



Thinking It Through

THOMAS J. SCHETELICH

The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand

One Sunday morning, at the Breaking of Bread service, several men spoke concerning Jesus Christ's second coming. As the meeting progressed, one person commented that we should live in expectation of the Lord's return. He asked a rhetorical question, "How should we live if we really believe Jesus is coming very soon?"

It was a paraphrase of the apostle Peter's question famously asked in his second epistle: "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?" (2 Peter 3: 11–12)

That's a good question! So what's the answer? Suppose I knew, by some special revelation that I do not have, that the coming of Christ would be in 90 days. What should I do? Should I quit my job and devote every moment to public evangelism? Should I sell everything I have and finance missions to get out the news? Should I spend all my time in prayer and fasting, pleading with God for mercy upon our city? Or should I spend all my time with my wife and family? A number of less noble thoughts also occurred to me, like, I'm sure not going to worry about paying my credit card bill.

On consideration, I realized that there is a real answer to my question. There was a brief, unique moment in human history when people of faith did know, for certain, that the Lord was coming very soon. This was when John the Baptist preached in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3: 2)

For that short moment in time, men and women of faith faced the issue as more than an exhortation, but as a real question requiring a real answer. "So the people asked [John] saying 'What shall we do then?'" (Luke 3:10) Should we preach in the streets? Should we fast in the temple? Interestingly, John mentions none of those things.

John told them to repent, and to bear the fruits of repentance. His message was universal; it included the moral and faithful of the day. He made no exceptions except for Jesus of Nazareth.

So, to begin to answer the question, "If Christ is coming, what should I do?" The first thing is to repent. Before anything else, I need to humble myself before the Lord and apply this exhortation to myself. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and bear the fruits worthy of repentance."

John then talks about the ordinary, commonplace things of life: honor God in your daily life; be honest in the way you conduct yourself; be gracious in the way you handle money. (Luke 3: 10–15)

John told tax collectors to collect the correct amount. He didn't say to forget taxes because the kingdom of God is coming. He said to be honest and charge the right amount. John told the soldiers to be content with their wages and he told the rich to share with those who have less.

I suggested earlier that, if I knew the Lord was coming soon, I might not pay my credit card bill. But on reflection, I am going to pay my bills honestly—not because they will send me an angry letter, or take legal action, but because Jesus Christ is coming.

I'm not going to quit my job; rather, I am going to do the best job that I can because Jesus Christ is coming. I'm going to work hard in the ministries at my home church and in my home city, to help people who need to be lifted up, or to help those who want to make their paths straight. I am going to spend more time with my wife, and be the best husband I can. I am going to examine my life, and bear fruits worthy of repentance. All because Jesus Christ *is* coming!

Jesus said that, "Blessed are those servants who, when their Master comes, He finds them so doing." (Matthew 24:46) The Lord grant that He will so find all of us. ■

"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?"
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COVER: (top left, bottom right) Accept children's home in India—Suzanne DeMatteo; (top right, middle) Bolivia—Enoel Suarez; (bottom left) French Alps—Amy Deligdisch .

short-term missions: lessons from bolivia



by **Enoel Suarez**

My wife, Leisa, and I have served the Lord in Bolivia since 1991. In that time we have hosted dozens and dozens of “short-termers.” This has become a part of our service in the Lord’s work and for His people. Obviously, for me to write an article on this issue is a matter of bias and, even more, of conviction. For the most part, the believers who come to work with us are a blessing and advance the Lord’s work. We pray that the encouragement is mutual, and experience has shown us that it is indeed.

In this article we’ll look at the effect on the sending church and the encouragement to the receiving church as well as what the experience means to the participants and those to whom they minister.

the effect on the sending church

- 1 Fulfill the Great Commission.** The church that sends people demonstrates that it believes in foreign missions and recognizes their responsibility in the Great Commission. This provides a concrete illustration that the church is committed to spreading the Gospel.
- 2 Spiritually grow the individual.** Sending believers to participate in foreign missions provides them with the opportunity to do things that are not possible at home. Being in a foreign culture stretches and challenges their viewpoint. As a result, these individuals often have a greater interest in the things of the Lord.
- 3 Foster excitement for missions.** When people return from a missions trip the assembly is excited to hear the report and share the thrill of what has been accomplished. In addition, a unifying effect can occur when the assembly participates financially and prayerfully with those they send out.

the encouragement to the receiving church

- 1 Demonstrate Christian love.** The knowledge that Christians in other places care for their social, physical and spiritual needs blesses the local believers. It gives a tangible demonstration of Christian love and practical concern.
- 2 Provide practical help.** Whether it is through financial help, expertise in a specific area, or simply manpower, short-term workers enable the local church to accomplish things that would otherwise be beyond their capabilities.
- 3 Encourage fellowship and local involvement.** The local church and its leaders are encouraged as they see projects accomplished and ministries strengthened. Friendships encourage the workers and other believers in very real ways.

