

Missions



Myanmar

Little School, Big Impact

The Middle East
A Different Perspective

Serbia
Ministry to Refugees

Plus...26 Below
Youth Retreat Report



Thinking It Through

ALLAN WILKS

Lost and Found

We all experience loss in our lives. Sometimes a loss is temporary, like losing the car keys. Even permanent losses can be minor, depending on the value of the lost object. But losses can also be devastating, as when Job lost his wealth, his health, and even his family.

The worst is losing a person close to us. Relationships are precious and death is permanent, so when a friend or close relative passes away we grieve with “the pain of searing loss,” in the words of Stuart Townend.

Mary Magdalene was a close follower of Jesus. She and some other women joined the apostles in following Jesus wherever He went. She had experienced a dramatic release from demon possession (Luke 8:2) and so this was likely at least part of the reason for her commitment to Him.

But more than that, she had found in Jesus a man of deep wisdom, grace and power. He was a man totally to be trusted, a man worthy of total commitment, a man even worthy of worship.

Other than that reference in Luke, we only hear about Mary Magdalene at the end of Jesus’s life. Naturally, she was in Jerusalem at the time of His capture and trial. As the events of that day spiraled out of control, we can imagine her panic and despair. John tells us (John 19:25) that when He was finally nailed to His cruel cross, she and several other Marys were right there. We can only imagine her desperation and her hope that someone would halt the nightmare that was playing out before her.

But God’s plan from the foundation of the world moved inexorably forward, and Jesus did die. Mary Magdalene’s loss at that moment was profound. What she had found in Christ was of infinite value to her, and now it was lost forever, as far as she knew.

While the apostles escaped back into Jerusalem, Mary Magdalene and the other women boldly followed Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to the burial tomb, watching in grief as Jesus’s body was wrapped and placed in the tomb, and then the tomb was sealed.

I imagine this was the point at which she accepted the finality of her smashed hopes and that her walk back into the city

was heavy with grief. Somehow she and her friends mustered the strength to prepare a mixture of spices and ointments, mixed with many tears, to be added to His body (Luke 23:56).

They returned to the tomb with the spices early Sunday morning while it was still dark outside (Luke 24:1, John 20:1). Grief requires closure and perhaps they thought what they were doing would help with that. But in fact, matters seemed to get even worse as they peered into the now unsealed tomb and saw that it was empty.

At this point Mary Magdalene was beside herself, grief-stricken and desperate to find her Lord’s body. This was the nadir for her. We can imagine the sobbing pain in her voice as she seeks a clue from someone she thinks is the local gardener.

But the “gardener” is Jesus. As He speaks her name she recognizes Him. She hears an echo of the many times He said her name in friendship. She hears admonishment, as if He is asking why she didn’t believe what He had told her. She hears His delight in revealing to her that her hope

was never unfounded. And all in that single word, “Mary.”

Perhaps never in the history of the world has hope so quickly soared from so low to so high. The pain of deepest loss was turned into the overflowing joy of greatest gain in just a moment, a moment that I’m sure defined the rest of Mary Magdalene’s life.

It would have taken her some time, perhaps weeks or months, to understand the full implications of the living Christ standing before her: salvation, regeneration, a sure hope for the future. But in that moment all that mattered to her was that her Lord was alive and what was seemingly irretrievably lost had been found.

Lord, help me not to be just a repeater of doctrinal truths, but help me to live in the knowledge of Your actual presence in my life. Help me to thrill that You are walking beside me at all times. Help me listen to Your living voice. ■

Allan Wilks, CMML Vice President, Technology

¹ Getty, Keith and Stuart Townend “In Christ Alone” 2001

**No pow’r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow’r of Christ I’ll stand.¹**



STEP Center for Academics

A Little School in Myanmar Has a Big Impact

BY PHILIP C. PARSONS

Late last year, my wife, Mary, and I had the distinct pleasure of visiting Pam and Zama (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 28) who minister in Myanmar. The little school they started 10 years ago has developed into a vibrant work, penetrating the lives of young boys and girls with the Gospel.

A brief history

The second largest country in Southeast Asia, Myanmar was originally known as Burma until 1989. Today, it is officially known as the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The country is bordered by India, China, Bangladesh, Laos and Thailand. High mountain ranges in the north, east and west provide isolation and protection from neighboring countries. Much of Myanmar's civilization developed independently of other countries. In the 1800s Britain's expansion of India spilled into Myanmar, making

it a British territory in 1885. Myanmar achieved independence in 1948 but in 1962 a military-led coup introduced the "Burmese way of socialism." Following many years of strife, there are encouraging signs and changes for the better.

