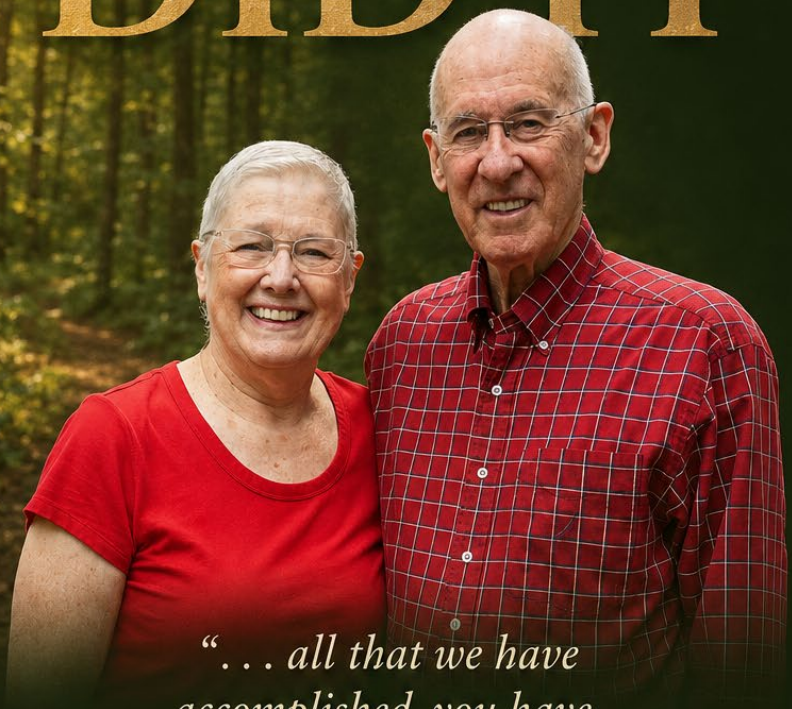
Obedient tools
honor the
Master Craftsman

GOD DID IT



". . . all that we have accomplished, you have done for us."

Isaiah 25:12

Ron Meyers

Obedient tools honor the Master Craftsman

GOD DID IT

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All the Scriptures used are the New International Version except those that are otherwise identified.

Table of Contents

Preface....7
Introduction....11
Chapter One - 2007....18
Chapter Two - 2008....32
Chapter Three - 2009....56
Chapter Four - 2010....68
Chapter Five - 2011....82
Chapter Six - 2012....95
Chapter Seven - 2013....109
Chapter Eight - 2014....122
Chapter Nine - 2015....136
Chapter Ten - 2016....151
Chapter Eleven - 2017....161
Chapter Twelve - 2018....169
Chapter Thirteen - 2019....176
Chapter Fourteen - 2020....187
Chapter Fifteen - 2021....197
Chapter Sixteen - 2022....208
Chapter Seventeen - 2023....221
Chapter Eighteen - 2024....229
Chapter Nineteen - 2025....237
Afterword....248
Addendum....250

PREFACE

In the summer of 1950 I was six years old. I knelt with my grand-mother, who was visiting us. We prayed together that God would help me become, in my grandma's words, "The grandest missionary possible." The trajectory of my life was fixed then. Even now, at age eighty-one, I am still trying to be the best missionary I can be. My reason for writing this book is to explain how I have continued to do that specifically during these past nineteen years.

In 1973, Char and I began our missionary ministry in South Korea. We taught pastors and future pastors until we turned the entire operation over to the nationals in 1986. We then worked in several church pioneer projects in the United States as I completed my formal missiological educational goals. Next we served in mainland China from 1991 until 1996. At that time I accepted the invitation to serve as the coordinator of the MA in missions degree program at Oral Roberts University where I taught missions to graduate missions students and Doctor of Ministry candidates.

I began a policy applicable to my relationship with the many inter-national students who came from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific areas to study in the United States. In the first class of each new semester, I announced that if any international students were involved in training pastors, I would, at my expense, travel to their nations and teach them Christian Leadership principles. My students took me up on the offer, so for nine summers I traveled multiple weeks to Myanmar, numerous countries in Africa, and many states in India.

The last two of those summers, 2005 and 2006, on my way home, I told myself, "If I were not committed to teaching at ORU, I could just travel and teach in the nations all year long." That was exactly what the Lord had in store for me.

Early in 2007, Char and I returned to the mission field, this time to Africa and India. In the spring of 2006, I had been invited by a missionary organization to be responsible for the continuing education

of all existing field missionaries. Char was invited to be responsible for training their new missionary candidates. Our offices were to be just down the hall from each other. We shopped for a house near that office, resigned from our positions at ORU, and made serious preparations for a new beginning.

Then abruptly, yet kindly, we received notice that both invitations were being canceled. We had already resigned our jobs at ORU and my position at Tulsa Chinese Christian Church. We had no positions. At the same time Char developed two abscessed teeth in the same jaw. Her head swelled up so that her face was round like a pumpkin. I developed staph infection in my left elbow.

As we humbled ourselves before the Lord, God opened an opportunity to move to Africa and begin conducting Leadership Empower-ment Conferences for pastors. This book tells the story of what God did through us from 2007 until the end of 2025. *God did it*.

In the Psalms, it is clear what David thought. However, 1 Samuel 16 through 1 Kings 2:12 records what David did. Through both David's poetry and his history, we see a clearer and more holistic picture of David. Two different pictures, each of them complementing, illustrating and supplementing the other.

Similarly, on youtube.com/@empoweringchristianleaders and the empoweringchristianleaders.com website, my books, teachings and seminars show what I think and teach. But this book records how we lived and served during these last nineteen years. The combination of the website's teachings and this book gives an impression of what this missionary's life says and how the teachings inform and empower others.

I have related these events as truthfully as possible, neither embellishing nor diminishing the impact of what happened.

Early one morning in 2019, I was running on the empty streets of Kampala, Uganda. To my left, a sign identified the building as the home of Salt TV and Radio. *As a native English speaker would*

they allow me to serve as a Christian talk-show host of an English broadcast? Almost immediately, I changed my mind and continued running up the street to the large intersection. With my fertile imagination perhaps this idea was just one of my silly notions.

Several minutes later, however, I turned and approached the same building. The same thought occurred to me, so I went inside and asked to see the manager. They could do no more than say "No." Within minutes I was sitting in my sweaty running shorts and shirt by the desk of a well-mannered, well-dressed man. He politely listened as I told him about my work was and of the cancelation of our planned teaching ministry trips due to the COVID pandemic.

When he heard my English talk-show offer his response was, "But I don't know you or have any idea what you believe or might teach." I saw his point.

He agreed to listen to a set of video recordings of our fifteen-hour Leadership Empowerment Conference series which I delivered to him on five disks the next day. The next week, I returned to receive his appraisal of the videos. He had listened to all fifteen hours and recommended me to the CEO of Salt TV who wanted to meet me.

When I met the CEO, the Lord allowed me to minister spiritually to him and his wife. We bonded. He wanted to know how much I could pay for TV time.

"I have $500 which was given to me in Mauritius. I'll give that to you for as many hours as you allow."

He said, "I don't want anything at all. Record your teachings for broadcasts at 10:00 AM every Thursday and Friday starting next week."

For almost two years, every week I recorded teachings for that week and additional ones that could be used later. When we returned to the United States in April 2021, he had a supply that would keep them going for a while. Then I received an invitation to continue

to supply recorded teachings through YouTube. He gave me the specifications for a TV quality video camera while a church in the US volunteered to pay for it. We could see God was at work.

When we arrived in Texas in April 2021, one of the first things we did was purchase a 10' X 20' shed which I called my "Shack." It is 25 steps from our home in the forest. There, in quiet solitude except for the occasional cardinal who feasts on the bugs on the window, I can pray, study, receive visitors, record and edit teaching videos. So I "commute" to work in about two minutes by walking up the path from our home to the Shack. How convenient!

The following chapters contain details and testimonies of what God has done during these years. These paragraphs are based in large part on the numerous reports I sent to our friends who have prayed for us and this ministry during these nineteen years. I kept those reports, thinking that some day I would put them all together.

In life and ministry, our egos are not important, but the glory of God is extremely so. This book is named "*GOD DID IT*" because from the depths of my soul I want God to be glorified for what He has done. I want to make it clear that in life and ministry, God is the invisible Initiator, Prime Mover and great Cause behind all that Char and I did from 2007 through 2025. In 2007, we were 62 and 61. In 2025, we were 81 and 80. It seems that God used our latter years well.

INTRODUCTION

In January 2007, Char stayed in Tulsa to complete her academic work while I traveled to Pretoria, South Africa to begin a new phase of our ministry. In the next three months I furnished our apartment and made teaching ministry trips to Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Congo Brazzaville. In April I returned to Tulsa, to watch Char receive her Doctor of Education degree and complete the storage of our personal effects. Then we moved to Pretoria. For almost three years we traveled to the nations of southern Africa, conducting Leadership Empowerment Conferences. In April 2009, we traveled to Israel to celebrate our fortieth wedding anniversary. We did not know how that trip would enlarge our ministry.

I thought it might be interesting to see what housing was available in Israel in case we ever moved there. On the morning of our appointment with a real estate agency in Tiberius, we intentionally left early to pray and walk around the neighborhood of the apartment building we were to visit. There we learned of yet another real estate office and stopped in to visit. God had a big surprise for us.

Not the one we came to see, but another apartment had just come on the market! It was bigger, located higher and on the front of the building facing the Sea of Galilee with a spectacular view. For these three significant reasons, it was much better than the one we originally planned to see in that same building. In fact, the apartment was so well located and situated, we immediately wanted to live there. Simultaneously, it was in such bad repair that the price was affordable.

During the next year and a half, we bought and remodeled that apartment, then moved there in the fall of 2010. The Lord used that wonderful apartment to help move us and the base of our ministry operation from South Africa to the Middle East. It was a strategic decision. We were then able to more readily accept invitations to conduct Leadership Empowerment Conferences in Europe and Asia as well as Africa.

From 2010 until 2019, we operated out of that center, traveling to Sweden, Russia, Myanmar, India, and Africa. In 2019 we had so many invitations to Uganda we decided to move there for a period though we kept the apartment in Tiberius. Our first assignment during that time was a return ministry trip to Mauritius, located east of Madagascar and west of Singapore in the Indian Ocean, with a plan and flight tickets to also move on to Korea for two weeks.

While in Mauritius the COVID pandemic hit, so we had to return to Uganda without going to Korea. We were locked down in Uganda for two years!

What did Paul do when he was locked down in prison? He wrote. That's what I began to do and eventually developed 150 lessons from the Life of David. These materials are still being used in many shorts, videos, brief devotionals and written teachings.

For many years I have carried from place to place a dilapidated, heavy, old book in my library that I hoped to read some day. I found it among my grandfather's books. *Stanley's Wonderful Adventures in Africa* was written by the Honorable J. T. Headley and Willis Fletcher Johnson and published in 1890. Its brittle pages are complete with drawings and a map of central Africa. As I read it, I learned the history of many of the places where we ourselves had actually traveled, ministered and lived during the fourteen years we served in Africa.

I have personally seen the slave prisons in Zanzibar, spent many mornings running along the side of Lake Victoria in Uganda, vis-ited Victoria Falls in Zambia where David Livingston spent some time and looked at materials he wrote about the slave trade which are still on display today in a museum in Livingston, Zambia.

Though I am an ordinary person, my story is unique because my experiences have taken me to many different places.

Five years before actually moving to Africa in 2007, I took a six-month sabbatical leave from my responsibilities at Oral Roberts

University. Char and I left Tulsa, Oklahoma and traveled to Africa and India for a mission trip from June 14, 2002 until the end of that year. On that trip I began conducting a prayer experiment to see what would happen if a teacher prayed. Seriously prayed.

As a result of my increased praying and new sensitivity to what was on God's agenda, rather than mine, I began to see things in Scripture I had not seen before. I taught with greater freedom and anointing and received more invitations to minister than had been scheduled. So upon returning to the States the end of December, I decided to continue the experiment indefinitely.

In 2002, I had asked the question, "What would happen if a teacher prayed?" God answered in extraordinary ways. This book is my report—to encourage my readers, to increase our prayer life and to become sensitive to the things about and for which we pray. More ideas about effective prayer are included in Rise to Seek Him, published in 2007. Check out the book page of empoweringchristianleaders.com.

George Müller is a famous figure in England known for his successful orphanage work. From 1836 until his death in 1898, he cared for over 10,000 orphans in Bristol and became a worldwide symbol of faith-based charity. Müller never asked for money. He relied on prayer and faith alone to provide for his work and his needs were consistently met through unsolicited donations. He shared testimonies of answers to prayer, but he did not actually request money.

I have tried to follow Müller's example. When money was provided for us in a timely way, the testimony reported on what God did. We gave regular reports during our ministry; reports, not solicitations. This book is a report of what God did. To Him be all the glory.

My sense of optimism appears in these chapters. We experienced a number of truly pressing circumstances, difficulties and hardships, but I do not feature or enlarge on them. I simply report them. Generally speaking, my years are proof of what I call Bible-based optimism.

Some twenty years ago I began to ponder the combination of God's goodness, wisdom, and power—all of them infinite. Then I concluded that the world that exists is the best that ever could have been created. Everything God does or allows is consistent with His boundless love. He will not do or allow anything that is not loving. All that He does or allows is consistent with His wisdom. He knows what is best. Furthermore, He has all-power to do, cause to exist, accomplish or effect anything He wants—including what is the best results for sin, testings and hardships. These produce the conditions in which the very best—a higher good, the highest good—can develop.

Believing this way, Char and I kept moving forward through our experiences. Yes, we had challenges, but as we look back on them now, we see that the good God did in us and others can often be directly traced to how He helped us through those very difficulties.

Several months ago I read something that directed me to the thinking of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646 -1716). He was a German Christian philosopher credited for developing the idea that the world that is must be the best of all possible worlds, due to God's supreme goodness, power and wisdom. Leibnizian optimism is his solution to the problem of evil. How can a perfectly good, all-powerful and all-knowing God live alongside evil and suffering in the world? Before creating the universe, God's infinite wisdom allowed Him to contemplate every possible world that could exist.

Because God is perfectly good, He was bound to choose and create the best of all possible worlds. For Him to do otherwise would have been an act of imperfection. Therefore, the world that we inhabit, despite its apparent flaws, must necessarily be the best of all possible worlds. Any negative elements, according to Leibniz, are integral to a larger, more perfect whole that we are too limited to comprehend.

Years before I read about Leibniz I had already believed this principle. Discovering Leibniz simply confirmed that what I had believed as I walked with a good God was philosophically and theologically sound.

This introduction would not be complete without mentioning how I enjoy my unique and wonderful partnership with my wife, Char, in life and ministry. She has been my faithful prayer partner and companion through all of life. Every bedbug-infested bed in which I slept, she did too. The mosquitos that bit me, bit her too. We thank God that Char did not get malaria nor suffer from dengue fever when I did, but she had her share of inconveniences.

In Ethiopia, she was bitten by a poisonous caterpillar. She did not request that we leave the mission field and go back home. One day, while sitting through a church service on a chair on a hotel's lawn, her feet and ankles were bitten many times by chiggers. Char never asked that we leave the work we were doing.

Together we experienced a night in the open air in the eastern Congo jungle with our bus stuck in the mud. Together we traveled by motorboat up a mysterious tributary of the Congo river to reach three of the villages to which we ministered in the north part of the Congo. Char did not complain. She was thirteen years old when she decided to be a missionary and she has stayed true to her calling through all the difficult experiences we had together before, during and since leaving ORU.

This book is our story. I am writing it, but it is *our* story. In the reports scattered throughout this book, I use the word "we." A reminder that this was not just my story. It was our story of what God did.

Two parallel verses of Scripture are applicable to our stories. The first is the great truth Jesus taught in John 15:4 & 5. "*No branch can bear fruit by itself . . . apart from me you can do nothing.*" We cannot do anything apart from Him, but *He* can do many things, *anything He wants to*, through us.

In that same vein, Isaiah 26:12b says, "*. . . All that we have accomplished you have done for us.*" The words in these chapters is a record of what the Lord has done. May His Kingdom be established and His name be praised. God did it.

MAP OF AFRICA

MAP OF INDIA

INDIA
MAJOR CITIES
TAJIKISTAN
AFGHANISTAN
PAKISTAN
CHINA (TIBET)
NEPAL
BHUTAN
BANGLADESH
MYANMAR
SRI LANKA
LADAKH
JAMMU & KASHMIR
HIMACHAL PRADESH
PUNJAB
CHANDIGARH
HARYANA
UTTARAKHAND
NEW DELHI
RAJASTHAN
UTTAR PRADESH
BIHAR
SIKKIM
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
ASSAM
NAGALAND
MEGHALAYA
MANIPUR
TRIPURA
MIZORAM
JHARKHAND
WEST BENGAL
GUJARAT
MADHYA PRADESH
ODISHA
CHHATTISGARH
MAHARASHTRA
DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI AND DAMAN & DIU
TELANGANA
ANDHRA PRADESH
GOA
KARNATAKA
TAMIL NADU
PUDUCHERRY
KERALA
LAKSHADWEEP (INDIA)
ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS (INDIA)
Arabian Sea
Bay of Bengal
INDIAN OCEAN
International Boundary
State/UT Boundary
Country Capital
State/UT Capital
Major City
* Amaravati is considered as state capital by the state govt. but has not been notified by the central govt.
Map not to Scale
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CHAPTER ONE - 2007

In August of 1962 at the age of 18, I left my home in Keokuk, Iowa and excitedly traveled to Mount Vernon, Ohio to go to Bible College. I felt the same excitement when I moved to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in the fall of 1966 to assume responsibilities as the associate pastor of a church. That excitement happened each time I moved: to Canada in 1968, to Korea in 1973, to Doylestown, Pennsylvania in 1986, to Long Beach, New York in 1989, to mainland China in 1991, to Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1996. Each of these moves were from glory to glory as God took me from one serving opportunity to the next. So in January 2007 at age 62, I was again filled with that same expectation and anticipation as I moved to our next adventure.

BOTSWANA

In the first three months of 2007 in Pretoria, South Africa—in addition to purchasing furniture and appliances and setting up housekeeping—I also made two ministry trips. The first was to Botswana which is next to South Africa. My destination was within five - six hours driving distance from Pretoria. It was my first trip, but many more followed in the Toyota Corolla I had just purchased. My big take-away from this first trip was the development of a deep appreciation for the ministers who hosted me and with whom I worked in each place. In the southern part of Botswana, I spent a period of time near Mahalapye then also ministered in Francistown in the north.

During the years in Africa and India, I forgot that I was white. Now I realize, when I look at a photo taken during those years, how I must have stood out; a reminder of years earlier when I sat on the floor of a pastor's home in Korea when he said to me, "Sometimes I forget that you are a foreigner."

During our years abroad, in most of our experiences, we learned to be color and ethnicity blind, appreciating people of differing racial and ethnic backgrounds as they are. We loved and accepted them as brothers and sisters.

Our host in Francistown bemoaned the fact that so many foreigners did not understand that elephants were a problem to Botswanan people who had gardens. He regretted that some foreign people had such an idealistic notion of animal rights that they seemed to ignore the fact that elephants destroying gardens made life difficult for people. Aren't people more important than elephants? However, none of those issues separated the Africans from myself. We were working together to see pastors develop and churches grow.

THE CONGOS

My second trip was a flight to Kinshasa, the capitol of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The next morning after my arrival I went out for a walk as is my custom. (If I kneel or sit, I often go to sleep on the job.) As I walked and prayed, I noticed smoke ascend-ing from a building in the far distance. People on the roads and streets also noticed the smoke and chattered loudly.

The sound of gunfire from that direction added to the tension. I was told that political fighting had produced the bombing of the building and the gunfire. As the day wore on, my host was unable to come to the hotel to guide me in our next steps. The sharp sounds of gunfire grew closer and closer. I stayed in the hotel and away from the windows all that day and all night. How about that for an introduction to political unrest! The next day, my host rushed to the hotel and into my room, alarmed about my safety and eager to know that I was okay. Then I realized the seriousness of the matter. I was also glad to be able to eat something besides the bananas and peanuts on which I had survived during the delay.

Another learning experience that trip was the elaborate musical and sound-box preparations made to entertain participants in pastors' conferences. Many foreign guests tried to make their conferences attractive by providing music, bands, meals, books and other enticements. I was there to teach; not entertain. So I learned to make certain that my hosts knew in advance about my expectations.

Over the years of conducting conferences, this issue arose repeat-

edly. It took a long time for us to develop the reputation that our teaching was worth more than other kinds of attractions available in others' conferences. Not to be critical, but based on my observations and the feedback we eventually received from our confer-ences, this is what we came to believe.

Nevertheless, I bonded well with the good pastor, Pierre Dianda, who was my host. As the years passed, Char and I were his guests in the Congo several more times of fruitful ministry. Since that first time working together, we still have a good friendship and contact each other through WhatsApp from time to time.

Later in that same trip, I flew to Kisangani where I met Moses Ngondombo who was to be my interpreter. We bonded. As the years went by, we did many conferences together. That first conference was in a tent and went well. Moses became a long-term friend, and we still communicate with each other.

From Kisangani, I flew to Isiro where I conducted a successful and well-attended conference. But something happened on that part of the trip that has caused me to reflect deeply on the missionary-national relationship. In our missiological training, we emphasize the need for the foreigner to accept the customs and idiosyncrasies of the local people. I believe this is probably right. On the other hand, I do not believe that in every instance the foreigner needs to maintain shallow courtesy to a fault and overlook unfairness. Here is what causes me to feel this way.

The host of the conference in Isiro was a likable, good-looking man, but I did not lodge with him. He had arranged for me to stay with another person. The other person provided a fine room in his house, fed me well, taught me how to use Dettol in my bath water and coached me about many things I needed to learn about travel and ministry in Africa.

My friend in Pretoria, Joao Luis, who had arranged for this conference, had promised the host a certain amount of money which I was to pay at the end of the conference. So when I observed that my house-host had borne all the expenses of my stay while the pastor who was my host for the conference had not, I wanted to give the money to the man who had actually hosted me—not the man who had merely made the arrangements. When I stated my intention, the pastor/host called my friend in Pretoria and complained.

My friend in Pretoria then told me that I had to keep his promise to the pastor/host, even though the pastor/host had not entertained me. I did what my friend told me and paid the pastor/host with nothing left to give to the house-host. But I never forgot that experience and what I learned from it: Clarify arrangements beforehand so there are no misunderstandings later. Christian workers have the right to require each other to be accountable.

In May, I returned to Tulsa, Oklahoma for the glorious experience of attending Char's graduation.We met friends and family, packed our possessions and returned to Africa—this time with Char. Her education changed her for the better. She became more persevering and more able to express herself concisely and confidently. She has still not used all the knowledge she gained regarding administration of a post-secondary institution, but the discipline of finishing her study program developed her. She was a great addition to the conferences we then conducted together during the following years in Africa, Europe and India.

ZIMBABWE

Our first trip together was a drive to Zimbabwe, which shares a border with South Africa to South Africa's north. In the past it had

been called Rhodesia, and the foreign settlers had brought great development to the nation. Rhodesian cattle were second only to the beef in Argentina. Along with many other nations in Africa, nationalist movements reclaimed (or took over—depending on one's political outlook) the countries. White settlers often lost their properties, and the locals did not know how to operate the pumps for irrigation, plowing or advanced farming techniques. In the eyes of the native Zimbabweans, the rationale for reoccupying the farms was that the land was originally their own. They believed they should reclaim it as their own Zimbabwean land when the foreign government was removed.

The fine family we stayed with during our conference in Harare, Zimbabwe had a well-kept property, nice home and garden. They told us it had belonged to a white family. It was only much later after we were no longer traveling to Harare that we realized the house may have been one of the ones developed by foreigners then possessed by the locals. Nevertheless, we were not there to be involved with political matters. We had a great time with the man and his wife and sang songs I had written about his two daughters. I sometimes wondered if the relationship would have grown had we suspected that the land had been repossessed. Of course, it was also possible that this property was an exception to what had happened to so many other whites who had been booted off their properties.

To demonstrate the maturity level of the conference attendees, it was at Harare, Zimbabwe that I first presented my teaching about intimacy with God illustrated by the marriage relationship. This was a very new

and unique teaching, based on Hosea, Ezekiel, Song of Solomon and others who portray believers as the wife, bride or lover of God. If we spend intimate time with God, we will produce "babies" that look like Him, bring glory to Him, yet look like us too. It takes a mature and spiritually discerning person to appreciate this kind of teaching. Yet it was received well and appreciated at Harare. That particular teaching is on the seminar page of empoweringchristian-leaders.com.

The conferences in Harare went well with even an unplanned additional conference for one of the pastors who had attended the original conference. In Norton, about a half hour's drive west of Harare, we stayed with a fine brother, Fred Shumba, whom I had met when he was a student at Oral Roberts University. The conference we held in his church was also well received, and we thanked the Lord for that. But we also interacted with the culture, people and the situations in which we found ourselves.

As I walked on the roads and prayed in Fred's neighborhood, I noticed a number of properties on which there was a house under construction. From the appearance, they had been under construction for a long time with little progress. Inquiring about this phenomenon, I learned something interesting about African culture and the unfinished homes.

We in the United States have largely learned a good work ethic and appreciation for ownership rights from the Bible and England. We have an appreciation for ownership, hard work, personal responsibility, autonomy, self-reliance and self-respect. But we may not realize that in other parts of the world, people may not rely on themselves as much as they rely on others in their extended families.

This weakness hinders their personal growth. Their way of thinking involves "What is mine is mine and what is yours is also mine." This attitude leads them to assume they can at will use the possessions of others in their extended families. If someone works hard, buys a plot of ground, and builds a house, others in their extended families may take unfair advantage of them and move in.

This aspect of their culture rewards the unmotivated and punishes the hard-working. So they deliberately protect themselves by taking a long time to build their houses. Because my readers are from Africa and Asia as well as people in the West, I want to tread carefully on this subject. But I do want my readers to grow and excel. I train leaders. Whatever our cultural background, we must learn to take responsibility to achieve our goals—especially if we want to lead God's people to improve in character and maturity. Walking in the neighborhood of my host in Norton, Zimbabwe and asking questions about unfinished houses helped me see the great advantage of self-reliance.

To further understand these matters, I recommend reading *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind* by Lawrence E. Harrison and *Culture Matters* edited by Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington.

Three more experiences and learning opportunities in Zimbabwe involved nations, cultures and people living among our hosts. In all we made four ministry trips there, and each one was different. We once stayed with a family who operated a small orphanage in their home. In the evenings after our conference-related responsibilities were over, we sat on the floor of their living room as I shared Bible stories with the children. By staying with our hosts, we gained many opportunities to be of influence and hopefully, we helped them through informal sharing during meals and relaxed times when we were not conducting a conference.

