



My prayer for you today: May the Lord strengthen you in the inner man, that you may be guided by the Spirit and discover the abundant life with Jesus as Lord. May you come to enjoy the breadth and length and height and depth of the love God has for you and your loved ones!

May 1, 2021

Dear Ministry Partner,

Look! Do you see it? There is wonderful light at the end of the tunnel!

- We hear that Greece and other European countries are lifting pandemic-era restrictions.
- Cuba is expected to lift restrictions by July 7.
- Spain is projected to open in July as well.
- Many other places around the world are opening too; the list is growing day by day.

I'm excited because I know that there is powerful impact to be made around the world! "Zoom" has been helpful—but most of the greatest decisions are made in face-to-face meetings with leaders in various countries.

In this month of May, I'm scheduled to meet with leaders at Lomas Verdes Seminary in Mexico City. We've worked with this seminary before—at one point planting 25 churches in an 18-month period! I'm happy to report that those churches have continued to thrive, and they're also still planting additional churches!

But now it's time for a new initiative—because the pandemic has left so many of Mexico's churches without leadership, their pastors taken by Covid. I proposed to the seminary's president that we ask each church to send its best candidate for pastor to the seminary for training. With your generous support today, we will give a scholarship to each candidate, so a lack of finances doesn't keep any high-potential leader from emerging.

It's a win-win situation for the seminary: Each bereft church gets a pastor; plus, the seminary—its student body also decimated by the pandemic—gains students. But the greatest benefit is to the kingdom, as churches will be revitalized by pastors with a fresh vision for multiplication through church-planting!

This isn't simply theory. **We've seen how God works.** When we learned that 22 churches in Santander, Spain, were without pastors and at risk of closing, we gave scholarships to students—your generous support made it possible! Today, three years later, we're about to graduate 25 students from Santander! Graduation day will be a day of celebration!

Meanwhile, I've already been on the road for face-to-face ministry meetings. Last week I met with leaders of a church in the Atlanta area that we've partnered with for some 30 years. In the pandemic-enforced "time out," the church's leaders took a good look at their ministry and mapped out a fresh vision.

I'm excited about what the Holy Spirit inspired in them: Their new vision is identical to the three distinctives of our own ministry: *evangelism, accelerated church-planting, and leadership training.*

(Thousands of churches never arrive at such a vision—but thank God for churches like this one, still hearing from the Lord and following His leading!)

As I met with the leaders, we discussed the work of a local church in terms of big boats: Is the church going to be a cruise ship, or a battleship?

These leaders were emphatic: They want to be a battleship!

I remember 30 years ago, we lost the partnership of a church, and this Atlanta-area church stepped into the gap with their commitment of support. At the time, we were just beginning our ministry in Cuba. The pastor asked me, "Manny, what would happen if a church like ours got involved in helping you reach Cuba?"

I was thrilled to hear such a question! "It would be like parking an aircraft carrier off the coast of Cuba," I told him, "and blitzing the entire country with the Gospel."

With God's help, the pastor replied, we want to be that aircraft carrier!

This church was raised up by God for a strategic and fruitful long-term purpose. And now, we see they are focusing even more keenly, dedicating themselves to the harvest even more fully. The aircraft carrier has accomplished much; the battleship will accomplish even more!

- **God is beautifully at work renewing us even as we go on serving. There is no fatigue, only a renewing of strength. We're experiencing the promise of Isaiah 40:31—mounting up with wings as eagles!**

Jesus, in a way, dealt with cruise ships and battleships as He observed two different kinds of disciples in John 6. He feeds the 5,000 with just five barley loaves and two fish. The people eat their fill, and there are leftovers.

The next day, as a side effect of the miracle, a crowd gathers. Jesus knows they aren't really looking to Him as their Messiah; they just want more bread! They claim they wanted to verify His divine authority—they even suggest a sign: Since Moses gave the people manna in the wilderness, Jesus should be able to produce likewise. "Lord, always give us this bread," they insist.