Christianity in Myanmar is rooted primarily in the work of Adoniram Judson. A Baptist missionary, Judson went to Burma at the urging of William Carey. The first assembly was formed in 1894 by one of Judson's early converts. Today, there are 107 assemblies throughout the country.

Myanmar's major religion, Buddhism accounts for nearly 90 percent of the population. Although religious freedom exists constitutionally in Myanmar, the military regime persists in its attempts to keep Christianity from growing. For example, more than 3,000 Christian villages have been burned down in the last 10 years.

Top row (L-R): School children; Classes by color at "fun day" activities; Bottom: Mother and child after school.



Top right: School "fun day" tug of war; **Left (from top):** Elementary classroom; STEP classroom; Phil and students in chapel; After school refreshments; Pam and student making giant bubbles.

Zama and Pam

How do you reach Buddhists for the Lord Jesus Christ? Pam, of Wichita, Kansas, was drawn to an orphanage in Myanmar during the summer of 2000. A teacher by profession, she often visited missionaries and ministries during summer breaks. Her love for the Burmese children grew and she committed to return to the orphanage each summer. By 2003, Zama, a Burmese national, was serving at the same orphanage. Soon, it was clear the Lord had brought these two servants together, and they were married in July 2005. That same year, submitting to the leading of the Lord coupled with a longing desire to reach the children of Myanmar for the Lord, they began a kindergarten to provide a Christian education primarily for the children of Buddhist families. By the end of the first school year the kindergarten class of five quickly expanded to 35 students and three teachers. In addition to starting the school, Pam was teaching phonics and English and Zama was teaching the General Epistles and New Testament Survey classes at a nearby Bible college. On weekends, they printed and distributed evangelistic tracts. Today, 10 years later, the vision of providing a Christian-based education for Burmese children has grown to 317 students and 40 teachers and support staff.

STEP Center for Academics

It took several months for the school to be recognized and accredited as an educational institution in Myanmar; Pam and Zama had to first set up a business. The STEP (Serving Through Educational Programs) Center for Academics (SCA) is the official business name for the school. It is now accredited with the Ministry of Education as a private school. The school motto is "Stepping into education that lasts for time and eternity."

Word about the school quickly spread in the community. Parents pressed Pam and Zama to expand the school so younger brothers and sisters of children already enrolled could become students as well. When asked why parents want to send their children to this school knowing there is a high value on Christianity and the Bible, Pam responded by saying,

"These parents see their children better behaved, academically challenged and loved by their teachers."

A pressing concern is the cost to rent space for classrooms. In 10 years, rent for the school has tripled. Today, the school rents two homes in which the rooms have been modified to create learning spaces for students in nursery, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and grades one through nine. Two rooms in Pam and Zama's home are also used to accommodate the school's needs. Still, with more than 200 students on the waiting list and escalating rental costs, it is clear to Pam and Zama that the school can no longer remain in its current location.

After months of prayer and evaluating possible alternatives, they saw the Lord open the way for them to purchase 14 acres of land in a Yangon suburb. News of the school moving to a new location was well received by the parents. Some parents are already making plans to relocate nearer to the new location. It is anticipated that the groundbreaking will occur in 2016, with construction of a security wall, roads on the property, a well and the main education building to follow before the school moves. The vision is to expand the school and accommodate 1,000 students through grade 12.

School facts

The school is currently located in an upper-class residential community. The students come from mostly middle-income families who rely on taxi service to get their children to and from school each day. Approximately 85 percent of the students come from Buddhists homes. This year there are five MKs who are part of the student body. The instructional staff are all Bible college graduates who love the Lord. However, many of the teachers have no academic training. Pam devotes much of her time in teacher-training seminars and meets with new and prospective teachers one afternoon a week doing university-level educational topics. During the day, she makes purposeful visits to classrooms, all with a view to encourage, assist and equip teachers to be effective instructors. Pam teaches four classes each day (junior high Bible and high school history). Zama visits classes, encourages teachers and teaches high school Bible classes. He is also responsible to care for many of the non-academic matters including the necessary govern-

ment work that is required to maintain the school license. The school is regularly reviewed by the Ministry of Education. During these visits, teacher and student records are examined to ensure the school is operating according to requirements.

