

SHIELD OF FAITH MISSION INTERNATIONAL

SFMI

**Prayer/News
UPDATE**

Fulfilling the Great Commission Through Establishing New Testament Churches

An image of two astronauts in white space suits floating in the blackness of space, with the Earth's horizon visible below them.

Proverbs: Knowing the Truth

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Editorial Notes

It is a marvel to us that the Lord inspired fallible man to write Scripture. He could have crafted the written word in heaven and conveniently placed copies throughout the world. He did not. Instead, he used flawed men such as the wise but sinful Solomon who seemed to ignore the wisdom given in a measure to him not seen in others. The Book of Proverbs is the Lord's faithful reminder that objective truth is something that the Lord has promised to reveal to all His children. In this issue, Dick York reminds us that reading and understanding is insufficient without obedience and application.

In a similar vein, Jim Lucas contrasts the promises of God with the doctrines of men. Again, "it is important not only to come to Jesus, but also to abide in Him."

Richard McDaniel's article on body ministry provides a good overview of this sometimes neglected provision of God for the edification of His elect.

Continuing the theme of this issue, Steve Montgomery reminds us to "Take Heed to What You Hear." The Lord expects us to not only "hear" His word, but also to understand and obey it.

Item for prayer.

The training program begins January 17. There are presently 8 student applications.

There is a need for housing. We would like to see a place where they could all be together. There are also those who will teach. Those who teach generally do so at their own expense. Richard McDaniel has a full time position as Director of Training. Full time, for him, begins at least a month before the students arrive and lasts for some time after the training ends. Richard also has on his heart to visit again the brethren in Kenya and Mexico. He has been asked to teach some of the things that are taught in the training program to some of the smaller local fellowships in the Northwest.

Therefore, we are adding him to our list of full-time missionaries. Any financial aid the Lord may put on your heart for him can be designated and sent through the Shield of Faith Mission International.

Ministry Opportunity

We would like you to enter into earnest prayer with us for a full-time secretary/bookkeeper. This individual would need to have a heart for missions and the ministry of SFMI. This position requires a working knowledge of computers and a willingness and aptitude to be trained in Quickbooks and any other programs the mission utilizes in its ministry. If you are reading this and God has spoken to you, or if you know someone who might be interested, please have them contact SFMI by email.

Our Cover: What does outer space have to do with the Proverbs? Man's tentative "exploration" of outer space began with discovering and understanding the principles of science that enable any "venturing" beyond earth possible. Man learned about gravity, energy, and a multitude of other considerations that enable a manned rocket to boost its fragile cargo out of the atmosphere and into the airless realm of space. To do so requires understanding and "obeying" those principles of science that allow these small steps for man. If so much understanding and obedience of natural scientific principles is necessary (remember what defective "o" rings can produce) to accomplish a temporal triumph, how much those principles of eternal wisdom?

Proverbs: Knowing the Truth

By Dick York



Knowing the truth is not the same as believing it or walking in it. Unbelief is often disguised by the reciting of facts that hearers would assume the speaker believes or practicing religious acts that observers presume are heartfelt. The proverbs of Solomon are a case in point.

We have no doubt, since they are part of the canon of Scripture, that they were written by inspiration of God and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. However, it has been said that “God builds with crooked sticks,” meaning that not every instrument that God used was a perfect man. In fact, it is evident that all of God’s people were flawed to some degree; and God did not conceal that fact. The only perfect one is God himself, and the only perfect humanity was the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why he said, “Look unto *me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:22).

The reason for the writing of these proverbs by this gifted king—the wisest of men—is stated succinctly in the first six verses. Solomon was determined to impart knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and discretion to his children, and justice, judgment, equity, subtlety, and learning to his successor. But it is evident that knowledge and discretion are not imparted to young men by the simple stating of truth. Solomon’s heir did not gain discretion or wisdom simply by reading what his father wrote, if indeed he read it at all. It was under Rehoboam’s reign that the kingdom was divided because of his lack of wisdom and discretion. He rejected the good counsel of old and wise men and received the counsel of his young and foolish contemporaries.

But the underlying cause of Rehoboam’s

error lay not only in his own indiscretion but in that of his reputedly wise yet incredibly foolish father who, disregarding all that he had written, ignored his own counsel. In Proverbs 1:20-22 Solomon declared that wisdom is everywhere, uttering her voice in the streets, crying in the chief places of concourse and in the openings of the gates, pleading with the simple ones to turn from their simplicity, the scorners from their scorning, and fools from their folly. Amazingly, she gets little response. Blinded and deafened by political ambitions, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, and the raging of hormones, fools, no matter how much wisdom they may have imbibed or how much knowledge they may have absorbed, when yielding to the appetites of their carnal nature or the ambition of their swollen egos, demonstrate as much ignorance as those who have known nothing of the truth.

