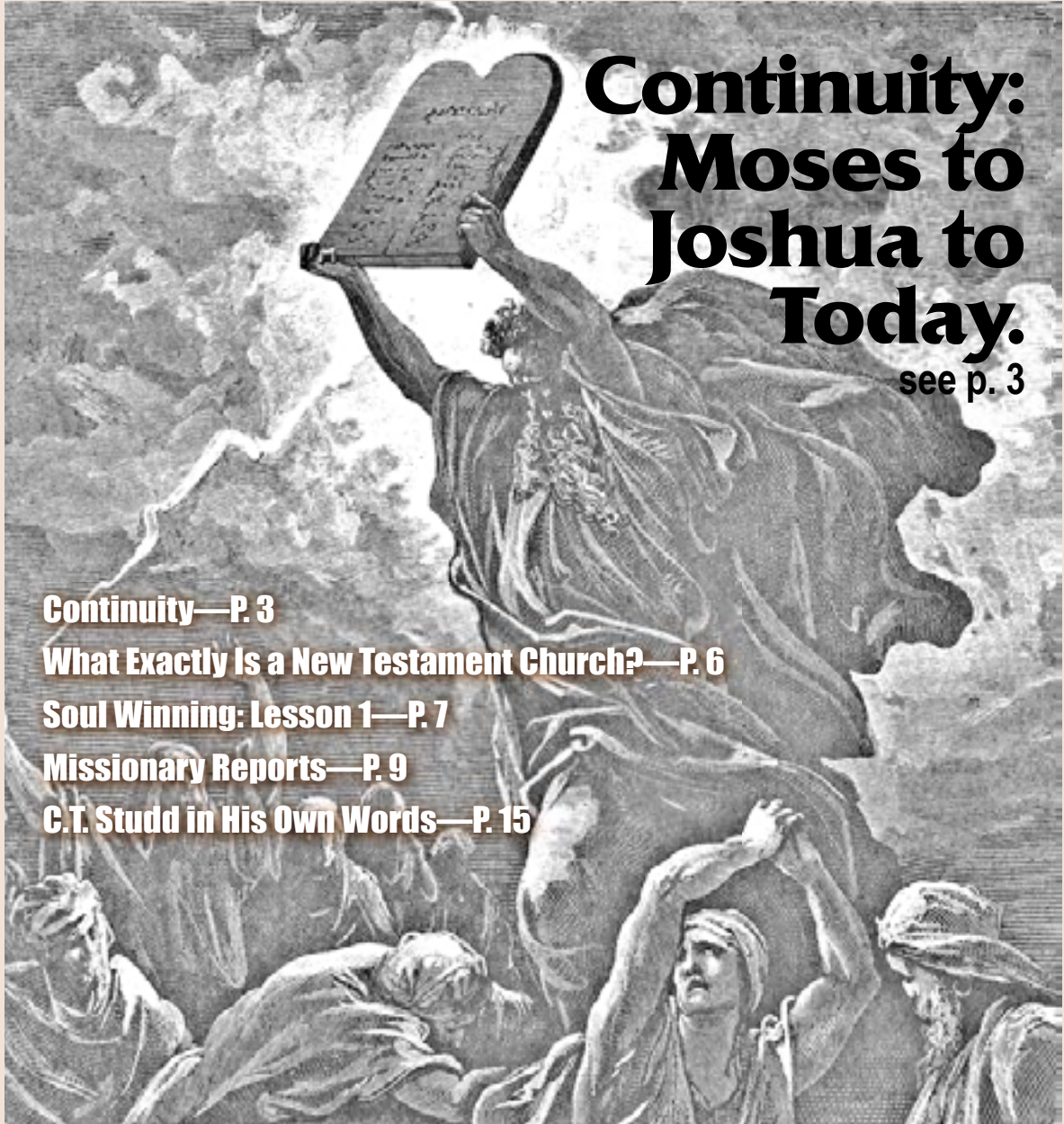


SHIELD OF FAITH MISSION INTERNATIONAL

SFMI

**Prayer/News
UPDATE**

Fulfilling the Great Commission Through Establishing New Testament Churches



Continuity: Moses to Joshua to Today.

see p. 3

Continuity—P. 3

What Exactly Is a New Testament Church?—P. 6

Soul Winning: Lesson 1—P. 7

Missionary Reports—P. 9

C.T. Studd in His Own Words—P. 15

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September-October 2010



A Purpose, a People, a Proclamation

Acts 15 tells of a heated discussion about the nature of the gospel message. The issue was a wrong view of the continuity between the Old and New Testament. Some Jewish believers thought continuity in God's plan meant continued allegiance to the Law of Moses while the apostles argued for seeing the law as a tool to crowd us to the Savior.

The controversy came to a sharp stop when James spoke: argument settled, letter written, and all said, "It seemed good to us and the Holy Ghost."

What had James said?

He took them to Amos 9:11-12 to show them that God's eternal plan was not a law but a people; that God had visited the Gentiles *to take out of them a people for his name.*

God's eternal purpose is a people; that people is the church, and the church is a

people recruiting people for God's purpose.