Visit www.CMML.us or www.MSCCanada.org to learn more about short-term opportunities.

Above: Short-term group traveling to El Mazi for a day clinic.



the value to individuals

The world we live in is very small compared to the great distances missionaries had to travel in former times. Now, most mission fields are less than one day away by air. People travel great distances for business and pleasure, so why not do so for the Lord's work?

People of all ages can go on short-term missions. Young people are exposed to a foreign culture and the distinctiveness of how "assembly missionaries" function. There are many groups that take young people overseas for summer missionary work. Some do very good work, but they operate on a different basis than what is taught in assemblies. That is, these organizations work with a structure beyond the local church and often require the participants to raise support and make a financial commitment which, in part, funds the organization. It

is vital that assemblies allow young people to be in prayer and to depend on the Lord to meet their needs.

A percentage of young people who participate in short-term missions will later in life become missionaries themselves. Who can measure the impact of the initial exposure on the final decision? Though the majority will not become missionaries, the experience helps shape their lives in prayer, giving, and interest in missions.

Families can visit a missionary and work alongside them for a week or two. For many families this would be less expensive than a family cruise or a trip to Disney and has a greater impact. More and more senior citizens in the Western world have the time and good health to visit the mission field. Often those in this age group have expertise and/or experience that is a great help in the field. Instead of being served, short-term missions trips provide the opportunity to serve and to use talents and gifts for the Lord.



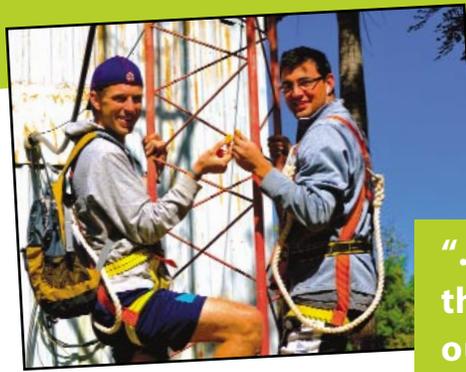
the value to missionaries

Here again I speak from experience. Many of those who have come to visit and serve with us have greatly blessed Leisa and me and our four girls. Friendships have been made that carry on for years. Knowing that others are interested in our work and ministry encourages us. Certain aspects of the work have moved ahead much quicker than otherwise would have been possible. Buildings have been raised that may never have been put up without the help from abroad.

Without qualified volunteers from other places, the medical trips we lead up the Amazon basin would likely never happen. It is vital to reach remote people and tribes with the Gospel. The camp work would still be in its infancy and the radio ministry a distant dream without the help from visitors.

Encouraged and blessed by those coming to help, the believers in our local churches see the ministry and various outreaches growing and are excited to be part of the work. They actively participate in these ventures realizing it is only possible through God's goodness and the kindness of His people.

Top (from left): Boat maintenance team; A doctor performing ear surgery; Guayara church ceiling installation; Face painting in San Borja near the White River; Volunteers, Zac and John, changing the radio tower warning light bulb. **Above (clockwise from left):** Jessica Suarez helping with children's fluoride treatments; A volunteer doctor examining a local child; Children receiving parasite medicine during a river boat medical trip.



"...as you pray for missionaries, the mission field, projects and outreaches, consider how the Lord wants to use you to answer a need."

considerations

Several warnings need to be given as well. People from developed countries should realize that things do not happen the same way they do at home. Supplies may not be readily available and lumber stores nonexistent. Expectations need to be realistic. The culture will likely be different and people may lack the sense of urgency North Americans are used to.

In planning to visit a mission field some research is in line. Be sure supplies will be on hand and check that the project is of lasting value and will further the ministry or help people's

circumstances. Disenchantment and a negative view of short-term missions often occur when participants have too little to do or are given minor tasks.

