



February 1, 2017

Dear Ministry Partner,

Already!

It might be reasonable to expect a slow start-up to a new year—like a jetliner gradually gaining speed in order to lift off from the runway. . . .

But no! We're already bearing much fruit! We're already showing promise that **THIS WILL BE A BANNER YEAR!**

As I write these words, I am thanking God that He has given me the gift of such a fruitful partnership with you . . . for the sake of the harvest!

Look at how our banner year is already shaping up:

- This is the year for a big jump in the multiplication of church plants in India. We are planning—but first, praying—that in March we may see a tripling in the number of workers and church plants across this giant nation.
- In the Dominican Republic we will do a project of soil testing in the south of the country to see how ready this team is to launch scores of church plants!
- In Mexico we have already done testing. In a narrow window of time, we saw more than 25 churches launched!

We have also seen the legendary zeal of Mexican believers. Their courage in the Lord is contagious—it's inspiring. We believe we are ready to plunge into the work there. Our prayer goal: to embark on a church-planting project that will soon put 10 churches in each of the 32 states. (How can we move so fast? The speed of the project will be related to the generosity of the partners that the Lord sends us.)

These are what I call “happy plans” . . . cause for rejoicing! . . . and they are very much on the front burner of our new year! But at the same time, I am rejoicing in what God is already doing through your generosity around the world. My first travels in the new year have powerfully demonstrated, yet again, that Psalm 77:10 is true: “the right hand of the Lord does not change!”



He keeps blessing when we keep going out in obedience to do what He told us to do!
It's like the law of gravity:

If we release an object, it falls to the ground.
If we obey His lead, there is victory and blessing!
It doesn't matter whether we're 20 years old, or 50, or 60, or 90. He
blesses our obedience to His Word!

When I was 18 years old, I was waiting for a bus in Portland, Oregon, when an old man appeared, half running, half shuffling his feet. His voice was full of concern. "Was that the Number 28 bus that just left?" I said no. "What bus is yours?" he asked. "28," I answered.

His face changed. He was grateful. Relieved. Happy. "I'll wait with you," he said, breathing hard.

I wasn't happy to hear this! I saw saliva dribbling from his mouth. It had a brownish color because he was chewing tobacco. I was a Bible college student. I was too clean for his company!

Now I can see how pharisaical I was!

To recall our dialogue today is very telling.

"Where are you studying?" "Judson Baptist College."

He didn't hear very well. "Jesuit?!"

I corrected him. He took a moment to process what I had said. His face became sad. With a sense of loss, he finally said, "That is wonderful. I wish I had done something like that when I was a young man. But now I'm 82, and life is gone!"

His sad longing jolted me back to God's heart for reaching out to people of all ages and in any circumstances. I asked his name. "Butler," he said. I began telling Mr. Butler that with God it's never too late—if we're willing to respond to Him. I told him a story that Jesus shared with His disciples. . . .

A man went out early in the morning to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. He went back out at 9 a.m. to hire others. He did the same at noon and at 3 p.m. Finally, at 5 p.m., he saw some who had not worked all day long. He asked why they were idle. "No one hired us," they said. So the man hired them too—in the last hour of the day!



When the boss began to pay the workers, he started with the last ones that he hired—and paid them a full day’s wages! The same full-day wages went to every single one of the workers!

Mr. Butler was thrilled by the story—and the idea of grace! I asked him if he wanted to “hire on” with God to receive eternal life. He had just lit up a cigarette, but with obvious emotion and resolve, he took the cigarette out of his mouth, threw it on the ground, and stepped on it.

“Yes,” he said firmly, “I want to receive Him right now.”

He prayed with me in the busy streets of downtown Portland. Then he began pumping my hand. “Thank you, young man,” he repeated. “Thank you so much! Thank you!”

I was on cloud nine as I boarded the bus with him! I gave him my Bible. He was overwhelmed with gratitude. I told him whether we ever saw each other again, we would be together in heaven. And then he was gone.

I was 18. He was 82. But in his obedience and mine, there was great blessing. When we obey, there are blessings for all.

Do you sometimes feel you’re “too far gone” in some way to engage in the Lord’s will, in new initiatives? NO! Obedience will always bring blessings and reward! ALWAYS! Opportunities in this life can garner blessings that will last for eternity.

Our church planters often promote their causes to their local communities using a common promotional slogan: “Come, grow, and go.” Easy to understand, easy to remember.

- First, a person is to come. They are to come to Jesus and be saved. They’re to become disciples who know Him as Lord.
- Second, they are to grow—in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. They are to grow into spiritual maturity.
- Third, they are to go! This is the hardest of the three steps. There’s a lot of Bible study! Some people have been in a Bible study group for many years. But the going is a problem—Why? Because people have a constant sense of inadequacy. I can’t. I’m too (fill in the blank: _____).

Believe me, I don’t want to make you uncomfortable or cause guilt. My own daughter, Elizabeth, who has a wonderful walk with the Lord, feels the same burden. She was trained as a medical doctor. She has specialized as a pediatrician. She has many other attributes (is her father boasting?). But when it came time to go back out to the mission field in Africa, she was in tears!



I asked if she was sad to go. No. That was not the reason at all. She just felt “so inadequate”! Her preparation was crowned with high honors, but she felt inadequate!

Really, it should be no surprise. Even Paul the apostle acknowledged that we are inadequate—in and of ourselves.

One of my great mentors, the late Dr. Charles Ryrie, signed my first Ryrie Bible with precisely the same conviction. He wrote words of encouragement, and then, next to his name, he quoted 2 Corinthians 3:5: “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”

As my daughter tearfully contemplated her return to Africa, I shared this same passage of Scripture. Peace mercifully descended on her. God’s Word says yes, we know we are inadequate in and of ourselves—but God makes us adequate. His Son is our Captain; His Spirit is our comforter, and the One working alongside us. His Word is our guide. His provision makes us adequate in Him!

Obedience—no matter how old we are, no matter how far along in our spiritual journey—will bring blessings . . . and victories . . . for eternal keeping. Sure, we can seek the safety of an eternal Bible study, but we will eventually discover that knowledge does not give us adequacy. We will probably just feel more inadequate! Yes, we must grow, but we also must GO. We need to mobilize counting on His resources, not ours.

The late Dr. E.V. Hill in his famous “Third Base” message forcefully reminds us: “God didn’t save anybody to only run through first and second base and then go sit in the dugout to wait for the rapture!” In his classic colorful style, he shouts to the audience: “DON’T FORGET THIRD BASE!”

In this way, life is baseball. First you come; second you grow; but then there’s third: You must GO! Go into the entire world; preach the Gospel! You are not too young—not too old—to obey! I was 16 years old when I started a ministry of evangelism. I was so green and so inadequate that I didn’t even know I was inadequate! I just responded to what little I knew!

“Not too young; not too old; not too late!” If you are alive, you’re able to say yes to the Lord. You have a place on His team—and victory is guaranteed.

Will you please join Him? OK, you already have. But will you join with us and make 2017 count as a year of eternal gains because you were obedient to His call? OK, maybe you have already given in this year. But here’s the simple truth: God needs a team of players who will play every inning of the game. So I warmly invite you to give again today.



He will make you adequate in whatever you are lacking. It is His provision that makes us adequate. Trust Him and he will meet you at whatever level you join Him!

Please pray with us, and please give today to send somebody . . . that the Gospel may GO!

Rejoicing in the Soul Harvest,

Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. It is a delight to me to serve in the harvest fields of the Master alongside you! I look forward to hearing from you soon!