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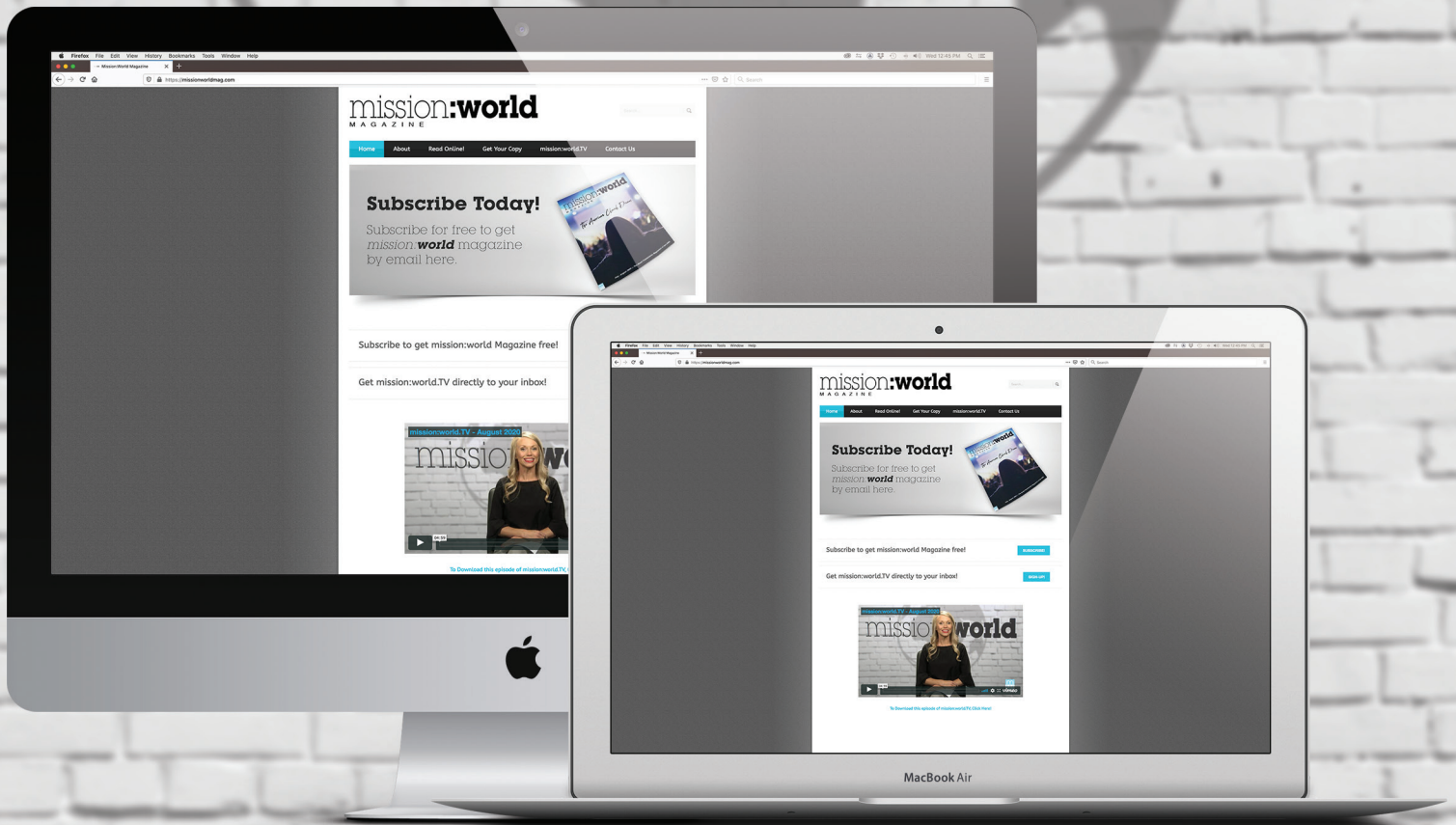


BEAUTY FROM ASHES

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BMA Missions seeks to facilitate churches in fulfilling the Great Commission through assessment, training, coaching, and missionary care.



Lifeworld assists in taking the gospel throughout the world through radio, television, the internet, and mobile devices.



Ministers Resource Services helps meet the financial planning needs of BMA pastors and staffs.



THE **Joy** OF
SUFFERING?

BY: Dr. John David Smith
BMA Missions
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“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

II Timothy 3:12

A few years ago, a ministry leader from the Middle East was visiting the U.S. A lunch conversation turned to the topic of persecution. When one of the Americans stated that we simply could not relate to persecution for the faith, our Middle Eastern brother's response left all the Americans in awkward silence. He said matter of factly, “I will pray with you about this.” He went on to talk about persecution as a blessing to the believers in his country that decreases apathy and purges impurities.

Most followers of Christ in the West define normalcy in our version of Christianity with the descriptors of painless, peaceful, and prosperous. Even in more conservative thought where following Christ does not ensure wealth, it almost always assumes the absence of difficulty. In comparison with the majority of the world, believers in the West have enjoyed unprecedented safety and ease in their spiritual lives. What lessons can we learn from our brothers and sisters around the world about suffering? How does our expectation of the three Ps (see above) stand up to Scripture and current realities? Will the three-P context last in the West? Will it end abruptly or slowly fade into history itself?

