



October 1, 2017

Dearest Ministry Partners,

Warm greetings from the other side of the planet!

Yes, it's true. I'm in Tamil Nadu, India. Yet I'm there with you too, in spirit—thinking of you, the family, and friends, asleep on Friday night while I get going on Saturday.

I landed this morning in India around 4 a.m. local time. As I landed, I received a text from the U.S.—and from that moment, I wasn't groggy with jet lag anymore! In my hotel room, I followed up on the text by placing an international phone call.

Subject: *How to reach unreached people groups in Togo, Ghana, and other nations of West Africa!*

How did people who we do not know come to contact us about planting churches in West Africa? It happened because, by God's grace and with your faithful support, we are becoming known in different parts of the world for effective, efficient ministry-building.

In modern marketing terms, we have a "brand"! We are known to train and deploy local leaders in their countries to saturate their regions with the Gospel and plant churches.

Over the years, more and more people have contacted us "out of the blue":

- "I'm calling you because I've shared in three separate situations that we want our company to plant churches. In every one of the independent conversations, your name came up as the people we should talk to." This call came more than 10 years ago from a stranger (who is a good friend today).
- A few months ago a man called me from Arizona. "We've been looking for you for the last few months," he said, "because someone shared with us about your ministry and we've made a decision that that's what we want our missions program to be about."
- The ministry in the Dominican Republic started like this: Norma called because she was convinced that if we got involved, we would see thousands of churches planted.
- A graduate from our seminary in Spain got us involved in India for the same reason: "There will be thousands of churches planted," he declared.

And now his home church—in his native Brazil—has reached out to him: "Why not bring the evangelism and church planting program that you are doing in other places to our own backyard? We have wanted to see churches planted throughout the tribes, towns, and villages of the Amazon River. Can you help us to do that?"



The Brazilian student in turn said to me, “If you help us to set it up, we can work hard to keep it going!”

My friend . . . Do we see a pattern here?

Praise the Lord! The pattern is to make disciples of all nations!

And now, with the phone call even as I landed here, we face a new challenge: to pursue the gigantic task before us, the leading of the Lord in West Africa.

There is a happy connecting of the dots in this request. Our daughter Elizabeth, a pediatrician, works at the Hope Hospital in the nation of Togo. So we will be thrilled to hold hands with her in that faraway place as we go to unreached people groups.

It all began with you! You’ve allowed God to use you to “build our brand.” Your support in prayer and giving has paved the way for God to give us tremendous results—great breakthroughs—over a number of years.

The reality is, without month-to-month donors, there is no “World Link Ministries.” The achievements—the establishment of this “brand”—could only have happened as you joined the Lord in a team committed to fulfillment of the Great Commission.

I praise God that you’re not like so many who have reduced the Great Commission to the lesser commission. I thank God that you are personally following our captain, “God our Savior,” in the ministry of reconciliation.

Today’s missionary force is a mere fourth of what it used to be. How is it that church missions conferences have been reduced to a couple of “Missionary Emphasis Sundays” per year? As I told two West Coast pastors recently, the senior pastor of any church is the key to the climate, the culture, and the attitude of the church:

- If the senior pastor offers little more than lip service to missions, the church picks up on this and imitates him.
- If the pastor merely tolerates missions, or if the pastor sees missions activity as a nuisance, people pick up on it.
- If the pastor takes the “opportunity” to be absent for missionary activities, the church will take note and do likewise.

As part of my doctoral work, I took a series of courses identifying the main drivers of transformation in the climate and culture of an organization. These studies bore out this truth: The single biggest factor in forming the culture and the climate of a church is the influence of the lead pastor. Countless studies affirm it: As the pastor preaches and teaches, he sets the direction for the congregation.



I even heard a comical case of a pastor who carried five pens in his front coat pocket. Over the course of three years, the deacons of the church came to adopt this idiosyncrasy! *Everyone on the deacon board carried five pens in his coat pocket!*

But here, sadly, we see **a great disconnect**: Jesus is the head of the Church. He is the Prince Shepherd. All others are under-shepherds!

Christians in local churches tend to “follow the leader”—the senior pastor. But they’re following the wrong leader!

Jesus doesn’t wear five pens in His front coat pocket. But He has told us—five times—to go make disciples of all nations. He didn’t say to only reach out to our immediate community. He said, “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth.” And these targets were to be aimed at simultaneously, not consecutively.

Even in the Old Testament, Psalm 67 states:

God be gracious to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us,

That Your way may be known on the earth,
Your salvation among all nations. . . .

God, our God, blesses us.

God blesses us,
That all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

What is the psalmist telling us? He’s telling us why God blesses us: (1) that all the nations may hear; (2) that all may be saved!; and (3) that all may come into a praise relationship with our God.

This is why I am so thrilled that our “brand” is so strong. Not for the sake of earthly pride . . . but for the sake of souls. What a joy that many people whom we don’t even know are asking to share with us in the work that God has called us to!

Yes, I was tired after 20 hours of flying, but hearing of another opportunity like West Africa—hearing from people who want to reach out to the unreached—people willing to commit to three years’ funding for those operations—that’s exciting!

God is entrusting us with the stewardship of reaching more peoples in more places. Praise God that He has built our brand! Our brand is our culture, and the Head of the Church sets it as we follow Him, our Leader!



The longing of my heart is to keep in step with Him . . . to be found faithful in what He so plainly calls us to in the Scriptures.

Today, I simply open my heart to you, my friend and partner in the work. October is upon us. It's a crucial moment for planning your end-of-year giving. But we truly need your generous support immediately. Please don't wait.

The new work in West Africa will be funded for three years. I praised God for the passion of those who are already committed to this effort. But most of our work around the world depends on people like you: caring, committed Christians who are willing to make some kind of sacrifice for the sake of souls.

As I sit here in Tamil Nadu, India, my heart is soaring with the scope of this opportunity. Vast numbers of lost people can be reached as we give and pray and serve together! I also look across the oceans and see Mexico, with all its needs, another place where we can make a huge impact in the year ahead. I see Cuba, I see Spain, the list goes on.

The world is writhing with trials and tragedies. *We need to get the word out to multiplied millions that God loves them and wants them to come to Him to find grace in their time of need!*

It is a high honor to be recognized as members of His team. Please make it your plan to have a strong finish for the kingdom in this last quarter. But please also give today as generously as possible to keep our teams at work for another month.

I urge you to make it your aim, because of His values, to imitate Him—not with five pens, but in pursuit of five commissions He expressed over the course of the Scriptures: the call to make disciples.

I am filled with joy to be considered worthy of His adding to our task. I trust that you also consider yourself worthy of being tasked with the things that matter most to Him!

We are building treasures in the heavens, and eternity will be the sweeter. I hope you will rise to the occasion by doing your best to finish the year strongly in His leading.

Praising God for renewed strength, for His energizing us to mount up with wings as eagles.

In the train of His glory,

Dr. Manny Fernandez



P.S. Where will God lead us next? I don't know. I only know that we need to be ready to obey and follow Him there! Your generous gift today will help us go where He has already called us, and stand ready to walk through the next open door. Thank you in advance for the gift you'll give today! God bless you!