



Thinking It Through

GORDON FRANZ

An Empty Tomb or a Tomb with Bones?

In the Book of Acts, the two main apologetics used by the Early Church are the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Psalm 16 is quoted on two occasions in the Book of Acts in order to demonstrate that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the fulfillment of this psalm. The first time is in Acts 2, Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. The second occurrence is in Acts 13 when the Apostle Paul preached in the synagogue of Pisidia Antioch on his first missionary journey.

Peter's Pentecost Sermon

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, gave a bold address and turned his audience's attention to Jesus of Nazareth. Quoting Psalm 16:8-11, he proclaimed that God raised Jesus from the dead, and the tomb He was laid in was empty.¹ "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day." (Acts 2:29)

King David's tomb still existed in A.D. 30. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian (A.D. 37 – 97), wrote about this tomb on four occasions relating three events. First, he recounts the burial of David by Solomon and mentions that a vast amount of wealth was placed in the tomb. Second, he tells the story of the high priest Hyrcanus taking three thousand talents of silver from the tomb in order to bribe the Seleucid king, Antiochus the Pious, to lift the siege of Jerusalem and to hire a mercenary force. Third, he records the exploits of Herod the Great who, needing money, broke into the tomb and took ornaments of gold and other valuables. Greed got the better of him and he returned a second time determined to find the coffins of David and Solomon. He went in with a handful of trusted friends and two bodyguards. It is recorded that both bodyguards died in flames of fire. That was enough to put the fear of the Lord into Herod so he built a lavish marble entrance to the tomb.²

The Roman historian, Dio Cassius (A.D. 160 – 230), states that during the Bar Kokhba Revolt (ca. A.D. 135) "the tomb of Solomon, which the Jews regard as an object of veneration, fell

to pieces of itself and collapsed."³ Thus, it no longer exists for pilgrims and tourists to visit.

Peter goes on in his sermon, "Therefore, [David] being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,⁴ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses." (Acts 2:30-32)

What Peter is saying is this: "David was not writing about himself. Go down to the lower part of the City of David and see the lavish entrance Herod constructed for David's tomb. If you think this is talking about David, pay your shekel entrance fee and see the bones of David for yourself. His flesh has decayed

and all you have is a tomb with bones! By contrast, go to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea outside the Gennath Gate and see it is empty. The Lord Jesus bodily rose from the dead! *That* is what David was writing about."

King David died and his body saw corruption. In contrast, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and was seen by many witnesses before He

ascended to the right hand of the Father.

An Encouragement to Believers

Psalm 16 should be an encouragement for the believer in the Lord Jesus because we have a book that predicts the future long before it happens. No other religious book can claim that. The Bible is history written before it happens and can be trusted.

The fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus gives us the assurance of eternal life and a home in heaven. His resurrection proves that sin has been paid for and believers are forgiven all their sins. Have you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? ■

¹ Acts 2:22-29; ² Antiquities of the Jews 7:392-394; 13:249; 16:179-183; Jewish Wars 1:61; ³ Roman History 69.14.2; ⁴ The Davidic Covenant—2 Sam. 7:4-17; 1 Chron. 17:3-15

Psalm 16:8-11
I have set the Lord always before me;
Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Block 8 Ministries:

A Shoebox without Shoes Starts a Walk of Faith



by Erin Hayes

Once there was a shoebox not filled with shoes, but with toys, a picture, and sealed with prayer. The shoebox traveled from “Somewhere, US,” and landed in Bastion Popular, a poor sector of Guayaquil, Ecuador. The shoebox waited in storage as kids’ club leaders attended training meetings and thought about the children in their area of Bastion.

That shoebox, along with 119 others, was loaded onto a rickety truck. It traveled through rain on a muddy dirt road before it reached the hands of an eight-year-old

girl. Months later, the box holds different treasures in the girl’s bamboo house. The plastic doll from the shoebox sits carefully on her shelf, and the picture of the little girl, who packed the box in “Somewhere, US,” is in the family photo album.