Another learning time for us in Zimbabwe occurred in the home of Des-

mond and Mary Shephard. This wonderful couple demonstrated real commitment to Jesus. Because of our instructions from the Bible about teaching children to obey, one of the issues raised the question of obeying Zimbabwe's government prohibition against spanking children. We taught that obedience was an important thing for our Christian children to learn. Lovingly but firmly disciplining them pleased God and ultimately was a blessing to the children.

Our discussion at the dinner table one evening elicited this observation from Mary, "I love our boys too much to let them disobey. If I must, I will go to prison rather than not correct our children."

What an amazing and wonderful position! This woman loved her children and, as Proverbs teaches, parents who love their children discipline them. So Mary would correct her children. Years later we learned that Mary got sick and died. We grieved and prayed for Desmond.

In another home of our host, Washington, we enjoyed his little boy called "Washy." In our travels we often truly enjoyed the families with which we stayed. However, one night on that trip, I locked my computer and the cash I had just taken out of the bank, in the boot of our car. I was not able to watch my bag while I was teaching, so rather than take my computer into the session I locked it in the car.

It was a mistake and completely my fault. When we returned to the car after that evening's session—the bag, my computer, and an entire month's operating expense funds had been taken. We were handicapped the rest of that visit and unable to give our hosts as much money for food as we would have liked. We had brought food supplies with us from South Africa, but still wanted to give them more money for the inconvenience of having guests in their home. We tried to treat our hosts fairly, but this was one time we fell short.

During informal conversations we often taught Christian principles in addition to the teaching of a conference session. Usually what we shared was appreciated. However, once it was not. It has al-

We rode hundreds of motorcycles during our fourteen years in Africa and India, but this was the only time we rode together . . . . visiting a tea farm.

ways caused me concern when Christians use the name of God carelessly as a means of making an exclamation. To register surprise or amazement some will say, "Oh, my XXX!" and place the name of our beloved and re-spectable Lord in that exclamation. One time I tried to explain this to one of our hosts and realized that not everything I wanted to teach was received.

Our host responded by saying, "Ron, don't expect me to agree with everything you have to say." I immediately saw his point. Though I felt it was his loss, I backed off from my usual willingness to share openly. I needed to relearn that a receptive heart was a necessary precondition for my conversational partner to benefit from what I had to say.

Another short story happened during our travels. I was walking through a market area looking at the fruit and wares when I saw a cute little girl. I stooped over to pick her up, but instead of encouraging or making her happy, I frightened her. She jumped to the ground to get away from me. I tried to pick her up. She screamed with horror and wiggled violently to avoid my grasp. I had been affectionate and held many children in the homes of our hosts, but this was not the same. It was my fault—my mistake. Ever since that incident, I have been sorry that I was not more careful in approaching this little girl. It is possible that my white skin frightened her, so I learned to be more careful.

UGANDA

I will never forget arriving in Addis Abba, Ethiopia too late to catch our next flight. I borrowed a phone to alert our hosts in Uganda, then we waited at the Addis Ababa airport for the next flight. When we finally arrived in Uganda, we were so late and so exhausted it was difficult to eat the nice meal our host and hostess, Joseph and Ruth, had prepared for us. We tried and did our best. The report of that trip says:

"We arrived after midnight in Kampala where three brothers who became the 'team' for the next five weeks of ministry were waiting for us. The next day, we proceeded to Mbale (pronounced M-ball-ay) for three glorious days in an Empower Africa Christian Leadership Conference attended by 100. Our host invited us to teach on two different local Christian radio stations for two nights each, presenting our series on Christian family. The potential number of listeners was approximately five million with about 90% actually listening. There is little for the people in the mountains north of Mbale to do after dark. The second day a pastor and his wife who heard us on the radio attended the conference. We have been warmly urged to return.

"Next we did another three-day conference just outside Kampala in a church led by Joseph, one of our team. We again experienced a good response. We stayed in the home of Joseph and Ruth in Kampala, enjoying them and their children for a week, bouncing through city traffic, speed bumps, potholes, lots of start-and-stop traffic, graveled road, then a deeply rutted rural road. Praise the Lord it never rained! We also ministered in that church and another nearby church on the weekend."

Among the wonderful things God was doing, He was also teaching me some important lessons about working with people. One of our helping pastors met me but the next day complained of a toothache. I felt responsible to help him and paid to have his tooth cared for. After that bill was settled, another expense was mentioned so I helped him again. Eventually, I was asked to help with the med-

ical expenses for his son. It turned out that the son had AIDS. I declined to further help that pastor. Perhaps this sounds cruel, but we need to know when to be generous and when to conserve our resources for other more worthy projects.

From another report: "In this southern region of Uganda political stability in recent years has allowed for an increasing number of churches, though a great need for the training exists."

RWANDA

"The next portion of that trip included groups of pastors who were deeply moved by our teachings. We could never humanly have known that what we taught would fit their situations so well. This was an exciting part of what God was doing through these opportunities." Kigali, the capitol, is on a tilt. Mountains and valleys alike are covered with a mosaic of houses, garden plots, and businesses. An interesting network of roads has been carefully laid out, and the streets are clean, lined with green lawns and flowers.

"We held two four-day conferences, one on either end of the city. This nation, severely ravaged by war in the 1990s and a horrific genocide in 1995, now has a wise president—Paul Kagame—who is introducing great improvements. He wants Rwanda to be a beautiful paradise by 2020. He has begun well.

"Many older pastors and Bible School teachers were lost in the wars, creating a need for mature Christian leadership. But the Christian president is inviting today's pastors to prepare for the improvements of Project 2020. We are planning to return to Rwan-

da for five weeks November and December of 2008 because of the great hunger for teaching.

"One incident in Kigali involved our hostess who had a dream of white people, perhaps angels, coming to stay at her house. When our host arranged for us to stay there, neither one knew of this dream. So when we two white people appeared with suitcases at her door and were introduced by our conference host, the hostess reacted joyously. Her dream had come true. You can't make up stories like this.

"A second incident there involved my habit of going for long walks every morning to pray. The International airport was near the home of our hostess, so I walked back and forth in the parking area rather than out on the road in front of the airport. After all, I was trying to be alone so I could tend to the important business at hand. It did not matter to me what it looked like. I had a job to do. I was trying to blend in and not be noticed. After several days, the airport police approached me wanting to know what I was doing. I had to ask my hosts help me explain that I was in Rwanda to conduct conferences and liked to walk outside in the mornings. The officials were understandably concerned about airport security. It did seem interesting to me to be almost apprehended by police for walking and praying.

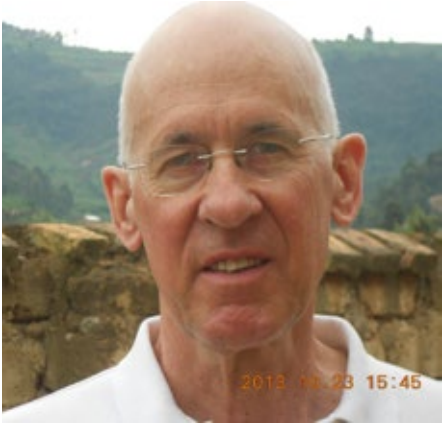
I reported; "Our team members arranged three of the five conferences in Rwanda, but two more were held in churches of young men who had found my teachings on the internet and independently contacted us.

They had invited us to conduct conferences when we were in their countries. We had some reservations about partnering with persons unknown to us, but this fear proved to be unfounded—much to our delight. One told us that a Korean who knew us years ago had told him about our website. We introduced our contacts to each other. They are now making plans for five Rwanda conferences for 2008 when we will also minister in their Bible schools.

BURUNDI

"This nation had been ravaged by a recent war. Now they have an HIV-AIDS problem in 70% of the population with an illiteracy rate of 80%. Orphans are everywhere, begging from team members as well as ourselves. They sleep in boxes, sacks, or on the sides of the streets. In the midst of these difficulties, we were introduced to an entrepreneurial and gifted leader/pastor and former Bible college professor who is leading a wonderful spiritual revolution against the legalism of old Pentecostal churches. He is allowing people to dance during the church's worship time. Can you imagine an African church that did not allow dancing? The result of this liberty is phenomenal and their joy is contagious.

"Before going to teach the first morning, the Lord told Char He was excited. As we taught, people in the crowd shared how the Lord had given them visions of the two of us, even of what we would wear and say in our introductory statements. There was so much surprise and joy as their visions became reality. Their out-pour-ing of love and reception of our teaching was almost overwhelming. We held three days of conferences, then ministered in four dif-ferent venues/rallies during the next three days.



"When we promised to return for three weeks in

February, 2009, this lion of a pastor said, "If I were God, I would have you returning earlier." He is also asking for anyone else who is qualified to teach basic Bible school, to consider giving a semester or more to this fine ministry that is bursting forth. They will soon begin a Bible school and are planting churches as far away as the Congo.

"Amazingly, neither of us were sick the entire five weeks we spent in these three nations. On the last day, the Lord quickly healed Char's sore throat. The food was much the same as served in Zimbabwe: cooked bananas, potatoes, rice, beans, beef, goat, chicken, or fish and a cornmeal paste they cover with a delicious tomato sauce. Sweet bananas, too, and other tasty fruit such as: pineapple, watermelon, mango and papaya also abound. Paul notes in Romans 5:3-5 that suffering produces perseverance which produces character, and then a hope that does not put us to shame. We feel so privileged and humbled that we get to go on these adventures.

"On another front we have some exciting news. I have been working for several years to publish again. During November, Soar With Eagles released my second book, *Rise to Seek Him, the Joy of Effective Prayer*. This book chronicles the dramatic changes in our ministries that have occurred since I began my experiment in prayer on July 9, 2002. My discoveries are part of what we teach in our conferences. Additional publications of African editions of both Habits of *Highly Effective Christians* and *Rise to Seek Him* are on the drawing boards.

"The last few weeks of December 2007 and January 2008 were spent in the US. It is summer in sub-Saharan Africa, while it is winter in the Northern Hemisphere. During that time the Africans celebrate Christmas holidays by going on vacation. So even if we stayed in Africa during those months, the African annual pattern would not be conducive to conducting conferences. So we took advantage of the break to be with family in Washington, D.C. Incidentally, grand kids are grand."

CHAPTER TWO - 2008

Upon returning to warm South Africa early in 2008, I flew to cold snowy Sweden to teach a week of intensive missions' classes. Swe-den is an 18-hour trip due north but is only one hour behind South Africa time so there was no jet lag. I had been introduced to Livit Ord University during my years at ORU. Even after moving to Afri-ca, they still invited me to participate in their program for training Christian missionaries.

Back in Africa I also spoke at the World Missions Centre training conference and at the Pretoria Missions Fest. I trained counselors in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Char and I both taught Bible studies in a Pretoria University Christian student group.

Another interesting and fruitful door opened when I presented a session on prayer at "Mission Exposure and Training" (MET) in Pre-toria, hosted by Jerald and Pat Golbeck, a dedicated missionary couple. Through a mutual friend, Joao Luis, we became associated with this group that trains Christian leaders from all over Africa. For one month at a time, MET hosted their international students in a location about a 15-minute drive from our apartment, across from the South African government buildings on Church Street.

Many of our contacts for our future trips in 2008 and years to come were originally made through MET. The first one was in March when we went to Nigeria for a two-month trip to work with several

MET graduates in their respective locations in and near Jos and Lagos until April 27th. Though we were in Nigeria, which is a more difficult area of Africa, we were pleased with the fruitfulness of the trip.

NIGERIA

A year earlier, in August of 2007, after speaking on the effectiveness of prayer for MET, five Nigerian participants approached me, insist-ing that Char and I come to Nigeria. The months of March & April of 2008 were set aside. Subsequently, almost every place in Nigeria where we held Empower Africa Christian Leadership Conferences (EACLCs) we were hosted by MET alumni and their friends. We later changed the name to "Leadership Empowerment Conference" when we began to include Asia and Europe in our scope. But in 2008 we were still doing "Empower Africa Christian Leadership Conferences." Even now we are still in contact with many of the fine people we worked with on this trip. Here is what I reported upon our return from Nigeria in 2008:

"JOS—on March 4th, we flew into Lagos from South Africa several days earlier than originally planned due to the lack of daily flights. We also extended our time in Nigeria four days because of flight schedules. We spent the night in Lagos, on the south coast of Nigeria, then flew on the only Wednesday flight northeast into Jos in Plateau State. It is a high, rocky, arid place but not quite as hot as the rest of the country. Pastor Fred Emmanuel of Ibadan, our contact man on the ground for the two month trip, met us as well as Pastor Andy Abah, the director of Grace Foundation Inland Mission serving northern Nigeria and other African countries. He and his wife, Lucy, are wonderful servants of God. Our initial purpose for going to Jos was to participate in their Africa Missions Summit. But because we were there early, we were invited to do an entire three-day leadership conference for 35-40 missionaries.

"Soon the Summit was in full swing. We appreciated the opportunity to participate and also to hear the reports from points farther in the north of Africa. We rejoiced with those who were seeing outstanding results, yet grieved with one dear brother whose life

and those of his family members were threatened. As a result of a fire, he lost the building and equipment he had gathered in 18 years of ministry effort. On the final Sunday morning of the missions conference, we were both asked to speak. I spoke at the first session, and Char, the animated story-teller, presented her message in the second one. We were in the company of great heroes of the faith and both of us were highly honored and deeply moved by the experience.

"UYO—early in the morning of March 19th, we boarded a van for Uyo. Bags of potatoes of the other passengers were stuffed under the seats. The luggage was stacked, bulging from the rear of the vehicle so that the door had to be tied in a nearly horizontal position. Twelve of us rode for 11 hours, stopping only twice between driving like crazy down the congested highways, all the while swerving to miss the many potholes. Both of us had bad cramps in our right knees and were glad to disembark in our next place of ministry.

"We were taken directly to a hotel complex where about 50 women, mostly widows, had gathered for a conference. We were astonished to learn of the difficulties of these women who, when their husbands die, often lose everything to the husband's family. It was a joy to see a ministry of compassion serving these who are so disadvantaged in this land.

"The following week we pressed a three-day schedule into a two-day conference for about 40 pastors. One attendee had a dream the night before that he was to attend a conference the next day. As he was driving past the host church, he was impressed to go inside and inquire. He attended both days.

"The minivan trip to IBADAN was only 10 hours, with less luggage and an air conditioner. We only stopped once, at a restaurant where the generator had burned out resulting in no food. Nevertheless we were glad to get out and stretch. Ibadan was home to Pastor Fred who recognized the value to Africa of the Empower Africa Christian Leadership Conference program. He believed we should move our base from Pretoria, SA to Ibadan, Nigeria. As a result of

planning and hard work, over 150 Christian leaders, pastors, and their wives gathered for an exciting three-day conference.
One pastor told of the Lord showing him in January to get ready because we were coming. He was so stirred in his spirit even though he had no idea who we were, that he invited and sponsored 52 pastors and leaders for the conference. Every day the attendance was greater than the day before. Afterward, he testified that he was glad to find another role model for ministry. Many are looking for living illustrations of Bible-based ministry and are so excited after attending our conference. Many have commented that they wished more could hear what we have to say.

We have been asked to return to every place we have ministered throughout the last 14 months. Though we were in Ibadan only a few days, they were power-packed days. We do the same amount of fasting, praying and preparation for each new venue, but the difference in success levels depends on the preparation of those on site. In Ibadan, in addition to the conference, we also ministered three days in the sponsoring church.

"LAGOS—between the two of us, we presented 50 sessions in three conferences and services in local churches during our two weeks in Lagos. Pastor Abraham was our contact MET alumni in Lagos. He arranged for two pastor-friends in other areas of the city to sponsor conferences. Each of these, in turn, contacted their area chapters of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) arranging for the area pastors to attend those conferences. A total of 250 attended the three conferences. The spon-

sors, along with CAN and PFN leadership, are making plans for our conferences in other parts of the Lagos Metropolitan area when we return in 2009.

"IWO in OSUN State was the site for our final conference. The miraculous element in this newly developing ministry continued to amaze us. It was astounding that people who did not know us, other than knowing someone who attended that one session at MET, repeatedly were assured by the Holy Spirit that our conference would be of benefit to them.

"Even during a break-down of the car in which we were traveling from Lagos to Iwo and the two and a half-hour wait in the equator's heat had the mark of God on it. The car broke down right in front of a mechanic's garage. We asked God to *"Make a covenant…with the creatures that move along the ground…so that [we] may lie down in safety."* (Hosea 2:18) Our God is amazing! We are so happy to be His partners."

ZAMBIA

In 2007, when I had agreed to go to Nigeria in 2008, another man named Rex also asked us to come to Zambia. He was younger than the other four Nigerians.

I asked, "Are you able to bring together pastors and Christian leaders for conferences?"

He said, "Yes," so I gave him a chance. He brought together four groups in four different places in Zambia and interpreted for us in each of them. During that May in Zambia we again moved 'from glory to glory' and watched God work. Everywhere we went the Africans were so appreciative of the mentoring and biblical instruction on leadership. The pastors of one denominational leader's churches had recently requested training on Christian leadership when our conference became available. In addition to the four conferences already scheduled, we conducted an "extra," unscheduled, two-day conference that was a timely answer to their needs and prayers. Here is what I wrote to our supporters when we returned to South Africa:

"After returning to Pretoria from Nigeria on Sunday, April 27th, we left again early Saturday, May 3rd, this time by car. We drove north, then northwest from Pretoria, continued northwest then north through Botswana, ferried into Zambia, then proceeded east and again north to Lusaka, Zambia's capitol. We took this rather circuitous route to skirt Zimbabwe where fuel and food shortages make cross-country travel prohibitive. This kind of travel helps us appreciate our US roads and border systems.

"Though most of the nations of Africa are no larger than our States, at every border we moved from window to window, filling out forms, paying levies and buying car insurance—all leading to that coveted stamp of approval. Some countries require visas which we obtained at a price from their consulates prior to leaving South Africa. If I could not be patient and navigate these mazes, I was not qualified to be a missionary. This type of patience is what our work requires.

"On this trip we learned the reality that the more remote the area, the more potholes appeared. As we neared the border of Botswana, a tire blew out. As I quickly changed the tire, a Christian business-man stopped and led us to a tire store in the nearby town. Then he insisted on paying for the new tire. God was at work.

"After traveling for two long days due to some bad roads, we arrived in Lusaka where we met our Zambia facilitator, Rex Chipoya. We drove north, then east. Mpika, Mpulungu, and Kasama are all in the remote northeast of Zambia. Getting to each of these places took

longer than planned due to road conditions. In fact, we bent two rims and blew another tire on one deep pothole. We changed one tire and limped to the next town on the other slowly leaking tire. In spite of these hindrances, the Lord had gone before us. We rejoiced that all of the conferences were eagerly and gratefully received. We continued to find the Christian leaders of Africa zealous, sincere, dedicated, intelligent and eager to learn. The same was true in Ndola and Kabwe.

"We were told about one interesting phenomenon: 'Many false prophets roam the countryside.' So everywhere we began a conference, the first several one-hour sessions were usually greeted with understandable skepticism. However, by the end of the first day people eagerly discussed our presentations and quickly embraced our teachings, recognizing they were biblical and balanced. Consequently, we were sincerely invited to return.

"A childhood song addresses the issue of re-dundancy: *Same song, second verse . . . . .* Our monthly reports continue to report of God's—not our—suc-cess-es. Reports that are becom-ing more and more like what we had first envisioned: well-attended, inter-church, area-wide conferences for Christian leaders. Making printed copies of the conference materials available to those who can pay for the copies and awarding certificates of attendance have also greatly improved the program.

"One pastor lamented there were too few Christian books available

in Africa, so he was grateful we came with new information. We are praying and working toward distributing my books here in Africa. In fact, we would like to see them published in both English and French and distributed through Christian bookstores. Publication of my first book in English is underway and will be available soon in Christian bookstores. Though this has called for a $6,000 investment, the need to get good materials into the hands of these Christian leaders compels us. Please join us in prayer about this need."

THE TWO CONGOS

On Thursday, June 29, we drove from Ndola, Zambia to Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As we entered the nation, we recognized the need for prayer support for protection, favor, open hearts and God's ever-vital anointing on the teachings. Each time we sent a report we also prayed for each of the people who would receive it. The location and the nature of others' ministries varied from ours, but it was the same Lord we all served. Below are six June developments:

"1. Lubumbashi is the second largest city in DRC. We quickly realized this conference was a good start in the development of relationships, leading to return trips to conduct conferences in other parts of the city. We were grateful for the advance preparation so that the expectancy and prayer levels were both high. Every-where we served, we experienced repeated confirmations that we were doing the right thing—conducting conferences for African Christian leaders. We left our car in the enclosed yard of our host in Lubumbashi.

“2. We flew to Kinshasa, also in DRC, ferried across the Congo River to Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo (RC) in an outboard motorboat where we ministered to several groups. Brazzaville is the capitol of Republic of the Congo (RC—often referred to as Congo Brazzaville) and is just across the Congo River from Kinshasa, the capital of Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The two capitals face each other and are faintly visible through the haze from across the wide and swift Congo River. DRC was colonized by Belgium and RC by France. Later, each obtained their independence, thus two Congos exist today. During the three days we spent in Brazzaville, RC, our presentations were well received. We were constantly amazed by the hunger for teaching demonstrated again and again by our eager listeners. Praise the Lord!

“3. We then flew to Imfondo in the northeast of RC near the Central Republic of Africa and across the river from DRC, to conduct a five-day conference and speak five times at a city-wide meeting. We were met at the Imfondo airport on the tarmac by a delegation of ministers from the area ministers’ association then at the airport gate by three choirs who danced and escorted us for a two and one-half hour parade (Our smilers were quite weary at the end of the day!) The week was a combination of some of the most difficult spiritual and physical hardships combined with some of the most triumphant teaching and preaching we have ever experienced. We rejoice to have met the fine people from many different denominations of this village nestled between miles and miles of forest and the river that separates northeast RC from DRC.

“4. Next we flew back to Brazzaville to conduct a conference.
The Brazzaville conference was both appreciated and successful ac-cording to the feedback we received. Our spirits bore witness that this was true. Much of the credit for this, again and again, was the teachable attitude and hunger for knowledge on the part of sincere African leaders.
“5. Then we completed a series of four meetings the next week for leaders, focusing on character studies from
the Bible. At month’s end we were scheduled to speak to Bible

College students for two days then fly on July 2nd to Pointe Noire on the Atlantic coast for a conference." Anytime we were called upon to present a second series of teachings, we needed to have advanced materials prepared to present to those who had already received conference training.

"The first time we used our new Character Studies Series present-ed itself this past week. A conference in the north part of RC was canceled due to unrest regarding local elections. Any time a coincidence or surprise happens we pray that we will be able to move smoothly with the new developments and that God will work His great purpose. In this instance, the leaders who attended this second week of teachings had just finished our regular conference the previous week. They were eager for more and the teachings were well-received.

"We were excited and busy developing further studies—each based on a Bible character. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Jeremiah, and Daniel had been ready for some time. David was now finished and presented once. On the drawing board and at various stages of completion were: Noah, Jacob, Zipporah, Balaam, Esther, Job, Elisha, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Mary (Jesus' mother), Peter, Paul, and Phoebe.

"6. We proceeded with plans to translate into French both *Habits of Highly Effective Christians* and *Rise to Seek Him—The Joy of Effective Prayer*. Both of these books are now slated to be published in English, then distributed throughout Africa via Christian book-

stores. (Note: Both books are now available on the Book Page of empoweringchristianleaders.com.)"

In July, we continued our work in Congo Brazzaville (RC) and God continued to encourage us. He gave us a special impression while in RC and after two conferences in Brazzaville we traveled to Point Noire on the west coast for a conference. (1) We were pleased with the quality and intellectual level of the participants in that cosmopolitan economic center. On our final Sunday there, we thoroughly enjoyed ministering in a glorious joint worship service of several congregations.

(2) We had an unusual experience as I was teaching about intimacy with the heavenly Father. I was teaching about El-Shaddai, the many-breasted One, our heavenly "Daddy." He has plenty of room to comfort, nourish, and hug all his little boys and girls on His lap at the same time. The interpreter followed me to the chair depicting the throne of God where we are welcome to approach Him.
Not only did the interpreter join me, but he also motioned to others on the platform and in the audience to join us. About ten of God's "children" quickly gathered together to demonstrate one large happy, grand hug. The crowd applauded loudly and worshiped with sustained praise as they realized the significance of God's generous approachability. A price tag cannot be attached to such powerful spontaneous experiences.

We returned to Brazzaville in RC on July 8 and the next day crossed the Congo River into Kinshasa back in DRC. We participated in Kinshasa's second Missions Fest, a mission-ary mobilizing and promo-tion-centered conference usu-ally sponsored by a group of coop-erating churches and pastors in a metropolitan community. Between the two of us, we led four workshops and ministered in a plenary session—a real honor for both of us. In addition, we took part in many important networking opportunities, and the attendees received more intense missionary perspectives of their own continent—Africa.

My reports continued:
"The major event for us in Kinshasa was our own well-attended and highly successful pastors' conference. This conference was hosted by the same Pierre Dianda with whom I worked sixteen months ago when he first went to the Congos. Once again the value of training pastors in Africa was so clear to us. Many African pastors have received little or no quality training. They respond well to the five things we offer them in the fifteen hours of a conference: Prayer, Intimacy with God, Bible Study Methods, Christian Family, and Sermon Preparation and Delivery." We did two more conferences in DRC before beginning our return trip to South Africa.

We acknowledged our partners in ministry with these paragraphs:

"We especially thank God for the fine quality of ministry part-

ners He has privileged us to work with. One was our host in RC, Pastor Adrien Wambote. He is a skilled leader, administrator, has excel-lent people skills and enjoys the respect of those he leads. We have served as his guests in ministry two times and look forward to years of continued partnership. Another is the interpreter, Pastor Yvon-Pierre Ibata, provided for us in RC. He has a quick mind, a good understanding of English and spiritual depth. He, as well as all our partners, consider our conference materials of great value. He is working now to form a team of translators to get *Rise to Seek Him: The Joy of Effective Prayer* translated into French. A third gift to us is Pastor Pierre Dianda, our host twice in Kinshasa. He, too, is a skilled interpreter with a good understanding of English and an ap-preciation of our teachings. He was gathering a team of translators to translate *Habits of Highly Effective Christians* into French.

"A fourth is Pastor Moses Ngondomba, (mentioned in chapter one) our excellent host and translator in Kisangani in central DRC. This modern day Moses' wife's name is Zipporah—just like the name of the Moses who led the children of God out of Egypt. Sixteen months earlier, when I had a two-day lay-over in Kisangani on my way to Isiro, a local pastor asked me to preach one evening. Moses was the man he had hired as the interpreter. Now he served as our host for this final pastors' conference in DRC. He is a church-planter recently
moved by the Lord from Kin-shasa to Kisan-gani.

