The Bible is full of accounts and records of real people who had real problems in real life that learned to trust God and He always stayed true to His word.

Whether it is eternal life, (which is not something you work for, earn, or try out for a while; it is completely free and entirely of God) or it is food for the next meal, God can and will provide if you do what He says. The only way to teach trust is to take the time to show it.

Nothing is a substitute for time. It takes time to build trust. The Creator of all has proven Himself throughout time and He is trustworthy. Are you growing in your trust of Him? Will you continue living in fear or do you want to be safe? Trust our Heavenly Father today and for the rest of your life.



McClure Family

Missionaries to Northern Mariana Islands

Fruit

John 15 : 1-8

We all enjoy fruit especially from things that we labored hard on.

We all want to see the fruit of our labor and relish in its benefits. But how do we get fruit?

We have some banana plants that have been in a field for several years and never grew more than 4-5 feet high. Normally these banana plants grow upwards of 12-15 feet. This last year I decided to move them and plant them somewhere else. Now they are growing and fruiting as they should, producing some very large and delicious bananas that my kids are thoroughly enjoying.

The same is true with God and He knows how to make his branches produce the best and most productive fruit. Sometimes it is the soil, sometimes the location and sometimes the environment. Many times, we have sin or weights in our life that need to be pruned in order to produce fruit (Hebrews 12:1-3). Sometimes, in order to grow, we have to be cut back, replanted, or simply fertilized (turn up the heat). Be careful not to confuse God's plan with the consequences of sin, though, God's law of sowing and reaping is still in effect (Galatians 6:7-9; 1 Peter 4:12-19). No matter the circumstances you find yourself in, if you are a child of God, then He has a plan that will be best for all involved. That doesn't mean it will work the way you think it should; but it does mean that God knows what He is doing and we'll understand it better by and by. Also, remember He is God and therefore, He does not need your help. Don't force your way else you may find yourself in the same boat with Jonah or on the same path as Balam.

So, to answer the question, "How do we get fruit?" The answer is we must, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58) You see, fruit takes time and it is not one act or service, though these are good, rather a life lived to full maturity that God can and will use. This could be in the form of a character trait i.e. faithful, honest, patient, peace maker. Or it may be in the form of lost souls you've helped bring to Christ. What kind of fruit is your life producing?



John 15:16 "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

McClure Family

Missionaries to Northern Mariana Islands

Sustaining our Burdens



Psalm 55 : 20

20 Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee:
he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

A burden can be defined as a heaviness or a weight. In this Psalm, David had been betrayed by his closest friend. No doubt the burden he carried from that was great. Betrayal can feel like a heavy burden. Many of us know it well, be it from a friend, a family member, or just an acquaintance. Betrayal is just one burden we face in life. There is not enough space for me to list them all. Some burdens weigh heavier than others. Some seem impossible to bear. Less than a month into our marriage, we learned that one of our parents was facing a terminal diagnosis. After our first anniversary, we buried one of our fathers. Two months before that, we were told it was “medically impossible” for us to have children of our own. This was, undoubtedly, one of the darkest seasons of our lives. All our energy seemed to be invested in putting one foot in front of the other each day. And yet, looking back, it was one of the sweetest times of our lives, because we learned about the sustaining power of the Lord. We were incapable on our own to simply power through, to carry on as if we were ok. The truth is, we were not ok. We were hurting, and we felt broken. But God was not silent, He had not turned His back on us. He lovingly carried us, and He gracefully strengthened us. He brought us through and showed us His miraculous power in giving us our first child right during our greatest moments of grief. You see, this is just one story of hundreds of moments of God’s sustaining power. Every story gives us solid testimonies of His goodness to remember in times of trial. The last part of that verse says that the Lord will not cause us “to be moved”. I like to picture myself in a storm, resting on Christ alone as our Rock. This verse does not promise a life free from storms. We know that trials and blessings come both to the just and the unjust. We live in a broken and sinful world, but we have this hope: the Lord sustains. Amid moments when we just cannot see a way forward, we have a Father who lovingly carries us.