A Desire to Share God’s Love

I came to Guayaquil, Ecuador, in 2010 to teach music at Hope of Bastion School, a free Christian school in a poor community named Block 6. One of the first friends I made here, and now one of my closest, is Noemi Marquez, a member of our Block 6 church. When I first arrived, she had recently trusted in Christ as her Savior and was baptized. We met together to study the Bible, we saw each other at church, and I taught her daughter

in Sunday school. She was passionate about God’s love and seeing her family, friends and neighbors understand the message of salvation. One day she appeared at my door with two of her neighbors, a bunch of kids, and a Bible in her hand. “Erin,” she said, “explain to them that salvation isn’t by works and that it doesn’t matter if you wear a long skirt or pants.”

Introducing the Gospel with Gift Boxes

Noemi wanted to share the Good News, and she wanted help doing it. We talked a lot about what we could do in her neighborhood, Block 8, about a 15-minute walk from the Block 6 church. We decided to start a kids’ club in 2012 and prayed for the ministry and more leaders. About this same time, we got word that Samaritan’s Purse “Operation Christmas Child” was coming to Guayaquil, and we decided that outreach would be a perfect way to kick off our new ministry. We attended training and received boxes to give out. These gifts had a great impact on the children and were a meaningful way to begin the ministry and demonstrate God’s love to them.



Above: Children praying; **Left:** Truck transporting shoeboxes; **Right (from top):** View of Block 8; Children receiving shoeboxes.



A Thriving Ministry in a National Believer's Home

All of the Block 8 ministry meetings are held in Noemi's living room. On Sundays, Noemi and her husband Luis donate their entire house to kids' club and youth group. Luis usually takes care of their baby while Noemi is involved in the activi-

ties. Kids' club has a steady attendance of about 50 children while youth group has about 15 teenagers. Many of our kids and teens professed faith in Christ as we worked through a discipleship program that came with the "Operation Christmas Child" boxes.

We also have a weekly moms' group studying the Gospel of John. Since some of the moms can't read, we draw each chapter as we study it. This visual and interactive method is a great way for everyone to understand and remember the book of John, regardless of education level.

The Volunteers Describe their Work

The Block 8 ministries has impacted the children and moms in attendance, as well as the workers. The ministry team includes myself, Becky Martin (a fellow missionary), my friend Noemi Marquez and her family, and other faithful national believers, all with a strong desire to serve God and tell children, teens and parents about His love.



Becky A Fellow Missionary

Canadian missionary, Becky Martin (*Missionary Prayer Handbook*, Day 24)

faithfully works with the Block 8 kids' club.

I get excited about the Block 8 ministries because I see true passion, joy and eagerness come right from the hearts of the people in Bastion. I see Noemi open her own home for kids' club, youth group and Bible studies. She is just bursting with excitement to see God working in her community. I get excited, encouraged and motivated when I watch Noemi passionately living what she believes.



Noemi A Hospitable and Burdened Spirit

Noemi and her family graciously and enthusiastically open their home to the Block 8 ministries. Without her, this ministry might have never started.

I have some very complicated friends and neighbors. They have very difficult problems and, unfortunately, do not trust churches or Christians. We've been playing soccer in the afternoons, and I told them, "The Gospel is not boring. I'm going to bring you something to show you how fun it is."

Erin gave me some gospel bracelets and I handed them out to my friends and explained what the colors meant. I told them about heaven and sin and Jesus' death and resurrection. They were very interested and immediately put the bracelets on. When I saw them a few days later, they showed me their bracelets and asked where mine was! Then they began to ask really difficult questions about infidelity, sexuality, sin, and their fear of churches and judgment. Many of them think they are too bad to step foot in a church and they aren't ready to change. I told them that Jesus came to forgive us and we can't change on our own. I invited their kids to the kids' club and the women to our women's meeting and they began to make excuses. When I told them that I'd make them dinner if they came, they were intrigued. "You want us to come that badly?" they asked. They couldn't believe that it meant that much to me. I'll do whatever. I just want them to come hear the Word of God.



Natalie A Young Heart for Missions

Noemi's nine-year-old daughter, Natalie [shown on the right in the Samaritan's Purse program graduation photo], studies in a

Catholic school, the best school closest to her home. Many of Natalie's friends come to the Sunday kids' club at her house, and Natalie has many opportunities to be a young missionary in her community.

In religion class, my teacher asked if anyone knew all of the books of the Bible. I recited them all by heart and the teacher congratulated me. He asked me how I knew the books of the Bible and if I was Catholic. I told him that I'm an Evangelical Christian. Then my friends started to ask me if I worship the Virgin Mary. I said no because I thought about a necklace that my mom has. It says, "Praise the Lord forever." I told my friends, "No, you have to praise the Lord God and only Him forever." The next day, when all the students lined up to pray to the Virgin Mary, no one in my class said the prayer!