Finally, as you pray for missionaries, the mission field, projects and outreaches, consider how the Lord wants to use you to answer a need. ■



Enoel and Leisa Suarez, commended in 1993 by the Southdale assembly in London, Ontario, Canada, serve the Lord in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

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A CALL TO SERVICE

The Value of Short-Term Missions

Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all the peoples.
1 Chronicles 16:24

by **Brian Kramer**

As CMML's Short-Term Service Coordinator, I provide current information to individuals and assemblies regarding opportunities to work alongside missionaries around the world. Before sharing about the value and challenge of short-term work and the amazing variety of opportunities to serve, let's consider what the Bible says about short-term missions.

A Biblical Basis

The apostles, or "sent ones," were sent out by Jesus to proclaim the kingdom of heaven and to do good works (Matthew 10). This "sending" was not limited to the Twelve. In Luke 10, seventy-two other disciples were sent out with a similar message to "heal the sick" and to preach "the kingdom of God." This "short-term missions trip" had a profound effect on them. "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!'" Jesus reminded them of the greater joy of knowing that their names are written in heaven.

Jesus instructed His followers to make *more* disciples of every nation, baptizing and teaching them to observe all He commanded (Matt. 28:19-20). They would "be witnesses" both at home "in Jerusalem," and far away "in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Some, like Paul, would spend their lives as "missionaries"—traveling and living in distant lands. Others, such as Philip in Samaria, would share the good news closer to home and for a shorter time (Acts 8:5, 12).

Though Paul the apostle sometimes worked alone, more commonly he relied on the support and encouragement of a team of fellow workers. Paul often chose "short-term" workers to accompany him, even if they were young and inexperienced, such as Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). He often mentions his "fellow

workers" in his letters: men and women of all ages and nationalities. Some, like Luke or Timothy, were "full-time" workers; others, like Priscilla and Aquila, were—literally—tentmakers, and some were with him temporarily before returning home.

The Value and Challenge

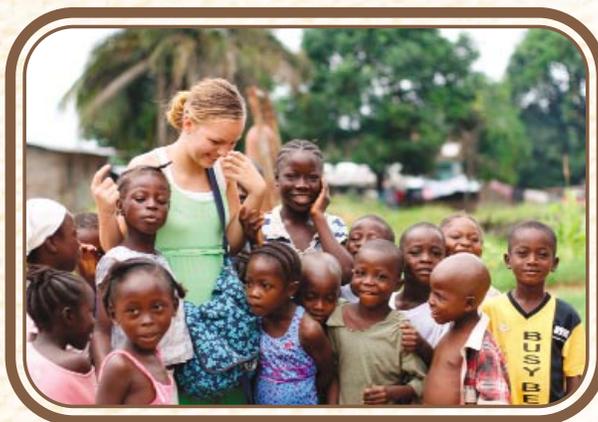
A group of volunteers with the right focus and a heart for the Gospel *can* accomplish a great deal: construct a much-needed classroom, distribute literature to every home in a town or small city, preach God's word, or participate in street ministry or children's outreach with skits, puppets, music, and "paint board" story-telling. Even with a short visit, a hard-working, enthusiastic team can be a big encouragement in these practical ways to the missionaries and local believers. The couple or individual who stays for a longer time period brings a different type of encouragement. While perhaps not as dramatic as a team trip, an extended stay allows them to appreciate the culture, make deeper and lasting friendships, and get involved in discipleship, Bible studies, preaching, and follow-up work which a shorter team visit doesn't allow.

While unrealistic hopes can lead to disappointment for the short-term worker, setting aside expectations and having a servant's heart will make the short-term experience valuable to the volunteer as well as to the missionary and the local church. He or she learns that "flexibility" is a top priority. Exposure to the cultural challenges and the varying responses to the Gospel gives a deeper appreciation for the loneliness, joys, frustrations, and rewards faced by missionaries every day.

In many cases the volunteer returns home with a new vision of missions, which is manifested in various ways: praying for

missionaries you have worked with—and lived with—takes on deeper meaning; there is often a greater desire to get involved in Gospel work at home, which can “infect” the entire assembly; and short-term missions is often an important step toward full-time service. In addition, short-term missions can maintain or restore the vital link between home assemblies and workers on the field.

