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# Prayer/News Update

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## A Working Heritage

BY JERRY SKILES

### *Insights into Missions in Africa*

I grew up next to the Willamette River in Oregon, and spent many hours in a rowboat. There is an interesting phenomenon in boating: if a leaf or other debris gets behind a row boat, it will continue to follow for awhile even though it has no contact with the boat. If you attempt to separate yourself from it by rowing upstream, it will follow you. Eventually, enough distance occurs and it moves on, driven by other forces acting upon it.

While I think highly of America and her work ethic, I fear that America's culture today is like the leaf that follows the boat. Many Americans work as their forefathers did, but they lack the power and conviction that came from those influenced by the Word of God. They may work with good values, but the values are not purposeful acts of worship to the Creator. They may follow a good path, but as time goes on, I fear that only those who honestly understand God's order will maintain control in the currents of time. They are caught in a vortex, but not of their own design. Believers' work should be as much a part of their Christian life as the day they set aside for rest, worship, and fellowship with other believers.

God has given us His Word to instruct us in living blessed lives. In Proverbs 1:20-33, Wisdom is personified. She is freely offering herself to those of whom it is said "I will laugh at your calamity and mock when dread comes upon you." Yet she promises, "But he who listens to me shall live securely, and shall be at ease from the dread of evil." God's Word is wisdom to those who believe. As we read, we are confronted with laws and principles that teach us and from which we can profit. When ignored or rejected, our loss is the result. There are many unbelievers in the developed world who follow God's laws but are like the leaf in a boat's vortex. Their behavior is the result of society's influence upon them.

On the other hand, the believers in these countries work because of a conviction

from God's Word. While those who do live by conviction have a great influence on their surroundings, most Americans are behaving the way they do because of past influences.

Today, America's greatest asset might be her Christian heritage. It is not just what believers are doing today that makes America great, but what our forefathers did in establishing a value system based on the Word of God. We remain a very productive and blessed nation due to a belief system that is founded on biblical principles, even while we seem to be losing touch with the One that gives us the blessing.

There are many nations in the world that have had little or no influence from laws and principles found in God's Word and suffer because of it. The following are some observations I have gleaned as I have worked with traditional African tribes in the Northeast corner of Ivory Coast. These are "nations" to themselves. While they are part of the political state of Ivory Coast, they are not typical Ivory Coast citizens, nor are they "modern" Africans. The majority of these tribal people remain virtually unaffected by change. While most Africans have moved into contact with the larger world, these traditional tribes have remained the same. These traditional tribesmen live in very different circumstances than their metropolitan countrymen, but they share a common heritage. The tribes represent the heritage of many modern Africans. This traditional way of viewing life creates a vortex—a power that sucks on and influences—many modern Africans to follow, yet not really touch it. This basic influence from the past is one of the greatest hindrances to the development of Africa.

The traditional African believes he has little control over his life relative to the creation. Learning the tribal language gave some insight into how they think



about life in relation to their surroundings. In English we say, "I stubbed my toe on a rock." In the tribal language we learned to say, "The rock struck my foot." In a sense, this reflects how they see the things of the earth. While they do not believe the rock actually moved itself, the rock had more to do with the

accident than did the movement of the foot. The rock is viewed as alive, and while it may not be the exact cause of the hurt, the spirits that control those things caused the accident. Thus, the traditional African goes through life attempting to harmonize his life with nature. He is very superstitious of any event that is out of the normal. Those "abnormal" events are warnings of impending danger and must be handled to avoid catastrophe. He spends hours trying to solve his problems through consulting spirits and sacrificing to idols. The spirits always tell him that what he is doing for them will result in a profitable end.

But the traditional African does believe that he can have control over other people. They are persuasive and they call upon the spirits to change the hearts of others to achieve their desired goals. This is evident in fables and proverbs that depict as the "hero the individual who uses others' productivity to gain his own end." It is not gained by physically working the land for himself, but through the use of his persuasive language and people skills.

The tribal Africans we work with are basically subsistence farmers. Their lives revolve around finding enough food for their own consumption. They raise some chickens or other fowl for cash expenses, and the wealthy ones might have a few cows, but for the most part, getting enough to eat is their main concern. They make their own houses and farm implements. Many of the people we worked with had never been farther than a day's walk from the place they were born. They had no rea-

son to explore because all they needed could be found within their tribal area. If there is food shortage, sickness, or death, it is because the spirits were ignored or offended. The native population does not see these spirits as being anti-God; in fact, they can be readily incorporated into "Christianity." Many converts reject the spirits, but when problems arise they return to the mediums to seek solutions. Because they thought that becoming a Christian would end all problems, when problems reappear the vortex of the past pulls on the new convert. Despite my best effort to teach against this, I know it still exists with many of the tribal converts.