Pray for the school

This school is just the beginning of a much larger vision to reach the people of Myanmar for the Lord. Two teachers, trained by Pam and Zama, have left SCA to begin two "daughter" schools in Myanmar. It's hard to "let go" those who have been trained, but it is satisfying and effective for nationals to reach other nationals for the Lord. Pray that the Lord will provide teachers not only for the ongoing ministry of SCA but also the daughter schools that have begun.

Finances needed to run a school are always a challenge. Tuition, which meets the salaries for teachers and the operational costs for SCA, is \$70 per student per month. Rent for buildings has been wonderfully provided by the Lord. By faith, a loan was secured to purchase the land in anticipation of building a new facility and expand the school.

Prayer is needed as Pam seeks to acquire a permanent resident certificate for Myanmar. This will permit her to remain in the country and not leave due to current visa limitations.

Pam and Zama welcome visitors! Should the Lord give you a burden to go help at the school, contact them at: stepzp@gmail.com. ■

Philip C. Parsons, CMML Assembly Relations and Missionary Care



Above and right: Fruit market; Shwedagon Pagoda.



Above (from top left): Buddhist worshiper at Shwedagon Pagoda; Pam and Zama with their children; Entrance to Shwedagon Pagoda.



May We Introduce

Michael and Breanna Rudolph *Missionaries to Haiti*



Michael's Testimony

Raised in a large, pastor's family, I grew up with sound teaching and good examples all around me. With a keen sense of how my actions affected what other people thought of me, I did and said what I was taught and what I knew would make me look good. With my self-righteousness I pushed aside the prodding of my conscience and the Holy Spirit until my mid-teen years when God showed me who I was in His sight. Still, I fought the truth of my condemned position before God until my late teens when my heart was overcome. The realization of God's righteousness and my wickedness, the work that Jesus Christ did on the cross, and the grace He applied to my heart, changed me from the inside out. Living with a renewed heart, I wanted to serve my Lord but I still made my own plans until our sovereign God used an earthquake to show me His will.

In 2008 I went on a two-week trip to Haiti with a medical team. That trip gave me a personal vision for the world outside of the United States and led to three more short visits through the end of 2009. Then January 12, 2010, an earthquake shook Haiti to its roots, and I returned again with a 10-day emergency relief team. During the first week, I realized the workload was huge and felt I should extend my trip for a few weeks. Following God's leading, it was five months before I returned home to Tennessee, this time hearing His call to full-time service in Haiti and preparing to move. From 2010 to 2013 I worked with several established missions, during which time I met Breanna. Then in the fall of 2014 God brought us together again, this time in courtship.

Breanna's Testimony

I was born the oldest of nine children into a loving Christian family. My family is part of a very conservative church where obedience to church authority is imperative. I professed faith at a young age and tried my best to obey the church standards

and to follow God in the way that I was taught. I was involved in various short-term mission trips during my early 20s. In 2012 I was asked to go to Haiti to work as an assistant in a medical clinic for one year. During that year in the mountains, I met and worked with Michael, who was the clinic director, not knowing that God would later bring us together again.

Shortly after I returned home, God began to open my eyes to see His sovereign grace and mercy. I read the Word with a hunger I had never known before, coming to realize more and more that it is not what I do that secures my salvation, but it is what God has already done for me. I read the verses in Romans 3 and many other places that showed me what a sinner I was from the time I was born and how evil my heart was. I then came to understand God's marvelous plan of grace like never before. Jesus bore my sins on the cross, He made me alive, and He saved me for His own purpose and glory, and He will complete the work that He began in me. Learning these life-changing truths eventually led to a very painful time in which I had to leave my family and the church where I was a member. The Lord led me to Tennessee where I had some friends and where I could be part of a wonderful assembly there.

Together

During the year of our long-distance courtship and engagement, Michael focused on the work that Aid For Haiti was doing in the remote areas of Haiti and built a house for us on their mission base in the mountains. God miraculously brought our lives together and continued to confirm our calling to foreign missions. We were married in January 2015 and moved to Haiti following God's leading in our lives. We currently fill the field administrator position for Aid For Haiti and are seeking God's direction in what we believe is an indefinite call to service in Haiti. ■

Coats & Tracts

Ministering to Refugees in Serbia

BY STEVE LUIBRAND

It was the most exciting day I've had for a long time. A Serbian brother and I took winter clothing that we collected and went to the truck stop/motel on the main freeway just before the Croatian border. We heard that refugee buses stop there for several hours waiting for the "go ahead" to send them forward to the train which would take them into Croatia. We had heard many negative reports about how difficult it is to distribute help to the refugees unless you are with the UN or the Red Cross. We did not know what to expect, but we had prayed for a long time about this, so we thought that it was time and this was the right place to try something. As we pulled into the truck stop, we were amazed at the very small number of police. There is a very large area for trucks to park, and hundreds of people were milling around, some lying on the grass soaking in sunshine. We asked around and didn't get any negative answers so we set up our New Testaments and tracts on the hood of my car and pulled out a few of the clothes and presto, we had a crowd.



