

Missions

Evangelism
on the Zambezi River

**Mentoring and
Small Groups in
Germany**

**Depression Among
God's Servants**

**Pioneer Work in
Romblon, Philippines**



Thinking It Through

KEITH KEYSER

Boldness: An Essential Missionary Trait

After being rebuffed in Pisidian Antioch on their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas began evangelizing in Iconium. Following the controversy, one might expect them to soft-pedal the message in their new location. They might naturally reason, “Let’s try engaging people in a sports discussion and eventually get around to saying something about the Lord.” These missionaries were made of sterner stuff, however, for the same ardor that marked their ministry before characterized their renewed witness. As Acts 14:1–3 records: “they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” Opposition did not dampen their zealous gospel preaching; it increased their determination to spread the good news.

The apostolic tradition of plain speaking

Paul and his friends were following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Himself who regularly spoke with startling candor.¹ The boldness of Peter and John marked them as His followers.² The church at Jerusalem prayed for them to have ongoing confidence in sharing the truth, and their intercession was effective, for “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”³ The apostles’ confidence in preaching stemmed from the Holy Spirit’s work in and through them. Similarly, Paul asked the saints to pray that he might boldly preach.⁴

The believer’s standing in Christ opens the way into God’s presence. As Ephesians 3:12 says: “in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.” He is bidden to “come boldly to the throne of grace... [to] obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”⁵ This divine treasury of necessary strength, hope, and power moves the believers to frankly articulate the need of hell-bound sinners and the salvation that

is freely offered in Christ. Like Barnabas and Paul, he preaches in such a powerful way that people know he is in earnest.

Like dying men to dying men

The 19th century “prince of preachers,” Charles Haddon Spurgeon—himself no milquetoast elocutionist—describes the boldness of a biblical preacher:

*We want men like Baxter to preach, ‘As though they might not preach again, as dying men to dying men.’ We want men like John Berridge, who have pulled the velvet out of their mouths years ago and cannot speak fine words—men that hit hard, that draw the bow and pull the arrow to its very head, and send it right home, taking deadly aim at the heart and the conscience of men, ploughing deep, hitting at the private lusts and at the open sins, not generalizing but particularizing, not preaching to men in the mass but to men in the detail, not to the mob and the crowd, but to each man separately and individually. Grow not offended with the minister if he come home too close to you; remember that is his duty. And if the whip goes right round you, and stings you, thank God for it, be glad of it. Let me... sit under a man who uses the knife with me sometimes, a man who will not spare me, a man who will not flatter me. If there should be flattery anywhere, let it not be at any rate in the pulpit. He who deals with men’s souls should deal with them very plainly; the pulpit is not the place for fine words, when we have to deal with the solemnities of eternity. Take that advice, then, and listen to a personal, home-smiting ministry.*⁶

Today, increasing spiritual darkness demands Christians who will follow their example in boldly preaching the crucified Christ, even in the face of opposition.⁷ Rooted in their confident standing before God and empowered by His indwelling Spirit, believers may lovingly speak the truth to the lost. Such boldness will encourage them to “expect great things” from God and “attempt great things” for God.⁸ ■

¹ John 7:26; John 18:20; ² Acts 4:13; ³ Acts 4:29; Acts 4:31; ⁴ Ephesians 6:18–20; ⁵ Hebrews 4:16; ⁶ Spurgeon, C. H. “Struggles of Conscience.” In *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, 401–402. Vol. VI. London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1860; ⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:1–2; ⁸ Carey, William. “Expect Great Things; Attempt Great Things.” www.WMCarey.edu/carey/expect.

Vol. 44, No. 2. Christian Missions in Many Lands (ISSN 0744-4052) is published eleven times a year by Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc., Belmar, New Jersey. Periodical postage paid at Belmar, New Jersey, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send United States address changes to Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc., PO Box 13, Spring Lake, NJ 07762. Send Canadian address changes to MSC Canada, 101 Amber Street, Suite 16, Markham, Ontario L3R 3B2. MSC Canada publication agreement Number 40026478. All correspondence, including address changes, gifts for missionary work, and for expenses should be sent by Canadian readers to MSC Canada, 101 Amber Street, Suite 16, Markham, Ontario L3R 3B2 and by United States readers to Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc., PO Box 13, Spring Lake, NJ 07762. Copyright © CMML. All rights reserved.

