

Heart*Cry*

MAGAZINE

REACHING A VAST & NEEDY REGION

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

UPDATES FROM

INDIA, MALAWI, TANZANIA, ZAMBIA, AFGHANISTAN, AND PERU

GREETINGS

Welcome to another issue of the *HeartCry Magazine*. I hope and pray that you are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The HeartCry staff and I pray for you often during our daily prayer meetings. We also pray for your families, loved ones, and friends, that they might know Christ and be conformed to His image and purpose.

As we begin this new year, much has changed in the world around us, but our purpose remains the same. Vertically, our desire is to glorify God and carry out His will upon the earth—that the Lamb might receive the full reward for His suffering; that He might see a great multitude from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and be satisfied (Isaiah 53:11;

Revelation 5:9; 7:9-10). Horizontally, our desire is to care for God's people. There are so many men and women around the world that are ministering in Christ's name and suffering untold hardship for their service. They work in anonymity, with little earthly recompense. If they were taken home to glory tomorrow, few would even notice. And yet, they are most precious to God and to us. They are the reason that HeartCry exists! Please pray for us, that God would give us wisdom to minister to His people throughout the world, to communicate their stories to you, and to be faithful stewards of your giving to them.

Your brother,
Paul David Washer

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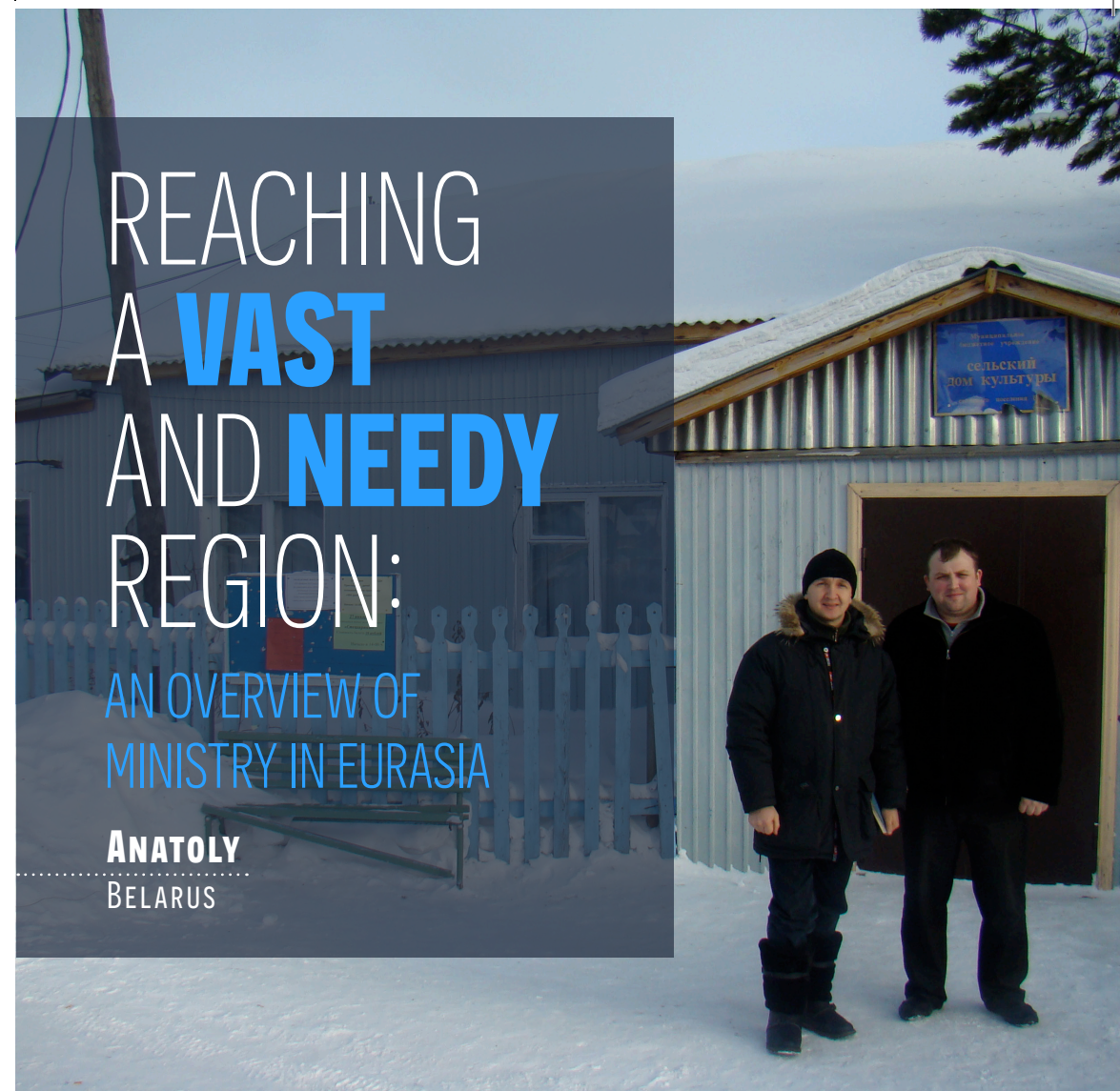
"They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand." - Romans 15:21

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REACHING A **VAST** AND **NEEDY** REGION:

AN OVERVIEW OF MINISTRY IN EURASIA

ANATOLY
BELARUS



I live in Belarus and pastor a church near Minsk, the capital city. One of the biggest blessings in my life in recent years has been partnering with HeartCry to impact the lives of pastors and missionaries all over the Eurasian map. I never imagined that the Lord would open such wide doors for me. I hope that this overview will help give you a picture of the work the Lord is doing across this vast region.

When I think of Eurasia, I think of huge distances. Although a lot of people are increasingly concentrated in cities, hundreds of thousands of people still reside in smaller towns and villages that are far from urban centers.

Russia and Kazakhstan are the world's 1st- and 9th-largest countries by area respectively. If we were to start a journey from the westernmost place in Belarus where there is a HeartCry-supported missionary and drive a car all the way to northeast Russia to meet the most distant missionary, it would take 121 hours of driving non-stop!