Grateful, desperate people

The people's desperation is evident by how fast they congregate when they see or hear about clothing. As I began to try to hand things out, the crowd began to push me into my car. I soon realized that handing out items was futile, so I got

out of the way and let them have at it. It didn't take long for it all to disappear. Actually, all the people were quite polite considering the need they were in. A few weeks before, when I had been at the open-air market looking for winter clothes, I had seen a girl's nice pink jacket and bought it for a mere 2 or 3 dollars. I hoped that I would see a little girl to give it to. Right before the crowd got so big that I was pressed out of the way, a father came up with his girl about nine years old and asked "jacket" and pointed at her. I said, "I have just the one for you!" She tried it on and it fit absolutely perfectly. They were very thankful.

Unfortunately, our stuff seemed like a drop in the bucket. I had to hold up my hands saying "sorry" to many. All the clothes were gone in about 10 minutes, but most of the people who took some got literature as well. We stayed for more than an hour and tried to talk to the people who approached us to look at or ask about the books. Many came. Of course the language barrier proved to be frustrating as the few who knew some English knew very little. We met people who speak Farsi, Arabic, Kurdish, Urdu, Turkish, Russian and a language from Eritrea. So many neat things happened and through it all God's peace reigned, and He showed that He had placed us there at that moment and that place for a reason. One man, in a few English words, tried to express his thanks for the New Testament he received. He pointed at his heart and said "Jesus." I asked where he was from, and he said Iran. He pointed at the New Testament and tract and said, "This very good!" I think he is an Iranian Christian. We hear a lot about our brothers and sisters in Iran who are suffering for their faith and how



the Church is growing rapidly there amidst persecution. Praise God, I think I met one of our brothers from there. Another man took the New Testament and kissed it and said, "Thank you very, very much." Yet another held the New Testament to his heart and smiled and indicated his thanks in the best way he could.



No women approached our car other than one who sat nearby with two friends. She came up and offered us a candy that she had just bought at the gas station. I politely refused a couple times but then took one and gave her a New Testament. She was very

surprised, hesitated to take it, but I insisted since I had taken her candy, so she accepted. May God bless His Word to her heart.

Lastly, there was a young man who stood near the car watching us. I had given him a tract in Arabic, but he looked at it a bit and then just continued to watch. I asked where he was from and how he got here. He spoke very little English, but we managed some communication. He is Yazidi from Sinjar in northern Iraq. He fled from the war into Turkey. I gather that he traveled across Turkey, made the dangerous sea-crossing to the Greek islands and is working his way through the Balkans to northern Europe. He was very hesitant and shy. I gave him a New Testament. He opened the tract, pointed to a picture of the cross and said, "Jesus, Messiah."

"Oh, yes, He is," I agreed. I told him the Gospel in as simple terms as I could. Pray for him as he travels. I definitely feel that God brought us together and that God is at work in his life. He has much literature in Arabic, which he understands. If you are not familiar with the Yazidis and the situation that they have been in during the last couple years, it is worth reading about.¹

Plans for the future

God definitely opened the door for us. We plan to buy more clothing and go again, maybe once a week for the near future. Please keep praying. There are disturbing reports of the doors to this being closed, but we know that when God opens a door, no man can close it.



What I learned

The news we watch fills us with fear of “Islamic radicals” invading Europe and wanting to take over the West, etc. While there are true Islamic radicals, and many want to do us harm, we saw more than a thousand people from the Middle East milling around waiting for their next transport causing no problems—people created in God’s image, with hopes, fears, and longing just like all of us. Many children kept coming up and getting more tracts, something interesting for them to look at. Others used cardboard boxes that they found to make a pretend train. They also pulled up grass and piled it in windrows, acting just like we did as kids. We need to keep our eyes focused on God’s truth; these are people, just like us, with the same needs and weaknesses as we have.

We must love them and see them as the people that Jesus died for. Fathers, who seek safety and happiness for their family, struggling with the realities of a very difficult trip, look at you with pleading eyes asking for socks, coats, hats, and gloves. We must very carefully consider the great events of our

age and ask ourselves: do we understand the times and react as Jesus wants us to.

