## SOWING&REAPING

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ISSUE FOCUS

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Editor: Sarah Hartwig
Designer: Your Creative People
Publication Advisors:

Mark Batory, Executive Director

Dale Crawford, Administrative Director

*Marshall Fant*, Director of Church Consulting and Strategic Planning

Forrest McPhail, Regional Director for Asia, Australia, and Oceania

**Alan Patterson**, Regional Director for Europe, Africa, and the Middle East

From the

## DIRECTOR'S DESK

Many years ago Ross Drown, Nate Saint's son-in-law, piloted a plane transporting an elderly American pastor from Miami to Haiti. During the course of the flight, the pastor was excited to learn of Ross' connection to the Saint family. Ross' father, Frank, had been a jungle pilot and close friend of Nate Saint and his four companions. Frank was the man who led the team in January 1956 that found and recovered the bodies of the illfated missionary men. As Ross recounted some of the events, the pastor exclaimed, "I saw your father-in-law, Nate Saint, die!" With great surprise Ross protested, "That's impossible! How could you have witnessed my father-in-law's death?" The pastor insisted, "It's true! I was at the very place and moment where he laid down his life for Christ, and I watched him die. The place was Wheaton College during the invitation after a special missionary service. Your father-in-law was one of many who came forward to offer himself completely on the altar of God. It was at that moment that Nate Saint died to self, took up his cross, and followed His Lord."



You see, what Nate Saint did at that prayer altar was give himself in sacrifice to Christ. What transpired on that narrow beach in Ecuador was nothing less than the final expression of his taking up his cross and obediently following Christ.

We live and function in a self-indulgent world—and church! To be a follower of Christ is often viewed as being served by the church instead of serving Christ and His Church. Christians today can faithfully attend church, read their Bibles, help out in the Lord's work, even serve as missionaries on a foreign field, and yet never truly take up their cross to follow Christ.

Christ clearly defined His requirements for those who claim to be His true cross-bearers when He said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). True Christian faith begins with self-denial, which is the foundation upon which the Christian life of cross-bearing is to be lived. Jesus did not say, "Let him deny himself of a particular list of things," as though there are limited or minimal requirements. He said, "Let him deny himself"—period! Denying self is allencompassing; it is to disown or abandon self of our natural affection toward the good things of this life—all pleasures, profit, honors, relationships, life itself, or anything which would keep us from the will of God.

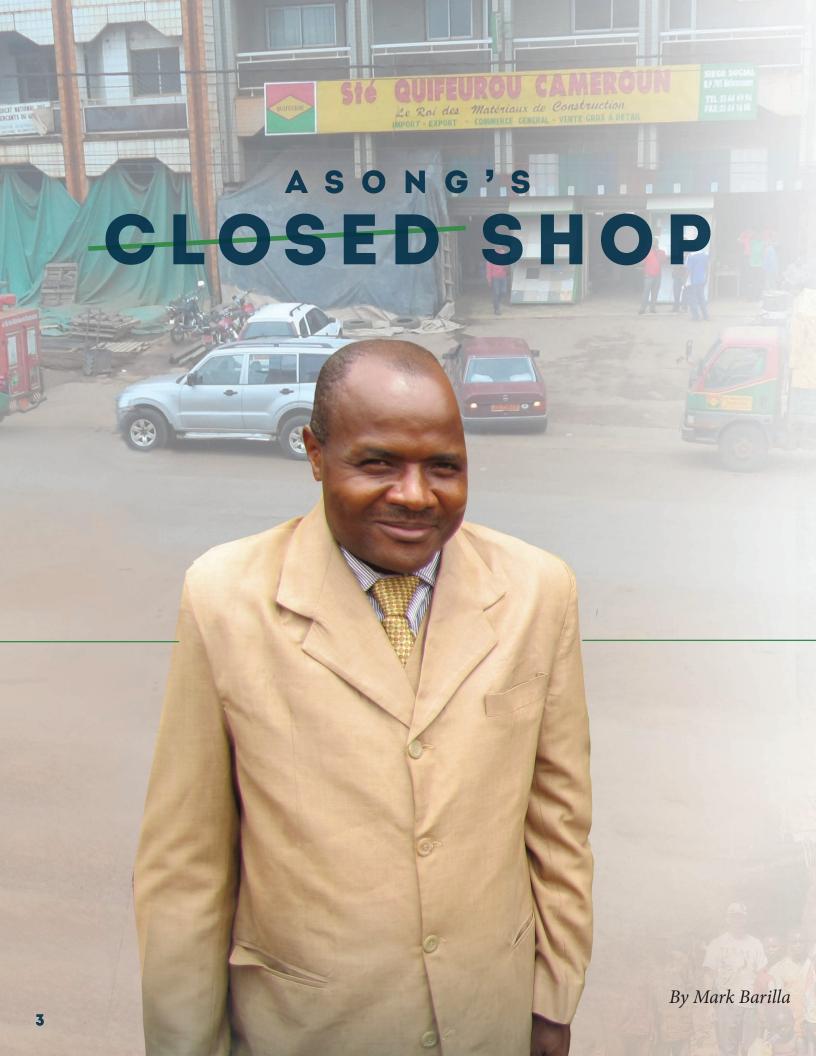
## "WHOSOEVER HE BE OF YOU THAT FORSAKETH NOT ALL THAT HE HATH, HE CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE" -LUKE 14:33.