The sad part of Africa is that the problems do continue, even after a person believes. I believe that much of this is due to the way they perceive their problems. When we first moved into the village we were confronted with a tremendous amount of death. A few weeks after we settled in, an epidemic of measles swept through the area. In only a few days it killed four children and two adults in the village of seven hundred. We had seen poverty and disease in our previous ministry, but we had never seen a whole population living at such a low poverty level. Everywhere we turned they lacked. Yet, their isolation had made them ignorant of any other standard. They were not experiencing anything they had not seen before.

Shortly after we arrived, my wife provided some medical assistance. People immediately saw an aspirin could relieve pain; an antibiotic could change a life threatening sickness into a few days of discomfort.

Salt was added to their diet, which added flavor and spice to food that never before seemed bland. We began to help where we saw a need, but they had never recognized the need before. Pumps and wells were introduced; schools for their children were made available. Bibles and

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## THE CALL OF GOD

### THE CALL OF LIFE!

Jesus said that in the last days the love of many would wax cold, and many would fall away. Paul, in his letter to Timothy, spoke of men being lovers of themselves, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. I believe we are living in those times.

We hear of growing congregations, people confessing to be Christians. I know that doesn't sound like falling away. But we are warned that in the last days many will perish because they love not the truth. God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. <sup>2 Thessalonians 2:9-11</sup>

Many people today have the right words and say the right things. Just last night a lady called at our door. She was staggering drunk. She had wrecked her car, then, continuing on foot had fallen down and lost her shoe. She lied to us, saying that she had been beaten up. We gave her coffee and a sandwich, and talked to her about the Lord Jesus. That's when she informed us that she had been born again. Of course I believe our Lord suffered for her and that she truly can be saved, because only by grace can any of Adam's race be saved. However, at this present time, she is not manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, and that alone is the evidence that one belongs to our Lord Jesus.

Jesus came to restore to us the life of God that we had lost, a life in the will and the love of God. This is salvation. <sup>1 John 5:11,12</sup> "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." <sup>Philippians 2:13</sup> There is no salvation for man but in union with God's will. The will of God and the life of God are inseparable. Jesus the Son of God is the express image of the Father and He came to reveal the Father to us by always doing His perfect will. He was obedient unto death, thus displaying the love of God in perfect form.

Much that is preached as Gos-

pel in these last days fails to stress repentance from sin and obedience to God. Jesus preached repentance. He was always ready to forgive the vilest sinner, but He would command them to repent of their sin. (See Luke 13:3-5 & John 8:11). Some believe salvation accommodates *our lives*. But we can only enjoy salvation when we are surrendered to His will. Through repentance from our self-willed lives and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we come into the will of God, where we can experience God's love and God's life.

Jesus, who is our life, is forever the same. He, as our High Priest, is ready to live out His life in us if we will simply trust and obey. In Isaiah 30:15 we read, "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: *and ye would not.*" Without repentance there can be no rest, and without godly confidence there is no strength of the Lord. Jesus is ready to impart life in abundance to all who will repent. The Lord is not willing that any should perish.

Man, however, is quite willing to go on in his sin with a false confidence that because he believes in God everything is all right. Esau, who despised his birthright, when he sought repentance he could not find it. <sup>Heb.12:17</sup> "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the Word preached did not profit them not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we who have believed do enter into rest..." <sup>Hebrews 4:1,2</sup> In returning and rest we shall be saved and in quietness and confidence shall we find strength.

The peace of God flows through the believer like a mighty river bringing life to all who come and drink of her goodness. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. It is not overcome by the world.

The love of God enables us to follow the Spirit and do the will of God. To love God is to keep His commandments. <sup>1 John 5:3</sup> His commandments are not grievous when

you love righteousness and hate iniquity, you will be anointed with the oil of gladness. <sup>Hebrews 1:9</sup> God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>Romans 5:8</sup> "We love Him because He first loved us." <sup>1 John 4:19</sup> "... every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." <sup>1 John 4:7,8</sup> Eternal salvation is promised for those that will obey Him. <sup>Hebrews 5:9</sup>

The salvation of God is an on-going daily process. Jesus reconciled me by His death and He saves me by His life. <sup>Romans 5:10</sup> I know that I am saved by the grace of God through faith, which enables me to do His will. Jesus, who learned obedience by the things that He suffered, <sup>Hebrews 5:8</sup> is now taking up His abode in all those who will surrender to Him. <sup>John 14:23</sup> He will daily teach us to make the right choices. The Lord said to the Hebrew Christians, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age (mature or perfect), even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." <sup>Hebrews 5:12-14</sup>

Are you being exercised to discern both good and evil? In these last days evil is being called good, and good is evil spoken of. Strong meat is for those who are of full age. This doesn't mean old people, it means those who are perfect (spiritually mature): we are perfect when we are fulfilling God's purpose in our lives. Sin, on the other hand, is the falling short of that mark. When we are surrendered to the will of God, the life of Christ will be seen in us, enabling us to love righteousness and to hate evil; causing us to discern good and evil and therefore in faith make the right choices. In so doing we will experience the *abundant life* of Christ Jesus.