Thanks for praying. Keep it up. ■



Steve and Jenny Luibrand were commended in 2004 by Stevensville Bible Chapel, Stevensville, Montana.

Postscript:

The last time we handed out supplies and New Testaments we were stopped by a government official. It is unclear whether or not we will be able to continue. We are looking into our options such as getting official papers permitting us to do this work or piggybacking with another organization that already has permission to distribute materials. This is a matter for prayer.

1 Mattix, Sarah. “Hope for Yezidi Refugee Women.” *Missions*, August 2015.

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26 Below

Not a Fan but a Follower

BY TOM TURNER

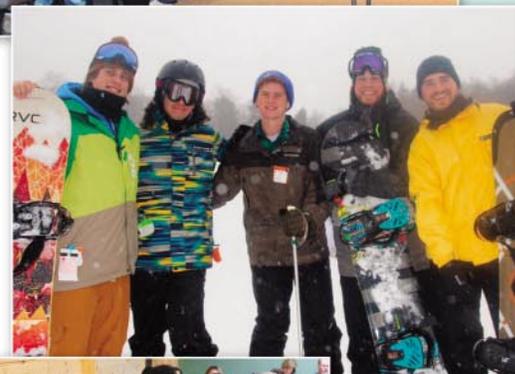
"Listen, Consider and Decide" from Luke 14:25–35 was Christian Ramirez's (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 24) challenge to the 128 young people at this year's Northeast 26 Below conference. The theme, "Not a Fan but a Follower," helped the audience understand where they are in their walks with the Lord and where they want to be. Christian asked, "Are you satisfied with your life right now? God wants to use you, specifically! A useful tool in the hands of the Master can accomplish wonderful things for the glory of God."

Each session started with great singing, honoring to the Lord. Then, as the Word of God was presented, many could be seen taking notes as they were asked to listen and consider what the Scriptures were saying to them. At the last session the Gospel was clearly presented, with an opportunity given to trust Christ. Christian challenged the believers to "consider the cost of absolute surrender to God and become 'not a fan but a follower' of Christ. To be a 'follower' you have to be impacted by what happened at the cross." At the conclusion, a photo of the five missionaries who were martyred 60 years ago in Ecuador was displayed as Christian quoted from Jim Elliot, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

As we gathered around the Lord's Table Sunday morning, there was not a lull as the young men thanked and praised the Lord for what He did on the cross at Calvary. That time would encourage the heart of any elder to not give up working with the young people in his care. The final song put a lump in my throat as the young people sang, "When He comes our glorious King, All His ransomed home to bring, Then anew this song we'll sing: Hallelujah! What a Savior!"¹ ■

Tom Turner, CMML Vice President, Publishing

¹ Bliss, Philip P. "Hallelujah! What a Savior!" 1875.



Picture it! Photos of 26 Below can be seen at [Facebook.com/cmmlus](https://www.facebook.com/cmmlus) and a recap video can be viewed at [YouTube.com/cmmlus](https://www.youtube.com/cmmlus).



CMML Launches Security Initiative

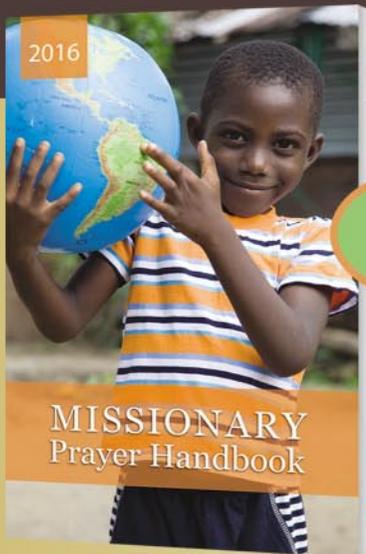
"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16)

We are pleased to announce that Brian Moore will assist CMML to develop a new security program that will raise awareness and understanding of security issues and help inform and support those serving overseas. We gratefully acknowledge that our security rests in the Almighty who guards and guides. However, we recognize our responsibility to be vigilant and to live wisely in this increasingly insecure world.

Brian will develop security policies and procedures for CMML. As requested, he will visit overseas workers to provide security suggestions. If a crisis occurs and a response from CMML is appropriate, Brian will assist with these efforts.

This much-needed new initiative will allow CMML to stay abreast of the events unfolding around the world and have plans in place to continue serving those who serve. We covet your prayers on our behalf as we develop this program and for those serving the Lord in many dangerous areas around the world.

The Directors of CMML



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