Dying to self, therefore, is the prerequisite to taking up one's cross for Christ. Cross-bearing for Christ is not simply enduring an unavoidable illness, circumstance, or undesirable condition—though it is important that we do that with grace and faith. Cross-bearing is a deliberate, personal choice to accept the difficulties, dangers, or hardships along a chosen path of living for and serving Christ—the things that could be rejected or avoided without the criticism of others—all for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. Cross-bearing may require leaving home, moving the family halfway around the world, and denying certain creature comforts and pleasures of this world, but once you die to self, taking up that cross is a very natural joyful action. There is nothing more joyous this side of heaven than accepting Christ's invitation to take up His cross!



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met Asong Christopher Mbengu in Cameroon about eleven years ago through his nephew, Chiro, who had visited our church and was very interested in the gospel message. We spent time together studying the Scripture. Many of our studies were outside Mr. Asong's shop. Although Chiro never made any spiritual decisions at that time, we had many opportunities to share the Gospel with him. Chiro moved away to continue his studies, and I became a customer at Asong's shop. He was such a conscientious store manager and would find products for me that could be purchased only in the larger cities, specialty items like canned hot dogs and Barilla pasta. I gave him Bible tracts a couple of times, but he confessed later that he always threw them away.

Around the same time, one of our coworkers gave Asong a Bible. Asong told me later that having his own Bible was very important to him and helped him come to our church. He was skeptical due to his frustrations with religious groups. He had been chased from the Catholic church in his village when he was 12 years old. He was also afraid because of three unexplained deaths of Cameroonian members of a mission organization. Occasionally, Asong would leave his shop in the care of a family member so he could attend church services, Bible studies, and prayer meetings. He and his wife began visiting regularly. Soon afterwards we learned that God did a saving work in their hearts.

### THE SHOP BECAME AN INSTRUMENT THAT GOD USED TO TEACH THE MBENGUS TO TRUST HIM.

In one of our dialogues about the Lord, I asked Asong if he would close his shop for a few hours on Sunday and attend worship services. He said that his business could not afford to do this. But God was at work in his heart. One Sunday in March 2008, he was challenged by Hebrews 5:14 and 6:1-3. It

> was not long until he decided to trust God for provisions and closed his shop completely

on Sundays.

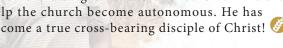
Although Asong had accepted Christ, he still sold liquor at his shop. The Lord worked in his heart again. He testified that God had convicted him



about selling alcohol. He told his customers that when the New Year came, he would no longer sell liquor. Many complained about his decision, but he stayed with it. A few months later, he testified to the church that his sales had increased, and the Lord was blessing.

Asong and his wife, Karen, began to grow in Christ and soon became active in church. God prompted Asong to serve others and prepare himself to teach the Word. He shared another testimony with the church family. Asong felt God wanted him to be a part of the Bible institute. He repeatedly expressed that he did not know how to make time for this except to close his shop.

Up to this time, his business had been successful, but he closed his shop and sacrificed the income. He could now give himself fully to be a student of God's Word. Today, Asong is a graduate of the Foumban Bible Institute, the deacon at the Foumban church, and the director of the adult education program there. He has been a frequent speaker at the Bafoussam church plant and has been instrumental in helping start this work. Asong and Karen are the parents of three children. In addition to all his church responsibilities, Asong is a full-time teacher and works as a veterinarian. Because our Cameroon churches have had a difficult time becoming selfsupporting, Asong recently offered his home and land for raising chickens and other animals to help the church become autonomous. He has become a true cross-bearing disciple of Christ!



