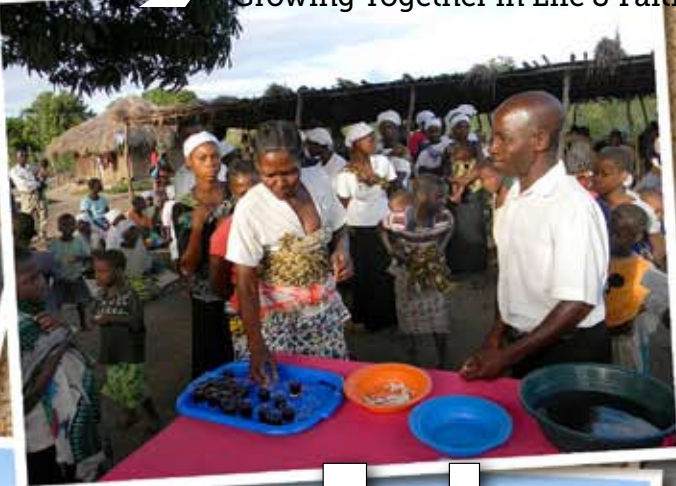


CHRISTIAN Odyssey

August-September 2011

Growing Together in Life & Faith



Mozambique ADVENTURE

Page 3



Groanings That Need to be Edited

As an editor, I am often approached by people who have a story or an idea. “Do you think that would make a good article?” they ask hopefully.

“It could,” I tell them, because we always need articles. “No promises, but if you write it up and send it to me, I’ll take a look at it.”

Later—usually much later—I will get an email with a document attached. “It’s a bit longer than you asked for,” they say. “Well, quite a bit longer, actually. And I am not sure I have actually said what I wanted to. Anyway, here it is. Do what has to be done to it.” The aspiring writer has learned that it is much harder to put an idea on paper than it is to tell the story in person.

So I put on my editor’s hat and prepare to sort things out. Provided the writer has a sound idea, an editor can usually get even the roughest prose ready for publication. The material usually just needs some reorganizing, some grammar corrected and verb tenses straightened out. I try not to lose the personality of the author. I ask myself, “What is it he or she is struggling to say?” Then I reshape the material so that they can say it—clearly and unambiguously. I know I have done my job when I send the writer an edited draft for approval and get a message back saying, “Yes—that is what I was trying to say.”

The experience of sorting out what others are wanting to communicate has helped me understand something Paul wrote about prayer. In his epistle to the Romans, he says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know

what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26, NKJV).

At first reading, you can get the idea that there is a kind of incoherent moaning going on as background noise while you pray. But that isn’t the case at all. The “groanings that cannot be uttered” are ours. We want to communicate with God clearly and effectively. We want to understand his will in our lives and the lives of others and ask him to make evident his grace and mercy. But often our efforts fall far short, sometimes degenerating into a confused and frustrating web of muddled clichés. But God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, has invited us to participate in their free and loving communion, and prayer is one way we can do that.

So, Paul explains, the Holy Spirit enters into our inadequate prayers and redeems them. In this way we can have absolute confidence that we are heard, and although the answer to our prayers is seldom an unqualified “yes,” we can be certain, as the Spirit gives us assurance, that our lives and the lives of our loved ones are secure in the unquenchable love the Father has for the Son. God promises that his ears are always open to the groanings of his children (1 Peter 3:12). In fact, Paul is telling us, he is personally present in our groaning from start to finish.

Later I often find my prayer has been answered. Not often exactly as I had asked, but I learn that a person has been helped or a problem solved. And in retrospect I can say, “Yes, that is what I was trying to say.” **co**

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Mozambique Adventure

By Tim Maguire

I expected our trip to Mozambique to be challenging. What I didn't expect was that my assistant would be arrested before we had hardly started!

I had asked a friend, pastor Daniel Fernandes from Lisbon, Portugal, to accompany me as translator in Portuguese-speaking Mozambique. Daniel had arrived in Johannesburg that morning, and we left immediately, full of excitement, expectation and hope. But the moment we crossed from South Africa into Zimbabwe on our way to Mozambique, the Zimbabwean border police arrested him. It was not a promising start.

But I am getting ahead of my story. Why were we going to Mozambique?

Domingos Rede

Mozambique is a former Portuguese colony, situated on the eastern coast of southern Africa. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. About 10 years ago, Domingos Rede, a teacher in Mozambique, felt God calling him to preach to the people of Mozambique. He left his profession and enrolled in a theological college. He built a small church out of mud bricks and grass in his home town and started evangelizing even before finishing his formal studies. He called his fellowship "Maranatha Action Church" (M.A.C.)

Domingos was an evangelist in the truest sense. He and his family would move into a village where he hoped to plant a church. They would build themselves a small hut from branches, mud and thatch, and live and work among the villagers, telling them through action and word of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Three or four months later, he would move on, leaving behind a small church, cared for by an appointed deacon and

served by one of his regional pastors. He had no means of income, but God always provided, even though they did at times go to bed hungry. Wherever he went, many responded to his message. After seven years M.A.C. had 54 congregations in the central and northern Mozambique provinces of Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambesia.