In spite of wisdom’s promised legacy, which Solomon recorded—“Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you...whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil,”—he himself turned a deaf ear. It was Moses who prophesied that Israel would demand a king like all the other nations had, and he also instructed them as to what kind of restraints would govern their king’s behavior: “He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses... neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold....to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel” (Deuteronomy 17:16-20).

Solomon rejected Moses’ instruction and grossly violated the word to which he had exhorted his son to be obedient. Solomon had

a navy, which, once every three years, brought silver and gold, ivory, and other things. He made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones and had horses brought out of Egypt. He loved many foreign women of the nations concerning which the LORD had said, “Ye shall not go in to them, and neither shall they come in unto you, for surely they will turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon clave unto these in love. He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines; and his wives turned away his heart after other gods. He went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Malcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. He built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon; and likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burned incense and sacrificed unto their gods, and the LORD was angry (1 Kings chapters 10-11).

The consequence was what he had written of wisdom’s decree:

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my arm, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for they have hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD. They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (Proverbs 1:24-32)

God told Solomon, “Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have

commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee” (1 Kings 11:11). Solomon did not walk in the counsel he had given, and neither did his son Rehoboam. As a result, the kingdom was divided; and Israel was confirmed in idolatry, which led, ultimately, to the captivity of the nation.

Perhaps we see this as just another “Bible story” and not as a piece of history that has been recorded for our admonition. However, it is factual and purposeful—an example of a real and present danger.


What constitutes the “falling away” of which the Bible prophesies? Does it mean the loss of orthodoxy or the lessening of religion? Obviously, that was not true in the case of Solomon; he did not retract his counsel nor cease to be religious. He just ceased to *apply* what God had taught him. He demonstrated more tolerance for freedom of religion, even to the point of participation.

He exercised less resistance to the incursion of the enemy’s devices and increasingly less sensitivity to conscience. Corruption starts at the core. The label doesn’t change; the outward appearance remains the same. But the motives change. Selfless worship of the LORD because He is worthy gradually changes to become an exercise that entertains me or makes me feel good about myself. Self begins to replace true worship of a holy God. “Keep your heart,” Solomon wrote, “for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 9:23). Yes, Solomon wrote that—and ignored it. But in spite of the defects of the vessel, the counsel is from the LORD.

We have witnessed the fall of our nation. The labels are the same though; the pictures, the banners, the patriotic slogans, all bravely persist. Copious numbers of talk show hosts rehearse *ad nauseam* the deplorable state of our nation with not a hint of the godly wisdom that alone can provide an enduring solution. And, if you have been paying attention, you have discerned that the inward corruption is beginning to ooze

Until our lives are governed by the truths we profess to believe, we, like Solomon, are contributors to that which will bring God’s judgment upon us.

through the label; and in spite of our religious appearance and brave attempts to preserve our Christian orthodoxy, we are looking more and more like what we have become. Being a good, patriotic, and conservative American no longer equates with being “Christian.” The time has come to abandon such a notion and realize that all flesh is flesh. Whether conservative or liberal, religious or irreligious, “*All* flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away” (1 Peter 1:24). Comparative righteousness is no longer acceptable; man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. Saving the nation and preserving our liberties is no longer the issue. The solution lies in our personal relationships to the holy God, whose Word we know is true and that we profess to believe. Until our lives are governed by the truths we profess to believe, we, like Solomon, are contributors to that which will bring God’s judgment upon us. What we offer the world as wisdom means very little if we demonstrate by our actions that we don’t believe it.

A nation is only as holy as the people who populate it. Let us no longer be pretenders. Let us not wait for the whole nation or even the whole church to respond. We must make it a matter of *individual responsibility*. The only thing we have to offer to the deliverance of our land is personal repentance and revival. Every man shall give account of himself to God. We must not let our nominal “Christianity” or our orthodoxy deceive us into thinking we are not part of the problem. Let us today seek God’s face for a personal revival this year. We can contribute nothing greater than that to the solving of the problems that have befallen us, and nothing other than that will be anything but a contribution to the problem. 

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SFMI Update

Missionary News, continued from page 14

This letter is written not only to inform you of our new situation but also to ask for your prayers. We value the prayers of God’s people more than anything else. In future letters, we will be more specific about prayer needs but for now there are several things:

1. The next training program begins on January 17th. We have 8 trainees this time. One immediate need is for housing. We want the Lord’s anointing on this 6-month program. We see it as an opportunity not only to train individuals but to work together as a team for the advance of the Kingdom.
2. Pray that we might be steadfast and unmoveable, trusting always in the Lord and in His promises. He knows our needs.
3. Pray for healthy bodies. I don’t want to go into detail, but we’ve had a series of health issues in our family lately. It’s been bringing stress, and we need to have victory. God is sustaining Elijah, but we always like to keep him in prayer too.
4. Pray for the ministry in local churches, for help in making arrangements, and for these times to bear much fruit. Pray for anointed ministry. The inspiration of the Spirit is the key to fruitful ministry.