Kenia and Olmedo Ministering Together

Kenia and Olmedo Correa work together in the kids' club. Kenia also works with the women's Bible study and says the following:

The coolest part for me is being able to work alongside my hus-

band. I've always wanted to be involved with him in a ministry. I love to see him teach the kids and get involved in their lives. The Block 8 ministry is definitely yielding fruit in the community. During the Samaritan's Purse discipleship program graduation, I watched a father listen very attentively to the gospel message. God Himself is bringing His Word here.



Carlos

Making a Difference

Carlos works with the kids' club and youth group and has a burden to encourage young people to live sanctified lives for the Lord.

There are many teens affected by drugs in the Block 8 neighborhood. There is no control in their homes. Parents don't look out for their teenagers or even know what they're doing. Many adolescents have dropped out of school. At youth group, as well as through time visiting in the community, we are there to give them a good example. These kids know that someone is looking out for them, caring about them, believing that they can flee from temptation and also stay in school. Conversations always come back to the only real way to change—through Jesus, and His truth found in the Bible.



Anggie

Creating a Safe and Loving Environment

Just a teenager herself, Anggie [shown sitting with the children] skillfully works with the kids' club, teaching the children about God's love and providing a "safe haven" in a sometime-scary world.

For me, the most important part of the ministry is getting to know the kids—it's also the hardest part. For example, Joao is a three-year-old who was extremely shy when he first came to kids' club. He cried when we acted out the story of David and Goliath. As I got to know him, he told me that he saw a neighbor murdered and watched as the police showed up. No wonder he was scared when Goliath fell over dead!

Kids' club is a safe place for Joao, where he knows he is loved by all the leaders. He's learning a lot from the Bible stories and is now very talkative and gives great hugs.

Jean Carlos

Sharing New-found Life

Jean Carlos [shown in the white shirt in the photo above with Anggie] helps with the youngest children at kids' club. Jean Carlos recently trusted in Christ at camp and now enjoys work-

ing for the Lord with the Block 8 ministries. He says:

"I like helping out with the children at kids' club. I'm learning a lot from the experience and I'm glad I have this opportunity to grow."

A Continuing and Lasting Impact

Starting with simply inviting children to a Bible program and handing out Christmas gift boxes, the Block 8 activities continue to change and grow. Kids' club and youth group are winding down for the school year, and the moms' Bible study is branching out into the community, bringing the Gospel to Noemi's "complicated" friends and neighbors. Noemi continues to play soccer with these women and has many great opportunities for conversations about the Lord. Recently, after a Thursday-night prayer meeting, Noemi gave me a hug and said, "I have a surprise for you, but you'll have to wait until Sunday."

When Sunday rolled around Noemi was in church with a mom and daughter from Block 8. During the meeting she whispered, "Erin, my friend wants to accept Christ as her Savior. Pray with her after church!" We prayed together after church and this young mom is sincerely trusting in Jesus. Please pray for these new believers, Noemi's testimony and witness in her neighborhood, and God's work being done in Bastion Popular, Guayaquil, Ecuador. ■



Page 4 (top left): Kids' club small group; **Above:** Children praying; **Right (from top):** Block 8 youth group students studying the Bible; Block 8 youth group; Erin with Dayana and her shoebox.

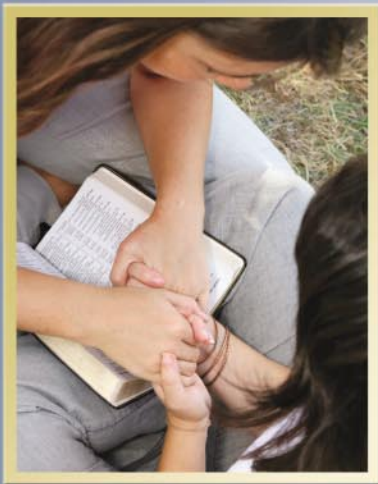


Erin Hayes was commended in 2008 by Valley Bible Chapel in Washington Township, New Jersey.