My heart has always been with Belarus. For a number of years, my co-pastor and I developed relationships with many pastors of small churches in our country. We visited them, encouraged them, arranged conferences for them, and prayed for them. We continue to

do it even now. One of the most moving moments for me in recent memory was when I spoke to a church planter who had relocated to a very hard place in northern Belarus and later was basically abandoned by his sending church and by his denomination. I told him that we were considering supporting his work. We knew his family had lived from hand to mouth for years and that their living conditions were substandard to say the least. Upon meeting with them, I quoted Brother Paul Washer that the amount we would provide must enable their family “to live with dignity.” He and his wife were flabbergasted by this language. The expression on their faces was as if I had just turned into a pink unicorn before



their eyes! The fact that someone out there would value their commitment and their sacrifice for Christ in such a way affected them deeply. These are moments to live for!

My younger friend Denis from western Belarus has just completed his internship at our church. His church is going through a very serious transformation right now. His youth group went through Paul Washer’s workbooks on the doctrine of man and the doctrine

of God. Women in their church, on their own initiative, went through the *Behold Your God* workbook. Church members have read a number of solid theological books in recent years. People who have been professing Christians for years are saying, “Now I actually understand what Christ did for me. Now I actually understand what Christian living should be like. Now I understand the difference between works righteousness and the gospel.” What a joy it is for me to mentor a young man like Denis, who is so passionate about the teaching and application of the gospel in the lives of his people!

When my partnership with HeartCry was just beginning, I took a flight from Minsk to the Russian Far East. I still remember how long it felt and how impressed I was with this massive expanse of forest-covered land. I also remember how on the next trip a pastor from Irkutsk drove us from one Bible-believing church in the region to another, a trip that would often take a whole day.

Over the last few years, we have continued developing relationships with pastors and church planters, both urban and rural. Pastors in big cities seek to engage with and encourage those in the more remote locations. A good example of this is Pastor Gennady from Irkutsk, who makes about two driving trips a year around his region (which is almost 300,000 square miles in area, larger than the U.S. state of Texas). In the bitter cold of Siberian winter, he



visits villages where three or four people were converted through evangelistic efforts a few years ago, or a small church further in the north where he serves as the only mature friend and counselor to the local pastor. Gennady is a faithful expositor of the Word of God. When we meet, I can often see how his heart is grieved that so many professing Christians in so many churches in his city do not seek a deeper knowledge of God and do not pursue holy living. The vast majority of churches in Siberia are infected with pragmatism and “easy-believism.” When I visit Gennady’s church, I find a warm family of believers who are eager to dig into the Word. One of the needs in his region is a ministry among Buryats, a large ethnic group (over 500,000) that primarily resides to the east of Lake Baikal in the Republic of Buryatia (part of the Russian Federation). Very few Buryats are converts, and only some parts of the Bible are translated into their native language. Gennady believes that it will take a native Buryat to reach his own people with the gospel, as they

are wary of turning to what they see as a “Russian religion.”

Move 1,500 miles northwest, and you will find yourself in Nizhnevartovsk. Pastor Vladimir, a Ukrainian by birth, has been preaching the gospel in this city since the 1990s. Apart from pastoring his own congregation, he is closely involved in a rehab ministry founded by his friend, who was also a pastor in the city. For the last two years, he also has had an exceptional chance to teach a former charismatic church the basics of Reformed theology! What he finds is that no matter what the label, genuinely converted believers are hungry to be fed the Word of God. Many wonderful conversations have come out of that ministry. Seeing people liberated from the falsehood of the prosperity “gospel” and from the abuses of self-proclaimed “apostles” is a real joy!

Hop on a plane in Nizhnevartovsk, transfer in Moscow, and in about eight hours you will reach Mikhailovsk, a town in the southernmost region of Russia (about six hours from the Black Sea). Pastor Andrey was invited here

by a group of believers who wanted to be better grounded in biblical teaching and simply did not see any church where Scripture was faithfully explained and applied. Last year, his family of five moved from their hometown (a 34-hour drive) to Mikhailovsk. At the moment, Andrey is trying to lay a foundation for the church, going through the basics of the gospel, Christian life, and church membership. Travel east and cross the Caspian Sea, and you will arrive in Kazakhstan. I'll let local missionary Bakhid tell you about the spiritual state of that nation:

After only a little time in southern Kazakhstan, the Lord showed me the true spiritual condition of the churches here. The problem is that there are very few churches preaching the gospel in the Kazakh language. Kazakh Christianity is very young, only 25 to 30 years old, with the Bible being fully translated into Kazakh just about 7 years ago. There are no good Bible commentaries or Christian books in the language yet, and Kazakhs know little about Church history.

The situation only gets worse due to the fact that most missionaries (particularly from South Korea and the United States) who come to Kazakhstan have a theology (soteriology, ecclesiology, etc.) that needs to be drastically revised. Pentecostal and liberal Presbyterian churches in our city, with considerable financial support, are trying to publish books and have conferences and thus reach people with what is essentially a twisted gospel and a different Christ. Of course, I can't speak for all these churches, nor do I claim to have everything right. I am only sharing my eval-

uation of the overall situation in this area, based on my personal meetings with Kazakh Christians from other churches. It breaks my heart to see that, for people suffering from the negative consequences of their bad decisions, the root issue is often poor instruction in the Word at the very outset of their journey with the Lord. Christians suffer for years from bearing burdens that the Lord has not placed upon them. It is not only they who suffer from this, but also their children. So the cry of my heart is a prayer that the Lord would bless our country.

I praise the Lord for giving you, those who are praying and giving on our behalf, a commitment to this ministry, which makes it possible to change the situation for the better. Frankly, I do not consider myself worthy to be an active worker in the preaching of the gospel here. But by His grace, the Lord continues to use me to preach the Word of Grace in this city and to teach sound doctrine.

Recognizing the vast need, we have begun translating books into Kazakh, beginning with Paul Washer's Knowing the Living God. It is a wonderful theological tool for studying the attributes of God to help us worship the God of the Bible, not the god of our imagination. What I had hoped would be a fairly simple task has turned out to be quite an undertaking. There are very few Christians with a sound theology

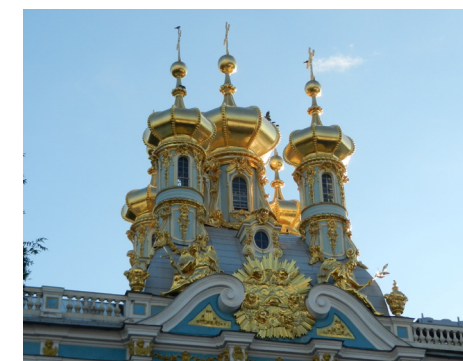


as well as a good knowledge of both Kazakh and English. I would ask you to join our prayers for God to continue to open doors for translation and send qualified believers with the right skills into our church. Although translation of books is a job that requires a lot of time, effort, and money, it is a worthwhile investment for people to have a correct understanding of the Bible today and in the future. This provides a healthy alternative against unsound teachers, whose books have dominated libraries in Christian homes for the last 25 to 30 years.