In this issue, you can read about the history-wide extension of God's plan in Dick York's article "Continuity." You can read about who that people is in the article, "What Exactly is a New Testament Church?" You discover how the church is called to take the message of God's plan to others in Jim Lucas's article on winning souls. And you be encouraged by the results of announcing that message as you read the reports from believers around the world.

All with one motive:

"To the intent that now...might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Steve Montgomery

"Poverty-stricken as the church is today in many things, she is most stricken here, in the place of prayer. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, few pray-ers; many singers, few clingers; lots of pastors, few wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many inter-ferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing here, we fail everywhere"

—Leonard Ravenhill, "Why Revival Tarries"

"Prayer can place us in a village in Africa or in a hut on the Amazon. It can put us in a peasant's cottage or in a royal palace. It can set us alongside a suffering saint or raise a roadblock in the path of a scoundrel"

—John Phillips

Continuity

By Dick York



From before the beginning, God has had a plan to make man in his likeness. That purpose to make us into his image—to conform us to the express image of the Father—has never changed. Although we may not comprehend it, all of history is designed to perfect a people for His name. Through it all, He will perfect His church.

For some of us, it is difficult to relate the past and the future to what is happening in the present. There seems to be a disconnect that isolates our present experience from what preceded it or will succeed it. As a consequence, we may think that whatever we start is something new—that it is somehow ours. Therefore, each generation’s accomplishments, or even our own previous experiences, become obsolete; and what we do today has little to do with some past or future generation.

That is not the case, however. Days merge into weeks, months into years, and years become a generation; and one generation follows another to accomplish a single objective that is greater in magnitude and duration than the sum of all the generations. Thus we need a sense of history; but whether we have it or not, we are presently contributing, either deliberately or ignorantly, to the end result. As unrelated as some things may seem, every event in history and every character who performs in that event contributes to the fulfilling of God’s purpose. Many microcosms of history attest to this fact.

Moses, for example, led the children of Israel out of Egypt, but it was Joshua who led them into the Promised Land—a land that is still on center stage today. These were not two different events; there is continuity. The purpose in bringing them out of Egypt was to bring them into Canaan. As a matter of fact, that determination was made many generations before they went into Egypt, before there was a nation of Israel. Nearly five hundred years had elapsed since God had promised Abram

the land of the Canaanites; and everything that transpired during that time—the sins of Canaan, the famines that threatened Abraham’s descendants with starvation, their enslavement by the Egyptians—contributed to bringing about God’s objective. Even Moses’ transgression, which kept him personally from entering the land, did not negatively affect the continuity of Israel’s history. Nothing derails God’s plan. Rebellious people, even less-than-perfect leadership—all are contributors and therefore significant.

See how the narrative of Joshua begins: “Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, saying, ‘Moses my servant is dead.’”

We could conclude, “Well, that’s the end of Moses; now it’s Joshua’s time to do his thing.” Not so. Although Moses is dead, everything that now involves Joshua is predicated on what God had said to Moses or what He had promised to the fathers, all of whom in some way and to some degree were flawed. Just skim through Joshua chapter 1. In verse 3, notice this promise: “Every place that the sole of thy foot shall tread upon, *that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.*” Verse 5: “*As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.*” Verse 6: “...unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance this land, *which I swear unto their fathers* to give them.” Verse 7: “...observe to do according to all the law, *which Moses my servant commanded thee.*” Verse 13: “Remember the word *which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you.*” Verse 14: “Your wives...shall remain in *the land which Moses gave you...*” Verse 15: “Return unto the land of your possession...*which Moses the Lord’s servant gave you...*” Verse 17: “According as *we hearkened unto Moses* in all things, so will we hearken unto thee; only the Lord be with thee *as he was with Moses.*”

We, from our New Testament perspective,

cannot look back and say, “Oh, it was a different time then. In the Old Testament God was dealing with Israel; now he is dealing with the church. But since the church has been doing it all wrong, we need to start over with something different.”

As has been stated, God has only one plan. About six thousand years of history have unfolded since God said, “Let us make man in our image,” and He has never abandoned that purpose. God has never changed course; He has never lost control. That doesn’t mean that God has never been grieved or displeased with the actions of His people. That was the risk He knowingly and willingly took when He, of necessity, gave man a free will: you can read much about those grievous failures of men in both the Old and New Testaments. You can observe it also in your contemporaries, and perhaps even in yourself. But it does mean that God has used

everything—even the flawed things—to accomplish the good pleasure of His will. And one thing we know from the Word of God is that *all things* work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. We may—and well we should—

observe things within the present religious system that are contrary to God’s Word and therefore, counterproductive. We may encounter much that is deleterious and destructive in some of the practices of the present day church, but the saints within it have, nonetheless, been the salt of the earth until now; and those who have been saved because of it comprise a major percentage of the true body of Christ. Although many have been saved quite apart from the religious system and many others have been saved out of it—some in spite of it—many of God’s people are still very much a part of it.

It seems evident from the escalating proliferation of new churches, fellowships, and groups of various stripes, that much such

observation is taking place. New churches are as copious as new versions of the Bible, making it obvious that it is on many hearts to see a correction. But, sadly, not all good intentions produce favorable results and not all change is positive. Even commendable improvements do not guarantee enduring good health. The proof of this is seen in the fact that many of the denominations that are now considered reprehensible began as efforts to replace churches that had become or were becoming apostate. We must be aware that change produces two results, one good and the other bad.