If you are walking through a storm today,
know that God is bigger than your storm.
Trust that even when we feel weak, He is strong.

Slater Family
Missionaries to Ireland

The Goodness of God



John 10 : 11

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Have you ever experienced a moment that was so good, so pure, so wonderful that you wanted to bask in it for hours? Maybe it was enjoying a perfect sunset on a warm evening, cuddling a toddler as you read their favourite book together, or perhaps strolling through the park with a loved one. Isn't it amazing how God allows us to experience glimpses of His goodness in our daily lives?

He is a good, good Father. There have been so many times in our lives that we have experienced peaceful, fulfilling moments in our family and in our ministry. There have also been many times when we have encountered difficult, stress-filled circumstances that have stretched us and forced us to examine just how much we truly believe that God is good. After all, it is relatively easy to believe that God is good when everything is going our way. But when people die, governments shut down churches, chronic illness surfaces, it can seem impossible to see God's goodness. Is God always good? We have found that God uses difficult moments to remind us that He is truly good even when our problems seem so terrible. We hear countless stories of faithful men and women of God who suffered terrible losses while building His kingdom. The apostle Paul shares that he had been sent a messenger from Satan to buffet him, one that he asked God three times to remove.

But the answer was this, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul testified that the power of Christ rested mostly strongly on him when he was at his weakest. The goodness of God is not expressed in my comfort or safety or security, but in Himself. Because His goodness is so pure, so wonderful, so complete, I can be perfectly certain of it during any and every circumstance. I can genuinely thank the Shepherd for His goodness even when He is leading me through the valley of the shadow of death.

My trust is in His person, His character, His very nature which has been revealed in billions of ways throughout time and space to billions of people and in my own life experiences.



He proved His goodness by laying down His very life for His sheep.

His goodness is manifested in His Word, in His very Spirit indwelling me.

He is good, and He really, truly cares for me.

Slater Family
Missionaries to Ireland

Saying No



1 Corinthians 3 : 6

6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

When we moved to Ireland, we knew it was a spiritually dark and difficult place. And we have certainly found that to be true. Before we had even arrived here, it felt discouraging to think of our future ministry, spending years of our lives never seeing any fruit. Obviously, that was our flesh speaking and maybe that's a bit too much honesty from us. Ha! God was quick to correct our thinking. He showed us that no seed planted, and no plant watered, is ever wasted. We first experienced this truth in one of our teenagers.

She was in no way connected to our church, yet she showed up to the very first days of our teen Bible study. She was raised with a Catholic and Atheistic background, but here she was! There are at least a dozen reasons why she "shouldn't" have been there from an outside perspective. But she came, and a relationship was kindled. Seeds were planted and watered.

For months she was faithful to attend Bible study, but never darkened the door of our church on Sunday morning.

She was invited to go to summer camp, where she was gloriously saved!

We witnessed her life radically transformed by the power of the Gospel.

And this is just the first of dozens of stories where we have marvelled at the Lord drawing men and women to Him. You see, God doesn't actually call us to produce fruit. He calls us to be the branches, faithful to stay connected to Him and watch as He works through us to produce fruit. He calls us to plant and water.

There are seeds that we will plant that we will never personally see mature into fruit.

There may be someone in your life that you think is impossibly hardened to the Gospel. But our God is able, and our God is powerful. It is He that gives the increase.



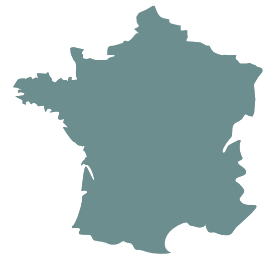
We must be willing to do our part, to be uncomfortable at times to share the message of Hope.

But we can relieve ourselves of the pressure of producing fruit, trusting that the Lord is in all and over all.

Slater Family

Missionaries to Ireland

The Ministry of The Word is One of Reproach



Jeremiah 20 : 10

10 For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

Have you ever spoken truth only to be mocked and rejected? If so, you have tasted a small dose of what Jeremiah lived during his ministry. He spoke God's Word in hard places (before horrible worship centers where children were sacrificed and before the Temple of God in Jerusalem where superstition and hypocrisy replaced true worship) and he spoke to hardened people (God's rebellious people and many pagan nations). His audience's reply was to defame him.

