



Thinking It Through

ALLAN WILKS

God's Sufficiency

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:8)

Here is a tremendous truth—that God's grace is all-sufficient for everything, always. In our stressful lives it is quite difficult to grasp the immense value of this. To help us, the Bible is filled with demonstrations of God's sufficiency, especially in the accounts of miracles.

Consider manna. In Exodus 16:4, Jehovah responds to complaints from His chosen people about the lack of food by promising "to rain bread from heaven." How would this happen? The Israelites may have imagined a onetime appearance of an overabundance of loaves, but the reality was much different. God gave just enough manna for one day's nourishment (two days' worth on Friday and none on Saturday), and this miracle was repeated daily for 40 years until just before the Israelites entered the promised land—that is nearly 12,500 miracles demonstrating God's sufficiency!

God gave His people the perfect amount of food they needed, but in such a way that they could never store it up for the future. The miracle was perfectly sufficient but required a daily, ongoing trust in God's faithfulness.

The Lord Jesus demonstrates this same principle repeatedly in His miracles. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee He tells the servants (John 2:8) to "draw some out" from the 180 gallons of water with which they had just filled six large vessels. Somewhere during their short journey from the kitchen to the master of the feast's table, the servants came to be carrying "water now become wine." (verse 9) Presumably, this stunning miracle was repeated many times over the remainder of the feast.

Jesus could have instantly produced 180 gallons of wine, but John's wording seems to suggest the miraculous transformation occurred after drawing out the water. Hence, the need for wine was met in a way that was perfectly sufficient. The size of the six stone jars was a reminder of the Lord's latent power, but the actual miracle was a lovely demonstration that God

supplies just exactly what is needed.

We see the same principle when the Lord fed 5,000 men with five barley loaves and two fish. Matthew points out in chapter 14 of his gospel that this number does not include women and children; perhaps there were more than 10,000 who were fed that day. At the end of this astonishing meal 12 baskets of fragments were gathered up.

This seems like a surprisingly small amount of leftovers for such a large crowd; try to imagine the debris a crowd leaves in a stadium after a sports event. The fact that there were leftovers at all demonstrates that everyone was satisfied, but the small quantity of leftovers shows how perfectly sufficient this amazing miracle was.

Over and over again, as God performs miracles in the Bible, we see this same principle of sufficiency. His acts demonstrate His complete mastery over nature and yet they are never flamboyant. On the contrary, they supply exactly what is needed at the time.

How this truth should sustain us in our daily lives! Though our God's resources are limitless, He doles out His grace in our lives in measure exactly matched to our needs, always, at all times. Paul told the Philippian believers that he learned to be content in all circumstances, whether in abundance or want. Surely his sense of peace flowed from his deep understanding of the principle of sufficiency.

Why does God lavish His grace on us so consistently and in such perfect measure? Paul explains in the verse we started with, 2 Corinthians 9:8, that He does this so that we "may abound in every good work." By supplying all that we need, both temporally and spiritually, God frees us to serve Him. It's as if He is telling us to focus on what is really important and He will take care of the rest.

What a challenge! Lord, help us to understand the peace that passes understanding. Help us to know with certainty that You are supplying all we need, at all times, with utter faithfulness. And may the breathtaking release this brings allow us to fill our lives with good works for Your name's sake. ■

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An Impossible Mission: Reaching the Masses in Poland

by Tom Stanczak



My friends and I planned a dangerous escape. The year was 1985. I wanted badly to leave communist Poland, but it was nearly impossible for a 19-year-old young man of military age to get a passport. But, thank the Lord, our plans never materialized. Three years later, after much prayer on my part, the Lord miraculously opened a legal door for me through the “Iron Curtain” to Austria, then to Canada and finally to the USA, fulfilling my dreams. What seemed impossible became a blessed reality. As I left Poland, scared and uncertain, I prayed, “Lord, I want to serve You wherever I am; use me in a small way.”