In 2007, Domingos attended a non-denominational conference in South Africa where he met one of our GCI pastors, Caleb Makhela. They exchanged telephone numbers but did not keep in touch. About two years later in October 2009, Domingos felt moved to travel to Cape Town, South Africa, and preach there. He could give no logical explanation as to why, and he had no money to make the nearly 3000-kilometer journey. He sold his mobile phone for bus fare and set out. After traveling through Zimbabwe and into South Africa, he arrived in a little town called Louis Trichardt. He remembered

Sometimes God shows his divine nature, with great eloquence, through the small things in his creation.

that Caleb lived close to Louis Trichardt, and he still had his phone number. So he gave him a call, asking if Caleb could put him up for the night.

As pastors do, Caleb and Domingos started chatting theology. Caleb gave Domingos our booklets titled *Statement of Beliefs*, *Transformed by Truth*, and *An Introduction to Trinitarian Theology*. Domingos stayed up all night reading. The following day he explained to Caleb that he and his church board had



Water was collected from a river several kilometers away. Providing enough was a continual challenge, as was feeding the group.



Training delegates and their families

A Bible is a precious gift

gather during Easter 2011.

been praying that God lead them to a fellowship with a sound theology that would be willing to affiliate with them and provide them guidance, structure, governance and accountability. Until he read GCI's literature, he had not found a fellowship whose theology he fully agreed with. He told Caleb that he wanted to meet with the GCI leadership in South Africa. and discuss the possibility of affiliating with us.

Looking for a spiritual home

When I met with Domingos, I was at first skeptical. So often in Africa, churches want to affiliate with larger organizations for financial gain. I told Domingos that if he was looking for money, he had come knocking on the wrong door. In fact, if he affiliated with us, he would fall under our financial model and would probably have to pay a portion of Mozambique's income to our National Office. (At that stage I had not fully realized just how poor Mozambique really was). He never blinked, just insisting that all he was looking for was training, governance and accountability. He didn't want his church to go the way of so many others in Africa, where the leader introduced his own thoughts on theology and led his flock astray, or where it became focused on the leader rather than God.

I also explained to Domingos that affiliation was not something that we rushed into. We would go through an "engagement" period to see if we were compatible and if both groups got along. I suggested that he go back and explain the situation to his board, and that I would do the same. Then I would travel to Mozambique and visit his churches personally.

In February 2010, Caleb Makhela and I went to Mozambique to meet Domingos on his home ground. We traveled the country with him, visiting and speaking in 44 churches over 10 days. The welcome we received at each congregation was truly heart-warming, and the spiritual unity was overwhelming.

It was only then that the poverty of the country really hit home to me. All the members are subsistence farmers, growing maize, which when ground and boiled makes up their staple diet. This is their breakfast and dinner, cooked without salt or any other spice or sauce. Lunch is unheard of. Their only drink

is water, drawn from a local river or one of the boreholes the government has installed in certain regions. Perhaps once a fortnight they slaughter a chicken, which provides a little protein to their diet. On one occasion we were presented with "tea," which was simply boiled water with a teaspoon of sugar added. But these people were sincere and genuine and they did want to be associated with us.

We decided that we would formalize our association in August 2010, when Domingos was to have attended a pastoral training session in South Africa. The day before I left to attend the international GCI conference, in July, in the USA, I phoned him to check that he had received the funds that I had wired to cover his travel expenses. He wished me a safe trip, and told me that he and the members in Mozambique would be praying for a successful conference.

Shocking news

When I arrived in Orlando, I was shocked and saddened to learn that Domingos had passed away, probably due to a malaria relapse. Not only had I lost a good friend, but I had lost our channel of communication with Mozambique, since the primary language there is Portuguese. Domingos was the only member in Mozambique who spoke any English.

Thanks to 21st-century technology, however, I was able to use Blackberry and Google translation programs to reply to the frantic messages from those Domingos left behind in Mozambique. I reassured them that our relationship would continue and that I would see them again as soon as it could be arranged. I was able to return to Mozambique in September 2010, when with the advice and approval of their church board, I appointed Pastor Mariano Binzi as their new leader. Even though the affiliation process had not yet been formalized, they already considered themselves fully GCI.

One thing I realized on my first visit was the importance of training the pastors in basic theology. Some of the Mozambican pastors did not even have Bibles when I first met them. Since then, we have provided them with Bibles, and with the generous help of our Canadian churches, we have been able



Transport in Mozambique is by bicycle—
Pastor Mariano Binzi is 'taxied' to church services. ▲



▲
The Late Domingos Rede with wife and youngest
child outside their home in Chimoio

to plan a pastoral training program. We have also been able to bring in a leader and translator from our small congregation in Portugal. Enter Daniel Fernandes, who is originally from Mozambique, although he left as a young child.

Arrested

I picked up Daniel from the Johannesburg airport at 6 a.m. on the Wednesday before Easter and left immediately for Louis Trichardt, where we picked up Caleb Makhela. The three of us then set out for Mutare in Zimbabwe, where we could spend the night at the home of one of our Zimbabwean pastors, Emmerston Gova.

At the Beitbridge border-post, we stood in queues for about five hours. As we were finally cleared to drive into Zimbabwe, Daniel was greeted with his first African sunset. He took out his camera and snapped two pictures of trees with the sun setting behind them.

Unfortunately, we were still in a restricted area where cameras were not allowed, and the Zimbabwe CID pounced, arresting him on the spot. They took him into a back room, confiscated his passport and camera, and told him he would have to appear before a magistrate the next day.

I realized what the border officials were really after when they started rubbing thumb and forefinger together! I told them we were pastors and were unwilling to pay any sort of bribe. I also threatened to phone the Portuguese embassy. This was more trouble than they wanted, so they made Daniel delete the pictures, and we were on our way again. We arrived at Pastor Gova's home some time after midnight, waking him by throwing stones onto his roof!

