

Missions

Global Travel
Insights from a Couple's
30-Year Ministry

Colombia
Sharing Christ with
Venezuelan Refugees

France
Reaching Nantes
through a Bookshop

Cambodia
Interview with a
New Missionary





THINKING IT THROUGH

BY THOMAS J. SCHELICH

A Tree Planted

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is in the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7–8)

Jeremiah is the longest book in the Bible. Jeremiah's ministry spans from his days as a youth to his old age (Jeremiah 1:6–7). He prophesied and lived through what is, from the measure of human tragedy, some of the worst events in the Bible.

He was a man with the courage to not look away from difficult times or from the hard things of life. He dealt with sorrow, injustice, and crisis without avoiding them or excusing them or retreating into unrealistic supposition. He faced life with the strength of unflinching honesty. The Lord said that He made Jeremiah as strong as a fortified city (Jeremiah 1:18).

At the core of Jeremiah's strength is the word that describes his message better than any other: *hope*. The idea expressed in the biblical concept of hope is mostly lost today. In Scripture, it is listed alongside faith and love as the greatest Christian virtues (1 Corinthians 13:13). But the English language is vibrant—each year, about 100 words are added to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, and words' meanings change.

The biblical sense of *hope* has essentially disappeared. Around 1900, the *OED* declared the biblical meaning "obsolete and archaic." Biblical hope is like faith but, in a way, is more challenging. Both faith and hope look to things that we cannot see. Faith looks to things that we cannot see because they happened long ago. By faith, I believe that God made the worlds; by faith, I believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again (Hebrews 11:3; Romans 10:9). Hope looks to things that we cannot see because they have not yet happened (Romans 8:24–25; Colossians 1:5). I hope in the Lord's return and in all things being made right, both on earth and in heaven.

Faith and hope stand strong in the Lord: one looks with assurance to what God has done, and the other looks with assurance to what God will do. But, for faith and hope to have any

value, each requires an object that is true. To hope is noble if it is tethered to something real. Otherwise, it is just a panacea offered to make people feel better.

Jeremiah's hope was not wishful thinking but, rather, an understanding that God has a purpose in all things. His hope was in the Lord. Jeremiah looked at life with clear eyes because he knew that the Lord has something greater beyond. In Jeremiah 17, he describes those who have this hope, this attitude toward life. He compares them to a tree, planted by water, that does not fear heat or drought. Jeremiah knew people who became anxious in times of drought and who lived life in the fear of uncertainty. But the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord, never stops bearing fruit.

Here, the word to note is *planted*. The tree is in this spot on purpose. Its location is not fortunate nor privileged; it is not there by a happenstance of nature. Similarly, God purposely placed your life close to the spiritual resources of His Word, of His Spirit, and of others who trust in Him. That is no accident.

In your days, the "weather" changes. A lot of climate change may be waiting ahead, and I am not referring to global warming. There are days of heat; there are times of drought. When that happens, the tree by the river does not retract or go into a defensive posture. Rather, the tree's roots stretch and spread toward the river, toward God's Word, toward His faithfulness, toward the Holy Spirit's comfort. Although everything else may dry up, the tree will continue to yield fruit. This story will be yours if you trust and hope in the Lord. ■

Thomas Schetelich is a CMML director and an attorney at Ferguson, Schetelich, & Ballew, P.A.

Vol. 49, No. 3. 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 & BACK COVER PHOTOS: ©Lightstock.com



VISITING MISSIONARIES

Lessons Learned over Three Decades of Travel



BY PEGGY & DAN COVERT

And we'd like to make a stop in Cochabamba . . ." I told the travel agent.

"Cocha-what? How do you spell that?" she asked.

In 1987, to visit a missionary in a foreign country, you had to find a travel agent who could figure out how to get there. Now, it is much easier—just go on the internet, select a travel website, and type in your destination. Soon you will have dozens of options to choose from.

HAVE A PLAN

Although the "how" of traveling is easier now, you must think about other things before purchasing that good fare. Who will you visit and why? When is a good time to visit? How can your visit encourage the missionary most? What does it take to be a welcome guest? Hosts at a missionary guesthouse once commented, "All of our guests are a blessing—some when they come and some when they leave."

