



April 1, 2021

Dear Ministry Partner,

As I write you today, I am both grieving and rejoicing.

*On the post-Covid horizon, opportunities for ministry are many . . . cause for rejoicing!*

But the coronavirus has not finished its destructive work. In parts of the world, the virus is multiplying at alarming rates. . . .

- I am grieving for SPAIN.

As I write, the country is closed; but the pressure on the “gates” is mounting, as the people are deeply weary of the year-long siege. It appears that Spain will have to open after Easter, because the economy cannot support another trimester of closure—even though doctors there are warning of a *fourth* resurgence.

- I am grieving for CUBA.

Millions are in dire straits. Closure has wiped out supplies. Many have no funds for buying even basic items allowed under humanitarian agreements within the embargo. Food is dangerously scarce. We have reports that people are truly in the depths of despair. Keep praying for our hundreds of ministry partners there!

- I grieve for INDIA.

Multitudes are suffering terrible shortages, trying to survive, and struggling to keep themselves from starving. For many, the struggle is proving hopeless; many Indians are dying.

One hundred million people above the poverty line are expected to fall into poverty. But many more millions will also descend into the pit because even the best case forecast is *two more* economically bleak years ahead for India. Millions of migrant workers are still striving to get back home to their villages since their work dried up—some on odysseys of as much as 1,200 miles!

- I grieve for BRAZIL, with its runaway multiplication of infections.

A pastor told me that in the past 10 days alone, 10 percent of his congregation had tested positive for Covid. Brazil’s entire hospital system is on the brink of collapse. Death rates are catastrophic. Leaders are afraid of opening the country because it seems the horrible situation could become even worse—unimaginably worse. Pray for Brazil!

The state of the world is a stark reminder that mankind is not all-sufficient and that we do not map our own journey.

Also, it's in times like these that people tend to remember *there is a God*. Our potential for advancing the kingdom against the tragic backdrop of the global pandemic is awesome. A hurting world is wide open to receive the message of hope and salvation!

**Now compare the ongoing tragedies of Spain, Cuba, India, Brazil, and elsewhere . . . to the UNITED STATES . . .**

We are coming out of the pandemic. The vaccines are reaching Americans by the millions. We have much to be glad for, much for which to be grateful. We look around at our lives and we can envision getting back to something like normal.

In fact many in our country may be taking for granted the speed with which the vaccines were developed and how quickly they're being distributed. But the reality is, the U.S. situation is extraordinary. Our nation had the medical know-how and economic clout to develop vaccines at record-shattering speed and the social and political infrastructure necessary for vaccinating huge numbers of people quickly.

Result: We are far, far ahead of most of the rest of the world. The system is working wonderfully well. **We are in a place of privilege.**

Yes, we *are* blessed. But we must not celebrate in a smug way. It is crucial that we remember why God has blessed us:

**We are blessed to be a blessing.** We are blessed in order that the ends of the earth may learn of our great God.

Psalms 67 is our guide: "May God be gracious to us and bless us," the psalmist says—and *why*? "So that your way may be known on the earth, your salvation among all nations."

The psalm closes with a reprise of the same prayer: "God blesses us, so that all the ends of the earth may fear him." (NASB)

As the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have been presented with a God-given window of opportunity. And I am happy about the way God's people have responded over this past year. But Proverbs 13:12 says "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Today, as the U.S. enjoys the hope of recovery, other nations are experiencing hope deferred . . . and their hearts are sick.

They need us. *They need God's love to be made manifest as never before.*

Of course, when we focus on the scope of the global need, we may feel overwhelmed. But we are not called to solve all the problems. We are called simply to express God's love in whatever situation we find at hand. . . .

I think of what just happened in Brazil, as our ministry director there was struck by the growing number of children orphaned by Covid. Many would be left to live on the streets—with horrifying consequences.