God has put it in the hearts of many of His people to see a scriptural assembly in operation. But what does that mean? Does it mean scrapping all that has gone before and holding in contempt believers who still identify with the “traditional” church? Or does it mean putting together a program that imitates letter-perfectly

what we think we see modeled in the Book of Acts? Or is it more than that? I would say it’s more than that.

The church that we read about in the Book of Acts did not come about by imitating some former church in a previous “book of acts.” It was the product of believers

being led by the Spirit of God. If and when the time comes that a change is necessary, whatever we do must not represent simply a carnal reaction to something in our former experience that disappointed or disturbed us, even though that may have been the catalyst to cause us to seek something better; it must be an act of obedience to God with the view of edifying all the saints, not abandoning some of them. The forming of another assembly of believers is not the starting of something new but the next Spirit-led step in the unfolding of God’s work. It must not be an act of rebellion but of obedience. Otherwise, we will find ourselves reproducing what we hope will be a better version of what we just left. We tend to organize

A danger for God’s people today is to think that God’s plan is failing, that the church is being corrupted because of what they see coming into religious congregations; and therefore they withdraw, become isolated and lose their joy and their confidence that the Lord is in control.

things, and we do it according to the patterns and systems we have seen and known—or we follow some new trend or movement or man that has captured our attention. Therefore, it is likely that we will build a box much like the one we were in before, or after the pattern of some contemporary version of what is supposedly “New Testament,” and require God to work in it. This will prove to embrace the same errors or deficiencies as the one from which we escaped. But, of course, we will find *our* errors more tolerable than we did *theirs*, at least for a while. In the end, however, our denomination will be as egregious as the one we found offensive.

God does not bless organizations; He blesses people—not because He is a respecter of persons but because they walk after *His* Spirit, being led by *Him* in the pursuit of *His* eternal purpose. God blesses obedience. Even if we organize our work properly and do it letter-perfectly according to our interpretation of the Scripture, it is not guaranteed that God will bless it if we are not walking in the Spirit. A perfectly crafted box can contain corrupt fruit. If we recognize who God is and are led by his Spirit, He will lead us out of all error and guide us into all truth. God has only one church. It may presently exist in many organizations or, in some cases, where there is no organization, and He will bring His people together in His time.

Organizations have come and gone and will continue to do so. None of them have escaped deterioration or apostasy, nor will any that are yet to come, because organizations are made by men, but it is Christ who is building the church. He has been doing that since time began. Every episode in the history of nations, every incident in the history of the church, both positive and negative, has contributed to the perfecting of God’s people. When it is finished—and certainly we are close to that time—He will present to himself a glorious bride, having neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing.

As the present evangelical religious system continues to apostatize, many of God’s people are being shaken out of it. Many are not in fellowship with like-minded believers; some are even discouraged. If you are one of them, take

heart! God’s plan is not in disarray. Even though religious men, salesmen, or showmen try to put together programs that will attract crowds and build numbers, they are only contributing to the great falling away that the Scriptures have predicted. The Holy Spirit is calling for God’s sheep to “Follow Me;” and Jesus told us, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

A danger for God’s people today is to think that God’s plan is failing, that the church is being corrupted because of what they see coming into religious congregations; and therefore they withdraw, become isolated, and lose their joy and their confidence that the Lord is in control. Such is not the case. God is in charge, and what is happening today is exactly what the prophets and the apostles foretold. The great falling away will come in the guise of religious renewal. It is imperative, therefore, that we continue to follow His instruction.

Forsake not to assemble with likeminded saints, no matter how insignificant their gatherings might seem, and more so as we see the end times approaching (Hebrews 10:24,25). Read the Bible, believe it, and meditate upon it (Psalm 1). The continuity of God’s plan has adhered unerringly to the course that He has laid out in His word, and we are nearing the end of it. Rejoice, be glad, be steadfast, unmovable, abounding in the work of the Lord. Paul, in Romans 8:21-25 described the hope that we are about to see fulfilled.

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. 🙏



What Is a New Testament Church?

By Steve Montgomery



The masthead of this update states the purpose of Shield of Faith (SFMI): “Fulfilling the Great Commission by Establishing New Testament Churches.”

What do we mean by “New Testament churches”?

Entire books have been written to answer this question. I will take the most basic definition and focus on those things that SFMI considers vital for the churches.

First, let’s clarify what the church is *not*. Although nothing in the New Testament teaches against a congregation’s having its own building, the word “church” in the Bible never refers to a building. Nor does it refer to a denomination or movement. “Church” means simply an assembly of called-out ones. Public announcement is made of a gathering, and those who gather are the called-out. Christ chose this word for the company of those who believe Him, in both a local and a worldwide, time-spanning sense. It speaks of the Lord walking through the streets of this world, calling people to join themselves to Him. Those who respond are the *church*, the entire company called out of this world system to follow Christ.

Just as the entire group of all who have believed in every place throughout time in heaven and on earth make up the church of Christ, so in any locality, the entirety of believers there make up the church of that city.

In New Testament use, however, a local church is more than a theoretical number of saints in a given location. The New Testament identifies a local church as a group of born-again believers with a mutual commitment to gather regularly to exhort one another, teach one another, pray for one another, and practice the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s table.

