



Thinking It Through

MARK KOLCHIN

Refreshment and Revival

“As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.”

(Proverbs 25:25)

I will never forget the experience. It was a sizzling hot summer day when a group of men in our fellowship played another team in a softball game. When we started, we were all very energetic and ready to play. But as the game wore on, so did we. Halfway through the arduous event, with our arms and shoulders drooping (and our spirits as well), someone showed up with an ample supply of ice-cold water and soft drinks. What a surprise and what a blessing! It didn't take long for that source of refreshment to be tapped into and enjoyed. And did we ever appreciate it! The effect it had on me as well as the rest of the team was astounding. There was a new supply of energy and a renewed vigor in my step. We were all refreshed and revitalized as a team, and we were able to complete the task we had set out to do from the very beginning—not just to play the game, but to finish it and win.

In many ways, this seemingly trivial incident in the grand scheme of things is remarkably similar to what can occur in our life with Christ and our service for Him. Periodically, we can succumb to the heat of the day and scorching cares of life. They can wither our resolve, sap our spiritual strength and slacken our pace from pressing on for Christ. Energetic and enthusiastic at first, we are determined to do well and finish strong. But in the battle, we falter under the strain and sag in our spirit. Unfortunately for some, it's been that way far too long. The words of Paul to the Galatians seem very fitting: “You did run well, who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?” (Galatians 5:7) Resolve can quickly fade like the setting sun (Judges 5:15).

But God in His mercy and grace has a way of helping us out in these situations just at the time we need it most. Like it was on that summer day on the ballfield, “someone” shows up (most certainly under the Lord's direction) with a refreshing supply of “cold water” for our weary souls. How it encourages

our hearts and revives our spirits! It might be a simple verse that speaks to a need at the time or an account of answered prayer that lifts our hearts. Or it may be an outstanding report of God's power and might at work in a distant land—good news from a far country—that recaptures for us the hope that God's ways will yet prevail. It has a wonderful way of renewing our spirits and lengthening our spiritual stride, and its effect is often immediate and undeniable. Thank God for His “someones” who show up in our time of need.

From another point of view, we can also look to be that “someone” to others who are within our spiritual reach. Service for Christ and prayer for His servants (both abroad and home) are ways in which we can be a source of blessing and refreshment. The battle can be heated at times and constant targeted prayer is an absolute necessity (Acts 12:5). Just as Joshua prevailed against Amalek only as Moses hands were held up and steady until the going down of the sun (Exodus 17:12–13), so too the Lord's battles are fought and won as God's people are steadfast in prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We need the help of each other to continue in prayer, and those on the front lines desperately need our prayers. They need it and appreciate it! Israel prevailed because Joshua used the sword while Moses prayed. It is a tremendous picture of the means of victory—prayer and the Word of God.

God has His ways of providing help and refreshment when our steps are faltering. Whether we are on the giving end or the receiving end, He is faithful to His people and His Word. He is the source of all blessing and as the psalmist attested, “All my springs are in Thee.” (Psalms 87:7) May we learn even more the meaning of these words in our walk with Christ.

“For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.” (Philemon v. 7) ■

Mark Kolchin is a commended worker living in New Jersey.

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COVER PHOTO: Shaji Matthews—Nepali children

Simple yet Significant

Evangelism
Stories from Poland

BY ANNE STANCAK

Simple and significant: these two words have challenged and encouraged me recently. I am challenged to see our simple daily interactions with others through God's eyes as eternally significant. I am encouraged by those same eyes that shine with pleasure as we, His children, humbly offer Him our "five loaves and two fish." He delights to use you and me. Isn't it amazing?

A simple "thank you"

We pulled up just as Daniel's game was starting. Our son's team was playing in a two-day nationwide soccer tournament about an hour and a half away from our city. We weren't supposed to be there; we had made other

plans but after praying about it, Tom and I felt God's "push" in this direction. As we rushed to the field, there stood a group of ladies who were helping at the event. We stopped to ask directions and then Tom smiled and said, "Thank you so much for organizing this for

our kids! Here, can I give you a gift? It's a book that has my story in it." (Before leaving for the tournament, we had packed the car full of these evangelistic books. They are the testimonies of five men, including Tom's, and all are loosely related to soccer.) Between games, Tom gave books to parents, fans and players who had come from all over Poland.

We arrived the next morning for the final day of the tournament and saw Basia, one of the women Tom had thanked the morning before. She was beaming as she told us that she had read the book. "I admire your deep faith," she said to Tom, "and I want you to know that I prayed last night and gave my whole life to God. Now I have such peace! I know it wasn't by chance that our paths crossed." A simple "thank you"—so significant!