So **he opened an orphanage**. He and his team secured a facility, painted it, and installed bunk beds. We bought food for the children, and clothing, and school supplies. It's only one orphanage—maybe it seems like such a small effort compared to the massive need all across the nation. But God only calls us to do our part—He will supply the rest. *He can feed thousands with a little boy's lunch!*

My friend met a woman on a plane. She shared that she is battling breast and lung cancer; she's terrified of Covid. My friend asked me, "What would you say to a person like that?"

What could I say? Humbled and heartbroken on her behalf, I could only tell her just how much God loves her . . . and how He was willing to overwhelm her deep concerns with powerful, overwhelming applications of His love. *In the end—and indeed, from the beginning—what else is there for us except the power of God's incredible love for us?*

We as followers of Jesus Christ must remind ourselves—and today, especially—that we only conquer *through Him who loved us* . . . but we do overwhelmingly conquer!

“. . . We overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” —*Romans 8:37-39*

Yes, I know, you may have heard this since you were a child in Sunday school. The idea that *God loves us* can sound trite.

But here in Romans 8 the apostle Paul gives us the dynamic application—the depth, the breadth, the length, the height! God doesn't just love us. He loves us with a *forever* kind of love. A love that gives us hope beyond our present bleak circumstances. A love that promises never to leave us. A love that comes with a "user guide"—which powerfully explains *how we can connect with* that "forever" love.

**All of this, and more, is what you and I are offering to a hurting world today.** The love of God is in Christ Jesus. By receiving Christ Jesus, we connect with the depth, breadth, length, and height of the love of God forever. ***Nothing will be able to separate us from Him.***

And when you understand this "depth, breadth, length, height" . . . then whatever is troubling you becomes a "momentary, light affliction" . . . *not worthy to be compared with the far exceeding and eternal weight of Glory!* (2 Corinthians 4:17)

The world urgently needs these comforting truths of Scripture today. And it is for this cause that we are blessed! His blessings are meant to be a motivator, a catalyst, inspiring us to *pass the blessings on*. We don't need to hoard what God has given us—because there is no scarcity with God. He has infinite supplies. We are called to be more than mere recipients. We are called to be channels . . . of His grace!

You've heard the phrase "pay it forward," the idea of being kind in the name of the good you've already received. The phrase "pay it forward" is attributed to Lilly Hardy Hammond who used it in her book *In the Garden of Light* all the way back in 1916. But the idea goes back much farther—at least as far back as Psalm 67! Blessings received are to be paid forward!

A contract lawyer can tell you about another type of "paying it forward." If you owe me money, I can give you the option of *lending someone else* the same amount of money rather than paying it back to me. Maybe I'll even let you switch from actual money to some other form of payment—allowing you to "pay it forward" with some kind of good deeds, for example.

*Today you and I have arrived at a "pay it forward" moment.* We have so much to be grateful for. Yes, the pandemic has been exhausting, terrifying, frustrating. But we have hope. We can see light at the end of this dark tunnel. The only question is this: **Will we remember those who still stumble in the darkness?**

I hope you will give today out of the blessings you've received. Your gift today will make a very real impact.

- Where people need to know God, you'll train and deploy a national church planter (it only takes \$50 a month!) and build a church.
- Where people are hungry, you'll provide food.
- Where orphans are wearing rags, you'll provide clothing.
- Where people are desperate for clean water, you'll dig a well.
- In a village where children need education, you'll build a small school.

And the list goes on! *Whatever the Lord lays on your heart to give, your generosity will set Psalm 67 in motion . . . making God's ways "known on earth" and His salvation "among all nations"!*

I thank you in advance . . . and I pray that God will continue to bless you as you "pay it forward" today!

Rejoicing in the harvest,



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. As we are liberated from our own pandemic anguish, we can't simply get busy pursuing our own "normal" and ignore the plight of those still battling the monster. We've been blessed; now let us bless those still in need. May the Lord grant you a special role in the promotion of His grace and love to the world!