We would love to visit with any of the churches or small groups of saints who invite us to come. For us, it is always a time of mutual encouragement. Keep in mind, too, that we can put together a segment of the training for your fellowship, in accord with your needs. Write or call; we are always glad to hear from the saints. I will put our contact information here and also that of the mission.

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In His service,
Richard McDaniel 



The Promises of God vs. the Doctrines of Men

By Jim Lucas

“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1 :2). Our Heavenly Father was the first to proclaim the gospel (good news). The promise of eternal life is indeed good news! In every generation there have been those who take great comfort in the promise of God; for example: “Abel who offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained a witness that he was righteous” (Hebrews 11:4). Enoch fully trusted in the promise of God. He so pleased the Father that he was translated and did not see death (see Hebrews 11:5,6). “Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness” (Romans 4 :20-22). We are told, “But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Romans 4 :24).

Unfortunately, in every generation there are also those who do not believe the promise of God. Look at Cain, who was told that if he did well, he would be accepted (see Genesis 4:7). But he did not choose to do well; instead, he slew his own brother. “For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” (Romans 3:3). Many have not believed; nevertheless, the promise of God, who cannot lie, remains as true today as when He first proclaimed it. It’s important to understand that many will consider the promise of God and embrace it in part but will never become fully persuaded and will perish in unbelief. Faith is not an option. We are *expected* to believe God:

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he

believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (John 5:9-11)

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, laying aside the commandment of God. (Mark 7:7,8)

This is what Jesus told the Pharisees, but this is similar to what many are still doing today. The promise of God has been put aside to address a question, “Can you lose your salvation?” Over the years, many have endeavored to answer this question, and the majority have divided into two groups: Calvinists and Arminians. The teaching of John Calvin and Jacob Arminius have brought great confusion, simply because the question is not relevant! Salvation is of God; it has nothing to do with you. God has promised. Either you believe the promise, or you don’t. Therefore, let us fear God and

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. (Hebrews 3 :12-14)

Many profess to believe who are not partakers of Christ, but those who are fully persuaded will remain steadfast unto the end. The Apostle John speaks about those who have gone out from amongst the believers. Like the tares that abide among the wheat,

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (1 John 2 :19)

It’s important not only to come to Jesus but also to abide in Him. Many come and go but never

manage to become rooted and grounded. Notice how Paul prayed for the Saints in Ephesus: “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love” (Ephesians 3:16,17). This process is quicker for some than for others, but *all* must be rooted and grounded by faith in the love of God.

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. (1 John 2:24,25)


We all need that faith that worketh by love, which enables us to rest in the promise of God. We love God because He first loved us. Those who are convinced that God loves them unconditionally trust Him and rest in His promise. They are not trying to appease Him but are simply trusting in His good intentions for them. This is why the children of Israel were told:

And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God (Ezekiel 20:20).

We are no longer under the law of Moses, but the law foreshadows the many benefits that we find in Christ Jesus by faith. For example, by

faith, His *righteousness* is imputed unto us. Also, the case in point is the Sabbath, or rest, that was given to the children of Israel one day a week and foreshadows the “rest” that is promised by our Lord Jesus—not just one day a week but forever. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Many are professing to believe who do not have this all-important sign that they are under the Lordship of Jesus. In order to enter into the yoke of Jesus, there must be a complete surrender to His will. This is not possible for those who are not convinced that He loves them and who don’t understand that He has only good intentions for them.

The “rest” is the sign that you are surrendered to his Lordship. This can come only if we will relinquish unto Him all the cares of life.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith : but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb 10:35-39) 

Take Heed What You Hear, continued from page 8

And when we understand what is being said here—and what is not being said—we can understand the rest of the phrase:


...with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

The presupposition is that what we receive, we will pass on to others. “Take heed, pay attention to what the I am teaching you,” the Lord Jesus says, “because if you pay little attention and learn sloppily, you will have little to give to others.”

Often, we attend church meetings only to receive for ourselves. We measure the value of a message by how much application there was for

us. Yet Christ tells His disciples that we are taught so that we might teach. We receive that we might give. He tells them to pay close attention to what He is teaching because they are expected to teach it to others. They need to get it so that they can give it. And He also tells them that how much they will continue to learn is proportionate to how much they are able to give. If they didn’t learn it well enough to teach others, they won’t be entrusted with more. It is to those who hear, those who pay attention and take heed to what they are taught, that more shall be given.