FRONT COVER: Victoria Falls, Zambezi river—©iStockPhoto.com/halecr BACK COVER: Sioma Falls, Zambezi river—Gwen Amborski



"Like a River Glorious"

EVANGELISM on the ZAMBEZI

BY GWEN AMBORSKI

On the flood plains of the great Zambezi in Zambia's Western Province, live some unreached people of the Lozi tribe. They live in fishing villages dotted along the river. My husband, Don, and I went on a boat trip on those flood plains with some other missionaries 20 years ago and found that many of them had not yet been reached for the Gospel.

Those people remained etched on my mind, and I always hoped that one day it would be possible to share with them about the Creator of those pristine flood plains, the One who loves them so much. So it was truly a blessing when an opportunity was presented to go visit some of them in June 2014. We went on a river evangelism trip on the Zambezi with our friends Rich and Laurie Weindt, missionaries in Mongu, the capital of the Western Province of Zambia. Two students and the principal of the Evangelical Bible College in Mongu went with us.

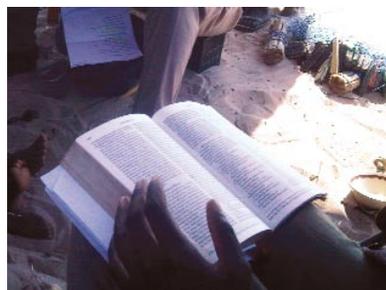


From top: Sioma Falls on the Zambezi; A fishing village on the Zambezi flood plains.

Our group set off from the harbor in Mongu in the Weindt's boat. As we traveled on the river we passed various villages and prayed about where we should stop. We soon found a village that was easy to reach by boat and asked the people if we could share some good news with them. Many were interested, and we gathered together with them. We began with an icebreaker, which was to sing some songs in their language, Lozi, and they seemed to really enjoy it. We asked if they knew who God is, and nobody answered. However, one man did know who Jesus is. It was then time to share the Gospel, which the people received

with joy. Some of the women wanted to accept Christ as their Savior. Laurie Weindt and I had a chance to talk to the women after the meeting and help them pray to receive Christ. However, I first made sure that they really understood. The Bible college group and Rich Weindt met with the gentlemen, and we wrote down the names of all those, both men and women, who made decisions to follow Christ. These names would then be kept by the Bible college group for follow up.

When they realized that no one had a Bible, the students said that they would get some from Mongu and bring them



From top (L-R): The team discussing their mission strategy on the way to the first village; The team making “a joyful noise unto the Lord” while singing Zambian songs with the villagers; The Bible college principal and one of the students who participated in the trip; One man had the only Bible on the second island; Saying goodbye to one of the ladies on the second island.



back to these isolated people. We then gave tracts to them so that they could read the Word of God. We pray that what they heard, they will hide in their hearts (Psalm 119:11).

It was then time to say goodbye and head off to another village. As we took off, I was reminded of the apostle Paul as he went from village to village sharing the good news.

As we continued to travel and view the wild beauty of the flood plains, we found another village where we could easily leave our boat. The people at this village greeted us very warmly. The Bible college group knew one of the men on that island because he attended a church they had visited on the mainland. This man had the only Bible on the island. We found out this was a temporary fishing village and that they lived there only for the purpose of fishing and then selling their fish. They were very happy to gather together and join us for some songs in their language. Then we shared again the wonderful, everlasting message of how God sent His only Son to die for them, and many received this message joyfully. After we made a clear presentation of the Gospel, we wrote down the names of those interested. The men on the island joined together with the men on the ministry team to discuss the Gospel in more detail.

It was a privilege to meet with the ladies again, go through some important Scriptures and give them some tracts. Some of the ladies wanted to come back to the Lord as they said that they had fallen away from Him. They then prayed that God would restore them and bring them back to Himself. It was indeed a wonderful day, and there was great rejoicing in heaven.

At that point it seemed right to encourage them to meet together regularly as a group to exhort one another in the things of the Lord. This would help them grow stronger in their faith.

As we left the island, we were so grateful to the people for the chance to share with them the good news. On the way home, the Bible college principal and students became very excited about the possibility of visiting these people again and bringing Bibles to them. We have since heard that there is a group from the Bible college who now visit the second village regularly, and it has become what is called a “preaching point.” In other words, it is a gathering of believers but without any leadership of elders at this time.