He was discredited as a false prophet. He experienced the defaming of many as Jeremiah 20.10 says.

Fear on every side is what Jeremiah's audience was taunting. Why? Because fear on every side is what God said would happen to a wicked man named Pashur in Jeremiah 20:3-4. God renamed this man and gave him an awful name: Magor-Missabib, which means Fear/terror on every side. Jeremiah's audience was mocking him with his own words (God's words). God's words and way were being entirely rejected.

Although our church has never experienced the level of persecution that Jeremiah did, believers in France are treated like a sect and as fools for Jesus. When people hear my accent (James), they want to know where I am from. When I tell them they are excited and filled with all sorts of questions. Eventually they ask, "What are you doing HERE?" My response is: "I am a pastor." This reply can kill almost any conversation. One of my unsaved friends told me that when he talked about our church to his friend, his friend replied: "That's a sect." This is the ministry of the Word, but we love it. Sure, it can be discouraging, but God's Word is life that gives life! You can help by praying for these 2 things:



Carney Family
Missionaries to France

The Lord Has Me Taken Care Of



Isaiah 41: 9-13

I have spent roughly sixteen years of my life overseas in Ivory Coast and France. During that time, I developed a very close relationship with my parents and my three siblings. I also recognized the fact that I do not like change in any way, shape, or form. This proved to be difficult when I moved to college. I came to Trinity Baptist College here in Jacksonville last August, and I had already figured it would be hard to leave my parents and my two brothers and come to live here in America. However, I was not prepared for the culture shock that I would experience when my family and I did finally part ways. I began my first semester of my freshman year on August 15th . Once I started my classes, I truly discovered how scared I was. I knew that God had placed me here for a reason, but at that moment, I did not understand why. My parents left to go back to France a few days after I started school, and it dawned on me how much I would need to rely on God over the coming weeks and months. And because I don't like change, being on my own for the first time in my life was terrifying. During that time, I took great comfort in Isaiah 41:10, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." I trusted that this is where Christ wanted me to be, and He would hold my hand every step of the way. God knew and understood my struggles. He provided me with the encouragement and strength that I needed.



He blessed in more ways than one; He gave me a wonderful church family who loves me and family members here in town who care for me. One thing that I have learned from this life-changing experience is always to trust in God's plan because the Lord has me taken care of.

Kara Flowers
Missionary to France

The Power of the Gospel



Romans 1: 1-16

Throughout history it has been proven over and over again that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can change anyone. There is no one too hard or too far gone for Christ. Everyone believes something, of course, even atheists. Sadly, what they are believing is a lie. We have met quite a few atheists throughout our ministry in France, but this story stands out.

At 63, Danielle Desmet was a lifelong atheist. For 8 years while out on her grocery run, she had passed by a little sign for Eglise Biblique Baptiste (Bible Baptist Church) in Hierges, France. She had always wondered what a Baptist church was, and her curiosity finally got the better of her. One random Saturday, she determined to stop in for some information at the little church-- but ONLY IF the traffic light near the entrance of the church turned immediately green. The light did cooperate, so Danielle picked up a flyer with service times. She showed up the next morning, and we soon began noticing that the Word of God was working in her unbelieving heart. After more than a month of regular church attendance, Danielle broke down and trusted Christ as her Savior.

Months after Danielle's conversion, her husband, Jean Paul, began attending our Sunday morning services. By his own admission, he was skeptical of any church. After World War II, he was raised by Jesuit priests, but he turned his back on the Catholic religion during adulthood. Despite his reservations, he was next to Danielle every Sunday morning for seven months. He listened intently and asked many questions. Finally one day, he told his wife that it was time for him to have a nice Bible. A Bible was promptly purchased for him, and that day, Danielle led her own husband to Christ.