Taught that we might teach. Receiving that we might give. Growing by giving. It is as we invest what we learn into others that we are given more.

How urgent it is that we take heed what we hear! 



Take Heed What You Hear

Steve Montgomery



And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. (Mark 4:24)

These words of Christ carry a key for our growth and for growth of the churches. But to capture what is said, we need to see what is *not* being said. This verse is often seen as a warning: “Be careful what you hear!” The context of Mark 4, however, shows this is not what the verse is saying.

Context

1. The Parable of the Sower:

This parable presents four different “grounds” into which the Word is sown, each representing different responses that people have toward that Word. The first, though exposed to the message of Christ, don’t really hear it, and Satan takes from them even the little they take in. The second hear but don’t receive the message personally, that is, they don’t pay sufficient attention to genuinely understand. The third group hear but don’t produce fruit—in this case, that first fruit of repentance. But of the fourth group Jesus says, “these are they which are sown on good ground; such as *hear* the word, and *receive* it, and *bring forth fruit...*” A key emphasis of this parable is the urgency of paying attention to, listening well, considering and capturing what the Word of God teaches.

2. Verse 9: “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.”

It is common to hear fairly exotic interpretations of this phrase, but the actual sense is something much more prosaic than is usually explained. Jesus is simply saying, “If you have ears, use them!” After making the point in the parable that paying attention to the Word is urgent, He finishes with the exhortation to put our ears—and our minds—to work.

3. Verse 10-12: Verse 10 says, “And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.” Matthew records an additional question: “Why speakest thou unto them in parables?” (Matthew 13:10). Both Mark and Matthew give us the Lord’s response:

And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. (Mark 4:11-12)

Again, the emphasis is on listening. They will not be converted because they will not make the effort to understand what they are hearing.

4. Finally, we come to the immediate context of Mark 4:24, verses 21-22:

And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

The point here, of course, is that Jesus did not come to hide His teaching, revealing it only to a select few. Rather, He came that the light might shine broadly. According to John 3:19, the condemnation is not that the light is not seen but rather that it is seen and men reject it. God did not send His Son into the world to be hidden under a bushel, and Jesus taught nothing in secret. Anything that was (historically, prior to the incarnation) hidden is now revealed in Christ. The point again is that the truth is available, not secreted away; and if we will only pay attention, search, consider, and meditate on what the Lord Jesus says, we will understand it.

The context shouts to us that the phrase, “Take heed what you hear,” is not a cautionary phrase, warning us to filter our hearing or even limit how much of the Bible we hear; but rather, it is an exhortation to pay attention! Take heed, look at, listen closely, be alert to, think about what you are reading and hearing of the Word! This is not a warning to listen less but an exhortation to be more diligent in listening, to listen harder and more carefully!

Continued on page 7



Missionary Reports



Ivory Coast, West Africa
Jerry and Cherry Skiles

I enjoy listening to a Christian song in which the singer sings of wanting to feed hungry children and to cross the oceans to tell of God's love. I like the song, the singer's intensity and passion, and I think she is more intense



than me. I have shared the message of the song with the locals.

I like the song, but I don't agree with the message. I feed hungry children day after day. I don't like to see hungry children. I long for the day when they will no longer wake up to another day of hunger. I yearn for the day when there is no ocean to cross to tell people of something they do not know yet or of any language or tribe left to hear the gospel for the first time. I think that if the singer were really passionate about the things she sings, I could arrange for her passion to be



completely filled. Positioning oneself to do the things we think we want to do is not really that hard if we cast ourselves without reserve to the task.

God has provided good rains this year for the grains. The people, Lord willing, will be filling their storage sheds. There is hope and hunger at the same time here for the villagers. They need to make it to that day of harvest, but it isn't easy. I don't suffer from a shortage of food, but I can identify with waiting for a better day—the day when suffering and problems will cease. It will come, but I am not sure when.


Life in Africa has challenged me with this question: "What do I really deserve during my time on this earth?" If I have felt hunger, it is almost always by choice or as a consequence of my decisions. Many tribal people cannot imagine what I take for granted. Growing up in America caused me to think that freedom and liberty were normal. Today I am amused by how naïve I was. I feel blessed to have lived in Africa because I know how gracious God has been

to me. My aging has given me doubts; I wonder how much more I am unaware of His goodness to me, because I don't really know what normal is for the human existence. I enjoy speaking of God's Grace, but the older I get, the more I wonder how much of His Grace and Love I really understand.

