

April 2024

MISSIONS

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School Invests in
Young Lives

Philippines
God's Significant People
in Insignificant Places

MPH
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All Ages in Missions

Interview
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Discuss Daily Life





THINKING IT THROUGH

BY ERIC BARTON

A Faithful Creator

Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. (1 Peter 4:19)

When a believer shares the Gospel with an unbeliever, the topic of suffering commonly arises. Some familiar questions include: Why do bad things happen to good people? If God is good and all powerful, then why does He allow evil? Is God punishing me because of my sin? While some of these questions are easy to answer, others are more difficult. And, in some cases, we may have no answer at all—not because one is nonexistent but because we share the same doubt and concern.

Yes, these types of questions are not unique to the unbeliever. Eventually, we all face adversity that stretches us to the breaking point. And, in that moment, we may be tempted to enter into the same state of doubt as the disciples in Mark 4:35–41. When faced with a great windstorm on the Sea of Galilee, our Lord slept quietly in the stern. In contrast, the disciples were afraid and awoke the Lord asking, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

Shamefully, I have asked the same question. So what are we to do when faced with such unbelief in our lives? We can look to a few essential truths in our time of need:

God’s Word

According to Mark 4:35, our Lord Jesus prompted His disciples to sail the Sea of Galilee, plainly stating, “Let us cross over to the other side.” Despite the storm, He and the disciples crossed successfully, just as He had said. The lesson is clear: God’s Word is trustworthy and provides the perspective we need when emotions run wild. When the Father of Lies whispers, “God doesn’t care,” God’s Word proves otherwise. And, when we can’t find our way, His Word points true north.

God’s character

Unlike us, God never changes. Regardless of our circumstances, He has been and always will be merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abounding in goodness and truth, and forgiving (Exodus 34:6–7). As the source of perfect love, He is patient

and kind. He lavishes us with promises to lean on in times of trouble and has proven Himself faithful to fulfill them. His ways are never arbitrary; He always acts with purpose (John 9:1–5). When He bruises, He also binds up, and His wounds are ever faithful (Job 5:18; Proverbs 27:6).

God’s sovereignty

As sovereign of the universe, God has the right to do as He pleases. However, His sovereignty never acts apart from His character. As such, what He permits and does are always for His glory and our good. This truth also means nothing can touch us without His permission (Job 1–2). And, in His wisdom, He understands that suffering equips us for greater service, refines our character, and brings Him much glory (2 Corinthians 1:3–7; Isaiah 48:10; Romans 5:3–5; 1 Peter 4:12–14).

Accomplishing what He loves

Suffering characterized the Lord Jesus’s life, and we are likely to become acquainted with it too. It is a necessary part of our spiritual growth. While things won’t always make sense, one thing is certain: our faithful Creator never leaves nor forsakes us.

What’s more, how we suffer is a message itself. To a dying world looking on, there is no greater gospel message than a life of genuine faith devoted to the praise, honor, and glory of Jesus Christ while passing through the fire (1 Peter 1:7).

But should our faith falter after we have suffered awhile, we need only cry out to the Lord and confess, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24) In doing so, we give the God of all grace the opportunity to perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle us (1 Peter 5:10).

Let me leave you with something Steve Estes said to his friend Joni Eareckson Tada after her diving accident and subsequent hospitalization. As Joni struggled to make sense of her suffering, Steve simply said: “God permits what He hates to accomplish what He loves.”¹ May it be so in our lives also. ■

Eric Barton is a CMML director.

¹ Joni Eareckson Tada, “Ten Words That Changed Everything about My Suffering,” *Desiring God*, 7 September 2021, DesiringGod.org/articles/ten-words-that-changed-everything-about-my-suffering.

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COVER PHOTO: Teacher with students, Manantial School, Mexico—Shelby Haines





A Gospel-Saturated School in Southern Mexico

INVESTING IN YOUNG LIVES FOR ETERNAL IMPACT

BY NATHAN CEDARLAND

Puerto Escondido is a small but rapidly growing city on Mexico's southern Pacific coast. It is one of the large population centers in the vast but more sparsely populated Mexican state of Oaxaca. Getting an accurate number for Puerto Escondido's size is a challenge, but the metropolitan area has a population of roughly 75,000 people and boasts more than 800,000 tourists per year.