But why do we say, “*New Testament church*”?

In one sense, of course, every Christian

church is a New Testament church. Has anyone ever heard of planting Old Testament churches? But when SFMI uses that phrase, we refer to specific aspects of church polity and practice that we believe essential for the longevity and multiplication of congregations established; and we believe these aspects are taught in the New Testament. SFMI trains workers to establish churches in these basic principals:

- **Autonomy of the local church**
- **Plurality of leadership**
- **Priesthood of the believer**
- **Centrality of Bible teaching**
- **Body ministry and an open pulpit**
- **Regular practice of the ordinances of the Lord’s table and baptism**

Autonomy of the local church:

The churches in the New Testament were autonomous in their decisions and direction. The apostles held a high degree of spiritual authority among the churches but seldom exercised that above a church’s autonomy and never to the detriment of that autonomy. Paul repeatedly uses the word “beseech,” imploring rather than commanding, appealing to them to act based on the relationship they have to Paul and to Christ. In Acts 15:28 we read that they determined not to impose on the Gentile churches anything but “these necessary things,” leaving decisions regarding the daily life of the church in the hands of the local believers. Paul trusted the Lord to lead each congregation and “commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23) and to “the Word of His grace” (Acts 20:32). Peter gave instruction on how elders should rule and left that ruling to those local leaders (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Continued on page 8

SFMI Update



Soul Winning, Lesson 1

By Jim Lucas

How long has it been since you heard teaching on this subject? It seems that not many people are that interested in winning souls. They would rather hear teaching that would be a benefit to themselves in some way, without realizing that being a soul winner is perhaps the greatest blessing next to having Jesus in you.

The very first thought I want to bring out is the need for the love of God. We will never be fruitful without it. Love for self is the greatest hindrance, and it destroys the testimony of the believer. If we haven't ever experienced the grace of God in our own lives, then we know nothing of the Cross and the great changes that take place when one surrenders his will and takes up the new abundant life in Christ Jesus.

It is quite possible to have a clear understanding of the gospel of our Lord Jesus and be able to explain it to others; but if we haven't a genuine *concern* for the ones we are endeavoring to reach, they will discern it, and we will turn them away. The soul that has a genuine love for Christ will manifest it in love for the lost.

We should never boast of ourselves or of our churches. Jesus says, "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." If you are not sure what you should say, just start by exalting Jesus and pointing out how great He is. It is also important to be a good listener. This will reveal an interest in them and at the same time give you an opportunity to find out where they are spiritually. We should not assume that they have never heard the gospel, nor should we assume that because they have been raised in a Christian home and are members of a church that they have good understanding. In either case, we simply want to discern where they are spiritually and help them to come to know Christ Jesus. Therefore, don't feel that you are wasting your time by listening to them!

We are not commanded to go and make converts, but we are commanded to go and preach the gospel and make *disciples*. When we try to make converts of individuals, they soon resent it because they feel pressured and become uncomfortable. It is not our place to convert them. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. We

need not focus on their sin, but if we preach Christ Jesus crucified, then the Holy Spirit will bring the conviction that Christ Jesus suffered *because of their sin*. I am not saying that we *don't* preach about sin; we most definitely do. But we should not direct our *focus* on their sin. Instead, we direct our focus on the fallen state of mankind in general. Then we can speak the whole council of God. They need to hear the truth. If, however, we unwisely put them on the defensive, they won't hear it. Don't assume that just because they are uncomfortable, it means they are under conviction. I have made many people uncomfortable unnecessarily.

Avoid having a canned message. If we find ourselves always presenting the gospel in the same way, it can lack the anointing that we desire. If we depend upon our knowledge and past experience then we are not being led by the Holy Spirit. The anointing will be there for those who depend upon His leading.

Another common mistake is to assume it is up to you to bring this person to Christ Jesus at this particular time. There is a time and place for everything. A Spirit-led person will know the time to speak or to listen, to go or to stay. Don't leave if it is time to stay, but don't stay if it is time to leave. Don't try to reap when it is time to sow, and don't fail to reap in the day of harvest. 🙏



These churches were not part of a denomination with headquarters in Jerusalem, Rome, or anywhere else. They were independent assemblies voluntarily cooperating and communicating with other churches, with a free flow of visitation, ministry and money that crossed state and national borders. They did not isolate themselves, but decisions for the life of the church were local, with no ecclesiastic structure over the churches.

Occasionally people refer incorrectly to Acts 15 as the first inter-church council. In fact, only the churches in Antioch and Jerusalem were represented there. Antioch took a certain doctrinal issue to Jerusalem not because Jerusalem was the “Holy See” but because the erroneous teaching had *come from* Jerusalem (Acts 15:1).

In New Testament pattern, local churches are autonomous.


Plurality of leadership

“And when they had ordained them *elders* in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

“And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the *elders* of the church” (Acts 20:17).


“Is any sick among you? let him call for the *elders* of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14).

In each verse above (and in many others) we see that the churches of the New Testament were governed by a plurality of elders. In Titus, we read: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain *elders* in every city...” (Titus 1:5). Again, in each church (singular) there were *elders* (plural) whose responsibility it was to rule (1 Timothy 3:5, 5:17), to lead through example (1 Peter 5:1-3) and to feed the flock (Acts 20:28). The New Testament pattern is not that of single-man leadership in the local church.