It may be a surprise to learn that not all missionaries see the value of short-term workers. Perhaps because of a difficult experience with a visiting team, or simply the extra work and distraction that even the most conscientious visitors cause, some missionaries are reluctant to invite short-term workers to come and help. However, many have learned that with the right preparation, good communication, and realistic expectations, both the missionary and the workers are greatly encouraged. One missionary in eastern Europe said to me, *“Understand that visits and time together can be just as important to the missionary, if not more so for some, as going to accomplish a project. In most cases the project encourages the workers while the visit encourages the missionary.”*



The Amazing Variety

A common misconception about short-term missions is that it always involves a *team* which travels from North America, at great expense, to another part of the globe, for one or two weeks. While team trips are an important part of short-term missions, my focus as Short-Term Service Coordinator for CMML is to match *individuals* to specific needs which vary greatly in length. The opportunities available, a few of which are highlighted on the next page, reflect an amazing variety.

- **“Team” size:** This ranges from one or two individuals up to 20 or more, depending on the need or project, housing capacity, transportation and so on.

- **Age:** Teenagers, especially traveling with parents, are welcome in some situations, and workers in their 60s and 70s bring experience and maturity.

- **Location:** The CMML website currently lists opportunities in Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, and Central America. Cross-cultural outreach within the U.S. is also a possibility.

- **Time Length:** Ranges from two weeks to two years. The time commitment depends on the need and requires balancing the cost of travel with the availability of the volunteer.

- **Type of Work:** Opportunities as varied as administration and agriculture to translation assistance and youth work are all available.

The CMML Short-Term Opportunities Web Page

This page, located at www.CMML.us/Involved/Opportunities, is frequently updated with new or revised opportunities to serve. It is grouped by time frame and for each opportunity the country, worker, specific time, type of work, and description of work is provided, as well as contact information. At the end of the page are links to other mission service organizations including MSC Canada and Echoes of Service, country profiles, and email updates.

While the Opportunities Web page is the *major* tool for providing information on short-term opportunities, individuals and assemblies may also request a bi-monthly email update which highlights selected opportunities and additional information on short-term service. To receive the bi-monthly email update, or if you have questions or comments about short-term opportunities, please email bjkramer@cmml.us.

A Call for Missions

Do short-term missions further the purposes to which the church is called? If done well, the answer is definitely “Yes!” While giving to missions, reading about missions, praying for missionaries and hosting them on home visits are all vital ways to partner in their work, short-term service directly involves us in the work, side-by-side with missionaries and local believers. By going and serving, we become “hands-on” partners in the work of the Gospel.

Jesus calls us to follow Him, and to *go*—to go and proclaim the Gospel, to make disciples and teach them how to follow Him. We must go into our own neighborhoods and communities, but Jesus also said, “Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to *all* nations.” (Luke 24:47) Our goal is to use short-term service as an opportunity to further the purpose to which we are called, to the glory of God.

Brian Kramer is CMML’s Short-Term Service Coordinator

Current Short-Term Opportunities

Summer 2013: Teams will be formed for gospel outreaches in Europe (Teach and Testify Teams in Ireland, May 20 – June 13) and Africa (Gospel to Ghana, June 15 – July 1). Go to www.TnTTeams.org for more information, and watch the “Opportunities” Web page for more information on these and other summer 2013 opportunities.

School Year 2013 – 2014: Schools in the Philippines (Faith Academy), Tanzania (Haven of Peace Academy) and Thailand (Grace International School) need teachers, administrators and support staff. Schools in Argentina, Burundi, Colombia, Fiji Islands, Honduras, Mexico, the Middle East, Portugal and Zambia also have needs.



Ongoing Needs: Many CMML missionaries have needs which are not tied to a particular time frame:

Ecuador: individuals or teams for one week to one month to help with construction and landscaping (Bayardo Arroyo)

India: medical and educational help in an HIV/AIDS ministry (Raju Mathew)

Ireland: an individual or couple to help with evangelism, discipling, publishing, and correspondence courses for one to two years (Penny DeFouw)

Paraguay: a team of 5–10 for evangelism in rural areas (Mike Meiers)

Philippines: looking for someone—possibly a retiree—to assist translators by explaining English words and idioms and the text’s overall meaning in each passage (David Harvey)

Romania: an opportunity for young people to experience missions first-hand, from one to six months (George Murray)

Uganda: a variety of opportunities in an English-speaking African country—Bible teaching, printing, art, sewing, construction, children’s work, and youth work (Bob Cullen)

www.CMML.us/Involved/Opportunities

God's Love in a Broken World

Two Sisters Learn to "Let Go and Let God"



by Suzanne DeMatteo

Last summer I set out with a simple plan: volunteer my time to the Lord and serve people in need. What God chose to do was to teach me just how "big" the needs are in this broken world.