"While working closely with the local ministers association in a broadly-based organization of city-wide churches, we completed one of our best conferences—thanks to the preparations

on the ground by another fine partner. Pastor Moses planned to translate the Empower Africa School of Ministry Curriculum into French. We thank God for these gifts—partners in the work God is calling us to do in Africa.

"Awarding certificates of participation to those who attend became standard procedure for us, as it added dignity to the entire operation. Because the pastors are unable to get formal education, they appreciate certification of having received this training.

"As we headed 'home' to Pretoria, we flew from Kisangani to Kinshasa to Lubumbashi where we each ministered on the last Sunday of July. We both thought that once we were through ministering, the pressure would let up. Not so! The trip was long and difficult at times, but also rewarding and beautiful. It took us almost four hours and many "fees" at the border to cross into Zambia.

We headed home, driving in our own car from Lubumbashi. However, as we crossed into Zambia on our way to Botswana and home to South Africa, we had a near-death experience that night in a remote area. There was plenty of distance before us on the long gradual hill as we approached a slow-moving truck. The semi-trailer truck driver signaled to indicate it was safe to pass, but the truck filled too much of the road. As we waited for the truck to move over, we used up the distance between ourselves and the top of the hill.

Our Toyota Corolla was about three-fourths of the way past the truck when a car came over the top of the hill. It moved quickly toward us. I slammed on the brakes *but so did the truck driver!* Our car was slowing down more quickly than the truck. But we needed to wait until the truck was in front of us, before we could move back into our lane. And the approaching car, already halfway on the shoulder, was coming like a bullet out of hell.

In a split second, as the truck pulled ahead of us and I pulled back into our lane, the approaching fiery dart swished past us. That night Char and I almost went to heaven together. This was why we needed the prayers of our friends.

"We arrived in Kabwe, Zambia long after dark where we were hosted in a comfortable guest house by a brother who believes in our ministry. The next morning we headed for Livingston. However, because there was no sign, we missed a turn, driving east an hour instead of west. Only when we arrived at the Zimbabwean border did we realize our mistake. The roads of Zambia, as well as in DRC were being repaved by the Chinese, so the drive was alright at that spot as we pushed through the rolling mountainside. We stopped at an ATM in Lusaka to get money for petrol and groceries.

We had been advised to make a stop at Victoria Falls and visit Livingston. As we approached Livingston, so many potholes filled the road it took us two hours to drive the final 74 kilometers (45 miles). The farther you drive from the capital, the more the road deteriorates. We stopped there two days, viewed Victoria Falls and visited the Livingstone section of the local museum. A brother had made a reservation for us in a small guest house and we stayed three nights just to catch our breath. Victoria Falls was worth stopping to see. And learning about our fellow missionary, David Livingston increased our appreciation of our opportunity to serve in Africa. The things we learned at the museum were consistent with what I had learned years previously while I was still at ORU and traveling to Africa in the summers. When I had ministered in Kenya, I had stopped in Zanzibar and saw the slave prisons en route to my next destination—Tanzania."

PRETORIA, SOUTH ARICA

"Our drive the next day was highlighted by the crossing of the Zambezi River on a ferry. It only took 15 minutes to clear the immigration and customs from Zambia to Botswana with no "fees." We saw a herd of 15 or more elephants drinking and bathing at a

waterhole near the road, then a large troop of monkeys—maybe 45 of them of various sizes by the side of the road. As we drove closer, they moved off the road into the tall grass and seemed to disappear as if we had seen a mirage. Driving through Botswana, we finally arrived in Pretoria, South Africa late Saturday afternoon, grateful to sleep in our own beds.

"During that trip, we drove over 7399.5 km. (4,598 miles), flew within the Congos, and had five flat tires and three badly bent wheel rims. With the price of gas as high as $2.50 per liter in one place, that came to a little more than $10 a gallon. Our comfortable car buzzed right along, but we reconsidered never driving that way again."

These days were filled with gratitude to God for our praying friends. The conferences scheduled for August in Mozambique were canceled so were able to regroup. I was working on my next book with a working title of "*Bible Characters, Biblical Character.*" As I wrote the twenty-three chapters, I utilized the interesting discoveries I had made in my Bible reading and studying over the years. The book was eventually named *"Choose Your Character"* and is available on the Book Page of empoweringchristianleaders.com.

God knows our needs better than we do. He is superior to us in His great ability to plan schedules with the foresight of an all-knowing God. He has our long-range success in mind, not just our short-range monthly goals. At first, we were disappointed to learn that Mozambique had canceled for August, but Father knew best. God knew I needed time to work on Bible Characters, Biblical Character, our car needed bodywork, wheels, and tires. Our own bodies too needed a break after nine months living out of a suitcase. From November 2007 until the end of July 2008 we had been non-stop on the road.

As we looked back on August, we were truly grateful that the Mozambique series of conferences canceled. We would not have made that decision—we didn't know enough to make such a good

decision—but wisdom could see that God was taking care of us. In the years to follow we were glad we took the time to write more materials. The book about character was to be my third. It was written with Christian leaders in mind, yet the broad range of subjects it addressed makes it easy for every reader to find something uniquely applicable. It was quite an adventure strolling through the books of the Bible with my Bible character friends. After reading the Bible through fifty times by then, I felt like I was acquainted with the characters in the Bible. Here are a few lines from the introduction:

"Times, cultures, traditions, and societal values may change from century to century, but human nature does not. Bible characters can teach us biblical character . . . . I know these people. I have met them again and again over the years. I know what they think, how they acted, what they did right and wrong and how their lives teach people today to learn how to live biblical and principled lives."

I finished the first draft of the book in six weeks and five days. The manuscript then went to a skilled editor friend.

ZIMBABWE AND ZAMBIA

In September, we were scheduled to go to Zimbabwe again. But in 2008, Zimbabwe was going through an extremely difficult time. Politically and economically the people were suffering unimaginable hardship. Just finding food to eat was a matter of life or death for many. As we traveled, we took food supplies for ourselves.

We have chosen to put a positive interpretation on these difficulties. When Jesus—our Model Incarnational Missionary—left heaven and came to earth, He walked where we walked and experienced life as we experience it. Leaving from South Africa's easier life situ-ation into Zimbabwe's extremely difficult one, we had a somewhat similar opportunity. We generally tried to identify with our friends and ministry partners wherever we went, joining them in ministry and life as they were experiencing it. In the years that followed we were glad we followed this practice.

I was glad to be working on the book and to be getting ready to

go to Zimbabwe. About that time I read an article that concluded about how happiness contributes to good health. Amen to that!

When we returned from five months of non-stop travel, we found we were going to have an unexpected break. Both of us slept well, became well-nourished, and, since change is a rest, we felt stronger. We were surely tired and glad to have the time to recover and re-tank. When we were younger, we heard an older missionary friend who traveled and ministered a lot say that he always built into his schedule "turnaround time."

The men who were translating my books into French were hard at work, eager to get them ready for publication and distribution. Pierre Dianda from DRC visited us as he was in South Africa for a conference. We had a delightful time together over lunch. As I was walking him to the gate, he shouted back to Char, "See you next year!" We wouldn't miss it!

We then headed back into Zimbabwe for another, my third or fourth, trip there. I had previously traveled to Zimbabwe during my years at ORU, in addition to our trip together in September, 2007. We had been asking folks to pray with us for Zimbabwe as that nation was going through a difficult time. So we were happy to report that our prayers were being answered. The leaders of Zimbabwe at that time were President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister designate Morgan Tsvangirai. They had been political opponents who were trying to work together to form a power-sharing government. For 28 years Mugabe had been the president, often wielding an iron hand. But since the recent elections, things were changing. Much of the current violence was now finally coming to an end.

Nevertheless, we had heard from all quarters that the Zimbabweans were starving—no food on the market shelves. We found they were also hungry for the Word of God. Because Zimbabwe is directly north of South Africa, we drove again. This time, however, we carried all our own food. Pastors arranged for housing and meetings, but we took one month's supply of groceries. This was quite the challenge: 30 cans of meat, 30 cans of veggies, 30 cans

of spaghetti or beans, breakfast and lunch fixings, i.e., cold cereal, powdered milk, dried fruit and nuts, Cup-a-Soup packets and crackers, peanut butter and cheese spread. Add to that a small propane gas tank with a burner for heating water and warming food, pans, a thermos, dishes and knives, etc. Think camping! We added bags of rice, corn meal, sugar, oil, coffee, dish soap, a few vegetables such as potatoes, onions, cabbage and garlic to share with folks there.

When we added our clothes, cosmetics, and books—we were loaded! We also took our own water. Since there was little or no electricity, there was no guarantee we would be able to get water from the deep wells, so we took a 25-liter tank and prayed for supply along the way. In areas with shallow wells, people were sick with cholera. We also purchased 120 liters of petrol (gasoline) that we would pick up in Harare, the capital city, to get us from church to church and back to South Africa.

During our years in Africa, as we traveled, now and then someone would ask how we financed our hobby. It was always our joy to tell them about Christians in America who cared about people in Africa. They were delighted to hear about those prayers. About that time several African friends also joined in prayer and fi-nancial support. When we shared that there were Christians eager to sponsor such an adventure and join hands and hearts with us, they always—always—expressed

praise to the Lord. Many of the pastors and leaders that we were able to reach were so hungry for teaching. We
could see that what the Lord had given us to share met deep needs in many of them. Their reception to the teachings was delightful. It was our joy to challenge them to think about new ideas, and the prayer times at the end of each conference were phenomenal. They were being empowered to become better leaders.

As we parted with each group, they always asked us to greet our family and our brothers and sisters in Christ. We knew we could not do what we were doing without the emotional, spiritual, prayer and financial support from people who love us because they love God. We have no way to know how other Christian couples spend their latter years, but we were growing older together and having the time of our lives while we were at it!

Upon completion of that trip, we reported to our friends:

"Our busy and fruitful ministry trip to Zimbabwe and Zambia is now complete, so we are regrouping in preparation for the next one. We were gone for 28 days, from September 22 through October 20. The month had four "firsts" for us: We set a new record for presentations. Between the two of us, we presented 135 one-hour sessions.

For one week I went in one direction to Lusaka, Zambia and Char went another to a suburb of Harare, Zimbabwe.
Char shared the lecture schedule with a local African colleague, John, who taught one of four sessions each day, so the two of them completed a conference without me. We can see that this ministry is growing. During the two years we have been here getting started, we too are growing.

The "boot" (their name for the car trunk) load of food supplies was not examined nor were the contents confiscated. We had enough to eat for the month, and more, and could share with those who hosted our visits.

"Our first three days in Zimbabwe, we presented leadership teachings and the book of Hebrews at a Bible Institute during the day, then six sessions from our conference sessions at another Bible Institute nearby in the evenings. We ministered three sessions in a host church the next Sunday, then drove southwest for 130 kilometers that afternoon to the next venue.

"During our two weeks in the Kadoma and Chetugu region we presented four complete conferences to hungry and eager listeners. We each also ministered on the weekends that were between and following those four conferences. I left for Lusaka, Zambia on Monday where I was a guest speaker in another organization's conference. Char and a colleague presented a conference in a suburb of Harare. I returned to Harare on October 18, and we drove back to Pretoria on October 19 and 20.

"The living conditions in Zimbabwe remain extremely difficult. We heard pastors talking of people living on whatever they could find. Some were starving to death. Water and electricity were in short supply. We were glad we took lots of candles. If it were not for gardens and the black market, life would be impossible. The good people of Zimbabwe and their leadership needed our sincere prayers.

"The value and rightness of our being here in Africa, training leaders at the local level, was confirmed again and again. We ministered to scores of intelligent, dedicated, sincere, and prayerful Christian leaders who were eager to learn everything they could to increase their effectiveness and fruitfulness in Christian ministry."

RWANDA

"Next Wednesday we fly all night from Pretoria, South Africa via Nairobi, Kenya to Kigali, Rwanda. What we have been planning for some months is about to become reality: five or six conferences during five weeks. We begin in the north with conferences in each quarter of the nation, then one or two in Kigali, the capital. The President of Rwanda has challenged the pastors to prepare themselves for effective ministry to the emerging Rwanda of 2020. He is a future-thinking man with aggressive short and long-range plans

for the development of his nation. We anticipate a profitable trip to Rwanda. Here are the reports we wrote upon completion of that trip:

"Ruhengeri Conference:

Our first conference was in northern Rwanda in the town of Ruhengeri just across the border from DRC, near where rebels were fighting government forces. Much killing took place. The conference was scheduled to be in the foothills of a range of volcanic mountains in which gorillas continue to live in their natural habitat. A billboard on the road says, "You are getting close to home," indicating that also here in Africa, Darwin's influence is felt.

"After the three-day conference we had a fruitful four-hour session with Bible school students—all of them pastors—in which we addressed the crucial question of self-reliance. We spoke to the problem of African dependence on foreign funds. We were most pleased to receive questions on this issue and see the maturity of the present generation of African church leaders. They want to break away from the patterns of the past that have weakened them.

"Nygatari Conference:

Our second conference was on the border to the east with Uganda in a community called Nygatari. We were pleased with the warmth of our host and the eagerness to learn on the part of those who attended. The host pastor wants to teach what he has learned from us in many cities and villages in the eastern part of Rwanda, so we encouraged him.

"Buhinga Conference:

The next week we traveled to the southwest and conducted a well-attended conference in the village of Buhinga. The host pastor was a leader of leaders, eager to teach what he had learned to others in his district. He was so impressed with the teachings that he made a point to also attend the next conference in Butare to make certain his notes were complete. He has invited us to return in late fall of 2010 to conduct a conference in a city nearby, which is on Lake Albert separating West Rwanda from DRC. He intends to gather

pastors for the next conference from both sides of this national boundary in an attempt to serve eastern DRC as well as western Rwanda.

"Butare Conference:

We traveled east again to Butare in the south-central quarter of the nation. We were pleased to see the quality of the host pastor, Herman Gatware, his large church and the attendees at the conference. He wants us to return in 2010 for another conference in which he intends to bring together a larger representation of the Christian Church in South Rwanda. The interpreter wrote to say that he was more profoundly impacted by these teachings than any other conference for which he had interpreted. In his words, "I want to express my deep gratitude to you for the strong message. This was my utmost time of understanding such a powerful, precious word full of inspiration, discernment, and wisdom. This is God's answer to our needs."

Though not seen everywhere nevertheless this site is certainly possible in Africa.

"Logistics:

"Butamwa Conference in the Kigali Suburb:

Finally, we traveled to Kigali, Rwanda's capital, and conducted a conference in the newly developing community of Butamwa. In the years to come this area in south Kigali will have an even larger international airport than the present one. A number of government agencies will be relocated to this area. Our host in Butamwa was our host for the entire five weeks. He is a future-oriented person who has purchased a tract of land in Butamwa and plans to start a church there. He is aware of the influence he will be able to exert in years to come.

It is our practice to stay with the local people in order to get better

acquainted with them. This has been greatly appreciated everywhere we go. While it is more difficult than staying in a local guest house or hotel, it has endeared us to the pastors and leaders, giving us greater freedom to work with each group. We traveled to each venue by bus, with 12-32 seats, a quick and efficient mode of transport. The Lord gave us great grace as we rode the switchbacks in the mountains, so that we never suffered from motion sickness like many of our fellow-passengers did.

At the end of 2008 we wrote this summary of our first two years in Africa:

"In January of 2007, I came to Africa. Char joined me three months later. From the beginning of this project, we felt it would take us two years to get started on a continent new to us. With the completion of our five weeks and five conferences in Rwanda, we felt we had reached a significant milestone, bringing our first two years in Africa to a tired and happy end. Though we saw some signs of slowing down, we remained healthy and strong. I still run 10 kilometers every other day while Char remains nimble and strong enough to handle her own suitcases with all the loading and unloading required. In 2008, I celebrated my sixty-fourth birthday while Char had her sixty-third.

We rejoice that God has given us the opportunity to serve Africa in this season of our lives."

"[The righteous] will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, 'The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.'" Psalm 92:14, 15 NIV.

CHAPTER THREE - 2009

"Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: 'The Lord's right hand has done mighty things! The Lord's right hand is lifted high; the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!' I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done."
Psalm 118:15-17

Our time in the States with friends, then with our encouragers in Oklahoma for three weeks was excellent. Knowing that our families were okay and our friends would pray for us freed us from worry about our families while we were in Africa. Our trip to Tulsa was a whirlwind as we shared our adventures, visited with great friends, and shopped for a year's worth of needed supplies. In consultation with my copy editor in Tulsa, I finished editing Choose Your Character and was able to move it toward publishing. It was not difficult to leave the cold of winter and return to South Africa's summer. We returned to our little Pretoria "flat" for just a few days and recovered from jetlag. Char nursed a cough while we prepared for our next missionary adventure.

BURUNDI

Burundi is a geographically small and mountainous nation. Here is what we reported.

"February Burundi Con-fer-ences
We flew into the capital, Bujum-bura, which rests on a plain at the edge of beautiful Lake Tanganyika bordered to the north by lush green mountains.

I preached at an Anglican Church in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, one Sunday morning.

We were met at the airport by our dear brothers and sisters and the party began. At first we regretted bringing warmer clothes, but as we drove north into the mountains, we realized our memories had served us right. It was still winter in Burundi. Winter? Rather like North American spring or fall, cool and pleasant with occasional rain and cold winds, but hot in the summer.

"It was a busy and productive time in Ngozi and some of its surrounding villages. We were slated to hold nineteen days straight (February 1 – 19) of one-day meetings. This was a departure from our normal routine of conducting three-day, fifteen-session Empower Africa Christian Leadership Conferences. We were glad to have prepared new materials which was our normal practice. We preached in six three-to-four-hour long church services and taught three hours in each of two men's, two women's, and two youth conferences. All were well received by teachable and hungry listeners. Then our five days of conferences with pastors and leaders were especially fruitful. With no Bible schools in the area, these hungry leaders pulled our teachings out of us. These events afforded fruitful ministry times with many, but particularly with the pastors/leaders. We kept two interpreters busy.

"Several times there I felt impressed to speak in the local prison. And then our host was called to the local province governor's office to talk about a prison ministry. Was this a coincidence? I don't think so. Officials offered an opportunity for a special four-hour meeting and I volunteered. The Ngozi Men's Prison houses 5,000

male offenders from the surrounding five provinces plus another section for the women. Our group ministered to four-five hundred men prisoners squeezed into a mid-sized courtyard. One of the church choirs, including their babies and babysitters and several church leaders and pastors went with us. So about 60 of us filled one end of the yard.

"We two white people always caused such a stir everywhere and this prison was no exception. To everyone's delight the Christian prisoners of the "church" in the prison sang and danced. Then the choir which accompanied us did the same thing. I spoke twice, using drama and visuals, challenging the inmates toward self-reliance coupled with faith in God rather than depending on others. Between 50-60 persons (including a woman from the church choir!) responded to the altar call. We mingled and prayed for them, then personally greeted and encouraged many of them. Good reports later came to us from our host pastor.

"Burundi was much like Rwanda to its north—mountainous, green and rainy with fertile soil. Yet both nations were economically impoverished—Burundi much more so than Rwanda. Thousands of people lived at the poverty level, in many cases because of recent wars and genocides. It was heart-rending to see the child beggars on the streets, many of them war orphans. Yet the opportunity for powerful ministry was overwhelming. May God bless them abundantly as they seek to live according to His Word.

"We experienced some trauma during our last hours in Burundi

because the driver would not take us to the airport until we paid him more money. He drove us to the bank, not the airport! We arrived at the airport just 20 minutes (not the recommended two hours) before the plane was scheduled to take off. The Lord and the Kenya Airlines staff graciously helped us quickly through the boarding process and we got on that plane. Thank you for praying for us. We felt the effects of your prayers when close calls like this occurred. May the Lord richly bless you."

As we look back on our fourteen years traveling to the nations of Africa, it is amazing that we only missed one flight—that time in Kenya. There are so many variables over which we have no control, yet the Lord graciously allowed us to get on our scheduled flights. One time we arrived at Johannesburg Airport after the thirty minute trip from Pretoria, only to discover I had not included the packet of my necessary medications. So I left Char at the check-in counter while our neighbor and I drove quickly back to Pretoria. The medicines and I made it back to the airport in time for me to join Char. That was a really close call!

NIGERIA

Our next trip was to Nigeria, beginning with Lagos.

"March and April in Nigeria were great. We met many new friends, conducted eight successful conferences, avoided heat rashes and arrived on schedule at each appointment—including the Lagos airport in preparation for our departure. We arrived back in Pretoria, South Africa, Saturday morning, April 25: exhausted, sleepless, weary and happy in our work.

"Each of the eight conferences we conducted or participated in could be a story of challenge and victory in itself. But the significant blessing was the fine quality of the Christian leaders we met and their willingness to serve with us to promote and plan future Nigerian conferences. They were eager to open more doors. Since we were foreigners, we were dependent on our African hosts. When they did well, the conferences succeeded. Therefore, the quality of the people we worked with was a major factor in the success of our

work. We were so grateful for the good partners God gave us.

"We again began in Jos, Nigeria which is in the central part of the nation. Each conference was a little farther south of the preceding conference so that by week six, we were in Lagos in the southeast. We again conducted three conferences in Lagos— a large, sprawling, populous commercial center. We promised those leaders we would reserve for them two weeks for three conferences toward the end of April for the next three years."

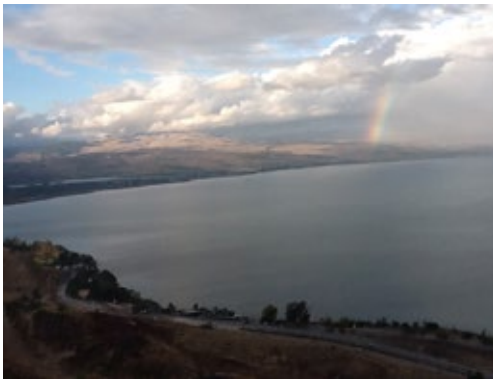
We did not know then how impossible this promise would be, due to civil strife. The United States Department of State cautioned us not to go to Nigeria as we had planned.

Another aspect of our Nigerian trips was that each year the conference itself seemed better. Part of this may have been due to our personal and professional development. Another significant part was the improved preparations made by our hosts.

In one of the places we stayed a rooster liked to roost in the tree just outside our room. Early each morning, he crowed loudly. And I was already tired from conference responsibilities. When our host agreed to move him somewhere else, I was glad. At that same conference we moved from a hot church building out-of-doors to a wide place under a broad shade tree. We learned to pay no attention to the chickens and other animals that walked around in our "classroom."

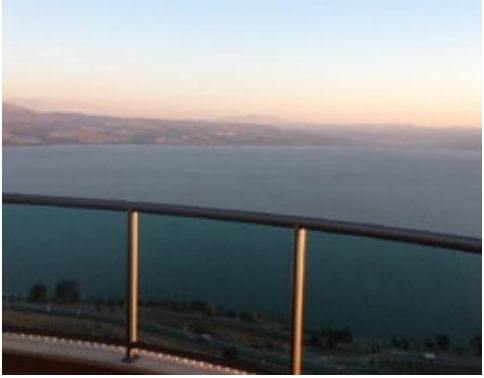
■ ISRAEL

In May we conducted two conferences in South Africa, one in Pietermaritzburg and the second just down the street from our apartment in Pretoria. Then from May 20 - 28 we took a nine-day trip



to Israel to celebrate our fortieth wedding anniversary. The Lord used that anniversary trip to help us know we needed to move our base from South Africa to Israel. This move strategically put us in a place from which we could travel more easily to Europe and Asia as well as remain close to Africa.

We were married on April 27, 1969. Those forty years passed rapid-ly, and it was difficult to imagine ourselves as old as the calendar indicated. We felt that our best years were ahead of us and this proved to be true. We so enjoy continuing to do ministry together.



THE CONGOS

We thanked the Lord for the opportunity to partner with the fine people of Africa. And we looked forward to two months in the DRC beginning the first of June, another fulfilling time of ministry with our friend Pierre Dianda.

We had a unique experience traveling from Kisangani in central Congo to the shore of Lake Albert and back. Neither of us would want to try it again. The arrangement for land transportation took longer than our host, Moses Ngondombo, had expected. It was already late afternoon when we began the long drive. We traveled all night, so in the morning, our driver was sleepy. From my place in the back seat, I saw that he was going to sleep. The car was veering to the right side of the road. I quickly called out to him. He woke up and pulled us back onto the road. But that experience seemed only a foretaste of what was in store for us on that trip.

The good part of the trip was the highly successful conference meetings from 6:00 am until 12:00 noon—all during the main

conference. The host explained that most of the participants were fishermen who worked all night. Afternoons were too hot for meetings, so the best time was from early morning until noon. We were glad we let them decide the meeting times. They knew better than we did. Every morning when we arrived at the venue at 6:00, the church was already filled with people eagerly ready to hear our teachings.

As we began the long drive back to Kisangani, I noticed a clacking sound in one of the rear wheels. I told the driver and he said not to worry about it, but it got worse and louder. Pretty soon the car was wobbling. Even though we stopped to look into the matter the driver insisted that we drive on. We were only minutes into the next leg of the journey when the wheel fell off. Yes! Clear off! Lug bolts serve a useful purpose in keeping wheels on, but our driver did not seem to understand this situation.

The wheel issue could not be resolved until the next day, so we elected to get into an already occupied car and move on rather than stay in that small place until morning. Moses was kindly willing to wait until morning for other transportation. Adding the two of us, the full car was crowded. During that night we stopped so the driver could nap. As I walked on the road, I saw white shapes moving toward us. Sheep—not ghosts! It is one thing to lose a night's sleep, but quite another to be tossed around in a crowded place—squeezed, shaken, pressed and poked all night long. We learned to appreciate beds that allowed us to hold still and sleep. Beds that don't move and shake! We later learned that a rat ran across Moses during the night. 'Til this day, I am grateful we found a ride back to Kisangani, even if it was crowded and bumpy.

Yesterday, seventeen years after that adventure, I contacted Moses to make certain of the date and the name of the lake. I thanked him again for facilitating the conferences. He responded, "It was not just a trip for me, but a school. I learned so many things concerning ministry, missions and Christian life. You are such good models and mentors for my wife and me." People are always watching and learning.

Looking back at that experience with the miracles of preservation, I do not understand how we were able to do it. The best answer to that impossibility is to admit we did not do it. God did it.

Later on that trip, after a conference in Kinshasa, we were totally occupied with signing certificates of attendance and preparing for the closing ceremony. In the midst of all that noise and activity, to my utter surprise the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, "It is okay to offer more." The offer we had made for the purchase of the apartment in Tiberius, Israel had been accepted by the seller, but he changed his mind and asked for more. We did not know what to do, but the Lord did. I would not have thought it was okay to raise the value of our offer, nor would I have thought the Holy Spirit would speak during such a busy time. It is wonderful to allow God to be God, to let Him lead us and do what He wants to do. We enjoyed many years resting in that apartment in Israel between teaching ministry trips.