## NO BRIBES FOR E

"IF ANY MAN WILL COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY, AND FOLLOW ME" -LUKE 9:23.

For each person the application is different, but for all believers the principle is the same: following Jesus means taking up His cross. The struggle is daily.

Salvador Eduardo Espinoza Sanchez, a native of Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico, enlisted in the military at the age of 14. There his slavery to the vices of sin grew until, hearing the Gospel, he was saved from sin's penalty and power. His life was radically changed, and he served for several years in his church after leaving the military. He also studied the Bible formally in a Bible institute, where he gained ministry experience and met his wife.

Eventually circumstances led them to serve in their local church in Culiacán, and Eduardo began to look for work. His military background, especially his experience with weapons, facilitated his entrance to the penitentiary system, where he quickly ascended through the ranks. Soon he was the assistant director of the jail. The blatant corruption in the prison system clouded the atmosphere, and on many occasions his testimony shone brightly in the darkness, and prisoners were saved through his witness.

Even his children noticed the difference. Other penal system workers with much lower rank and pay grade quickly prospered, buying houses, cars, or clothes in no way commensurate with their supposed income. Eduardo prohibited what bribes, fees, kickbacks, payoffs, and corruption he could of his subordinates, and in doing so he made both friends and enemies—of the prisoners, friends; of corrupt subordinates, enemies.

Eventually he met Leonel, known as the greatest Ponzi scheme perpetrator in the country, the Mexican "Bernie

Madoff." The prisoner suffered from medical problems which required his transfer to a local hospital. Due to his high profile status and probable flight risk, a senior official from the Federal Penitentiary was required to accompany the entourage. Other officials exploited Leonel's needs to extort money from him, but Eduardo took advantage of the extended personal contact with him

to share the Gospel. Although Leonel hardened his arrogant heart, refusing God's offer of grace, a sort of friendship evolved. The two families met. Leonel's family knew Eduardo as the only official who did not try to extort him. Eduardo's family knew Leonel as the guy whose wife bought them hamburgers once from a fancy chain—Burger King.

Eduardo worked in the correctional system for four years, but shortly before he retired Leonel wanted to run a Ponzi scheme in the jail. The idea was to open a business that employed prisoners as part of their rehabilitation, but in reality it would be a front to run drugs through the jail. The only significant obstacle for him to pull

## DUARDO!

By Jonathan Latham

it off would be Eduardo. The rest of the officials would get their share, but Leonel knew that Eduardo would resist. Through his emissaries the offer was made to give Eduardo his cut, a proposal which Eduardo immediately shot down. In fact, he informed the appropriate authorities of the plan, and things froze for a brief time. During a hospital transfer Leonel twice broached the subject. After the second rebuttal he insisted that he would show Eduardo he was serious.

When Eduardo showed up to work a few days later, a new Porsche was parked at the entrance to the building with Sinaloa plates. He had never even seen one of those in his state. Upon entering the building Eduardo was summoned to a meeting where, to his surprise, Leonel was waiting for him. Yet another attempt was made to persuade Eduardo to look the other way so the business could be started. If he was willing to go along, the Porsche out front was his.

For some time, things had been tight for Eduardo financially. In fact, on the very day he was offered the bribe he did not have enough money to buy lunch—and now he was offered a brand new Porsche! The temptation was strong, but even then, there was really no struggle. Following Jesus means doing right. Following Jesus means denying yourself. It means taking up your cross. Sometimes the cross is financial. Eduardo's answer was a firm "no."

That day Eduardo had to put his lunch on his bill, but he didn't have to put corruption on his conscience. Eduardo's family did not have many of the luxuries other prison officials had, but he had something they did not—peace.

Today Eduardo's daughter is married to a pastor, and his son is an assistant pastor under his brother-in-law's leadership. Sin and corruption might get you a Porsche, but grace gives you things that really matter.



he Philippines, where we have served at Bob Jones Memorial Bible College as a family since 2005, is a diverse country in many ways. One of those ways is in terms of security. The country as a whole is listed by the US on travel.state.gov as a Level 2, which means "Exercise Increased Caution." Other parts of the country are at a Level 3, and a still smaller area is classified as Level 4, which means "Avoid Travel There." Both the Level 3 and Level 4 areas are located on the island of Mindanao. Here is what the travel website says about Mindanao: "The Philippine government has declared martial law throughout the Mindanao region. The Philippine government also maintains a state of emergency and greater police presence in the Cotabato City area, and in the Maguindanao, North Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat provinces."