I took a break from my studies as a nursing student to serve the ministry "Accept," located on the outskirts of Bangalore, India. My sister Lauren, a tenth-grade teacher, used her summer vacation to come along.

Accept the Broken

Bangalore is a place of stark contradictions. Within Bangalore proper is a world-renowned booming hub of technology. As you make your way outside the metropolitan areas, you are surrounded by beautiful, exotic vegetation surrounding homes clustered into villages. This is the "cinematic" India I envisioned most of my life.

But just as quickly, you are faced with most of the region's brokenness and abject poverty. People struggle against homelessness, trying to make ends meet, fighting for space alongside wandering cattle and stray dogs. A collective sense of weariness rises from the area with a culmination of profound poverty and hunger and a desperate need for Jesus. It was in this place that we encountered Accept.

Accept's mission is to show the love of Jesus to those who only know disgrace, shame and pain. It does so by first and foremost being a hospice and medical clinic for the area's impoverished people suffering from various health conditions, with primary emphasis on the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Accept also functions as an orphanage for children with HIV. The staff preaches the Gospel in word and deed to all who come through their doors.

Accept's ministry began with the work of CMML missionaries Raju and Joyce Mathew [*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 7]. Upon their return to India in 1995, the Mathews were deeply struck by the condition of the sick in Bangalore and, particularly, with the societal treatment of those with HIV. It was then that God stirred the Mathews' hearts to begin the clinic, essentially out of their garage. From those humble beginnings, Accept has grown into a 35-bed clinic that provides care for HIV patients with infections, as well as palliative care for those who are in the final stages of Acquired Immunodeficiency Disease Syndrome (AIDS).

The clinic works alongside other medical facilities to provide patients with dental and eye care, cancer treatment and surgeries. Accept also provides neo-natal care for HIV positive women. In fact, Accept's current ministry of caring for 20 children began as an outgrowth of this provision.

An HIV positive woman being cared for at the clinic gave birth to a child who was also HIV positive. The mother requested that Raju provide for her child after her death because her family refused. Accept responded by opening its doors to that child and dozens more since. By God's provision, a separate facility was built to feed, clothe, and house these children.

Face the Unexpected

God's provision is undeniable. As God moves the hearts of those working at Accept as nurses, caretakers, and secretaries, He also moves the hearts of others to volunteer time, energy, and resources to meet various needs, whether it is to build a needed facility or, as mine and Lauren's case, to lend a hand and lighten the load.

It's at this point that I must make two confessions. The first

Above: Boys from the children's home.



is that Lauren and I had, at best, only a vague idea of what we would do when we arrived in Bangalore. I planned to help in the clinic, applying some of what I learned in nursing school, and Lauren planned to use her summer away from her students to help a new group of students.

The second, and slightly embarrassing, is that I still had a grand idea that I would be immensely helpful. God quickly humbled me.

Battling nerves, I started my first day by shadowing a nurse. We found ourselves in a female ward, a long room with about 10 beds, occupied by women who were sleeping or simply unable to move. I immediately felt overwhelmed by the burden that these women carried. It was at this moment that two things struck me. The first was how small and inexperienced I was in light of their enormous suffering. The second thing that struck me was the floor—I fainted. I awoke to my feelings of inadequacy, being compounded by humiliation and defeat. Really, God? I asked, exasperated. How can I be of any use? I can barely stay upright in the face of what's happening here.

Lauren also found herself fighting an uphill battle. She was responsible for 20 children, ranging from ages 5 to 19, all speaking English at varying levels, needing to be taught different subjects, some of which Lauren had no experience in, and lacking the proper resources. She felt like she was in the midst of a riot, with 20 different children needing 20 different things and, most importantly, needing and vying for her attention all at once. Lauren felt overwhelmed, inadequate, and at a loss for how to make a lasting change with so little. It was at this moment in both of our experiences that God stepped in.