Please pray that the Lord would raise up some elders to lead the group as they meet on the island. We are so glad to hear that the Bible college group has been visiting them regularly and discipling them.

Would you beseech the Lord for the growth of these new believers and restored Christians on both islands? God knows their hearts and it is our job to plant the seed and leave the results with Him.

It was a great honor to take part in this river evangelism trip and to let these isolated people know about their Creator and His Son who died to save them and give them a future and a hope. They can now experience life in Christ and know Him personally. Your prayers are appreciated for the other tribal peoples who do not know the Lord and live in different villages on the flood plains of the great Zambezi. We desire that they might come to know Christ and experience His peace, which is like a river glorious.¹ ■

¹ Havergal, Frances Ridley. "Like a River Glorious." 1876.



Gwen Amborski was raised by missionary parents at Mukinge Hospital in Zambia's North-Western Province. She and her husband, Don, are commended by Grace Gospel Chapel, Erie, Pennsylvania. They have three teenage children: Jamey, Raymond and Marilyn. Don is a missionary pilot. Gwen teaches music at Amano Christian School, which includes helping with end-of-term dramas and preparing the family worship services and is involved in discipleship and evangelism through music.



MAY WE INTRODUCE

Rebekah Flynn • Missionary to Zambia



I had the privilege of being born into a Christian home. At a young age I understood my lost condition and accepted Christ as my personal Savior. At that point, I didn't understand what it meant to truly live for Christ. In 2004 I began to understand the truth of consecration and the importance of living wholly and completely for Christ. It was then that I was baptized and began gathering with the local assembly of believers.

I finished high school and started university wondering what God's plan was for my life. In 2008 I first felt a burden for Zambia, and halfway through completing my nursing degree I had the opportunity to visit for 12 weeks. That summer opened my eyes and changed my life.

Zambia is a country of more than 12 million people with 68 percent of the population living below the poverty line. One in seven children never live to see their fifth birthday. False doctrines are cropping up all across the country and witchcraft continues to destroy people both physically and spiritually. It is a country of great need, a need that only the Lord Jesus Christ can fill.

When I returned home, I began to seriously consider returning to Zambia and asked God to show me clearly what He wanted me to do. I finished school, started work and life

moved on. Even though I felt a burden for Zambia, I was getting used to my comfortable Canadian life again.

In June 2012 there was a plane crash in Zambia and a young missionary couple went home to heaven. They had paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to their Lord. I had excuses for not going but they were pretty lame. After many sleepless nights and many hours alone with my Lord, I felt Him calling me to serve in Zambia, but I needed confirmation; I needed to be sure. Then one afternoon, the words of the hymn were sung "love so amazing, so divine, demands my heart, my life, my all."¹ I realized that giving my all to Christ was not an option; it was demanded and expected of me. Was I willing to wholly and completely consecrate my life to Christ regardless of the cost, regardless of what He asked me to do?

The Lord has given me peace and confirmed His calling on my life in so many different ways. In May 2013, after completing a tropical nursing course in England, I arrived back in Zambia, at first for just a year. After spending the summer at home, I returned to Zambia in September 2014, this time indefinitely. I cling daily to His promise "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20) ■

¹ Watts, Isaac. "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." 1707.

Mentoring and Small Groups

My
Experience
Serving at
Black
Forest
Academy

BY MEGAN TAYLOR

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.

Melissa is a junior at BFA and it was amazing to be her dormitory resident assistant last year. We would often take walks together after school and talk about life.



I taught middle school math my first two years at BFA; these are "sixth-grade" girls (now in eighth grade) that I taught and have the opportunity to hang out with from time to time.

"Let's have lunch!" are words that always bring a smile to my face, especially when coming from one of the many girls I have the joy of interacting with here at Black Forest Academy as I serve as the high school assistant chaplain. BFA is a private, coeducational boarding school located in southwestern Germany. A mix of believers and non-believers, the more than 300 students represent over 50 countries. Being able to advise and walk alongside the females of BFA brings happiness into my daily life, and more often than not, I learn from them.

Students at BFA are continually challenged in their spiritual walk, being urged to join small group Bible studies, embark on missions trips, participate in weekly chapels, volunteer in Sunday school classes, partake in local outreach, and welcome a mentor into their lives, among other areas of involvement. Two of those opportunities I am passionate about are the mentoring program and the small groups; both allow the unique experience of intentional community among believers, sharing life with one another in order to grow stronger in our walk with Him. As it says in Hebrews 10:24-25, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another."