A cursory look at the World Watch List 2019, which highlights Christian suffering around the world, tells us that our three-Pros are not the norm. Some have estimated that 88% of all followers of Christ live under a constant cloud of persecution. According to the Watch List, 10% of all followers of Christ live under intense suffering for their faith; it is estimated that over 4,000 believers lost their lives in 2018, almost 3,000 were imprisoned, and an average of 11 lose their lives each day. We encourage you to read stories published by Baptist Missionary Association (BMA) Global Missions (www.bmamissions.org) and on the Voice of the Martyrs website (www.vom.org) to increase awareness of Christian suffering and to know how to better pray.

The topic of suffering absolutely dominates the narrative of Scripture. The sources of persecution were varied; however, the main drivers included zealous followers of organized religions, oppressive government, animism and Spiritism, other elements of spiritual warfare, and the sinful, fallen heart of each human being. It is noted that suffering can be internal as well as external. Suffering includes grief, sickness, financial trouble, emotional distress among many other products of fallenness. In this brief article, we are looking more at the external pressures applied to followers of Christ.

In looking at the context of ministry for Jesus, Paul, Peter, and James we get a good idea of the dominant setting of suffering in the New Testament. Jesus had a constant battle with the religious zealots and directly with Satan himself. Ultimately Jesus suffered on the cross to satisfy the wrath of God and make the payment of redemption for us. Jesus told His disciples in His last days on earth, “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20).

Paul went from the persecutor to the persecuted for the cause of Christ. Please read II Corinthians 11:22-33 for a list of many things Paul suffered. On Paul’s first missionary journey alone, he encountered a sorcerer, Jewish mobs, Gentile mobs, was confused with the gods of Greek mythology, was stoned and thought to be dead. On his other two journeys he encountered theological issues, demon possession, polytheism, more mobs, death threats, and riots.

James writes to Jewish believers who had been scattered most likely after the death of Stephen and as part of Herod Agrippa’s persecution of believers. James says, “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (James 5:9-11).





Peter wrote to the churches of Asia who were under intense persecution from Nero. The entire context of Peter's writings was one of persecution/suffering. Peter declares, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?' Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (I Peter 4:12-19).

Could it be that the pressure applied to Western Christianity (and around the world) via Covid-19 has already begun to have a purifying effect? One of the greatest enemies to the cause of Christ in the West is comfort. Will believers in the West see their religious liberties erode at a faster pace? Current realities sure do indicate that these things could very well happen in the not-so-distant future. It is time for churches in the West to stop preparing church members to inhabit pews and to begin to make disciples who will be able to inhabit the Catacombs. Even if our freedoms are not limited, disciples equipped for a context of suffering will be more fruitful in freedom or oppression. We encourage our brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering now, and we equip ourselves for any eventual suffering with the following:

- 1) God is in control and His plan does include suffering.
- 2) Suffering purifies and clarifies.
- 3) We can have all joy in the midst of suffering through Christ.
- 4) God is the only hope in all contexts whether it be feast or famine.
- 5) Suffering helps drive the mission of God.



2020 IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

AND LIFEWORD MINISTRY TAKEAWAYS

BY: Donny Parrish

Lifeword

lifeword.org

Last March the global pandemic changed all of our lives. All of us went from enjoying people and enjoying life to being confined to our homes. Spare closets became classrooms. Bedrooms were converted to office spaces. There was a lot more cooking that happened at home. And when we did eat out, it was only takeout. For most of us our church experience on Sunday became watching an online church service. Facebook Live became our connection to worship each week. And now, almost one year later, many churches are still struggling to hold weekly in-person worship because of the fear of Covid.

One of the phenomenon's that has driven the use of the internet is the popularity of social media. Millions of people use social media platforms to communicate and to inform themselves about current events. The local church has benefited greatly from the use of social media during the pandemic. Facebook Live has become standard practice for most. Lifeword has been using various social media platforms to take the gospel of Christ to people all around the world for several years now. However, the recent turmoil in Washington and the resulting censorship of all social media posts from the President and other prominent conservative voices has made many second guess their use of social media. Many individuals have abandoned platforms like Twitter all together and moved to other sites. Others have checked out of social media all together.

What should be the response of God's people in light of all that is happening today? Is it time to abandon the internet as a vehicle to share the gospel? Many have asked what Lifeword's response will be.

God has blessed the ministry of Lifeword this past year. In many respects this has been the most successful year in the history of Lifeword. The pandemic has been a tragedy. The heartbreak resulting from the millions of lives lost and the pained caused to those who have contracted the virus has been immeasurable. But, in the midst of all this turmoil, many around the world have sought for God. Lifeword has been there to meet their need. Lifeword has a clear gospel presentation in over 90 different languages that has attracted people from around the world to the Lifeword Cloud (Lifeword.org) for answers to their spiritual questions.

