



Dearest Ministry Partner,

First, INDIA: I have never seen such poor people. . . .

I walked into a haggard little village of India, where the people were mourning a woman's death. I saw the body lying on the dirt in front of a hut. She was hardly bigger than a girl and covered with flowers up to her chest. A small pebble had been placed on each eyelid to keep them closed. Her mouth was open and stuffed with black flowers.

The men smelled of alcohol, meant to diminish the pain of life. The huts of the lucky ones—the “well-off” ones—had been built around an oval perimeter, leaving the center as a large courtyard where the community life and activities take place.

I was there with a church-planting team from the big city of Chennai, formerly Madras. The team visits this village every week to shepherd believers. It's only one among many villages they minister in.

The people rejoice at the arrival of the team because the visitors bring food and clothing and other aid that they urgently need for their families. Young teenage girls are already mothers, holding babies and pregnant again. There is no concept of birth control, so even women in their 50s have babies.

Most of the huts have been built or paid for by the team. We visited every hut, distributing five-pound bags of rice. Each family waited in front of its hut with their hands folded in respect and bobbing their heads in gratitude.

One woman stood on a patch of scraggly grass speaking sadly and hopelessly. An Indian translated for me: “This is the spot where I want to have a hut for me and my children. This is the spot where I want to have a hut for me and my children. . . .” She kept repeating the same phrase over and over throughout our visit. She is not one of the lucky ones. Each hut that has been built costs \$300. They can only be built as funds become available.

The team's week-to-week shepherding is pointing the way to Christ and to the life He offers those who come to Him. The team members are also helping the residents learn to read and write and to study the Bible.



In another village, residents were rejoicing at the water well the team had provided for them. Some of the children happily pumped the water while others took turns crawling under the water as it came gushing out. They were oblivious to their utter poverty. They were also oblivious to the danger of their situation . . . the snakes.

The chief of the village, with hands folded as if praying, asked that we help put up four light posts to light the village at night. They can teach the children to look out for cobras during the day, he explained, but at night no one is safe—because no one can see them!

The city of Chennai can't afford to put up the light posts for them; it's doubtful that they would, even if they could. They regard the people of such villages as "undesirables." These villagers are at the bottom of the system, the social structure embedded in their culture.

Some villagers are good at catching the cobras. They sell them to labs in the city; workers "milk" the snakes to make anti-venom. But the children of the village are terribly vulnerable to the snakes. They don't know where to look or how to avoid them.

During the week, I taught dozens of pastors. In spite of the harsh realities they deal with, they want more of God. They want to know how to minister more effectively to their people. And they will sacrifice even more greatly to achieve such a goal. Many pastors took a train 400 miles or more to spend a week in our training. One traveled nearly 1,000 miles! It took him 48 hours one way to be with us for 40 hours of meetings!

I was teaching the historical books of the Bible, from Joshua to Esther. This subject was very important for these pastors because they don't know much about the Old Testament. I was astonished to learn that one of the pastors, eagerly absorbing the teaching all week long, has a 1,000-member church! You and I have the joy of sponsoring church-planting teams based in his church; they're among the teams visiting the villages every week.

And it's in these remote, primitive villages where the power of our faith is put to a real test. As our teams go into these most difficult places and meet the most basic of physical needs in Jesus' name, it's the "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father" of James 1:27.

In the villages, the teams invited me specifically to give the rice to each family; they wanted me to have the pleasure of reaching the "final stage." I did it, but I believe I was the wrong person to do it. YOU should have been there handing out the rice! You are the beginning of the equation . . . and this was the final stage of your ministry!

Next, SPAIN:

Spain couldn't have been more drastically opposite from India. I felt at first that I was experiencing civilization in all its sophistication. But soon it became clear: This is still, truly,



a mission field. If you're looking for swollen bellies, you may surmise that there is no need in Spain. But the reality is that Spain is losing hope. These people need Jesus just as desperately as the villagers of India.

Some in Spain are actually comparing the chaos in their government—or the lack of government—to the days before Franco seized power to keep the country from collapsing into communism. There is actually no government at present, just a lot of squabbling about who will form a coalition with whom, sharing power in order to govern by some means.