Our church began praying in earnest for the salvation of Danielle's 90-year-old mother. After her salvation, Danielle made a habit of reading Scripture to her and talking with her about the Lord. Months after Jean Paul's decision, I received a call from Danielle asking if my missionary friend and I could come over and talk with her mother. Madame Colas listened closely as the Gospel was explained, and then she bowed her head and got saved. What a miracle to see how God not only transformed a confirmed atheist-- but then used her to win her family to Christ!



This is the power of the message that we share!
Paul said that it is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Romans 1.16)

Let's get the word out!

Someone you will meet today needs to hear it.

Flowers Family

Missionaries to France

His Goodness and Mercy



Psalm 23 : 6

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Life as a foreign field missionary is not easy. It's tough for many reasons: living far away from your family, adjusting to a different culture, sometimes being the only spiritual individual at a gathering, being lonely, etc. Missionary life often involves sacrifices in unexpected ways, and growing up on the mission field gave me first-hand experience with the good, the bad, and the ugly of life. Moving around multiple times to different countries and continents throughout my childhood wasn't fun when I had to say goodbye to my friends. Leaving our home in Africa because of the war in the country and packing only what we could take in our luggage wasn't fun. Always being at church to do the work could be fatiguing and draining on my family at times. But throughout my life, I have seen the Lord's goodness and mercy on me and my family. The Lord has provided for our needs and taken care of us throughout the hardships and the sacrifices. During the times that we moved, we had individuals give generously to our family. I have seen the Lord's provision in my own personal life as well. Moving to the States for college with practically no money, I have seen God provide for me financially. I have seen the Lord provide for me emotionally by providing me with good friends. I have seen God take care of me spiritually by providing a godly church. In many ways, God's grace has been extended to me in so many ways that I do not deserve.

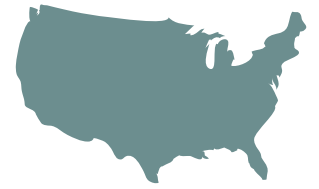


Through all of the hardships, I have learned that the Lord is faithful to take care of His own; He will provide for His children. Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I am grateful to the Lord.

Lydia Flowers

Missionary to France

Living Above Discouragement in an Unfriendly World



Jeremiah 1 : 2-10

Have you ever been discouraged concerning your walk and work for the Lord? Have you ever wondered, “what am I supposed to be doing?” Don’t feel alone, others have been there too. Jeremiah lived in an unfriendly culture, and you can sense the discouragement he felt in verses two and three. Living for God in an unfriendly culture requires courage. He lived in the time of Josiah who was a reformer; “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord” (II Kings 22:2) and that was good. He also lived in the time of Jehoiakim who was a tyrant (Jer. 22) and Zedekiah who was the puppet. (II Chron. 36)

We live in an unfriendly culture today.

The devil will try everything he can to discourage us in our work and walk with the Lord.

So, take courage in some things taught to us in the Bible;

1. The Creator knows what use to make of every man before He makes him.
2. What God has designed men for He will call them to.
3. There is a particular purpose and providence of God regarding servants.
4. God will stand by us in the work He has for us.
5. Though a sense of our own weakness and insufficiency should make us go humbly about our work; we should not draw back when God calls us.
6. God will be our protector.

Living for God requires courage.

God knows our gifts and talents and intends for them to be used for Him.

- This requires a personal encounter with God.
- This is required in a commission to serve God.
- This requires dependency on God.

Remember He has said in John 15:16

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.”

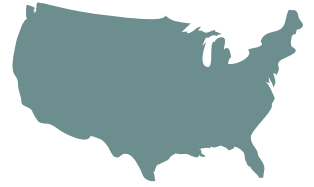
So, don’t be discouraged, remember

He is yours and you are His, so keep on keeping on!



Langley Family
World Harvest Baptist

“Big Apron”



I love the story of Susanna Wesley and her “Big Apron”

Susanna took her relationship with God as seriously as she did her duties as a wife and mother. Early in her life she vowed that she would never spend more time in leisure entertainment than she did in prayer and Bible Study.