Mentoring

Working in the summers at a Christian family conference center, Christlike communities have always been a part of my life. One summer my boss challenged us to intentionally seek out a mentoring relationship and to begin praying about God using us to mentor the younger generation. This was such a foreign concept to me—pour into someone else's life with *my* wisdom? I'm no one special. What do I really have to offer? In that moment, sticking true to Proverbs 19:20–21 was all that I could do: "Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise. Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." Looking back at moments such as that one helps me to realize God's bigger picture for my life. Walking together with younger-generation girls not only allows me to pour into their lives but for them to pour into mine.

Recently, the high school at BFA decided to start a mentoring program where individuals in the community can reach out to high school students through mentorship. I am privileged to participate in this program, meeting regularly with three high school girls. A chance to pour into the lives of teens is not one that I take lightly. From the start, it has been my prayer to overflow Jesus's love for me into the lives of these girls through food, fun, laughter, tears, hugs, and overall life experiences. When I think about the role I want in life—*this* is it. In the name of Jesus I want to be able to love and support those around me, specifically the younger generation. Over time I have found that I have a heart for the generations to come, and I cannot thank my Lord enough for giving me that ability, along with this amazing opportunity to do just that at BFA.

Small groups

Along with mentoring specific girls at BFA, I have had the privilege of co-leading a small group every week for the past four years. Seeing them grow from freshmen to seniors is a progression that cannot be explained in words. My heart smiles when I think about the seven special individuals involved in our small group. It continues to be an answer to prayer as I share my heart, love, and life with these



These are my small-group girls, co-leader, and me as we had a fun photo shoot to end their junior year. I love them with love overflowing from the love I receive from our Lord.

amazing women. We continue to invest into one another's lives through the various emotions that we experience together weekly. We understand each other and continue to build one another up through life's struggles and surprises. So much of life within my small group reminds me of the verses that come from 1 Thessalonians 5:9–11 that say, "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

Every week while I meet with my small group, I take a moment to thank God for the blessing that He has bestowed upon me through these excellent women He meticulously created. I continue to be in awe of the fact that He purposely placed us in each other's lives. From the very first meeting, and continually since then, these girls pull at my heartstrings, making my time here at BFA such a blessing. As women of faith, these ladies will forever have a special place in my heart, and it brings me much delight to say that one day we will all be reunited in heaven.

Minister to each other

Whether you are younger, older, a new believer, a seasoned believer, male or female, the opportunity to pour into the lives of those around you, as well as allowing those around you to pour into your life, should not be dismissed. Seize those moments when you can embark



Olivia started out as my eighth-grade Algebra student, and now I consider her a really close friend, connecting with her and giving her hugs any chance I get.



It is hard to believe that my small group Bible study girls are seniors! Pray for them as they head off to college, or take a gap year, this coming fall.



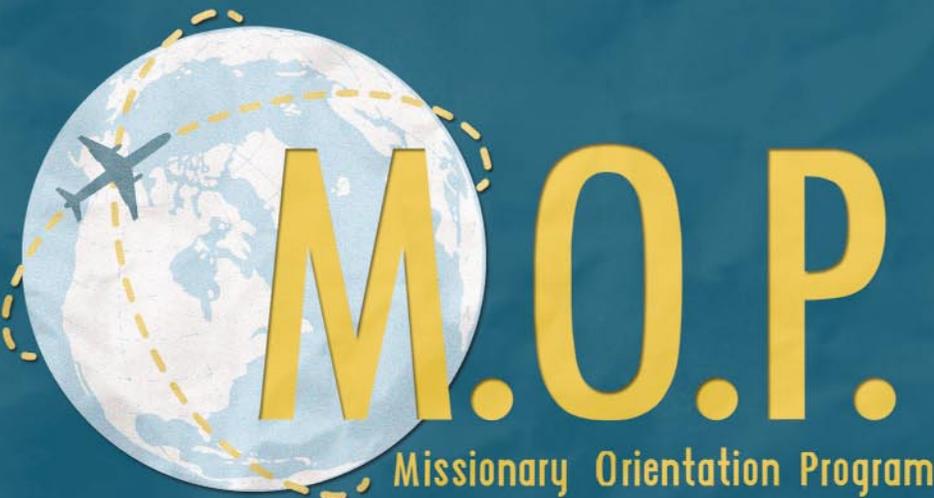
Ashley, a senior this year, went on a missions trip with me my first year at BFA; she was in my dorm last year and now is my mentee. Her strong faith in the Lord encourages me every day.



