



April 1, 2023

Dear Ministry Partner,

Spring is here! And the banner year we've prayed for is well underway!

Together, by the grace of our Lord, we are producing much fruit! *Look at all the ways God is using you—from the very place where you are at this moment—to reach people the whole world over!*

- We had a happy new year's launch in **INDIA**. What joy in the children there and in the ministers we gathered with in conference.
- In **SPAIN**—both in the Canary Islands and on the mainland—we experienced a wonderful February of growth. Workers at these schools are bubbling over with enthusiasm. The student body is growing. Our extension programs are stronger than ever.

We're taking the lead nationwide in training young leaders for careers in ministry across Spain and beyond!

- At 10 p.m. last night I began preaching an “hour of power” via Zoom with our partnering seminary in Manila, **PHILIPPINES**. In Manila, the start time was 11 a.m.—the following day! Preaching at 10 p.m.—to an audience you can't see—is a true act of faith. (Afterward, I was glad to “return to the past,” in Dallas, and get some sleep.)

My message in that “hour of power” wasn't just for our friends on the other side of the world. I believe God also gave it to me for you, right here, right now. . . .

Jesus is on His way to His final week in Jerusalem (Luke 14:25-35) to His suffering and death by crucifixion. The crowds think He's going to set up an earthly kingdom. They're hoping to get in on favors and rewards! But Jesus confronts them with the true—and high—costs of discipleship.

One Bible commentator accurately points out that someone can be a Christian without being a disciple. Indeed, someone can be a seminary graduate but not a disciple! In His teaching, Jesus calls us to make the kingdom of God and its priorities our priority—even if it means renouncing the love of the family, or the love of oneself.

And then comes the cross. Not just His. Ours. Jesus announces that there is a cross suited uniquely for each one of us: “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

Note the ownership of this cross! Note the possessive pronoun “his.” We are called to identify the sacrificial items in our experience—the things we'll have to give up for the cause of Christ—and exchange them for a life of doing God's will . . . of following Christ and doing what He calls us to do.



Easy? No. Jesus identifies costly ways in which comfort, and even relationships, are sacrificed in order to stay in step with Him

Finally, Jesus moves to his well-known story of a builder who fails to properly calculate the cost of his project. I can't help but think of "Stone's Folly. . . ."

In the late 1800s, in Topeka, a man named Stone had the (perhaps narcissistic) idea to build a mansion using stones for walls—but he ran out of funds when he was only halfway through and had to finish the work with wood. The people of Topeka took to calling the house "Stone's Folly."

(In 1901, Bethel Bible Institute rented the abandoned place. Rent was cheap—maybe because the place looked ridiculous! Coincidentally, in this monument to the importance of counting the cost, modern-day Pentecostalism was born.)

Count the cost, Jesus says, so you can go the distance. To quit is to become like salt that has lost its saltiness—useless!

And this admonition from our Savior compels us to swing around from reviewing what He has done through us . . . to what He wants to do through us, in the days ahead!

Now we look ahead:

- In July, I'll travel to the PHILIPPINES in person, to teach Accelerated Church-Planting. On the horizon will be the launching of 500 churches!
- And then . . . VENEZUELA! I got a phone call two days ago from Angelo, our graduate from Madrid, sharing an exciting ministry report. He's working with Alessandri, our national coordinator, selecting workers to launch 300 church plants in the capital city of Caracas and the surrounding metro area.

It's amazing to realize that we're already working with 315 churches in Valencia—now the number will be 615. Does it seem like too many? Not for an entire nation! In fact, 300 new churches are not *enough!*

Even more thrilling than the numbers was Angelo's report of the Holy Spirit's moving in so many settings and ministries. Newly started churches throughout the state of Carabobo are exploding with new people. Baptisms are being planned everywhere—with Alessandri designated as the "baptizer" in most of them.

Meanwhile, in several districts, the food program—"feed the children, reach the parents"—is outpacing its capacity. Groups are clamoring for more space because they can't fit all the children in! Thank God the food is abundant; but the need is for a spiritual response.

- † Please pray with us for people to come to faith in Christ!
- † Pray that God will show us a permanent solution to the problem of not enough space.
- † And pray that we will be able to replicate this powerfully effective outreach in multiple areas.