ROXANA'S NEW LIFE

Christ's Transforming Power through Discipleship

by Karen Hallock



It was the year 2009 and I was sitting in the first ladies' meeting at the Lazareto assembly since returning from the States. After the regular Bible study, one young woman expressed the need for younger believers like her to learn from the older, more mature believers. I sensed her sincere desire to better learn the ways of the Lord, but maybe the Sunday and Wednesday meetings weren't "cutting it" for her. She needed something more. I had to smile as I felt God "tapping me on the shoulder," realizing that this might be what He had in store for me when I prayed about opportunities to disciple other women. My husband Brad and I had just left our own daughters in the US and I felt a tremendous void. During the snack time following the Bible study, I went over to greet Roxana as I hadn't seen her since our return. One of the first things out of her mouth was, "Karen, would you consider discipling me?"

I stopped dead in my tracks. No more wondering. No need to pray more about it. How much clearer could it be? "Yes, I would be happy to disciple you." That was the beginning of an ever-deepening friendship and mentoring relationship.

Tranquility in the Midst of Turmoil

Roxana was born in Sucre, in the highlands of Bolivia, and was raised in a staunch Catholic home. Her mother died when she was only five-years-old and her father moved in with another woman. Her relatives didn't want Roxana and her three siblings to live in that household so Roxana's aunt, uncle and grandmother took the responsibility of raising them. Their needs were well provided for and Roxana graduated from high school and technical school, earning a three-year degree in physical therapy. When the family hit hard times, she went to Argentina with her cousin to work, since she felt the economic responsibility to help her younger sister finish high school. It was there that she met Horacio (now her husband). He also was from Bolivia and lived in Argentina with his older brother. Again, economic crisis prompted a move back to Bolivia, and he

invited Roxana to return and live with him, which she did. After two years they got married. However, a short time later he began seeing another woman. Devastated, Roxana did something she vowed she'd never do—go to an evangelical church. She was a devout Catholic and believed that was the *only* church. But upon the insistence of Horacio's sister and husband, who were believers, she began to attend the Lazareto assembly with them. She found that it was the only place she experienced tranquility in the midst of turmoil. It was during that time that she committed her life to Christ. In the meantime, one of the elders spoke with Horacio and he decided to leave the other woman and give his marriage a second chance. Roxana and Horacio chose to put the past behind them and together, with their new faith in Christ, they took the step of baptism.



A Converted Life

When I asked Roxana how her life has changed from before knowing Christ to now, she says that she no longer goes to fiestas, with all the drinking and bad company. She dedicates more time to her home rather than partying, and she goes out with her husband and children instead of her girlfriends. (Horacio and Roxana now have two children—Matthew, five-years-old, and Samantha, six-years-old). Before, her speech was corrupt and she was demanding and controlling in her marriage. Now she seeks to be careful with her words and gracious in her speech and manner of living.

Support and Teaching through Discipleship

Roxana has been through the fire as a new believer and I've sought to "be there" for her week by week as she experiences ongoing crises—financial desperation, marital difficulties, in-law nightmares, and child-raising challenges. Many times over the last few years, I've felt so helpless and wondered, what can I say? What can I do to help her? Is it making any difference? How can I, as a North American with my background, ever understand where she's coming from? Then I remember that God calls me to plant the seed and water it and *He* will give the increase. That part is not my responsibility. Roxana has since told me that she appreciates the support I've been to her through good times and bad, visiting her, listening, giving words of encouragement and refreshment, and helping with occasional financial gifts. She has learned how to be a better wife and mother. In addition to the spiritual guidance, she appreciates the helpful mothering tips as well as the correction in areas where she has erred. Overall, there has been tremendous growth and maturity in her life and she now seeks to minister to others. She has begun to meet with several other women from her neighborhood for Bible studies and has asked me to team up with her to teach a class with short topics to pre-

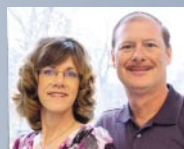
pare young girls for marriage and include practical lessons on homemaking (baking, cooking, and ironing and so on).

Lasting Fruit for the Lord

Roxana has seen a huge transformation in her husband in the last year. Horacio now meets weekly with Brad, who disciples him. A year ago this would only have been a dream. Isn't it good to know that God is producing lasting fruit? May we all be encouraged to make disciples for the Lord. ■

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 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.

