



***My Prayer for You ...** May the Lord lead you and your loved one as the Great Shepherd of the Sheep. May He guide you to green pastures and quiet waters. May He restore your soul. May your heart be satisfied.*

May 1, 2014

Dear Ministry Prayer Partners,

The thrill of church-planting? Or “merely” youth ministry?

This was my attitude, I confess, as I headed to Asia—but I just got back, and I’m happy to report:

I had it wrong!

This was a momentous and wonderful trip. I went to see how our teams are coming along in their church-planting activities. I expected no church plants to speak of ... just “youth-type” ministry.

I was happily surprised!

Yes, the ministry does involve a majority of young people around college age, but this is just the platform for the greater outreach—establishing dozens of church plants! Hallelujah! The work is taking root—and it is bearing fruit.

What a joy to meet the new leaders doing the work and rejoicing in the harvest ... and the new disciples being made. For example:

Meet Yoon. He is a spiritual leader in one of the two megacities we visited. Yoon is a true shepherd. Everything about him demonstrates his love for the work, for the team, and for the people he is reaching. They are his own.

Yoon and his wife have one child (only one allowed in their country!). Yoon oversees a team of six other evangelists and church planters; plus, he personally teaches in four house churches.

Unlike most men from his region, Yoon is physically massive: more than 6 feet tall and well over 200 pounds. Even so, he comes across as a very gentle shepherd. You can see by the way others gravitate to him, and by the rapport between them, that he is a loved and respected leader in the group.

The house churches are growing. People are coming to the Savior. There are major summer activities being planned. Morale is very high in the group. We praise God for this

wonderful work—and for the hope-filled expectations rooted in the hearts of this leader and his team!

Meet Nancy. Hers is a very special case.

I was told in advance of her delicate health condition and various surgeries she has gone through. She has had severe intestinal disease and large portions of her intestines removed.

As if her gastrointestinal challenges were not enough, when she was less than 12 years old, doctors accidentally injected her with a medication that produced a severe reaction. Her hand and forearm went purple and black. The doctors decided to amputate her right hand and most of her arm.

It was an “unlucky” experience, her doctors said, but there was nothing she could do. The hospital is military; her family had no legal recourse. All the doctors could do was wish her better luck!

So Nancy has no right hand and no right arm. No prosthesis, either. And less than half of her small intestine. I expected to meet someone grim, someone living under a cloud.

Again—surprise!

Nancy’s beaming smile dispels all gloom. She’s intelligent and articulate. Her English is excellent; her accent acts like an adornment to the conversation. One conversation makes it obvious that she is university-trained and very smart! Most amazing of all, this very happy person is without an ounce of bitterness—and a dynamic evangelist.

We sat at a table to record a video interview with her. At another table were 10 or more leaders preparing details and planning for the summer campaigns. During a lunch break, one of the leaders revealed something Nancy had humbly declined to mention: seven of the ten leaders around the table had been brought to Christ and disciplined by Nancy herself.

Wow! God does it again. It seems that God will not miss an opportunity to show us how His power can be perfected in weakness. This petite, weak, handicapped person, by the mere fact that she is willing, is being used mightily by God. It is humbling, inspiring, convicting. Hopefully, more than anything, it is powerfully motivating!

By stark contrast, one evening we sat in a nice restaurant with an expatriate missionary (using chopsticks to grab raw fish, then dipping it into a boiling soup in a large wok in the center of the table—basically cooking our own meal as we went).

I was struck by the words of this healthy missionary. Ministry in these parts is not easy at all, he warned darkly. One should give up any “triumphalist” hopes. The people of that region are *hard*, he insisted, and very proud. Lower your expectations as far as possible, he groaned, if you want to remain in the field. “Can’t.” “Won’t.” “Don’t.” This was his lexicon.

In fact, I was mildly “reprimanded” for even suggesting that we might enjoy a God-inspired optimism.

Yet the very next day, we met Nancy—with her victorious smile in spite of all her limitations! God knows what He is about!

The contrast made me think back to the biblical lesson I shared with you just last month: the contrast between Saul and Jonathan. **They believed in the same God, and enjoyed the same promises and the same provisions. Yet Saul could only see warnings, and Jonathan could only see victory.**

As so often happens, it comes down to either waiting for the “perfect” time—or “chasing daylight.” Saul wanted to run consultation after consultation, “just to make sure.” Someone told me an initiative we were contemplating was “premature at this time.” Of course we *never* saw this initiative ripen, so it never came to pass.

The way Jesus saw ripeness had to do with spiritual vision and perception.

The common wisdom sees months to go before harvest time—but supernatural wisdom sees the spiritual need now, the hunger of lost people now, the provision of salvation now—conditions perfect for harvest!

Jesus observed the others had already done the work of sowing and preparing. The prophets had done their work. John had already proclaimed “Prepare the way of the Lord.” If the disciples would only look around, they would see people with spiritual hunger.

Jesus wanted the spiritual perspective to overcome even their cultural prejudice against the Samaritans. The white harvest Jesus referred to in John 4:35 was a harvest of Samaritans coming from the villages after hearing the news of the woman at the well.

The disciples couldn’t see the Samaritans as likely candidates to receive the grace of God. The cultural barriers—addressing a Samaritan woman, and even worse, using her as a channel to introduce her people to Christ—was too much for them to consider! But not for Jesus. In a very short while, the disciples were to experience the reality of a soul harvest—among Samaritans whom Jesus was about to bring in.

Jesus, like the Father, has a crystal clear focus on the value of souls: “red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight.” The fields are not “premature.” They are ready. Conditions are perfect for us to join the soul harvest!

Little Nancy, with her big grin—her abiding delight in all that is happening in the revival in her land—is a powerful picture of the joy of the harvest.

The somber words of warning from the healthy and well-equipped missionary are the exact opposite of the spiritual vision that Christ requires ... a perception that sees the ripeness of the fields, in spite of imagined barriers.

Where would you rather stand?
What would you rather do?
What are you able to see?

Jesus says, “Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white unto harvest.” Will you choose the victories the Lord wants to give you, even if you feel “handicapped” or obstructed in some way?

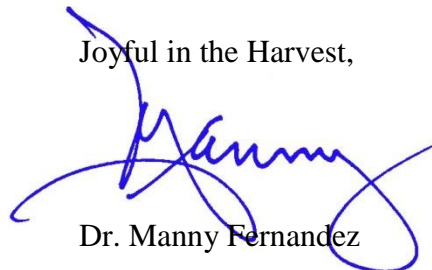
I invite you to trust fully in the Lord and take action today, declaring: “God is mighty to save by many or by few!”

Please prayerfully give a generous gift today toward our ministry together. We are facing a ministry budget shortfall that was not supposed to hit until summertime.

We are trusting, working, and focusing on our Lord for the victory. But I invite you to be part of the answer to prayer, an instrument of God’s great provision for the work of the ministry around the world. We need you.

May God bless you as you make a special effort, inspired by His power made perfect in weakness!

Joyful in the Harvest,



Dr. Manny Fernandez



P.S. Somewhere in Asia—in a country where Christianity is frowned upon—a mission field so difficult, I dare not even mention its name—God is doing amazing things, thanks to the generosity of friends like you.

I could fill pages with true stories of others like Yoon and Nancy. Let them be an inspiration to us today, here in our land of freedom, enjoying so many blessings. Let us give back joyfully a part of what God has so graciously given us, so that others, living in difficult circumstances, can find the Lord!