A simple question

It was a long walk back to the camp from the soccer field, giving us a great opportunity to talk with the kids. Last summer, our family was privileged to help at a children's sports camp in southern Poland. Tom, our daughter Elisa and I were counselors and Daniel was a camper. Tom was also in charge of the sports program (soccer, of course). It was a very challenging week, with temperatures in the 90s every day and little to no running water at the camp because of a problem with the pipes. Every evening, we hiked with the kids to the local pool so they could shower.



Tom with Basia, our new sister in Christ



Tom distributing literature at the soccer tournament

This particular day, Tom was walking next to little Lukasz. Their conversation turned to the subject of heaven and hell. "Lukasz, do you know where you will go when you die?" Tom asked. A simple question, yet so significant.

"I will go to hell," Lukasz replied, looking extremely sad.

"Do you want to go to heaven?"

"Yes, but I don't know how!" Lukasz said almost desperately. Tom shared with him the simple Gospel and that day Lukasz prayed with his mother, who was also working at the camp, and gave his heart to Christ. The next day he got up in front of the whole group and shared his story, simply.

The last night of camp, Tom led devotions with his campers and asked if anyone had questions. Rafal spoke up. "It's not a question, but I just wanted to say that I prayed and gave my life to Jesus." When Tom asked when that had happened, he said that it was the evening after Lukasz shared his testimony. Little Lukasz had led his first person to Christ! In total, 10 boys prayed to receive Christ that week. The eternally significant working of God!



Children's sports camp, Wisla, Poland

A simple group

It was the beginning of August, the heart of summer break, and the woman who normally opened the school building where our church meets was on vacation. Given that we couldn't meet at the school, everyone agreed that we, as an assembly, would meet the next



Tom preaching on the streets of Wroclaw

Sunday afternoon in the main city square. Tom would preach in the open air and we would all distribute copies of the gospel of John, Romans and Psalms.

The next Sunday came and unfortunately I couldn't go. I had come down with shingles after our week at the sports camp. But Tom and the kids took off, the car trunk packed with books. When I called later to find out how it was going, I was saddened to hear that only Tom and the kids, the other elder from the church and one young couple with their toddler showed up. Talk about a simple group! This young couple had never done street evangelism before. They were very hesitant but felt that the Lord wanted them to step out of their comfort zone to reach the lost in this way. Tom preached two messages, which meant that hundreds of passersby heard the Gospel, and as a group, they gave out more than 100 copies of the gospel of John, Romans and Psalms. Several folks sat on nearby benches and listened the whole time. One elderly man even approached the group. "How are you doing, sir?" Tom asked.

"Not so good," was his reply and then he started to speak of his different ailments.

Tom looked at him with compassion, "Sir, do you have hope?"

"My only hope is that I have a burial plot reserved for me in the cemetery," the man replied.

By the time they had finished sharing with him the good news of the Gospel, Tom said, "If it were only just to meet you, sir, then it was worth it for us to come today." A big smile lit up the man's whole countenance, and he left, now with a new hope that there is hope!

As they related that story to me, I started to look at

this simple group differently. I don't believe there was a church in the city that day that had hundreds of unsaved visitors hearing the Gospel, probably many for the first time, and more than 100 guests taking home a portion of the Bible. A simple group, a simple act—so our elderly friend could hear that he is significant to God!

A simple wrong number

Though a very "religious" country, Poland is one of the least evangelized countries in all of Europe. The majority of towns and villages have no evangelical church. This has been heavy on our hearts, so the last few years we have reached out to these places, mostly through literature distribution.

This summer, Tom decided to spend a week in one such town, Kepno (population of 15,000), which is about an hour from us. We know of no evangelical church in Kepno although we have heard that a few believers live there. Throughout the week, Tom and a few of our friends were able to distribute approximately 1,000 copies of the gospel of John, Romans and Psalms. God

also arranged some "divine appointments" for him. Once, when he was approaching a big apartment building, he saw two women outside. "Do you have some good news for us?" asked one of the women. This is very unusual in Poland where people don't freely talk to strangers. As you can imagine, this was a great conversation opener. Tom found out that the other woman had planned to commit suicide, and her friend was trying to stop her. He was able to share the Gospel and pray with them. Another time, as he was distributing literature, a group of teens told him that their friend had just killed himself. They listened carefully as Tom spoke about the Lord.