As to "why," we first began considering a trip overseas after hearing missionaries say that a visitor can learn more about the missionary's life and work than someone listening to the missionary's half-hour ministry presentation. Because our missionary friends followed this statement with an open invitation to visit, we decided to accept the offer to spend time with them and experience their daily life firsthand.

Since the two missionaries who suggested a visit happened to be our old friends, we felt comfortable writing to them to ask when we should come. After some back and forth communication via airmail—we didn't have email in those days, and phone calls were difficult—we learned that our friends would be glad for a visit at Christmas.

GO TO ENCOURAGE

As we prepared, a question that came to mind was, "How can we be a blessing and encouragement to our missionary friends?" Some people who visit missionaries have skills to contribute, like speaking or repairing equipment. We didn't have any such skills, but we could do one thing: transport freight. Back in the travel-agent era, each passenger could check two bags that weighed up to 70 pounds each! Over the years, we have carried some interesting things, including toilet paper, a baby stroller, and frozen turkey breasts. Some things were hard to pack; take, for example, the fishing pole that I carried through Miami International Airport while trying to look nonchalant.

PREPARE TO LEARN

Since that first trip to Ecuador and Bolivia in 1987, we have had opportunities to return to South America, visit European countries, and make short trips to India, the Philippines, Japan,



Familiar with traveling across a variety of terrains, the Coverts access a Bible school and farm via a suspension bridge near Camiri, Bolivia.

Thailand, China, Korea, and Central Asia. Vast differences exist among these places, but we found a number of constants: First, everyday life is complicated in third-world locations. Equipment breaks down, utilities are unreliable, and travel is often challenging. Second, missionaries are amazingly hospitable. This truth has challenged us and encouraged us to open our home to visiting missionaries, even if someone has to sleep on the floor. And, third, goodbyes are hard.



We got a taste of that difficulty on our first trip as we transferred from Ecuador to Bolivia. Our family enjoyed two weeks with Lloyd and Linda Rogers (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 22) in Ecuador. When Dan and I

said goodbye to them, we also said goodbye to our two sons, who were returning to the US while we traveled to Bolivia. Our ultimate destination was Camiri, where we would spend two weeks with Mark and Carol Mattix (MPH Day 19), but getting there was complicated. First, we flew to La Paz, and a missionary couple, whom we had not met before, met us at the airport and hosted us. The next morning, another missionary took us to the airport, and we boarded the plane for Cochabamba, where we had a short layover. Again, someone we had not met came to the airport and gave us a quick tour and a meal before our next flight took us to Sucre. By the time we got on the last plane, the gracious hospitality and repeated goodbyes caused us to choke up.

BE FLEXIBLE

On the way to Camiri, we got a taste of travel challenges. Flying into Sucre was an experience—the plane scudded along, barely above the mountaintops, and then dropped over the last hill and barreled down the runway, stopping at the end of the pavement. That was enough flying for a while, so I was happy to learn that we would travel from Sucre to Camiri with Gene and Loraine Train (veteran missionaries who are now home with the Lord) in their Jeep. The trip took about 24 hours and featured episodes of digging the vehicle out of mud holes. While fording a stream, the Jeep's engine died, and Gene climbed onto the fender to dry the distributor, while Loraine prayed fervently that a flash flood would not come downstream and carry us away. After midnight, we limped into Camiri; the front wheel's tie rod had broken just after we descended a steep mountain switchback road.

Sometimes, flying to our destination has been difficult. Shortly after the Iron Curtain fell, we planned to visit friends who were working in Kazakhstan. We found only one travel agent who knew how to organize the trip, and as the agent was in Indiana and we were in Washington, it was easy for something to slip up. Until we got to Frankfurt, Germany, we didn't know that we needed a special visa for a layover in Moscow. We bought new tickets that took us to Kazakhstan, but we arrived in the wrong city on the wrong day. Amazingly, we were able to call our friend in a city 200 miles away and explain the predicament. He phoned a coworker who was near us and who quickly arrived and rescued us, fed us, and put us on a plane to our friend's town.

Years later, we had an unusual experience as, early one morning, we flew out of Seattle on our way to Ecuador. About an hour into the flight, Dan calculated that we were somewhere over southern Oregon. I looked out the window and noticed that the sun, which had been on our left at takeoff, was now shining on the plane's right side—a sure indication at 7:00 a.m. that we were going north, not south. What was happening?