I read the story of the lad with the five loaves and two small fish found in John 6. Philip calculated the price it would take to feed the 5,000. Andrew brought the lad's goods to Jesus, and Jesus gave thanks for the fish and bread. He then gave the food to his disciples for distribution. I can relate to all the actors—except Jesus. He alone can do the impossible. For me, being involved in seeing God glorify Jesus is the interesting part of living, even during the times when I am completely confused by the process. I rest in knowing that it is happening.

This February, a medical team is coming to the area. A portion of them will come to where we live in Bwaybiye. Pray for all involved. It is going to be challenging.

The recent presidential elections are over. The winner was a favorite of this area in which we live, so we are hopeful that will translate into improvement for the area. There is still a lot of healing for Ivory Coast, but we are hopeful. Pray with us that the Lord will establish peace and good government for the country.

Jerry & Cherry Skiles 

USA

John Burwell

Dear Saints,

I hope that all who read this report/ prayer request are encouraged in our Lord Jesus and are resting in Him, as it seems as though the whole world is falling apart. Praise the Lord that all of us are together in Christ. I am very thankful for the body of Christ. I believe that we as the body of Christ have all received the commandment to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This is a commandment to the *whole* body of Christ—not to any individual member in the body. I realize that we all have different parts in that task and must be led by the Spirit, as individuals, wherever the Lord wills. My reason for saying all this is because I know that not all of us are called to go. Some are called to stay behind and pray for those going out. So this a request for your prayers.

Last June, I was reading a report written by T. J. Ball on the Shaikh people of Bangladesh. At that time, this people group had a population of about 130 million people. After reading his report, I was very interested in the country itself, so I began to read about it more and more often. As I continued to read about this broken country, heaped over with lost souls who

have never even heard the gospel, I felt like the Lord wanted me to start praying about going there to live and to preach the gospel. I began to seek the Lord as I continued to read about the country. This occurred while I was still living in Ghana. I found myself talking about Bangladesh all the time with Austin, Tim, and Mike; and I was growing more and more confident that the Lord was leading me there.

One day, I stumbled onto the names of a husband and wife who had been missionaries in Bangladesh for 35 years. Tom and Gloria Thurman have two children who were both born and raised in Bangladesh. I found Tom's email address and wrote him a simple letter stating that I was thinking of going to Bangladesh to preach the gospel and would greatly appreciate any information and advice they could give me about the country. Instead of receiving a long email about the country, they invited me to visit them at their home in Columbia, Mississippi.

After returning home from Ghana in April, I began to pray that the Lord would raise up a team to go to Bangladesh. And the Lord has begun to do just that! Austin Ball, with whom I went to the training program and with whom I also served in Ghana, senses the Lord's leading to Bangladesh as well. I am very thankful for this. Austin has been a huge blessing to me over the last few years. He has been a sharpening stone and a great friend.


Two weeks ago, Austin and I finally made a trip to the Thurman's for a visit. They are in their 70s now but still have a real heart for seeing the gospel go forth. They were incredibly hospitable and welcomed our visit without hesitation. We only had time to spend a day and a half with them, but we were very encouraged. We spent nearly all of our time talking about Bangladesh and watching videos about the country and hearing about the work the Lord had done through them while they were in Bangladesh. They gave us some contacts that we could meet there and gave us some very helpful advice about visiting the country.

This brings me to my prayer request. Austin and I have been planning for a couple of months now to go and visit the country for about four weeks. The purpose of this visit would be to scout out the land. I would like to visit each of the six regions in Bangladesh, try to visit some of the established churches that are there, visit some of the 5,000 slums in Dhaka, try to visit a few orphanages as well, and whatever the Lord leads us to see while we are there. This will enable us to better know how to prepare to move there in the future and will also help us to know how to pray in a more specific way for the people of Bangladesh.

We are planning to visit the country for the month of January, Lord willing. Please be in prayer that all the necessary paperwork will go smoothly. We have

about a month to prepare and a lot to get done in that amount of time. Please be praying that the Lord would guide all of our steps, both while we prepare and during our visit.

Sometime back, I was reading about how the Lord told Moses to send the twelve men into the land of Canaan to spy out the land. Ten came back with a bad report detailing how the land was overrun by giants and walled cities, but Joshua and Caleb came back and said these people are “bread” for us. Joshua and Caleb had their hearts and eyes set on the Lord, and so those giants weren’t even worthy to be considered because the Lord gave confidence to Joshua and Caleb. I know that when we go into the land the enemy will try to discourage our hearts and try to cause us to fear. So please pray for us that our hearts and eyes would be fixed on the Lord as were Joshua and Caleb’s. May we have the perspective that caused them to testify that the enemy was “bread” for them because we are the Lord’s (Numbers 14:9)!