Let me tell you the story of a BJMBC graduate who serves in one of the areas listed above. I will call him Pastor DC. For obvious reasons, I am not being overly specific about

his name or where he is now serving.

When I met Pastor DC 20 years ago (before we came to the Philippines as a family), he was pastoring a well-established church in a densely populated part of Manila with a rather unsavory reputation. Let's just say it is a place where a Bible-preaching church is urgently needed. When we returned as a family in 2005, Pastor DC was one of the students in the master's program. At some point during that year, Pastor DC suffered a debilitating stroke, which left him with slightly slurred speech and a half-paralyzed body. Once he recovered, he managed to finish his master's degree at BJMBC, but it was obvious that the pace of life and ministry in Manila would not work for him. What should he do?

That's when I first learned of his plan to head to Mindanao—to the areas referenced above—in order to minister there. The risks in Mindanao are primarily due to Muslim terrorists, who have had a stranglehold on the region for decades. Just last year an extended battle between the Philippines government and

Islamic rebels played itself out in Marawi City, about 150 miles from where Pastor DC now ministers. Security is such an issue that I have never visited his place, and he would not invite me. He once joked about inviting me to the nearest possible city but doing so under the name of "Pastor Duhat," a Tagalog translation of my last name (it actually means blackberry or Java plum).

Pastor DC headed to this volatile area and threw himself into the work of the ministry there. He has done it all: start a church, train pastors, erect a church building, strengthen believers, and encourage men in the ministry. Every now and then my cell phone rings, and it is Pastor DC greeting me in his slightly slurred speech and expressing gratitude for what he learned at BJMBC.

Frail in Body,
BUT A MIGHTY WARRIOR
FOR CHRIST

By Tim Berrey

In recent years, he has faced numerous challenging circumstances. He suffered another stroke. He was robbed after withdrawing money from an ATM. A pastor friend of his was traveling on a motorcycle with three other family members, and all were shot dead by an Islamic gunman.

A bomb exploded in a public building frequented by one of Pastor DC's children.

I sometimes think part of his security (humanly speaking) is his condition. Now over sixty, with a body ravaged by strokes, this humble messenger of the cross does not visibly look like much of a threat to Muslim extremists—not hardly worth the powder to shoot him or the possible risk of capture it might entail.

But that body that looks so frail and harmless may be one of the strongest warriors for Christ in the region. This man is winning souls, planting churches, teaching pastors, and single-handedly battering the gates of hell, all on a shoestring budget and in a body that most would say belongs in a nursing home.

My guess is Pastor DC will die in the trenches with his boots on, a worthy successor to the many servants of the Lord who have viewed their lives as candles to be burned up (not stored somewhere in a pantry closet) in useful gospel endeavors.











By Karen Hall

hat does seed sowing look like in Papua New Guinea? While I was visiting in the home where I usually share a brief Bible story every Saturday afternoon, one of the occupants stormed in saying,

## "DON'T USE MY KNIFE AND POT TO CUT AND COOK PORK! YOU ARE MAKING IT ALL DIRTY, AND NOW I WON-T BE ABLE TO USE IT. YOU ALL KNOW THAT!"-

"Regina" attends the local Seventh-Day Adventist assembly and was not too thrilled to find out that other non-SDA family members had used her utensils to prepare their portion of pork from the marriage feast that day. In addition to Christ's work on the cross, she believes that works, such as abstaining from pork and following a smattering of other Old Testament laws, are necessary for salvation. The lesson portion that I had planned to share with her aunt that day dealt with that very issue from Mark 7. I decided to go ahead and share the lesson with her aunt and see where the conversation led.

After the reading of the portion from Mark 7 and a little discussion, Regina's aunt called her over, saying,

## "YOU HAD BETTER LISTEN TO THIS; IT IS ABOUT WHAT YOU WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT."

I reread the section slowly with Regina, who had attended my literacy class previously and is a beginning reader. The passage clearly states that food does not make us clean or unclean in God's sight but, rather, that the sin that resides in us causes us to be unfit.

Regina seemed befuddled and didn't have much to say but stated that because she consistently followed God's commands, He would accept her. I challenged her with some examples from my own conduct that showed that I couldn't perfectly follow God's commands even when I really wanted to. She grew more serious and asked if she could have the lesson booklet with the Scripture portions to read on her own. A few minutes later when scolding one of the

small children of the household, Regina proved the point when she swore in the tribal language.