Overflow

We left Mutare early the next morning, traveling through into Mozambique and eventually arriving in Morrumbala, in northern Mozambique, just before midnight on Thursday. Most of the conference attendees had already arrived and were dancing the night away in praise and worship. After a warm and touching welcome, we crept off to our hut to sleep. The mu-

sic and dancing continued into the early hours of the morning. African Christians know a lot about the joy of salvation.

The next day we found that instead of the 54 delegates we were expecting, more than 350 had arrived! They had brought their reed mats with them and most were sleeping under the stars, without even blankets to keep them warm. What a humbling experience to see this thirst and sacrifice for understanding.

We also discovered that since my last visit in September 2010, an additional 33 churches had been planted, bringing the total to 87 congregations. Even without Domingos, the spreading of the gospel in Mozambique was continuing.

We spent the next four days in fellowship, song, praise and teaching. The Mozambican leaders hungrily drank in and accepted all we had to say. On Sunday, in a deeply moving ceremony, we formalized the affiliation and welcomed our brothers and sisters from Mozambique into the GCI fellowship. We took communion with them, which was a first-time experience for most.

Prayer

Please remember to pray for our brothers and sisters in Mozambique. The challenges they face are many. There is little or no formal transport system, making it very difficult for our leaders there to visit churches and members. Bicycles are often used to travel hundreds of kilometers over rugged terrain. Disease is rife. The average life expectancy is at least 20 years below the world average. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. We now have about 2500 members there, not one of whom are employed or have any means of income. They are all subsistence farmers and live day-to-day, hand-to-mouth, scratching a living out of the harsh African soil.

The Bibles we give them are their most valued possessions, and they are hungry for more knowledge and understanding. I continually find their joy and love a source of great inspiration, and a radiant reminder of what our faith is all about. Their hearts and prayers are with all their new brothers and sisters around the world, as I know yours are with them! ☺

Where Is Love?

By Joseph Tkach



As Pastor General of Grace Communion International, I hear about many inspiring outreach projects that our congregations are engaged in around the world. Some are simple acts of kindness and service to those in need.

Others are quite extensive, with several congregations, sometimes across two or three countries, working together in such projects as providing education for disadvantaged children, vocational training for young adults, or employment support for poor but hardworking families. This is one of the great blessings of our being a relatively small, yet very interconnected worldwide denomination.

When Christians help others, we let them know that they matter and that they are included in God's love, no matter who they are.

All of our service and outreach in Christ's name is motivated by God's love, which fills us, and which the Holy Spirit prompts us to share with others. But have you ever wondered about the many examples of genuine and generous love by people who are not Christian, some of whom might not even believe in God? Where does such love come from?

"Let us love one another, for love comes from God," 1 John 4:7 says. In the very next verse, we're told, "God is love." "Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them," verse 16 continues.

Do you see the implication? Because the Creator is love, love is "hardwired" into the creation, and into every human. That means that wherever and whenever we see love expressed in the world, regardless of the source, we are seeing God's love, because there is no other kind of love but God's love. "We love because he first loved us," verse 19 says.

So what is so special about what we call "Christian love"?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?" Parents who love their children would never do that. Human beings, in spite of our many inadequacies and imperfections, want the best for our children. Jesus continued, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:9-10).

Jesus was pointing to a love that goes deeper than just loving those who love us, those who are good to us, those we naturally care about. He was talking about a love that extends even to those whom we don't like, even to those who despise or hate us, who mistreat us, who might be our enemies. That's how God loves us—Christ died for us while

Jesus showed that our human capacity to love others needed to go beyond just those we know and like.

we were still God's enemies, Paul tells us in Romans 5:8.

During Jesus' ministry, he often upset the religious establishment of the day by extending love to people considered "unlovable." He forgave a woman caught in the act of adultery. He treated a prostitute with dignity and respect. He made friends with the much-despised tax collectors and others considered beyond the pale of polite society. He touched and healed lepers—the ultimate outcasts of the day. His closest friends were common working people.

Jesus showed that our human capacity to love others needed to go beyond just those we know and like. He told his followers to pay special attention to those whom society has rejected. In his parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46), he identified with the suffering of the sick, the loneliness of the prisoner and the plight of the poor. He told us to help them, saying in verse 40, "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

That kind of love is contagious. It often brings out the best in anyone who either receives it or witnesses it. Those who followed Jesus after his resurrection were soon called "Christians," and it was not long before their unusual way of life began to be noticed. In hard economic times, Christians were generous. When plagues struck, Christians nursed the sick. When widows and orphans were left to fend for themselves, Christians cared for them.

Even though Christians were often despised and persecuted, their lives of love also tended to prick the consciences of those who knew about them, causing many to join them in their labors of love.

When Christians help the poor and the outcasts, we let them know that they do matter and that they are included in God's love, no matter who they are or what they have done. There is no in crowd and out crowd. *Everyone* matters, and everyone has been included in God's love. There is redemption for every person; all they have to do is believe it and embrace it.

Our example of love and service in Christ is a key part of the way God leads people to do that. As we all work together, our collective work in Christ can reach even further and have an even greater impact than we have daily as individuals.

Thank you for your faithfulness! As the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58)! **co**

Is God in Control?



Many Christians like to say that God is in control, that he has a plan for your life, and that everything that happens is part of the plan. Some will tell you he arranges the events of each day for us, including the trials. When you hear such talk, do you feel relieved at the thought God has every minute planned out for you, or do you chafe at the idea, like I do?