These are the countries with which I interact regularly. Personally, from the outset, my heart was with Belarus. But then I went to Siberia. Then I went to Kazakhstan. I saw the vastness of the need, and it blew my mind. I am a limited man with limited time, strength, and gifts. Yet, every time I visited missionaries scattered around Eurasia, I could see God performing a miraculous reaction: my visits, teaching, and encouragement combined with people's spiritual needs exploded into joy, renewed commitment, clearer understanding of the Word, and

thanksgiving! I know this happens because the Lord is good to us, because He loves His Church immensely, and because He wants to accomplish more.

So I ask myself this question: **what can we do to maximize our output?** What can we do to make the most of our limited resources? My answer from Scripture and from my own experience (limited though it is) is *to find faithful men, to teach them, and to pour my heart into them.* The gospel is powerful to produce fruit on



any continent, in any nation, in any language and culture. **But the success of missions stands or falls on whether we have faithful men on the mission field and whether we have pastors and churches who back them up, love**



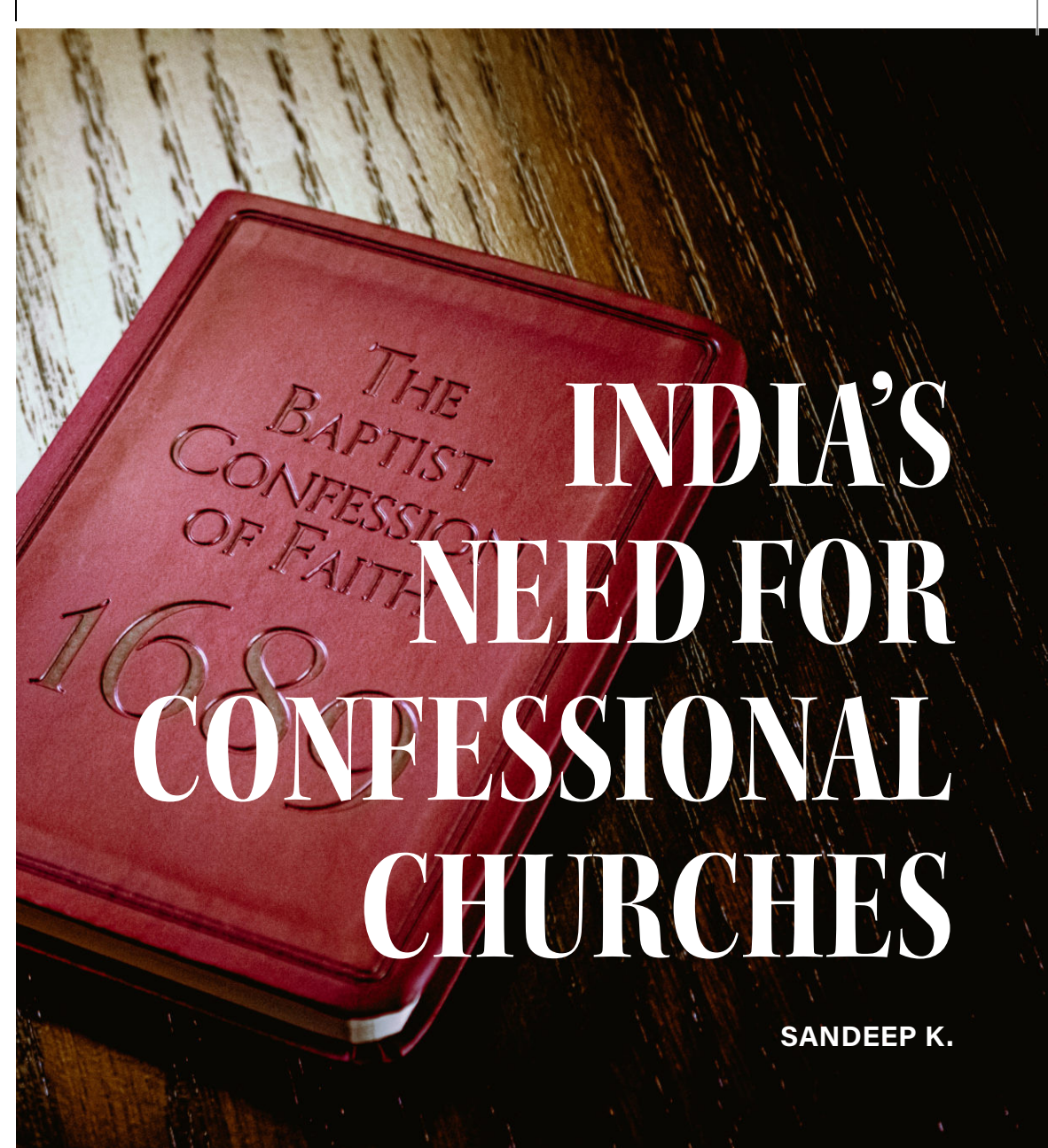
them, and care for them in a tangible way. I see this happening. I am rarely fully satisfied, but I am always thankful and hopeful. I am thankful that all the brothers with whom we work are uncompromising preachers of the Cross. I am hopeful that they will raise up another generation of servants of the same quality. I can see that their connection to the Church at large sustains their spirit of joy and keeps them from sinking into despair when things go wrong.

Every time I give a goodbye hug to one of my dear brothers serving around Eurasia, every time I hear thanks from them and their wives for spending time with them, I am amazed at God's grace. He allows me to spend

time with some of the finest and most Christlike men in His Church. He allows me to ease their burdens and share their joys. He allows me to remind them that, while they are on the frontline of the battle, thousands of their brothers and sisters are lovingly praying and giving. They are heralds of the Kingdom that will one day be victorious and fill the world.

Our Lord is so gracious to us. He has given us more than we deserve, and He will accomplish through us more than we imagine! Together, we have all that is needed to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

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After the arrival of the Baptist missionary William Carey in India in 1793, more Western missionaries from various denominations made their way to India. In spite of facing many hurdles, the missionaries persevered in offering the locals a living hope in the gospel as well as a helping hand through the establishment of hospitals, schools, colleges, and other organizations designed to alleviate human suffering. Because of their relentless efforts to reach out to the people of India, some churches

were established both in the North and the South of India. Thus, various Christian denominations spread across India.