Beyond human possibilities

The mission God gives believers is beyond the realm of human possibilities. Consider Moses who, after witnessing his fellow Hebrews’ sufferings, springs into action, kills an Egyptian and flees, making his mission one big failure. Forty years later, God called him to the true mission that He had for him. At first, Moses tries to refuse, but finally he goes to see Pharaoh, this time with a call from God. However, instead of being set free, the Israelites’ persecution intensifies. Moses can’t take it anymore and says, in Exodus 5:22, “O Lord, why have You brought trouble upon this people? Why have You sent me here?” Moses may have thought, “I realize I tried to do it by myself the first time, but this time I am obeying God’s

orders. This mission is impossible!”

It is at this point, when things looked utterly hopeless, that God declares, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of My mighty hand he will let them go.” (Exodus 6:1) He says, “Now you will see” as if He wanted to emphasize to Moses that, “This is not your work supported by My strength, but My mission and you are invited to join Me in it.” God allowed Moses’ first meeting with Pharaoh to end in defeat, so that the Israelites would understand, without a doubt, that this mission came from God Himself. What is impossible for man is possible by His mighty hand. This all happened so that He would get all the glory!

Pray for a great work

In John 14:12, the Lord Jesus says to His disciples (and to us), “I tell you the truth, whoever believes in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” Could it be that we have limited fruit in our own Christian lives, and in our local churches, because we don’t believe this? Is our mission more our own doing rather than one that exceeds human strength and ability? We need to pray that God will show us what mission He has for us personally as well as corporately as a local church. Pray for great things—if He allows us to accomplish the work it will be clearly evident that He Himself equipped us to do it.

Walk on water

You remember the account, in Matthew 14:22-34, when Jesus sent His disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee. An angry storm arises. Suddenly Jesus appears and proclaims, "It is I. Have courage!"

Peter answers, "Tell me to come to You on the water."

Jesus, pleased with Peter's faith, says, "Come!"

Can you and I "walk on water" today? While in Austria, I lived at a refugee camp. Nearby was a center managed by North American missionaries and many refugees were saved through this work. A Polish church was needed for these new converts, but the missionaries' focus was on evangelism rather than church-planting. Believing in the importance of the local church, I kept talking with them until finally they agreed we could try. So I gathered together a small group of eight new believers. On the train to that first meeting, I experienced the strongest satanic attack in my life. I felt it physically, as if Satan sat down beside me and said, "You? You want to start a church?" Suddenly I wanted to get off the train and cancel the meeting. I practically had to cling to the seat to keep myself there. Dragging my feet, I arrived and preached my feeble sermon. We broke bread and that was the beginning. Today, more than 20 years later, that assembly is still proclaiming the gospel. I didn't realize that day on the train that by going to that first meeting I was responding to Jesus' invitation to "step out of the boat."

Only God can start a church

God has allowed me to take part in planting three churches, and this third time around, I have come to the conclusion that planting a church is not a difficult task—it's impossible! You can start a Christian foundation or club. You can construct a church building. You can even start a religion. But you are not capable to start a church of the Living God! Only God can do that because only He can save people and regenerate life. When I understood this to a deeper level, then I could really say, "Great! That is what I want to be involved in. I want to do this because this is Your work, Lord." The pressure is not on me. This is God's work and God's mission.

Working on the mission

What is your greatest dream? I wanted to play soccer for the Polish national team. Now, studying the Bible with unbelievers is, to me, better than playing in the largest stadium in the world. Coming home from an evangelistic Bible study one evening, with tears in my eyes, I thanked God for using me in this way. I prayed, "I want to keep doing this as much as possible. But Lord, there is such a great need to reach the masses. Would You like to send me to the masses?" I didn't have the slightest idea how He would do it.

A couple years passed, when a brother whom I did not know contacted me from Germany. He said, "We want to come to Poland to give out 30,000 tracts during the 2008 European



Scenes from Wroclaw, Poland.