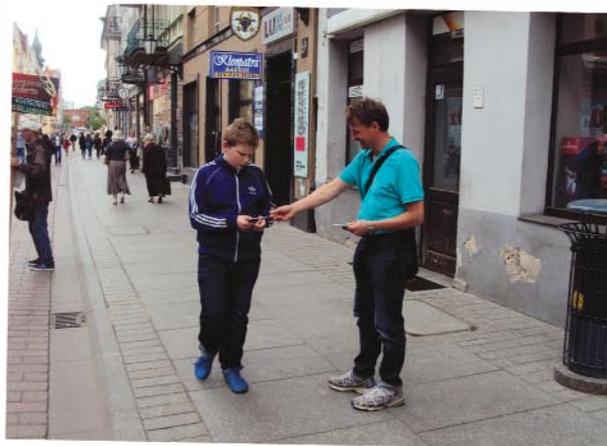
A couple weeks later, Tom was calling someone who helps organize camps for college students in a different part of Poland. He had never met this person but had been given their number from someone else. As he started talking, it became clear that he had dialed the wrong number. With his dyslexia he mixed up the numbers. But God delights in using dyslexics, too! Tom used the opportunity of dialing a wrong number to talk about the Lord, and it turned out that the person he was talking to is a believer from Kepno, and he and a few others had been praying for the evangelization of that town! A simple wrong number, significantly used by God! Please pray for Kepno, that an evangelical church could be planted there.

Simply be willing

Whom will the Lord bring across our paths today? Isn't it amazing that He chooses to use us, simple people doing simple things? A word of thanks, a caring question, a step out of our comfort zones to tell someone about our wonderful God, even our so-called "disabilities" can have an eternal significance for Him! ■



Kepno, Poland



Street evangelism

Anne and Tom Stanczak were commended in 1998 by Bethany Chapel in Wheaton, Illinois.



SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

COMPILED BY BRIAN KRAMER

There are a number of opportunities to serve the Lord through short-term missions trips. Here are just a few current needs for your consideration. Visit CMML.us/involved/opportunities for more information about these and other ways to serve. This list of almost 50 different opportunities is updated frequently by CMML's Short-term Service Coordinator Brian Kramer (bjkramer@cmml.us).

Summer

Ireland—Evangelism

May 20 – June 7

A cross-cultural missions opportunity that doesn't require learning another language.

Contact: Ron Hampton (Ron.Hampton@eteams.ca)

Website: eTeams.ca/Ireland-2016

Brazil—Evangelism

July 25 – August 26

Literature distribution and evangelism at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Contact: Daniel Schutte (danielschutte@sbcglobal.net)

Peru—Teaching English

June – July

Two teachers with mid-level Spanish skills to teach at Strong Tower Christian School.

Contact: Tom Clark (tclark@morningstarperu.org)

Website: MorningstarPeru.org

Special Areas—Teaching English & Youth Work

June – July

Working with older orphans (16–27), teaching English at a camp in the mountains.

Contact: Brain Kramer (bjkramer@cmml.us)



Visit CMML.us/involved/opportunities to view these and many more short- and long-term opportunities around the world.

School Year

Middle East—Teaching

2016 – 2017 school year

Elementary and middle school science, math, and English teachers needed at an English-language school.

Contact: Brain Kramer (bjkramer@cmml.us)

Poland—Teaching English

2016 – 2017 school year (two-year commitment preferred)

Teach English, develop friendships and share the Gospel in the classroom and group outreach.

Contact: Pat Hughes (patandcindyhughes@hotmail.com)

Website: WSJ.edu.pl/about-us1.html

Bolivia—Teaching

2017 school year

Opportunity to teach English, technical skills, or to learn and teach an indigenous language.

Contact: Merlyn Schultz (meschultz@gmail.com)

Website: MerlynMarionSchultz.blogspot.com

India—Bible Teaching, Children/ Youth Work, Medical, Technical Training

Flexible dates between September 2016 and March 2017

Multiple short-term opportunities at the Bengal Bible Training Institute in North India.

Contact: Leslie Mathew (drlesliemathew@gmail.com)

Website: BBTI.in

Mexico—Teaching

Three weeks or longer during 2016 – 2017 school year

Provide volunteer help in a Bible-centered English academic program.