In the next update, we’ll look at the importance of the other aspects SFMI draws from the New Testament and teaches as important in establishing churches: the priesthood of the believer, the centrality of Bible teaching, body ministry, an open pulpit, and the regular practice of the Lord’s table and baptism. 

“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:24).

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).



Missionary Reports



Ivory Coast, West Africa Jerry and Cherry Skiles

Greetings:

Cherry and I recently came out of Ghana into Ivory Coast. Bole is the small border town near the Ivory Coast frontier that we use to ferry our vehicle across the river dividing the two countries. It has administrative offices for that region of Ghana. The Kamara people live in the area, and during a March 2007 SFMI team survey trip in Ghana, Ed Enns, David Kangni, and his wife, Mariam, made contact with them. The Kamara tribe has no known Christians. The tribe converted from animism to Islam years ago. In recent years, a SFMI team has done discipleship and training in Bole. There is also a cashew research center there, and on this trip I stopped to pay a courtesy visit at the center and to learn about their research. The first and second in charge were not in the area so I was delegated to go and see the third. During my visit with him I discovered that he was a pastor of one of the local churches and that he had attended some of the training courses conducted by the SFMI team!

He was a mature man, and I could tell that he was truly impressed by what the young men on the team had been teaching. I explained that the Kamara people near him were still without the gospel and that it was the Lord's will and purpose to see them reached before His return. I left the visit thinking how God's ways are so providentially ordered. Most likely, it will not be the last contact I have with him or the area.

We arrived in the village in the evening, and the next day Hovare came for a visit. He explained that there had been a series of armed robbers in the area and that the son of one of the elders from Gogo (the village we had lived in when we worked with the Loron) had been shot dead by the thieves.

SFMI Update

The local populations are very cautious now. They move in groups and avoid night travel. The rebels who control the area have been contacted. The local people are suspicious of them, but no one knows who the robbers are. Gold has been discovered in the area, which has brought a lot of newcomers, making identification of people difficult. Hovare says the rebels are not checking people traveling on the road, as they did before, because of fear. Cherry and I live in a village off the road far enough that strangers are quickly recognized, so we are safer than most, still not forgetting or overlooking that our Lord is our protection.

Cherry has been checking sick people in preparation for the medical team in February. It is emotionally draining. Yesterday, she saw a young man who has pain behind his ears. He has recently lost both

his hearing and his ability to keep his balance, so he now crawls around. He has a young wife and family. Cherry returns from these visits emotionally wrung out, but those in need keep coming.

Some examples of health issues.

My daughter's supervisor is an African American. He spoke to me about visiting Africa. I told him that I would do what I could, to help him. As I was traveling this time, I began to think about the adjustments he would face in a short trip. The big cities of Africa normally challenge Americans, and the further you work into the rural areas the more you feel out of sorts. Roads deteriorate; clothing deteriorates until you see naked children and half-clothed adults. Physically, the signs

of poverty become obvious—malnutrition, people with skin over bones, or pot-bellied children; people with untreated illnesses, and families living in huts that most American's would not want their animals



to live in become the norm.

Then one arrives in the rebel area, and the insecurity that it brings, along with the lack of people to take care of any problems you may encounter. If a foreigner asks someone, “How are things?” the stranger most likely will think twice about asking the second time. The Loron have a proverbial story about the hyena who asked what caused redness in the eyes. It’s a funny story about the (stupid) hyena that got his education in sorrow and misery.

Living well on this earth comes about by adhering to laws and principles given by God in the Bible. If people want to see how distant and consequential living life alienated from God can be, come to a rural area of Africa where the gospel has had little impact. The wonderful news is that Faith in the Word of God can and will transform lives when the Bible is taught rightly. Individuals have to respond, and good teaching is needed for the change to happen.

Pray that we would teach and administrate the Word of God correctly and that people would have ears to hear and hearts to respond to the Word.

Jerry Skiles 

Rogers, Arkansas Jim & Fran Lucas

Dear Saints,

I want to thank all of you who are holding us up in prayer, and I also want to thank those who fasted for the outreach to Saint Cloud, Minnesota. Our heavenly Father responded in a wonderful way.

He obviously had prepared the way before us. The tent site was excellent, located in the downtown area, but on the east side, which is considered the poor side of town. The timing was excellent because we had a thunderstorm that nearly turned into a tornado the day before we set up the tent—then another, much lighter one on the last day. We were unaware that the dates scheduled put us there during the time of the county fair, and we were located only a few blocks



from the fairgrounds.