Sometimes God helps us endure the inconveniences that go with our assignments. This kind of enablement too should be acknowledged as miracles. God did it.

SOUTH AFRICA

"Our gracious and compassionate Lord was good to us in September. He gave us a cancellation of our planned three-week trip to Zimbabwe. This meant that Char had time to recover from serious bronchitis and to prepare many of the foods we had missed. And I had time to recover from severe flu. If we had gone to Zimbabwe as tired and sick servants, we can only imagine

what might have happened. We praised the Lord for his great wisdom and intervention in our well thought-out plans. We urged our encouragers to 'Rejoice with us!'"

During this third August-in-a-row the Lord knew better than we that we needed a break from travel to replenish ourselves. Slow learners that we are, we thanked the many who wrote thoughtful comments about our need to rest. As one of our professor friends wrote, perhaps we needed to learn how to "Do more by doing less." The need for pastoral training and encouragement in Africa was vast and our concern was great. But we did not want to burnout. We wanted to stay faithful to our assignment for the long haul. One tactic of the enemy is to use our spiritual zeal to destroy us. God helped us enjoy life abundant by, among other things, protecting us with times of rest. We thank Him. We reported:

"A family friend from the 1950s graciously provided funds to have *"Choose Your Character"* professionally edited. Because of this valuable gift, many hours were spent working with this professional editor. Twenty-four Bible character studies were polished one chapter at a time. In the years ahead we planned to use these materials. We then, as usual, traveled to our next destination."

GHANA

We spent five-and-a-half weeks in Ghana. One sobering event occurred as I ran and prayed (exercising both body and spirit) early one morning on the sandy shore of the South Atlantic in Ghana. I passed the body of a dead man, face down in the sand. I simply ran past him becauseI could do nothing to help him. On my way past him again, I once more simply ran on by. Later I was told that that area was dangerous and I should not go there. How many times did God protect us when we were not even aware of it? I was glad I did not linger around the scene of the dead body and get myself in trouble. Another memory in Ghana was when the neighbor of our house hostess died. The family played loud music, pounding on cymbals and drums all night long. Many Africans believe that loud noise, music, and drums keep evil spirits away. But I am a light sleeper.

A more pleasant memory was the evening Bible story and singing times with the children of our conference host. It was another time to teach, listen, learn and enjoy fellowship with others.

About this time we changed the names of both our conferences and our website in order to become attractive to a wider audience. This positioned us to respond to invitations for conferences in non-African nations. While the conferences and the website contents remained the same, the name changes broadened our scope. More books and semi-nars were being continually added to the website which became one of the gifts we provided this generation. Free resources for leadership development and empowerment.

Near the end of that trip I wrote:
"For November through December 6 we will have conducted three full conferences in Ghana. We anticipate conducting one more, a shorter conference in a university setting in Tema to the east of Accra. This last conference will be for pastoral candidates and theology students. One of Char's ORU classmates had returned home to Ghana to be our host.

"We learned about the phenomenal doors open on this continent for ministry. For example, the Ghana government had an open policy of opportunity in all public schools, primary, junior high and senior high, for one hour of Christian religious education. Few Christian leaders here seemed to know about this policy. So in most communities the opportunity was lost.

"We seriously considered working with some pastors to take advantage of this grand opportunity. We opened the opportunity for our supporters to come to Ghana for nine months to train chaplains

how to teach Christianity in Ghana's schools. We had contact with a fine person in Accra, the capital of Ghana, who could facilitate this ministry. He would help bring together a group of chaplain candidates and also provide free housing. The only expense would be transportation to and from Ghana as well as meal and personal expenses. We prayed that this opportunity was not missed.

YEAR END REFLECTIONS

"Some of the things we learned this past year: We needed to pace ourselves. We have somewhat slowed down. Added to that, the heat was exhausting and sapped our strength. The travel could be wearing. Poor sleep added further to the fatigue factor. The pace of the conferences was a source of happiness but could make us weary. So we learned to slow down.

"We also learned that all the nations in Africa are not equal in their need for our teachings. Some nations desperately needed what we taught. Others had more frequent visits from conference speakers and missionaries. So in the future we hoped to focus our activities more carefully on the nations and places in which our teachings added the most to effectiveness in evangelism, church planting, and leadership development.

"We also learned that those who invited us to serve with them in conducting conferences had varying opportunities or skills to provide us with effective inter-church, community-wide exposure for conduct-ing a conference. We prayerfully considered ways to improve preparation for our arrival, to brief the local leadership about what our conferences offered and to assist our conference hosts. Our hosts were fine people and we thanked God for them. Nevertheless, to be good stewards of our remaining years we needed to prepare them to maximize the opportunity for every conference.

"Another year of ministry in Africa concluded. An old saying used by swimming children to welcome others states, "Come on in. The water's fine!" Jesus said the fields were white unto harvest. We found that to be true.

Here is a 2009 photo of the two of us with our oldest six grandchildren.

CHAPTER FOUR - 2010

We had a great visit with family and friends in the States during December 2009 and January 2010. It was a happy, profitable, and at times, difficult trip. Char was sick again while in the States, but fairly soon was doing much better. We were happy to be back in Pretoria preparing for our next trip to Nigeria from March 3 until April 22. Our adventures in Africa in 2010 begin with this report after a trip to Nigeria:

NIGERIA

"Greetings from Pretoria, South Africa. We returned last week after nine fruitful and exhausting conferences, as well as other ministry engagements in seven weeks. As usual, we were happy and tired. We began our trip in Jos in central Nigeria's Plateau State. Just down the road from where we ministered, 500+ villagers were murdered. Nigeria was divided north and south along religious lines, predominantly Christian in the south. Jos, located in the middle, was on the fuzzy border between the religious rivalries. The police were notified and pacified, so the killers had freedom at night. While everyone was on alert and under curfew for many nights, we were safe.

"Try running a conference when the curfew starts at 6 pm! When we arrived at another city for ministry, we learned that just three days prior, terrorists had arrived in the area aiming to kill Christians. They had traveled from Benin, the neighboring nation in which they were trained and armed, only to be pacified by the local Imam who stated, "In this area sometimes siblings in one family have different religions or parents and children have different faiths. It would not be right to kill Christians in our area." The Lord used that Imam and miraculously protected us and our hosts from what could have been yet another blood bath.

"Eight of our nine conferences were great successes. We thanked God that the atmosphere of the conferences, preparations, anticipation, as well as the quality and number of participants kept improving each year. We came away with invitations to conduct twelve conferences in Nigeria next year. It will take us several years

to fulfill all of those opportunities, but we are delighted that people feel such need for more training.

"After three-and-a-half years of travel and ministry in Africa, we rejoiced to report that the size and scope of our work was increasing. Our conference schedule for Africa was full through December 2011. God was doing something bigger than we, so we were delighted to be a part of it. In 2012, we expected to begin accepting invitations to conduct conferences in non-African nations. We changed our ministry name to "Leadership Empowerment Conferences" rather than "Empower Africa Christian Leadership Conference" and also changed the location of our base from Pretoria, South Africa, to northern Israel.

"We obtained visa applications and finalized conference schedules so as to be ready for our two-month trip to Republic of Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo in June and July. We were glad to report no major health issues. Char stopped coughing and my heat rash was controllable. We continued to feel strong, able to travel and minister on this great continent."

"He has delivered us from such deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many" (2 Corinthians 1:10, 11).

REPUBLIC OF CONGO (CONGO BRAZZAVILLE)

We spent June in Congo Brazzaville (RC), a rather wild adventure. Though it was difficult, it was successful since we accomplished what we went to do, the training of pastors in remote parts of Africa. We measured the success of each trip in terms of the ministry that happened. As long as our trips were fruitful spiritually we were willing to put up with inconveniences such as those recorded below:

"We arrived earlier than scheduled. We anticipated getting through customs and immigration, then on to dinner with our brothers and

a good night's sleep before we departed early the next morning for the northern part of the country. It was not to be. They (incorrectly) said we lacked "the proper documentation," so we could not leave the airport until nearly noon the next day, spending a total of 17 hours and 15 minutes in the airport.

Two times we briefly catnapped on the luggage conveyor belt between incoming planes. The rest of the time we waited, sitting in uncomfortable chairs or pacing the hall, all the while calling on the Lord for deliverance from our 'prison.' We asked for His blessings on the ministry we came to do.

"Because of this 'unfortunate misunderstanding' (they said), our trip to the north was delayed five days. We eventually rode a bus that held 75 people and travelled all day using over 10 hours of what we had been told would be a 15-hour trip. Because it had rained, the driver announced we would stop for the night and leave at seven in the morning.

"We found a room in a guest house where we thankfully slept soundly. The next morning was overcast with no rain as we departed. But only 25 minutes out the mud on the road was slick. The bus began to slide to one side. The driver ordered everyone off the bus. We walked for about a kilometer, then waited for the bus in a village. When it arrived, we all piled back on as it gingerly moved forward. This happened several times: sliding off the road, off the bus, walking, waiting, and back on the bus again. During one of our waits, it rained hard.

"Long, long story short, the road was under construction by the Chinese and nearly impassable in several places. The rains turned it into a sea of mud. The 15-hour journey became a 52-hour nightmare. We thanked the Lord for the first night of rest, but the second night we sat in the bus for three hours as we waited for help. Then we waited in the bush with nowhere to lie down. Near morning we found a place on cut grass with many chigger bites to show for it. One woman refused to sell us some of the food she had with her, insisting we take it as her gift. We were grateful for the cans of sar-

dines, some bread and bottled water for Sunday brunch.

"We must mention again the wonderful people involved in this ministry. After our harrowing bus trip, arriving without our luggage and relaying our tale to our hostesses, someone ran out and came back with a big bar of soap, toothbrushes, and toothpaste. Another loaned Char an African cloth they used to wrap themselves which kept us until our bags arrived the next day. They insisted on laundering our dirty clothes and scrubbing our bags. Others opened their homes or fed us, while those who travelled with us left their families to guide, intervene and interpret for us. Without such gracious ministry partners our trips could never happen. God's network of godly men and women was such a joy to us. As a team, we always seem to get the job done.

"Char's duffelbag-like suitcase had been battered and torn in several places during our flight to Brazzaville. A bottle of disinfectant enclosed in a heavy protective plastic bag were both broken so a skirt was bleached. In a later flight, her astringent bottle broke open. Her radio earplugs quit working. And nothing would agree with her stomach for several days. When we finally got online, we received an email asking if we were all right. The Lord had led a sister to pray urgently for us. She had felt compelled to pray against intestinal trouble. This was not the first time friends prayed for us with urgency at the leading of the Holy Spirit only to find out later it was just the time we needed prayer.

"As though we had not had enough difficulty, one morning I suffered a severely sprained ankle. Because of the internal bleeding due to my blood thinner, I looked bruised from my toes clear up the back of my calf. Yet within two weeks, I healed and was back to running. We hope to know someday why all the delays and troubles. Through it all, the gracious Holy Spirit kept reminding us that in the face of reversals, kindness and gentleness was our assignment.

"For all of the trouble, it was a profitable though short time of ministry with our brothers and sisters in three northern villages. We

rode a small outboard motorboat on the Sangha River, a tributary of the Congo River. Because of time lost, we taught a full conference only in the first village and conducted only our two-hour marriage enrichment sessions in the other two. We (thankfully) were able to book a flight by air for our return trip to the city of Brazzaville, extra grateful for the safe journey. We next returned to Matadi in the southwest mountains of Congo Brazzaville across the river from Angola. The leaders of the large host church responded with enthusiasm to growing according to the Word of God."

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Most of July we were in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). "We flew to Goma on the eastern border of DRC across from Rwanda to the east. As soon as we arrived, we boarded another motorboat and rode for two-and-a-half hours to Bukavu, in another beautiful mountainous region. Our conference there was well attended and received by many pastors of the city.

"After the conference ended on the third day, we boarded a larger boat and chugged overnight slowly back to Goma. After a safe arrival there we encountered a misunderstanding regarding our coming and purpose. For a while we wondered if we would be received. But the gracious pastor eventually was able to pull together a group of eager learners. We were grateful for the opportunity to influence yet more leaders of the church in Africa. Our next stop was Lubumbashi in the south of DRC where we con-ducted two conferences with great response.

"In our otherwise tame travels in DRC, two of our flights were overbooked. No problem: just strap two children, even two adults, in one seat. Put others in the flight attendants' chairs and off we go. We thanked the Lord for His multitude of angels who bore us up lest we dash our foot against a stone.

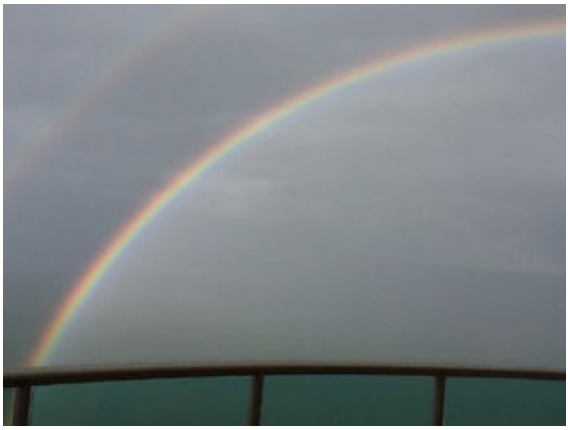
A NECESSARY YET UNEXPECTED INTERMISSION

"Our God is an awesome God who made us able to do our part in training grateful pastors of Africa. As always, we were sincerely grateful for the prayerful support of this work. We began having our rest times between ministry trips in Israel instead of Pretoria in

September. Our ministry trip to Mozambique was cancelled by our host so we could rest, ship personal effects to the Middle East, and work on editing the curriculum and other materials on the website: empoweringchristianleaders.com.

"Four times during our three years and eight months in Africa we had cancellations in August. Each time it became clear that God had something else for us to do during the time we intended to be traveling. This month was no exception. When our three-week trip to Mozambique was canceled, four things happened. 1) We easily shipped our personal effects on their way to Haifa 2) Edits for *Choose Your Character* were finished and sent to the webmaster and publisher, 3) Char received some medical attention. We grew older and needed to adjust to age-related physical realities. So we thanked God we were in a much better position for travel to Israel. And 4) we squeezed in another conference right there in South Africa.

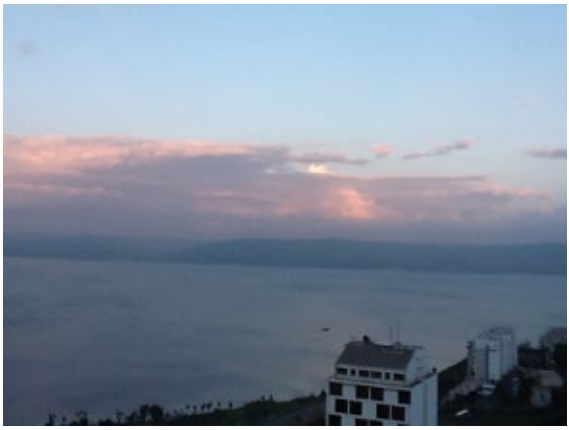
"Our conference schedule was full through December 2011 with commitments to the African nations of Rwanda, Nigeria, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Cameroon. Three of those trips were scheduled for two months each. As mentioned earlier, beginning 2012 we accepted invitations to non-African nations. We laid plans for a two-month series of conferences in three different states in India, hosted by three different Christian ministries.



"In September we began to travel to and from Israel to regroup between conferences. With funds from the sale of our house in Tulsa, we purchased

an apartment. Recuperation between ministry trips was restful and fruitful. We used those times for study and preparation of materials as well as much-needed rest. And we looked forward to learning more about Israel and Galilee."

Before we moved to Israel we did something we had only done one other time—when we visited Victoria Falls at Livingston in Zambia. We toured. We went to the Paul Kruger National Wildlife Park where we stayed two nights in what proved to be truly the wilds of Africa. The monkeys had learned how to steal food from visitors. Even though we slept in a cottage enclosed in a fence that kept out the other wildlife, the monkeys still took the visitors' food.



We saw wildebeests, lions, hippopotami, gazelle, hyenas, rhinoceroses, and many beautiful colorful birds—all in their natural habitat. As we stopped in our drive around the park, a herd of elephants came toward us. They were pretty close by the time I got the car in gear and we moved out of their path. One bull pursued us briefly. That animal could have crushed our car!

We returned to Pretoria and made final preparations for our move to Israel. In Ecclesiastes chapter three Solomon said, "*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, . . . a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away.*" It was time for us to move with the glory cloud to wherever the Lord sent us next.

ISRAEL

Most of us do not often experience two contrasting seasons as rapidly as we did in September 2010. For the first two weeks we sold furniture and household items and said our "goodbyes" in Pretoria, South Africa. During the last two weeks we shopped for replacements in Tiberius, Israel and met new friends.

The last time we had gone through anything similar was early in 2007 when we set up housekeeping in Pretoria, South Africa. For three years and eight months we traveled the nations of sub-Sahara Africa, conducting several hundred conferences. Between ministry trips we rested and regrouped in a rented apartment in Pretoria. Now as our ministry scope changed, we began to rest and regroup between trips in Tiberius, Israel.

Just as it was not accurate to say we "lived" in Pretoria even though we had a flat there, neither would it have been completely true to say we "lived" in Tiberius. Nevertheless, from our new home on the west side of the Sea of Galilee we could see eastward to the Golan Heights, north to Capernaum, beyond where the Jordon river enters the sea, and south to near where it exits in its journey towards the Dead Sea. On a clear day we could see the top of Mount Hermon far in the north. It was beautiful, especially in the winter when covered with snow. The attached photo shows a view from our balcony. Until our apartment was ready in mid-October we rented a smaller apartment as a temporary home.

The strategic reason for setting up housekeeping in Israel was to be closer to other populous areas of the world. We could still travel to and from Africa from Israel. We could also serve Europe and Asia. Our conference schedule was filled with commitments to African nations through December 2011 after which we accepted invitations from Europe and Asia.

Ever since visiting Israel and particularly Tiberius in 2009 Char and I have especially liked the Galilee area. Tiberius is a small city on the west side of the *Kinneret*—the local name for the Sea of Galilee, sometimes called simply 'the lake.' It is a tourist attraction in the

northern part of Israel. The pace there is slower than the busy and highly religious Jerusalem, or the racy spicy modern Tel Aviv. One attraction of Tiberius is the hot spring which attracts the interest and visits of some Israeli and foreign tourists.

Approaching the Kinneret on highway 77 from the west, we came over the crest of the hill at Poriya Junction and caught our first glimpse of the lake. From the top of the hill, the entire valley, including the mountains on the east side, are visible. The scene is breathtakingly beautiful! About three quarters of the way down the hill we reached sea level and proceeded to the lake, 209 meters (685 feet) below sea level.

This photo was taken just before I was put in a forced coma and intubulated.

The Romans selected this location centuries ago as a center for their administrative and military activities over their colonies in the Middle East. Near the Tiberius city center, the large rocks used in Roman fortifications, buildings, and city walls still add a kind of romantic mystique to the city. Jesus based much of His ministry in the northern part of Israel, especially in the Galilee area, but tradition says He never entered Tiberius. The Sea of Galilee is an attractive holy site for Christians from all over the world. Nigeria, for example, has a policy of helping their citizens make trips to holy sites abroad. So, while many Nigerians travel to Mecca, each year an average of 23,000 visit Israel.

MALARIA

Now I must interrupt the story of our travels and conference ministry to tell my malaria story. From July until October a malarial infection had been destroying my organs, but I did not know it. The malaria infection had been in my body about ninety-six days by the time we discovered it.

Israel is not where I contracted malaria. It is where I was healed.

In October 2010 Char and I were enjoying a brief rest period in Israel between our ministry assignments in Africa. We had just completed a most exhausting assignment in the two Congo Republics followed by some time in South Africa and were preparing for our ministry trip from Israel to Rwanda in November and December.

After moving into our new apartment, rest and regrouping in Tiberius, we neared the end of October. We were scheduled to fly all night on October 31 to Rwanda for our next series of leadership conferences. However, for four days I had been plagued by headaches that would not stop as well as muscle aches and discomfort. Usually I could shake off a cold or the flu in about three days, but not this time.

On that fourth day I realized something more serious was causing severe and lingering symptoms. So I considered getting medical attention. Two different nights I had broken out into a high fever, sweating profusely. Also times of extreme cold chills when I could not get warm. I wore winter pajamas under blankets while hugging a hot water bottle.

Char wrote to our medical friend in Tulsa, Oklahoma who raised the possibility that I had malaria. I did not think so, because I regularly prevented malaria by taking Larium, a protection against the disease. Larium worked well for both Char and me during our four years in sub-Sahara Africa.

But this time I had stopped taking Larium just after we departed from the Congos. Normally, after leaving a malaria-infested area,

we both continued to take Larium for several more weeks to deal with the next generation before it became adults. The goal of Larium was to prevent malaria but also to kill the newly hatching eggs.

This photo was taken during the 48 hours I was intubulated in an induced coma. The first thing I heard when I was coming out of the coma was Char's voice saying, "Daddy, Dan in here."

On the fifth day of solid headaches and body pain, the day before we were scheduled to travel to Rwanda, Char and I stopped at the emergency unit of the Baruch Padeh Medical Center in Poriya. This hospital stood at the top of the hill above Tiberius to the south and west. We were on our way to worship that Shabbat (the Sabbath or Saturday). Surely I would get needed medicine and stay with the Rwanda schedule.

But I was moved from the emergency unit to the hospital proper. My struggle for life was beginning as I would remain in that hospital for twelve traumatic yet wonderful days. Before it was over, I would be moved from the Internal Medicine Unit to the Intensive Cardiac Care Unit, Intensive Care Unit, then back to Internal Medicine.

I cannot boast enough about the staff at the Poriya hospital. They are skilled, professional, competent, business-like, caring and helpful. Judging from their attitude and demeanor, they did not perform their duties with a mere sense of obligation nor begrudgingly. Rather, these hospital staff members put their hearts into their work. Uniquely this staff was made up of a wide variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds: Jews, Muslims, and Christians from

Europe, North America, Russia, the Middle East and Africa—all are part of the colorful mosaic. In the hallways, hospital rooms, and patients' dining rooms, Jewish people wore kippah or yarmulke, a small round cap placed on the top of the head. Arabs were dressed with their traditional garb, flowing white robes and distinctive headwear. Other staff dressed as any Westerners today. Everyone worked together in apparent harmony.

This photo was taken after I was out of the coma and able to talk again. God used this man to save my life. He had had previous experience with treating malaria when Israel was draining the acres of swamps in the Huda valley in north Israel from 1951 until 1958.

We noticed similar harmony in the city of Tiberias, a largely Jewish community, and also in nearby Nazareth, a largely Arab city and partly Christian. In both northern Israeli cities the various types of people of different ethnic and religious cultures live and mingle peaceably. In the hospital they worked happily and cooperatively. Patients of whatever ethnicity or religion with divergent economic conditions were all treated equally well.

So different from what I read in the world press! I came away from my twelve-day adventure with the sense that Israel should do better in the world's propaganda wars. Without biased fabrication, the people in the world would have a different impression of Israel's lifestyle, living standard, work ethic and peaceful happiness. Israel is being unfairly misrepresented by many of the world news organizations.

If I were a journalist, I would take up this theme in my writing and

reporting. Char and I both were favorably impressed with the people and lifestyle of Israel—only one of the many lessons God showed me during those 12 days.

During my hospitalization, I experienced four serious medical problems: 1) extensive pneumonia, 2) acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS, "often fatal" according to the internet de-scrip-tion), 3) ventricle tachycardia (with a pulse of 200, also "often fatal"), and 4) ovale malaria (eggs in the liver that cause a later recurrence). We were keenly aware that God spared me from death. Following my release, I grew stronger each day—almost back to normal in two weeks. During my recovery, I wrote an e-book sharing nine lessons learned while in the hospital. We've always felt strongly that life's experiences contain lessons if we are careful to observe them. The lessons learned during my sickness were too valuable to keep to myself. To learn and improve from a difficult experience is an illustration of what I now call *"supersurvival,"* the name I eventually choose for the book. The subtitle is: *"Lessons about Life Learned near Death."* It is on the book page of my website: empoweringchristianleaders.com.

Instead of going to Rwanda for ministry, we moved forward with alternate plans for December and Christmas—this time in Bethlehem.

OH LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

This Christmas season was different. We did not spend it with our family in the States but in Israel, a nation that does not celebrate Christmas. Even where we attend a Messianic congregation of wonderful believers of Yeshua, there is little mention of Christmas. No Christmas trees or ornaments, no celebrations or parties, no Christmas shopping, no carols, not many references to Jesus' birth. One believer told us they will not sing Christmas carols or even talk about Christ's birth at this time of year. Yeshua, after all, was born during Succoth, "in the fall" or "in the spring" when lambs are born. "Besides, Christmas is a pagan holiday," she said.

Wow!

We found ourselves thinking of this as "a naked Christmas," without all the trappings of western Christmas celebrations. Those traditions tend to obscure Jesus, hiding Him from clear view. We learned that without all the external trappings, we could look at just Jesus, His coming to earth, identifying with and living among us. His first coming was only a small part of the grand plan that will culminate in His second coming and events beyond. This led us to re-think Jesus' incarnation.

Since life begins at conception, shouldn't we celebrate the incar-nation and conception of Jesus more than His birth nine months later? Perhaps these wonderful truths are overlooked in the frenzy of festivities. Christmas is not a biblical feast but rather a tradition that comes via the Church of Rome. Our Christmas in Israel forced us to entertain thoughts we had not considered while in the West. That year we celebrated Christmas with a former ORU student and his family, Palestinian Christians, in the little town of Bethlehem. For commercial reasons as well as religious influence Bethlehem has been strongly influenced by the Western Church. We joined the festivities and sang carols to celebrate the birth of our soon coming King, regardless of when it was.

Looking back now (in 2026) on our earlier traveling years of 2007 - 2024, I am amazed that I kept writing, preparing lessons, devel-oping teachings, posting and eventually video recording what I was preparing. Plodding. That is what I did. It was not until 2025 that it became clear what God was preparing to do with the those materi-als .

CHAPTER FIVE - 2011

After December 2010 in Bethlehem, we joined our family in Idaho in the United States. Dan was there from Canada, and we met Joel and Elizabeth's seventh child, Hannah Hope. We made a conscious effort to stay connected with our family even though we were busy in Africa, Europe and Asia. Family responsibilities are high on God's list of priorities and our's too. We began 2011 by visiting our supporting churches in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

In February we rented a U-Haul (a do-it-yourself moving truck) to take our personal effects from Oklahoma to Maryland. The weather was cold and everything was covered with snow. We drove on snow for quite a length of time before we reached dry pavement. In Maryland, we delivered our shipment to an Export Shipping Company. The shipment was scheduled to arrive in Haifa, Israel in mid-March while we were planning to be in South Africa.