Lifeword's outreach on social media includes seven different Facebook pages. In the last six months alone, there were over six million minutes of Lifeword gospel video presentations watched by viewers with a total of over 281,000 engagements. Lifeword gained close to 30,000 new followers on those pages. These are people that Lifeword would never have had the opportunity to impact through radio or television. The cost of air time on traditional media would never allow us to share Jesus with that many people.

"Will Lifeword stop using social media because of their banning of conservative political figures?" Absolutely not. The internet is where people are living in the media world... lost people. And if that is where lost people are consuming media that is where Lifeword wants to be. We will never offer a political message on Lifeword. Our message is much more profound and much deeper than politics.

"What will Lifeword do if the time comes that social media bans Christian broadcasting?" That time may very well come. In fact, our team is preparing for that day just "in case." We are working hard to diversifying our delivery platforms on the internet so that the ministry of Lifeword will be able to pivot should that time arrive.

"Should local churches avoid using social media because of the political climate?" Each local church will have to shape their outreach as God leads. However, social media will continue to be a viable avenue to local churches to reach out to their community in the near future. Post Covid (should that time ever come) I believe that broadcasting church services will continue to be extremely important to the Great Commission component of local church ministry. People will now want to experience your service online before they will ever attend your service in person. Much like perusing a church website has become commonplace for first time visitors, engaging in worship online prior to attending a person-to-person service will become the norm. And it is very possible, and even probable, that there will be many who will prefer to worship from home long after the Covid crisis has ended.

If Lifeword can serve your church in any way as you broadcast your service online, don't hesitate to call!



"I believe that broadcasting church services will continue to be **extremely important** to the Great Commission component of **local church ministry**"

**"...I HAVE SET THEE TO BE A LIGHT OF THE
GENTILES, THAT THOU SHOULDEST BE FOR
SALVATION UNTO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH."
ISAIAH 49:6**

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN **HIS** PLAN.
IT'S **LIFEWORD'S** PLAN, **TOO**.
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TO ONE-FOURTH OF THE WORLD.

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TO THE *Ends*
OF THE *Earth*

LIFEWORD SUNDAY 2021





BY: Siripong Yaebeang
BMA Missions
bmamissions.org

Proclaiming Christ During Coronavirus

Reflecting on the Challenges and Blessings in our Ministry During Covid-19

The Bible **never** promises that believers will not have difficulties in life. However, it does affirm that God will **always** be with His children in all circumstances. Although Covid-19 has caused trouble and uncertainty in our lives and ministry, knowing that we are facing it in the arms of God is the most comforting truth. There have been real challenges in the area of ministry, but there are also blessings! We would like to share some of the challenges, as well the blessings that we have experienced in our ministry during the pandemic.

The Challenges

First, it is a challenge for us to gather for church. Our church's situation is somewhat unique; we are using a hotel meeting room as a place to worship on Sundays. Because of this, we basically have to stop meeting whenever the hotel (by order of the government) thinks it is too risky for people to gather in large groups.

Second, it is a challenge for us to conduct church outreach. Because of how the virus spreads, we are limited with how much we can go out. People, and even the government, are getting very cautious



about any kind of activities that attract people. In addition, the believers here can be too cautious about going out to different places for ministry.

Third, it is a challenge to the believers' faith. The pandemic creates fear in people's lives, thus affecting their faith as well. It has made some of the believers here want to stay home and not come together as a church to worship, study God's Word, and serve. We keep telling our people that while we still have to be cautious and responsible concerning people around us, we must also live by faith, not fear. We don't want anything to cause our people to go astray from Christ, His Word, His church, and His people.

The Blessings

Although it is true that we have faced several ministry challenges during the coronavirus pandemic, we have also experienced many blessings.

First, God has brought several people into our church. This might sound contradictory to the challenges that I mentioned earlier, but by the providence of God, our church has welcomed more guests during this time than we ever have before. This means more opportunity for people to hear the gospel! Although a couple of guests never returned, most of them are still with us. We are thankful to God for all of these people.

Second, it has allowed me to work on some other projects. Because I had more time during the lockdown, God helped me to finish my third book. This book attempts to summarize or retell the Old Testament story from Genesis to Malachi in chronological order. I know that reading the Old Testament can be hard and confusing for many people here, so hopefully this will be a helpful tool.

Third, it has allowed our church to be a blessing to other people. Since the beginning of Covid-19, our church has been able to help people who have been greatly affected by it. We began by helping immediate family and friends of people at the church. We also have been able to help a community close to our church by giving them some rice. We are grateful to be able to help others; and we make sure they know that we do this because of Jesus.

Lastly, it has taught us to be dependent upon and to trust God more in ministry. During difficult times like this when everything seems limited,

it is easy to feel like things are not going as fast as we wanted them to be. However, these times allow us to pause and realize that God is sovereign over everything and the kingdom of God will not stumble because of circumstances in this world. It has made us ask the question: "Who will build the church?" And it is comforting to see yet again that Jesus Christ said "...I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18).