Our first day we had a visit from a pastor (Tevis) and his wife (Synica)—they both really love Jesus. They are colored in more ways than one—they are black, and they also reveal the beauty of the Lord in a very special way. They wanted to know why we chose St. Cloud, and we explained how the Father had led us in that decision. They didn’t question it at all—in fact, they believed that He had sent us for their benefit in many ways. They explained that they also were preparing to set up a tent for evangelism for the first time. Tevis said that when he told his wife that he had rented the site for two days (August 27-28), she said, “Yes, but there will be a tent set before that and for much longer time, and it won’t be [ours].” About two days later, he saw our tent and he knew God had sent us. They bought our breakfast and saw to it that we ate every morning for the two-week period that we were there. We would have breakfast with him, then would spend a good while discussing the word of God with him. He had been taught the prosperity doctrine but he readily received teaching from the Word on these things. Before that, he had been a Catholic, and our Lord Jesus brought him out of that. They both are growing in their faith and understanding of God and His Word. He told me after a few days that from the first time he came to the tent we had been a rebuke to him without saying anything, just in the way that we had set up, with no big fanfare—no name other than Jesus was displayed. We didn’t have a big rock band and our PA system was quite small. He said he thought that if Jesus were to come to town, He would come in this fashion. Tevis had been planning on having a rock band and doing a lot of different things to try to draw the people in. But now he says he will not do that, and he will be content with those whom the Lord sends. He realizes that to think you have to be successful is pride and that our Lord Jesus is more concerned in our obedience to him than He is in our success, and the



way we do things portrays who we are.

We found out that Sister Synica's car had a defective starter, and they were going to charge her five hundred dollars to fix it. We prayed over it, and Jack and the boys were able to fix it for about forty dollars.

The first week, there were three of us—Jack Burwell, Ethan, a 15-year-old young man ready to serve, and myself. We went house-to-house, sharing the gospel, but we kept one person at the tent most of the time to be available to minister to anybody who should come in. Some days it was one after another walking in or riding their bikes in; some had real genuine spiritual needs and wanted to talk, and others were just curious. Many just wanted to thank us for what we were doing. Daily we had people coming by and giving us twenty dollars or more just to support what they thought was a good ministry.

The second week, Joel Barnard and his brother Jesse came up from Powell, Wyoming, to help us. The timing was good, because this was the week of the fair. The first day of the fair, the authorities who managed the fairgrounds told Jack and the boys that they could not bring the gospel literature onto the fair grounds nor could they talk to people about the gospel. We questioned their reasoning for this; but we prayed about it, and the Lord Jesus showed us what he told Pontius Pilate on the day they arrested him. "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18: 36).

We were content to not take in literature but just go in and talk one-on-one with people. One or two would go in, and the rest would remain outside where we could give out literature and wear the sandwich board with scripture on it. One would

preach at the gate as people were coming and going. The authorities were not happy with this, but they tolerated it until the last day. The fair was to close at five PM. At four PM I was preaching at the main gate. They came and said that the land outside the fairgrounds also belonged to them and that I would have to leave. I told them "Ok, I'll go," even though I questioned their authority to do this and told them, "let me say one thing before I leave. If you want God's blessing on your city and fair activities, this is not the way to get it. The preaching of God's Word saves people from hell, and if anyone is responsible for keeping the Word of God from being preached, God will hold them accountable on Judgment Day." I believe our Lord Jesus wanted these men standing in the way of God's messengers to know that they are putting themselves in jeopardy. We still managed to preach right up to one hour before closing.

There's a lot more to report, but for now I want to thank all of you who labored with us in this outreach.

PS: Our heavenly Father certainly knows how to bring encouragement to his children. We just received an e-mail from a dear brother living in Mali, Africa. His name is Siaka (Isaac) and we met Isaac in Irkutsk, Siberia, Russia, in 1993 or '94. He was a student in the university in Irkutsk, living in sin with a Russian girl, but they gave their lives to Jesus and became faithful disciples:

Praise the Lord!

Thanks for the reply. I am very delighted receiving your contact! Yes it is a real pleasure to hear from you after this long and quiet time. Yes, I love Jesus; and I am growing in the faith. Life in Mali is not too bad. It is a poor Sahelian country, not seaside, but peaceful. I am living in Bamako the capital city with my family, but I am traveling a lot inside and out of the country.

Since 1998, I married my Russian girlfriend. Her name is Anna. We've got 3 lovely boys, with the oldest one 11 years old and the youngest 4 years old. Daniel Vladimir is the first, Serge Luc the second, and Antoine Thomas the last.


Since we arrived from Irkutsk, Anna has been assisted by the women from the Church we attend. She is now working as Director at the one of the factory making mineral water, soft drink and plastic bottles. We received quite a few visits from my parents-in-law coming from Russia to visit us. Maybe this summer they will visit us again.

Myself? I am working with British/Canadian gold company as project manager in Guinea, Mali, etc. That is roughly about us and how we are living.

Currently, I am in UK for roughly one week, meeting with my CEO.

This was very encouraging to Francille and me, to hear after so long that they are still in Jesus and growing in their faith!

This came at a good time to spur us on in this time of battle for souls. We should not grow weary in our labor of love. There is too much at stake! I know our Father will be pleased if you choose to join us in our endeavors. We will try to keep you posted on the progress of things.

*In Jesus our Lord,
James and Francille Lucas* 

Valle De Juarez, Mexico Ed and Abby Drysdale

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the last few months we have seen changes, some good and some bad. I have to keep reminding



Evangelistic street scene.

myself that the Lord is in control and knows best—Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” I’m sure you all can relate to the fact that when it comes to ministering to someone who is close to your heart, you want nothing more than to see them get saved, and yet they try your patience. Can you all relate? They might tell you that they are okay and even confess they know Jesus, but does their life reflect it? Are they walking with the Lord? I’m not trying to be judgmental, but does the Bible not say that we will know they are Christians by their fruit? You also know that their life in Christ Jesus would be a millions time better if they would summit their pride and realize they can’t do it alone. The price has already been paid at the Cross:



His blood was sufficient.