I certainly believe everything is ultimately under God's control, but I have a problem with the notion that he micro-manages our lives. Has he given us free will or not? Are our choices real, or not?

I think the answer might be in the Trinitarian relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They do what they do together. Jesus said the Father, living in him, did his work through him (John 14:10). It's all about participation: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—together.

Jesus called us friends (John 15:15), and what do friends do? They participate in a relationship together. Friendship isn't about controlling each other or forcing each other into some prearranged plan. It's about love, freely given and freely accepted. It's about sharing experiences, being together in good times and bad, enjoying, appreciating and helping each other.

Friendship with God is even more that way. God isn't just a friend, of course, he's the sovereign Lord of the universe who loves us unconditionally, and as such, a relationship with him is even more real than the one I have with my human friends. Jesus brings us, through the Spirit, into his own relationship of love with the Father. I get to participate because God loves me and not because of anything I did to deserve it.

With that in mind, I can envision an overarching plan for my life—salvation, life in Christ, knowing God in and through the Spirit, and eventually life forever in God's eternity. But I don't discount God working in the little things in my life, either. I see his hand every day, from the way he encourages me and reminds me of his love, to the way he guides and protects me. Because he lives in me, we go through life hand in hand, so to speak, and each day my prayer is that I will listen to the Spirit and respond to him as he leads me.

Did he provide the parking place I got at the store or arrange for me to break a glass and cut my foot? I doubt it. I'm pretty sure God doesn't micromanage every detail of my life. I think he can work with whatever happens and bring it around to his good purposes for me. But this I know for sure: he leads me, guides me and is always with me and reminds me of his presence throughout each day. **co**

Sure, everything is ultimately under God's control, but does he really micro-manage our lives?

Buy One Set One Free

By Leanne Wickey



How do you get ready for the day? We all have our own routines, but I imagine that soap, deodorant, shampoo and toothpaste are part of the picture. It is hard to imagine life without them. But where I work, these common items are luxuries and special treasures.

I work for a rehabilitation facility in Cincinnati. We are a non-profit organization that specializes in the needs of those suffering the effects of domestic violence, addiction, poor mental health and prostitution. Our goal is to get them back on their feet as an active member of the community.

A small act of kindness has changed the hearts of many of the girls who have come through the doors of our facility.

The facility I work with operates in cooperation with the county jail. We offer counseling and help for men, women, teens and children. It is a lockdown facility, in a dorm setting, with Correction Officers on guard on each floor.

First contact

I am the first person new inmates come into contact with for orientation. I go over policies, procedures, and regulations and let them know what is expected of them. I help them with the mounds of paperwork to sign. As their first contact, I try to remain cheerful and positive in a rather dark and bleak situation.

I work primarily with the women. Through the years I have had the opportunity to meet with women from many different backgrounds. Some definitely belonged in jail and will probably always be a part of the system. But there are also women who are the victims of terrible circumstances. These women are not “born criminals,” and many can be reached and have been reached with great success.

You have probably heard the saying, “You don’t know a person until you walk a mile in their shoes.” Can you truly imagine what it is like to be an innocent 5-9-year-old child and your parents, the only people you know and trust for love and guidance, sell you into prostitution so they can have money for drugs? Even young babies are not safe; parents or “caretakers” allow them to be molested, raped and abused sexually for the pleasure of paying strangers. As a reward for being “good girls,” they are given drugs so that they too become dependent.

Happening now

I have heard horrific stories that have made me cry out to God to save these lost little girls. I meet girls who have been locked in cages, poked with cattle prods for fun, and brought out to entertain men and women at parties, then thrown back into cages. Yes, this happens. It *is happening*—in America! They may be grown women now, but who was there for them when they needed help the most? Many of them are so broken and shattered mentally, emotionally and spiritually that without God’s help they can never break free from this lifestyle.

But when you are going through this terrible abuse, how can you believe in a God who loves you, and wants to save you, and have you be forever a part of his family? It sounds too

Comments from girls who have been helped:

Patricia: “Life on the streets is not a very clean life, and if you get arrested, no one really seems to care that you are not clean, but here they give you a bag of hope. A bag of hygiene supplies, and just being able to feel clean just gives you a whole lot of hope. Thank you.”

Julie: “I have never been arrested before, and when you feel lost and scared, someone comes along who actually cares, it’s like getting a present of nice things, and then you see that someone is actually praying for you, it just made me cry. I will never forget that little bag. I will keep it always to remind me there was hope where I thought I would never find it.”

Sharon: When asked if I would say something about the hygiene bag, I was thrilled! When I came in, over the weekend, no one was very friendly or seemed to care—I was alone and had nothing. They wanted me to take a shower & I told them I had nothing to take a shower with, where could I get something? They left me on my own. Monday morning when they called me out for orientation, I thought, “Great, what now?” But after meeting one of the nicest ladies leading orientation, I thought there just might be a glimmer of light here. She was very pleasant, non-judging and very concerned for my well-being. Afterwards, she gave me a bag—finally, my shower supplies! There was a book and a card saying that someone was praying for me. God bless the small things!

In the bag was a book and a card that someone prayed for me. God bless the small things!