Susanna scheduled two hours a day for fellowship with God and time in His Word. The challenge was finding a place of privacy in a house filled with 10 kids, Susanna’s solution to this was to bring her Bible to her favorite chair and throw her long apron up over her head. Every person in the household knew well to respect this signal.

No matter how busy Susanna Wesley was she always found time to spend with her Lord and Savior.

I challenge you today if you are not having a Quiet time, find yourself a special space somewhere in the house where you won’t be disturbed. Set aside a certain amount of time to spend reading and praying. Everyday God will reveal something new of His love and you don’t want to miss it.

To walk with day by day means...

- Reading and listening to His Word day by day.
(Luke 10:39, 42; Colossians 3:16)
- Spending time talking to Him in prayer.
(Philippians 4:6-7)
- Realizing that God is God and you are not,
and the role that means He has in your life.



Langley Family
World Harvest Baptist

If You Have A Need, Sow A Seed



“If you have a need, sow a seed.”

We heard a preacher quote this in one of our deputation trips in Washington State. The statement might seem ironic. After all, why would you want to give away of your limited resources when you yourself have a need for it. Yes, that is right, our resources are limited and finite but we serve an infinite God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills as written in Psalms 50:10.

We realized that we need to be a channel of blessings, always keeping our hands open, ready to release a blessing to others whose needs may be greater than ours. We know of a lady in the Philippines whose son has been diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. This family cannot afford to go to the modern hospitals in Manila. They instead opted to go to a provincial hospital in Central Luzon. Seeing her son become very weak right before her eyes is too much for this lady to bear. We decided to be an encouragement to her by giving them regular financial help for food and bus fare to the provincial hospital. It is not much, but the entire family is grateful. The son is currently undergoing palliative chemotherapy and we entrust him to God’s will.

We were also able to help another lady whom we haven’t spoken to in over 10 years. She contacted us saying that she lost her job due to Covid and they are in dire need of basic necessities. We offered her some financial help and asked her to go to a local church where she and her husband were saved. Little did we know that after four months, the husband would be taken home to glory. We are sad for his passing but thankful that the Lord’s saving grace is always on time. This lady’s daughter recently suffered stroke, compounding her deep state of grief. We encouraged her with messages on how the Lord provides for the needs of widows. In James 1:27, we are commanded to remember the widows and the fatherless in their affliction. We continue to minister to this lady by praying for her and helping her every so often with some of their food and medicine needs. We also donated to a school supplies drive for students in need at a local high school in our home town, Olongapo City, Philippines. Our contribution helped 17 students get the basic school supplies.

By helping others, we find that our needs were all provided by the Lord. Our moving expenses to the mission field and our used car were all paid for. We will continue to help others because the moment we clench our fists, the blessings will stop flowing through us.



Cerico Family
Missionaries to Canada

The Lord Sends People Our Way To Keep Us On The Right Path...



The Lord sends people our way to keep us on the right path so that our lives bring him the most glory. We see this in the life of Joseph as he was searching for his brothers. In Genesis 37:15-17, the Lord sent a nameless man who directed Joseph to his brothers. "And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field..."

Satan wants to derail us from accomplishing God's will in our lives. After high school, I wanted to go to Bible school. My Dad heard of a school in Manila but he did not know it was cultic. When he got saved, the Lord removed all his vices and made him a fervent soul-winner. However, he was deceived by the literature from RB Thieme, a retired colonel who founded a cultic religion in the U.S. My Dad wants me to study there but the Lord intervened. Pastor Martin Edejer, a faithful Baptist preacher in our Philippine hometown asked him why was he taking me to study in a cultic seminary. We learned later on that RB Thieme does not believe in the atoning power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He calls it "ketchup religion. "Why don't you bring him to Metropolitan Bible Baptist Seminary in Quezon City?," asked Pastor Edejer.