Lord bless all of you. Thank you so much for your prayers and support. It really makes the difference knowing that you are praying. Your prayers really do have an effect on how much the Lord will bless the work, so please pray with purpose. 

Rogers, Arkansas Jim and Fran Lucas

San Antonio Praise Report!

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

This comes close to describing what has taken place in San Antonio, Texas, thanks to the fasting and praying of you dear ones. We did not have the ground literally shaking, but I know the kingdom of darkness did not prevail against the thrust of those prayers. Souls were plucked from the clutches of the evil one, and many of the righteous were challenged and exhorted unto good works and were fed the Word of God. The laborers were few but mighty; the local saints marveled at the depth and wisdom manifested by the Holy Spirit in these young but seasoned warriors. The Word of God was preached with great boldness in the streets, in the homes, and in the tent. Our Heavenly Father had gone before us to prepare the way. For example, David, a 65-year-old mechanic, was given a vision just prior to our coming. In the vision, he saw his body pulled apart by a violent force and his soul came out all bloody; but then his soul went back, all clean, and he had peace. When told that this was because he was lost and needed to believe on the Lord Jesus to be saved, he surrendered to the will of God.

Then there was Arthur, who had been denied visitation rights to see his children. He had lost a nephew in a car wreck, and his uncle had died. He was overcome with sorrow. He was intent on drinking his sorrow away; but after four days of continual drinking, he was even more discouraged than ever. In desperation, he prayed and asked God to send him an angel. The very next day, Tim Spurling and John Burwell came to his apartment with the gospel message. He then came to the meetings in the tent for every morning service and every evening service. He turned his life to the Lord Jesus and asked if he could be baptized. When we read about Philip and the Eunuch, he said that he believed that Jesus is the Son of God, and I told him that we could not hinder him from being obedient to the Lord in baptism.

Then there was Thomas, who is employed by the road crew that was working on the same street where the tent was located. He resisted coming until the night before our final day. He was picked up by the police and given a DUI. He saw his need for a change in his life. This 27-year-old wept when we read Galatians 5: 19-21 and realized that fornicators and drunkards cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Please pray for these men, that they will grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus. James Bonner and Mike Jackson are following up on them. These new believers have agreed to go and meet with the saints. We are thankful for the love and help from the Lytle Fellowship, the San Antonio Christian Fellowship, Jim Pruitt and his gospel singing group, Bill Beetle and family, Adrian and Irene, Brother Phil, Brother Ward, and for the many dear old friends who came and visited. I am especially thankful for my children, who came down from Austin to give moral support on one of the coldest nights and then received us into their home for a good time of fellowship and rest.

Thank all of you for praying. Francille is doing great, and there are no signs of any effects from the stroke.

In Jesus our Lord,
James and Fran Lucas 

Atotonilco, Mexico Daniel and Mari Fontanez

In this update, we would like to share with you how the Lord blessed the Festival of Life we held on the 13th of November. There were many things that we asked prayer for. These included sound, funds, food, water, mime/sketch teams, music team, children ministry team, attendance, safety, stage, and literature. I am pleased to say that the Lord answered all of our prayers beyond what we imagined. Praise the Lord!

The Lord provided enough funds to make our own literature (flyers and tracts) and enough for food (lunch

and dinner) for all our teams. The provision for agua fresca was also abundant. We were also able to offer popcorn and duritos all day to children and adults—all this completely free!

In this picture, we have our agua fresca and popcorn team. We were also able to make two signs:



one for the Festival of Life and one for the Bible study on Monday. The sign for the Bible study is great because we can insert our weekly topic.

The sound and the stage that the Lord provided were just what we needed.

The sound could be heard at least three blocks



away, so even people who weren't brave enough to get



close were able to hear the gospel. Our children's ministry team worked very hard. They did face-painting while sharing a



short Bible lesson, balloon figures, muppets and music.

The Arandas Baptist Church sent their youth group to do some choreography for the kids.



They did a great job.

Our OAC evangelist, David Proaño, from Ecuador,



shared a sketch board gospel presentation for the kids.

We had two music groups: Martus and Alyssa Sali.



Alyssa shared "Mighty to Save," "Shout to the Lord," "My Redeemer Lives," and "Call on Jesus." We weren't able to have much rehearsal time, but it was still good, in my opinion.



Martus did most of the same songs we did in Yakima: "Eres Libre," "En la Cruz," and "Ven a Mi," among others. We had a great time doing it.



The youth from Atotonilco made people laugh and think, with two mime acts: "The Chair" and "We Don't Believe in Satan."