STUDYING MODERN HEBREW

After returning to Tiberius in February, I wrote: "Greetings from Tiberius where we appreciate the needed rain and experience of an early spring." Rain is precious in Israel and usually comes only in the winter. During our "rest time" in Israel I studied modern Hebrew full-time at Jordan Valley College, located on the south shore of the Kenneret (Sea of Galilee), twelve kilometers south of Tiberius. The Israeli government has an Office of Absorption which is responsible to assist new immigrants assimilating into the local society, such as providing Hebrew language classes.

Many of my classmates were recent Jewish immigrants mostly from Russian-speaking countries. What a view of the fulfillment of Bible prophesy this provided us as we saw first-hand the inner workings of Israelis being restored to their land! We were glad that the Department of Education allowed me to attend these classes where I learned more than just Hebrew.

While we were doing conferences in South Africa, an Israeli receiving agent took care of moving our household goods through

the port at Haifa and on to Tiberius.

After this, a local mover in Tiberius moved them from the container to our apartment. When we were through with our South African assignment and returned to the apartment in Tiberius, Israel the first part of May, we were able to arrange things in our apartment.

SOUTH AFRICA

We traveled to South Africa for two months of Leadership Empowerment Conferences. It was curious to us that only *after leaving South Africa* did the invitation and opportunity to conduct multiple conferences there materialize. South Africa had not been our main target—only sub-Sahara black Africa. But there were needs for advanced leadership training in South Africa, too. We wanted every one of the eight or nine conferences to be profitable—to help pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders become more effective, successful, fruitful and influential.

While we were in Africa in 2007, we targeted sub-Sahara black Africa north of South Africa. Our reading and research identified that that was the place most in need of training for pastors. But several months after we arrived in Pretoria, we were convinced by a black South African pastor and New Testament scholar that black South Africa also needed our training program. We waited. Then well into our fifth year working in Africa, we completed a two-month series indicating our friend was right. I reported:

"Our two months with eight Leadership Empowerment Confer-

ences conducted in South Africa during March and April were the best yet.

The attendance at each conference was good, and our host for the conferences made books available. Everyone received copies of two books I had written and we were invited back again.

"We usually conducted community-wide, inter-church conferences. But this time we were guests of a well-established church organi-za-tion founded last century by a powerful African Pentecostal evangelist. His work had continued to grow extensively. The chairman of their executive board had read two of my books and then met with me in Pretoria. In 2010 an invitation to serve in his organization was warmly extended, so we happily accepted. We placed this two-month ministry trip on our schedule for March and April of 2012. But in December of 2010, our Nigerian hosts canceled our 2011 March and April itinerary due to political unrest preceding their national elections. When we contacted South Africa, they were happy to receive us a year earlier than planned.

"As March and April passed, each conference was attended by more Christian leaders. This series confirmed our conviction that sincere, prayerful, fervent and intelligent African pastors welcomed the training. The first six conferences consisted of participants whose English proficiency level allowed us to just use English. So the seminar sessions went deeper and spoke more fully to the issues in our materials. The seventh conference was translated into "Xhosa" (pronounced something like "Kosa" with a click) by experienced interpret-

ers—all fine men and a blessing. East London in the Eastern Cape had been the site of this seventh conference and preaching in local churches."

We had a unique experience on that South African trip. Char was invited to speak in one church while I ministered in another. Talking about sexual matters and preaching about that subject is a taboo in Africa. Yet because of the spread of AIDS and the large number of single mothers and orphans it was obvious that they needed teaching about sexual behaviors. But none of them seem to dare broach the subject. Except Char!

She felt impressed to address the matter, obtained permission from her host, and delivered a strong message. After I preached, I went to the church where Char was preaching and sat at the back of the auditorium as she was finishing. She saw me and invited me to the platform to lead in prayer. I had not heard her teaching though I knew what she felt about the subject. I also knew she could be quite candid. When she invited people to come forward for prayer, almost everyone responded so we enjoyed a powerful prayer time together.

However, one of the elders in the congregation evidently had allowed his imagination to get the best of him during her presentation. He envisioned himself having an affair with my wife. An elder! After the service he said to her, "I would like for you to come to our house so I can see how you perform." She was appalled and so was I! We thanked God for the protection He gave us during all the years we served in Africa, Europe and Asia.

After we finished that series of conferences and before we returned to Israel from South Africa, we wrote the following report for our friends: "We have just concluded a wonderful and productive series of conferences in South Africa where we lived for three and a half years. During March and April, we traveled by plane and/or cars to seven different regions conducting three-day, fifteen-hour conferences. We were also engaged in teaching and preaching in many local churches on weekends and a special series on Good Friday. "Thank you for praying for the Meyers on Mondays. It meant more

than words can describe that you held us before the Father's throne in prayer. We believed the fruitfulness of these conferences was due partly to your involvement. Early on the morning of Monday, May 2, we flew to Tel Aviv, arriving on Tuesday morning, May 3. After a period of rest and writing in Tiberius we moved on with further scheduled trips."

The last day of July in Tiberius I reported: "During our weeks in Israel resting from our two-month series of conferences in South Africa Char settled things in our apartment. We enjoyed attending a local Messianic congregation where we continued to learn so much about our Christian faith from a Jewish perspective. God continued to bless us as we moved on.

■ RWANDA

"On August 2, we left for Rwanda. We praised the Lord that I had recovered from malaria, so we were able to do this. We scheduled eight weeks of Leadership Empowerment Conferences.

"This was our third trip to Rwanda since moving to Africa. Building on the relationships established in the first two trips, we antic-ipated a successful series of conferences. In two communities we conducted two conferences each. In addition to our basic Leadership Development Conference schedule we conducted a Character Development Conference.

An interesting bit of drama occurred with our finances. For some months, an anonymous donor made generous contributions that arrived in our bank account just when we needed them. We had no way to directly thank him or her. So to our report we added our expression of gratitude to that person as well as toward those who systematically contributed to our work. We also praised God for His provision.

Our report continued, "Partnership with us in the work was much appreciated. May the Lord bless all who joined us in prayer and provision so that the Church in Africa was strengthened. Her leaders became empowered to minister rich treasures from the depths

of the Word of God.

"When you pray for the Meyers on Mondays please help us to ask the Father for strength, protection, favor and open hearts in the conference participants. We flew all night and arrived in Kigali, Rwanda about noon on August 3. We took great encouragement from comments that assured us of prayers. God bless you." Midway through our time in Rwanda I wrote:

"Greetings from Kigali in Rwanda. We enjoyed a whirlwind month of August: Ron taught eight times in a series of meetings emphasizing prayer and fasting (in Kigali), Char taught four sessions in a Christian Women's group, then we both conducted two Leadership Empowerment Conferences (in Buhinga and Kamembe on the border with the Congo). We presented two Marriage and Family Seminars (in Gatadi and Bugarama on the Burundi border). The last four places in which we ministered were in the Southwest part of Rwanda. That constituted a full month for us.

"After another month in Rwanda we participated in a youth convention, conducted three more Leadership Empowerment Conferences, a Character Development Conference and lectured at Rwanda Institute of Evangelical Theology (RIET). RIET was a college-level interdenominational pastor training educational institution. Char taught a ten-hour unit of Philosophy and the Christian Faith while I taught a unit on Christian Leadership Development. "Traveling was not without its physical challenges—more than usual on this trip. But the feedback from the participants was re-warding. They were grateful for the quality of our program and its applicability to the contemporary ministry circumstances in which these dear pastors served. One audience sat spell bound as Char explained Christian moral standards for biblical sexual behavior. They had never heard basic teachings about sexual restrictions and behaviors.

"In another meeting the participants reflected a mind-set carried over from colonial days when white missionaries brought money with them to do ministry. They complained that we did not bring

enough money. After three days of conference instruction, they understood how dependency weakened them while self-reliance made them stronger. The conference concluded with requests for more teachings so they would not expect others to do what they could do for themselves. We thanked God that our brothers and sisters were learning that God, not the missionary, was their Source.

"On Monday, August 29, we traveled by bus back to Kigali for our next series of conferences. We both had stomach problems, not to mention the chigger and mosquito bites that left us polka-dotted. More than once we felt the strength God gave in answer to prayers. Thank you."

CONFRONTING DEPENDENCY

Back in Tiberius we sent another report about our two months in Rwanda: "We have just returned to Tiberius after two months in Rwanda. We traveled to within sight of Burundi in the south, next to and across the lake from the Congo in the west and a few kilometers from Uganda in the north. We presented eight different conferences, a special series and a convention. During three Leadership Empowerment Conferences, each began with the host and participants saying they needed more money. After the teachings and conferences ended, the participants still attended even without being given money for food and transportation. They invited us to return.

"In this part of Africa, 'dependency' was a serious problem. For a century and a half white missionaries from Europe and North America shared the Gospel. With good intentions, they built churches, schools, and hospitals with Western money. So they contributed to the impression that Africans could not expand the Church themselves but needed financial resources from outside. The Rwandan government was up to 70% self-reliant further reducing dependency on foreign aid. Yet the Church was far behind.

"Some of our leadership conference materials included lessons on self-reliance. For example, in Acts Peter and John did not give the lame man what he asked for. If they had, where would he be again the next day? Still at the gate, still begging. So, I taught how Peter

and John told the lame man, *"Silver and gold I do not have but what I have I give to you, in Jesus' name rise and walk"* (Acts 3:6). It was time for the African Church to walk, to become self-reliant.

"My four teaching points for pastors and church leaders were: "One, we should not let people in our churches manipulate us by their many requests. That hinders us from our important work of prayer, Bible study and sermon preparation. We must teach them to rely on God. Others should not require us to do for them what they should do for themselves. We should not expect others to do for us what we can do for ourselves. Self-reliance, as opposed to dependency, is a sign of maturity.

"Two, in what way am I like the lame man, asking God for a temporary fix (silver and gold) when God wants to give me a permanent solution to a deeper need (strong feet and ankles)?

"Three, Christian leaders know better what people need than the people know. If someone complains that he needs a new job, we pastors should tell him to get to work on time and work hard all day until closing time. Maybe they will become eligible for a promotion! This is better than getting a new job if they don't learn to work hard and honestly. Give people the instruction they really need, not what they think they need.

"Four, in the history of missions work in Africa, well-intended but misguided missionaries taught the church that it could depend on the foreigner's silver and gold. The church in Africa was weak and could not provide for itself. This policy weakens the church in Africa and keeps it from developing the muscle it could and should have. So we teach, "Church of Africa, rise and walk."

"The favorable response to these teachings (along with the many other leadership empowering concepts) was phenomenal—especially during this time in Rwanda. In all our participation with the Rwandans they were eventually satisfied with the financial help we gave, even though it was only a partial contribution and much less than they were accustomed to receiving. But most significantly,

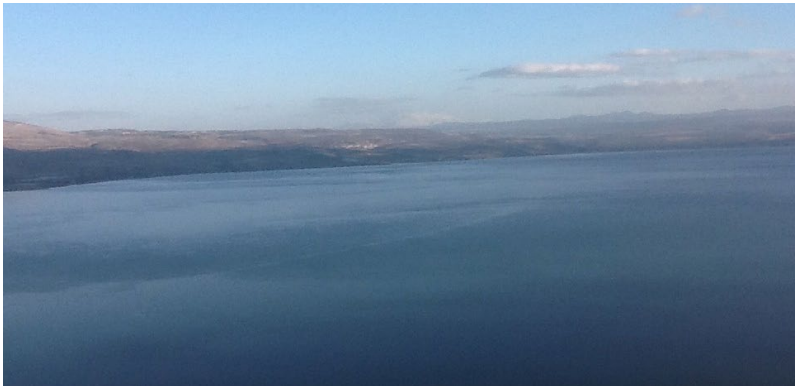
ob-serving their favorable response to our teaching about self-reliance, we decreased the amount we gave them. They gladly accepted our invitation to attend the second and third days without any financial support from us!

We gave them the opportunity to decide that the teaching was worthwhile even if they would not be given transportation money and a free meal. The attendance did not go down. Participants attended because they valued the teaching, not the funds. We fully appreciated the greatness of these miracles.

A QUICK "TURN AROUND" IN ISRAEL

"During our weeks in Tiberius I completed a final edit of the manuscript for *Choose Your Character, 25 Bible Characters who Inspire Integrity*, hoping for publication/printing within a few months. My draft of *Super-Survival, Lessons about Life learned near Death* was sent to the publisher for type-setting and cover artwork. We looked forward to seeing these books published for audiences in both the United States and Africa. It was our pleasure to give copies of my books to our hosts.

"We usually identified ourselves as "retired educators," but the



excitement we felt and the appreciation conference participants expressed wherever we traveled, made us feel this stage of our careers was the best one yet. The "convergence" stage in leadership emergence theory is the productive years after people have gained

meaningful life experience—before they become too aged and have to stop working.

"We fit comfortably into our new cycle. We arrived in Tiberius exhausted after a series of conferences somewhere in Africa. Gradually we felt ourselves becoming rejuvenated and ready for the next assignment. This culminated in a sense of expectation and anticipation to get back to work. Meanwhile, during our several weeks of rest in Israel, our appreciation for the land of Israel, its people and God's plan for them increased. We appreciated prayers for us and, as the Scriptures say, for the peace of Jerusalem.

CHAD AND CAMEROON

"On October 25 we drove from Tiberius to Tel Aviv to board an Ethiopian Airlines flight back to Africa—this time to Chad and Cameroon. This trip had been in the planning stages for about two years, since we learned of the great need for pastors' training in N'Djamena and other areas of Chad. Cameroon is just south of Chad so we decided to visit both nations in one trip, conducting conferences first in Chad then Cameroon. We wrote to our praying friends requesting prayer for a (1) strong move of the Spirit of God, (2) open and teachable hearts in the pastors and (3) anointing, safety and strength for the two of us.

"We returned to Tiberius from a five-week trip to Chad and Cameroon. We completed two conferences in N'Djamena, the capitol of Chad, then flew to Douala, the economic capitol and major port city of Cameroon, for three more conferences. We also did a conference in Muyuka, a community about an hour and a half south of Douala in the South-West Region.

"As we drove back to Douala, a miracle of protection occurred that reminded me of God's attention to detail and His ability to care for His workers. We had tire trouble on the road and jacked the car up. Then I noticed the jack was not well centered on the stone we had placed under it to get the vehicle high enough to change the wheel. We made sure none of our body parts were under the car and were careful not to bump the car so the jack would not slip off of the stone. We succeeded. Isaiah 26:12 was a reminder, *"All that we have*

accomplished, you have done for us." Thank you, Lord, for your protection.

"This trip and its series of conferences completed our fifth year of travels and ministry in sub-Sahara Africa. As we prepared for our annual trip to the US to visit family and friends, we came away from Africa with three strong impressions:

"One: the great need for the kind of work we were doing. We met dedicated, intelligent, prayerful, sincere pastors who were eager to learn. We were invited to return again and again as the training we offered appeared to be just what the pastors needed. This was repeatedly affirmed and the need was far greater than we could meet. It was a great privilege to serve these brothers and sisters.

"Two: the gratitude we felt toward the churches and individuals who stood with us in prayer and financial support. We were able to make those trips because of them. Many times we sensed the support of their prayers, some every Monday or in some other routine. Others were burdened for us at specific times. When we compared the times they prayed with the time of special need for prayer support we realized the Lord was directing His army of intercessors. Thank you ever so much.

"Three: we realized we needed to vary and increase our conference delivery system(s). The need for what we taught surpassed our ability to physically move from place to place to present conferences in person. We needed to record the conference for distribution and translation. Coupled with this was an increasing awareness that we would not always be physically able to do this work. We were both strong and healthy at the time and thanked God for the opportunity to respond to the invitations to help empower and educate Christian leaders in Africa. We would joyfully continue this work as long as we were able. But we eventually would have to decrease travels and increase recording, translating and writing.

"An outstanding aspect of our trip to Chad and Cameroon was the fine hosts with whom we worked. We established internet commu-

nication relationships with six more leaders of the finest kind. We looked forward to continuing to provide resources as well as coaching and encouraging these men. We thanked God for His blessings on Leadership Empowerment Conferences and our website, empoweringchristianleaders.com.

We later learned that enemies of the Gospel in N'Djamena, Chad, locked our host pastor Oliver's dear wife, Lucy, and two of their four children in their home and set it on fire. The three of them died. Lucy's family had originally not fully approved of her marry-ing Oliver, claiming he would not be able to support her well. When Lucy and two of their children were burned to death, they attacked Pastor Oliver verbally with vicious and unkind accusations. As we contemplated the suffering and difficulties our African brothers and sister endured, we were truly moved to pray for them. To this day Pastor Oliver and I exchange messages of affirmation, encouragement and appreciation. God has now given him a new partner named Nathalie. God is good.

"On this trip we met a Chadian-American who had worked hard to educate himself and get to the States. He became a citizen, had grown in his walk with the Lord and developed his ministry skills. While he was to be congratulated for the personal progress, he was the kind of man Africa needed. So I mentioned that after his struggle to improve himself, it would be psychologically and perhaps physically difficult for him to abandon his improved living standard in the United States and return to Africa. But if the Lord led him, that was what he should do. After all, he already knew the languages and culture and had no trouble with its food or climate.
"His response was, "Yes, I have heard that you are making a big sacrifice to be here."

"That was not my point, so I said, "It is no sacrifice. It is a privilege." Later I reflected to Char that a sacrifice is usually thought of as giving up something considered more valuable for the sake of something esteemed less valuable. But if what we were doing in Africa was more valuable to us than living in the States, this was no sacrifice. We were simply abandoning something of less value for

something else we viewed as of greater worth."

I cannot help but have a burdened heart when people say, "I pray God never calls me to Africa." As we look back now, we feel those were very good years. Perhaps not our best years, because God is not finished. We may have our best years yet ahead of us. Nevertheless, those were good years. It depends on how you describe "good" and what is really important.

CHAPTER SIX - 2012

It is fun to walk through open doors, but no fun to be shut out by closed ones. Yet closed doors as well as open ones can be directives from the Lord. Another missionary experienced this in his travels. When Paul and his company tried to go to the province of Asia (Acts 16) they were *"kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching."* And when they attempted to enter Bithynia, *"the spirit of Jesus would not allow them."* Then, while in Troas, Paul had a vision of *"a man of Macedonia standing and begging him 'come over to Macedonia and help us.'"*

CLOSED AND OPEN DOORS

Many of us have been disappointed by closed doors. So this may seem strange, but we actually began praying for closed doors so we would be ready for God's open doors. Perhaps He had plans about which we did not know. This prayer would be answered in a miraculous combination of a closed door coupled with a surprise open door.

Several times in Africa, we had cancelations—unexpected closed doors. As we looked back on those experiences we saw how the Lord used each instance to position us to do something else we did not realize we needed to do. God knew best.

In January as we prepared to travel to Nigeria, we could not escape the repeated warnings of danger, terrorism, bombings, and the targeted killing of missionaries and pastors. One of the most difficult decisions we have ever made was to cancel the trip we had been planning for two years. Except for the time I had malaria and we could not travel to Rwanda, we had never canceled a trip. We never wanted to let anyone down. If we promised to conduct a series of conferences, we would do everything possible to be there.

We wanted to go to Nigeria. But when I called the United States Department of State, they strongly advised us not to go due to political unrest and violence. As we considered how some missionaries are needlessly martyred and we would never send

anyone else under those conditions, we reluctantly informed our hosts that we could not come. Then we reported to our friends:

"Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters serving the Lord in Nigeria. It was difficult for us to obey what we felt was the voice of the Lord through our counselors at the United States State Department. We canceled our anticipated trip to Nigeria, scheduled for March and April. Faithful men and women of God serve the Lord in Nigeria, laboring under severe handicaps and imminent dangers. *"Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed . . ."* Psalms 2:1-2. Especially those who served in the cities of Jos and Abuja and their surrounding areas near the Islamic northern half of Nigeria, needed our prayers. Through the tears and agony of spirit surrounding our disappointment we sought the Lord. He had a surprise for us.

"We had known for some months that we needed to develop an-other delivery system for our conferences. We offered face-to-face presentations again and again and materials were available on our website. But we realized we were not going to reach every city in Africa with this training. We heard repeatedly that our message was just what Africa needed. So what to do? We prayed about recording our conferences so more could receive them. The previous month, the Lord had miraculously provided unexpected funds that allowed us to finance the recordings. Just a month earlier had we experienced the following surprise.

"At dinner in a restaurant our host's wife leaned forward and asked, "Ron, what is your next project?" I told her and her husband about several of our visions. He seemed most interested in the idea of recording our conference for distribution by CDs and DVDs. After reviewing how to finance a pilot project, he said he would pray about it. Two days later, early in the morning, I received a phone call. He told me that he and his wife would be donating a certain (to us a large) amount of money. So we had the funds we needed to record the conferences. We knew they would not replace our conferences. But they did provide an alternate delivery system.

"Back in Israel we were introduced to a believer who had a professional recording studio in his home and was willing to assist us. We traveled each day to Kiryat Tivon to record. After making these recordings, we put CDs in the hands of conference participants. This enabled them not only to review the materials, but also to share them with others.

Paul's open door took him to Macedonia and the gospel entered Europe—a huge step. We hoped our recordings would enable us to be a greater blessing to the body of believers in the world, not just Africa. Five years earlier we would not have been prepared for this. But after traveling for five years in twenty countries of sub-Sahara Africa, we had fine-tuned our message and could present it more confidently and succinctly.

Using the funds that the Lord provided, we completed the recordings. The Lord put us in contact with a dedicated and skillful professional sound recorder who operated his own home studio. We also met a professional manufacturer capable of mass producing solar-powered digital audio players at a cost of $20 per player. We arranged for the digital players to be produced in Israel."

MINISTRY UPDATE: MARCH 2012

Dear Friends,
Here is another update on some of the amazing things the Lord continues to do among and with us. We are so blessed to be in His Kingdom's service for such a time as this.

› We had to cancel our trip to Nigeria for March and April due to

random terrorists attacks on Christians. Our Nigerian friends told us how the Lord protected them in spite of the fact that the enemy of the Church is still intent on persecuting Christians. The conference in Jos in which we were to be involved concluded successfully. We thank God for these answers to prayer. While we were sorry that we could not be with our Nigerian brothers and sisters, we still saw the hand of the Lord protecting them.

› Meanwhile, God worked through us in our audio record-ing ses-sions. This work dominated our lives for weeks. We produced a set of 104 digital audio recordings of all our confer-ence materi-als and the books I wrote. As soon as all the recordings were made and the editing process was over these books would be presented three ways.

› They will be available 1) on a new Audio Recordings page added to our Leader-ship Em-powerment Resources web-site (lere-sourc-es.com), as DVDs and CDs, and on solar battery-powered digital audio players. The most unique of these three delivery systems is the audio player. It will be convenient for those who prefer to listen to audio presentations. They

will also be useful to the blind, those who have no electricity and those who cannot or do not like to read. Theoretically, even if a world-wide catastrophe occurred and electricity and/or the internet were no longer available, these solar-powered players would continue to inform and empower Christian leaders for years to come.

› Many of these materials are already available in manuscript form on the website or in my books (also on the book page of the website). The books can be purchased through Amazon.com or Soar With Eagles (http://www.soarhigher.com/bookstore.htm) Here is the list of what we recorded:

› LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE: 15 SESSIONS
› CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE: 27 SESSIONS
› LESSONS FOR LEADERS FROM DAVID: 14 SESSIONS
› UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WAYS: 9 SESSIONS
› HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CHRISTIANS: 17 CHAPTERS
› RISE TO SEEK HIM: 14 CHAPTERS
› SUPERSURVIVAL: 9 CHAPTERS

The total sessions and chapters were104. Then we began to look forward to being in Rwanda and eastern Congo during May and June. Need-less to say, we were not bored."

In two and a half months we completed the recording of 104 sessions, lessons, and chapters planned for our Leadership Development Resource digi-tal audio proj-ect. Then we advanced to the next stage, the editing process.

Sasha Fishman
studio engineer/technician

This process required the most time, perhaps three or four times the amount of hours as the other steps. While we were on the road in May and June, we maintained internet contact with the technician in Israel. So we moved forward with the editing even as we were in Africa.

By the end of the year these recordings were available via the website, on CDs, and on the hand-sized solar-powered digital audio players. We were so grateful for your interest in and prayers for this major project.

LIFE IN ISRAEL

We were often asked what was it like to live in Israel? So we answered as the following:

"We worshipped with Messianic believers while in Israel and usually took the day off. If we worked on Shabbat, we took time off Friday, the day of preparation, to rest. I rose early, ran and lifted weights— spending my regular hours with the Lord early in the day. Char was better at praying on-the-go. She extensively studied the Bible alone and also attended a Beth Moore recorded Bible study each week with her Christian lady friends. Char and I prayed together each night. When we traveled in Africa, we took a day off each week, usually not on Sundays.

"We learned about how much of Western Christianity was influenced by pagan traditions such as Easter, the bunny habits, Easter eggs, Christmas, Santa Clause, etc. None of that is in the Bible. We

learned plenty from the genuine faith, trust and patience of our African hosts. It was an honor to serve with them.

"As any servants of the Lord, we tried to hear from God and do what He said. In both of those surprises we had no idea God would change our plans. We continued to rejoice in the opportunities to work with the fine brothers and sisters of Africa. Rejoice with us!"

Friends sent us this link for a map of Africa that visually demonstrated its size relative to other significant nations. It details the enormity of the task and opportunities before us and anyone else on whom the Lord moved to serve in Africa.

RWANDA

Prior to leaving for Rwanda, we wrote:

"At 1:10 am on April 30 we departed from Ben Gurion Airport bound for Rwanda. We would hold eight conferences in two months. Since the eastern boundary of The Democratic Republic of the Congo bordered with Rwanda, we were invited to Goma in the Congo for two of those conferences. The other six would be in Ruhengeri (in the North), Kigali (in the capital), and Butare (in the south central)."

After we arrived and completed some of our schedule, we wrote: "Greetings from Kebuyi, Rwanda. As of the end of May we were halfway through our series of scheduled Leadership Empowerment Conferences. We completed five conferences, one in each of the following communities: Kigali, Ruhengeri, Kesengi, Butari, and the Kebuyi area. We were in the process of another conference in Kebuyi, this time in the city itself.

"Two of those conferences had a miraculous aspect that, thankfully, did not need to happen often. We arrived for the conference only to learn that no preparations had been made. In one case, we were able to quickly contact local pastors and gather a group. In the other, we attended a pastors' prayer meeting, presented our program, and were invited to present the full 15 hours to hungry pastors. The Lord made our work possible. We were walking on the water. Our energy levels remained normal and the expressions of gratitude continued to encourage us.