Matthew 28:19 & 20



Karen and Brad Hallock are commended from the assembly in Lynnwood, Washington, 1988, and Bible Chapel in Oregon City, Oregon, 2012.

Above (L-R): Karen and Roxana; Karen and Roxana with young ladies from the chapel and neighborhood at a bimonthly girls' meeting; Roxana and her husband Horacio and their children.

Discovering Life's Ultimate Treasure

A Report on

26 Below

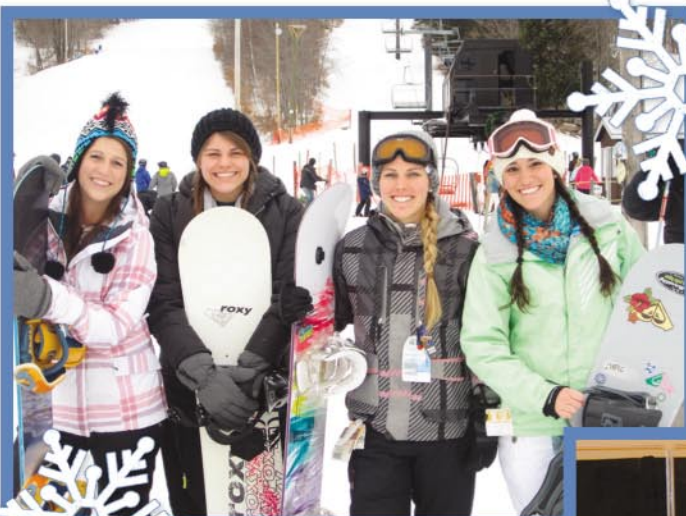
by Annie O'Connor

This was my first "26 Below." I had heard about it for years, but never attended. While on the way there I was filled with questions—namely, was it going to be 26 degrees below zero? Four pairs of gloves were enough, right? To my delight it wasn't that cold (twelve degrees seems warm when you're imagining Arctic temperatures). We arrived at Camp-of-the-Woods in Speculator, New York, and were greeted by picturesque winter scenes and warm, modern facilities. There were a total of 126 young people in attendance ranging in age from mid-teens to mid-twenties. Most were from New York and New Jersey; however, places as far away as Canada and Nebraska were represented.

The program started Friday night with a presentation of CMML's ministry, and Nate Bramsen (*Missionary Prayer Handbook, Day 2*) introduced the retreat's topic, "The Ultimate Treasure." He challenged us that, over the weekend, we should do an honest self-evaluation of what we value—do we truly cherish God's ultimate treasure, the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we trust Him step-by-step in our lives? After this exhortation, the evening ended with group "ice breaker" games that allowed everyone to get acquainted.

Saturday started early with an optional prayer meeting, breakfast, and then the second ministry meeting with Nate where he explored "diagnosing" what you really treasure. He encouraged us to do as Christ instructed in Matthew 6:19-21, 24 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... no one can serve two masters..." "We need to examine ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5) and pray as David did in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart." Following the ministry meeting, participants selected from three break-out sessions: "Full-time Missions" with Phil and Mary Parsons; "Short-term Missions" with two young people, Suzanne DeMatteo and Dave Facente, who recently attended various missions trips; and "Christian College Life" with Jon Hayes, missionary to Niger (*Missionary Prayer Handbook, Day 2*).

After lunch people were free to enjoy various activities, from relaxing indoor games to ice skating or even skiing or snowboarding at Oak Mountain, only a few minutes away. I decided to be adventurous and try skiing. This is the perfect time for beginners—or pre-beginners like me—to try something new with many friends around to help and encourage. Covered in snow, but filled with new, fond memories, we headed back to camp in time for a hearty supper. The evening program began with short presentations from Marco Arjona,



Clockwise from top: Amber Berkowitz, Teresa Brown, Kaitlyn Brown, Erica Brown (photo provided by Erica Brown); Nate Bramsen presenting from God's Word; Some of the group listening to the message.

Emmaus Bible College representative, and Nathan Bolton, representative for MSC's TNT (Teach 'n Testify), a short-term missions group to Ireland and Ghana. Jon Hayes gave a report on the work in Niger and then Nate Bramsen shared from the Word for the third ministry meeting. This time he focused on "discovering" life's true ultimate treasure—Christ. He explained that after you begin to follow Christ, the things of this earth dim in comparison. He summed up the Gospel message as: "You are far more wicked than you ever knew, but you're far more loved than you dreamed possible." After the program, people enjoyed playing either "psycho dodge ball," ice hockey, or more laid-back games in the lodge.

