



November 1, 2020

Warmest greetings to you! *My friend and partner, in service to our Great God!*

Here comes Thanksgiving! *More than just an American holiday.* It's at the heart of our relationship with God. What does God need? Nothing. But what does God want? What does He long for? Psalm 50:14-15 says:

“Offer to God **thanksgiving**,
And pay your vows to the Most High.
Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

God wants us to *be grateful*! This psalm tells us that God wants to bless us, but not in the context of a superficial, insincere relationship. Psalm 50 calls us to *involvement*. A heart of gratitude is to be the fountainhead for our service to the Lord!

What can we be grateful for? A lot. The Lord's protection in the midst of a global pandemic! His provision during uncertain times! His wonderful way of using you as His hands and heart, ministering to people in need well beyond our borders—even to ends-of-the-earth destinations. . . .

Yes, you'll meet people in eternity who were direct beneficiaries of your love and generosity. Your “thanksgiving offerings” have impacted them in a time of great need—offering not only food to meet their immediate physical needs, but also the lasting “Bread of Life” which gives eternal life. And you've helped dig wells to quench thirst now but also to introduce people to the Thirst Quencher! They are thankful for you. So am I.

I am thankful for what God has brought us through this year. Looking back over the calendar, I see the speed of our ministry at the start of 2020—wonderful achievements “out of the starting gate”—but then COVID . . .

- More than a dozen ministry trips canceled . . .
- A speedy (and mostly seamless) transition to Zoom technology . . .
- A huge multiplication of ministry on the internet . . .
- Great COVID relief evangelism outreaches, and . . .
- Wonderful, exciting results in country after country!

We were nudged into doing things that we had never done before—and did not choose to do on our own. It seems that COVID has been in control, telling people around the world what to do and when. But as **Romans 8:28** reminds us, “All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.” *This was God!*

Meeting online, we're pleasantly surprised to find that in some ways, this is better.

- We're meeting more often with people we know and love, people in faraway places whom we could only see once in a great while, in "the old days," after transatlantic flights and long land journeys.

The wonder of it all! All of us in this ministry have been amazed and inspired by the joy and opportunity in these experiences. These days we truly wonder how we didn't think of this before!

Certainly, we've found that some things never change. **Jet lag still exists in a way—but it's "Zoom lag" now**, as we adjust our schedule to meet with people on the other side of the ocean or the world. These past two weeks I've been teaching a group in Madrid—which means getting up at 2 a.m. to be dressed and ready to teach at 3 a.m.!

But it's thrilling. We had more students in these classes than we ever had when we were all in the same geographical location. One student even joined the Madrid classes from Indiana. (2-5 a.m. Indiana time! How was he doing at work the rest of the day? I don't know.) There were also students from Germany and from Latin America!

The promise and potential are patently clear every time we gather on the Web. The promise of growth is gargantuan.

And students are loving it. They're inspiring others to join us. Next week we expect a large class in Brazil, as word of mouth keeps growing there. (Mercifully, the schedule will be closer to normal: 4-6 p.m. Feels like a holiday!)

I have to smile, however, to see how students will always find angles for avoiding work. In every setting where we're teaching by videoconference, we find many students signing on with their cameras off, so they can see us but we can't see them. It's easier to be "in class" stretched out on the couch, or in bed!

Teachers, however, have now requested new "legislation" requiring all participants, without exception, to keep their cameras on if they want their attendance to count. "Closed" cameras will be excluded from the session. Participation is a must—you can't merely have a "spiritual presence"!

It's funny . . . but it's important. I totally agree with my teaching colleagues in believing that far more effective teaching will take place if students are engaged in every way. **It's parallel to Psalm 50! We can pretend to be there, but our heart and loyalties may be elsewhere. God wants us to engage from the heart.**

And I am thankful that your heart is engaged in this work, the work to which the Lord has called us together as a team. I am thankful that we are not alone in the work. We are together. And this togetherness is a joy.

I am also thankful for the amazing strategy that the Lord has chosen for us. He told us to make disciples—and now He has given us a strategy for exponential multiplication! I am blown away by the mathematics of disciple-making. Take a look. . . .

Say there's an evangelist with a 25-year ministry career leading an astounding *1,000 people per day* to the Lord. This evangelist will have reached 9 million people for Christ over the course of his career.

Our disciple-making operation—in the same 25 years—though slow at the beginning, will lead 33 million people to Christ.

I know people who in their entire career have planted 12 churches, and others, 27 churches in 30 years. I met a missionary statesman from Africa who planted 60 churches in his career.

But in about 15 years' time, with our disciple-making strategy, we've seen more than 18,000 churches planted—and these churches are living organisms. My life will end, but those churches have merely begun to reproduce!

I am thankful to the Lord for a winning strategy!

And I look forward to what He will do through us in the days ahead. You know He guided us to move into four additional countries to complete the vision of ministering on every inhabited continent by the end of 2020. Rolling COVID restrictions redirected our plans since we couldn't travel.

(If it were up to me, I would have gone! I went into Liberia in the midst of their Ebola epidemic. Also, I'm happy to report, just a couple of days ago I received a fantastic report from Liberia: tremendous multiplication of church plants there!)

But we are still pressing toward the four-country goal. We're soon to enter MEXICO and SIERRA LEONE with in-person classes and activities scheduled to begin as soon as COVID allows. We're still making arrangements to move into VIETNAM and INDONESIA. We're praying and planning and working, and trusting God.

What adventures does He have in store for us in 2021? As this tumultuous year winds down, we need to rally our strength and prepare to do His bidding in the year ahead.

So, as you bring your own offerings of gratitude to the Lord in this season of Thanksgiving, I hope you will give generously toward His work around the world. Consider how He may have “blessed you to be a blessing, that the ends of the earth may praise Him” (Psalm 67:7).

You can give with confidence, knowing how powerfully God is at work through this ministry!

As you and other friends give with extra generosity at the end of the year, we can finish the year strong—and add fuel to the fire . . . especially in areas of ministry where more fuel is needed in order to realize the full potential.

I can't help but think of Haddon Robinson, who was Dean of the Homiletics Department at Dallas Theological Seminary for many years. He was legendary for many great sermons, but I will never forget his particular take on one small passage of Scripture, Proverbs 6:6-8:

“Go to the ant, oh sluggard.
Observe her ways and be wise”
as she “prepares her food for winter!”

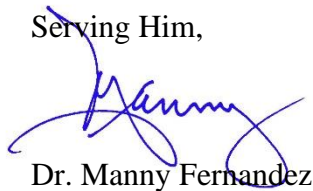
In his lucid, classical way, Haddon Robinson said, “What the Bible is telling you here is that if you had the brains of an ant, you would be making preparations for the future!”

He seared the words into our conscience—with both laughter and shame!

But his words are true . . . because God's Word is true. We are on the job today, my friend, thanks to your support—and we must stay on the job. **Please stand with us. Your support today is important. Bless us, as God has blessed you, so that we together can bless others!**

I look forward to hearing from you within the next couple of days. Thank you in advance! Have a grateful and wonderful Thanksgiving! May your fellowship with friends and family be sweet, and may you abound in a spirit of thankfulness to the Lord. God bless you!

Serving Him,



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. Your heart is clearly engaged in God's work. I celebrate your role in the ministry! And I warmly invite you to express your heart in a powerful, practical way today by giving as generously as possible. We know that the Lord, by His grace and power, will translate your generosity into new churches . . . new souls . . . new hope and life for multitudes! Thank you again!