"Suddenly I wanted to get off the train and cancel the meeting. I practically had to cling to the seat to keep myself there."

soccer championship. Would you help us and do follow-up work?" A handful of us had just started to meet as a new church in our home a couple weeks before. We had no means and it looked unrealistic—but we agreed! Some months after the first outreach, they came again and we handed out 20,000 more tracts, and then another 10,000 a few months after that.

When Poland's president died in a tragic plane crash, we developed with our German friends an evangelistic tract entitled, "Where was God?" The day before the funeral we distributed 10,000 copies in Wroclaw's city center [Poland's fourth largest city]. The tracts were so well-received that the next week another 10,000 were printed and distributed. A brother from the largest Pentecostal church in Wroclaw commented, "That's a very nice tract. How were you able to get it out so quickly? You must have a large organization!"

I replied, "No, we aren't even officially a church yet." That was another reminder that it was God's work. Those were God's resources and God provided the means of which I couldn't have even imagined!

The goal of a million souls

Two years ago a thought came to me that I couldn't shake: Ask the Lord to allow you to personally reach one million people with the gospel. I often share the gospel with people and I don't want even a day to go by when I haven't shared the Lord with someone—but this seemed unrealistic! After struggling with this thought for a week, finally I gave in and said, "Lord God, evidently this is from You, so I believe."

It was as if Jesus said, "I would like you to walk out onto the water a little farther with Me." Shortly after that time, my German friends asked me to be involved in a project to publish the book, *Jesus, our Destiny* into Polish, and to distribute 100,000 copies. They also created an evangelistic website "ZycieToWiecej.com" (translated, "life is more"). I'm privileged to write articles for this site and to respond to email generated from thousands of visitors. Then, earlier this year, another book was published with my testimony and that of five other believers; 70,000 copies have been printed and the books were handed out during Euro 2012.

What are we waiting for?

I no longer pray, "Lord, use me in a small way." Now it's, "Lord, use me as You want because whatever You are doing is great!" All the glory belongs to the Lord. Without Him, I can do nothing. With Him, reaching one million Poles for Christ could be just the beginning. This is God's work, God's mission. If He is inviting us to take part in His mission, then let's go! What are we waiting for? ■



From top (and L-R): The Polish assembly in Vienna, Austria, celebrating its 20th anniversary; Elisa, the Stanczak's daughter, and believers from Munich preparing to distribute evangelistic books and tracts in Wroclaw; A sample of evangelistic materials distributed; Tom and a couple brothers from the German team; Tom and his German friends at the Euro 2012 Soccer Championships in Warsaw—they distributed thousands of evangelistic books.



Tom Stanczak and his wife Anne were commended in 1998 by Bethany Chapel in Wheaton, Illinois. They and their daughter Elisa and son Daniel live near Wroclaw, Poland.



A Faithful Servant's Example

What I learned from Senior Missionaries

by Pablo Cenepo-Torres

Bert and Colleen Elliot were more than missionaries. They were leaders and mentors to countless souls, including many younger missionaries such as my wife and myself. Bert was about to complete 62 years of fruitful missionary service when he was called into the Lord's presence. A large "cloud of witnesses" was still celebrating his life and legacy six weeks after his passing when his beloved wife, Colleen, unexpectedly parted to meet him in heaven.

Some claimed that, as missionaries, the Elliots were among a unique and "dying breed." Their faithfulness and commitment should challenge younger workers—and all Christians—to serve the Lord as well as they did. Whenever I asked Bert to offer a word of wisdom to young people, he always said, "I want people to know that I have lived a happy and fulfilled life because of the Lord."

I am not the only one who considered this remarkable and humble man as a spiritual father, yet I feel blessed more than most due to the years I lived under his roof as a young teenager and with the 10 additional years I spent partnering with him in the ministry.