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books, motorized transportation, a flood of good things were introduced to their lives. While our presence added much comfort to their lives, it also created a new demand. They needed additional economy.

In a sense we created a problem, the awareness of the disparity between what the rest of the world has and what the tribal African has. When we tried to solve the disparity by subsidy, we soon found we had people traveling from larger towns to seek the cheaper help. Not only did that tax a limited resource, it upset existing ways of dealing with the problems in those other areas. Soon we were dealing with people who would buy from us only to go into another area and resell at the unsubsidized price.

Sadly, many missionary efforts end in this dilemma. Wells and pumps have been installed and made available only to have them fall into disrepair and remain that way. Schools have been built and provision for teachers made available, only to have no students show up because of lack of money. Hospitals and staff have been put in place, but the neediest still remain untreated. We educate to the problems of AIDS and even mention some of the relief possible, but it is not economically possible for them to attain it. The cry from many developing nations, even after all the gracious Christian help, is "Send money!" or, "Make it free to us!"

According to most research, Africa is one of the richest continents in the world for natural resources. In many areas, abundant underground water is found not far from the surface. The ground is quite capable of growing crops with no end to a "growing season." Forests that once spread over much of the continent are still capable of growing back that which was cut. Oil, gas and minerals lie beneath the African lands.

Many rivers still tumble freely to the seas. There exists a huge force of labor, waiting for opportunity and direction, yet productive soil still grows weeds.

In contrast, Americans are constantly looking for ways to use natural resources to the greatest extent. Waters coursing toward the sea are harnessed so that they produce power to benefit us; hidden underground resources are discovered and supply us with power to make travel easier or work more productive. Mixing various elements and compounds have produced medicines that give us relief from many of our pains. Even the things not seen by the naked eye are being explored and developed. Our education system takes young minds and begins to cultivate them for greater productivity. In American

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churches, the same attitude prevails. The question is asked: How can we use our resources to the greatest benefit in the kingdom of God?

I think back to my American history lessons: pioneers trudging miles in hope



*Hovare, one of the men who has earnestly followed the Lord, is helping and learning as Jerry soldiers some piece of equipment he is repairing.*

of finding a piece of untamed ground that they might clear and begin to cultivate. I never once heard of a pioneer family thinking that upon arriving someone was going to clear their land or dig a well for them free of charge. Or, that upon arriving in hard times some food from a foreign country would be sent to relieve their hunger. Or that maybe a stranger should build a school for their children. There was a fundamental mentality in those early settlers that is missing in many other populations of the world. Those settlers who went out believed that there were undeveloped resources that would produce for them a livelihood if worked. This is obedience to God's first commandment to man. Genesis 1:28: "...to subdue and rule..." concerning creation.

One of the major differences between developed nations and undeveloped nations is how close the people's work ethic and moral values are to God's law. Despite our well-meaning humanitarian aid to some



*Cherry Skiles holding a Loma infant*



*A number of the Loma tribespeople have believed the Gospel and have been baptized. The church is growing.*



*Travel by car sometimes means home made bridges*



*The Loma village where the Skiles work*

nations, there appears to be no significant gain in productivity. In some cases the aid we give is detrimental, inhibiting them from discovering what they have of their own. There are those who are overcoming this, having been influenced by God's Word from that vortex of their past. Even in non-Christian countries, following God's principles leads man to greater productivity.

In our tribal ministry we have seen that those who embrace the work principle found in God's Word profit greatly from it in Africa. A handful of these tribal believers see that by working each day as unto the Lord, and evaluating the resources that He has placed at their disposal, they are gaining control over their circumstances. It has not been miraculous, as if one day all the prob-

lems they have leave them. On the contrary, it is slow grinding work, but with measurable increase. Those who have embraced this new principle and law have a hope that is often absent in Africa. They maintain faith in God but also believe their physical efforts make a difference in the final outcome of their life on this earth.

I know that the old traditions still want to affect how they think; but the longer they walk in God's law, the more of God's influence they place on their community. These believers are not looking for what they can get from anyone. On the contrary, they also look for opportunities to share with those who have less. They are discovering that the Scriptures are true, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and the Lord is giving them the means to give. There is a major difference



*At the village water pump*

between how they think today and how they used to think. They used to ask: What do I lack? Their new question is: What do I have? Then, recognizing what they have, they offer it to the Lord for His glory.