And so as the Lord would have it, I went to study in this biblical seminary. At 16, I became a church worker, volunteering to carry the accordion as we roamed the streets of Metro Manila. The children would flock towards us when they hear the accordion. They listened to the Bible lessons. I got involved in soul-winning and door-to-door visitation. There was also a big focus on campus ministry, targeting the University Belt in Manila. At the University of the East, the security guards were strict at the gate so I enrolled to gain access to the classrooms. I preached the Gospel during breaks. The students who got saved became members of our church in Quezon City and to this day, they remain faithful. We met one of them, Imelda, in our deputation. She now works as a nurse in Houston.



I am grateful for the Lord's sovereign hand in my life, stopping me from being a part of a cult. Instead, he has given me grace to devote the prime of my youth for 10 years in a Bible-believing church, preparing me to be a church planter and to become a missionary.

Cerico Family
Missionaries to Canada

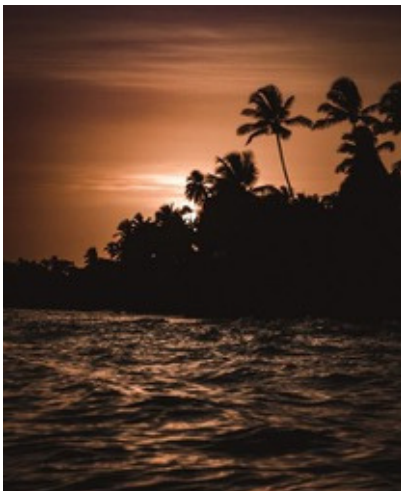
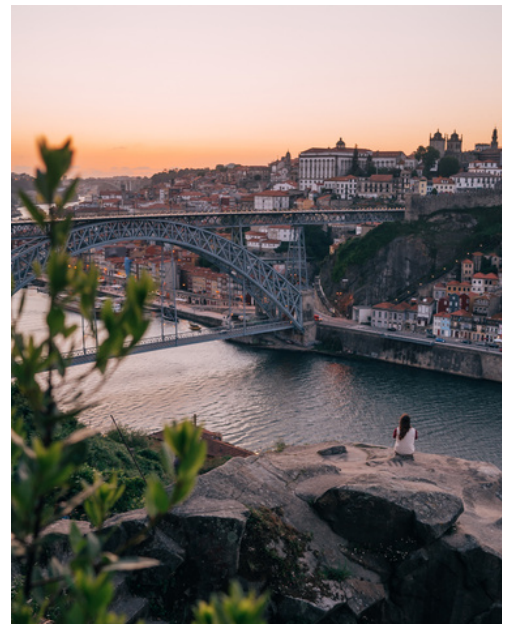
My Strong Hold

Nahum 1:7

7 The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him

Trish's youth pastor told all the young people to pick a life verse when Trish was in high school. She did not want to pick a well-known verse and after much deliberation, she picked Nahum 1 : 7. Little did she know that she would later in life be a missionary in the Arabian gulf. Not too long after Micah and Trish were settled into life in the Middle East, they got into a taxi that tested this verse. The taxi driver asked Micah if they were Americans and Christians. After Micah's reply, the taxi driver said, "I am going to kill you". Trish and newborn J were in the back seat and Micah was in the front. Trish leaned over the seat and whispered in Micah's ear, "he is abducting us. The driver was instructed to go South and he proceeded North. Micah realized they were in a desperate situation and leaned over into the face of the driver and told him he had two choices. Micah said, "you can either pull over and let us out or you can turn around and take us home". Then the driver angrily swerved down a dark alley. There was a man standing on that road. It was nighttime and Micah was nervous he would have to take on two men to defend his family. As the conversation between the two men ended, the driver looked at Micah and Said, "that man told me to turn around and take you home". Everyone was dropped off safely and Micah called the US consulate in our city to report the episode. The man at the consulate said, "In my 20 years of working here, I have never ever heard of someone being threatened to be killed, get temporarily abducted and then live to tell the tale". Micah then remembers the man on that dark road. Maybe it was an angel? Perhaps it was Jesus? Even in bad situations, the Lord is good. He is our stronghold in the day of trouble. The Lord remembers those who trust in him.

Undisclosed Missionaries





SPBC MISSIONS