"On other trips in years gone by, we experienced a few times when no preparations had been made. But never two times in a row finding our hosts so ill-informed and unprepared. In spite of our handicaps, God enabled us to conduct successful conferences. The only remedy for this problem we could think of was to send a front man to advise and guide those conference hosts. This would be an added expense. Proverbs 18:16 says, *"A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great."* We would like to believe that our God-given teaching gifts are ushering us into the presence of

the great—making it possible for us to make a contribution to the development and empowerment of the wonderful servants of God who minister in Africa. "Meanwhile, an interesting development arose for our next trip to Rwanda—perhaps God's solution to problem—We received two invitations for October/November 2013 to work at length with two well-organized groups.

"One was a large indigenous Pentecostal church organization in Rwanda. They wanted us to come for six weeks and six conferences to train some of their 2,500 pastors. Other trips would be planned in years to come.

"The other was World Vision which would host World Vision staff retreats for us for three weeks. We discussed our program with both of these groups and felt honored to work with these mature organizations in training their personnel.

"One of the unique contributions we made this trip was that each of us taught fifteen hours during one week at the Rwanda Institute of Evangelical Theology (RIET). The government of Rwanda stressed academic preparedness for pastors. This means that Rwandan pastors were doubly motivated to advance their educational preparedness for effective ministry. RIET was part of the response by evangelical Rwandan Churches to address this need. This time Char taught fifteen hours of Historical Books while I taught the same number of hours of Bible Archeology. Both were subjects we had taught years ago in Korea.

"Here is a summary of May and June:

› Three fifteen-hour conferences in Kigali, one in Ruhengeri, one in Gisignye, one in Butari, two in the Kibuye area
› Five evenings of services, where we taught one-hour sessions from my Character Studies each evening
› A two-hour meeting with university students
› A presentation to young athletes where I shared for one hour then ran with the participants for another hour
› A two-hour presentation to women by Char
› Fifteen hours of Historical Books and fifteen hours of Bible Archeology at RIET

› Three presentations to World Vision staff members in Kigali
› Other miscellaneous speaking engagements each weekend
› Our anticipated trip for one week to the Congo (DRC) to train pastors in Goma was canceled due to skirmishes nearby. We hoped to return there at a later time.

"Due to the above cancelation I was able to edit 15 hours of digital audio recordings as we moved toward producing the one hundred four sessions for dissemination on the internet, DVDs, and solar-powered audio digital players. This positioned us to make further progress on this massive project after we arrived back in Tiberias.

"Thank you again for praying for us during our nine weeks in Rwanda. We felt tired at times, but in many experiences we felt a strong undergirding in the Spirit because of your prayers. We hoped your habit of prayer for the Meyers on Mondays became well-established as your daily routine."

Looking back on those weeks in Rwanda, I remembered walking through the streets of Kigali to an internet cafe, settling in and working for a number of hours each day. Editing recordings was a labor-intensive, tiring work, but it made the difference between something professional and easy to listen to or sounding sloppy and difficult.

WORK AND HEBREW STUDIES IN ISRAEL

We returned to Israel the last day of June. Unlike other times when we needed to rest some number of days before we felt like doing anything productive, this time we hit the road running. Looking back on July we saw significant progress in several departments.

I plunged into editing the audio teachings for the Leadership Empowerment Resources website. These materials were mass produced in the form of solar-powered digital audio players and distributed on several of our subsequent trips. We thanked God for Sasha, our professional audio recordist, for his fine equipment and sound-related technical skills. He had a heart for this project, and it was great to work with him. The next step was to take the recordings to

the manufacturer of the players.

Renewing my study of modern Hebrew, I practiced conversations with a couple of young men from the congregation where we worshipped. As in learning Korean at ages 29 - 42, then Chinese at 47 - 52, now at age 68 I still learned through conversation partners who were willing to correct me. My progress was slow.

Char continued to be active in Bible studies, in both personal research and group studies, communication, and counseling via Facebook and email. She had interesting and valuable opportunities with this informal distance education. At times she worked with both her computer and her iPad going full-speed. She also concoct-ed interesting meals as she relished the great varieties of fruit and veggies available.

We attended a Messianic Believers House Church in those earlier years in Israel. One time the two of us teamed up in ministry in a Shabbat meeting. Char led worship, including a couple of choruses in Hebrew. Since that Shabbat was the ninth of Av, a time of commemorating several calamities in Jewish history, I shared on the value of suffering from my teaching on Job. The teaching itself was encouraging, but it seemed to have even greater application that day. We were glad we could participate with this group whenever home in Israel.

Just before going to India I shared: "As of the end of August, 83 of the 104 audio recordings of our teachings were edited and ready for publication. We intended to finish editing the last 21 sessions before we departed for India. While we were gone, Sasha Fishman, our recordist, worked directly with Ed Zagofski, the manager at Megavoice who oversaw the production of large quantities of solar battery-powered digital audio players. Sasha also sent all 104 recordings to Harley Ficke, our web-site manager, who uploaded them onto a newly formed audio/video page. These were available to website visitors at no cost, downloaded to i-pods, etc. or listened to directly from the website. It took months of tedious work to re-

cord and edit these teachings, but the long-lasting and far-reaching results continued for years. The solar-powered audio players taught and equipped Christian leaders on every continent.

"We applied for residence visas to Israel and were blessed to find a fine agency that facilitated this. Such a visa permitted greater flexibility in our travel plans than had been possible the previous two years just using tourists visas. The residence visa application process normally took a year and required that we remain outside Israel during the time of application. This meant we must either postpone prior commitments to Myanmar, Russia and Rwanda made for 2013 or keep those commitments by traveling to those nations from somewhere else other than Israel. God surely had something in mind.

"We anticipated what God planned for the months and year ahead as we watched Him continue to do *"immeasurably more than all we asked or imagined"* (Ephesians 3:20).

"We continued to be assured that our working toward getting more permanent visas for Israel was the Lord's plan. We sensed His assurances along the way and His help as we prepared to be gone for over a year to fulfill the visa requirements. We anticipated the Lord's agenda for us while in the US in 2013. However, obtaining a residence visa for Israel while in the States went much faster than expected so we were able to return to Israel early in 2013 and continued our travels and conference schedule from there.

INDIA

Our hosts in India were successful Christian leaders we had known at ORU. Soon after our arrival in India I reported: "We learned plenty from the genuine faith, trust and patience of our African and now Indian hosts. It was an honor to serve with them. We were not frustrated, though I admit I did not like the roosters crowing in the morning at 4:30, and the heat was difficult at times.

"During our series of conferences we met some of the finest people we could ever hope to know here on earth. It was a privilege to work with them. Both of our marvelous Kerala hosts and their

teams treated us royally, facilitating great opportunities to minister and making us comfortable in spite of the heat.
"During our first 25 days, we presented the following:

› four three-day leadership conferences
› one sermon in a Sunday church service
› six one-hour sessions for a two-day Bible college deeper life emphasis
› one one-hour presentation in another Bible college
› one two-hour Marriage Enrichment Seminar in a local church
› one Bible college three-hour mini-conference

"We found some slight differences between the needs of the Indian and African pastors. However, the basic appreciation that we observed so prevalent in Africa and the desire to continue adult education and sharpen ministry skills was in India too.

"The weather in Kerala State in the south was quite hot. To our happy surprise, however, the climate in Bangalore in central India was cooler. Having suffered from heat and heat rash in past trips to India, we came armed with antibiotic soaps, creams and powders to deal with the related discomforts. But the Lord brought us to this cool place. We did not think this a small matter and were grateful.

"The food seemed hotter, more spicy, than in Korea or Africa or in some regions in China where we have served. But we are remembered some of the tricks learned in the past. Instead of drinking water to put out the fire, we ate more rice or enjoyed the soothing effects of "curds," a liquid yogurt, as long as it was plain and not also spiced.

"We sensed the presence, protection, and blessing of the Lord as we moved from place to place. Thank you for your prayers for us in this regard. Scripture says, *"A person's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand their own way?"* (Proverbs 20:24) Here is an example:

"Through the invitation of a friend of a friend, we stayed for six days in the home of a generous couple. When we contacted our next Sunday service host regarding how to get from where we

were to their part of the sprawling metro Bangalore area and its busy streets Bangalore to their church, we were informed that it was just a two-minute walk!

"While in Bangalore (South Central India) we conducted more fifteen-hour Leadership Empowerment Conferences plus miscellaneous speaking engagements to churches and student groups. Then we flew to Chennai (formerly Madras in Tamil Nada State in Southeast India) and took the train to the north part of Andhra Pradesh. "In Andhra Pradesh we conducted one-day, five-hour conferences every day. Each day we moved to the next district to be ready for the following day's conference. We selected the best five hours of our fifteen-hour program and presented it again and again daily.

We continued this process throughout our three weeks in Andhra Pradesh. At the end of this exhausting and fulfilling marathon we spent a day in Chennai, resting and reading on the internet. Then we left for Tel Aviv, Frankfurt, Germany, and back to the United States."

We concluded our first six years of conducting Leadership Empowerment Conferences in December 2012. We intended to continue this work as long as the Lord gave us strength and health.

CHAPTER SEVEN - 2013

As we neared the end of January we thanked God that we received our new visa status much more quickly than expected. So we were able to return to Israel and with our trip to Botswana, continue working in and out of Israel. In subsequent years we used residence (not tourists) visas which allowed more freedom in entry and exit.

This photo was taken in January, 2013 with the Pacific Ocean in the background as we were on our way to the Israeli consulate in San Francisco to apply for our residence visas.

A GREAT START IN 2013

Two eye surgeries removed Char's cataracts and stigmatism. Then she had reading sight in one eye and distance sight in the other. I worried that after her operations, when she saw more clearly what I really looked like, she might re-think her commitment to stay with this aged man. Meanwhile, surgery removed skin cancer from my face. We were glad to get these issues cared for in the States.

Beginning with the Botswana trip, we made Leadership Empowerment Digital Audio Players available to conference participants. The website also received a new multimedia page.

Char remained in Israel, recouping from her eye surgeries. This experience gave us new meaning to being the apple of His eye. While many answers to prayer happened we also had struggles and setbacks along the way. God's grace was abundant as we pushed forward. He truly was our shield and set the agenda. Back in Israel we moved forward with our scheduled events.

BOTSWANA A SECOND TIME

Back in January, 2007, before Char joined me, I had traveled to Swaziland, Botswana and Democratic Republic of the Congo. During that time the Indigenous Botswana Pentecostal organization that hosted me in Botswana invited me back several times. We together accepted one of those invitations, but put the other one on hold for four years. Now, in 2013, I accepted that second multifaceted invitation and participated in a national convention, met with the host organization's executive leadership team, advised a Bible College Task Force, and conducted four Leadership Empowerment Conferences.

I traveled alone to Botswana, made twenty-eight presentations, and participated in several meetings with the leadership of the host organization. In three significant ways the Botswana ministry trip demonstrated God's ability to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine. The hospitality and personal treatment I received was fantastic. The quality of the Christian leaders met was excellent. And the response and appreciation for the teachings was extraordinary.

The only thing that was a bit difficult was that Char was not with me. We did chat daily on Skype which was a great blessing. The quality of the hospitality and provision was good, but there was a down-side. One evening as I entered the hotel a man asked me if I thought the woman with him was pretty. I looked at her and politely said, "Yes." He asked if I wanted to have sex with her. I was glad to have a solid marriage and the will to keep it that way. God was good and faithfully preserved me several times in this kind of situation. May His name be praised!

Here are the worship leaders in one of the churches where I preached.

Look what God did. These experiences in Botswana made it again abundantly clear that God was the Prime Mover, the Initiator, the Beginning and the End. We were only tools in His hands. He did His wonderful works even through faulty tools.

This photo was taken during one of the pastor's workshops. The material I used for the workshops was from the Leadership Empowerment Conference.

This is the group gathered for the general sessions of the national conference near Botswana's capital, Gaborone.

God enabled me to make three presentations at the national conference near Botswana's capitol city, Gaborone. Then four presentations at a revival series in a thriving local church in Mochudi, fourteen presentations to participants gathered for a four-day pastors' workshop in Mahalapye, three presentations to a mature local church in Gaborone, one presentation to a rapidly-growing congregation in a Suburb of Gaborone, and three presentations to a responsive congregation in Francistown.

Because the organizational structure was already in place I could not think of them as organizational partners. They were my hosts and I was their guest. They took the lessons I deposited with them and ran with them. They were good men and women. I still have every confidence they are doing well with my investment in their work. My teaching materials and multimedia presentations on em-poweringchristianleaders.com were made available to them. This gave them the opportunity to learn further if they so desired.

I celebrated the opportunity to have meetings with their executive council and Bible College Task Force. This organization was grow-

ing organizationally as well as numerically and spiritually. It was a privilege to be a part of the great work God was doing in Africa. This was the reason we left our positions at Oral Roberts University and Tulsa Chinese Christian Church in Tulsa to serve the body of Christ in Africa.

As I headed back toward Israel, the flight from Botswana to South Africa was no problem. However, the next flight was not possible. Due to an airlines employees' strike, I spent four days in a bed & breakfast lodge near the Johannesburg, South Africa airport, using the time for study and correspondence. After 29 days apart, Char and I were reunited on April 26, in time for our forty-fourth wedding anniversary on April 27.

During my absence, Char's hardest personal challenge was to adjust to the new condition of her eyes. One eye was fixed with a lens that enabled her to see distances while the other was fixed with a lens for reading. Theoretically, this meant she would not have to wear glasses, yet would be able to see at a distance as well as read. The ophthalmologist had told us it could take a length of time to adjust. But so far her brain was having considerable trouble processing different data coming from each eye through the optic nerves.

RUSSIA

Upon my return to Israel, we turned our attention to preparations for a ministry trip to Russia, scheduled for early-June through early-July. We were glad to have received our visas for Russia even though the Russian Embassy in Tel Aviv would only allow a one-month visa—not the two-month visa we had requested. We depart-ed from Tel Aviv on a direct 6-hour flight the evening of June 4. We traveled straight north and arrived in Ufa, a city that rests at the foot of the Ural Mountains, just after midnight the morning of June 5.

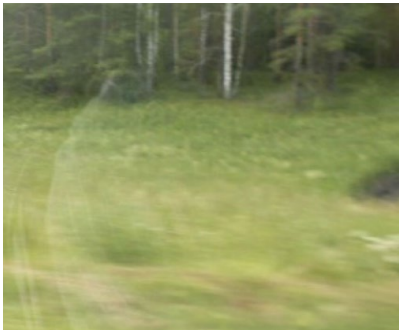
In order to produce the most possible fruit while there, our conference schedule for Russia was compacted and compressed. We con-ducted our conferences with fewer rest days between them. After 29 days of conferences and other miscellaneous speaking

engagements we departed from Ufa early the morning of July 3 and arrived back in Tel Aviv that same day.

"The land and people of Russia surprised us in so many ways. We enjoyed the beautiful fields, trees, forests, and rivers. The big-hearted Christians were so eager to learn. They won our hearts."
Since we agreed to conduct conferences the whole time with no

Yes, we had a flat tire, but more importantly, notice the beautiful field.

rest days, only travel days, we broke our rule of taking a day off each week. At first, we were scheduled to conduct five three-day, fifteen-hour conferences, but ended up completing six full conferences plus one more nine-hour conference. This was a highly rewarding, nevertheless back-breaking and record-setting schedule. Will we ever do it again? We have not decided. Again, God did it.



Russia has more than one hundred fifty ethnic groups, many

of them administratively referred to as "republics." We arrived in Ufa, the capitol of Bashkortostan, traveled south to Sterlitanak and Ishimbay, both in that same republic. After returning to Ufa for our third and best-attended conference, we traveled southeast to Beloretsk for the fourth conference.

Then we traveled west by car, train, and bus (for a total of twenty-four hours) through the republic of Tartarstan to Cheboksary in the Republic of Shuvashia for the fifth conference. Ulyanovsk was the sixth conference. This was our smallest conference numerically, but it was extra powerful due to the fact that all but one of the zealous participants were former drug addicts (shown in the

These are trophies in God's trophy case. These former drug addicts were learning principles of Christian leadership!

photo). Next we traveled farther west and completed the seventh conference in Penza. A sixteen-hour train trip overnight took us back to Ufa. Though we traveled great distances, we only visited a small part of central Russia.

When we live for One who does more than we ask or think, we

learn to live with surprises. The next two surprises related to my books translated into Russian. Habits of Highly Effective Christians had been translated seven years prior. In the summer of 2005, I had met a Russian book publisher in Uppsala, Sweden who agreed to publish and promote the Russian translation of Habits. Though we knew he had done so, we had never heard anything about its sales or usefulness. Upon arrival in Ufa in June, we discovered that some of the pastors who would host our conferences had already read Habits. They said, "Oh, we know you. We've read your book."

The second surprise was that copies of Habits, made available at the conferences, sold well. Later, the interpreters who traveled with us gave us feed-back on the usefulness of our message. Our quality of teaching was needed in Russia. As a result, we established a team of four translators who worked for the next two years translating the next three books into Russian. Even though we were surprised, the Lord was not.

William Carey admitted he was a plodder—he was slow, but persevered. Yet look what that "plodder" did. I too have always thought of myself as a plodder. Plodders keep moving ahead, so I just keep plodding. Char and I plodded together during our years in Africa, Europe, and Asia. Fasting regularly, hours of daily prayer and consistent Bible reading are some of the habits of this plodder.

A common potential weakness is possible with a husband-and-wife ministry team. They may be guilty of something called "bedroom counseling"—consulting each other with the possibility that they could both be wrong. Char and I had to be careful because we were each others' counselor. But how could we find a mentor when most of our mentors were dead? This is a problem with growing older!

"We spent a lot of train travel time with our interpreters and hosts in Russia. These informal times of discussion with local leaders provided just as much teaching opportunities as our hours of lecturing. Each was a joy because they were eager to learn.

RWANDA AND BURUNDI

In October and November we were scheduled to teach in three Bible colleges in Rwanda . This was the first time we spent that much time in academia while on the field. Yet we looked forward to it. The government in Rwanda wanted professionals in every career to improve and up-grade themselves. This included pastors, so the Lord gave us some opportunities.

Look what God did. The Lord enabled us to complete a daytime conference with Pastor Jerome in Ruhengeri with additional preaching evenings in Zion Temple. We conducted a conference and additional preaching in Gisenyi in western Rwanda across the river from Goma in the Congo. We presented a conference and additional preaching in Mukamira (near Ruhengeri). We followed with a conference and preaching in Cyanika (also near Ruhengeri), a conference with Pastor Patrick in Eastern Province and ministry with Pastor Herman Gatware in another conference. Then I went alone to Ngozi, Burundi just to the south of Rwanda.

On the bus ride back to Rwanda from Ngozi, a Christian choir rode on the same bus. Their rich African voices with beautiful harmony filled the bus and my heart. Everywhere we went we met only a few difficult people and many beautiful people. God has a wonderful family.

Char was the featured speaker at a women's conference near Butari, Rwanda. I taught the History of Christian Missions with Pentecostal Emphasis at FATEK (A local Pentecostal Seminary in Kigali), while Char taught Pastoral Epistles at Rwanda Institute of Evangelical Theology (RIET). At that same place I taught Urban Theology and Char taught Christian Philosophy. Wow! That was a busy period. Look what God did!

"We returned to Tiberius from a very full nine-week trip to Rwanda

and Burundi. We conducted seven conferences, taught intensive courses in two different Bible schools for two weeks, plus a number of weekend speaking engage-ments. We remained in fairly good health. The exceptions were my serious toe infection and Char's cough. We rested until we left for a family time in Idaho. Then our annual contacts in Tulsa during January for medical, dental, and inoculation issues before we returned to Israel the end of January.

FINANCIAL POLICY

In January 2007, we had completed seven years of work in Africa. When I preceded Char to South Africa and conducted conferences for pastors and Christian leaders, I was told that I needed to help conference participants with travel, lodging and meal expenses. Years earlier during our first furlough home to the US from South Korea clear back in 1977, I had learned that East Africa was plagued by "dependency." Over the years of studies and interactions with other missiologists, missionaries and missiological literature, the problem of dependency became clearer from an academic perspective. We had never faced this issue first-hand while serving in Korea and China. But in Africa in 2007 we came face to face with their dependency.

After prayer and studying the Word, we realized that if we went along with the expectations of our African brothers and sisters, we would be playing the co-dependency role. We would allow and further encourage them to depend on foreign funds for African ministry. For too long Westerners said, "Silver and gold I have… " So from the beginning we made the policy decision to be responsible for our own travel and expenses, to offer our services free of charge to our African guests but not to pay Africans to listen to our presentations. We felt our policy was biblical, but it was sometimes difficult to maintain. Occasionally we could see that our message

of self-reliance was beginning to take hold. Our messages about prayer, Christian Family, Bible Study and Sermon Preparation were well received, and, thankfully, our emphasis on self-reliance gradually also seemed to be being accepted.

Change was taking place. The phrase "Self-Reliant Africans" was no longer automatically an oxymoron. When we conducted this trip's second conference in Changugu in the south part of Rwanda and where I conducted conferences in the Ngozi area of Burundi, we saw clear evidence of self-reliance for the first time. We saw brick buildings and heard of others built by participants of former conferences.

These strong buildings were produced, not with foreign funds, but by local congregations. They baked the bricks, laid the foundations, built the superstructures for the roofs, and put tin on the roofs. Again and again our hosts proudly showed off their buildings, declaring they were a result of having learned from us the value of self-reliance. Our teachings had given them the courage to construct buildings themselves. Just imagine the joy we felt from hearing their testimonies!

One pastor told us of a widow who donated her only cow to be sold so the funds could go toward buying tin for the church building project. We asked to meet her. She proudly told us that after giving her cow to the Lord, He gave her a new and better cow. This kind of story was only possible when folks accepted the responsibility to build things themselves. We longed for the day when Africans would no longer write letters to their foreign

This woman's testimony about her new and better cow helped encouraged self-reliance. They learned they could build their own church with God's help without foreign funds.

sponsors saying, "The roof on your church leaks. Please repair it."

The three brick church buildings in which I spoke and the one in Changugu all testified to the courage and vision of our conference participants. In the future, we hoped to visit the other four buildings in Changugu built with local funds. The building in the nearby photo had no window frames yet, but, bless the Lord, it was built with local resources. We appreciated the magnitude of this miracle.

The believers can be proud of the building they built themselves.

Another host and colleague in Africa applied the "self-reliant" principle to new work he was doing with Bible translation and publication. We met him when he translated for us during our first trip to Rwanda in 2008. Since then he had been promoted to a managerial position in the Bible Society where he worked. The branch he was responsible for upgraded from being helped by offices in other nations to becoming a full "office" itself. They now sponsor and help start and support new branches in central and eastern Africa. He and his staff worked with Rwandan churches raising funds for Bible translation and publication. They also supported the work with their personal funds. Because of the motto, "Without the Bible there is no church," churches now support Bible publication efforts. They see how Bibles, in turn, are a blessing to the churches. This was an amazing story and God is to be praised! God did it.

If someone says, "I can," and another person says, "I cannot," they are both correct. We enjoyed working with the "can do" Koreans for thirteen years and now we saw signs of a change in some Africans.

2013 YEAR'S END WITH FAMILY IN IDAHO

We rested in Tiberius until we left for family time in Idaho in December. Until the end of 2013, we spent a happy almost three weeks with our family in the Northwest part of the United States. Our younger son Joel, his wife Elizabeth, and their eight children lived on Mountain Home Air Force base. Our older son, Dan, worked for the Canadian government and came to Mountain Home to be with the rest of us. The mountains of Idaho were beautiful and the skiing was great. Some of our skiing activities and the beautiful snow-covered mountains are recorded here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bT5N9uF7cX4&feature=youtu.be

Here is a Christmas 2013 photo of our family. In the back row are Joshua, Dan, Ron, Char, Joel, Samuel, and Elizabeth. In the front row are Benjamin, Jacob, Abigail, Mary Faith, Hannah and Rebecca.

CHAPTER EIGHT - 2014

During January 2014, we visited churches, conducted a missions conference and reported on our work to our supporters. We made a trip to Nebraska and Iowa to visit extended family and friends. Again we took care of dental, medical, immunization, computer upgrades and issues related to the care of our eyes.

Upon arrival from the states our projection for activity in and out from Israel began right away. The four projects for 2014 were:

› Hebrew Language Studies
› Leadership Empowerment Conference Video Recording
› Nine-week ministry trip to Rwanda Mid-June through Mid-August
› Eleven-week ministry trip to India October through Mid-December.

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE VIDEO RECORDING

After returning from the States, the major accomplishment of February was the successful completion of filming 15 sessions of our Leadership Empowerment Conference. These recordings included introducing beautiful, well-known Bible sites in Israel. In most cases the sessions were divided into two segments of twenty-eight minutes each.

Here is a visual sampling of what we did:

This is the famous Western Wall next to Temple Mount which provided a background for recording "Seven Principles of Christian Leadership"

Early in the morning we are getting ready to record

Many passing tourists paused to watch, but we just kept on recording.

Across the Jordan valley in the background is the brook Kireth where Elijah drew water and ravens fed him. We recorded "The Power and Danger of Prayer" here.

I am recording session nine, "How to Raise Confident Children" on the Golan Heights with the sea of Galilee in the background

Preparations are under way on the balcony of our apartment for Char to teach "How to Study the Bible" using Philemon as the example

This is the location where the Sermon on the Mount is believed to have been given. Char recorded one of her sessions here.

The camera crew is preparing to record Char's three segments of "Philosophy of Christian Education"

Here, just downstream from where some believe Jesus was baptized in the Jordon River, Char prepared to record one of her lessons.

The camera crew is getting ready to record, Jessie Kopp is to the left and Michael Hilsden to the right

On this boat, near where Peter would have walked on the water, we recorded "How to do the Impossible."

We recorded "Where are the Elijahs?" here at the Jordon east of Jericho where tradition says Israel entered Canaan land, Elijah and Elisha crossed over going east and Elisha returned alone after Elijah's departure.

I recorded "How to Prepare Biblical Sermons" here on the balcony of a tall building overlooking a rapidly developing part of Jerusalem.

Other sessions not in this sampling included:

› "How to Raise Obedient Children" recorded at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem,

› "How to Grow in Character as Your Marriage Grows" recorded on the western slope of the Mount of Olives with the city of Jerusalem in the background. Just to the east of the Eastern Gate, now called the Golden Gate, of the Temple Mount

› "How to Read the Bible" at the site of ancient Geshur and Bethsaida."

The complete set of teachings, a total of fifteen hours, made it possible for anyone anywhere to easily "attend" a conference. We were encouraged (actually pressed) by the Holy Spirit to make them available in this format to supplement our face-to-face conference presentations. For the next several months Christian professionals edited, prepared, and inserted Intros and Outros, inserted graphics of Bible verses and formatted the videos. These videos are available for viewing on the multimedia page of empowermingchristian-lead-ers.com.