Andrea: In jail, no one cares too much about you unless they want something from you, but at orientation Leanne was so cheerful and funny, for just a moment you forgot where you actually were. When she said her church made these hygiene bags just for us, I waited until everyone left and gave her a hug. I know you’re not supposed to do that to staff, but I knew she was different and really cared about my well-being. I will always keep my booklet and my prayer card, because I am praying for my person as well. Thank you, CFC.

good to be true, many have told me. That is why I always try to be an example and a light. My work gives me an opportunity to share little doses of God’s love with people who need it so desperately. I find myself learning more about God’s love by being with them. We learn to help each other.

Practical help

The Bible shows us that love is often best expressed in practical ways. Sympathy and encouragement is fine, but maybe what someone who has nothing really needs to help them feel better is a bar of soap and a toothbrush. So I approached my church (Christ Fellowship Church, Cincinnati) with an opportunity to do an outreach for these women. Could we make up small bags of toiletries to give to each woman at orientation? Our congregation responded enthusiastically.

Next, I had to approach the sheriff’s department for their approval, because nothing comes into a jail without their approval. We were approved to make up bags containing a regular bar of soap, a toothbrush, a plain style comb (no rat tails, as they can be used as weapons) and trial sizes of shampoo, toothpaste, and deodorants, etc. I went back to church and told them what we could do. We decided to add two more items—a little book called *The Dancing God*, by C. Baxter Kruger, and a small card that the person packing the bag could sign letting the recipient know that they would be praying for them.

So now, when we do our shopping, our congregation adds a few small items to their normal purchases. Every other week we fill 60 bags for the women. Who would have thought a simple gesture like this would have such a great impact? Even the hardest of girls soften when they looked into their bags and see the free gifts. When they find the card and read that someone has prayed for them, many of them just cry. This is my favorite part of orientation. I wish everyone could be a part of witnessing what I see.

Turning point

That small act of kindness has changed the hearts of many of the girls who have come through the doors of our facility. Some have started praying for the person on their prayer card. Some have asked for permission to put Bible verses and inspirational sayings on the wall. Some even started asking, “How could God love me after everything I have done?”

What a joy it is to let them know that no matter what they’ve done or who they are, God loves them. He always has and always will. There’s nothing they have done in their lives that God cannot forgive. And sometimes all it takes is a tube of toothpaste from a stranger to help them take the first cautious steps towards true freedom.

There are facilities like the one I work in all around the country, so maybe your church could do something like this. Then, as you are shopping for hygiene products for your family, you could add a small gift for a woman in jail.

Buy one—and set one free! 

It Was Time

By Beth Jeffers

Six years ago, our congregation found a church building that had just been put up for sale. It was the right size at the right price in the right area of Lexington. It seemed that doors had miraculously opened to pave the way to ownership.

Once we had settled in, we set out to survey our new-found neighbors and neighborhood, ready to busy ourselves with whatever God had in mind with our presence in our new community. It did not take us long to realize that in the apartments directly across the street and throughout the rest of the neighborhood, there were several Hispanic families. This, we thought, should be the focus of our community outreach.

However, no one in the congregation was Hispanic or could even speak Spanish well. Undaunted, we decided that we should find a Spanish-speaking pastor willing to come to Lexington. We prayed, and exchanged phone calls and emails, but we came up empty.

It didn't go anywhere.

It just wasn't time.

Some years later, a lady and her three children from the apartments across the street came to our Sunday services. Her name was Carla Matamoros Small. She was from Trinidad and Tobago, and spoke fluent Spanish. She knew several Hispanic families throughout the neighborhood. She saw our church building across the street and had the vision of starting a Spanish-language church service. Renewed with Carla's enthusiasm, we once again prayed, held meetings and exchanged phone calls. But once again it didn't go anywhere.

It still wasn't time.

More years passed by. One day Carla attended a Hispanic event in Lexington and a talented singer performed. She was so impressed with his singing that she invited him to sing later that year at a Christmas event that she helped to organize. Carla asked about his church and learned he attended a Hispanic church in Paris, Kentucky. She also learned his pastor was a church planter. Carla asked to meet with him.

At that meeting, Pastor Emmanuel Romero explained to her that he had planted a number of churches in small towns in central Kentucky, but his vision was to plant a congregation in Lexington. So far he had come up empty. Until now.

Carla arranged a meeting between our church and Pastor Romero to see if we could work out a time for them to hold services. In exchange for use of the building, he agreed that his congregation would help with the maintenance and landscaping. Over the years our membership had decreased, and many



Pastor Emmanuel and Lourdes Romero, Beth Jeffers, Carla Matamoros Small

of those who remained were not able to help as they had in the past. What a blessing for both congregations!

It was time!

"Soldados del Reino" (Soldiers of the Kingdom) opened Sunday afternoon services in our building in March of this year. A new church was planted!

In June, we held a special service to honor our Pastor, Ron Dick, and his wife Linda, who were retiring. The Spanish church planted beautiful flowers and provided some much-needed landscaping for the special day. Pastor Romero sang special music during the service in both English and Spanish.

It has been a joy to work with Pastor Romero and Carla as their enthusiasm and love of God is evident. We have plans for our two congregations to co-sponsor community events this year. Pastor Romero has attended our services twice to thank the congregation for letting his church meet in our building. He has said both times, "God will bless you for your kindness to us!"

Pastor, he already has. We have learned that believers are believers, regardless of denomination. We are all God's children. ☺



The CB team with local ministry leader, Randy Leyendecker, distributes aid to a homeless man.



Pastor Pedro Castillo is excited to receive large boxes of shoes, bags of clothes and some children's teaching resources.



Serving a meal to, talking with and praying for non-Mexican immigrants as they are deported.