More recently, owing to the rise of the house-church movement, student ministries, and other indigenous missionary movements, there are undoubtedly more Christians in India than there have ever been. With unlimited access to the internet (even in remotest regions), Christian sermons and videos are heard and seen throughout the country. Despite the

fact that Christianity as a whole is still a tiny minority among the large swaths of the Indian population, it is on the rise. Having said that, churches in India are largely still flimsy in terms of theology and ecclesiology. As a result, all kinds of heresies and unbiblical practices have made in-roads into the Church. This means finding a local church that is **confessional** (*i.e.* adhering to a specific confession, creed, or doctrinal statement) is next to impossible! There are literally thousands of

the councils proved the absolute necessity of doctrinal purity and clarity to the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ. Being removed from the larger biblical and historical context will only make a local church vulnerable and potentially heretical. This further points to the absolute necessity of having a statement of faith, regardless of where one lives in this world. This is the background one has to understand when speaking of the Reformed Baptist church that I pastor.



churches that do not even have a basic statement of faith, leaving room for ignorance and heresy.

With the spread of the health, wealth, and prosperity “gospel,” words like *doctrine* and *theology* are considered detrimental and dangerous to the growth of the church. But is it possible to build healthy and biblical churches without laying proper doctrinal foundations? The answer is a resounding “No!” History is replete with records of how the Church was invaded by darkness when it lost its doctrinal and confessional moorings. As early as the fourth century, the Church fathers and

We believe that the doctrines of the Reformation and the Baptist distinctives are inseparable from our local church. Ours is a church whose statement of faith is largely, if not entirely, based on the *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*. We encourage all our members to read and understand our statement of faith before they become members. One of the challenges we face from time to time is when we have to train members who are illiterate in sound doctrine. Therefore, we make sure that all the key doctrines are explained frequently, both from the pulpit and by way of conducting doctrine class-

es. We also have arranged special doctrinal conferences for the church to help the congregation understand the doctrines we believe. As a result, most of our members can articulate the essence of all the core doctrines in their own words, which is very encouraging. Because of our insistence on the doctrines, our members can distinguish between biblical and unbiblical teaching. This is highly important in our context, where unbiblical teaching is rife.

We believe that the Word of God should be the final authority for our life and practice; all aspects in the life of the local church should be guided and guarded by it (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21). All the important decisions in the church—be it our corporate worship, appointing leaders, accepting members into the fellowship, or disciplining a sinning member—are made based on our statement of faith, which is ultimately tethered tightly to the Word of God. In spite of receiving criticism of being “narrow-minded” and “too rigid,” our goal is glory of God and the edification of the local church, because it is through the local church that the radiance of God and the mysteries of the gospel are revealed to the outside world.

Many in our context think that because there is such poverty, lack of education, and indifference to Christianity, we need to lower the standards for establishing a local church. Therefore, they argue, any explanation of the key doctrines is laying an extra burden on the simple and the poor. This kind of logic is evidently seen in countless churches that have no absolute biblical foundations and roots. We believe, on the contrary, that laying a doctrinal

foundation for the local church is commanded in the New Testament (I Timothy 3:15-16, I Timothy 4:6, 11-16).

God’s people enjoy, grow, and prosper spiritually when the Word of God is explained, preached, and applied, no matter where we live—be it in India or in Scotland (John 10:27).

When different ethnicities are commanded to be united in the blood-bought Church of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:28), it is implied that the same doctrine is applicable to different ethnicities and people groups throughout the entire world. We have one God to worship, one gospel that rescues, and one system of doctrine to be explained and understood. Therefore, it is our prayer that the Lord would help us see the need for the countless churches to be doctrinal (confessional) in this country. May the glory of God be reflected by the establishing of confessional churches in this land of great need and great harvest!



WHY AFRICAN CAMPUSES NEED ROBUST THEOLOGY

MALAMULO CHINDONGO

MALAWI

Three years ago, we decided to launch an event to teach university students robust theology—and the University Theology Bootcamp was launched. For three years straight, we have gathered together with up to 200 students in the mountains of Zomba (the 4th-largest city in Malawi). Behind all this was our desire to see who would come to an event that was primarily

a preaching event—no entertainment, no tricks; just Bible-based, expository preaching. To our grateful surprise, there have been quite a few students interested in the event.

A POSSIBLE AWAKENING?

Like many of you, I believe we should not use words like “awakening” lightly. But could it be that the Lord is doing something among these young people?

We have discovered that some of these students have found the great Christian doctrines or the doctrines of grace on the internet. In the providence of God, these men and women are already listening to faithful preachers. So now they are looking for others who are just like them. Why are they interested in the dead people’s theology? Why are they curious about the old faith? Why are they interested in biblical truth? Why would they respond in this way after reading a sermon by C.H. Spurgeon? When we ask them why, they tell us that it is because these men did not compromise on the truth.

LONGING FOR SOLID DISCIPLESHIP

We have discovered that some of these students are looking for faithful shepherds to disciple them and help

them grow. Across Africa, especially southern Africa, many young people come from broken homes, growing up without a relationship with their parents. When they become Christians, they long for spiritual fathers and mothers to walk with them. We need to be there for them. Our churches must welcome young men and women and mentor them throughout their college years.

QUESTIONING THE PROSPERITY PREACHERS

We have found that there are hundreds of students today who are tired of the Word of Faith movement. They have tried it and tested it and found it wanting. Now they are questioning it. We need faithful ministries to step in and answer their questions. College is one of the most confusing



stages in life for many of these young people. As it is, many of them are being bombarded by liberalism, which has infiltrated most major studies in African universities. The prosperity gospel does not reason and has no answers for these young people. They need robust theology to answer all their hard questions and give them direction in life.

GOOD TURNOUT DESPITE COVID FEARS

With the fear amongst many students surrounding the coronavirus pandemic and with universities being closed for months during these times, we had thought that the Bootcamp would not happen this year. But the Lord surprised us at the last minute! Once universities reopened, the students

themselves were eager and asked us to please go ahead with the event. We gladly obliged, and the Lord provided the means for all of this, to glorify His name. He opened up the door and allowed us to have this event, with many in attendance to hear the gospel preached. Students listened with intense interest.