Megan Taylor was commended in 2011 by Oxford Bible Chapel, Oxford, Pennsylvania. Currently serving as the assistant chaplain at Black Forest Academy's high school, her previous roles include middle school math teacher and resident assistant. Her ministry at BFA includes, but is not limited to, mentoring, small groups, coaching, spiritual life formation, activity organization, tutoring, and baking.

on someone else's journey, and truly embrace what it looks like to be a part of God's kingdom. Be encouraged by the words of the Lord that are given to us through Jeremiah 29:11-14, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile." ■

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Are we being upfront and honest about depression in Christian circles? Can the godly suffer from depression or is it only something that afflicts the weak in faith? For many believers the idea of Christian depression is an oxymoron that negates some of the foundational elements of the Christian faith, such as the call to rest in the love of God or rejoice in His grace. In Christian circles depression often carries a double stigma, one of emotional instability and spiritual decline. As a result, Christians struggling with depression often fear reaching out for help, while for those in full-time ministry it is simply unthinkable. Alone in their struggle, they chide themselves for their perceived unbelief, only to fall deeper into despair. This erodes the effectual working of the body of Christ, intended to serve to the edification of one another in love. Fortunately most pull through. But not all. Too often we hear of Christians suffering emotional breakdowns, burnout, or leaving fruitful ministries for inexplicable reasons.

Depression is a life-threatening condition that is often muddled with troubling confusion. Many confuse mood and depression; it is not uncommon to hear people say, "I am feeling depressed" or "You look depressed" when one is merely sad or discouraged. Those suffering from depression may feel sad,

but they are just as likely to feel irritable or emotionally drained. It would be better to characterize depression as a state of overwhelming hopelessness, aggravated by feelings of worthlessness, self-loathing and even guilt. Other common symptoms are a loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed, a general lack of energy and being overwhelmed by even simple tasks. Those suffering from depression will often display behavioral changes that are out of character: recurring bouts of anger, uncontrollable crying, or social withdrawal. They may have trouble making simple decisions and exercise poor judgment. Serious or prolonged depression can seriously affect one's physical well-being and be accompanied with a longing for death or even suicidal thoughts.

In 1 Kings 19:4 we read: "But Elijah himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die...." While it would be foolish to begin making a medical diagnoses of any Biblical character, I think we can safely affirm that Elijah was not in a very healthy state of mind at this particular point in time. Physically exhausted, he collapses under the broom tree wishing only to die. Why? "...for I am no better than my fathers!" is the reply Elijah gives us. In other words he is over-



whelmed by a sense of personal failure and hopelessness. How could a man of such remarkable faith sink to such lows? We might expect this of others in this story, such as wicked King Ahab, but instead Ahab basks in his palace while the man of God weeps in the wilderness. We are left to wonder what happened to the man who boldly denounced the idolatry of Israel, who with unwavering faith endured three and a half years of famine, who fearlessly faced the 450 prophets of Baal. To find him in this wretched state of mind only days after the remarkable events of Mount Carmel is perplexing.

Surprisingly, Elijah is not alone. In 1857 the great Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, while preaching on Isaiah 41:14, shocked his audience with this confession:

"I have to speak today to myself and whilst I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and downhearted, I shall be preaching, I trust to myself for I need something which shall cheer my heart—why I cannot tell, wherefore I do not know, but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me; my soul is cast down within me; I feel as if I had rather die than live; all that God hath done by me seems to be forgotten, and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down... I need your prayers."¹

It turns out Spurgeon was subject to frequent bouts of the darkest depression, at times having lost the will to live. Even the apostle Paul appears to be in a terrible state of mind on more than one occasion. In 2 Corinthians 1:8 we read: "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life." Not only did these men of God feel hopelessly overwhelmed but they "despaired even of life." More examples could be taken from the lows in David's life, or from other Bible characters, such as Moses, Jeremiah, Rachel or Hannah. While not all believers can identify with these experiences, many can.