VBS crafts for children of Los Artistas colonia.

Crossing Borders *Summer 2011*

By Lee Berger

This summer, as we have done for the last six years, Crossing Borders mission camp crossed into Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, to share the love and grace of God with our Hispanic neighbors.

We normally average about 15 participants and have about a third of our group as new attendees. However, with the new passport requirements and the stressed economy, our numbers were down this time. But not our enthusiasm. We were a group of nine experienced missionary camp alumni, eager to follow wherever the Spirit led us. In some ways, we probably made a larger impact on this trip than on any previous occasion.

One of our goals is to work with and lend support to local ministries as they serve their people. Food is a critical need that the churches help provide. On the morning of day one, we gave dozens of large bags of dried beans and rice to 30-40 representatives from local churches. That evening, we spent several hours driving to parking lots, bridges, street corners and dirty niches to provide a hot meal and bags of toiletries, socks

and other necessities to homeless street people. We smiled at them, hugged them, sang for them and prayed for them.

While we were serving a meal we had prepared for non-Mexican immigrants who were being deported from Mexico to their country of origin (mostly in Central America), the Nuevo Laredo city mayor heard what we were doing and wanted to meet us. When Mayor Galdán arrived, we were able to discuss some of our ministry goals with him. He talked about his desire to help as many of his citizens as possible while faced with the challenges of coping with the drug cartels and gangs that terrorize the city and nation. He was very friendly, gave us his cell phone number and told us to call him if he could help.

Growing need

As often happens with this kind of cross-cultural mission, we might have gained more from the experience than the people we helped. We were struck by the simple but profound

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Greek, Hebrew and the Middle-Aged Man

By Mark Tracy Porter

What on earth was I thinking of? To paraphrase the comedian Steve Martin, the problem with foreign languages is that they have a different word for everything. But I wanted to understand the Bible better, so knowing that Greek and Hebrew have a different word for everything, this middle-aged man embarked on a mission to learn the biblical languages.

Learning new languages at my age can be a daunting task, so I began with an introductory class in Biblical Hebrew at a local seminary to be sure this was a path I really wanted to pursue. I discovered that I had a smidgen of aptitude for language, and I ended up with three years of Hebrew training. Then I did the same thing with Biblical Greek. I have been asked, “was it worth it?” My answer is “absolutely yes.”

As we were assigned to translate multiple biblical passages from Hebrew and/or Greek into English, I learned three important lessons: 1) Slow down; 2) There may be more than one right answer; 3) Let the passage drive your understanding. Let me show you what I mean.

Slowing down

In a microwave world, where the ability to multi-task is a prized skill, speed is king. Of course, accuracy is expected also, but the overall goal is to get more done in less time.

Translating turns this on its head. It forces you to slow down and to consider the meaning of each word or phrase, how it relates to the words around it, and how it may have been used in other places within the same document. Consistent with recent studies showing that cursive writing improves comprehension, I found it helpful to write out the translation by hand. Maybe that is why newly crowned kings in ancient Israel were to write a copy with their own hand of what we call the book of Deuteronomy. This would force them to slow down and to consider each word (see Deuteronomy 17:18-19).

Writing out a passage in longhand is a good Bible study tool. You might have read a passage many times over the years, but the act of writing it down might allow you to see things you have never noticed before.

More than one correct answer

In the discipline of mathematics, we are trained to find the one correct answer to a problem. Mathematics can be attractive to people who don't like ambiguity. But language often presents us with more than one answer, any of which may be correct. For example, most students of the Scriptures know the 23rd Psalm, perhaps even by memory. But have we missed something in the English translations?

Here is a verse from the familiar King James Version:

Psalm 23:6: “Surely goodness and mercy shall *follow* me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

That sounds right, doesn't it? But how about this, from the New English Translation:

Psalm 23:6: “Surely your goodness and faithfulness will *pursue* me all my days, and I will live in the LORD's house for the rest of my life.

Notice in the King James version, “...goodness and mercy shall follow me...”, compared to the NET version, “...goodness and faithfulness will pursue me...” Is one more right than the other? The word “follow” gives a more passive tone, while “pursue” is more active. The Hebrew word conveys this more active sense of pursuit with intent and purpose. So although “follow” is not wrong, understanding the original word gave me a deeper understanding.

Stopping with just the first right answer can lead to incomplete understanding. Exploring the full range of a semantic meaning may reveal more fully what the text telling us.

Let the passage drive our understanding

Each of us brings our own life experience to any text that we read. A word or a phrase might spark a memory of an experience which can then shade our understanding of what the text says. What about facing storms in life? Let's look at an example in Mark 4:35-41.

This is the story of Jesus and the disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee and encountering a storm. Often sermons based on this passage take it simply as an encouraging message that Jesus is with us in the midst of the storms of life and that he will calm the winds and the seas. Well, that's true, of course, but it isn't exactly the primary point of this


particular passage. This passage is about the identity of Jesus.

We see that as a human he became tired and went to sleep. Upon being wakened, without any appeal to the Father, he commanded the wind and the seas to be calm, and they obeyed him. Then comes the disciples' question, "Who is this?" This passage is about the person Jesus, fully man and fully God, displaying the two natures in one person.

While we certainly take hope in the fact that he can calm the winds and the seas, we also know that he doesn't always calm them in every situation in our lives. Sometimes we have

to ride out the storm.