Sunday was a sweet remembrance time as the group gathered for the Lord's Supper. I was inspired and blessed to hear so many young people come together and remember Christ's finished work on the cross. After a short break Nate presented the last ministry meeting. He encouraged us to take action on what we know to be true—that we need to live broken lives, forsak-

ing all else and pursuing Christ alone. After a few closing words we were dismissed to pack, have lunch and head home. After this weekend in God's Word, it's hard to image anyone leaving without their lives touched by the Lord Jesus, life's ultimate treasure!

26 Below encourages young people in the faith and motivates their participation in their local assembly and abroad. I was thrilled to participate for the first time this year in this wonderful time of fellowship and exhortation with other young people. I encourage you, or the young people in your family or assembly, to join us next year. ■

Annie O'Connor is CMML's Missions magazine Editor.

Want to learn more about life's ultimate treasure? Visit CMML's website to listen to Nate's messages.



Top: The group of 126 attendees in front of the Buirke Center meeting facility. **Left:** Julianne Cagliostro, Annie O'Connor, Craig Fritchey, and Marco Arjona.

My MOP Experience



Hearing God's Call

by Jerry Uy

After I was commended to the Lord's work in full-time missions, I signed up for MOP, CMML's Missionary Orientation Program, held at Greenwood Hills Conference Ground in Fayetteville, Pennsylvania. I flew to Philadelphia from Orange County, California, a few days before MOP began. I wanted to pray and talk about what the Lord had impressed upon me with my American "parents," Jim and Marge Hulshizer, who consistently prayed for me from the first day I visited a Bible chapel in 1984.

Learning from Those Who Have Gone Before

I traveled to MOP with a group from CMML and had the pleasant surprise of commuting with Ken Fleming. The story of Ken's brother, Pete Fleming, along with Jim Elliot and Nate Saint never escaped my mind whenever I considered missionary work. As most of us know, their bodies were literally made "living sacrifices" so that the Gospel could reach the hearts of the Auca Indians in Ecuador, where they were slaughtered. I was quite excited when I learned Ken would be one of the MOP instructors. I wanted to glean from his experiences as a missionary to South Africa and listen to his stories. Driving the CMML van was Phil Parsons, a former missionary to the Philippines and currently CMML's office and building administrator. Having been the high school principal of Faith Academy, my final destination, he spoke at MOP about educating children of missionaries on the mission field. Also instructing and participating there were Paul and Carol Bramsen (Senegal); Joel and Amy Hernandez (Emmaus Bible College); Patrick and Gael Long (MSC Canada); Phil and Marilyn Barnes (MSC Canada); and Bob and Helen Dadd (CMML).

Understanding Sacrifice and Trust

Five days before MOP 2012, I was shocked to hear that Jay and Katrina Erickson, a young missionary couple, died in a plane crash in Zambia, leaving behind two very young daughters. Jay Erickson was the same pilot who flew Bob Dadd as he and other CMML representatives visited several mission stations in Africa. The CMML team heard the news of the Erickson's fatal accident while at the airport in Africa on their way back to the US to attend MOP. A compelling, fresh video from the field stirred our hearts as Bob Dadd, the President of CMML, expressed deep sorrow over the loss of a mighty servant and spoke to us about missionary life overseas. My heart broke as he shared from God's Word, describing mission work



Globe ©iStockPhoto.com/DNY59; Jerry with Faith Academy students

as predicated on one word: sacrifice.

I had just been diagnosed with a rare cancer in early May, yet I was scheduled to be the first among the 25 MOP attendees to leave for the mission field. I wondered if God would heal me from cancer and let me teach at Faith Academy in August as planned. However, I also firmly believed that God would not call me if He would not equip me. I had the highest privilege of being prayed for by the instructors and participants of MOP who asked God for a miracle. Who would imagine I would be declared “in full remission” by the time I left in late August, four months after I was first diagnosed with stage-two cancer? The most important lesson I learned at MOP was to resolve to trust God even in direst circumstances.