In a sense it is comforting to know that others, who are admired for their devotion, have passed through similar experiences to our own. Spurgeon, in his *Lectures to My Students*, again offers an interesting insight:

"Knowing by most painful experience what deep depression of spirit means, being visited therewith at seasons by no means few or far between, I thought it might be consolatory to some of my brethren if I gave my

thoughts thereon, that younger men might not fancy that some strange thing had happened to them when they became for a season possessed by melancholy;"²

Similarly, in writing to the Corinthians, Paul says, "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us." Sometimes being open about our own emotional struggles can be a source of encouragement and comfort to others.

Often we forget that the Lord's servants are just people. As James aptly reminds us: "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours." (James 5:17) Should it surprise us then if he was afflicted by the same weakness of other men? Spurgeon writes:

"Fits of depression come over the most of us. Cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy."³

There are no superheroes among believers, just men called to a work that far exceeds their own strength. The victories won are the triumph of God's grace, but physically our bodies are still weak and earthly, susceptible to illness and exhaustion. Should it come as any surprise that the mind is subject to infirmities and exhaustion as well? Do we not all take on a little too much from time to time? Yet the Lord is gentle for He "knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:14)

God neither cast Elijah aside nor condemned him but instead sent an angel to care for his needs. He gave Elijah time to rest. He neither sermonized nor chided but quietly awaited till he had regained his strength. The Lord blessed him with a new vision of himself and listened quietly while Elijah replied to his query: "What are you doing here?" When he was ready, the Lord gave Elijah renewed direction and purpose (1 Kings 19:1-18).

Why do these fits come upon those who should be rejoicing in the grace of God? There are no simple answers. For some it may simply be a result of mental and physical exhaustion. Others may finally have succumbed to the constant pressures of their multiple responsibilities. Perhaps they have taken on too much. Some may simply be more prone to a melancholy of spirit. In other cases it may be providence keeping them from vainglory (2 Corinthians 12:7). Generally there are many contributing factors that have accumulated over time. Ultimately, though, it really makes little difference to those struggling with depression. Finding fault will do nothing to lift the spirits

of those who likely already blame themselves, and trying to justify their condition will not convince them otherwise.

When it comes to Christian service, the fact is the work is too great for any of us. It can only be accomplished in the power of God's Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). Christian leaders are virtually 24 hour ERs. In moments of dire need (death, terminal illness, financial ruin, family crisis, or spiritual infirmity) these simple men and

There are no superheroes among believers, just men called to a work that far exceeds their own strength.

women are suddenly expected to provide answers, counsel, comfort and direction. Tirelessly, they are expected to care for the spiritual needs of entire congregations while they seek to spearhead a fruitful ministry. When there seem to be no tangible results or the lives of those under their care fall into chaos, they often blame themselves. Further, their lives, and those of their family, are under the scrutiny of the public eye. Every choice they make is subject to judgment, and criticism is never far. Silently they endure personal injury and hardship. They are but mortal men, who in the course of their service become only too painfully aware of their shortcomings. Is it really any surprise they become overwhelmed and disheartened?

Those who are responsible for our spiritual care need encouragement. They also need to get away and find time to renew their strength. The Lord knows His servants need rest; do we? (Mark 6:1) Even a mule must be put out to pasture. The commended worker needs time to rest, and those who commended them should be concerned they do. These men and women did not act independently when they went out to serve the Lord. They acted in unison with their commending assemblies, who confirmed their calling. The course of their lives, and those of their families, were affected by that decision. If they fail it is as much the responsibility of those who confirmed the Lord's calling as that of the brother or sister who went. The opposite is also true. If their ministry is blessed, the joy is shared.

Depression can have profound consequences. It can destroy families and the productivity of one's life. It is the leading contributor to drug and alcohol abuse. Prolonged depression increases the likelihood of developing a serious illness. It

is by far the leading factor in the tens of thousands of suicides every year.⁴ The Canadian Mental Health Association distinguishes depression from "the blues." They note its all-embracing nature on a person's life: "Someone experiencing depression is grappling with feelings of severe despair over an extended period of time. Almost every aspect of their life can be affected, including their emotions, physical health, relationships and work."⁵