Every missionary is branded with special God-given abilities, but the Elliots' good example should serve as inspiration for us all to ensure that the qualities they portrayed as missionaries never become extinct. Using their lives as an illustration,

I'd like to consider some ways that elder missionaries can positively influence younger servants for the Lord.

Absolute dependence on the Word

Every day missionaries are stretched to minister in more ways than they expect. People's actual and perceived needs often spread extremely thin a missionary's energy and precious resources. Watching wise, seasoned missionaries take the exceptional challenges in stride and listening to their counsel helps younger missionaries keep their goal in focus.

The Elliots typified the saying, "first things first," and first on their list was absolute dependence on the Word. Without fail, regardless of circumstances, they started the day reading God's Word to each other. As a sleeping teenager, my morning "alarm" was hearing them read not far from my room. Their consistency and discipline not only introduced comfort and confidence to my otherwise uncertain life, it also etched into my mind a pattern to follow with my own wife and children.

Transparent marital devotion

The psalmist referred to the Word of God as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. This indicates two vital elements for a life of service: direction and range. The immediate direction and range for the missionary is in the home; missionaries

Above (L-R): Bert and Colleen Elliot celebrating their 60th anniversary; The Elliot family with the Cenepo-Torres family; Bert with students on a graduation outing; Bert and Pablo during Bert's last days.

are notoriously driven and often tempted to short-change spouses and children for the ministry. This is one reason why it is so important to pray for missionary families on the field.

For 63 married years the Elliots shamelessly demonstrated to the world their deep and constant love for each other. Their obvious love for everyone they met was an overflow of their own deep love and commitment. Their mutual love was unequivocally real and keenly romantic even past their eighties. When traveling with Bert, I was frequently asked by him, "Have you called your wife yet?" And after casual chats, he'd ask, "Are you separating time for your wife and kids?" Older missionaries should boldly and graciously encourage healthy relationships, especially with those closest to them. And we, as younger believers, need to take those admonitions to heart.

Generous support of the work

Younger missionaries need sound guidance on how to use material resources. My time with the Elliots before I entered full-time missionary service taught me that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot be used when helping people and supporting ministry; prayer and discernment should be applied to each situation. We should be generous, learn to be content, try not to second-guess our decisions, and leave the results with the Lord.

Bert and Colleen were keenly and gratefully aware of sacrifices made by others to enable their work, and they, in turn, showed unwavering and exemplary commitment to use what the Lord had provided for His glory. I am among their risky investments, and I'm so deeply grateful.

Unconditional love to all

Missions exist because God delights in using people to present His salvation plan to all kinds of people. An older lady from Peru's coast said, "Everybody feels like they have a special place deep in the Elliots' hearts." By the coast, on the mountains or in the jungles, with the rich or the poor, the Elliots' unconditional love to all reminds us to imitate Jesus to everyone we know and meet.

Total commitment to the Lord

In light of God's mercies, the apostle Paul invoked all believers to do what is reasonable for someone who has passed from spiritual death into life. The expected outcome of new life is total commitment to the Lord. Isaiah cried out, "Here am I, send me," and then faithfully took God's Word to people with hard hearts.

A hallmark of commitment to the Master, total self-sacrifice characterizes these so-called "dying-breed" missionaries. Technology has figuratively shrunk the world, connecting people like never before. But many before us served with much less. Would we today serve as faithfully—and passionately—if our technical amenities were all unplugged, if our health were

to fade, and so on? The Elliots still served, as they were able, past their eightieth birthdays. Another young missionary observed, "They don't believe in retirement." The Elliots, and many other seasoned missionaries, are models of total commitment for us to follow.