Establishing roots and bearing fruit

The Lord led Casey and Meg Herring to found Manantial School in 2013. They desired to start a Christian school that would focus on reaching non-Christians with the Gospel and would be affordable for everyone in the community. The school grew from 27 students in its first year to maxing out its current facilities—with more than 200 students—by year six. With a staff of 35 teachers and administrators, Manantial now provides classes from kindergarten to 12th grade. The school is also laying the groundwork for developing a Bible college in the coming years. Through it all, God has shown Himself faithful and continues to bless this ministry with numerous gospel opportunities.

Every day, Manantial's students hear the good news of Christ proclaimed by their teachers, who are trained to weave the Gospel into every class. All subjects are taught in light of a biblical worldview, with Christ at the center, which is particularly exciting because more than 70 percent of Manantial's students

Puerto Escondido is known as the surf capital of Mexico. Apart from attracting tourists, the excellent waves, beautiful beaches, and bohemian subculture draw a significant number of international residents too. This creates a contrast between the modern, New Age, and progressive lifestyles of the beach denizens and the inhabitants of the more conservative Indigenous towns in the



surrounding hills. But the cultures come together at Manantial School, where my family serves.

Manantial School, in Puerto Escondido, currently enrolls 219 students and has a waiting list of more than 200. The Lord uses Manantial to reach the community and region with the good news of Jesus Christ, and the school hopes to expand soon so it can extend that impact for many years to come.



Top (L-R, from top): Several sixth graders hang out during recess; Teachers, such as this physical education teacher, influence their students today so the kids can reach their region in the future; A group of third graders cool down after playing hard during recess; The third-grade class celebrates Mexican Independence Day; Two primary students hug goodbye before afternoon dismissal. **Above (L-R):** At night, Puerto Escondido is full of lights, colors, and activity; By 2019, Manantial enrolled more than 200 students, pictured here with the staff.



come from homes that do not know or believe the Gospel. Manantial offers an English immersion program at the primary level and affordable tuition for lower-income families, so many non-Christians are willing to send us their children, even though we promote Christ and His Gospel above all else.

This effort to saturate our school with the Gospel is bearing fruit: we have seen numerous students come to faith in Christ. Throughout the year, we offer parents several workshops on topics such as parenting, pornography, digital technology, and marriage. We base the content on the principles of God's Word and incorporate the Gospel. Students also bring their families to the Sunday gatherings at our local fellowship, and some parents have come to know the Lord. Many others are drawing near and beginning to attend Bible studies or our Sunday gatherings. Our desire is to reach entire families, not just the students, and we are thrilled to witness the power of the Gospel in so many lives.

Reaching the world from Puerto Escondido

We are not specifically an international school, since we open our doors to locals and internationals alike. While the majority of our pupils are Mexican, our student body currently represents 14 nations. This makeup reflects the diversity in Puerto Escondido and literally brings the nations to our doorstep. It is not uncommon for our local church to see visitors from numerous countries on any given Sunday. We conduct the worship

gathering in Spanish but translate our sermons into English, transmitted through headsets, to reach the many European, Canadian, American, and Australian residents and tourists.

Every year, our school presents Cultures Night, an event that highlights the nations represented in the school and includes traditional Mexican folk dancing from around the country. This outreach has been effective, with more than 700 people attending and hearing the message of the Gospel.

Besides international diversity, this region has its own internal diversity, with more than 155 Indigenous language groups. In some cases, the Mexican citizens who make up these groups speak little to no Spanish. Some still lack the Bible in their native tongue and any gospel witness in their communities. In fact, the state of Oaxaca has one of the highest concentrations of unreached people groups in the Western Hemisphere. All this diversity—from the international to Indigenous communities—makes Puerto Escondido a strategic location for gospel impact in this region, and Manantial School plays a significant role in the effort.

Weaving the Gospel into the curriculum

The school has also been a means of discipling young men and women in the faith. Besides equipping students through Bible classes and weekly chapels, we have implemented a classical Christian approach to education—one that emphasizes the integration of every subject with the truth of God's Word. In other words, students learn to think about all of life through the lens of Scripture and the lordship of Christ.