From MOP Student to Missionary Teacher

I now serve as an English teacher to a total of 80 sophomore and junior students at Faith Academy in the Philippines. There is no better way God could have nurtured my heart for this ministry than the seven-day MOP experience. Every day, as I wake up before dawn to get ready for classes, I am reminded of the word “sacrifice.” In my case, real missionary work is not simply an academic exercise; it is preparing the next generation of missionaries for future effectiveness and usefulness in

whatever field my students are called. It means being intentional and ready at any moment for an opportunity to teach the Scriptures to students while discussing a major literary work or piece of poetry. I have never been so energized to get ready for work each day. Yes, I am faced with many adjustments—limiting my freedom for the sake of those I serve, driving on the rugged roads and congested streets of Manila, living in sweltering-hot weather and learning to work with other missionaries—but the sacrifice Jesus gave at Calvary makes it all worthwhile.

An Encouragement to Go

If you are contemplating missionary work overseas, I encourage you to prayerfully ask the Lord for His guidance and to consider attending MOP. Ask your elders or visit the CMML or MSC Canada websites for more information. ■



Jerry Uy was commended to the Philippines in 2012 by Westminster Bible Chapel in Westminster, California.

This area left blank intentionally.



Christian Literature Work in Zambia

Editor's Introduction

In spring 2012 a CMML team visited several ministries in Africa. While there, they met Kelvin and Joyce Samwata, faithful full-time Zambian national workers with a profound heart for the Lord, His work, and the people of Zambia. In addition to their work with orphans, the Samwatas are greatly burdened to distribute good Christian literature to those with a thirst for biblical knowledge and a longing for truth. With obstacles such as poverty, illiteracy, and a sometimes low regard for the written word, this ministry is not easy. However, the Lord is doing a great work in Zambia through literature ministries and souls are being saved and nurtured for His glory.

Evangelism with the Written Word

Africa has a population of more than 1 billion people, with more than 400 million that cannot read.¹ Of the approximately 2,110 recorded languages in Africa, there are still a vast number of them that have heard nothing of the Scripture. Economic hardship plagues Africa yet it has not “slowed down the pace” of spreading the Gospel on this continent of mixed blessings. In these difficult economic times, the focus of even those in the church is on survival. With so many pressing concerns, many people are looking for answers, trying to understand the situations they face. Seeking comfort and hope, they are turning to the church. The door is wide open, and the Scripture rings true: “The fields are ripe.” The founder of SGM (Scripture Gift Mission), William Walters, once said, “God’s Word is food for the soul... it appeases hunger, it quenches thirst... it is just what the world needs.” We, as workers for the Lord in Zambia, always look for new ways to make God’s Word available in changing social and cultural contexts.

Printing at Musenga Mission

Philip and Valerie Grove [missionaries with Echoes of Service, UK] set up an extensive printing operation approximately 37 years ago at Musenga Mission in this unpredictable and volatile area of Africa. The Christian Literature Press is still going strong, producing more than 50 tons of much needed literature every year. Musenga Mission is now the hub of Christian literature distribution in central Africa. People in this part of the world gladly receive Christian literature and take time to read it. Many do not have Bibles of their own and so Scripture portions, which are given free-of-charge, benefit such people.

Printing is a costly business here. To make the price affordable, subsidies are necessary and are provided by generous believers in the West. The perception of many people in the church in Africa is that Christian literature should be free, and as a result, the few Christian bookshops in operation are struggling to stay afloat. The African church has yet to understand that paying for literature adds to its perceived value.

Copperbelt Christian Publications

Established in 1962, Copperbelt Christian Publications (CCP) is an interdenominational evangelical publishing house also based at Musenga Mission. One of its objectives is to reach non-Christians, especially in central Africa, with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ clearly written in a language they can understand. Their publications are printed by Christian Literature Press.

Increasingly threatened by social and economic pressures, the family, in many cases, no longer occupies a central position, resulting in broken homes and neglected and abused children. In such situations Christian literature offers a message of reconciliation and restoration. It affirms the importance of the family and the need to raise children in an environment of love and care. CCP books challenge worldly living by holding up a lifestyle of fellowship, care, and service based on God’s Word.

Book Supply

Mission organizations use various methods to make books available at affordable prices to Christians and particularly Christian workers. These efforts help congregation leaders

acquire church libraries, which are a resource for their preaching and teaching ministries. In Chingola, the Chingola Bible Centre has books and audio tapes accessible to all Christians in the town.