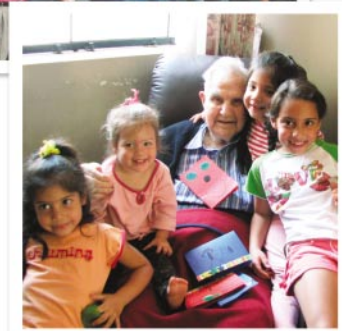
An example to follow

To summarize, the greatest example the Elliots left was their enduring dependence on the Lord, which led them to a permanent life of prayer. It was this governing practice that made them effective in all areas of their ministry. What we are now as missionaries will become a permanent picture for those who follow after us. We, as young workers for the Lord, must humbly take the example of those who are still going forward, bearing the torch which they received from those who finished well. May we all keep the mindset of the apostle Paul when he said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14). ■



Pablo Cenepo-Torres and his wife, Sarah, were commended to the Lord's work in Peru by Grace Bible Fellowship in Portland, Oregon, in 2002. Visit their website, ServingPeru.com.

Clockwise from top:
The Elliots with the school staff; Bert Elliot with the Cenepo-Torres daughters; Trujillo Mission workers and their families.



Editor's note: While brother Cenepo-Torres directs this article to encourage fellow young missionaries, it includes great lessons for each of us in our service to the Lord with our families, assemblies and in the individual work that the Lord gives to us.

Romania

Mission Field and Source of Missionaries

by Elisei Rusu

For many years the Western Church considered Romania an impenetrable mission field. The country's communist regime tried to eradicate the Christian faith using force and terror and closed the country to "negative" Western influence. During this time, all Christian work was done underground. Bibles, Christian literature, finances, and medicine came with "tourists" who risked their freedom, and even their lives, to help Christians in need.



Romania, the mission field

Things changed when Communism fell in December, 1989. The borders opened and a wind of freedom began to sweep people's fears away. Romania became an open mission field and in just a few years the number of evangelicals tripled.

In recent years, hundreds of Romanian Christians became involved in evangelism and missions in cities and villages that previously did not have an evangelical presence. These Christians are very effective because they know the culture, have connections, and better understand the people's unspoken needs.

Young Christians, less than thirty years of age, comprise the largest segment involved in evangelism. Their lack of fear or inhibitions distinguishes them from the older generations who are reluctant to go and speak with people on the streets or to share about Christ in the parks. This latter generation lived through communist persecution and it is evident that deep fear has been engraved in their minds and hearts.

The Timotheus Institute begins

With the help of Christians in America I visited my home country, Romania, in 1990 after living in the United States for two years as a political refugee. During my visit I discussed with national Christian leaders how we could help our country recover from Communism. The unanimous decision was for me to attend theological training in the United States and then return to Romania to help start a Bible institute. After graduating from the Moody Graduate School in Chicago, two

other native Christians and I founded the Timotheus Bible Institute in Bucharest, the capital city. My wife, Adriana, our three adolescent daughters, and I moved to Romania from 1996 to 2000.

Then in 2006, after six years back in the U.S., Adriana and I returned to Romania. We teach at the Timotheus Bible Institute and minister at the Antioch Church, a 112-year-old assembly. In addition to this ministry in Bucharest, we work with many assemblies throughout the country, training students and assembly workers and producing teaching materials on church government, pastoral theology, and leadership. These materials are used as national resources by the assemblies.

Romania, a source of missionaries

According to the *Operation World* handbook (2010), Romania has 5.4% evangelicals from its total population of over 21 million. This is a significant percentage in comparison to other European countries such as Greece (0.4%), Austria (0.5%), Spain (1%), France (1%), Italy (1.1%) and Belgium (1.2%).

There are approximately 230 Romanian-sent missionaries in the world. Though that number is small, these missionaries make a difference as they can minister in places where Westerners are not welcome, such as North Korea, India, and Venezuela. In these closed countries they are involved in teaching children, medical work or engineering as "tent-makers." Some are married to nationals and have immersed themselves in the local culture and assimilated with the nationals.