Christianity has never been free from conflict. In all areas of life and society, subtle and not so subtle battles are being waged concerning Christian values. In America today a large majority of people continue to follow a work ethic that has foundations in the Word of God even though they are not Christians. Those of us who are Christian must continue to function with these ethics because they are what the Lord requires of us. By doing so, we not only keep ourselves on course; we have an impact on our surrounding environment for the good of our Nation and society.

## Kenya and Tanzania

*Fields in need.*

In September and October, a four-man team consisting of Jim Lucas, Richard McDaniel, Mike Ball and Dave Baker traveled to these two countries to carry on and expand a ministry that has been in progress there since 1996. A Christian leader in Tanzania told Jim Lucas a couple of years ago that the church in that country is like Lake Victoria, broad but very shallow. The need for foundations and discipleship is great. To help meet that need, SFMI has begun to respond to the requests for teaching ministry. At the time Richard McDaniel wrote the following report, Mike Ball and Jim Lucas were still in Tanzania.

We began our ministry in northern Tanzania, just south of the Kenyan border. There we split into two teams with Jim and myself being one team and veteran Mike Ball with Dave Baker, a young man from Christmas Valley, Oregon, the other. Each team had an interpreter fluent in English and Swahili. In the places that we ministered, pastors and believers from a number of churches were gathered together in a Bible conference setting. Throughout the days we had three or four hours of teaching and some evangelistic meetings. The saints were greatly encouraged with the ministry of the Word, and we also saw several profess faith in the Lord Jesus as a result of the evangelism.

After one week, the two teams met in the city of Mwanza, a large city near the southern end of Lake Victoria. Here we had more ministry in churches, regrouped and went out again. This time I went with Dave Baker and Mike went with Jim. Mike and Jim went southwest of Mwanza to a gathering of believers and pastors, again in a Bible conference setting. There they spent hours each day in teaching, and the saints were greatly encouraged.

Dave and I went back into “the bush” to have ministry among believers in an isolated



*Richard McDaniel*



*Mike Ball*



**Massai youth, initiates to manhood with their lion's manes.**

area. One comment that I heard after our ministry was, “Now we have truly come to know Christ.” There was a great appreciation for the teaching of the Word, especially in the rural areas. From here, Dave and I went back up into Kenya where we had a few days of ministry in the Kisii region. Then Dave returned to Nairobi, where he left the country, and I continued with ministry for several more days in Kisii.

Mike and Jim had been scheduled for ministry in southern Tanzania, but abandoned that course when the one organizing the ministry demanded that they finance the food and lodging for those who would attend the meetings. Instead, they came up to Kisii, where we met, and then headed out to Narok, which is in Masai territory. There they were to have a few days of reunion with people that Jim knew, following which

they were headed back into Tanzania for meetings in the Arushia region, an area populated by the Masai people. They were to finish up their ministry back in Kenya, with two weeks of ministry to the Samburu people.

I believe that this trip was significant in breaking ground for an expansion of our ministry into Tanzania. Arrangements are being made for sponsorship of our missionaries by a local registered ministry so that residency can be taken up in Tanzania. Please pray with us for laborers for this field of harvest, with the objective in mind of making many disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. ❖

### Larry & Peggy Gallegos

Over twenty years ago Larry Gallegos went to Mexico with SFMI. In the course of time God led him to establish a Mexican mission with its own board of directors and a vision for sending the Gospel by Mexican nationals to hard-to-reach nations where missionaries—especially Americans—cannot go. God has directed him and his co-workers in a course of action that Larry and his family have pursued with diligence and patience.

Although Larry is not now a SFMI missionary, he has always been considered an associate. Many long-time friends of SFMI have known Larry and his work for many years. One reader, in a letter that appears elsewhere in this issue inquired about him. Following is his latest communication with us. By sharing it with you we will bring you somewhat up to date. For more information on the Gallegos family please write us.



### JLB and family off to Spain

“But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.” *Romans 15:29*

Paul sounded pretty confident about his arrival in Rome. “I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.” That kind of terminology raises certain kinds of expectations. Fullness and blessings carry a nuance of the harvest and abundance.

But Paul entered Rome in chains and after having been shipwrecked. The journey also included a two-year sojourn in the Caesarean jail, not what we might first think of as “the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel.” Was Paul mistaken? Did things not turn out as planned? Were his claims false bravado? I think not.

Paul indeed came as God planned. It's just that our expectations are often skewed by false images and human concepts. The years in prison were part of God's plan. Paul wrote and we are beneficiaries even today of that blessing. A parade of kings, queens and leaders visited Paul in prison, and he testified to great and small of Christ.