Just then, the pilot made an announcement: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the State Department has ordered all planes out of the sky. We are returning to Seattle." Everyone sat in stunned silence, wondering what was going on. When we landed, the airport was almost deserted, and airport personnel rushed us through baggage claim and out to the parking garage. There, we boarded a shuttle van, and the driver told us the terrible news of that morning, September 11, 2001. We got home, put the frozen turkey breasts back in the freezer, and called Lloyd Rogers to tell him we would be delayed. More than a week later, we arrived in Ecuador and traveled in a dugout canoe with Lloyd to a remote village in the coastal jungle. The local people were amazed to see us—they had heard about a terrible tragedy in America and thought everyone there had died.



Left: While in Peru, Dan enjoys a motorcycle ride with Jesse Mattix. **Right:** In 2006, at a commemoration conference in Ecuador, the Coverts listened to Bert Elliot speak on the Curaray River bank, where his brother Jim Elliot was martyred.



TRAVEL IN PRAYER

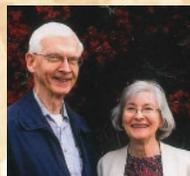
As events like these transpire, it is comforting to know that friends at home are praying for us. When we were stuck in Frankfurt, unsure if we should press on to Kazakhstan or go home, we remembered one woman, in particular, who encouraged us to make the trip and was praying for us.

Our most recent travel glitch also made us aware of those praying for us at home. In October 2019, we traveled to Peru with a friend, Rocky Osborne; the three of us had signed up to do a children's program at the annual conference for CMML missionaries. We arrived a few days early and spent a long weekend with Jesse and Janel Mattix (MPH Day 24) and their family in Tarapoto. On Tuesday morning, we all flew to Lima, where we had a layover. In the early afternoon, we headed to the airport food court and ate lunch at McDonald's. After pushing tables together and arranging our carry-ons in a pile, the seven of us tackled our burgers and fries. A few minutes later, Dan remembered his backpack and walked around the tables to make sure it was there. It wasn't. Sadly, the backpack contained our computer and copies of our plans for the children's classes.

Jesse notified security, and two agents arrived to get a description of the backpack. Later, they told us that, while reviewing security camera footage, they saw someone pick up the backpack and leave the airport. The backpack was gone. As we digested that news, Rocky looked at his watch and commented, "The women's Bible study at the chapel is just finishing—they've been praying for us." It was a comfort to us as we considered how to proceed without the computer. In the end, it worked out well: Dan had most of the material backed up on a thumb drive, and Rocky had a copy of our lesson plans. When we got to the conference, the hotel office was able to print copies from the thumb drive and Pablo Cenepo-Torres (MPH Day 23) loaned us a computer. Plan A was lost, but the Lord provided Plan B.

WILL YOU GO?

When done in the Lord's will and with care, visiting missionaries on the field is a blessing and encouragement to all involved. To sum up our experiences in visiting missionaries, we say: go to encourage, go to learn, be flexible, expect the unexpected, and go with prayer. ■



Peggy and Dan Covert attend North Lynwood Bible Chapel in Lynnwood, Washington, where Dan is an elder. The Coverts minister to missionaries around the world through visits and encouragement.

Left: Traditional vehicles park in front of an assembly meeting place, which the Coverts visited in Tarapoto, Peru. **Right (from top):** In 2019, Dan, Peggy, and Rocky taught Ezekiel to their group of 13 kids at the Peruvian Workers' Conference; At the European Christian Workers' Conference in 2013, the Coverts helped their group of kids paint toy sailboats; In Yurimaguas, Peru, Dan and Peggy tour a boat, while a few young passengers settle in for a three-day trip downriver.



The Church Amid Crisis

SHARING CHRIST'S LOVE WITH VENEZUELAN REFUGEES

BY SAM KILLINS



Top (L-R): Today, South America faces its largest migration crisis in history; Sam shares Christ's love with two men at the Colombia-Venezuela border; Each weekend, a family crosses the border into Colombia to help the new church. **Middle (L-R):** Sam and his friend Harry started a tuk-tuk transport service to witness to passengers, although it is on hold presently; Sam seeks to point refugees and immigrants in Colombia to Christ; At the Bible study in Cúcuta, attendees learn from God's Word. **Bottom (L-R):** Sam and a friend travel to Puerto Carreño to share the Gospel with workers at a cashew plant; In Puerto Carreño, the cashew plant owners allow Sam and his friend to preach to the workers; Students from a Christian high school help Sam minister to Venezuelans.