Pressing Forward

Returning to what I said in the beginning, it is a privilege to walk with God, regardless of the situations surrounding our lives and ministry. As a wise preacher often said, "Being in the same boat with Jesus does not mean there are not going to be any storms." What matters most is not the storms, but who we are with when we face the storms. May we find comfort and confidence with the fact that we are with the Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, no matter what we are facing in life and ministry.

We are thankful for your support. Please continue to remember us and the nation of Thailand in your prayers. God said, "For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations..." (Malachi 1:11). May this be true among the Thai people! Amen!





CHALLENGES OF REACHING AND TEACHING DURING HARSH SHUTDOWNS

My name is Daniel Bagosi. I am a pastor and a ChangeMaker for Baptist Missionary Association (BMA) here in Romania. I am married to my wife Claudia and we have three children—Amos, Asher, and Ahava. The year 2020 came as a total surprise to everyone. Both people inside and outside of the church, those that know the Lord and those that ignore the One who helps us no matter what we have to face found themselves shocked by the events of 2020. However, we believers had the promise that “He will never leave us nor forsake us.”

I'd like to start this short article by talking about some of the challenges I had to face as a minister, pastor, missionary, and national ChangeMaker for the BMA in Romania. For approximately two months, we were not allowed to meet inside our church building or even outside as an organized group of people. I had to pray and think about new ways that I could stay in touch with and encourage the people to whom I minister, ways to pray with them and share encouraging messages from the

Word of God. I created WhatsApp groups for the individual churches where I could record short audio or video messages for them. However, not all of the people I need to reach had internet access or knew how to use WhatsApp. For these people, I had to come up with something else. I called them on the phone, praying with them, checking on them, and taking prayer requests. Some of our people were quarantined at their homes, and we had to buy food supplies for them. I stayed in touch with our church people and organized them to deliver medicine or food supplies where needed. Another challenge we faced is we did not get to have any mission teams from the United States, so we had to put together goodies to make gifts for children and we had to buy medicines for those needing them.

Despite the challenges we faced, we also saw many victories. What was meant by Satan as evil was used by God to bless us and the ministry. The Sunday our church in the village of Ausea had to close its building, I visited all the families of the church with my oldest son Amon. We prayed with every member and encouraged them with a few kind words. (At

that time, we were still allowed to visit in small groups.) This time of fellowship turned out to be very efficient in building up relationships between me and our church members. Some of our church members shed tears as they thanked us for visiting!

Another blessing occurred in the two gypsy communities from Santandrei. I was able to make food bags for each family. This served as a great encouragement to these families that God would still provide even during the hardship of a pandemic. I was able to work with the leader of these communities, Nelu. He came to help me make the food bags, and I was able to use that time to disciple him, and to listen to the struggles and victories he had had over various temptations from his past.

When the government allowed us to meet outside, we set out chairs with the required distance between them. I will never forget that first service when we partook of the Lord's Supper outside. We sang songs and preached, and even our neighbors could hear the Word of God and be encouraged. Although teams from the United States could not come here, some churches and individuals from

the U.S. continued to support us and sent financial resources for us to do the work they had planned to do. This encouraged our hearts and kept us going in our ministry. In addition, some of our church members and friends began to appreciate our church services more because of the period of time where we were not allowed to meet in-person. And even though some of our families contracted COVID-19, including my wife and I, nobody died of the virus. We praise the Lord for answering prayers and healing us.

I learned during this pandemic that where there is a will, there is a way. When we are open and creative and willing to serve God, He will provide the resources, people, and creative ways for us to be able to minister to those in need. We continue to do His will and be active servants for His kingdom.

As I close this short article, I conclude that God is still in control. He still works, even during the pandemic. But He wants to use us, people willing to serve, to share His love in practical ways, looking for ways to serve instead of excuses. To God be the glory for what He did and what He will do in Romania, Europe, and the whole world! Amen!





Churches Helping Churches:

Blessings in Eastern Europe

Last year was a really challenging year for all of us. I believe that many people had to find new ways with how to minister to others and to stay faithful in what we do. To be honest at first, I did not know what to expect; my first thought was that something really bad might happen. Many people were afraid. As someone who strongly believes in God's sovereignty, I knew that the good Lord had everything in control and that He would show us what to do and how to minister.

During the first lockdown we simply used cellphones to call and text or email messages to people. We bought some literature and were able to give it away.

In our church we had three people who tested positive with COVID-19. One faithful sister in Christ, who also happens to be my sister by family, nearly died; but the Lord allowed her to live and we all rejoiced. Many people prayed fervently for her. The other two members fared much better and dealt mainly with headaches and tiredness. Of course, other family members also tested positive.

During the summer, the government allowed shops, restaurants, and churches to reopen. Life became easier, and everyone was happy that we could worship together again. We were so grateful. We used that time to fellowship even more than before. We attended church camp where everything appeared nice and simple.

However, at the beginning of fall, the situation in our nation began to be worse than that initial wave during the spring. We were already recording our sermons and sharing them via WhatsApp. This allowed church members who were ill or could not otherwise attend church to hear the sermon. Other churches invited me to preach via their YouTube channels. This gave me an opportunity to preach for both our congregation as well as other people.