David Proaño, our evangelist, did a second sketch board message for the adults. There was a Catholic Mass that same day about a block away, and during David's preaching it ended, and all those people walked down and heard the gospel. Some even stopped and listened to the whole thing. It was actually a quite moving call to repentance. Some of our team members were moved to rededicate their lives to Christ.

The attendance was also an answer to prayer. For the most part we had children, but we did have some parents and teens. Here is a picture of the crowd:



We also gladly report that everyone who helped from out of town and everyone from Atotonilco were protected during travel to and from the Festival of Life. We are grateful to all of you who prayed and to those of you who gave for this effort. Thank you. If you want to see more pictures, I will be posting them on Facebook.

Daniel and Mary 🌍

Atotonilco, Mexico **Steve and Linda Montgomery**

Usually I would use this space for news from the Highlands. This time, however, I want to share with you something personal from Linda and me—a landmark in the Lord's direction for our lives.

The first verses of Ecclesiastes 3 present that well-known passage contrasting such monumental things as birth and death, kill and heal, weep and laugh. Several years ago, as I read these words, I was struck by a strange phrase in the middle of the passage: "a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together." In the midst of such radical contrast as love and hate, war and peace, why this mention of stones? As I considered, I realized that in an agricultural society a landowner would cast away stones from his land in order to plant; but at an appropriate time, that same planter would use those stones to build a home.

No sooner had I caught the sense of the verse than I knew the gentle voice of the Lord assuring my spirit that the time had come for Linda and me to "gather stones." We had wondered if perhaps the Lord might open the doors for us to have a home here. However, we had not pursued that because, quite honestly, I feared my own heart—a tendency to be caught by property. We wanted to have the clear direction of the Lord before even touching on the possibility of a house or land. So you can imagine the release, the assurance, the rejoicing that this word gave us.



Linda, with architect Javier Rivera



Retaining wall at the back of the property



From above, as foundations go down



Prayer view from the top of the retaining wall

More than six years have passed since that day, but in the middle of November, construction began on our house. Here are a few pictures. Rejoice with us for the Lord's gracious hand, and join with us in prayer for this project.

Thank you for standing with us,
Steve and Linda Montgomery 🙏

Bend, Oregon **Richard and Julie McDaniel**

For the past twenty years, Julie and I have had the privilege of living in Central Oregon, where we have served the Lord in ministry. We've also been able to serve in other parts of the world through itinerant ministry in those places. Throughout this time, I have been self-employed as a building contractor. My conviction from the beginning of our walk with God has been that all believers are separated unto Christ as ministers in His work. I see that the Bible was written to common men, like you and me, who have jobs and families and responsibilities of life and that we are equipped to function as priests and to do the work of the ministry. Working men taught the Word, prophesied, exhorted, evangelized, shared with one another, and took on the responsibilities of eldership. It's been my desire to be an example to others in this regard, and so the combination of work and ministry has been a part of the testimony that God has given me.

There are ministry gifts that Christ has bestowed upon the church that require more time and availability. These are the gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. They function beyond the scope of the local church. I believe that the Lord has called me and raised me up to have a teaching ministry. For this reason, self-employment has been a good fit for me. It has given me the flexibility to teach, train, make disciples, travel, and, at the same time, has provided a means of support for our family. Paul, who was first a teacher, then an apostle, had the same practice. He did not cease to make tents so that he could

go into the ministry. His tent-making was used at times to provide for the ministry. In his epistles, however, he exhorted the church to support those who are called into these ministries. This is clearly the responsibility that God has given to the church. Ultimately, however, it is the Lord who supplies according to His promises.

In these days, the fields are white unto harvest, but the laborers are few. As many of you know, the Shield of Faith Mission has a discipleship/missionary training program. This program starts in mid-January and runs to mid-July. We are pleased to see laborers raised up out of these training times. I have served as the Director of Training the last four years and am one of the primary teachers, together with Dick York. The program is as much of a commitment for me as it is for the trainees and occupies most of my time.

Along with that, I have a vision for strengthening the local churches. That is the pool from which laborers come. We have an informal coalition of churches primarily here in the Northwest. It has been in my mind for some time to take some of our teaching to the churches. I was asked recently if we could bring a segment of our training program to a small, newly formed church in Rickreal, Oregon. We worked out a schedule that covers four days, which will enable the working men to attend. That will happen in March. The brethren in Yoncalla, Oregon, have also requested a similar program. This is something that we are available to do in any of the churches and is something that could even be worked into a rotation of different segments of teaching at different times and locations as another venue for furthering discipleship.

Add to this list the opportunities that we have to travel for seminars or conference ministry or visitation of those on the foreign field. There are opportunities to visit the brethren in Kenya, in Mexico, and in Korea. Lord willing, I will accompany Dick York to Korea next August for ministry.