Angelo sees many needs pressing in on the leaders there in Venezuela. He asked for direction. But we don't offer a "one size fits all" strategy. We will look first to the Lord, knowing that you're supporting us in prayer. We've understood this priority especially since the explosive growth we experienced in **CUBA**: Ask God to show the local leaders how to solve their situations with His leading. . . .

The secret in Venezuela will be to let the Holy Spirit awaken the ingenuity of the local leaders—just as He led the early Christian church . . . and the Cubans! I always marvel at how God relates to people *wherever they are*. This is a spiritual reality and a spiritual answer—not “weakness,” not a “cop-out.” This is *God at work through His people*. Which is why prayer must lead the way. And it does!

- Yet Venezuela is not the final horizon at the moment. My next ministry stop, **BRAZIL**, as we resume classes in Natal in the state of Rio Grande do Norte. I'm excited about this new chapter of our ministry together, especially because of a deep commitment on the part of the students and leadership in the region.

We are also connecting with churches in the great cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, tapping into radio ministries already reaching great numbers of listeners. The need is clear: Organize effective follow-up so listeners don't “slip through the cracks” . . . and establish new churches where radio is reaching but there are no Bible churches nearby!

This work will get underway in the first half of April . . . *almost by the time you read these words!*

- And finally, our hearts are still tuned to the tragedy of **UKRAINE**. The news is constant as the war rages on. In the political arena, it's an ongoing debate. But our response to human need is not subject to debate; rather, it is directly prescribed for us . . . ever since Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. . . .

A lawyer wanted to obscure his responsibility to love his neighbor: “Wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” (Luke 10:29). Jesus answered the question with his now-famous parable—demonstrating that **many a "religious" person knows the right thing, but fails to do the right thing.**

After contrasting the religious *knower* with the nonreligious *doer*, Jesus asked who the neighbor was. The lawyer had to admit that it was the one who showed mercy. Jesus advised him to do the same as the Good Samaritan. There is no way to equivocate this clear teaching—though some keep trying!

And so, inspired by Jesus' example of the Good Samaritan, I'll head back to Ukraine in the last week of April to survey the situation and see the needs firsthand. I ask for your prayers. The situation is unpredictable, with the potential to change dramatically one day to the next.

I'm determined simply to trust the Lord while seeking a clear understanding of the priorities as we help and partner with our Ukrainian brothers and sisters. War is a nightmare. We as partners want to be true in the moment of testing. For now, the door is open for us to help, so we are committed to helping. *We won't let go of our own accord.*



In all of the fruitful adventures through which God has already led us together . . . and through all of the fruitful adventures He is calling us to in the days ahead . . . the glory is the Lord's always! But for us, there is deep satisfaction as we see Him using us as He leads.

- What joy to see throngs of people being reached with the Gospel and being baptized in Jesus' name!
- What joy to see so many young leaders in a growing number of countries being trained and deployed for life in the service of the Lord and His church!
- What joy to know, as we devote ourselves to the commission we've been given, that God is multiplying your investment in His work wonderfully—exponentially: not just 30-fold, but in a great many cases beyond 100-fold!

This deep-seated satisfaction is a grand reward . . . and a reality for the rest of eternity.

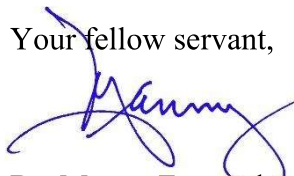
Yes, Jesus rewards those who have been faithful. God the Father wants us to believe in the reality of the Godhead . . . to believe in, and live by, the values and commands given us by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *But there is more*: We are not simply commanded . . . we are also rewarded! The three divine Persons of the Trinity are Rewarders of those who believe!

“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Thank you for your faith in both facts: that He is, and that He is the rewarder. Thank you for seeking Him with us!

And thank you for translating your faith into action, giving generously as the Lord leads you. **As we prepare for this intense season of ministry activity, please keep your heart tuned to this harvest work.**

As the weather warms up and people begin to engage in more leisurely activity, our teams will be representing you all around the world, bringing help, encouragement, and salvation through faith in Christ. Please give generously today to keep the work going strong this spring and summer. Thank you in advance! God bless you richly!

Your fellow servant,

Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. I ask you to give today . . . but *pray daily*. There are so many challenges ahead—yet our God is able! I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you again!