At the primary school, it is always a joy to walk on campus and hear the young students singing not just hymns but also Bible verses, math facts, and history sentences all to the glory of God. To give one example, the kindergarten and elementary students recently memorized all the verses of "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" in English and Spanish, and we heard about a kindergartner who continues to cheerfully sing this hymn to his non-Christian father. Pray that the Lord will use this child to soften the man's heart.



Top (L-R): The Manantial staff gather for their annual Christmas dinner; The teachers incorporate a biblical worldview into all their lessons, even one-to-one instruction; The second-grade teacher shows her students Christ's love. **Bottom:** At one of Manantial's Cultures Nights, several students perform a traditional dance from Jalisco, a western state.



Building our home

Two years ago, the Lord opened the door for us to purchase a tract of land on which to build a facility for the school. Currently, Manantial School rents two separate facilities: one for the kindergarten (K2 and K3) and elementary grades and one for the junior high and high school. We hope to begin constructing



our multiuse facility soon. Lord willing, it will serve the school during the week and our local fellowship on Sundays.

Additionally, we run a small Bible institute, the Christian Leadership Institute, which equips future leaders and prepares Christians for missions. We hope to expand it into a Bible college with on-campus experience with young people from Mexico, the United States, and other nations. It would also share this property in the future. We greatly appreciate your prayers for the accomplishment of this massive project. We know all things are possible with the Lord.



Ministering as a family at Manantial

After many years of home schooling, six of our seven children now attend Manantial. Our son and daughter in junior high understand the mission and actively encourage their classmates to attend the youth group and the church fellowship on Sundays. Currently, more students participate in the youth group than at any previous time.

Julissa has also served at the primary school, leading the assembly time on Monday mornings and helping support the young international teachers. Please pray for God's continued provision of teachers, as we are often being stretched due to a shortage in that area. Since the primary school's classes are mostly taught in English, we can recruit missionary teachers from the United States and Canada. Our kids are blessed by the presence of these young missionaries and have enjoyed making connections and friends from all over the world.

Besides serving as an elder in our local fellowship and as an instructor in the Bible institute, I am also the general director of Manantial School. At times, all of that together becomes overwhelming, but I am blessed to have a great team of four principals serving under me at the school and several colobors in the local church. Our family would appreciate your prayers for the Lord's sustaining grace in this work.

Sending our students to the world

We are incredibly grateful for how God has been working through Manantial School and our local fellowship, and we look to the future with great expectancy. It is exciting to think about the impact these students will have in this region. We suspect many of them will join the Bible institute, and Bible college down the road. We pray that some will be called to minister to the unreached people groups in this region and other places around the world. We indeed serve a great God who works through the prayers of His people. Your prayers for our students, teachers, this ministry, and our family truly make an eternal impact.

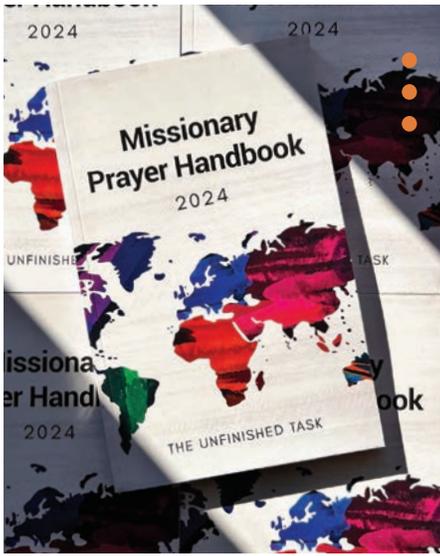
"Then He said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Luke 10:2, NKJV) ■



Nathan Cedarland and his wife, Julissa, are commended from Kaleo Grays Harbor in Aberdeen, Washington.



Top (L-R): Staff devotionals begin with worship; The K3 teacher models and leads the students in prayer; Students sing "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" at the 2023 Christmas play. **Left (top to bottom):** The primary school meets in a building apart from the secondary school due to space limitations; Nathan speaks during the dedication ceremony for the land that will, one day, serve as the school's home.