The event was titled “**The Worship of God**”; the following topics were preached: 1) “What is worship?”; 2) “A student life that glorifies God”; 3) “Don’t waste your life”; 4) “Dealing with anxiety and addiction”; 5) “Music in worship”; 6) “You were created to worship”; 7) “Finances, time, sexual purity, and worship”; and 8) “The regulative principle of worship.”

Pray that the Word of God would

dwell richly in the hearts of all who heard it!

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCIPLESHIP

For the next several months, we will spend our time in seven different campuses, two of them located three hours away from where we are. Almost all of the students who attended the event signed up for a discipleship program on their respective campuses. We will spend some time at each college teaching through Paul Washer’s series of workbooks. We plan to start with the first book in the series, *Knowing the Living God*.

Every week, our men will be traveling to various campuses to conduct these workshops for 13 weeks. Please pray for a movement of God in these meetings, that these young men and women would grasp these truths. Please pray that none of these meetings would end only in emotional excitement, with no real fruit of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Please pray also for those will be conducting these workshops.

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Two Years in Tanzania

SIMON BALIBWA

Tanzania is one of the newest countries in Africa where HeartCry is privileged to serve missionary pastors. Over two years ago, we received a call from our dear ministry friend, Ronald Kalifungwa, pastor of Lusaka Baptist Church in Lusaka, Zambia. He told our Africa Coordinator about a young man, Simon, who had completed a pastoral internship at Kabwata Baptist Church under Conrad Mberwe and had since spent a good bit of time with Lusaka Baptist. The young man was Tanzanian, and LBC was ready to send him home as a church planter. HeartCry gladly partnered with Lusaka Baptist to supplement with what

was needed to complete Simon's support. The following is a summary from Simon of the lead-up to his being sent out as a missionary as well as his two years thus far in Tanzania.

My name is Simon Patilo Balibwa, a missionary of Lusaka Baptist Church. I want to continue giving praise to our God for how He has undertaken for us. In this report, I will specifically give a summary of this new church plant, **Dodoma Reformed Baptist Church (DRBC)**.

In 2013, I went to Kenya to a Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) event, where I met Pastor Chipita

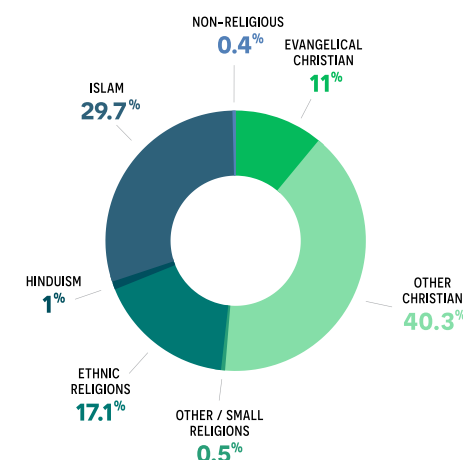
Sibale (of Kabwata Baptist Church in Zambia) and Andrew Alsop, who were teaching systematic theology and biblical survey. One day I shared a devotion on unity (I Corinthians 1:10). Andrew told me that he saw something in me and asked if I had ever thought about pastoral ministry. My answer was 'No!' because I had no sense of what it actually was, especially in Africa, where pastors are denigrated as people who have nothing left in their lives. I had never liked the thought of being a pastor. However, this conversation helped to change my mind. Later, I applied for the internship program at Kabwata Baptist Church, recommended by Chipita and Andrew, my new friends. I spent a couple of months praying about it, and it became

TANZANIA at a Glance

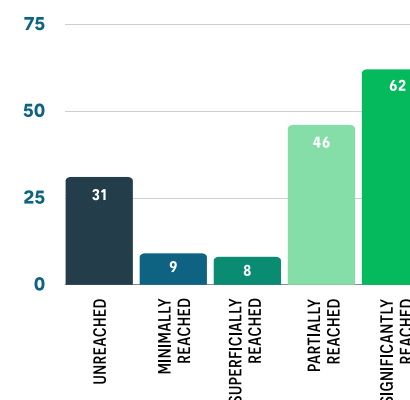


TOTAL POPULATION
59,649,000

MAJOR RELIGIONS



PEOPLE GROUPS: 156



Source: Joshua Project



clear that this was God's call.

I joined Kabwata Baptist Church for internship in January 2015; after a few months, I started to have a strong desire to serve God, especially when I thought of my friends and family who were bathing in sins back in Tanzania. The gospel is being compromised in our country, eaten up by all the false teachers and teachings. The Islamic movement increases, and the Charismatic movement with its false "prosperity gospel" spreads like bush fire. I felt burdened in my heart for those who live and die before the true gospel is preached for them to hear, even while they sing and dance in false religion.

My life's dream changed to serving God and fulfilling His will; this is what gives me peace now. God has planted this desire in me for His purpose in Tanzania, and I am joyous to serve Him.

I moved to Dodoma, the capital of Tanzania, in November 2018 to take initial steps—finding a house, getting legal permission from the government to conduct meetings, making contacts, and looking for a meeting place. I have so far managed many of these, yet still continue with the process of acquiring a permanent church registration. We started to meet for Bible study at my house in November 2018, and our first Sunday worship service was in March 2019, with seven people gathered. Now we meet for both Bible study and Sunday worship service with about 20-35 persons in attendance.

I have been active in evangelizing several different places, like food courts, bus stations, neighborhoods, schools, and recreation centers. I have met with people from a number of backgrounds, but many who profess to be Christians do not have clear knowledge about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who do not subscribe to Christianity tend to offer excuses as to why they are not Christians, often providing examples of unbiblical conduct committed by their former

church leaders that discouraged them from continuing to go to church. I am grateful to God that through prayers, Bible study, teaching, preaching, and related gospel endeavors, many have found the truth! I can testify that the Word of God is effecting changes in their lives.

Early on, our church started reaching out to students at the University of Dodoma, St. John University, and the Institute of Rural Development Planning (IRDP). We also started Carpenter Ministry to reach out to local carpenters and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them. Indeed, the Lord has worked through these ministries. We praise God for His grace and mercies in answering our prayers.

On March 1, 2020, Dina and I exchanged marriage vows. My wife and I are so grateful to God for his mercy and to Lusaka Baptist Church for their prayers and material support, which enabled us to afford the logistics of our wedding celebration. Please continue to pray with us that this union will honor and serve God and His people.