Recording is only part of the work. Let me brag about our producer. The Lord directed us to a skilled young videographer and producer, Michael Hilsden, who had three wonderful qualifications. (1) Most importantly, he was a man of prayer. When the Holy Spirit spoke to him, he listened. (2) He was artistic and knew how to film in such a way that with three cameras operating simultaneously, the videos series was alive and filled with artistic variety. With Michael we simply drove up or down the road to the important and beautiful sites we selected. We combined the high quality of the video recording itself with attractive packaging and produced a valuable tool for communicating our teachings to this generation. (3) Michael also had good people skills. He was easy to work with, even through the tension and challenges of live recordings on sites where other people and activities produced potential distractions.

Meanwhile, I proceeded with Modern Hebrew language studies and Char worked on getting our household items in place again. We appreciated the wonderful place God provided for us to rest between ministry trips. These were busy months as we worked with

the video editors and simultaneously pursued other ministry-related interests.

For the three months of March, April, and May I studied modern Hebrew. Three times in the previous two years, I had studied Hebrew for two months at a time. With this three-month series added, I had then studied Hebrew for nine months. The more vocabulary words I added, the more the breadth of the subjects I could discuss. The Lord gave me two wonderful teachers. As the only student in the "class," I practiced speaking, received correction, asked questions, and expanded my vocabulary. I did not know if I would use my Hebrew in a teaching ministry or not, but I felt I was to study it. It is always an advantage to be able to speak the local language. Additionally, I wanted to keep my mind nimble.

In addition, we also worked with Herman in Rwanda to develop the schedule for mid-June through mid-August in Rwanda, Burundi and possibly Western Congo. A fine team of Russian translators agreed to help translate my second and third book into Russian. Not everything we planned for those additional translations materialized, however. It was questionable if the two additional books would be finished and made available in Russia or not. Our Russian translator told us he had finished the first draft of the translation of *Choose Your Character*. Some day we will know of the success of these projects.

"All that we have accomplished you have done for us." (Isaiah 26:12 NIV). Yes! What we appear to have done, actually God has done for us. I discovered this amazing verse while working on the Isaiah chapter of Choose Your Character (available on the book page of empoweringchristianleaders.com). The way the Lord worked and what He accomplished in 2014 confirmed this to be true. Look what the Lord did! The last half of August and all of September were extremely productive as the Lord helped us with these four accomplishments:

We completed the editing and technical fine-tuning of the fifteen sessions (thirty 28-minute segments) of the Leadership Empow-

erment video series. These were all uploaded to a server to make them available world-wide on the internet. Uploading the data required more than 170 hours of transmission involving a week-long all day and all night data transfer process. They are available for viewing on the Multi-Media page of empoweringchristianleaders.com.

We moved the same video series into the hands of an Israeli video disk producer who put them on disks (three sessions per disk with five disks per packet) so that the entire series was available in disk form. Some people preferred this medium over watching or downloading online. The attached art work helped to envision the scope of this project.

For another five weeks, I studied modern Hebrew. It took about two weeks for me to get back to where I was before we went to Rwanda. Then I progressed forward. Every time we rested in Israel, I studied Hebrew.

The upcoming India ministry trip schedule was completed. Our hosts in India worked well with us so we can share the following itinerary. Please use it to assist you in praying specifically as we travel in India.

INDIA

We could never have completed all of this unless God did it. Surely the large number of events recorded and completed here is evidence that God did it!

› September 30 Fly from Tel Aviv to Delhi
› October 1 Arrive Delhi, speak to India Evangelical Team staff (IET)
› October 2 Travel to Bagdogra
› October 2-4 Speak in IET Northeast India Pastors' Seminar
› October 5 Morning and evening speak in IET Northeast native church
› October 6 Fly back to Delhi
› October 7 Travel to Kanpur by train
› October 7-9 Speak in Kanpur IET Pastors' Seminar
› October 10 Travel by train to Itarsi
› October 11 Arrive Itarsi and then ministry in SALTDC – IET Bible College Ministry This includes speaking in special seminars for Bible College students and faculty and spending time with college President Sam George & the faculty.
› October 20 Travel to Raipur by train
› October 21-23 Speak in Raipur Pastors' Seminar
› October 24 Travel to Bangalore
› October 25 Rest
› October 26-31 With Gilead Evangelical Theological (GET) Seminary and Dr. Pumza Tombing in Bangalore
› November 1-7 Leadership Empowerment Conference with India for Christ Ministry (IFCM) with Dr. K Paul Devakumar and Daniel Christos in Bangalore
› November 8 Travel from Bangalore to Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh
› November 9-29 With India Christian Ministries (ICM) and James Revabarapu in Hyderabad. Two weeks will be spent with young leaders and one week with rural pastors.
› November 29 Travel by car to Nalgonda, Andhra Pradesh
› Nov 30 - Dec 5 With Pastors and Martin Tagaram in Nalgonda, Andhra Pradesh
› December 6 Travel from Nalgonda via car to Hyderabad airport then by plane from Hyderabad to Coimbatore then on to Erode by car.
› December 6-11 With pastors and Samuel Joshua in Erode and other places in southern Tamilnaudu
› December 12 Travel by car to Tiruhirapalli and by plane from Tiruhi-rapalli to Chennai
› December 13 Return from Chennai to Israel

TO GOD'S GLORY WE REPORTED THE FOLLOWING:

"We returned to Israel from our ten-week ministry trip to India. We both felt that this has been one of our best trips during the last eight years. Yes, it has already been eight years since we left Tulsa in

January 2007, moved to Africa, and began conducting Leadership Empowerment Conferences.

MARATHON TRAINING

In Tiberius on January 9, 2015, I was scheduled to run a marathon race (42K). So each weekend throughout the India trip, in addition to my usual hours of daily running, I practiced long runs, often beginning the run an hour and a half before sunrise. The length of these weekly training runs gradually increased to 28K, 32K, 38K, then back down to 26K as I tapered off, the usual process during the last two weeks of training for a marathon. The trend was for my training runs to become faster per kilometer in addition to being longer.

This was my first marathon since I had developed a-symptomatic chronic atrial fibrillation ten years earlier. (I had run 30 marathons between 1999 and 2005). Four years earlier, when I had malaria, I also contracted double pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome. So, to feel like training and the challenge of a long race at age 70 was another testimony of God's goodness in giving us physical strength.

"This year's trip to India and ministry in the various venues prompted us to pray about returning to India again in October and November of 2015. Most of the host organizations there and the dates were already decided. So the schedule for 2015 looked like it included Myanmar, India and possibly the US.

CHRISTMAS IN ISRAEL AGAIN

For several years Char had a difficult time bouncing back to good health after the rigors of our India trips. But this year she recovered more quickly in spite of two Christmas events on two separate evenings. We sang, reviewed the Christmas Story and ate lots of goodies. This may not seem like much of a deal where Christmas is regularly celebrated. But celebrating the incarnation of the Messiah in a land where that is not widely celebrated is a unique opportunity to give glory to God in addition to annual Jewish feasts.

At one point in one of the Christmas parties, the combination of the carol we sang, the harmony and the Christmas decorations all seemed to work together. Even the non-Christians said they felt something they had never felt before. It was the gentle yet strong presence of God through His Holy Spirit.

"Even if those around us do not celebrate Christmas or scorn us when we do, we have every right to celebrate Jesus' incarnation. The

following thoughts echo those written by Erick Erickson, Editor-in-Chief of RedState.com. We have long "known" that Jesus was probably not born in December so you might find his observations interesting.

"In Egypt, less than 300 years after Christ's death, some Christians celebrated His birth in the spring. As the Biblical Archeology Society has noted, the earliest references to Christmas came at about 200 A.D., at a time Christians were not incorporating other religious traditions into their own. By 300 A.D., many Christians were celebrating His birth around Dec. 25th. Within 100 years, Christmas was on the calendar record. Christians looked to December because the early church was far more interested in Jesus' death. His death and resurrection is what matters to the Gospel, so that was the date on which the early church focused.

"'Around 200 A.D., Tertullian of Carthage reported: the 14th of Nisan in the year Jesus died, was the equivalent to March 25 in the Roman calendar,' according to Andrew McGowan of the Biblical Archaeology Society. The math from the day of crucifixion is simple. Nine months later would be December 25. Early church history held as fact that the prophets and martyrs of the church died on an anniversary of the day they were conceived.

"If that assumption is accurate, Christ died on March 25, the anniversary of his conception. Separately, and more directly from the Bible, Luke 1 tells us Zacharias, John the Baptist's father, was in the priestly division of Abijah. Based on a calculation of the division of priest in the temple in 70 A.D., a number of early church histo-ri-

ans presumed Zacharias would have been in the temple in early October. Later historians, speculated it would have been June. The Gospel of Luke records that when Zacharias left the temple, his wife conceived. *"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazaerth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David,"* Luke 1: 26.

"Six months after Zacharias left the temple would be March as Mary's time of conception. Fast forward nine months and again we find ourselves in December. With the earliest Church fathers settled on March 25th as Christ's death and believing fully that Christ's death would occur on the anniversary of his conception, the early church reinforced its belief well before there was any writ-ten accusation or evidence of the church incorporating Saturnalia or Sol Invictus into its celebrations. It is important to note, however, that most scholars reject setting Christ's birth to Zacharias' temple service because of problems related to really knowing when he was there."

I would argue that Jesus was incarnated when conceived at Nazareth; not when He was born in Bethlehem. But the important fact is that He did come to earth and the salvation He gives us is still the best gift ever given. Char and I were both raised in American Christian homes, celebrated Christmases on December 25 all our lives and then moved to Israel. In Israel, people who believe in the same Yeshua, often do not celebrate Christmas. Some—even Messianic believers—have an extremely dim view of Christmas because of its commercialization. So this question and the differences of opinion meant a great deal to us and impacted our attitudes towards our celebrations in a special way while we were in Israel.

We stayed in Israel through the end of the year in 2014 and looked forward to celebrating our Lord in a different way than in the States. Every Christian can celebrate the incarnation of Jesus any way they want. God is probably okay with that.

CHAPTER NINE - 2015

MARATHON AT AGE SEVENTY

After returning to Israel from India in mid December, 2014, I ran my thirty-first marathon on January 9, 2015. This was the first one in the nine years since leaving the United States for South Africa in January, 2007.

"In the drama of events recorded in 1 Kings chapter 20, the fol-low-ing wisdom is included in verse 11: *"The king of Israel answered, 'Tell him: "One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off."'"*

"From the time I was five years old and past my sixth birthday, I suffered from rheumatic fever—a problem with the mitral valve in the left ventricle of my heart. Twelve years ago, I developed chronic a-symptomatic atrial fibrillation, resulting in an irregular heartbeat. I cannot choose to have a regular heartbeat, but I can choose through exercise to have a strong heart. So I exercise vigorously and regularly. Four years and three months ago I suffered from malaria and its further complications with double pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), and ovular malaria. I almost died. Some survivors of ARDS pull an oxygen tank around for the rest of their lives. My book, *Super Survival*, shows the x-rays and details of my near-death experience. It is available on the book page of my website.

"For spiritual reasons, I believe in doing everything possible to maintain physical health. Chapter 12 of Habits of Highly Effective Christians, also available on my website, covers this subject. If we eat right, exercise correctly and rest appropriately we feel better, look better and last longer. Why should we not do everything possible to extend and utilize these best years of our lives?

"To God be the glory for helping me finish a 42.2 kilometer (26.19 mile) marathon in five hours, 37 minutes and 37 seconds. Throughout much of the race, we ran within sight of the Sea of Galilee. The snow capped Golan Heights and Mount Hermon—a majestic

sight were also visible. We worked our way through rain and cold wind that day.

"Last June I trained for this marathon while we were in Rwanda, running for two hours one morning instead of my regular one-hour run. It felt good, so the next week my goal was a three-hour run. Progress continued until five weeks ago when I began in the darkness at 5:00 am I ran 38 kilometers in five hours and 55 minutes. I felt I could do this marathon! However, it was a wonderful surprise to finish in only five hours and 37 and a half minutes. I was exhausted, but happy. In my previous thirty marathons, my average time was four hours and forty three minutes—all of them were under four hours. But now I was 70 years old!

"Another person wrote: "Ron Meyers, 70, has served the Lord more years outside the U.S. than inside its borders. Recently he celebrated a milestone when he finished his 31st marathon race in just over five hours, 37 minutes. In ministry and in a marathon, Ron says it is important to have a strong heart and also to have many people praying for you."

PASSING THE BATON IN ANOTHER KIND OF RACE

How does one measure success? One way is to determine if your vision is being followed and duplicat-ed. By January 2015 we had conducted conferences for over eight years. It was time to pass the baton to younger teachers.

Pastor Herman and his wife, Abia

With joy we reported on two of the African and Indian men with whom we worked. They carried the work forward—a great encouragement to us. We looked forward to sharing future stories about many others in Africa and India.

A Rwandan, Herman Gatware, traveled twice to nations near Rwanda—Burundi and Congo. He instructed groups of pastors, using our teachings. He reported that the trips were successful and hoped to give even more time to this aspect of his ministry in the future. During the next fifteen months, he arranged a series of conferences for us which, the Lord willing, would take place during June and July 2016 in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. We continued to encourage Herman.

Partially based on Pastor Herman's successess, I encouraged Pastor Rex Chipoya in Zambia to do something similar. Pastor Rex had hosted and translated four of our conferences about six years previously. After that series, he traveled about in Zambia teaching others what he had learned. So we conducted a "test" to see what would happen if he conducted more conferences using the materials we had taught him.

Below are edited excerpts from his report. English is his second language, but the validity of his report rings true.

". . . There is a need for African church leaders to be empowered with knowledge. The issue may include many kinds of leadership, be it in society or in the corporate world. It needs empowerment from time to time because of the dynamism and the global nature of today's world . . . . It is critical when talking about the Christian circles as there are a lot of things happening—so-called innovations of ways of worship which may or may not be biblical. Africa is much affected by this. In Africa you find many prophets with a superstitious-like use of water as anointed water for healing and the medium for deliverance. I mention the need for a more vigorous and consistent leadership conference which will address some of the challenges we are facing as Christians and as the church.
". . . In Africa, like other continents, a wind that blows where

church leaders are in the quest to find a successful formula for church growth. In so doing many church leaders are on high alert to adopt everything they might learn from anywhere without consideration of the doctrinal issues and the likes. . . . .

". . . My first challenge was to convince them that I was not as heavily funded as many other past conferences. The trend was for people to get funding to book hotels, buy food and even pay transport refunds to the participants. It took many hours to convince them that this was an African-driven initiative which all of us should support so that people will follow the quality of knowledge rather than the quality of food or money. From the first meeting some were convinced, but others were not. We chose to go with the people who agreed with us and, we started the preparation . . . . I reminded them that we did not need a big general crowd but leaders open to impactful teachings. Then they could teach others.

". . . . The second day we served food to 104 people. Those who attended appreciated the conference. It was so integral to the life of a leader—like refueling the leader for the next job. And they wished for annual events with a leadership conference every year in the same area. . . .

". . . . We had 154 participants from other churches. God prepared things so they went smoothly with food prepared by the locals. They donated food supplies, enough to cater for attendees.

". . . . We did not have any problem in the organization of the conference. Everything went smoothly and people were eager to learn. They contributed all they could to make sure this conference was a success. . . .

". . . . One lesson we learned was that organizing a rural conference was easier than urban ones. Most of the urban people were spoiled with the money issues. They needed conferences to be sponsored by us and were unwilling to contribute toward such. But the rural people were quite overwhelmed with all the things they learned. They received the Word with both hands. Even in the urban area,

some received my kind of philosophy. And I took time to counsel people on issues of money. What we needed was not money but services. Our focus should not be on money but on the services we could offer. We are called to serve, not to be served, and we should sacrifice for the kingdom of God.

". . . . Another lesson: if conferences could be held vigorously in the country, mindsets could be changed from that of receiving to that of giving and contributing to the kingdom of God.

". . . . Church leaders want to learn and will do anything that would encourage others to learn. Some are leaders without any formal training. They are in areas without access to books and other mate-rials to help them grow in faith and leadership.

". . . . A lot of doctrine is coming that leaders were suspicious regarding the new things from around the globe. Technology has advanced and people are copying what they see on television and the internet. This requires the church to be proactive in teaching its members doctrine so that many are not led astray.
". . . . Many people believe if you come up with such a conference,

you are financially sound. You must have big connections with people from somewhere funding you. But we tried to explain to them how this works.

Some of the topics covered were:

› Pray according to God's agenda
› How to preach Godly-based sermons
› The blessing of Jacob
› Philosophy of Christian education
› Becoming sensitive in the context
› How to effectively read the Bible
› Intimacy with the heavenly Father
› Grow in character as your marriage grows
› Better than silver and gold
› Where are the Elijah's of the Lord God
› Public ministry lesson from Jeremiah
› How to prepare a biblical sermon
› Planning in ministry

". . . . Many church leaders are eager to learn new things but there are no people who can take the genuine word and skills to them in a good spirit. Many foreign guests have made the problem worse than it was, but looking at the three conferences we had and the response we experienced—we have hope. It gives us light at the end of the tunnel."

Rex understood how our teachings differed from that of other foreigners. I have lost contact with Rex and cannot attest to the quality of what this young man has done since then. Yet it seems from his 2015 report that he then understood the weaknesses of the African church and grasped what they need to do to correct them. Please pray for Africa, its churches and pastors.

MYANMAR

The report about the Myanmar trip follows:

"'Good news," Char said. Ron safely completed a ministry trip to Myanmar. He returned home to Tiberius, tired and happy from a full schedule and a long journey. Home just in time to celebrate the

47th anniversary of our engagement to be married! While on his knee on the shore of Lake Heritage near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on March 31, 1968, his exact words were, "Charlotte, I love you. I will follow you to the ends of the earth until you say "Yes." So you just as well say "Yes" now. Will you marry me?" She is still glad he asked, and he is still glad she said "Yes!"

"Thank you for joining us in prayer for the developing nation of Myanmar. It is a strongly Buddhist nation with a population of 60 million—bordered by Bangladesh, India, China and Thailand. Because of its harbor in the Bay of Bengal, it is a transportation center. Interestingly, Mandalay, an inland city, has 300,000 Buddhist monks, some of whom lined up going from door to door each morning to receive donations of rice and food supplies. I witnessed this myself.

"Ron was the guest of Dr. Khan Kham Khai, one of his doctoral candidate students during his years at ORU. They worked together for two weeks. Here are six accomplishments we celebrated:

"The first week was spent in Mandalay. It is the second largest city in Myanmar, north of Yangoon eight and a half hours by bus, with a population of 1,225,133 as of March 2014. Ron presented:

Six Leadership Empowerment sessions in two days attended by pastors and Bible college students,
The commencement address at a Bible college, and
Preached in a local church on Sunday.
"The second week he was in Yangoon, the capital of Myanmar, with a population of 4,775,000 as of March 2014. In Yangoon he:
Presented six Leadership Empowerment sessions in two days,
Presented eight hours of teaching at a two-day Empowering Christian Businessmen Conference. The host for this event was a creative entrepreneurial pastor with a vision to strengthen the
church of Myanmar by strengthening its economic base. Ron also
Preached in another local church the next Sunday.
"While Ron was gone, Char entertained two different groups of believing ladies, using her grandmother's china. This was a fulfillment

of a long-held desire to bless her local friends.

"We prepared to celebrate the Passover with believers who understood that Yeshua is indeed the Passover Lamb, risen from the dead. We are sobered and intrigued by world events taking place all around us, yet we rejoice that the nations will become the nations of our Lord and of His Messiah. Happy Passover to all of you!

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

We children of the Lord usually enjoy planning then watching those plans proceed. *"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails"* (Proverbs 19:21). When a surprise opportunity to serve—one that was not planned occurs—we observe closely to see what God has in mind.

We planned to remain in Israel to study Hebrew, but two surprises happened. Both proved to be what God wanted us to do. One was a surprise trip to North America while the second was a surprise opportunity to minister to a Lebanese congregation in northern Israel.

Our report in 2015:

"For the first time since leaving Oral Roberts University and beginning pastors' conferences, we traveled to North America especially to visit our sons. Both visits were extremely well received and proved to be just what we all needed. Our two sons have been unusually supportive throughout the nine years we have done this work. We previously visited them as part of work-related ap-point-ments, but this trip was just for them and us. We believe in the priority of the family, and this was an opportunity to show it in a tangible way.

"We had not planned to visit America in 2015. I spent April and May studying Hebrew and in May, we renewed our residence visa. But God showed us that for family-related reasons we needed to travel to Canada and the US. Beginning June 1, we made a trip to Rhode Island to visit Joel and his family and attended his graduation from War College. Then we went to Canada to visit Dan and

our friends in Durham, Ontario where we had pastored from 1968 until 1973.

"Next we traveled to visit Joel and his family again (to Shiloh, Illinois near his new assignment in St Louis, Missouri) then finally on to Tulsa to visit friends, get new drivers' licenses and receive medical check-ups. We did not realize how much God would jam into a short six and a half week trip. During these travels and visits we experienced miracle after miracle. This was our only time in the fifteen years of our ministry travels in Africa, Europe and Asia to make a trip principally for family reasons. All other trips were for ministry or family-related reasons. We love serving the Lord and His people, but still believe that family is more important than public ministry. This trip proved that principle again, even after we had raised our boys and seen them successfully launched.

MINISTRY TO THE LEBANESE

"The second surprise during this period was a series of invitations to minister at a Lebanese Christian congregation in Israel, just north of Haifa not far from the Israeli-Lebanon border. At a prayer meeting I knelt next to a man I did not know. He was a Lebanese pastor serving in northern Israel. He had learned about me from my website. Char and I spent a Friday evening in June with that wonderful group before our trip to Canada and the United States. Then again in July after we returned to Israel we enjoyed a three-day conference, Sunday through Tuesday.

"We had not known that such congregations even existed, but God had not forgotten them. It was a wonderful time of ministry to hungry hearts—praise the Lord! We learned that a number of Lebanese moved into the northern part of Israel during and after the war between Lebanon and Israel. We used the material from a biblical perspective in our seminar "How to Grow in Character as Your Marriage Grows" and were well received. We made good friends with that congregation.

SEVERAL PERSONAL ISSUES—PART OF BEING A MISSIONARY

"About that time we received the news that the Russian translation of *"Choose Your Character,"* was complete and being published in book form as well as posted on the internet. We asked our friends to pray with us for distribution to as many Russian-speaking people as possible, not only abroad, but also there in Israel.

"We remained in contact with our ministry partners in Africa and India, making plans to serve in Rwanda, Uganda, South Sudan, and Kenya this summer and in five or six states in India in the fall. We also began to make plans for our oldest grandson to join us for our trip to India, then spend some time with us in Israel."

In response to a request for more reporting from India, we wrote:

"When home in our apartment I continued to study Modern He-brew. I made slow progress, was challenged and had good teachers. I worshipped in Hebrew as our circle of Hebrew-speaking friends slowly grew. The Shabbat meeting was translated into English, so Char and I worshipped together. In the mid-week Bible studies, she attended an English-speaking group while I attended a He-brew-speaking group. The day would come when being able to under-stand the Hebrew language would be a significant advantage.

Amos 3:7 says, *"Surely the sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants."* So we continued to wait on Him for direction in all our planning.

INDIA

Again in 2016, We were in India for two months.

"We arrived in Delhi on October 6 and departed from Mumbai on December 4. During that time we traveled from north to south as guests of five different ministries: India Evangelistic Team, India Christian Ministry, Foursquare, Bethany and Assemblies of God. We conducted nine conferences of 12 - 15 sessions and participated in four one-day conferences. We also taught in a number of local

assemblies and eight hours at a Bible college. We experiencedacceptance of our ministries and were treated with hospitality in each place. Your prayers for our protection and fruitfulness were answered. Thank you for your part in making this trip another cause to give glory and honor to the Lord of the harvest.

"Regarding protection, physical health issues are always a concern, but we saw some victories. As usual, we both experienced sore throats and coughing, but they only lasted a week or so. We continued without laboring under sicknesses for an extended time. Some trips in the past we struggled on and on with sick bodies. But this time, we experienced a minimum of digestive disorders in spite of the fact that Indian cuisine contains a lot of red pepper and other hot spices. Thank you for praying with us in this regard.

"The warm responses to our teachings merit comment. We are both Bible teachers, so training pastors, missionaries and Christian leaders for 50 years has been the niche in which we functioned most fruitfully. Though we have been well-received multiple times, in some scattered isolated seasons we were not able to connect or hearts were not open to our teachings. However, these two months with only one exception, every presentation was well received—in most cases embraced and appreciated with enthusiasm. We had invitations to return again next year. The Lord willing, we will work on schedules and plans. This too is a result of your prayers. Thank you.

"We ministered in Delhi, Siliguri, Kanpur, Piporea, Raipur, Bangaluru, Hyderabad, Nalgonda, Erode and Maduri. In several of these places we worked with two different ministries for nine days to two weeks. Overall, we conducted more than 12 conferences, three of them in Bible colleges. This was my sixth and Char's third trip to India, but our first time to minister in Tamil Nadu, the most southern state. We found exceptionally hungry hearts, eager students, and a wide-open door of pastor-training opportunities. Millions lived in cities we never heard of. While the Christians were only two – three percent of the population, the church thrived and their leaders were eager for training.

"Two testimonies related to health: Because we were in Tamil Nadu during December, we avoided the hottest time in the hottest part of India. So I returned home without my usual heat rash. Although I developed a sore throat early in the trip, I recovered within a week. Char often suffers from allergies when we travel. This time her allergies were kept to a minimum by prayer and medicines. When the medicine supply was gone the Lord touched her. Thank you for your prayer support.

"In addition to her normal conference teaching load, Char had four extra opportunities for ministry, two unexpected. She served one of the Bible colleges as a consultant, presenting a partial evaluation of their proposed curriculum for a new program they intended to add. She was happy to use her Post Secondary Educational Leadership experience, training and knowledge to help Bible schools improve their programs. At this same Bible college she presented a series of four lessons using newly developed materials regarding Hannah, Samuel's mother. Then twice more she spoke to groups outside the conference schedule. One of these led to an invitation to return to Tamil Nadu to participate in a women's conference next year.

"One morning as I ran before dawn in Bangalore, a car going the wrong direction passed me from behind and crashed into the curb just in front of me. If the car had arrived at that spot seconds later, I would have been hit and crushed into the wall.

"We enjoyed cooler temperatures this trip. We were in the mountains some of the time while a broad-range monsoon system worked through south India. India's weather was usually "hot" and "hotter." We thank the Lord for all these favors. With a demanding traveling and speaking schedule, it was good to work without dealing with painful heat rash and other physical health issues. Thank you for praying for us on Mondays. Some day we will dance together and celebrate on streets of gold, giving glory and honor to the Lord for what He has done."

Once again we were happy to see how hungry and appreciative the

Indian pastors and future pastors were with our teachings. We used the same teachings we used in Africa and Europe but tailored them to fit the Indian context as in the following example.