Recently I have been praying a lot for God's direction for our family. We are at a crossroads here, with the building trade drying up. My trade has been the means of provision that has enabled us to dedicate so much of our time to ministry. If I have to seek employment as an employee of someone else, it will really limit the time available for ministry. I'd have to give up the training program and some of the other things I've mentioned. So the question is whether to draw back or to go ahead in even greater measure. God has persuaded me to continue on. I have consulted with the men in leadership here, and they are also encouraging us to continue. We will be considered as full-time workers with SFMI, and, as such, the mission will help us to communicate with you through periodic newsletters. They will also be a channel for our finances. SFMI's policy is that 100 percent of the monies designated for our workers go to them.

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DEFINING BODY MINISTRY

By Richard McDaniel

There are several descriptive terms in the Scriptures that are used to depict the church. One such description is that the church is the body of Christ. He is the head; the redeemed throughout the whole earth are his body (Eph.1:22,23). His body is singular, made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have in like manner trusted in the Lord. There is only one fold and one shepherd, as Jesus said in John 10:16. This is how the *body* is defined.

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27). Within the body there are many members. *Every* believer is a member of equal standing before God and *called, qualified, and equipped* to be a priest in the Lord’s service. This service is what defines the *ministry*. The following Scriptures will support my statement:

- 2 Timothy 1:9 indicates that God has saved us “and called us with an *holy calling*, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace....”
- 2 Corinthians 3:5,6 says that we are not sufficient of ourselves; “but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us *able ministers* of the new testament.” This portion, taken in context with many other Scriptures, tells us two things. It tells us that we, the members of Christ’s body (which is the church), have been placed into the ministry and that the ability that we’ve all been given for the ministry has its source in God. The word “ministry” simply means “attendance” or “service.” A minister is a “servant.” All who know God are called upon to serve God.
- I Peter 2:5 describes the church as a “*holy priesthood*” and again in verse 9 as a “royal priesthood.”

As members of his body, Christ has commissioned us to continue with the Father’s work, which He began here on earth. What was that work? In Jesus’ life, He manifested the

Father to the world, He brought the message of God to the world, and He came to save sinners. Our service, as we continue with His work on this earth, consists of the same things. At Paul’s conversion, the Lord Jesus said this to him, “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those in the which I will appear unto thee” (Acts 26:16). Is not the same true for each of us? God has one purpose for all who believe and become His children. The testimony that we have is that we are living sacrifices, given over to him who purchased us and that Christ is in us. His life abides in us and is our life. We serve Him, and in that service we are ministers. God’s message will come through us in how we live and what we speak. Along with that we have been given the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). That corresponds with the commission that Christ left the church before His departure: (1) “Go...and teach all nations... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...;” and 2) “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” One part of the task is for the *nations* to be reached with the gospel. The other part is to reach *individuals* with the gospel. The task is more comprehensive than just winning souls to Christ. It is making disciples who are being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). In all this, the *ministry* is defined.

After the commission, the Lord Jesus instructed His disciples to wait for the promised Comforter and then said, “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...” (Acts 1:8). The *ability* to perform the ministry was given through the bestowment of the Holy Spirit upon every believer. That ability comes through the fruit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given out at His discretion and are not acquired in any other way. There are three passages in which the gifts are listed and categorized. They are 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. In

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Defining Body Ministry continued.

the Ephesians passage, there are five gifts listed that are ministry gifts given to the church. They are given “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (v.12). It goes on to say in verse 15 that the objective is to “grow up into him in all things.” That means to come to maturity in Christ. Now, verse 16: “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Notice how verse 16 compliments verse 12. The objective of both verses is the edifying or the building up of the body. Verse 16 says that every joint or member of the body has a part in that. The interpretation, according to context, is that the five ministry gifts (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) are given to the church for the perfecting or equipping of the saints so that the saints together can do the work of the ministry. The body of Christ has a ministry that every joint or member has an active part in completing. How long does this ministry

last? Verse 13 gives the answer: “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.” We are all pilgrims in transit, and the final phase of the journey is not going to happen until God says our service on this earth is done.

To summarize, body ministry is the service that the body of Christ (the church) accomplishes through the enabling of the Holy Spirit towards the completion of God’s eternal purpose on earth. The ultimate goal of His purpose is to call and raise up unto Himself a people “to the praise of his glory”(Eph.1:12), both as individuals and among all nations. This is accomplished through Christ working through every member of His body. We are all equally accountable to our Head and equally responsible to be faithful stewards of that which our Head has bestowed upon us. In this way, the church is built up. Christ is the Rock upon which the church is built, and He promises to complete that building and states furthermore that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. We can go forward in confidence together as members of the body in the ministry. 