At our church, we teach that everyone in the church is a missionary. Most of them take ministry very seriously. I find myself filled with joy observing how our church members call each other, share sermons and Bible verses with each other, pray together, and witness to others. When we have sick people in our community, we help by visiting them, shopping for them, or taking them to the hospital. Even though we could not do other activities during the time of government restrictions, our time was not wasted.

When the restrictions for churches became more difficult, we lost our place of worship for an indefinite period of time. Because we do not have our own church building, but instead rent a room in a city chateau and another room at a public school, we could no longer meet. We were not allowed to use either of the places where we normally would meet.

Around forty minutes away from Jilove, my wife's hometown, is another church where I have preached many times. I enjoy helping that community as well. (Next week, I have a meeting there with a Muslim from Pakistan who wants to talk about Christianity.) Elders from this church allowed our church to use their sanctuary for free and helped record our sermons on YouTube. We use their building at a different time from the local congregation. Our church is very blessed to have the opportunity to worship together since we cannot meet in our own town.

We are thankful to our Lord that He is so good to us. He gave us everything that we need to worship and serve Him in this difficult time. All the glory belongs to Him.

I would like to also thank all of the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA) churches, brothers and sisters, ministers, and ministries. What a great group of dedicated people! I am very thankful that I can be part of this mission. I probably repeat myself, but I am a product of BMA Missions. I have never been a member in any church other than a BMA church. I was baptized, disciplined, educated, and sent to preach by the BMA of America.

May God bless you all.





Preaching to a Camera

BY: Matthew Prather
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It is hard to believe that we have been in Waxahachie, Texas for a little over four years now. When you move to a new town to plant a church, there is so much to do and so many dreams you want to see come true. Most of all you want to impact your city for Christ.

Fast forward to Easter 2019. After lots of prayer and searching, God had provided us with a building to rent to have services each week. We had previously been meeting in a civic center and were only able to rent it certain days of the month, and then would have to find other places to meet on other days. This was difficult to say the least. Renting a building was exciting and allowed us to reach more people. At the end of 2019, we had seen 87 first-time families. Our church was growing, and we were excited as we headed into 2020.

In March 2020, my family and I headed for a vacation in Colorado to go skiing. Little did we know that we would return to a different world. Never in my wildest imagination would I have expected that we would be closing the doors to services in the building for which we had prayed. It

was quite a shock. We had not invested in a live-stream camera setup. The first week was focused on survival. How were we going to have an online service and what would it look like? So many questions and frustrations. After an exhausting first week, we began to realize that we had no idea how long we would be online and not meeting in our building. We worked hard to figure out what this online church would look like. One thing we kept coming back to was that things would have to be different. We couldn't just take the exact same service and move it online. It did not translate. We were a church of relationships. We wanted to impact people through relationships. Armed with an iPhone and a computer we started this journey to impact our community.

We wanted our livestreams to show life, to be welcoming, and to lead to life change. But how would that happen? We began to think about what our online service needed to look like. We started each service with a fun trivia to start conversation and encourage comments before the service started. But that didn't seem like enough. I changed my

preaching style. I began to embrace the fact that I was preaching to a camera, which to be honest was something that I found very uncomfortable.

I began to ask questions during the service and expected people to actually talk/chat during the service. We believed that people were actually looking for relationships. We created online connect cards for first time guests. We created a link for someone wanting to chat about salvation or any struggle they were having. We even at times added a Google Meet link so that people could talk to me (the pastor) after the service. We learned quickly that people were lonely, they were hurting, and they had questions. We knew the One for whom they were looking. We pointed them to Jesus.

Easter Sunday rolled around. We were supposed to be hosting our one-year celebration in our new building. We were not going to be in our building for Easter! This was so disheartening and discouraging! In fact, there was one Sunday after the service where I said, “I am not built for this online thing. I love people too much.” On Easter Sunday we saw a breakthrough. We saw the first person accept Christ as his Savior. This family was from Waco, Texas, an hour away from where we are located. They would never have stepped a foot in our church if it had not for COVID.

From there we took what we learned. People were and still are asking questions about worry, fear, and hopelessness. They made statements like “I can’t sleep at night,” and the list goes on and on. We wanted to answer their questions; so we went to where they were looking—Google. This time of despair, a time that felt as if everything was turning to ashes, became this beautiful time. Through the months that followed we have seen eight people come to know Jesus as their Savior. Weekly we still receive messages stating things like, “I feel empty inside,” “My husband passed away from cancer,” “I am struggling with depression,” “I try my best to keep my faith in GOD but sometimes it’s hard when you’re feeling alone,” “I am never going to be anything in life,” “I just want help and guidance,” and “I am struggling with what my purpose in life is.” These are just a few examples of the many online conversations that we have had.

If it were not for Covid, we would not have been live streaming, we would not have been forced to get creative with reaching our world for Christ. When we think of reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, we can allow COVID to be our excuse to stay in our house and not reach out or we can embrace the journey and point a hurting world to Christ.