The winds that supposedly blew Paul “off course” took him indirectly to an island where a sick father heard the Gospel and a whole culture was touched with the power of God. Paul indeed came as stipulated. One also would suppose that the arrival of God's only begotten son to this earth would be better orchestrated. He came in the fullness of time and to an exact and specified location—yet some



would call the timing and planning of the Son's arrival as mediocre.

Mary, because of the edicts of an ungodly Roman system, had to travel over rugged roads in her ninth month of pregnancy. Upon arrival they literally found no place at the inn. This long-awaited

birth takes place in a barn and the child's first bed is an animals' feeding trough. Did something go wrong with God's timing? Did he get “blind sided” by the unexpected census? Too bad the crowds got there first. Perhaps Joseph should have called ahead and made reservations! Plain and simple, God's ways are not our ways.

Today, I am exhausted. Last night I had a bout with kidney stones. We stayed up until 2:00 a.m. chatting with our family. Earlier last night we drove Jose Luis and family to the bus station so they could catch the bus to Mexico City and then catch a plane for Spain and North Africa. We had to tie up so many loose ends before they left. At 9:00 p.m. we were still finalizing paperwork and bookkeeping for the Arandas church building project. But in spite of all the movement of the last days (actually weeks), there was peace.

We had hoped or expected some great resounding response from the churches for the ‘going out’ expenses, but the offerings trickled in. On the last day - yesterday - we still were buying tickets and juggling accounts. There still was a bit of a gap, and as is often the case, on the last day, the rest came in. Actually, we got a call from the next stop over in Mexico City. Good friends wanted to know how to get a substantial offering to the Barocios. It just happened that they could pick them up at the bus station, give them the offering, and then take

# istry late

Mannana, Mannana, Mannana is good enough for me. Hey!

When I learned this song as a child, I didn't realize how true it is. We have been blessed with a beautiful home, which is a miracle in itself since houses for rent are scarce. We have spent the last two weeks painting and trying to get many minor repairs done on the house. So we've called a carpenter, electrician, boilerman for our hot water, plumber, oven repairman, and the list goes on. They have all come and done an assessment, then promised to return the following day to do the work. Manana never comes. The Lord told us to be con-



tent in all circumstances and we have been trying to keep a good attitude about it and just go along with the ride.

I have been attending language school in Atotonilco with a lady who studied to be a bilingual teacher in the U.S. She's fluent in both languages and seems to be a very talented teacher. The first week has been challenging for me just communicating even the most basic of things, but with God's grace, I'm learning slowly but surely.

We are also looking at enrolling Nicole in Kindergarten to help her get a grasp of the language. Please keep this matter of language study in your prayers.

We would also like to ask you to join us in worshipping and thanking the Lord for His mercy and grace toward us. He has answered so many requests and His hand has been evident every day.

We would like to name a few:

1. Thank you, Lord, for our safe trip and easy border crossing
2. For finding a house so quickly. (Everyone we speak to is amazed at the short time it took to find one. People have been waiting months to rent a house.)
3. For the brethren here who have welcomed us with open arms.
4. The many oportunities the Lord has brought our way to minister and hopefully shine a light for Him.
5. Choosing us, giving us a chance to be free through Him, no longer in bondage like so many we see here who are in bondage to Catholicism.

Thank you once again, Heavenly Father, and all God's people said .... ❖

## Tim and Kim Montgomery

Do you remember the feeling you used to get as a youngster, when, after having worked hard to plant a garden, and then having waited what seemed like forever, finally the little shoots you had been anticipating began to spring up? I remember. It was always exciting. You felt rewarded for your efforts. Well, here "Down Under" spring is setting in. The weather is getting warm and everything is turning green. The buds on the trees are just now breaking out into leaves and sunshine is abundant. And along with nature's encouragement comes a little from the Lord as well. No, we don't have visas yet, and there are no signs as of now that it will happen any time soon. But, nevertheless, encouragement comes.



## Door-to-door Ministry

As you know, I'm not able to go out at this point, but others are! The three door-to-door partners that worked with me are keeping up the endeavor. Debbie and Dion go out on Tuesdays, and Debbie and Kevin on Fridays. They've had their hard days, but they've also managed to make a number of contacts that are turning into friends and opportunity for ministry. They're encouraged and so are we!

## Thursday Night Bible Study Continues

I'm not allowed to teach it at this point, but that doesn't stop us from getting together and growing in the Lord. Some nights Don (our church elder) teaches. Other nights we never even get to that point, and for positive reasons. We still begin each Thursday night by giving each person a chance to share something that they've gotten that week from the Scriptures. Often people have so much to share that it essentially turns into an open meeting such as you see in 1 Cor 14.