Church growth in the Romanian Diaspora

When Europe opened its eastern borders in the 1990s, many unemployed Romanians went to find work in Western countries. The Lord used these expatriates to start new Romanian-speaking churches all over Europe, in places such as Vienna, Frankfurt, Brussels, Athens, Paris, Marseille, Turin, Rome, Madrid, Barcelona, and London. They were motivated to start Romanian-speaking churches to provide fellowship in the midst of a new culture and an unknown language. These churches became a refuge for Romanian expatriates, a support group and a networking place for newcomers. In addition to meeting their emotional needs, more importantly, these churches became a place where many Romanians met Christ for the first time.

Many of these visionary people who started Romanian churches had no experience leading a Bible study, let alone leading a church. Yet with their love for the Lord, and an innovative spirit, they looked for practical ways to develop their churches, realizing they did not have the resources locally. Their first action was to bring pastors from Romania. However, they soon realized this was only a temporary solution; many pastors, or their family members, did not adjust to the new culture, or they did not understand the needs and the hearts of the expatriates.

They then invited recognized preachers from Romania. But this neglected pastoral care. People were fed on Sundays but left on their own the next six days of the week. Frustration developed bitter roots in congregations and spiritual lethargy conquered a large number of Romanian expatriates. Confusion increased when invited preachers from many different backgrounds brought mixed and even contradictory messages.

The final approach was to enroll some of their own in Bible schools for theological training. Although this approach was the most expensive and took longer to produce results, it became the most efficient method to develop and establish Romanian churches in the Diaspora. Unfortunately, not many young believers have the time and resources to set aside four to five years to study the Word.

Training Romanians to minister throughout the world

Understanding that Romanian expatriates wanted biblical training, Timotheus Bible Institute (TBI), the only Brethren Bible school at the university level in Eastern Europe, offers online courses in addition to regular classes for students outside of Romania. Christians from America helped TBI with the infrastructure and software necessary to implement online courses and, currently, approximately one half of the curriculum can be taught online. Adriana and I are involved with this program; Adriana teaches English as a Second Language and I teach Ecclesiology, Pastoral Theology and Leadership.

Due to our previous experience as expatriates, Adriana and I also visit many Romanian churches in Western Europe and encourage and teach Christians how to integrate into the new culture and become missionary-minded in their relationships with the host culture. One of the biggest challenges for immigrant Christian parents is how to keep their children close to God in a culture they barely understand. Through marriage and family counseling, we help families cope with the stress of living in a different culture. Through conferences for families, we teach biblical principles using life experiences for parents and children. Non-Christian families also want to learn how to have a good family life, and these ministries have become an evangelistic tool used to bring people to Christ.



Clockwise from top left: Timotheus Bible Institute entrance exam; Group praying for those who heard the gospel; Young believer sharing the gospel; Preparing materials for an evangelistic outreach effort.



Clockwise from top left: Teaching in Italy; Adriana teaching English at Timotheus Bible Institute; Training session in Spain; Adriana, center, with a women's group in Italy.

The future for expatriate believers

Currently the Romanian church's main ministry in the Diaspora is only among expatriates. In a few years they will have to become bilingual to communicate with their children, and to create friendships with the nationals. Otherwise, they will not last long in the new culture. This is our message for the Romanian churches and we hope they will serve God by becoming more like Christ who "became flesh and made His dwelling among us." (John 1:14) We also encourage Romanians to become involved in their adoptive countries and share Christ with people around them. For this reason we train Romanian Christians in cross-cultural ministry and evangelism in their specific host culture.

Conclusion

Romania has a special place in God's economy; over five percent of Romanians are evangelicals and their spiritual and social impact can be seen both inside and outside their country. With more involvement from all Christians, and a better understanding of God's plan for them, Romania can become a strong bastion of Christianity in a secular Europe. Through instruments like Timotheus Bible Institute, many bilingual Romanians from the Diaspora can become influential in different European countries that currently have little evangelical



presence. We pray the Lord continues to use us in furthering His Kingdom in the world through our personal example of service and teaching. ■



Elisei and Adriana Rusu, native Romanian Christians, suffered persecution in the 1980s while Romania was under communist control. They came to the United States as political refugees in 1988 and later returned to Romania after the communist fall. Commended to the work of the Lord by Alpine Chapel, Lake Zurich, Illinois, (in 1996) and Northwest Bible Chapel, Chicago, Illinois (in 2004), Elisei and Adriana train Romanians in the Word and help expatriates in Europe establish Christian work in a new culture.