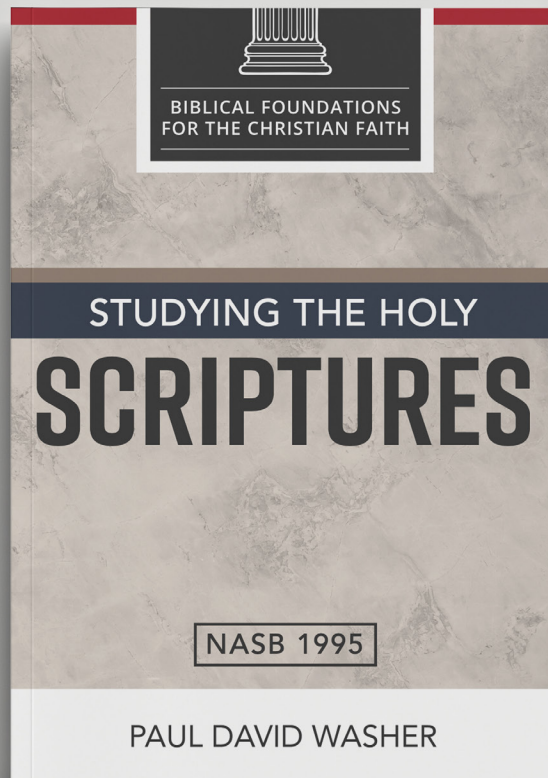


Prayer Items

- We are earnestly praying that we can find an open door for radio ministry. This is another opportunity that would enable us to reach many people with the gospel of Jesus Christ in Dodoma. We need funds to pay for a one-hour slot once or twice a week.
- Please pray for us at DRBC to be able to buy a church plot and build our own structure.
- We are still processing the application for permanent church registration; we praise God that we managed to get the second endorsement letter, for which we have been praying for so long.
- I am continually grateful to God for Lusaka Baptist Church, HeartCry, and all their partners. Thank you for your prayers and support! Continue praying for the brethren here and for my wife and me, that God may grant us good health, strength, wisdom, and all resources needed for propagating the gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ.
- Pray for God's intervention in the souls to whom I minister.
- Please pray that God would give us more wisdom in every aspect of this work, regardless of the challenges we may face. I hope to tell you more about the grace of God to us in the coming months.
- Please continue to pray that I would be faithful to God and tireless in this work, and pray that God would raise more men and women to work in His vineyard here in Tanzania.

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NOW AVAILABLE



Paul Washer's fifth workbook in the Biblical Foundations for the Christian Faith series is available now for less than \$7 per book! The Scriptures are the greatest treasure that a person can possess. They are the only source of inspired, inerrant, and infallible revelation regarding God, His will, and His works—especially His work of redemption through Jesus Christ. The Christian cannot hold too high a view of the Bible or exalt it beyond what it deserves. For these reasons and many others, the Christian should consider the study of the Scriptures to be his or her primary and lifelong task. *Studying the Holy Scriptures* helps the reader examine the importance of doctrine as well as the trustworthiness, history, purpose, and power of the Bible—the inspired Word of God.

You can find *Studying the Holy Scriptures*, along with other published titles, at heartcrymissionary.com/books.

ELDERS ADDED IN CHOMA



KWENDA KWENDA

ZAMBIA

In December of 2013, Kwenda was ordained and sent out by Kabwata Baptist Church to become pastor of Choma Central Baptist Church—initially planted in 1987—in Choma, which is midway between the Zambian cities of Lusaka and Livingstone. Kwenda and his wife Miriam were married in April of 2015.

If there are critical stages in the life of a church, then one of these must be the appointment of church elders. It is often said that a church cannot progress beyond what its leaders invest. Seven years after my arrival here, the Lord was pleased to bring in Mr. Edgar Munsanje, Mr. Kolezi Chirwa, and Mr. Emmanuel Dukuzyesu into the eldership at Choma Central Baptist Church on January 17, 2021.

The process started with receiving names of potential elder candidates from the church members. Six names were brought forward. I, along with some of the elders at Kabwata Baptist Church, had interviews with each of the men, from which three names clearly emerged as those who met the qualifications stipulated in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These three names were then brought for a confidence vote before the church members, and all three were affirmed.



In all this, I first want to thank God for answered prayers. For many years, we have been praying for this very thing for Choma Central Baptist Church. I would also like to thank everyone who has been praying for the work here and all who have been supporting us financially. Indeed, your spiritual and material support is not in vain.

Secondly, it is important to note that it has not been an easy road. As you may be aware from previous reports, I almost stepped down as pastor at one point because of struggles with the interim leadership.

I have shed tears many times along the way. These are some of the challenges of pastoral ministry. Thankfully, the Lord has seen us through it all!

Thirdly, I recognize that this is not the end, but the beginning of more work—hence the need for more prayers! It is one thing to have elders come along-

side you and yet another to work in harmony with them. My prayer is that we may bond well and faithfully serve the Lord together. We plan to study good books together that will help them grow into their new roles of faithfully serving God's church as elders.

In conclusion, please pray for unity of purpose in the newly established eldership. Pray that we settle in quickly and get to work. Pray that we also find ways to take the gospel to our community despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media is being utilized, but it has many limitations. Pray also that the members adapt quickly to the change of leadership structure.

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2020 GOSPEL ADVANCES IN AFGHANISTAN

LUCAS A.

Lucas was forced to leave his home country and ministry in 2015, but he is currently training pastors and church leaders who still live there. His ministry consists of translating biblical resources into his mother tongue, corresponding regularly with church leaders, and organizing training conferences for pastors. He and his wife have three daughters. Below is a summary of the work in Afghanistan in 2020 as the ministry moves into a new year.

Leadership Training

We are currently working with around 20 main house church leaders and 120 other leaders of small groups, university student Bible studies, and other ministries. We are meeting through Zoom, Skype, Telegram, and

WhatsApp and following up to help them teach and lead.

This year, due to quarantine and travel restrictions, we had only 8 leaders for a 7-day training session in another country. We covered an overview of the Old Testament and then looked



at Nehemiah and Ezra in-depth. We studied the meaning and application of these books and, particularly, what message they have for the Afghan Church at this time in history. Our plan is to continue doing our training for another 20 leaders in 2021.

Online Ministry

Our website (khabarkhush.org) is online now, and we have almost all of our translated books available there as eBooks—as well as worship songs in the Dari language. We hope soon to upload articles as well. Our website is linked to all our social media platforms and also the audio Bible teaching app *Farestade*.