GOD GETS OUR ATTENTION IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

BY: Brad Faulk
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The old saying, “You have to laugh to keep from crying” seems to sum up pretty accurately the season in which we currently find ourselves. We’ve seen more discouragement, more despair, more doubt, more division, more darkness than at any other time...at least during my lifetime. We’re in a season where peace seems to be hard to find.

Recently, I had been preaching a sermon series out of Ephesians 6 on the Armor of God. We had already covered the first two items of armor, (the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness) and now it was time to look at the third item, the sandals of the gospel of peace. While preparing to preach on this subject of peace my prayer probably went something like this. “God get us out of this Covid mess and this shutdown. God get us back to normal so we can experience Your peace again.” It was in that moment of prayer and study that I felt God speak clearly to my heart. He posed this question: “Why am I not enough?”

God, of course You are enough! Why would you ask me that? I felt God whisper some clarification. “Why would I get you out of the fire when you have yet to thrive in the fire?” Ouch! *Okay God, I’m gonna need a little more clarification.* He continued: “My presence should be enough. You can experience joy and peace in the midst of this fire when you take your eyes off the fire and place them on the fact that I am in the fire with you. That alone should be enough.” He continued, “Brad, you have a prime opportunity to bring peace to a world without peace, and the current condition that you find yourself in gives you a greater opportunity than ever before.”

“If I remove you from the fire, I remove the opportunity. You have everything you need to thrive in the fire. You have my presence.” Ouch again!

As God was speaking to me, I was reading this passage in Ephesians 6 on what it is to put on the sandals of the gospel of peace. A verse leapt off the page and slapped me over the head.

This awesome opportunity to share the Prince of Peace during this time of unrest is an opportunity we can easily miss while waiting for God to rescue us from the fire. This opportunity is maximized right now! We must maximize our efforts!

One example of how this unique season has opened new doors for the gospel was on a Sunday service in July. We were having services in the park due to the virus.



There we were under these giant oaks worshipping in song when I noticed a gentleman walking up to us. He leaned up against one of those big oaks and listened to the entire sermon. As I was preaching, I couldn't help but notice him and I wondered what his story was. At the conclusion of the sermon, I got to talk with him for a bit before our prayer time and he told me that he showed up to the park that day for an N.A. (Narcotics Anonymous) meeting. I asked why he came to our service instead of the N.A. meeting. He said he couldn't find the N.A. meeting but instead saw us located where he thought the N.A. meeting was to be held. This is no ordinary park. It is massive! And we have never ever met at the location where he just

happened to find us. We always meet on the other side of the park well hidden from this location. However, on this Sunday morning, someone had beat us to the pavilion that we had been using so I had to walk around the park to try and find another spot to meet. I'm pretty sure God had the perfect spot reserved for us all along. To make a long story short, this man asked Jesus to come into his heart at our prayer meeting. God is good!

Thank you to the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA) Missions office and to all of you for praying for us as we seek to maximize our efforts in spreading the gospel. We are facing many of the same challenges here that every church is facing. Our prayer is that our focus would not be on the challenges but on the unique opportunities these challenges bring.

Grateful for His mercy and grace, The Faulk Family





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BMA Missions
bmamissions.org

As we all know, in March 2020, the world was hit hard with the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, in mid-March, our country went into lockdown. I remember we had our last worship service in the sanctuary on March 15, 2020. We prayed over our nation, churches, and leaders around the world. We left that Sunday not knowing how long this lockdown would last.

Everyone was chaotic; people were uncertain about the future and what this illness might hold for them. In the middle of all of this, we believers had our hope in God who holds everything in His hands. He is aware of everything that happens according to His divine will. Psalm 24:1 reminded us that God is in control and He is behind every episode of our lives.

As a leader, we need to learn that maintaining your spiritual equilibrium living and leading in this chaotic world is key to determining the outcome of the missions over

which God has made you overseer. Making the right decisions at the right time will help you become more fruitful, more effective, and will keep you from avoidable mistakes.

About a week after the lockdown, I prayerfully decided to begin virtual worship services on Sundays as well as a mid-week prayer meeting on Zoom. We also started a virtual Friday night Bible study. The purpose of these virtual meetings was to stay in constant contact with the people over whom God made me shepherd. Each week, we reached multitudes of people through our Sunday worship. Prayer requests began to pour in from all over the world. The Lord began to work through our services in the lives of people by answering their prayers. Many who suffered from Covid-19 and other illnesses became healed. And those who were facing hard times found themselves encouraged through the Word of God.

On July 5, 2020, we resumed in-person services in our sanctuary. During the first

couple of weeks, people were too afraid to join; but over time, all returned with great enthusiasm. We decided to arrange a Christmas dinner on December 13. Many people attended this dinner, and everyone enjoyed it. We sung carols and had a wonderful Christmas service. However, right after this, people began to get sick because of the second wave. Nearly 25 people were infected with Covid. We had to stop meeting at church and resume our virtual services again for four weeks. During all of this, we continued to see God's might hand over us all. Out of the ashes of this sickness, beauty appeared in the form of a revived and faithful church. When sorrow surrounds us, and when suffering hangs heavy on our heads, we know as believers that with God on our side, tomorrow will bring wholeness and healing. God knows what we need; and when it is time, He shows up and makes Himself known to us.