Many evenings there is a very strong theme of what the Lord is ministering to us and through us as a group. They have grown so much. Just recently, two more members of the group have really come

alive in their ability to go the the Word and receive from the Lord. The things they are sharing have been powerful! They might turn into preachers if they keep it up. But we wouldn't complain about that, would we?

## Church

And then there was last night at church. The meeting was just a few minutes from ending when, of all people, Morris came walking in! (Morris is the one you've been praying for for quite some time.) He took a seat by Debbie (Debbie and Dion had been to see him to explain why I couldn't come around any more. So he had decided he would come to me and had had a bit of drink perhaps to get his courage up!). "Is there anything anyone would like to add before we close?" it was asked. Up jumped Morris. "Well, I just want to give this guy a 'cuddle'" (Ozzie for hug) he cried as he came up to me. We hugged. (I can't bring myself to say we cuddled!) Everyone tittered as it was apparent he'd had a bit.

So the meeting ended. Morris was "happy" but by no means out of his wits, so we had a nice visit. He can't understand why I can't come around.

"You're my mate!" he said.

"I know," I replied. "I feel the same way, but my hands are tied."

"Well, if Mohammed won't come to the mountain, we'll bring the mountain to Mohammed!" he proclaimed.

And that's fine by us. We'll take the encouragement anywhere we can get it at the moment.

God bless! Please continue to keep us in your prayers.

Tim and family



**Kazakstan**

**Peg Mott**

Hi, everyone,

I've been back in Kazakhstan about a week and am enjoying administration for our team of nine men and four women. These are odd odds for overseas, eh!

We'll be testing new students this week and will start classes the next. Please pray.

Love Peg



**“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.”** Genesis 32:24

Few portions of Scripture are as strange as this. Jacob wrestled with the Lord! It was obviously a great turning point in his life: from here on, he is called Israel, meaning “God prevails.” From this moment on, he walks with a limp. And we begin to see a slow but steady transformation that ends in the elderly shepherd standing before Pharaoh. There he says, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.” We see him, leaning on his staff, blessing Pharaoh, and can’t help but exclaim, “What a man of God!” It is almost difficult to believe this is the same man whose conniving and trickery had been the main theme of several previous chapters of Genesis.

Jacob was the second of twin sons. He was born grasping the heel of his older twin, and so received the name “Jacob,” meaning the usurper. True to his name, he gained by subtlety both the birthright and the blessing of the firstborn. While Esau is far from innocent in this, yet it was the crafty machinations of Jacob (in one case with his mother’s help) that got him what he wanted.

His trickery made it necessary that Jacob run from his brother for a time. But he became a self-made man. He had not thought to rely on God to lift him up or help him, but on this quick trip out of town he has an encounter with the Creator. Alone in the desert, in a dream he sees a ladder reaching up to heaven and hears the voice of God:

“I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.”

Jacob awoke amazed and frightened, realizing that he had actually heard from God. True to his principles, he immediately set out to make a highly advantageous deal with God:

“And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I

will surely give the tenth unto thee.”

“If you’ll do what You’ve said, and if You’ll keep Your promise to bless and protect me and if You bring me back here in peace, **then** I’ll follow and worship You.”

God is no man’s servant. He has already begun His program to bless Jacob, but not in a manner Jacob could have anticipated.

Jacob was the clever schemer, but he wasn’t the only clever schemer around. It may be that in all the Middle East, there was only one man who was more of a schemer and conniver than Jacob, and that man was Laban. Now God has set these two on a collision course.

Laban uses Jacob as free labor for a time, and then makes a deal for seven year’s labor as dowry. With a switch of daughters, he obtains yet another seven years. Then they make a deal for further payment: from here on the sheep that are born spotted or colored will be Jacob’s, the white Laban’s. Jacob thought he knew a method for causing the sheep to bear spotted lambs, and while his method was in itself nothing, yet God worked and the ewes gave birth to spotted and black lambs. Jacob began to see himself prospering, getting the best of Laban.

But Laban would not be outdone.

When the number of spotted sheep became more than the white, Laban changed the deal again and again – ten times in six years. Jacob became sick of stealth. The clever machinations that he admired in himself became repugnant when he found himself on the receiving end. God brought him to the place where he was fed up with schemers.

Jacob finally left Laban to go back to the land of his father. This meant facing Esau, his brother, who, twenty years before, had determined to kill him for his treachery. As he drew nearer home, he heard that Esau was coming with four hundred men to meet him.

How will Jacob respond? Even though God had promised to bring him home in peace, Jacob is fearful. He divides his company into two groups (‘Maybe if one escapes I won’t lose everything!’) He sends presents and messages of peace and submission to assure his safety—and he talks to God.

Jacob’s prayer is a sincere one, and shows us something of the maturing that Jacob has done in the years of hardship he suffered. He admits he doesn’t deserve one of the blessings he has received, yet he reminds God of His promise. Jacob is

# Jacob

## What Can He Teach Us?

By Steve Montgomery



genuinely wanting God’s help.