Learn to Let Go

God began to strip us of our own plans to “help.” He taught us that the cliché is true—we had to “let go and let God.” He allowed Lauren to form deep relationships with the two house moms who care for the children. He moved her heart away from merely teaching to forming actual relationships. He allowed Lauren to love and accept the children, which is what they needed most.

As for me, God kept me on the floor, though in the metaphorical sense. God allowed me to feel that small, so He could show me how big a task it is to serve Him. I began working with Manikam, a staff member who works with terminally ill patients in the last stages of AIDS. He took me along to help him do the work he normally does single-handedly. We washed patients’ laundry, brought them hot water from the spigot outside, cleaned bathrooms, served lunch and cleaned patients’ beds. This was not work I ever thought I’d do, but it was exactly the work I needed.

Love the Weak

Together we cared for Shammurthy, a man in his 60s, in the final stage of AIDS. He was skeletally thin, too weak to lift his head and constantly in pain. Manikam and I bathed him, changed his clothes, adjusted his sheets, fed and massaged him, and, as Manikam put it, showed him that Jesus loves him and gives comfort through His people. The more time I spent with Shammurthy, the more I grew to love him, not because I’m an exceptionally compassionate person, but because Jesus truly broke my heart for this man. I feel blessed to have served



From Left (and top to bottom): Suzanne with girls in the children's home: Marya, Chandini, Anusri and Rachel; Girls in children's home: Ramya, Rajeshwari, Chandini and Marya; Lauren and Suzanne with a few support staff members; Lauren with Jaylocksmi, the house mom, and two girls, Rachel and Anusri; Suzanne feeding her patient, Shammurthy; Lauren tutoring Srinivas, Richard and Kishore, along with the other 20 children; Lauren with 4-year-old Anusri, a girl from the children's home.

at Accept, where they made it possible for this man, and many others like him, to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. Despite what their families and culture have told them about their value, HIV positive patients can know they are loved and blameless in the sight of God before they see Him face-to-face.

Serve and Trust Him

For one month, Lauren and I were a small part of a team working for God's glory in a broken area of a broken world. We learned that sometimes we serve God best when He calls us to serve outside of our element and to trust Him with our plans and with the outcome. Lauren and I learned these lessons working with the staff at Accept, who embody the concept of living by faith. Accept is run completely on faith. They trust God to provide the means to pay their bills and salaries and to provide people to serve the needy. God has never failed them.

Go and Help

I cannot begin to share all the things God taught us. I would need to write a book—or books! But one thing I hope to do is lay a burden on just one person to go and serve people through Accept. God has made us very small people in a broken world with very big problems. In spite of this, He has called us to do things that may seem small for us but are very big in light of eternity. Because our God is a big God, nothing is too difficult for Him. ■

Suzanne DeMatteo is in fellowship at Rutherford Bible Chapel in Rutherford, New Jersey.

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6 Weeks

3 Ministries

1 Life-changing Experience

Investing in People on the Mission Field

by Amy Deligdisch

Language can be such a precious tool—or a hindrance. I studied Spanish in middle and high school but was too embarrassed to really practice and so much of my knowledge faded. Since then, the use of Spanish around me has increased! I started to use what I could, but progress was slow. So, when I considered what to do with my summer, it was natural to look for an opportunity to live in a Spanish-speaking country to improve my language skills through immersion. My good friend Lydia encouraged me to talk to her father, Gil Vargas [Missionary Prayer Handbook Day 15]. For more than 20 years, Gil and Carolyn have served in Spain and soon Gil sent me a full itinerary of what my six-week trip would look like. As I finalized my plans, I decided to visit my uncle and aunt, Dave and Judy Wastle [Missionary Prayer Handbook Day 12], who are “next-door” in France, as well as my good friend Hannah’s parents in Spain, Craig and Brenda Landrum [Missionary Prayer Handbook Day 15].

As I watched these three couples at work, I realized I was seeing three different forms of one calling: invest in people.