ONE BOOK, MANY USES

Assemblies Utilize the *Missionary Prayer Handbook* to Engage All Ages in Missions

Every year, thousands of believers use the *Missionary Prayer Handbook* to pray for the Lord's work around the world. We love hearing how believers like you use the MPH to involve all ages in missions—from personal, daily prayer to weekly prayer meetings in local assemblies to special projects and outreaches. Your creativity and faithfulness amaze us! Below, believers representing assemblies across the US discuss the MPH's role in their ministries. Your chapel may engage in similar efforts, or the ideas may inspire you to try something new.

ARBOR OAKS BIBLE CHAPEL

Dubuque, Iowa

Arthur & Lois Manning & Laurel Rasmussen

My husband, Arthur, and I (Lois) have been serving in our assembly's Awana ministry for the past 20 years. Every year, we have a missionary theme, usually during March. At the beginning of the school year, we start talking about which missionary or ministry we will recognize for the year.

This year, we wanted to emphasize a missionary family our assembly, Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel, supports. We decided we wanted our clubbers to get to know Daniel and Anne Johnson and their family (MPH Day 1), who serve in Burundi. Using the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*, I looked up their names and saw an email address that I could use to contact them.

One of the sections in the Awana handbook requires clubbers to insert a picture of the missionary they are praying for. I received a digital prayer card from the Johnsons, which we printed copies

of and distributed to all the clubbers. In another section, the clubbers need to send a letter to the missionary, so we encouraged the clubbers to email the Johnson family. We reminded the parents that their children may continue to send emails to the missionaries after they complete the coursework. I also told the parents that they could send pictures of their family to the Johnsons. The Johnson family has really enjoyed receiving emails from our clubbers!

I asked Daniel if he could send us some videos of their ministry so we could show them to our clubbers on our missionary night in March. (We couldn't have a live videoconference since the time difference was too great.) I also gathered information about Burundi and collected gifts for the clubbers, such as small Burundian flags and coloring books of African animals. We enjoyed interacting with the Johnsons in this special way!

WOODSIDE CHAPEL

Fanwood, New Jersey

Charlotte Mearns

We at Woodside Chapel had such a great time at the fall 2023 Women's Missionary Day, which takes place at a different New Jersey assembly twice per year. Our theme centered around education, since our three speakers were teachers or associated with running schools. For the luncheon portion, we decorated each place setting on the tables with an apple and a pen with a little luggage tag attached. The tag featured the name and picture of a missionary or missionary family—their listing in the *Missionary*

Prayer Handbook.

We tied a string to the tag and wound it around a CMML

pen. Several women were involved: Mrs. Pizzulli painstakingly made the tags, and the tablescape was Margaret Nowak's vision. At the end of the conference, everyone went home with a reminder to pray for "their missionary"!



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 Teaching in a Bible Institute; Personal evangelism; Sunday school teaching; Teacher training
 Cherryside Bible Church, Arlington, VA

BIBLE BELIEVERS FELLOWSHIP

Wausau, Wisconsin

Late in 2020, we at Bible Believers Fellowship were introduced to the 2021 *Missionary Prayer Handbook*. After a few weeks, we thought it would be helpful to share two pages at each of our weekly prayer meetings, so we scanned them into a PowerPoint presentation. A year later, our assembly still appreciated the material, and we had developed a method for using the MPH that worked for us: At the start of a prayer meeting, one of the men walks through each country and the families and individuals listed for that day, introducing them and moving through the information. We pray for each of the missionaries during the meeting.

In the last two years, we have grown in our efforts surrounding the MPH. As we move through it, we send emails to each missionary requesting information about their families and prayer needs. We share their responses with two other interested

assemblies. We use PowerPoint to display the MPH pages, followed by a slide summarizing the prayer requests to help us remember the specific needs. We also have occasional Zoom meetings with various missionaries, which further engage the believers and develop even closer relationships with the missionaries.

This ministry requires a weekly local effort. The Lord has supplied us with the willingness to maintain this effort and an assembly eager to meet and pray. We are grateful. We see great value in this and have continued using the MPH in our prayer meetings. It is a tool that the Lord is using to encourage prayer, and we are thankful.