No regrets

While it is true that foreign languages, especially biblical ones, have a different word for everything, by slowing down and letting the text speak, we can come closer to understanding the text as originally intended. While learning Greek and Hebrew was not easy, it has helped me to be a more skillful and clearer teacher. I have no regrets, except perhaps that I wish I had started a bit earlier in life. 

Crossing Borders

From page 11

faith of our Mexican brothers and sisters who are desperately reaching out to God in the midst of serious trials, putting their trust in a God they may not yet know much about.

These people live in tiny shanties made of wooden pallets and tin, they have no running water, no electricity, and no sewer service. They often don't know from where the food will come to feed their children the next meal. As we prayed for these dear people—God's beloved children—my eyes filled with tears, and I saw others of our mission team crying also. It seems the fewer material goods and less physical security these people have, the more strongly they tend to rely on the loving hand of God in their lives.

In the past couple of years, most of the mission groups from the U.S. to Mexico have quit going. From the base camp where we stay each night, there used to be several dozen short-term mission groups crossing the border each summer. This summer there were only four or five mission teams coming to the border facility, and all those groups were confining their mission work to the U.S. side of the border. Our group was the only one scheduled to cross into Mexico. It is sad that at a time when our Mexican pastors and ministry partners are under the greatest stress and in most need of more encouragement, they are being abandoned.

Why not join us?

Crossing Borders camps provide a good way to help people experience short-term mission. Our next trip to Mexico will be to deliver hundreds of shoebox gifts on the weekend of December 9-11. Perhaps your church could help provide shoebox gifts. Then in June 2012, we plan to spend a week in Mexico as we did this year.

Would you like to join us? Crossing Borders is not just a youth camp. We welcome people of all ages from 15 to 99. If you are looking for new challenges to stimulate growth in your Christian walk, if you are ready to reach outside yourself and invest in the lives of others, if you can accept the challenge of operating in a foreign culture, and if you want to share your


Is it safe?

There is ongoing violence in some areas along the Mexican border, and many people are affected. The bulk of the violence is between rival factions of gangs, crime syndicates, drug cartel members and the police and armed forces. This is a deep-rooted problem that will not go away quickly or easily. However, with the kind of work we do and in the locations to which we go, we are essentially a "non-target" for the cartels and other criminals.

Nevertheless, we use wisdom and caution in our work in Mexico. We maintain year-round contact with our Mexican ministry partners, who are aware of the local situation and advise us how and where to work. We always travel and work in groups—never as individuals. We stay away from any known areas of violence, and we spend each night on the U.S. side of the border at our base camp.

Info:

For more info about Crossing Borders, go to www.cbmission.org or call Lee Berger at 903-746-4463. GCI also sponsors several other short-term mission camps. Go to genmin.gci.org/campministries.htm for details.

heart testimony with others who need to know Jesus, then this camp might be just right for you. You do not need to know Spanish in order to participate in this mission. 

Lost? Not Really



My brother Tim had an inoperable brain tumor that caused him to have grand-mal seizures. During his seizures, he would stop whatever he was doing and freeze in place. When the seizure was over, it would take him several moments to get reoriented. He would look around to figure out where he was and what he had been doing. It was important for him to see familiar things or people.

Tim normally got along fairly well because he was always surrounded by people he knew. One time, however, things were different.

Tim and his family had come to California for a visit. We had just driven to my brother's apartment for the first time. Tim was a few feet behind the rest of us walking through the yard up to the front door when he had a seizure and simply stopped. The rest of us were inside for a minute or so before we realized he was missing.

We ran outside and found Tim sitting on a curb with tears in his eyes and a look of absolute fear on his face. He'd come out of the seizure to find himself lost in a completely unfamiliar environment. Not only did he not know where he was, he wasn't sure who he was. All he knew was that he was lost, and it terrified him.

My heart broke when I saw his eyes. I have no idea how it feels to be so lost and alone, but that day I looked into the eyes of someone who does.

Of course, Tim was not really lost; he just believed he was. He was right outside the front door of an apartment full of people who loved him and wanted the best for him. Just a few feet away was safety, comfort, and acceptance, the answers to his fear and longing.

People who feel spiritually lost, often don't realize that the answer to their longing is so near.



You and I live among many who are in a spiritual sense just like my brother Tim. They don't realize that the answer to their spiritual fear and longing is so near.

You and I have been invited to help them learn that they are never alone, that they can find the safety, comfort, and acceptance they crave in Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Luke 19:10, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." That's the work we've all been given as we follow Jesus, and what a joy it is to see the lost suddenly realize they have been found. **co**

Rumor Has It



The old Hee-Haw television show had a segment where a group of gossipy women sang a song saying they really weren't the "gossipy kind." And since they didn't like to repeat rumors, you had better listen closely the first time.

It was pretty funny, especially since rumors are so much a part of everyday life. You hear them on the job, at home, in political campaigns, newspaper articles, e-mail correspondences, at church and on television. They always have and always will be a part of everyday life.

Rumors feed our desire to know a secret. "Don't believe anything you hear and only half of what you see" is great advice, but hard to heed.

Once it was reported that Mark Twain had died. Imagine his shock when he read his obituary in the newspapers, to which he made the famous reply, "The rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated." That's one of the problems with rumors. They tend to get greatly exaggerated. That's how urban legends are born.

Rumors about Jesus were rampant in his day. He once asked his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets" (Mark 8:27-28). Nothing but rumors, wrong information passed around as fact without a shred of proof.