The church needs to be proactive in preventing and dealing with depression, if for no other reason than Christian charity. It is not something she can afford to turn a blind eye to. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than 18 million Americans suffer from depression every year, and yet almost half of them are afraid to reach out for help.⁶ This should never be the case among God's people. Surely if anyone should be willing to listen with compassion, it should be those who are debtors to God's grace. Hebrews 5 speaks of the High Priest being chosen from among men that he might have compassion on the wayward because he himself is subject to weakness. Everyone needs a sympathetic listener, someone they can trust. The commended worker needs someone in whom he or she can confide, and the leadership in their commending assembly needs to be proactive in ensuring that is the case, particularly when serving in an isolated area. Visits by the leadership, and especially two-way communication in a gracious, sympathetic spirit is essential. As a church we must look to emulate our Lord and His promise: "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) May we also stand by one another in times of weakness and in times of joy. ■



Daniel and Mirtha McKinley are commended by Tenth Avenue Bible Chapel, Burnaby, British Columbia.

¹ Spurgeon, C. H. "Fear Not, Sermon 156." The Spurgeon Archive. October 4, 1857. www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0156.htm; ² Spurgeon, C. H. *Lectures to My Students: Complete & Unabridged*. New ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1954; ³ Ibid; ⁴ Murray, Bob, and Alicia Fortinberry. "Depression Facts and Stats." Depression Fact Sheet: Depression Statistics and Depression Causes. January 15, 2005. www.UpliftProgram.com/depression_stats.html; ⁵ "Depression." Canadian Mental Health Association. www.CMHA.ca/mental-health/understanding-mental-illness/depression; ⁶ Murray, Bob, and Alicia Fortinberry. "Depression Facts and Stats." Depression Fact Sheet: Depression Statistics and Depression Causes. January 15, 2005. www.UpliftProgram.com/depression_stats.html.

ROMBLON, PHILIPPINES

Pioneer Work in *Paradise*



BY KENNETH AND JOYCE HARDISTY

We recently visited Patrick and Karen Carder (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 10) on the island of Romblon and experienced firsthand where they labor for the Lord. We gained a fresh perspective of their heart's desire for the people of this small island.



The trip to Romblon from Manila is a 14-hour, overnight, inter-island boat ride. As we stepped off the boat, our first impression was a sense of going back in time. The city of Romblon reminded me of old Manila, a time when life was less complicated and less stressful. Outside the city, many of the homes are simple structures of nipa thatch with grass roofs giving the island a tropical ambiance. Although there are many tricycles and motorcycles on the island, there are very few cars. Traffic jams are not a problem on this remote island, but the roads can be rough on a car and flat tires seem to be a regular occurrence.

The next thing we quickly noticed is that we were in a true tropical paradise. The island is located in the Sibuyan Sea which is nestled between the South China Sea and the Philippine Sea. Its shores and forests are covered with coconut

palm trees, and its mountainsides are full of marble. The Sibuyan Sea sparkles in the sunlight and reveals many hues of spectacular colors. The waters teem with many varieties of fish, and its coral reefs and blue holes make it a diver's paradise.

It is to this Philippine paradise that the Lord has called Patrick and Karen to begin a new work for His glory. The Lord used Lani, an old friend and helper of Karen when she was in the Manila area as a single missionary, as an instrument to call them to this island where she now lives. The people are very friendly and open and are always quick to enter into conversation with you when you stop the car or meet them in the marketplace.

The native tongue on the island is Romblomanan or Subayano, but the people all seem to speak Tagalog, the Philippine national language, quite well. Patrick is learning Tagalog and beginning to use the words that he has learned as he interacts with the people, and Karen is well on her way to fluency. She has a tutor visit her weekly to continue developing her language skills.

Building relationships and gaining the people's confidence and respect is the first major step to being accepted as part of the community. This takes a great deal of time but it is essential. To be accepted into the community means learning their ways and speaking and learning their language. It was fun to see

From top: The Carder's home; Patrick and Karen Carder.

Patrick and Karen greet the folks they have built initial relationships with and to see them waving and saying “hello” to all the children who line the road in their barangay (village). They have gotten to know many of the children by setting up a little feeding station for them at the gate of their home where they can pick up a small quantity of rice and candy on their way home from school. They plan to begin a children’s club, Lord willing, at the local school once they can work out all the details. They also hope to contribute to some of the needs of the local school system as the Lord allows. All of these steps go a long way to being accepted as a part of the community. Customs and culture can be so different from region to region across the islands, and learning what is acceptable and not acceptable in your particular area takes time and can be frustrating.