Support Work in France

The first part of my visit was in France. We all have preconceived notions, don’t we? These were mine: support work is more boring than, and probably not as important as, evangelism, teaching or preaching. I thought, people are what matter to God and this work isn’t even with people! But as I saw the work in France, I realized this perception is simply invalid. Uncle Dave and Aunt Judy, along with others, are remodeling and maintaining Pierre Vivantes, a tiny medieval village, to be a haven for European workers. They keep its original appeal and add modern conveniences, comforts and beauties. Fellowship and



counseling are also available. While I was there, they allowed me to invest in the ministry—I cleaned, baked, watered the prolific flowers, and visited with some of the people. Workers arrive weary from their ministry and leave refreshed and rejoicing. Sometimes we forget that physical labor and encouraging believers to carry on is an investment in God’s service.

Spain: Invest in People

During my time in Spain I spent a few days with Craig and Brenda Landrum, in Calatayud. Missionaries in Mexico for twenty years, the Landrums were instrumental in planting two churches there. Just over a year ago they moved to Spain to aid and encourage a church that lacks biblically-trained leadership (a situation that is fairly typical in Spain). Craig regularly meets with some of the men in the chapel for Bible studies. Slowly, their Bible knowledge is growing and they’re gaining courage to stand up and share in the Lord’s Supper. The Landrums regularly open their home for hospitality, visit with people and pray for them. While there, I was thrilled to join Brenda in a Bible study with two curious non-Christian women and, at the same time, Craig had a Bible study with a non-Christian man. Because Craig and Brenda have invested themselves in people’s lives, those they interact with are willing to learn from them.



Spain: Learn from Each Other

Of all the people I visited in Spain, I spent the most time with Gil and Carolyn Vargas. In charge of the Emmaus Correspondence School courses in Spain, Gil has found them to be very effective



Above (from top): Wheat field in Provence, France; Calatayud, Spain; Pyrenees Mountains, Spain.

tools to train people in Bible knowledge. In addition to the courses, he and Carolyn carry on a work of discipleship and evangelism. They're greatly invested in the people who run the courses and guide and disciple the Bible students. I drove with Gil and Carolyn from one end of the country to the other to visit with these course correctors. I heard the people we visited with talk about spiritual things, the ministry, and hard times as well as jokes and everyday life. Their time, energy and money are given to the people they're called to invest in.

The Vargases invested in me as well! I had a place to stay, food, transportation and a premade connection with everyone they introduced me to. They teased me, laughed with me and made me feel safe and at home. Knowing I wanted to improve my Spanish, they arranged for me to live with various Spanish friends for several days each. Praying with me and for me, they viewed my five weeks in Spain as an opportunity for discipleship. They explained their reasons for different choices they've made, both day-to-day and major life decisions. They asked searching questions about my own life, encouraged me to consider what I really believe, and even challenged me on sins in my life. To them, it was more important to say what I needed to hear rather than what I would like to hear. They had the authority to say these things because they already invested a great deal in me. Because of their loving boldness, I can take active steps to conquer these sins and rejoice in the help they offered.

I also had the opportunity to invest in people. In addition to encouraging others whenever possible, I was excited to teach a kids' Bible club. Since this is something I've done in the past, I was eager to help. Though I only had six children for four days, I never had more interested and involved students! Before the club started, they knew all the points of the Gospel, but nothing else—they didn't even know who Noah was. Now they do! Three children professed salvation prior to the Bible club and I pray they go on to serve the Lord Jesus through the situations God has placed them in.

What I've learned

Sometimes He guides by making the path obvious. When I decided to go on this trip, I did not hear the voice of God, find a particular Bible verse, or even receive special direction encouraging me to go to Spain. I simply decided to go because it seemed the obvious thing to do (from my desire to learn Spanish and learn more about missions), and those I looked to for counsel encouraged me

to take advantage of the opportunity. Now, because of all that God taught me, I know that this was obedience. Through this precious time with these three missionary couples, I learned the importance of investing in people and the different ways to do so.

Be invested

Who are you investing in? You can invest in missionaries: reconnect with ones you know or reach out to ones you don't know. Learn about their work, write them notes of encouragement, faithfully pray for them or support them financially. Even better, visit them and invest in the people in which they are investing. You will not truly understand their work until you see it with your own eyes and love the people they are pouring themselves into. Who knows? You might become a missionary too! ■

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Right (background): French Alps. Small photos (from top): Local believers and neighbors of the Vargas family gathered on a Sunday near Salamanca, Spain; House church in Seville; Teaching a kids' Bible club.