Another time Jesus was discussing the kind of death Peter would experience in the future to glorify God. Granted, this wasn't a real cheery subject. So Peter, realizing Jesus had a close relationship with John, asked in so many words, "Well, what about John?" Jesus replied, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." Basically he was saying, "Don't worry about it. Just follow me." However, rumors spread that John would remain alive until Christ returned, even though that isn't what Jesus said (see John 21:21-24).

The Bible has nothing positive to say about those who spread rumors. They are called "gossips" (Romans 1:29), "busybodies" (1 Timothy 5:13), and "a person who stirs up conflict" (Proverbs 6:19).

Regardless of this, since rumors will always be with us, we will always be tempted to listen to them and even pass them on to others. Unfortunately, words we pass on to others cannot be taken back. Spreading rumors is like scattering feathers in the wind. You never know where they will land and it is impossible to gather them together again.

Proverbs 26:20 tells us that without wood a fire goes out, and without a gossip, discord will cease. I think that means I have to let the rumor stop with me. That's not easy, but rumor has it that everyone will be a lot better off if I do. **co**

Are You Out of Your Mind?

A Study of I Corinthians 14:13–25



The believers in Corinth liked to speak in tongues, but Paul encouraged them instead to seek gifts that build up the church. He explains why prophecy is better than tongues.

Does anyone understand? (verses 13-17)

Believers meet together in order to build one another up (v. 26). But since tongues don't help others, "the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say." If they speak in tongues, the words should be explained.

"For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful." People who speak in tongues edify themselves (v. 4), but they are not producing any other fruit, or any other results.

Paul asks, "So what shall I do?" What is the practical action in this situation? It is to pray *and* to be fruitful: "I will pray with my spirit, but I will *also* pray with my understanding." Tongues edify the speaker in a non-cognitive way, but they do not help anyone else understand.

"I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding." Will he alternate between tongues one minute and ordinary language the next? Perhaps. But he can pray with his spirit or sing with his spirit and with understanding all at the same time, with normal words.

"Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit [in tongues], how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say 'Amen' to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying?" If other people don't know what the words mean, they cannot indicate agreement. They are like outsiders, excluded from the praise.

"You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified." Tongues are good for private use, but not for public praise and prayer.

Do people respond with belief? (verses 18-25)

Paul knows both sides of the issue: "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you." Even though Paul spoke

tongues privately, he says, "in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue." Church meetings are a place for instruction, not for using a gift that does no one else any good.

He chides them, "Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults." When they use a spiritual gift for self-exaltation, they are being childish.

Tongues do not help other believers, but could they help unbelievers? To address that point, Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11-12: "With other tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord."

Isaiah was talking about the Jews being conquered by enemy nations, and in that circumstance God used other languages to speak to the people. But they did not respond to Babylonian words any better than they did to Hebrew words; they were unbelievers. Paul concludes: "Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers..."

"Prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers." When God inspires people to prophesy, he speaks to people who will respond. It is the same in the church, Paul implies. Prophecy is the appropriate gift for speaking to believers.

"If the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?" The visitors would hear many sounds, but would also see that no one understood anyone else. It would seem pointless, and it would repel them.

"But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare." Prophecy helps people understand what sin is, and helps them admit they fall short and need a Savior.

So it leads to conversion and belief: "They will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" Prophecy is the appropriate gift to help unbelievers, too. **co**

THE GREEKS HAD A WORD FOR IT

οἰκοδομή

Oikodomē comes from Greek words for "house" and "build." It may be used in its literal sense, for constructing a house, or repairing a building. But it is often used in a figurative way, as a metaphor for helping people. Paul uses it in 1 Cor. 14:26: "Everything must be done so that the church may be built up." He is not talking about

constructing a building—he is referring to helping other people.

But what does it mean to "build" another person? *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* gives this paraphrase: "to increase the potential of someone or something, with focus upon the process involved – 'to

strengthen, to make more able, to build up.'" In 2 Cor. 13:10, Paul refers to his God-given authority "for building you up, not for tearing you down." **co**

Dr. Michael Morrison teaches classes in the New Testament at Grace Communion Seminary. More information about the seminary can be found at: gcs.ambassador.edu.



H m m ...

If you read history you will find out that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.

C. S. Lewis

Jesus himself did not try to convert the two thieves on the cross; he waited until one of them turned to him.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

We must be intellectually humble in making claims about God as Creator. But we should also state confidently that denials that God is Creator are fraught with even more irresolvable difficulties and ultimately provide a less satisfactory grounding for a worldview in which meaning and purpose play important roles.

Karl W. Giberson & Francis S. Collins
The Language of Science and Faith: Straight Answers to Genuine Questions

Rumors

- There is nothing as effective as a bunch of facts to spoil a good rumor.
- It is easier to float a rumor than to sink one.
- A groundless rumor often covers a lot of ground.
- There is nothing busier than an idle rumor.
- It is hard to understand how a rumor without a leg to stand on gets around so fast.
- Whoever gossips to you will gossip about you.

Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility. For the person who is un-

willing to grow up, the person who does not want to carry his own weight, this is a frightening prospect.

Eleanor Roosevelt

All language about the future, as any economist or politician will tell you, is simply a set of signposts pointing into a fog.

N.T. Wright

Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't.

Margaret Thatcher

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. Life is no brief candle for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

George Bernard Shaw

Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Be Yourself. Everyone Else Is Taken!

Snoopy

Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.

Abraham Lincoln

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

Albert Einstein

You never know what you can do until you have to do it.

Betty Ford

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside

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out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Romans 12:2, Message Bible