As the world watches South America's biggest migration crisis in history unravel, who will do something about sharing Christ's love with the five million displaced Venezuelans who so desperately need it?

"I will," I told God a couple years ago.

I offered myself not because I have all the answers or because I'm a great person but because I've tasted God's goodness and I want to share it with others. I know that Christ offers hope that does not disappoint, and even though my own efforts to tackle such an enormous calamity will always fall short, I know that Christ is the Solid Rock. If I can point others to Him, then maybe they will trust Him and find in Him the ultimate refuge and peace they need.

This sounds nice, but what does it look like?

Serving the community

I think the answer is a church. I don't mean a building or an entertaining service—I mean a vibrant community of Christ followers who love others as much as themselves and who share the Gospel in both word and deed. I mean a group of brave women and men who know God and are willing to share their lives and their possessions while proclaiming Christ crucified.

In no way do I claim that the church I'm a part of has attained this, but we're trying. Every Tuesday, in the center of Bogotá, five Bible studies meet in five run-down hotels that are packed with Venezuelans, and on Saturday evenings, a group of Venezuelan believers gather to break bread and pray, as well as learn from Scripture and fellowship with one another. Throughout the week, classes for immigrant children who are unable to enroll in school and occasional distributions of food and clothing take place at a community center.

Reaching farther

In Cúcuta, Colombia's main border city with Venezuela, a new church meets regularly. Since our immigrant friends are so transient, it is tricky to have solid, long-term discipleship with them, but finally, we gained some traction with a few families and individuals who bring much-needed stability to our congregation. One such family crosses the border into Colombia every weekend and stays in my apartment until Sunday morning, when they help with the worship service and Sunday school teaching. In the afternoon, they return to Venezuela, taking food and supplies with them to make it through the week.

Every Saturday, I meet with a dozen immigrant street vendors and musicians to eat lunch and study the Bible. It's nice for them to get out of the sun and into an air-conditioned room where they can receive a meal, support, and camaraderie. I pray that God will guide and open doors.

Recently, in a smaller border town called Puerto Carreño, which is located about 500 miles from Cúcuta, a friend and I

started sharing the Gospel at a cashew plant that employs indigenous locals and Venezuelan immigrants. It's an awesome setup because we don't have to pay rent or set a meeting time. Instead, the business owners permit us to show up whenever we want and freely share from Scripture as the workers plug away at their jobs.

Helping one another

We're not the only ones trying to make a difference in this region of the world. Many of my Colombian friends from the church in Bogotá are carrying on the ministry in the capital, but they also like to visit and help me in Cúcuta and Puerto Carreño whenever they can. A couple of teams from a Christian high school have served along with us, and a church group from the US came once and led a Christ-centered counseling seminar for those trying to process the crisis of adapting to a new country.

Groups like the Mennonites, the Red Cross, and Samaritan's Purse also make efforts to provide relief for Venezuelans, and their work is far more widespread than anything I'm doing. Still, the need is overwhelming.

Praying earnestly

Sometimes, I feel like everything I'm doing is just a drop in the bucket or like I'm barely giving out crumbs, so to speak, when people really need a whole loaf of bread. One friend described my discipleship process as if a huge stream of water were gushing in from Venezuela and I were trying to hold it in my hands. It is far better to entrust my friends into Jesus's hands because He will never let them down.

I identify with what Jesus felt as He drew near to Jerusalem and wept over it, or when He looked upon the crowds and described them as being harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Luke 19:41; Matthew 9:35–36). He then encouraged the disciples to pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest, asking Him to send more laborers into the harvest (Matthew 9:37–38).

Even as Venezuela's economy and society have shattered into pieces and, currently, no leader appears qualified for the task of rebuilding Venezuela, Jesus is the Good Shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep and can rebuild each person's life. The scattered immigrants, the majority of whom are living in Colombia, need to be brought into His fold through much love and care. Would you pray that the Lord of the harvest would enable me to do this? ■



Sam Killins is commended from Lone Star Bible Church in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

Interview with Abigail Brown



A New Missionary Shares about Daily Life

Commended from Westside Bible Chapel in Wichita, Kansas, Abigail Brown (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 6) moved to Cambodia in 2019 to serve at Sangkim Canaan School. Abigail teaches English to 10th-grade students and disciples the youth at Bethany House, a part of the school. Beyond teaching, Abigail enjoys building relationships with the students and teachers, exploring her new home, participating in the local church, and helping with Bible studies. Please pray for Abigail as she adjusts to her new life while seeking to reach those around her for Christ.