According to the latest census, the population of this 33-square-mile island reaches almost 38,000 people living in 31 barangays. Many of the locals work in the marble industry, mining, cutting, and fashioning marble for sale as tables, counter tops, chairs, statutes and anything else you can imagine. From the Carder’s front porch you can often see Bangka boats laden, sometimes to the point of sinking, with marble or slate. You can also see many people around the island, from small children to young mothers to old men and women sitting on the roadside with a hammer and chisel breaking larger fragments of marble from the cutters’ shops into small gravel to be used for other purposes. It is a hard, labor-intensive job but it provides income for the island’s very poor families.

Many of the locals are fishermen and spend all night out with their flashlights securing their catches when the sea conditions permit. Others collect shells, crabs and the pebbles that the sea brings in. The pebbles are dumped into large piles on the shore where they are then dried, sorted by size and sold to local businesses.

Although it may look like paradise, day-to-day living presents many challenges for the Carders. Locals often feel that, since for several years no one lived in the home they rent, they are still free to avail themselves to use the property, for sleeping on, for having picnics and parties, and for using the beach for their daily catches. How to deal with these sorts of intrusions without offending anyone is one of the many challenges they face. Misunderstandings can cause conflicts with the locals which they try to avoid at all costs. Since many of the roads are dirt, the rainy season presents its own set of challenges. Keeping the water pumping station serviced and in working order, repairing plumbing, running electric lines and acquiring Internet connection are all just a way of life on this tiny island. It can be frustrating at times, but being convinced that this is where the Lord has called them to serve helps them deal with all the day-to-day issues.

Deciding how to reach out to the people of this remote island has been a challenge for them. Currently, they have a small group meeting in their home each Sunday morning to remember the Lord and to be taught the basic doctrines of the faith. In addition to this, Karen has begun a Bible study with a few of the older women from the barangay near their home. They are currently studying through the Emmaus course *What the Bible Teaches*. Karen uses both the English and Tagalog versions as she teaches. This has created many interesting discussions and questions from these women who come from a Roman



From top: The inter-island ferry; A typical family home on Romblon; The road that encircles the island; Family relaxing during the heat of the day.



From top: The town of Romblon, Romblon; Karen studying language with her tutor.

Catholic background. Pray for the salvation of souls as a result of this study.

Patrick is building relationships with the local barangay captains and prays with them concerning their spiritual needs. These relationships will play a vital part in the plans to show the *Jesus* film in the local barangays in the coming months. Each of the barangay leaders must be contacted, and approval must be received from each local council before they can show the movie. Having a relationship with their local captain provides Patrick the potential for other relationships to be built with all the barangay leaders, which is crucial for their future success on the island. The plan is for them to begin showing the movie in the southernmost barangay, working toward showing the movie in each of the 31 barangays, and ending in the main city of Romblon. Please pray that souls will be awakened to their need for the Savior.

Pray for the Carders as they begin what will be many years of work to establish a new testimony on this island. Pray that the Lord will give them the encouragement of seeing souls saved and growing in grace for His glory. "Let them give glory unto the Lord and declare His praise in the islands." (Isaiah 42:12) ■



Kenneth and Joyce Hardisty were commended in 2006 by Branford Bible Chapel, New Branford, Connecticut, and Hiawassa Bible Chapel, Orlando, Florida.

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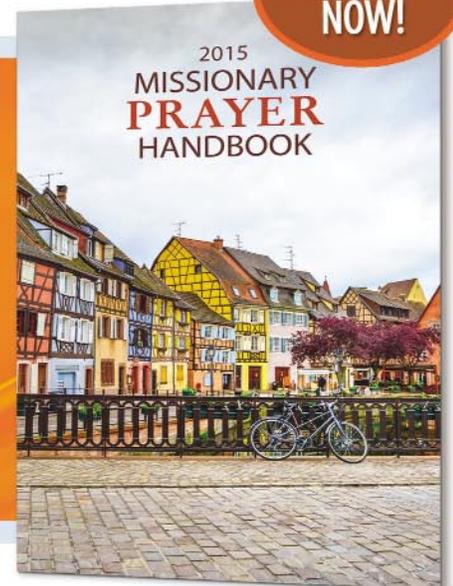
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