However, in comparison to the number of Christians in Zambia, these facilities fall far short of meeting the demand. There is a need to make Christian literature available in the remote parts of Zambia in a language that people will understand and at an affordable price.

Acquisition of Christian Literature

Christian booksellers in Zambia have a common frustrating experience. Many people visit bookstands or stores and express a desire for the books but never buy them. The agent for the Copperbelt Christian Publications is zealous to get books to people. He takes the initiative to set up a bookstand at Christian conferences. However, many times he comes back frustrated, having sold so few compared to the conference size. In some cases the sales do not cover the cost of fuel to and from the conference.

The Lord has been good to the people of Zambia—the majority of those who have attended school can read one Zambian language and English. There are many English Christian books in print available to Zambian Christians. But there are still many in the rural parts of Zambia who do not have easy access to Christian literature.

Religious Education Books

Teaching religious education in Zambian government schools is a welcomed open door for ministry which we cannot miss. The Christian Literature Press prints the pupil's and teacher's handbooks which are then distributed by

ZARET (Zambia Religious Education Trust) throughout the country. This is a great opportunity to reach school children and their teachers with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a captive audience and many are being saved.

ZARET is responsible for publishing, printing and distributing Christian religious education textbooks for all government schools in Zambia. Over the past five years there has been talk about merging the Christian Evangelical syllabus with the Catholic syllabus. We attend high-level meetings in Lusaka at the Curriculum Development Centre, which is part of the Ministry of Education, where we present our arguments against merging the two syllabi. The Catholics are trying to get rid of the Evangelical syllabus to their own advantage and to deny school children the Gospel in their religious education.

Scripture Portions

We at Scripture Gift Mission Zambia produce a wide range of Bible resources for one-on-one evangelism in a variety of languages. Among these are resources for illiterate, traumatized street children, who are perhaps the hardest group to bring to Christ. Many have experienced the ultimate rejection—their families forgetting to love them. Others are traumatized through losing their families through war and AIDS.

We distribute large quantities of Scripture portions to those who are eager to hear God's Word. Everywhere in Zambia people ask for something to read if they find out you are an evangelist or someone who serves the Lord. We take such opportunities to share God's Word with all who would care to listen, and there have been amazing results. From children to adults, many are being saved;



From left: Philip Grove, Tom Wilson and Bob Dadd in Chingola.



Above: The Christian Literature Press at Musenga Mission.

this has brought tears to many as God uses Christian literature to reveal how much He loves them. It's the power of His Word unleashed by His love.

Here is what one person said: *I was saved through your leaflet called Don't be afraid. That was the day that I got sick—so seriously sick that even my family did not care for me. I thought of killing myself. I thought nobody cares for me, not even God. In the leaflet I came across the words "I am the Lord who heals you," and "The Lord knows the plans for everybody, plans to give you hope and a future." Because of these two verses I gave up my thoughts of killing myself and I have come to believe that God really cares for me. Thank you.*

Statistics alone cannot adequately convey the greatest success stories, the times when an effort to distribute literature meets a real, immediate need. As you know, many Africans are reeling in poverty. Although they have nothing, many people are being lifted to the right hand of God in Christ. Christian literature is playing a major part in this great harvest. Nothing will ever surpass the written Word of God! Becoming a saint happens in an instant, learning to live in that sainthood, however, is a lifetime battle. It is in this battle where literature plays a pivotal role and so all resources which can be

poured into literature production will help to disciple believers in Africa.

Conclusion

Zambia has a high percentage of illiterate people. Although the government is working to reduce the illiteracy levels, this problem still poses a challenge to the spread of the Gospel. The major challenge is to change people's attitudes about books in general and to ensure that education is available to them so that people can easily read and discover the value of books. The ultimate goal of literature work is to fulfill the Great Commission.

Please pray that many will come into God's family through literature work; for the needed support of literature publishing, production and distribution in Africa; and finally, for believers to value the written Word of God and to invest in it. ■



Kelvin and Joyce Samwata are full-time national workers in Zambia. They faithfully work side-by-side with CMML and MSC missionaries.

¹Jason Mandryk, Operation World, (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 30.

“Statistics alone cannot adequately convey the greatest success stories, the times when an effort to distribute literature meets a real, immediate need.”



Meeting at Chingola Bible Centre.



Above: Chingola Bible Centre