



May 1, 2020

Dear Ministry Partner,

Warm greetings in the Lord! I'm praying that the Lord will protect and provide for you as we enter yet another month of the unique and troubling experience of the global pandemic.

I'm also happy to report that our "new normal" is amazing growth—amazing impact—as we teach online, reaching farther than ever before in nation after nation! Even in the time of coronavirus, God is in control! It's our Genesis 50:20 moment: As Joseph declared to his brothers, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

And what Joseph went on to say is also God's word to us today: "So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." I know God will provide—because His love never fails!

*We see multitudes seeking God, many for the first time ever, in the midst of such uncertainty about the virus and the economy. God is giving us ways to reach them!*

Look at what's happening in **India**, the most populous nation on earth. As I write, the country is in virtual lockdown . . . more than a billion people. Many are being reached by our workers. They're being authorized by India's government to go out and take food to the poorest of families—because the state is unable to care for so many. This presents an opportunity for us to reach out in the name of the Lord!

Our workers are mobilizing to feed the needy who are paralyzed at home without work, without money, and without food. We're giving them the staples of paratha (traditional flatbread), potatoes, and other basics. Each delivery provides for a family of four for two weeks at a time. In some areas, our teams represent the only way that people have access to fresh vegetables.

(You'll recall that I told you about the lockdown in **Spain**: If you're caught out on the streets without a provable good reason, fines are heavy, starting at 600 euros. But in India, where people don't have the funds to pay a fine, the authorities have them beaten with clubs if they're caught outside without authorization.)

You and I have cause for gratitude, even with the many inconveniences of our situation. When we look at Spain, Cuba, India, Brazil, and so many other countries, we see profoundly how God has blessed us here in the U.S.—where our government can move to keep our economy going by providing financial help to so many.

I am thanking the Lord that some of our states are already restarting their economies and that our economy, the greatest economy in the world, can be the main locomotive to jump-start many others. I'm praying that God will open the door for the U.S. to get back underway financially, and that others will see their way clear to start anew, sooner rather than later.

Meanwhile, God keeps surprising us.

*Here's the latest surprise: an open door in **the Dominican Republic!***

We never saw this coming!

In this impoverished Caribbean island nation, many people don't even have a basic smartphone. Yet there are many pastors whose churches do have computers and an internet connection. We will be teaching the Book of Hebrews as a test course online—with a teacher based in California, and a translator based in Texas, reaching pastors in the D.R.!

How did this happen?

Some time ago, a group of pastors attended one of our teaching sessions in the region. It was evident that these pastors urgently needed training. And after our teaching, they realized it too.

I'll never forget the plaintive words that one of them spoke at the end of that encounter:

“Now you can't leave us like you found us. Now you know how little we know of the Bible and of Bible doctrine. You have to help us.”

It grieves me to think about how they were conducting their ministries. The average pastor rotated his preaching among three topics: (1) the Gospel, (2) tithing, and (3) how you can lose your salvation!

Their teaching of the Gospel was already compromised because they believed you could lose your salvation. Their teaching on tithing was compromised because they believed this was “the only part of the Old Testament still valid today”!

On top of all this, they believed that “if you don't tithe, you lose your salvation”!

It is painfully obvious that even their three areas of “expertise” were far afield from the truth of the Scriptures. They do need our teaching!

At first, however, I was hesitant. We have always focused not on training established pastors, but on training new students whom we could teach and then deploy to go start new churches.

But what the Lord is showing us in the D.R. is that there are “church planters” who have already planted their churches and are already pastoring them, but who never got trained—so they are teaching error.

We've got to take action in the Dominican Republic. Please pray with us that the Lord will show us the perfect path for teaching them! The opportunity is thrilling—but daunting.

There are so many who need to understand the truth . . . the light of the Word.

No, the D.R. was not even in our plans for this year! But what's becoming pretty obvious is that it was in God's plans!

Yet, as we do our best to reach into the Dominican Republic, we are still doing our best to reach into the four new fields to which the Lord has already called us for this year: Mexico, Nigeria, Viet Nam, and Indonesia. . . .