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My life as a Missionary Mom

by Janel Mattix



From left: Two little “monkeys,” Fionna and Isaac playing on their “fort” (which is now a chicken coop).



Some of us picture the missionary wife like this: A woman wearing a helmet, trudging through the jungle, happily encouraging her kids along the way and stopping periodically to give lessons to the local children. However, for me, the reality is that a few days here and there may be like that (without the pith helmet), but the majority of my days are filled with keeping the household going: cooking, cleaning, homeschooling, washing clothes, healing little hurts and keeping the coffee and encouragements going for my husband. To add to the everyday load, being in a different country, with a different

language and culture, adds some challenges and spice to life! In this article, I'll share what it's like for me as a missionary mom in a little Bolivian town. Keep in mind that this is not how life is like for every missionary family. We live in a somewhat rural area but if we lived in a bigger city things might be quite different.

Overall, I have enjoyed the challenges and opportunities that come from being a missionary wife and mom. There are very difficult and discouraging times, but there are also very rewarding times and I have learned a lot in both practical and spiritual matters.

Where We Live

We live on a multi-use property complete with a dairy farm, Bible school, and camp, located along a river in Camiri, a small town of about 30,000 people. Along the Chaco desert's edge, Camiri is only 4 hours away from tropical Santa Cruz. In my opinion, it is unbearably hot for about half the year; however, my children think it's just fine—it's great weather for swimming. We have many unique insects, from grubs and stick bugs to mosquitos and spiders galore, tarantulas, snakes, scorpions and poisonous centipedes—all of which fascinate my children and husband.



Homemaking on the Mission Field

Homemaking is labor-intensive here. There are no “quick” meals or one-stop shopping markets. Lists can be made, and menus planned, until you go to the market and discover a few necessary items are not available.

Fresh vegetables arrive at the market on Saturday morning so I try to purchase the majority of the week's groceries then. Chickens come gutted with their heads and feet still attached. The market has multiple vendors who specialize in each product type; I go to the dried goods store, the egg lady, cheese lady, the butcher, the chicken lady, the fruit lady, the vegetable lady and the bread lady. At each stand it is very beneficial to make friends with the seller and be her loyal customer. If you are a regular they call you “casera” [meaning “regular customer”] and often give you some type of preference.

When cooking, everything is made from scratch and simple meals are often a better option. I do a decent amount of canning, and freeze a lot of food, so I can have relatively “quick” meals on hand. We also make our own peanut butter and were making our own bread until recently.

The dust, dirt and bugs make it a challenge to keep the house in order. Ants come quickly if we leave anything out. We do not have access to a garbage disposal service, so we burn the majority of our trash and bury the remaining few items.



From left: One of God's awesome creations, hanging out in the backyard; The Mattix home—the Bible school's library is attached to the house.

Raising Our Kids

Raising kids is a challenge for anyone. Add to that another culture, where the expectations are different, and it can add a little more stress but also give another perspective. The locals love to give motherly advice. They continue until your children are about 3 or 4 years old at which point they figure if you've made it this far, something must be going right. It is important to them that babies wear socks and are well-wrapped, even in very hot weather. And it is vital that children learn to shake hands and say "hi" and "bye" at a very young age. Telling your child that you will be right back, when in reality you will be gone for much longer, is considered completely normal. What we would call lying, starts when they are little babies and is called "protecting" the child.