What foods do you eat?

Here in Cambodia, rice is served at nearly every meal. We also eat noodles, chicken, fish, soup, fruit, and veggies. While buying fish in the market, I have learned that it's best to go for a fish that is still wiggling. This ensures it is fresh.

How do you get around?

If I am running errands on my own, I take a moped. It's quite enjoyable! If a few of us are going out, we take our tuk-tuk, which is a cross between a motorbike and a golf cart, or the truck the Lord provided for us earlier this year. The moped has quit on me a few times, and once, one of my 10th-graders arrived at my location right at my time of need and was able to kick-start the bike.

What's the weather like?

The weather in Cambodia is usually very hot and humid. During rainy season, we may get a storm in the afternoon. I missed the height of rainy season last year but experienced some other grand tropical rainstorms! Currently, we are in the dry season and have enjoyed some cooler days.

What cultural tradition do you find interesting?

One tradition I appreciate in Cambodia is nap time after lunch. It is nice to get some rest before tackling afternoon classes. When I leave Cambodia for a time or miss my nap, I realize what a wonderful habit it is. Interestingly, it doesn't seem to be a practice in the other Asian countries I have visited.

Do you feel settled?

I do feel settled! I love our village. Our school is located in the country, but it is only a short drive from the market, shops, and restaurants.

What do you miss the most?

Recently, I have been missing American food and also Romanian and Mexican food. It was interesting to celebrate the holidays on this side of the globe since the special day comes to Cambodia about 13 hours before it begins back home, and then those at home celebrate it while I sleep. It is interesting to experience such things from a new perspective.

What is a typical day for you?

For me, a typical school day involves lesson planning, which I usually do in the morning. Grading homework and tests, recording scores, and planning ahead are all a part of this. Most of my classes are in the afternoon. After teaching the 10th-grade English class, I have some time to relax and get more work done before one shorter class later in the afternoon. After dinner, I usually end the day by working on school tasks or personal responsibilities.

On Saturday mornings, we stay busy with teaching English and Khmer Bible studies, a discipleship Bible class, English class, and guitar. We follow this with a youth meeting and cleaning the chapel, getting it ready for Sunday meetings. Generally, we have some free time Saturday afternoon, and I try to meet with my Khmer tutor then. Sunday afternoons are often free, unless someone is up for an adventure.

How do you relax?

I love to walk in the evenings and listen to Christian audiobooks. Usually, there is a beautiful sunset over the mountains to admire too. It's a pleasant way to end the workday.

How do you get to know people?

I enjoy meeting the English-speaking kids in the school and talking with them. I have gotten to know some of the teachers by teaching an English class and others by going on adventures around town with them. However, with the current language barrier, it is difficult to connect with everyone.

Various mission teams come throughout the year. This is my first time being the missionary who stays behind, watching short-term mission teams leave, and at first, it was an odd feeling to realize I was not on a short-term trip. Needless to say, it is a blessing to meet the individuals who visit our school.

What is challenging?

It has been challenging to jump into a new school, a month after the school year started, without orientation. Since I don't know how things are done here, I have made some mistakes and have asked a lot of questions. However, I am enjoying the challenge of thinking through the various issues that arise, and I'm so grateful for the supportive school staff. God is gracious to give me this task and guide me along the way.

What is exciting?

It is quite exciting to see how people in the school are responding to the Gospel. The church has grown even since I started coming. A number of the regular attendees are kids, and it is exciting to think about how many people this group of young believers could affect. I am also excited whenever I take a step forward in learning the language.

How can we pray for you?

Please pray that I would be effective and obedient in what the Lord has for me to do in Cambodia. Please pray for my language learning too. I know what I learn will help my class and my outreach abilities. Thank you for praying! ■

From top: Abigail shops for food, including wriggling fish, at the local market; Mopeds and tuk-tuks are common modes of transportation in Cambodia; On Saturday mornings, a few students gather to study the Bible; The church has grown, and now, more people attend the Sunday morning meeting.