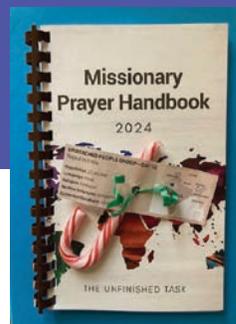
MOUNTAIN RIDGE BIBLE CHAPEL

Berkley Heights, New Jersey

Judy Gallagher

One of my responsibilities in my chapel's annual vacation Bible school has been to choose a missionary family that we can feature during the week. We hope to expose the kids to missions and help them engage with the missionaries and pray for their ministries. I use the *Missionary Prayer Handbook* to select a family that has a ministry to children. Then, at VBS, I show kids the MPH and tell them to check their copy for the featured missionaries' listing, including their picture, children's names and ages, and ministry description.

In our 2023 VBS, we highlighted special-areas missionaries. We collaborated online to put together short, daily presentations about their family, location, ministry, and prayer requests. I also created a bulletin board displaying photos and info, and it remained in the chapel's fellowship hall for the entire year, reminding us to pray for our featured missionaries.



Space intentionally left blank

Around Christmas, I worked on another project. I used the 2024 MPH to create candy cane treats with an affixed tag featuring information about the 31 unreached people groups listed at the end of each day in the MPH. The tag's reverse side included a link to CMML's website, where people could access supplemental information to help them pray. My assembly also had copies of the 2024 MPH out on a table, and I made the candy canes available at our Christmas program and holiday youth activities. We hoped to encourage our families to learn more about the unreached people groups and pray that the Lord will raise up messengers to bring the Gospel to them. ■



How does your assembly use the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*? We'd love to know. Scan the QR code to tell us.

Ask a Missionary

Missions work around the world is unique—different from what friends and family at home encounter day to day. So, to learn about life on the field while getting to know our missionaries better, we asked them to share their firsthand experience or advice.

QUESTION: What has the mission field taught you about parenting?

PERU

Marta Hocking



The people around us observed our parenting and considered it a good example to follow. A national missionary who stayed a few days in our home commented that he thought having bedtime stories with the children was a good idea.

DOMINICAN REP.

Sharyn Branson



Both of our kids left home in 2023, so there is much we could say. But one thing really stands out: the importance of always putting family above ministry. It is easy to get so busy with ministry that we do not give the time and attention to our kids that we must. Ministry is important. It is why we are here dedicating ourselves to serving God in foreign missions. However, always, always, always put family before ministry—God, family, then everything else, including ministry. We must keep our priorities straight all the time. Parenting is hard, but it is even harder if we put ministry above our kids or make them feel, in any way, that ministry is more important than they are.

PERU

Nicole Cacho-Hansen



I think that parenting in a foreign country has taught me not to sweat the small stuff. Some of the things my home culture does with children are the exact opposite of what the culture I live in does. I have realized that, in both cultures, kids can grow up to be responsible adults and love the Lord. I have also learned to respect different parenting styles. Living in another culture helps you evaluate the pros and cons of your own culture and those of the foreign one, so you can adopt the practices that work for you and your family.

MEXICO

Priscilla Clark



I grew up on the mission field and then had the privilege of raising my kids on the mission field. One thing for which I am forever grateful to my parents is instilling in me a love for the Gospel and the Lord's work. I could tell that, to them, the most important thing in life was taking the Gospel to people so they could believe and have eternal life. My husband and I sought to raise our kids with this same urgency—first, to love and know God and His Word and, because of this, to love His work in the world. Besides living these truths and passionately teaching them to our kids, another key to giving our children a love for the work was involving them in the ministry from a young age. When kids participate in taking the Gospel to others, they taste the incomparable joy of seeing people come to the Savior.

UGANDA

Sue Cullen



At times, we may have felt that raising kids in a foreign country deprived them of many privileges. But, in hindsight, now that our two "boys" are grown, we most certainly believe otherwise. Instead of deprivation, their upbringing was a privileged one! We got to be together. They experienced the enrichment of culture—a foreign one in addition to their own. They were exposed to a healthy environment—organic food and no air pollution. I got to be involved in their school as a piano player for the assembly time. They got to have their dad as their Bible teacher, listening to his sermons on Sunday in church. I hope these comments encourage parents who are still raising their children.

ASK YOUR QUESTIONS!

Visit [CMML.us/askamissionary](https://www.cmml.us/askamissionary) to submit your question—it might be selected for a future issue!