Our media team is doing a great job engaging and answering questions on our social media platforms. We have reached thousands of Farsi and Pashto speakers around the world with our two Facebook pages—one is more for evangelism and the other for apologetics. We are using YouTube for our newly produced worship songs and also a couple of evangelistic videos in various languages and dialects of Afghanistan.

Testimonies

In 2020, even with all the restrictions and the increase of pressure and persecution for the Afghan Church, we witnessed growth, with 14 newly established house churches around the country and 5 Bible study groups for those curious about Christianity. Below are a few testimonies:

“There was a man we were serving without saying we were Christians. One day he came to one of us and asked, ‘Who are you? What kind of God are you following?’ This brother was surprised and said that we are following the true and living God! Then our brother asked the man why he was asking. He said, ‘You are all serving me and my family in a way which we have never been served—even my own father has not served me in this way! I am sure you are not Muslim; I want to become like you guys.’ Then our brother was a bit relieved and shared about Jesus. By God’s grace, the man professed faith in Christ! One of us is reading the Bible with him every week. He is so happy and reading the Word of God daily.”

“I was communicating with a man via our Facebook page for six months. I finally met him in person and, by the grace of God, he professed faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He was once a very strong Muslim and studied in a Masjid (mosque) for several years, planning to become a religious leader. Then he finished high school and entered university. He started reading different books and realized that the teaching of the Mullah (instructor) was not true. Eventually, he abandoned religion. After a few years, he became tired and realized that he could not live like that. He could not deny that there is Someone who controls the



whole world. He started searching for the real God and the true way to follow and found himself drawn to Christianity. He wrote to us on our page, and we began working with him. After our meeting, thank God, he professed faith in Jesus! He has started coming to a newly established home group.”

“There is a Christian young woman in our church. Last year, her father forced her to marry a young Muslim man. When they got married, we were worried about her and prayed for her and her husband. We thought we had lost our sister, because our society is centered around men, and women do not have the right to speak. Last month, the wife shared the gospel with her husband and introduced him to one of the brothers from the house church. Our brother worked with him, and God touched his heart. He professed Jesus Christ as his Savior and his God! We had a Christmas celebration on December 22, and both of them came. The husband was so happy and enjoyed God’s presence in the worship.”

TESTIMONIES OF GOD'S GRACE IN PERU



TWO LOST MEN ASK FOR GUIDANCE

BY IVAN TASSARA

I ran into a man this month that I have known since childhood. He is in his fifties. He is known for his past as a criminal and was a member of the first gang in the city of Sullana. Ever since I was a child and saw this man in our neighborhood, I have always viewed him with fear. Now he works in construction, but he still has problems with alcohol and drugs. He has had five different wives, but each relationship ended in separation because he treated them violently.

This week, while I was in the neighborhood visiting my mother, I crossed paths with him; he came over to greet me. He said to me, “Your mom tells me you’re a pastor now. How I have needed to speak with a pastor!” We talked for a long time, and I told him about Christ. He told me that he wanted me to visit him and to keep teaching him about Christ. He has the false belief that he cannot give his life to God because he would simply fail God.

We agreed on a time for me to come by his house and study the Word of

God together. Although I have to admit that I am fearful to go where he lives, I still will go to see him. I pray for his life, and I ask you to pray for him too. I am hoping in the Lord that He will work for good in the life of this man and will bring him to salvation.

Another man, who is much younger, has also asked me for help. He has been studying the Bible and wants someone to visit him and explain the Word of God to him. He wants to understand more about God. He told me that, ever since he has begun reading the Bible, he has had a terrible feeling of guilt because of the kind of life he has lived. He lives in a very dysfunctional family—his dad is a known thief, his older brother is in prison, his other brother is involved in crime, and he himself has a history of criminal behavior.

I am going to begin meeting with him once a week to study the Word of God. This is a great opportunity because he has invited me into his home, which means that everyone else in the home will be able to hear about Christ. Brothers and sisters, pray for me, as I always ask you, in order that Christ would use me according to His will.



CESY'S NEW JOY IN THE LORD

BY ARTURO MARIN

Cesy used to come to Sunday school classes when she was a child. Her mother was one of the teachers. At that point, our church had a number of people congregating each week and many, many children coming to our Sunday school; but we did not have healthy, biblical doctrine. Our evangelism was not done in a way that was according to Scripture; as a result, we had many people who came to church but did not really know Christ.

Cesy grew up and went off to the city to study. When she came back during the breaks, she would walk past our church and watch us, but she would not participate. Now she is married and has a daughter.

In the midst of the pandemic, her father and other family members became sick with the virus, and there was a sense of desperation. I was in Lima at the time, but I received a desperate phone call from her mom, asking for prayer—it seemed like her husband was about to die. Cesy was also very fearful for her father's life.

In those moments, I prayed with them and spoke to them about the Word of God. I told them about their need for salvation and their need to repent of their sin. We continued those phone calls for some time.

When I returned to San Rafael, great was my rejoicing when I saw Cesy joyfully coming to the church and giving testimony to the fact that she is now a true Christian!

She is very excited and is attentive when she is with the church. When we go to visit the sick and take food and supplies to them, she is with us. When we evangelize, whether in San Rafael or in other towns, she goes with us. During the different tasks that the church carries out, she is always present. Though her husband is still an unbeliever, he respects her profession of faith. We are praying for his salvation as well.

“FOR THE FIRST TIME, I HAVE UNDERSTOOD”

BY JAVIER CARHUAPOMA

On Saturday, we had two different services outdoors. The first group met outside Brother Juan's home, and the other group met outside of Brother Miguel's home. While I was preaching, a man that was passing by on his motorcycle stopped and began to listen. As he listened, he got off his motorcycle and took a seat. He was attentive for the entire sermon.

After the service, I went over to him, and he said, “Pastor, I have understood the gospel clearly this morning. I see the urgency of repenting. I have gone to church before, but for the first time I have understood the need to repent; I want to obey the Lord.” His name is Henry. Henry was present for our virtual Sunday school the next morning, and I was able to introduce him to the brothers and sisters of the church, and we prayed for him.

Sunday afternoon, I received a call from a man named José saying, “Am I speaking with the pastor of Marana-

tha Church? I need to speak with you urgently.

I was talking with my friend Henry this morning, and he told me about the Word of God that he heard you preach yesterday. He gave me your number to call you. I was at the point of taking my own life.”