Contact: David Wielenga (dbwielenga@gmail.com)



Missions-minded Kids

14 Tips for Teaching Children about Missions

BY JUDY GALLAGHER

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.” —Luke 10:2

Quite often, missionaries testify that exposure to missions and missionaries in childhood was a major motivator in their call to serve the Lord overseas. As a young child, I had the privilege of regular furlough visits from a great aunt who devoted her life to serving the Lord in a mission hospital near Hyderabad, India. In my teens, my interest in missions grew as I experienced many weekend trips with my family to share food, medical care and the Gospel in various areas of Baja California. Over the years, I have made teaching children about missions a part of Sunday school and vacation Bible school activities. After retiring from a long career as a librarian, I am blessed to volunteer at the CMML office. One of my great joys has been to prepare and present the missions-themed children’s programs at recent CMML conferences.

Jesus urged His followers to pray for God’s provision of workers to reap a plentiful harvest of souls. As believers we may be obedient in prayer, but the challenge is to also follow with experiences that encourage the growth of missions awareness from a young age. Here are a few ideas for mission-minded activities that can be used in families, fellowships and other youth-focused ministries.

As a family

1 USE THE *MISSIONARY PRAYER HANDBOOK*

Set aside a daily time to gather as a family to learn about missionaries and pray for them. Use a world map, globe or rotate maps of countries, and use books or the Internet to

learn more about the countries and cities where they serve. Put markers on the map for all the people and places as you pray through the handbook. (*The Missionary Prayer Handbook* is available at CMML.us/2016MPH or MSCCanada.org/resources)

2 PROVIDE HOSPITALITY TO VISITING MISSIONARIES

Invite missionaries visiting your area to stay in your home or share a meal. If a missionary family has children in an age range similar to your children or grandchildren, plan a special outing or activity together. These experiences often foster lasting relationships that are a special encouragement to children living on the mission field.

3 FOCUSED GIVING

Involve your children in supporting the work of missionaries. Use the handbook, *Missions* magazine, missionary websites and blogs and other resources to identify special missionary projects for which your family can work together to raise funds that will bless others in the name of the Lord Jesus.

4 LISTEN TO MISSIONARY REPORTS

When your local fellowship, or one nearby, schedules a missionary presentation, take your kids and teens along to listen and learn how the Lord is working around the world. Many current missionaries cite this opportunity as key in their decision to follow God’s command to “Go.”

In your local fellowship

5 SUNDAY SCHOOL FOCUS ON MISSIONS

This can be a monthly feature or a special program for the summer months when Sunday school teachers are often given a break. On a monthly or weekly basis, select a country and have adults or older teens plan a lesson that provides the children with knowledge about the geography, culture and customs of that nation. If possible, include a snack that gives a taste of that country. Use the handbook or CMML and MSC websites to introduce them to missionaries who live and work there. With prior planning, contact can be made with missionaries who will provide photos and firsthand reports. Create information papers that can be brought home to encourage prayer for missionaries in the family.

6 COMMENDED OR SPONSORED MISSIONARIES

If your fellowship supports or has commended missionaries from your area, plan ways to involve kids and teens in communicating with them via email or Skype to chat or share about a special event. Regular contact with believers from home is a blessing valued by those serving the Lord far from home.

7 "ADOPTING" MISSIONARIES

Another option is to identify and "adopt" missionaries perhaps from the same state or related to local families. Involve your Sunday school in remembering birthdays, especially of missionary kids. Prepare items or cards to send in care packages or as special holiday gifts, which will help make missionaries feel like they are part of your fellowship.



8 PROJECTS FOR MISSION SCHOOLS AND ORPHANAGES

Using the handbook contact information, contact missionaries to learn ways that you can involve kids in projects that support work being done to minister to the needs of children in schools, camps and orphanages around the world. This might involve craft activities that create useful items that can be distributed and/or adult-supervised "fundraisers" like dinners and car washes.

9 SCAVENGER HUNT

Involve your teens or families in creating posters about different countries represented in the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*. Information and pictures can easily be found online or in library books. Be sure to include a map that shows where missionaries are located, pictures of the flag and unique geography, food, and customs. After you have accumulated a few, prepare a scavenger hunt "passport" with items to be identified in each poster as participants "travel" the world in posters.



10 CONFERENCES

If a missions conference is held within driving distance of your assembly, work together to have your children and teens attend. CMML conferences regularly feature a children's program that introduces kids to how ordinary people are used to do extraordinary things in the name of Jesus.

11 SHORT-TERM TRIPS

Encourage and support your teens to experience mission opportunities at home and abroad. If your fellowship has a commended missionary, explore the idea of a short-term group trip to demonstrate fellowship and involvement in their work. You can also identify local ministries that would provide opportunities for kids to be of Christian service to others. (Read page 9 and visit CMML.us/involved/opportunities or MSCCanada.org/opportunities to view a list of short-term opportunities.)