I am humbled to say that God has used Vertical Life Church-Urdu during this pandemic to reach many for His glory. Through His Word, He has touched many lives all over this globe. Along with spiritual food, God also made it possible for us to take care of the physical needs of our community here in

Atlanta, and also our Christian community in Pakistan by allowing us to distribute food.

As believers, we have experienced that no matter how educated, famous, powerful, or spiritually strong we are, we are still mere mortals. Even though we try hard to be in control, we learn very quickly that God is the One who is in control. A.W. Tozer said, "While it looks like everything is out of control, behind the scenes there is a God who has not surrendered His authority."

We have learned to rely more on Christ and to live in harmony with Him and with each other. We as a church should always be on guard to face the unexpected, and to be ready to experience the newness of God's love no matter what happens in life. With God on our side, we can go through deep waters and walk through the fire while staying strong in our faith. Throughout the ages, we see that God's faithful people flourish like palm trees by putting their trust in Him. Troubles and pandemics of this world do not shake their faith. We can see that when the government and other authorities fail in such situations, the church has always risen above and has been the backbone of humanity all over the world.





BY: Rigoberto Jimenez
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LESSONS FROM JOB ON SUFFERING

I send special greetings from El Salvador to all my brothers and sisters in Christ. Before continuing I want to thank *mission:world* magazine for this new opportunity to share the wonders of our God.

Last Sunday, December 27, we celebrated our last service for the year 2020. We hosted a dinner and celebrated with all the families of our congregation. While we worshiped the Lord, there were many tears and painful memories because some of us who were there had lost a family member or a friend. However, despite the feelings of pain, we also celebrated the fact that God kept us safe and provided for us. The vast majority of us who were present had lost our jobs, but—praise God—we did not lack food. We all were attentive to the words of 1 Samuel 7:12 which says: “Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, ‘Till now the Lord has helped us.’” That is the only explanation; that is the answer.

When we go to the Word of God, we see many great men who rose from the ashes even when everything seemed finished. One of the most outstanding characters for me is Job. Job had an incredible testimony. Though God had blessed Job tremendously, at one point in Job’s life, he lost everything that he had. Even Job’s health was taken from him. He got scabies that caused such intense itching that he had to scratch himself with a piece of metal to relieve the itching. In addition, Job’s wife abandoned him, and all of his children died in an accident. Job found himself in desperation pleading in Job 3:3-5, “Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, ‘A man is conceived.’ Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it. Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.” Despite Job’s grief, he did not say a word against God; on the contrary, Job blessed the Lord. “And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and

the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). After a period of testing and trials, God blessed Job with even more than he had before, and Job became a person of recognition once again. “And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before...And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:10, 12a).

I can assure you—as a church, we ended the year with a glorious victory in Jesus. Allow me to share how Centro de Vida Church closed out the year 2020. From the ashes, God raised men, women, and children for His kingdom; and now they shine for Jesus. We closed the year with 37 professions of faith. We were able to disciple and baptize 14 of these. We also opened two new cells (Centros de Acción). I thank God for all that He has done through each servant of our church.

Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” There are two reasons why we experienced beauty from the ashes. First, we have a clear vision of what God has commanded us to do. Our vision is based on serving, evangelizing, and making disciples. Second, we are a cell church. When the government told us that we could no longer meet in our church buildings, we began meeting in homes. When they ordered that groups could be no larger than ten people, we held the meetings as families. Our children’s club teachers recorded small videos to share via Facebook and WhatsApp in order to continue working with our children. They also brought materials to each child’s home so they could participate in the weekly activities...and parents would take photos of their work. This all took a lot of effort. However, because of this work, we continue to see wonderful results as our church experiences extraordinary growth. Before the pandemic, our attendance was somewhere between 70 and 80; today, our attendance averages between 120 and 135. And because our building is too small and we are having to remodel it, we are hosting our activities out on the street. This attracts even more people, and God continues to save many.

What are our plans for 2021? First, remain faithful to the vision that God has given us. And second, use every tool that God has provided for kingdom enlargement through His local church. At the beginning of 2021, we are already seeing first fruits. We have opened a new missionary field and started a new children’s club. Thanks to the Everlasting Smiles Ministry, we have been able to bless many children with shoeboxes. Gifts are a wonderful tool to open doors for us to continue sharing the good news with families. Thanks to the financial support of Lifeword en Español, at the very beginning of this year, we inaugurated Radio Centroamericana, an online radio that allows us to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with every corner of our country, and even to the ends of the earth. In addition, Radio Centroamericana connects with our community radio stations via FM signal; this allows us to reach even more people for Christ.

I beg for your prayers this year. We hope to open a new mission; but unfortunately, we do not have the resources that are needed. Please join us in prayer and support as we continue to make the name of our Savior Jesus Christ famous.



Thank You, God, For Your Mercy Towards Honduras



BY: Denis Lopez
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In the past three months, we have seen many significant changes to the ministry here in Honduras. First, we had ten months of the pandemic. This completely damaged the economic situation of many businesses and families. In addition, it is sad to see acquaintances and brothers in Christ die because of COVID-19. Since March 2020, we have been helping to provide bags of food to places most affected by the economy.