Healthcare Situation

Moving to a new climate with different insects and illnesses adds its challenges. The first few years here, I was a magnet for bugs and looked like I had chickenpox all the time. But, over time, I have built up immunity to these little rascals. We often get unusual skin problems, due to the heat and dirt. Dengue fever is a problem for this area; Some years we don't get it and other years we get hit hard. The local hospitals are in poor condition but, the Lord has kept us all fairly healthy and has directed us to the right doctor when we are in need.

Bolivians view many medical problems as either caused or healed by hot or cold temperatures. They are very concerned about sitting on cold cement, drinking cold liquids, or eating ice cream when it is cold outside or when they are ill. For example, they believe because you walk around barefoot, cold enters your body through your feet and you become sick. Also, they often say they need to drink or eat refreshing items, such as a flaxseed drink, to help certain ailments and that you shouldn't eat cabbage, a "fresh" food on a cold day. Their viewpoint about temperature reminds me of my Irish grandma's comments, "You are going to catch your death of cold if you go out with wet hair or in your stocking feet."

Schooling Options

We have tried a few schooling methods. Currently, we homeschool our children using Sonlight curriculum and enjoy it. Our daughter, Fionna, attended kindergarten at a Bolivian school where she started to learn how to read Spanish and picked up a good local accent. I was surprised at the additional, somewhat time-consuming, activities. For example, they love to have large events: for major holidays the children parade by the main plaza, and for Mother's Day all the classes put on a big performance with elaborate costumes made by the parents.

We understand the benefit of having our kids in a local school in order to speak, read and write Spanish well. However, on the other hand, the local Bolivian educational system has its problems: during exam time or at the end of the quarters, I find many mothers finishing their child's school work for them. And often-times they even hire people to complete the projects and turn it in as their own.



Right: Fionna's kindergarten graduation from the local Bolivian christian school; **Above (clockwise from top left):** Fionna and Isaac helping students from the Bible school unload bricks for a new mud oven; Bible school students and Fionna making cakes for Bolivian Father's Day; Fionna and Isaac playing with friends.

Ministry Opportunities

Living right in the middle of our ministry provides a unique opportunity. The students watch and observe us. They see us work out our disagreements, handle problems with our kids, and make mistakes. Talk about being in the spotlight! It can be difficult at times, but it also provides an opportunity to be a part of my husband's ministry. My main focus is on my family and, as time provides, I get involved in other things. Mostly I invite students over to the house to bake or have a meal with us, or I go visit different ones. The girls love to learn how to make cakes, cookies and breads, and the boys love to eat the results.



From left: Fionna feeding a calf its milk bottle; Isaac greasing his bike's chain.

Fun Activities We Enjoy

We really enjoy where we live. We have lots of space around us—the kids love to ride their bikes all over the property, slip in the mud, and check out all the exciting activities around the farm. Our son, Isaac, quickly learned how to patch his own bike tires—they are frequently punctured by the many thorns around here. Jesse, my husband, made a river-run water pump that lifts the water 10 meters from the river and he also helps with other projects around the farm. I enjoy “country living” and raise chickens for eggs and have a vegetable garden. It has been quite a learning adventure. A friend recently gave our children two rabbits (male and female), so we are learning about those little creatures too. Fionna started to help out at the milking parlor when she was about 6-years-old. She even learned how to go out to the pasture and bring the cows in for milking. Jesse’s parents are close by so we get some special family time with them as well. ■

Bolivian Culture

Life in a different culture can be a shocker. Some of us are more graceful about it than others, but we all make blunders one-time or another. In this particular culture, protecting a friendship is more important than honesty. Being direct and to the point is not a common practice and can be offensive to the locals. The list could go on and on. It’s been a painful area to learn. Thankfully, I have a few good friends here that help me out.



Janel Mattix and her husband, Jesse, were commended by Hope Bible Fellowship in 2001, and Northgate Gospel Chapel in 2004, located in the Seattle area. Living in Bolivia since 2003, they help with a one-year Bible school and discipleship program as well as minister in a new assembly in Camiri. They have two children, Fionna and Isaac.

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