Well, I believe that is where we are right now. The Lord is doing some pruning in the church. It hurts to see that some have quietly excused themselves from meeting, and yet the Lord is adding to His church.



My daughter Nicole and Claudia singing in church.

There is a new family that has been meeting with us on Friday nights, as well as at Sunday morning service. Samuel and Rosario have three boys: Alex 11, Daniel 10, and Moses, who is 8. This family started coming just because we started praying for their youngest son, Moses, who has had some strange problems that the doctors can’t seem to diagnose. For some reason or another, one day when he got out of bed the right part of his body just wouldn’t function. He started losing mobility. He had problems walking and using the right side of his body.

Misael and Claudia had befriended them and started asking for prayer for Moses. So we began to pray for healing, and within a short period of time, Rosario was excited see that her boy was getting better! One Friday night, she showed up and wanted to thank us for praying for her boy and to show gratitude. Her husband had told Rosario, “If you want to go, I’ll drop you off, and then I’ll pick you up; but I’m not going in.”

He kept himself at a distance for a while not wanting to really attend the studies. It wasn’t until he came to the couples event that his life began to take a turn in the right direction. The Lord used that couples event to show him where he was lacking and how he needed to have Christ centered in his family. In the ensuing weeks, we invited several brothers from out of town to come and minister and to encourage the brothers here. It made a difference, because Samuel began to attend more faithfully, his heart began to

soften towards things of the Lord.

One of the things the Lord emphasized to him and his wife was the importance of raising their kids in a godly manner. The Lord was drawing them in through their kids. We had informed them of a Christian camp that was going to be held in July, and we started to raise funds so that all the kids who were attending church could go. To my surprise, Samuel had asked his kids, "Would you rather go to the beach or this Christian camp?" Hands down, they all wanted to go to the camp!

When their kids returned, we let them share the following Sunday. It was very moving to hear that Alex and Daniel had made decisions to follow Christ. As for Samuel and Rosario, they are not far behind their kids. We are encouraged to see a continual desire to learn more about Jesus and to set an example for their kids.

As for Oscar, he is really growing in the Lord and is doing some teaching in the church. He also has created a blog for our church. Continue to pray for Oscar's wife, Gaby. She has completely stopped coming.

Misael and Claudia are taking over some responsibilities of the church. They are such a blessing to us! He is sharing and teaching as well. Misael is like a young Timothy to me. He really is a big help!



Oscar ministering



Contact: Want to know more? Call us **anytime** at (541) 728-5946. Yes, that is a U.S. number!

Want more regular updates? Search for Abby Drysdale on Facebook. If you prefer pen and ink, here is our address:

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The Drysdales 🌐

Atotonilco, Mexico
Daniel & Mari Fontanez

Mari and I are truly grateful to all of you who are investing time in prayer for us. Thank you for joining with us in the work of the Lord. Only the Lord knows



Here we are, singing to the Lord at Maguey last Monday. Juan and Blanca are to the left in this picture.

how precious and powerful your prayers really are. So, while we express our gratitude to all of you prayer warriors, we also would like to inform you how you can continue to pray for us. There are a few people who are with us at the Maguey church plant, Juan and Blanca, and Mario and Rosy. These two couples live in the housing development there and are members of the Casa de Pan y Alabanza church here in Atotonilco. I'm really encouraged to say that these couples picked up the work when the team was at the Yakima Valley Outreach. They were laboring for the Lord, setting up and taking down the canopies and chairs. Juan even shared one of the Bible studies while I was gone. Our prayer is that the Lord would lift them up as leaders. We pray that the Lord would build them up and equip them with the love and vision for the work at Maguey. Please be praying for them as we search to inspire, involve, and encourage them to engage the work there. Also pray for Mari as she works with the children's classes. These are mainly evangelistic classes; so pray that the Lord would bring salvation to these kids and that they



Of the three women, Rosy is the one in the middle.



Diana with the kids.

would walk with the Lord. Pray also for Diana and Chuy, who are helping Mari with the classes. Intercede before the Lord for patience, creativity, salvation and endurance. One last request: sadly, Chely, who has professed faith in the Lord, has (for a while now) not been at the meetings. Please pray that the Lord would work in her heart and that we might also find from the Lord the words to encourage her walk. Once again, we send out a big THANK YOU to all of you who pray for us. May the Lord bless you. 🙏

Cliff Huffmire is a long time friend of SFMI and has faithfully ministered in Jiquilpan, Mexico for many years. He recently noted the death of Jorge Rivera, a familiar name to many readers of the newsletter.

Jiquilpan, Mexico

Cliff Huffmire

I met Jorge Rivera in March of 1980. I first heard of him a few months earlier when my friend Steve Montgomery had sent out a call for prayer for the son of a lady in the church in Guadalajara. Jorge had promised himself, after over two years in prison, that he would never return to prison life. When the police cornered him driving a stolen car, he pulled a gun. He was shot five or six times and taken to the civil hospital, where doctors gave no chance to survive and left him on a gurney for several hours. At 6 am, a different doctor looked at him, realized that he was still conscious, and decided to try to help him.