But the wrestling match occurs as

Jacob considers whether he is willing to give up control of the situation and trust wholly in the Lord. Hosea 12:4 tells us what this wrestling match was:

“Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him *in* Bethel, and there he spake with us; Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD *is* his memorial. Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.”

So Jacob did not wrestle with the angel in any manner that the World Wrestling Federation would recognize. He wrestled in *prayer*. And with whom did he wrestle? Hosea says “He found him in Bethel, and there He spake to us.” The next verse tells us that it was the *Lord God of hosts* who found Jacob at Bethel. So the “man” with whom he wrestled was none other than God Himself!

Jacob wrestled with God in prayer. He was facing what appeared to be the biggest challenge of his life: his brother was apparently coming to make good on his promise to kill him. He now has a choice:

Entrust his life into the hands of God. Or, come up with yet another clever scheme to save his skin, outsmart the enemy and “get away with it” one more time.

The answer from God is: “Yield to Me. Surrender your “right” to solve your own problems and let Me do it.”

For the man that was used to outwitting and out-scheming, this was difficult to hear.

The name of the place where Jacob had this battle with himself and with the Lord is Jabbok, which means ‘an emptying, a pouring out’. That brook flows through a deep and rugged ravine. Jacob, looking down into this desolate valley, must choose to pour himself out or abide alone.

Jacob passes a night battling. Who can say what deals, what compromises Jacob offered to God short of yielding fully to Him. The Lord was present to bless, but the blessing required that Jacob put the circumstances in God’s hand and, to Jacob, that didn’t look like blessing.

It is a simple and clear teaching of Scripture that the blessings of God may—often do—contain a time limit. All the time Jacob is squirming, trying to find a way to get God’s help without God’s requirement, time is going by. Esau and his four hundred are drawing

nearer. If Jacob puts off entrusting this to God, time will run out and he will have to face his brother on his own terms. Not to decide is to decide. He must yield or continue on in his own course.

So, after a night of wrestling in prayer before the Lord of hosts, without Jacob giving in, time is running out.

“Let me go” God told him, “for the day breaks.” “You’ve made your decision. Time’s up. Your brother is almost here. If you won’t trust this to me, you’ll have to deal with it yourself.”

It’s at this moment that Jacob finally breaks: “No! Don’t leave me! I surrender! Give me the blessing that You choose! I put myself in Your hands! Not my will but Yours!” Jacob yields to the Lord of hosts. He gives up, capitulates to the Most High, and God blesses him:

“And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”

Israel means “God prevails,” yet the Lord tells Jacob he inherits this new name because he, Jacob, has prevailed. So, who prevailed, God or Jacob? The answer, of course, is “Yes.” When Jacob let God do His work and have His way, it was Jacob who walked away a victor.

When we face the battle between our own will and the will of God, it is as we say, “Not my will, but Yours”, that we win.

God prevailed, and because He did, Jacob prevailed. At that deep and rugged canyon he poured himself out and in the process became a man of strength, of power with God. Jacob understood this, for he named that place “Peniel” – ‘Facing God.’ He faced up to God, submitted to Him and became a conqueror.

In the midst of the wrestling match, the Lord touched Jacob’s thigh, so that it was out of joint. Ever after, Jacob was unable to walk on his own; he needed to lean on something outside of himself. Jacob will ever after lean on the Lord. He’s not a *perfect* man, but he is a *transformed* man, on his way to becoming that godly man that blessed Egypt’s Pharaoh.

A simple formula in Scripture, repeated many times in different ways, explains it all:

“God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5, Prov. 3:34, Prov. 29:23, Matt. 23:12, Luke 14:11, Luke 18:14)

It is in dying that we find life, in yielding that we find victory, in submitting that we find power. May we take God’s grace quickly and become, like Jacob, men and women who prevail.

## Rest in a Troubled World

We publish six issues of the *SFMI Prayer/News Update* each year. This is the last issue for 2002. The next one will bear the date 2003. Looking at world events as they rapidly develop, we are caused to wonder what will be dominating the news by that time. Will we be at war? Will we be in some new crisis? Of course we don't know about that; even two months down the road is a mystery. But it is no mystery to God, and our times are in His hands.

We pray that God will give wisdom to our leaders, and that there will be agreement and unanimity as they determine the course of our nation in these critical times. We believe we see increasing evidence that these are indeed the end times. It is not time to be distracted, but to pursue the course the God of heaven and earth has set before us. We have seen, in the past several months, that the proclamation of the Gospel can be a dangerous activity. Missaries were held captive in Afghanistan,

school children held hostage in Ivory Coast. We have also seen those dangers dissipated as the great God of heaven has brought deliverance. Isn't it marvelous to know that our God is our shield and our buckler, our defender. It is time for the church to steadily pursue the course God has set us on. We must continue as though all will continue normally for millenia to come, but be mindful that we may be doing it for a very short time, no panic, no frustration, just earnest obedience. When the end comes, we want to be found doing what He told us to do.