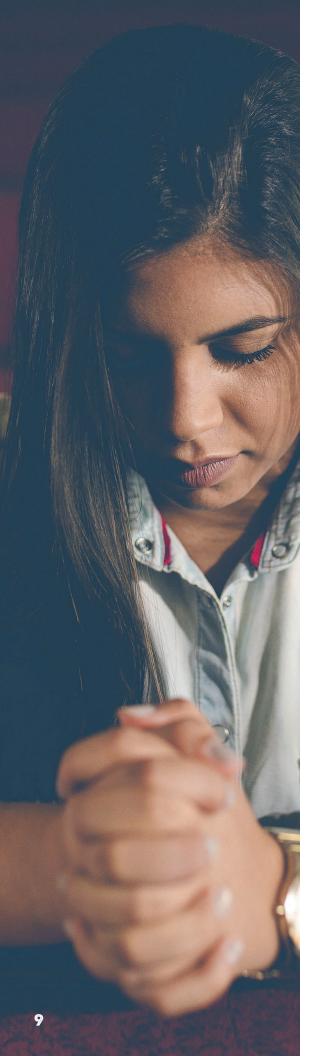
As I was getting ready to leave after finishing my visit with her aunt, she meekly apologized for swearing in front of me. Regina has attended eight months of twice-weekly literacy classes with an evangelistic Bible lesson presented in each class, but today her response was different. She could make no reply to the truth that she read in Mark 7. It was as if the Scripture was hitting her squarely between the eyes—better the Bible than I, the foreign missionary!

Is she starting to realize that her own works are fruitless and only Christ's work can make her acceptable to God? I don't know, but that's part of sowing—giving out the truth and trusting and praying for God to give new life and growth! Please pray for Regina and others like her who have received a lot of "truth seeds" through various interactions with the missionary team and local believers here.









## PRAYING BIBLICALLY

for your missionary.

### **ACCEPTANCE**

By Alan Patterson

Our praying point for this article comes from Romans 15:30-31 and specifically the bolded section: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints."

We will come to an explanation of this text, but first some background. Not too long ago my wife and I had the opportunity to visit one of the three main Nazi concentration camps in Poland. The camp has been somewhat rebuilt, and no doubt appears far cleaner and neater than it did in its sordid days. Nevertheless, the utter hatred and dehumanizing of the Jews by the Nazis is still on display. The Jews know better than any other people what it means to face prejudice. But we also know from Scripture that in Christ's and Paul's day the Jews themselves were hyper-prejudiced against the Gentiles. Paul confesses in his testimony, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them" (Acts 26:9-10).

After Paul's conversion, God's power converted Paul's hatred into a love for Christians, including Gentile Christians, but he did not forget the role of his own people and their religion in preparing the way for the Gospel. Paul was the "apostle of the Gentiles," and he spent much of his life planting churches in mostly Gentile lands. As he won Gentiles to Christ, he also taught them that they owed a debt of gratitude to their converted Jewish brethren because the Gospel and the Savior had come from the Jewish race and religion.

In the context of the verse for this point about praying for acceptance, Paul explains that the Gentiles in Macedonia had taken a love offering for the suffering saints in Jerusalem, most of whom were converted Jews. His argument is "if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things" (Romans 15:27). But a potential and very real problem existed: those converted Jews might not want to receive aid from Gentiles, though they were brethren in Christ. Therefore, Paul implores the Romans to strive with him in prayer that this love offering, this "service," would be well-received by the suffering Jewish Christians.

The application to missions is this: if believers might have so much prejudice as to reject the help of other believers, even in a time of extreme need, then how much more might unbelievers reject the message of people they hardly know and who are bringing a message that contradicts all they (and their ancestors) have ever known? We need to pray, therefore, that God would so work that the missionaries are able to commend themselves to their hearers. Without this breakdown of resistance, the gospel message itself will also be rejected. Pray that God would shatter this resistance.



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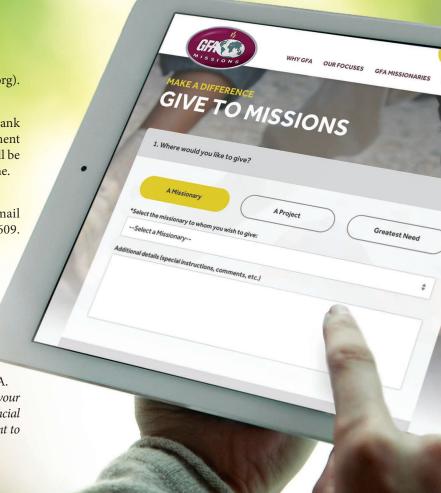
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