Sunday night, right before the evening service began, I met with José and preached the gospel to him. He told me he wanted to follow Christ and repent. That night, listening to the sermon together, were Henry, José, and several of their friends. Please pray for all of them, that our God would be greatly glorified in their lives. Pray that they would continue to bear witness to the power of the gospel!

I was very surprised by this first open-air meeting as a church in the midst of this pandemic. God has already given us the great blessing of preaching the gospel outdoors, and we believe many people heard it.



Ministry Project Highlights

Part of HeartCry's aim to spread the gospel throughout the nations includes purchasing or funding particular tools or ministry needs for the missionaries serving on the field. Below are a just a couple of the specific projects we have been privileged to be able to fulfill in the last few months.

Laptop for Gautam

NEPAL



“Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I praise God for your prayers and support for my need, as I was in very much need of a laptop. This is a great help to make it easier to work on all my assignments in my pastoral internship; it will also help me in all my personal study and ministry work. Thank you for your generosity! I am encouraged by your support. Please continue to pray for me, that I may grow more in the Lord and equip myself for the future ministry among our own people here in Nepal. Praise God for meeting this need!”

The Essential Means of Grace

RUSSIAN TRANSLATION

Over the summer, Paul Washer released a small book through Reformation Heritage Books titled, *The Essential Means of Grace*. Through a friend and translator in Belarus, we were able to help fund the translation and publishing of the Russian version. This little book was sent to many of the churches we support for the pastors and church members. We have since heard reports of how beneficial this volume has been. One brother even plans to host a conference with a few local congregations over the topics within the book.





MINISTRY AMIDST CHRONIC ILLNESS



RUXI VANDICI
ROMANIA

Recently, I read an article entitled, “Can sickness be better than health?” The author shares the testimonies of faithful servants of God who have endured great afflictions, including painful and prolonged sickness, and afterwards have been able to testify of the wonderful grace the Lord bestowed upon them through their debilitating illness. C.H. Spurgeon’s words have especially caused me to wonder and think carefully: “There is no greater mercy that I know of on earth than good health except it be sickness; and that has often been a greater mercy to me than health. It is a good thing to be without a trouble; but it is a better thing to have a trouble and know how to get grace enough to bear it.” Hav-

ing lived for more than six years with a chronic illness that drastically limits my energy and physiological functional capacity, these words made no sense at first. During the rough hours, when even brushing my teeth seems like a great accomplishment, it is difficult to believe sickness is better than health. When deep discouragement overwhelms me for not being able to lead evangelistic and discipleship Bible study groups with young women as I have in the past, or when people dear to me fall into immorality and dangerous or false teaching, it is really hard to believe that having trouble is better than not having trouble.

But then I took some time to meditate on the passage from II Corinthians 12:9: “But He said to me, ‘My grace

is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Looking back on these hard years, I can wholeheartedly testify that the grace of God has been sufficient for me—grace to keep me; grace to sustain me; grace to provide for my every need; and, probably most importantly, grace to prune me through this trial. There are many ways in which I have experienced Christ’s grace and power made perfect in my weakness.

The first and most important lesson I have learned (and am still learning!) is that Christ is all I have and all I need. Sickness, trouble, blows to the ministry, losing friends—these have all taught me that Christ is all I have and all I need. I am still learning this lesson every day.

Secondly, linked to the first lesson, I am continually learning the lesson of dependence upon the Lord. Dependence to have enough energy to make it through a meeting, a Bible study, or church service or even to get back home from grocery shopping.

Through this dependence on the Lord for physical strength for everyday tasks, the Holy Spirit has taught me a more important lesson: to rely not on people or on myself for spiritual or emotional strength, but on Him alone.

The Lord has blessed and helped me tremendously through loving and caring family and friends; I am deeply grateful to Him for that. I have felt His love through the love and service of my wonderful parents and friends whom He has given me. But somehow, through decreased physical capacity, He has torn down my excessive reliance on people and self. I pray He would continue to replace it with a deeper and deeper reliance on Him. Christ has proven Himself faithful as an ever-present Friend and Help in time of trouble. Communion with Him is joy and peace even in the midst of suffering.



Thirdly, humility is another lesson the Lord is teaching me through suffering. John MacArthur says humility is the greatest Christian virtue and the most important lesson the Lord teaches us through trials. This is exactly what God was teaching the Apostle Paul by leaving the thorn in his flesh and not granting his request to have it removed (II Corinthians 12:7-10).

Beyond the personal lessons amidst suffering, the Lord has opened doors for me to encourage and minister to



several young women who are fighting serious illnesses like cancer and lupus. I think they feel I can understand something of their struggle, as I fight a chronic illness myself. I am so glad I have been able to share with them some of the verses, sermons, and writings that have been a tremendous help for me over the years. It is such a privilege and joy to be able to bring just a little bit of encouragement and comfort to some of the dear suffering children of God. I often encourage them with the truth of God's sovereignty. As Spurgeon says: "When you

go through a trial, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head." I remind them that God did not promise us a life free of troubles, but He told us that through many tribulations we will enter the kingdom of heaven (Acts 14:22). At the same time, I remind them (and myself) that God is a loving, kind,

caring Father and that Jesus knows and sympathizes with our suffering, as He Himself experienced the worst suffering known to man—namely, the wrath of God for our sins. No matter how much we suffer in this short life, if we are God's children, we will not experience *that* terrible suffering, for Jesus endured it in our place! And for eternity, we will rejoice in His presence and worship Him! The words of the following hymn by Samuel Medley have brought great comfort and encouragement to me and to others with whom I have shared it:



*God shall alone the refuge be
And comfort of my mind;
Too wise to be mistaken He,
Too good to be unkind.*

*In all His holy sovereign will,
He is, I daily find,
Too wise to be mistaken, still,
Too good to be unkind.*

*When sore afflictions on me lie,
He is (though I am blind),
Too wise to be mistaken, yea,
Too good to be unkind.*

*Hereafter He will make me know,
And I shall surely find,
He was too wise to err, and oh,
Too good to be unkind.*

Right at the time when I felt my illness had no point and brought no good, the Lord started to show me what He was working in me and also how He was using it for other people's good. I learn more and more that the Lord is bringing glory to Himself in our weakness, not in our strength! I wish to say with the Apostle Paul: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Corinthians 12:9). I pray that I will be faithful to Christ till the end, that as the years go by I will trust more and more in His amazing promise in Romans 8:28: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."

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