Jorge survived. Over the next weeks of recovery, he listened to and believed the gospel.

Jorge was still the same man that he had been before regeneration in the sense of knowing no half-hearted way of life. After being a leader of crime and evil, he became one of the most sold-out Christians we had known. He quickly learned to share his faith among his friends and through preaching on the street. He was a learner, and though he had been kicked out of secondary school for setting it on fire, never to return, he had a very insightful way of learning from the Scriptures and making practical applications.

He became one of our most prolific disciples, always eager to learn or work. He wanted to be a minister. A year after marrying Blanca and birthing

their first child (Karla), he asked to move to Jiquilpan in order to study everything that I had learned in the Missionary Training Center. After working with me to establish five churches in and around Jiquilpan over five years (Samuel and Melisa were born around Jiquilpan), he and Blanca applied to the home church in Guadalajara to be sent to Morocco as church planters. They were in ministry there for eight years before the government expelled them for evangelism. Their youngest son, Mikael, was born in Morocco.

Upon returning to Mexico they settled in La Barca to help establish the fledgling church there. During that time Jorge got a vision for starting a church in Atotonilco, and invited the Montgomerys to join them in the effort. After a couple of years, Steve began to notice, and Blanca expressed her concern, that Jorge had begun drinking. After a time, Steve had to ask Jorge to return to his sending church in Guadalajara to be under authority and away from the fledgling church in Atotonilco.

To make a long story short, Jorge was excommunicated and then restored to fellowship twice over the last 10 years. He developed hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver.

In 2004, I asked him how he had fallen so low. He told me that he had felt that God owed him something; that he had suffered through many years in ministry, and felt that God should reward him with the money and prestige that he desired. He confessed at the time that it was sin, but that was the reason he had rebelled. He told Blanca recently that he had become like Samson: he kept getting up and going out as before, until one day he couldn't get out.

As I spoke at Jorge's funeral on August 25, I expressed the desire that we might all take a warning from the last painful weeks of Jorge's life, and death: "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). "God is not mocked; whatsoever one sows, that shall he also reap. If he sows to the flesh corruption, he will of the flesh reap corruption..." (Galatians 6:7-8). "Therefore, let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Pray for Blanca, Karla, Samuel, Melisa, and Mikael; they have suffered much through the last ten years. Blanca expressed to Javier Sanchez this week to encourage families to reconcile quickly as she regrets being so angry that she wasted the last three years with Jorge, sick as he was, but sober.

Cliff Huffmire 🙏



C. T. Studd, in his own words...

During the years of 1896 & 1897, C.T. toured American universities on the behalf of the Student Volunteer Movement. Studd wrote regarding one meeting at Pennsylvania's Bucknell College:

“Had a splendid student's meeting at 6:30. The Lord was greatly with us. After some hymns and a prayer, I spoke for about 30 minutes; then all got on knees, and one after another gave themselves to God in such sentences as ‘Lord, take me as I am,’ ‘I will go with Thee, Lord Jesus.’ There must have been a score of them. Oh, surely that is the sweetest music that can ever be heard by any ears, and if sweet to us, how much sweeter to Jesus. Afterwards I got them to sing a hymn:

“The cleansing blood I see, I see,
I plunge, and oh, it cleanseth me.”

In one of his last letters written to his family in England, C.T. Studd reflected on the work and events of his earthly life:

“As I believe I am now nearing my departure from this world, I have but a few things to rejoice in; they are these:

1. That God called me to China and I went in spite of utmost opposition from all my loved ones.
2. That I joyfully acted as Christ told that rich young man to act.
3. That I deliberately at the call of God, when alone on the Bibby liner in 1910, gave up my life for this work, which was to be henceforth not for the Sudan only, but for the whole unevangelized World.

My only joys therefore are that when God has given me a work to do, I have not refused it.”

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Calling Mighty Men of Valor!


Who has not thrilled at the exploits of David's mighty men? Yet the first description of these men was less than flattering: "*And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them...*" (1 Samuel 22:2).

What made them into warriors of renown? Time with David and each other, serving, sweating and learning to use their weapons. The

cave of Adullam was God's training.

Are you looking for intensive Christian training, with time to serve, sweat, and learn to use the sword of the Spirit? This January, SFMI will hold a 6-month training, with an additional 3 months for those called to cross-cultural missions.

If you want in-depth, life-changing training that will equip you to serve your King and His people, email sfmi@sfmiusa.org right away.

Time to enroll is short, so don't put it off! 

Can You Help? 1, 5, or 10 Talents Wanted!

For several years now SFMI has hosted a website. When it first was designed, it looked similar to other website designs. Well, it is time for a change. We want to remove the frames. We would like a simple background on the home page where we could alter the text, display photos, and add links using the program Dreamweaver. Our in-house resources are limited, that's why we're asking for the use of your talents. Would you see this as a ministry opportunity in your walk with the Lord? Would you like to assist us in having an appealing, top-notch website? Email SFMI if you would like to participate in this project and give us your ideas (sfmi@sfmiusa.org).