But Jesus sets them straight. He is the Bread of Life. To share in this spiritual bread, you need to partake of His body and blood.

The spiritual reality escapes them—and it's offensive to them. So the self-focused disciples stop following Him. But the 12 truth-following disciples stay behind. At which point, Jesus asks them: “You do not want to leave also, do you?”

Peter answers for the group: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have already believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

True disciples believe in the Lord and in His mission—they work not for the here and now, but for spiritual and eternal achievements. Jesus points out the goals and objectives of the work of true disciples:

“Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”

Some don't grasp the spiritual nature of Jesus' teaching. For others, they are “words of life”!

Which kind of disciple will I be? Do I have an appetite for “eating His body” and “drinking His blood,” as He put it? The first who heard these words found them distasteful. But Christ's true disciples understood—they believed the spiritual nature of His words—they received them and embraced them.

- **What do you have appetite for? *The answer to this question shapes the way God works in you and through you.***

Just last week we received a surprise donation from a married couple. The very next morning our partner in Morocco called with an urgent need: 27 South Sahara families had shown up at their church needing food and shelter. The timing of both arrivals—the donation and the families—was wonderfully synchronized.

When I shared with the donors what a joyful “splash of impact” their gift had made, the husband was astounded: “We have always longed to be of help to families in need,” he told me. “It's amazing how God has worked this out!”

If we have an appetite for the Lord's mission, we can partake of the Lord's mission. As you stand with us in prayer and giving today, God will give us more to do in His harvest fields.

- Churches in Mexico have been hurt in many ways during the pandemic. We have the joy of ministering to them.
- In Brazil, where we started an orphanage to care for children who lost parents in the pandemic, there are situations that need spiritual energy. We have the joy of ministering there.
- In India, where the pandemic shows no sign of stopping, there's an ongoing need for food supplies in India. We have the joy of providing “loaves and fishes”—and the Bread of Life—for physically and spiritually hungry multitudes.

God will give us more and more to do as we continue to partake of the Bread of Life! As we emerge from the pandemic—with half the U.S. population vaccinated—we're happy to be alive and in good health, able to help others through the generosity of friends like you.

Life beyond Covid has a new feel. Many people have learned crucial lessons through long, dark days of doubt and fear and confinement. I pray we'll emerge better focused and more compassionate. Most of all, I pray that we will be truth-following disciples, not self-focused disciples . . . disciples who strive to do the work of the Master, not leaving it up to others.

We have witnessed, in early church history, what happens when God's people don't engage in the work. Paul Lee Tan writes of the phenomenal growth of Christianity in the early centuries. By A.D. 300, the church was spreading so fast, it looked as if the entire civilized world could be evangelized by A.D. 500.

But gradually, people began relying on clergy to "do ministry." They abandoned their role as true disciples—disciples who do the work of the Master.

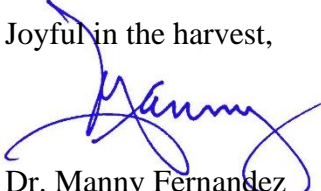
Result: "Christianity's movement was checked," Tan writes.

- We must not divide our ranks between those who have a responsibility to bear fruit and multiply—and those who don't. In God's plan, there are no separate classes of discipleship. There is only discipleship.

I thank God that you are engaged in discipleship with us! Thank you for being the root that brings life and production to the tree. Thank you for your quiet but effective role. There is a whole world to reach, and I am happy to be working with you for the purpose to which our Lord has called us!

Please serve Christ again today by giving a generous gift of support. Give with great joy and with gratitude that He has spared us through the pandemic for the great exploits He has set in store for us!

Let your gift today express your appetite for the things of eternity! Thank you in advance!

Joyful in the harvest,

Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. So many, in such need! Yet God has given you and me the privilege of serving as the hands and feet of Christ, to break the Bread of Life, to minister God's love. Thank you again for your partnership in ministry. I look forward to hearing from you soon!