We don't know who the heroes will be, or if there will be any. But we want to hear our Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." So while the world is in turmoil, let us be going peacably about the Lord's business. God said, "And the work of *righteousness* shall be peace; and the effect of *righteousness* quietness and assurance for ever." Isaiah 32:17

## A Reminder of the 2003 Training Session

January 13, 2003 is the date of the next training session. There are people who have talked about participating whose applications are not yet in hand. If you have planned to be a participant in the next session, now is the time to make application. You can contact the SFMI office by writing to SFMI, P.O. Box 144, Bend, OR. 97709; or by emailing [sfmi@sfmiusa.org](mailto:sfmi@sfmiusa.org); or by phone, (541) 382-7081. There is no charge for tuition. There is a \$100.00 fee per student to partially cover the cost of materials. Each student is responsible for his/her own accommodations and food. The course is six months long and will finish in mid-July. We would love to spend the first six months of 2003 with you.

## Letters to the Editor

We appreciate hearing from folks who receive the Prayer News Update. We have often been much encouraged by the things people write, and have also been informed by data that is mailed to us. We welcome relevant articles, information, questions or constructive criticism.

Dick York,

I finished reading your book, "Law's End" this morning and have started to read it again. Thank you for this precious gift! I come from a very legalistic background, but have gradually been stepping out into the grace which is in Christ Jesus. The message in your book has been a tremendous encouragement.

I am getting up in years (age 51) and I believe the Lord has something more for me to do before I pass on. I do not know what that is at this point, but I am checking out various possibilities.

RB

Thanks for another great Update! We appreciate receiving your news/prayer newspaper here in Mexico and being able to pray for you.

We wonder why the Gallegos family is never mentioned in the newspaper; we understand that they are still in Tonalá, outside Guadalupe.

Sometimes while reading this issue, I felt like it was written only for "insiders" and I think you could improve on that. For example, shouldn't "Tim, Kimber and family" in Australia be more fully identified? Also The letter by Steve Montgomery was excellent! However, if you told your readers the state that Atotonilco belongs to in every issue, we could find it on a map and perhaps learn more about the region through other sources.

The lead article, we assume by Dick York, was up to the usual high standard we expect from Shield of Faith. However, there was one unfortunate line, which to make matters worse, the editors decided to highlight. It said: "In fact, the terms I have just used—"Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians"—are themselves an oxymoron, because in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile." Galatians 3:28 also says there is no male and female. ...

Obviously there are still men and women just as we can also identify Jews and gentiles. We are all one in Christ, but we are *not* all the same! ...there is a difference between men and women. There is also a difference between Jews and Gentiles. ...

Jews that come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and follow Him in faith are free to worship God within their own cultural context, if they choose to do so. Just as Gentile believers are not under the Jewish law, messianic Jews do not have to become gentiles in order to worship God. ...One way to put a little joy into Mexican evangelicalism would be to discover the fun and meaning of the Jewish feasts

PG, Oaxaca, Mexico

**Editor's note:** There is a movement today to encourage Christians who are not now, and never have been, Jews to embrace Jewish customs and Old Testament tradition as an important part of New Testament Christianity. In so doing it is assumed that there is an added dimension of spirituality that is somehow pleasing to the Lord. The result is, in many cases, a legalistic bondage to dietary laws, feast days, etc. erecting again a division in the body of Christ. It was to this problem that Paul's letter to the Galatian Christians was directed

It is true that there are men and women in the body of Christ and that their roles are different, but they are not divided religiously or traditionally.

The laws and practices of Judaism as taught in the Old Testament and Christian living as taught by the apostles in the New Testament are distinct. To learn of the significance of the law is of utmost importance and extremely edifying. Paul said those things are given for our admonition. They are types and shadows that reveal and explain eternal truths. But they are fulfilled in Christ, and we are warned against reverting to their practice.

See Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, Acts 15, Ephesians 2 and many other passages of New Testament Scripture.

# Grandma and grandbaby

The Loma Tribe  
Ivory Coast, West Africa

**I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;...bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; everyone that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory...Isaiah 43:6,7**

The SFMI Prayer/News Update is published bi-monthly and is sent free of charge to God's people everywhere upon request. If you have friends to whom you would like a copy sent, please submit their address to this office. In response to inquiries about the cost of publication: \$6.00 per year per subscriber. Yes, contributions to offset this cost are accepted, but not solicited.