VBS, camps and retreats

12 FEATURED MISSIONARY

Add a featured missionary to your VBS or camp program. This will provide a unique opportunity for kids and teens to get to know missionaries and learn about their work and ministry needs. This can be done using ideas mentioned above. A bonus would be to identify a missionary who can attend as a participant and speaker. Through personal channels, or through the CMML or MSC Canada offices, you can get names and contact information for missionaries who might be available.

...**ORDINARY PEOPLE** are used to do **EXTRAORDINARY** things in the name of Jesus.



13 "WHEN GOD SAYS 'GO!'"

Is a week-long missions-themed VBS curriculum that focuses on well-known Bible messengers who were commanded to "GO" give others a message from the Lord. The daily lessons, supported by PowerPoint presentations, stress the importance of obedience to God's direction in service for Him. Email Judy Gallagher (jkgallagher@cmml.us) if you would like to receive a digital copy of the outline and lessons for "When God Says 'GO!'"

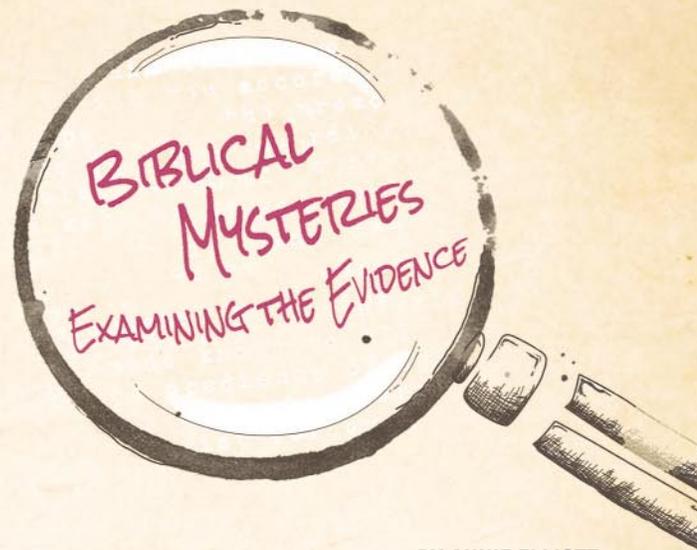
14 CRAFTS OR PROJECTS

Instead of the usual daily craft activities, consider preparing something your featured missionary will be able to use in their ministry, especially if it involves outreach to children. Bible texts, wordless books, gospel bracelets and Bible covers are just some ideas. One New Jersey fellowship collected children's books for a library in India and art supplies for a youth development center in Niger as part of their VBS programs. ■



Judy Gallagher is a CMML volunteer and is in fellowship at Mountain Ridge Bible Chapel, Berkeley Heights, New Jersey.

REACHING HIGHER 2016



BY ANNIE ELLIOTT



How do you know the Bible is true? Rob Sullivan (Christian Evidences Ministries) delved into the topic “Biblical Mysteries: Examining the Evidence” at CMML’s sixth annual Reaching Higher conference, held February 12–14. Ranging in topics from astrophysics to anthropology to archaeology, Mr. Sullivan led an in-depth survey of evidences for the Bible’s accuracy and reliability. Participants were reminded that “there are no throwaway words in the Scripture” and that it is important to understand the details given in the Bible and to be aware of extra-biblical evidences so that they might “rightly divide the Word of truth” and be able “to give an answer... for the hope that is in” them. (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15)

In addition to the five ministry meetings, the 42 participants benefited from an informative question and answer time as well as three seminar sessions: our response to the refugee crisis with Brian Moore (CMML security coordinator), understanding Islam with Rob Sullivan, and a practical roundtable discussion of the assemblies’ involvement in missions with Bob Dadd (CMML president). Free time for fellowship and games, a tour of the CMML office and guest home, delicious meals, and a group game rounded out the weekend.

A conference for men and woman in their 20s and 30s, Reaching Higher is held annually at CMML’s guest home in Wall Township, New Jersey. Its purpose is to provide a time of deep study and uplifting fellowship with like-minded young people. This year’s group, with an average age of 27, came from as close as a few miles away to as far as Iowa and Québec. Lord willing, the next Reaching Higher will be held in March 2017. ■

Annie Elliott, Missions editor.



Scan the QR code or visit our website to listen to Rob Sullivan’s messages.

CMML.us/reachinghigher2016

Additional photos from the weekend can be viewed at **Facebook.com/cmmlus**