We thought that everything would continue like this in a new norm. However, during November, we were affected by Hurricane ETA and seven days later by Hurricane IOTA. These hurricanes affected 1.5 million inhabitants of Honduras. For a while, many people stopped thinking about the pandemic and

focused on the damage caused by the floods. Many people lost everything they owned and had to beg for food.

God allowed us Baptist churches to first support the needs of our members. Then, since the communities of three of our churches were affected by the floods, we began to help them with the need for food, providing bags of food to as many as possible. To this day, we are still experiencing the aftermath of the floods. There are families who have not been able to return to their homes. They are currently living in houses made of plastic in the middle of streets and under bridges. Thank God, many of you were able to help both our church members and our communities. This has allowed us to enter very dangerous places, places where even the police do not want to enter, and to share the gospel

of Christ in those places. We have seen many sad and joyful experiences.

As we meet people, each one has a story to tell about how they experienced the floods, how the hurricanes affected them...and many seem to be hopeless. As we spent time with them, they opened their hearts. One man





daily for about five consecutive weeks. We delivered these lunches, along with about forty mattresses and around 500 bags of food, to these people who had lost everything and who had come to clean up their houses. It was a difficult year, but we experienced blessings and joy by being useful in our communities and seeing our communities take on a new perspective regarding churches. We hope this will continue to open opportunities for us to make Jesus famous on earth.

I want to thank you for your prayers for our ministry here in Honduras. Thank you for the financial support you sent to help our country. I ask you to continue praying for our situation. This year, we are electing a new president. Pray that God would help us to choose the right person and that our country might rise from the effects of all these problems. Thank you, God, for your mercy toward Honduras!

shared with us his story. While he was on the roof of his house with his wife and two children waiting to be rescued, he asked God for forgiveness because he had turned from God a few years ago. His experience caused him to seek God's forgiveness, which of course God gave, and to grow closer to God. We saw another lady who had a tree fall into her house. She lost everything because of the floods. She was very anxious and fearful, but we were able to give her encouragement from the Word of God. These are just two examples of what life is like these days.

It is impossible to return home without feeling sad. I look at my daughters sleeping peacefully in their beds, and I see all the other families without a decent place to live. Nothing prepared us for all that our people living here have experienced. Sadly, we see families leaving the country because of all the problems.

The good news about all that has happened is that before these events, our communities had stopped trusting churches because the leaders of big churches had joined the government. When these emergencies arrived, our communities saw that the only groups actually helping were the churches. We had a special support team make 140 lunches





WHAT GOD CAN DO WITH A FAITHFUL REMNANT

BY: Leonel Moreno
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Allow me to introduce myself. I am Leonel Moreno Corella, and by the infinite grace of God, I am pastor of Orotina Missionary Baptist Church. Our church is located in a beautiful community with a hot climate, rural people who are fruit producers and very hard-working folks. Orotina has a population of around 30,000 inhabitants.

After calling me to the ministry, God sent me in 2012 as a missionary with my family to this small village located about 14 kilometers from the center of Orotina. In this place, we discovered a small group of people with a desire to know the Word of God. However, shortly after we arrived, adverse circumstances knocked on our door.

The small group of people with whom we worked added to the weight in my heart. They had few resources and were located far from the center of town in a conflictive area. My heart and mind were filled with doubts, tears, sleepless nights, and sadness. Because we saw no growth, I viewed my work as ineffective and a failure. It was a time of great confusion and discouragement. I was supposed to show people a face filled with firmness, security, and confidence even though my heart was discouraged and full of frustration.

This was a pivotal moment for me. I needed to make decisions, difficult decisions about our ministry, and I had no clarity on what I should do. Thoughts of leaving everything crossed my mind. But the Word of God sustained me. It hammered my head. God constantly confronted me with passages like Joshua 1:1-9 and Isaiah 41:10. They

became the breath I needed each day. “Lord, show me,” became more than a prayer. For six months I groaned this phrase but only heard the silence of God. Internal loneliness filled me even though my family and many other people were by my side.

After making a decisive decision, God began to show Himself by extending and expanding our work to neighboring towns. More work. I began to approach the Word of God with an intensity I had never had before.

The path began to be clear. We decided to reach other villages and get closer to the center of Orotina. We began to see fruit. Doors to homes were opened. God provided us a place to meet. Everything seemed to be going wonderfully. However, a month later, another hard test arrived. We were no longer allowed to meet in our meeting place.

Discouragement set in and spread to the other brothers of the congregation. But God in His faithfulness took us to a tiny warehouse, full of garbage, covered with old cans, and without electricity, and He turned that place full of waste into His church building with a faithful remnant of people. We felt covered by the faithfulness of God who called us to share the gospel week after week.

Acts 2:47 became a reality for our church. On this side of 2021, we have already celebrated our third anniversary as an established church, part of the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA), receiving support for both missionary activity and to help pay rent. God continues to bless us. Let's keep moving forward!

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