Spain's unemployment rate is astronomical. Five million university graduates—trained, qualified, and ready—have no prospect of a job. Many have been forced to go back and live with their parents and wait for better times. In such an uncertain world, Spanish couples don't want to give birth; so the nation's population is shrinking. This situation opens the door for the minorities to grow, bringing a whole additional set of pressures and problems to the system.

And in the midst of all this conflict and pressure, our students are endeavoring to forge ahead in ministry! On this front, I can bring good news: Problems open hearts to one's need for God. We have a far more receptive audience in Spain today than when people felt thoroughly, successfully European. They believed that, as part of a united Europe, they could solve any issue with their own intelligence and strength. Now, they're looking desperately for the truth!

As a result, we're opening churches and extension centers throughout Spain's various regions. There's a happy mood among our students! They have the joy of serving in a thriving, God-led enterprise that is gaining momentum and has a bright future. They're evangelizing and planting churches enthusiastically!

Then, UKRAINE:

In a country still at war on its eastern border, we're finding the same brightness and openness. Yes, Russia is encroaching into Ukrainian territories. Russia's leader, Vladimir Putin, is perceived as an evil person, deceiving even his own people. Ukrainians are afraid for their future. Yet in the midst of such gloom, the light of the Gospel is shining bright. The church is making powerful inroads!

At a church in Kyiv, they asked me to preach on Matthew 24:15-28—which, very appropriately, reveals that the world is moving rapidly toward the final days. The congregation was eager to play the role that God has designated for them in such turbulent times. They were encouraged by the fact that all that is happening gives them an audience and much fruit as they share with their people!

Now . . . after India, Spain, and Ukraine . . . I come to one more country of consequence: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



What are we to do with these opportunities? Are we to simply be awed at the extremes that people are enduring? It might be easy to look at India's poverty, or Spain's meltdown, or Ukraine's violence and see these as mission fields beyond our capacities or possibilities. But this isn't how God sees it!

Look at what John the apostle saw in his vision: 14 judgments have already been poured out on the earth (Revelation 10); then the last set of 7 judgments will finish all that has been prophesied—yet at the last moment, God calls a truce! With only minutes to go before disaster strikes, God calls out to his beloved planet: “Why will you die? Turn and be saved!”

Think of John's situation. He has heard the Great Commission from Jesus' own lips in Galilee (Matthew 28). He has heard the Great Commission from Jesus again in Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Now, years later, John is exiled and isolated on the small windswept island of Patmos. And God says to him: “You must prophesy again.” The sense of the statement, in the original text, is even stronger: God is telling him to “keep on prophesying again, and again, and again, until the very end!”

Even in his utter seclusion, cut off from the world, still God tells him to do all that he can! And God makes a way. He eventually moves John back to Ephesus where he becomes the bishop of the church—to mobilize the Ephesians! My friend, as you obey, God will use you also!

So today, I bring you this challenge. As we approach the year's end, we need your help. We are still carrying the shortfall of the summer months. We make no apology for the ministries that have been accomplished. We know that God can erase the shortfall by December 31 and launch us with renewed strength into the New Year. But He will do it through friends like you.

So I warmly invite you to do whatever God empowers you to do. Don't pull up short; go to the limit of His provision for you! I think of the little boy's loaves and fishes. Why would Jesus bother to start with such a tiny amount when God could have done it all from scratch? No . . . in his vast wisdom and love, He wants us all to share in the greatness of what He will do.

The boy's faith was necessary. The boy who gave up his loaves and fishes is receiving dividends in eternity for his God-magnified example!

Please join him in his faith and obedience. Share your loaves and fishes with those in need in the many places where we are involved. How is the Lord speaking to your heart right now? What kind of impact could you make on the harvest? . . .

- 4 lamp posts for the village in India: \$2,000
- 1 hut to house a family in that village: \$300
- 1 seminary building in Spain: \$5.6 million
- 1 church planter in India: \$60 per month
- 1 church-planter team: \$6,000 per month
- 1 church planter in Ukraine: \$100 per month



You, and you alone, know what God is enabling you to do. Large, small, or in between, let your response be “from the heart” . . . an expression of Christlike compassion at year’s end for needy people in faraway lands. Let me hear from you today! Thank you! God bless you!

Joyfully in His service,

Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. It is a joy to me to be called into the service of the Master alongside you. Thank you for all you have meant to me and to the ministry. Now, I look forward to hearing from you and celebrating whatever way the Lord uses you in the days ahead!