- **Mexico** is beginning to see an explosion of COVID-19 cases because the government initially didn't respond to the threat. Their president for a time was even encouraging the traditional greetings of hugs, kisses, and vigorous handshakes. He claimed protection in the name of amulets—and even a “lucky” \$2 bill he carries!
- **Nigeria:** Rising numbers of cases. Tragically, many who know that hydroxychloroquine is a valid therapeutic medicine, have been buying it in massive amounts—and they are poisoning themselves with too much of this “medicine.” Our partners on the ground in Nigeria tell us that it may be autumn before there's any idea of a timetable for restarting their country.
- **Indonesia** has had to evacuate many missionaries, no one knows when it will open. We're still trying to get reliable information. I'll keep you posted as we learn more.
- **Viet Nam** has been a positive anomaly. The country shut down instantly when the pandemic became known. There was mandatory quarantine and testing for people coming into their country. There are fewer than 300 COVID-19 cases registered in the country and more than 200 people have recovered; not a single death reported.

Of course, I'm no medical expert. I'm just a minister doing what God has called me to do. So I'm excited that Viet Nam represents our best opportunity for moving forward with ministry!

*Here's the bottom line: God is giving us opportunities for doing good.* Jesus leads the way. The Bible declares in the most simple and profound way what Jesus' mission was—as expressed in the testimony of those who observed His life in real time:

“You know of Jesus of Nazareth,” Peter says in Acts 10, “how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”

Peter was sharing the Gospel with Cornelius in Caesarea—it was the beauty of the Gospel being preached for the first time to the Gentiles. *What Jesus taught, and how He lived, had been engraved in the hearts of those who knew Him.*

Result: the wonderful conversion of the household of Cornelius—and the opening of the way to heaven for the entire Gentile world!

The summary of Peter of the life of Jesus is both simple and beautiful: “He went about doing good to those who were being oppressed by the devil.” *What the enemy meant for harm, God turns into something good!*

We see it today in **Cuba**. . . .

Their so-called “Special Period,” 1990 to 2000, was a time of deprivation after the Soviet Union fell apart and no more help was sent to Cuba. Then Venezuela stepped in, in 2000—but then that nation was torn apart by socialism and drug cartels, leading Cuba into the so-called

“Extra Special Period,” with no help from either the Soviets or Venezuela.

But the perfect storm had not hit yet! Coronavirus has now taken away the country’s main source of income: tourism. Cuba itself is shut down, so there is not even local trade.

In the Special Period, the local church became both the pharmacy and the market. There was no one else to turn to. The only voice speaking of hope, the only source of a positive disposition, was the church—and the church delivered!

Today, again, Cuba’s people are turning to the church. Just as there were more conversions to Christ in the Special Period than at any other time in Cuban history, today the church has more opportunities than ever—and this is true in every country where we’re working.

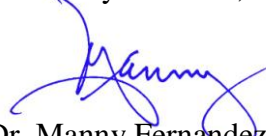
Jesus was asked, by the lawyer trying to justify himself in Luke 10:29, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied with the parable of the Good Samaritan—and added, “Go and do likewise.” **The need of the hour is to be “the neighbor”** . . . the one who practices mercy toward others.

Here in America we have been set in a special place by the Lord in His grace. No other country can give trillions of dollars to maintain its people when the economy has shut down. God’s favor to us is “a very present help in trouble.”

*We must respond to God’s blessing by being a blessing to others.* You and I may not be able to feed and clothe and heal multitudes in the physical realm, but God has positioned us to minister to multitudes in the spiritual realm . . . to do a work in this difficult hour which is eternal, not just temporal.

Please join me today in this time of so much devastation and need, in offering a sacrifice of gratitude to God—to keep our ministry reaching out to those in need around the world. Let us bring our loaves and fishes so that the Master may again feed the masses. Ask God how He would have you show mercy to your neighbor.

Gratefully in Christ,



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. Many cannot give. But if you are one whom God has blessed — if you still have the capacity to give—I warmly invite you to do whatever you can, today. Thank you for being my friend and partner in ministry . . . a merciful Good Samaritan to a world in need!