"I urge my listeners to pray specifically for what God wants, not just anything we want to pray for. When you pray to the Hindu gods, you can ask whatever you want. It does not matter about the content of your prayers, because you will not get an answer from gods that are not real. But Pray carefully and responsibly when you pray to the almighty, powerful, wise, prayer-answering true God."

In 1965 Graham Staines and his wife, Gladys, went from Australia to Odisha to work with lepers and poverty-stricken people. On January 23, 1999, thirty four years later, accused of forcing people to become Christians (which was not true), Graham and his sons, Phillip, age 10 and Timothy, age 6 were burned to death while sleeping in their vehicle.

Years later, we taught in that same state in India. In the last class of "How to Study the Bible" Char asked the group of future leaders to write about a verse of Scripture that stood out to them in their Bible readings. Using a chart she listed the numerous things in Ephesians God does for us. Then she listed all the things we do—only two!—believe and obey. Everyone happily learned how to study the Bible. They especially enjoyed discovering how God did so much for us compared to the minimum required of us. Interestingly, while teaching, Char had noticed a group of the men gathered in the back of the room talking. When she asked the interpreter why, he told her someone was reinterpreting the lesson into yet another language.

Then when Char announced the lesson was finished, the entire group spontaneously stood to their feet and applauded vigorously to glorify God. She was thrilled about how the students received insight and how excited they were to learn from Scripture—a skill Char had taught them. Why was Graham Staines martyred and Char's teaching so well received? Why was James beheaded and Peter miraculously delivered from prison the night before he was to

be executed? We do not know the answer to these questions, but we obey and let God do what He wants to do. We praise God—especially I praise God—that Char is still alive and still by my side.

My last class that series was a one-hour session on Eschatology. How does one cover this subject in one session? Anyway, the hour passed quickly with seemingly a good understanding of what we know about the future. In studying Revelation we all realized that some of it we do not and cannot understand until the events described occur. The Scripture does not totally reveal everything for the present but sufficiently tells what God knows we need now.

RESPONSES TO PEOPLE'S QUESTIONS

From time to time we received questions about our work and always tried to respond truthfully. What we did was adventuresome enough, needing no embellishment. Some of those questions and my responses follow:

"What brings you the greatest joy in your personal life?"

"We have served as devoted missionaries for so many years that we have learned how the Lord of the harvest Himself brings greater joy than the harvest. Char and I are in love with our Lord and with each other. We bring joy to each other. Our grandchildren are a delight and the responses to our conferences always bring us personal satisfaction"

"List a couple of your favorite activities and/or hobbies."
"Char does a lot with Facebook. I run, lift weights, play basketball, and study Hebrew. All of these activities are in addition to conferences which is our work. It is difficult to separate the personal joys from the public ministry joys."

My response to a request for a story: "This part of any report is always difficult for me, because everything we do is interesting and yet normal for us.

We like our work whether it is easy or not. We do it because that is

who we are. At age six, I decided to be a missionary while at age 13, Char made the same decision. So here we are in our later years still doing what we have always wanted to and love to do.

"The Christmas parties make a nice story, but non-Jewish readers might not appreciate fully the absolute adventure of celebrating Christmas and Easter.

Receive my reports for what they are—our attempt to relate what happened to us personally and professionally during our ministries.

With this we arrive at the end of chapter nine recording the events and thoughts of 2015.

CHAPTER TEN - 2016

We are daily blessed with answers to our prayers. God is still *"able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine"* (Ephesians 3:20).

ALONE IN ISRAEL

On April 5, I wrote the following:

"During the last month I kept my promise to Char. I told her that if she would remain steady with me during our two-month ministry trip to India in October and November, she could go to our son, Joel's house to visit him, our daughter-in-law and our grandchildren. The trip to India had not been easy, but Char stayed with the plan for that extended series of conferences in many different states. Now she was resting in the States with family. So, without her with me in Israel, I focused on Hebrew studies, meal preparation, and housekeeping.

"For two years I had been developing a problem with the retina of my right eye. An examination revealed that the problem required surgical repair. This was scheduled for early April with time enough to recover before our next trip scheduled for June and July."

Later, I reported:

" I am typing in my hospital room. This morning I was admitted to the hospital and went through a battery of pre-op tests. Tomorrow morning at 8:00 I will undergo eye surgery for the retina of my right eye. The tests are over, so this afternoon I am peacefully writing this report. Char has now returned to Israel."

As we came to the end of May, I finished a six-month period of time during which I focused more on Hebrew than on travels to Africa or India. We thanked the Lord that He gave me skilled and dedicated language helpers with whom I spent numerous hours practicing speaking Hebrew. Eagerly I wondered what the Lord had in mind for me to do with this skill I slowly acquired.

We were not unaware of the significance of living in Israel in this generation. God has good plans for His people, Israel. We considered it a unique opportunity to live there, learn the language, and join the Jewish people in prayer for the peace of Jerusalem. As I looked back on the hours and efforts I spent learning Hebrew, I was grateful. But I wondered what God had in mind. Maybe learning to appreciate Israel with my limited knowledge of Hebrew was reason enough. Now in 2026, even though I have not used my Hebrew in ministry, I did enjoy Israel more because I learned their ancient language.

In May I recovered from my eye surgery and began again playing basketball with the men in the Peniel Congregation of Messianic Believers on Shabbat evenings.

Paul the Apostle and his company of travelers faced two closed doors in Asia Minor before receiving a revelation in Troas to move on to Macedonia (see Acts 16:6 – 10). This unexpected move brought the Gospel from Asia to Europe, changing not only church history, but also world history. Man proposes, but God disposes. Like you, we wanted God's plan fulfilled more than our plans. Three times during our three-month trip to Africa during June, July, and August, our plans were willingly set aside as doors closed and other doors opened.

RWANDA

In Rwanda we ministered first in one unscheduled meeting in an International Congregation in Kigali which resulted in an invitation to return the next year with a full conference. But non-scheduled add-ons like this occurred often and nothing was canceled. We then conducted conferences in Butare, Cyarwa, Nymagabe, Gasarenda, and Murambi. Three of those conferences were one-day add-ons to the schedule. Then we returned to Kigali, moving on to Uganda.

UGANDA

In Uganda, we conducted a conference in Lira, then returned to Kampala for a scheduled conference. During this second week, war broke out in South Sudan. Our host advised us to postpone our ministry trip until another time. So, what were we to do with the

ten days we had expected to be in South Sudan?

We continued with additional teachings for another week in the host church in Kampala. Then we conducted another complete conference in another church. As a result of these two unexpected and blessed times of teaching ministry, we assisted, advised and participated in the development of a greatly needed Bible school in Kampala, Uganda.

This school served a considerable number of quality people displaced from Rwanda and Burundi, East Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya as well as others who live in South Sudan and Rwanda. Three African friends with whom we worked over the past several years and are well qualified to teach and administer a Bible school asked us to advise them. Char assisted them, hoping to further use her academic training in Educational Leadership. Our personal intent was to teach several courses s each year.

KENYA

The third surprise opportunity was the result of a cancellation in Nairobi, Kenya. The original host pastor was called to travel abroad to further his ministerial education. We were glad he would further develop himself but were at a loss as to what we should do with the

seven days we had allowed for ministry to his group leaders. We prepared to become guests of a ministry in Southwest Kenya in the Kissi area. This group had not been a part of our original schedule. But when they had learned were to be in Kenya, they requested that we include them. We were glad to insert them into our schedule. This was another of God's providential involvements in our travels. Our teachings were well received and we passed the baton. They taught others what they learned from us.

Before we traveled to Kissi, however, just sixteen hours after learning of our Nairobi conference cancellation, we "happened" to meet a Kenyan American. Sam was back home in Kenya for the express purpose of conducting a leaders' conference. The Lord had told him not to concern himself with the logistics of his conference. And he was staying at the same Christian guest house where we were.

When Sam learned of our conferences, he invited us to work with him. He did not know we had just had a cancellation for the exact week for which he planned a conference with no exact teaching agenda. Our three-day, fifteen-hour conference fit perfectly into his time slot and was welcomed by his friends. This conference was conducted in Eldoret in the West part of Kenya, just northeast of Kissi where we were already going. So according to God's schedule, not ours, we traveled to Kissi, then to Eldoret, both in western Kenya. After the Eldoret conference we traveled east back to Nairobi on August 13 to catch our originally scheduled flight from Nairobi to Tel Aviv on August

14. As I looked back on the schedule changes and saw what happened, I was amazed at how much better God planned it. I am not the most flexible of men, but I would be foolish to try to control things when God is doing it so much better than I.

A VISIT FROM OUR FIRST GRANDSON

Back in Israel we were delighted to receive our first grandson, Joshua. He visited us then traveled with us to India. Our younger son, Joel, and his wife Elizabeth were intentional in having a large family of eight children so they could make an investment in producing godly influencers for the next generation. They were also deliberate in wanting to connect their children with their grandparents. This impacted our relationship with our grandchildren. Joel and Elizabeth wanted us to have input in their lives. What an opportunity to influence yet another generation! We prepared for our trip to India, flying on October 6th. We looked forward to meeting new friends and facing new opportunities, first in Mumbai, then in other parts of India.

Yet, after our two months in Africa, we rested before preparing for our two-month ministry trip to India. Again, I used the time to study Hebrew. Later Joshua played basketball on Shabbat evenings along with the men in our congregation and me. During his time with us he completed several lengthy reading assignments I gave him, reading and reporting on important books from my library.

INDIA

Most of October and November we spent traveling to, within, and from India. Throughout the years, the Lord allowed us to establish good working relationships with Christian hosts and organizations made up of quality people. We so appreciated the opportunities to serve which they provided for us. An added joy was that Joshua taught music and worship to a youth group. Several times, during other ministry times I called him to the platform and asked him a question or two. He always responded well.

"We began on October 7th by spending four days in Mumbai, the largest major city in western India. We worked with a new group, friends of our friends, with whom we anticipated working again.

This map shows the geographic relationship and distance between Israel in the Middle East and India in south Asia.

We conducted a one-day conference for Christian leaders in a local church in Mumbai, preached in two services in the morning, Joshua taught a group of youth, then we traveled to Pune in the afternoon and evening of October 9. We moved through western India conducting one-day pastors' conferences in Pune, Bidar, Nizamabad, and Nagpur before arriving at Hyderabad.

DENGUE FEVER

We believe it was while we were in Bidar, I was bitten by a mosquito which carried the dreaded Dengue Fever. There is no prevention or cure for this debilitat-ing disease. Thinking it was just the flu, I pressed on with teaching. But as several days passed, my temperature spiked, then returned to normal, only to spike again—a normal symptom of the disease. I grew weaker as the fever persisted. On October

20 after we arrived in Nagpur, we decided to find out what was going on. The blood test results showed that my blood platelet count was down to 32,000. It is supposed to be between 150,000 and 200,000, so I was immediately hospitalized.

The next morning my platelet count was even lower, down to 29,000. Our host pastor had me transferred to a larger hospital equipped with an ICU where I could be more closely monitored. Five days later, when my platelet count climbed back up to 90,000, I was released. Three days later a post-dismissal blood exam revealed that my blood count was up to 150,000.

This is the wonderful family who hosted us for a conference in their church when we discovered that I had contracted dengue fever. They were very patient and helpful during this difficulty.

During all this time in Nagpur, Char maintained her schedule of teaching for one week. Then upon my release, we remained in Nagpur another week for a full recovery. We are so grateful to our hosts who were concerned and sup-portive throughout the ordeal.

As a result of my illness, we missed one week of ministry opportunity in the Hyderabad area. But we carried the full load of teaching for the second week that had been planned. Slowly, day by day, I gained strength. We traveled south from Hyderabad to Tamil Nadu and conducted a series of conferences at a Bible college and in other cities near Erode. Then we traveled to Madurai where we conducted another conference and ministered in a local church.

As I pray, I walk. It helps me focus. If the house is empty and I need to concentrate on the conversation I walk with my phone in my hand. Joshua also likes to walk to focus on whatever. He agreed to attend some of the conference sessions, but mentioned that he

The host pastor for this conference in Madurai was especially hospitable. This was not our usual treatment, but this time we stayed in a nice hotel and ate food we enjoyed.

liked to walk while listening to something. My response was, "Ah! No problem! There is a long upper balcony in the auditorium where I will be speaking. Go up there and walk as much as you like. No one will be distracted." The plan worked great. From time to time, I noticed Joshua walking as I taught, but it was no problem to any of us.

This wonderful family hosted us at a nice hotel. This was not our usual experience, but it certainly gave us good rest and nice meals.

God is good. He knows our situations and makes things work out just right.

"Open doors seemed to be everywhere. Many implored us to return and teach more. We could not do what we do alone. God gave us wonderful local partners that facilitated our ministry opportunities. This also is something God did. *". . . All that we have accomplished, you have done for us"* (Isaiah 26:12).

■ ISRAEL

Back in Israel I was almost back to my normal level of strength. One of those first days back in Tiberius I ran again through the much-needed rain. In the fall of 2016, Israel experienced a large number of grass and forest fires—some the result of intentional arson. So the rain that began on November 30 and continued was a welcome answer to prayer. It saddened us to think that some people

who lived in Israel did not truly love that land or else they would never attempt to destroy it by fire.

God is good and He always does what is best. He has done that since the beginning. The universe He created is a result of His perfect goodness, wisdom, and power working in unison to produce the best universe possible. What He created is better than what would have existed if He had created a problem-free universe in which less character development could take place. The challenges and difficulties He allows make possible the personal character development that He loves. On the macro scale, God's universe is the best that could have been. On the micro scale, it is still true that what God does and allows is the best. We need only be obedient and fit in with His plans.

Looking back on the difficulties and victories of our trips to Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and India we saw God's best. Easy? No. Eternally valuable? Yes.

CHAPTER ELEVEN - 2017

"We celebrated our 48th wedding anniversary in April. As with most people who reach similar milestones, we reflected that before we were married we could not have imagined what would happen to us. Since our wedding we have lived happily ever after in Canada, South Korea, Doylestown, PA, Long Beach, NY, Beijing, China, Tulsa, OK, Pretoria, South Africa, then in Tiberius, Israel. In this variety of settings we remained happily engaged in the King's glad business of teaching, preaching, administrative duties and more. What great memories!

"While in Israel between travels, I made slow but steady progress in Modern Hebrew language efforts and taught myself how to type in Hebrew, though I was never fast. I had earlier learned how to use a Chinese word processor and how to type in Chinese. That was a two-step process. First, type the letters that indicate the sound then select the Chinese character. In typing in Hebrew my writing did improve and I learned to spell better.

UGANDA

We spent five weeks in Uganda, mostly teaching Bible school courses and speaking in local churches. Contrary to our usual pattern of three-day conferences, only once did we remain in a church for a full three-day conference. Our host, Pastor Peter, found us "by accident." He heard us speak in a small church where the Lord led him to worship. Peter gave a rousing testimony and invited us to come the following week to speak to his pastors and leaders. It was a great time even though rainy and cold.

The year before, we had promised some of our brothers that we would be happy to return to Uganda and teach more Bible school courses. We found two groups of eager Bible school students happy to learn Bible Doctrines from me and New Testament Survey from Char.

The small town of Mubende is 200 kilometers west of Kampala, the capital. In that place we taught a group of about 30 men, a mixture

of educated and uneducated pastors. These dedicated and intelligent men asked good questions and appreciated learning what we taught. Education and IQ are two different issues. Education relates to the amount of information in one's head while intelligence quotient refers to one's aptitude to learn. In our line of work this distinction was important. Having no education does not indicate a person is not intelligent.

In another remote place the church only had a few chairs and benches, but about 100 people crammed together or sat on mats for hours. They listened eagerly and enthusiastically received what we taught. By late afternoon of the second day, I was asked to stop because they were too exhausted and could learn no more. Then we realized most of these rural people were not accustomed to sitting, concentrating, and learning for a long time. We were moved by their situation and hunger for the Word. They did their best and so did we.

This is a frequent sight in much of sub-Sahara Africa

Back in the capital, Kampala, we found another group of about 50 hungry students. Even after the classes were completed, they remained to ask other questions.

"We trust that for many years the congregations pastored by these developing leaders will benefit from the deposits we made. On this trip we departed from our routine of only conducting three or four-day Leadership Empowerment Conferences. We spoke once or twice in a greater number of local churches while focusing on Bible

This is the Nile river as it begins its journey from Lake Victoria in Uganda proceeding north to Egypt.

This is the Nile river as it begins its journey from Lake Victoria in Uganda proceeding north to Egypt.

school students and potential Bible school students. We had to be

We made a lot of friends in Africa and we still have contact with many of them.

flexible.

Throughout this time we continued to pray for a specific people group to which we had ministered in Rwanda. They are the Yikenyarwandan-speaking diaspora from Rwanda and Burundi. This diaspora has scat-tered people in nearby nations, a result of several wars and the genocide in Rwanda. The school we envisioned would train Christian leaders in Uganda, leaders from Eastern Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, and Tanzania. This worthy cause merited our attention because no post-secondary school existed that specifically addressed leadership training for this unique and specific language group. We continued to pray and wait on the Lord.

Recognizing the need for a Bible school, we felt compelled to help them. We held a meeting of interested brothers and sisters and discussed the need to look for property and lay plans for engaging a faculty and recruiting students. We envisioned a wholistic approach to training leaders in Bible, theology and life skills. That part of our vision is still in our hearts but waiting for God's right time. We generally counseled others who had a dream this way: "Give it to God. If He gives it back to you, it is yours. If He does not, it never was." We followed that maxim with this part of our dream for Africa. Perhaps there will be another book to tell what God did next with our dream.

SOUTH SUDAN

Oh my, what a struggle we had in South Sudan! We were told that we could receive a visa to enter South Sudan at the Juba, South Sudan airport. We found out the hard way that this was only true if we had a letter of invitation stamped with approval by the Ministry of Interior. We did not have such a letter. So, after our morning flight

from Uganda to Kenya, when we tried to board the plane to South Sudan, we could not. After four days and three nights living in the Nairobi, Kenya airport, we finally boarded a plane for Juba, South Sudan. We did, however, learn a little bit about how to manage the airlines' lounge systems.

Never at any time during those three and a half days were we hungry or in pain. We just could not move on. We developed a keener sense of the suffering prisoners endure. We tried to contact the host pastor, but it was a weekend and he was busy with church responsibilities. Anyway, we endured that difficulty and were eventually bound for South Sudan.

As we approached Juba, from the air we saw the green landscape and the over-flowing Nile river just east of the city, flowing north toward Egypt. Six years previously many in the south part of Sudan hoped that major political problems would be solved if the partly Christian southern part of Sudan separated from the rest of the mostly Muslim part in the north.

But because of inter-tribal warfare in the south, attacks on convoys of travelers, highway robberies and murders and other complications, political unrest still prevailed. Add to this turmoil, a terrible famine in the north which drove as many as one million refugees south into Uganda and Kenya. The Sudanese people felt desperate. Some reported that 20 million persons were affected.

The dear pastors who waited for us and attended the Juba conference were very appreciative. It took some time, however, for our bodies to feel rested. Since we arrived three days late, we start-ed the conference the day after arrival. Our suitcases did not arrive until yet another day later. Then we departed the same day the conference closed.

In spite of these difficulties, we enjoyed good fellowship, had an excel-lent interpreter, and finished that leg of the race set before us. We continued to pray for the valiant soldiers of the cross who labor under extreme hardships and handicaps to preach the Gospel, evangelize, and disciple Christians. We were invited to return for another conference or two and prayed about it.

During our time in Juba a group of orphan children came to visit and sing for us. There is a great variety of specialized Christian ministries throughout Africa: teaching, gardening, health, nutrition, music, women's ministries, orphanages, youth, digging wells, educational projects, etc. Each laborer needed to know his or her assignment and stay with it. We felt God called us to do what we did. God told us to train pastors so we stayed with that.

MAURITIUS

Mauritius is an island nation in the Indian Ocean, south of India and east of Madagascar, the large island just east of Africa. We have visited beautiful nations, met wonderful people and experienced the blessings of the Lord on many occasions. However, never have all three of these factors combined to produce such a fruitful, enjoyable, challenging and appreciated time of teaching ministry as we enjoyed in Mauritius.

Phillip Tse, a dedicat-ed man of Chinese descent, bought a copy of *Habits of Highly Effective Christians* in a bookstore in Port Louis, the political and financial hub of the island nation. He contacted me. He was serving as the acting pastor while the senior pastor was off on an assignment. The church was filled with zealous Christians, so it was a great joy to associate with them.

We conducted a community-wide, inter-church conference sponsored by St. Paul's Anglican Church, spoke in several other churches and home group meetings and engaged in personal counseling. We learned the value of individual counseling sessions. It was a source of happiness to address some of the problems people were experiencing with our Bible-based answers. We taught a full conference, met with multiple cell-groups, preached in services and met with the church leadership. Some of the men and I played basket-ball. Pleasure or physical exercise was not our goal, but we rode on a catamaran, snorkeled in the Indian Ocean and watched the dolphins play. We also saw a whale. We were invited back.

IN BETWEEN

Our September weeks in Israel between ministry trips go by quickly. We were always glad for these turn-around opportunities in Israel. We almost always returned from Africa, tired from the work happy because God blessed it. As the time for our India trip approached, we were refreshed, rejoicing and anticipating what the trip would hold.

As we prepared for our trip to India, we were given a new kind of opportunity—to broadcast the soundtrack of our Leadership Empowerment Conference video series through the radio ministry of Voice of Hope. The sound track itself was a series of professionally recorded teachings with value of its own to the radio listeners. The broadcasts served as radio advertisements for the teachings and videos now appearing on our website: empoweringchristianleaders.com.

What are the chances that opportunities to broadcast our Leader-ship Empowerment Conferences would come our way in precisely our two target areas—Africa and India? God did it. Broadcasts of our conference by TV in India began October 24. The broadcasts were at 12:00 noon on Tuesday and Thursday and Saturday and Sunday at 5 PM, Indian time. Because these broadcasts were also on the www.gracetv.co website, they were available throughout the world.

The daily radio broadcasts from Voice of Hope out of Lusaka, Zambia were scheduled to begin January 8, 2018 at 9 PM (21 hours Central Africa Time) and continue Mondays – Fridays for six weeks. Those broadcasts covered most of Africa.

As the Lord made it possible we prayerfully wanted to expose our teachings to English-speaking Africa. While we knew that face-to-face presentations were more important, radio waves traveled over the African landscape much more easily than our aging bodies. We simply tried every avenue to reach church leaders. In addition to this, I made plans to go by myself the next April to Namibia to work with a pastor/bishop of a group of pastors.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND PLANS

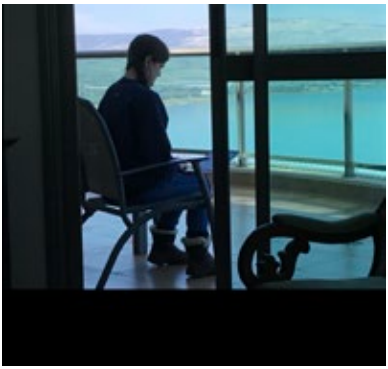
"After this whirlwind tour we spent seven days regrouping in Tiberius. Then we moved on to North America to visit our sons, their families and pets. Our grandchildren were growing physically, socially, educationally and spiritually. We maintained contact with them via daily Skype Bible studies. We flew first to Canada to be with our first son, Dan, and his chocolate Labrador retriever, Bella, for a week. Then to the States to be with Joel, Elizabeth, and eight wonderful grandchildren for Christmas and New Year's.

We planned physical check-ups and visits to churches in Tulsa during January, 2018. Then I would return alone to Israel on February 5, 2018 while Char remained in Illinois with the Joel Meyers family until the end of February. She would bring our oldest granddaughter, Abigail, with her for a three-month visit to Israel. At ages 73 and 72, we were relatively healthy and continued to work hard. We were grateful that we could enjoy family time in spite of our callings to live and serve abroad. The Lord helped us with all our medical needs. We also reported to four churches regarding what the Lord was doing. We were tools in His hand.

CHAPTER TWELVE - 2018

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY AND PUBLIC MINISTRY

It was Abigail's turn to spend time with Grandpa and Grandma. She visited us until April. We never realized we would have the opportunity to spend so much valuable face-time with our grandchildren while maintaining our schedule of ministry trips abroad. God is so good.



We enjoyed having our granddaughter Abigail with us for several months. She liked our balcony. I can't say that I blame her.

As children, we both learned so much from our grandparents, so it was our joy to share life lessons with our grandchildren. We thought we might have to sacrifice this joy, but look what God did. They were with us as we traveled and ministered. God is interested in families. Sometimes I struggle with productivity since I enjoy my work so much. But I know that according to Scripture, we must not be so preoccupied with ministry that we neglect family. If we cannot manage our families correctly, we are not qualified to lead in the church.

Some folks back in 1973 discouraged us from going to the mission field. They thought it would not be good for our children. On the contrary, we found the advantages our boys had growing up abroad out-weighed the disadvantages. Our sons are more broad-minded and aware of the greater world issues than many who grow up in a mono-cultural environment.

Joel and Elizabeth wanted each of their eight children to visit and learn from us— an additional source of happiness. We anticipated six more 'grandchild' visits. These visits would be an opportunity to demonstrate the credibility of our message about the importance of family. A kind of living illustrated sermon. People were watching how we lived. Getting to know our Abby one-on-one was pure joy.

NAMIBIA

While the Christian world celebrated the resurrection of Jesus, I had been alone in Israel planning and preparing for the Namibia trip. Then Char stayed with Abigail in Israel. Especially during this trip, I was mindful that "Righteousness exalts a nation." Both spiritual and governmental leaders of Namibia served important roles in helping their nation raise the level of its righteousness and spirituality. I prepared to minister to both governmental and church leaders.

From April 8 until May 3, I would conduct five Leadership Empowerment conferences. On schedule, I rode the train to the Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv then flew all night to Windhoek, Namibia. I worked with a new person whom I had only met through the internet, so I was concerned about the connection. It was a rare experience, but no one was at the airport to receive me. After several anxious hours my host arrived at the airport. I was relieved!

During the four weeks in Namibia I taught five days in Windhoek, the capital, to a mixture of governmental and church leaders. Then six days in Luderitz on the coast among beautiful mountains and countryside, located toward the south. Next I spent three days in Warmbad in the south where my host lived.

On the ride to Warmbad, I was scrunched up in a crowded seat in a small truck. There was no room for another passenger, but they made room. The starlit black sky at night was absolutely beautiful. Being an early riser I enjoyed this during my morning walks. Following that, during four days in Karasbur I met wonderful people all eager to receive the teachings. Then finally the last two Namibia days were in Windhoek again in a second venue teaching another group of hungry minds.

UGANDA

After Abigail flew home to the USA, we began serious preparations for a June 5th departure for Uganda. We were scheduled to conduct conferences in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi. The order and the dates of these trips would be established

in meetings with our fellow workers in Uganda. We planned to return to Israel on August 30. This was to be one of our longer trips. We did not, however, go to Kenya or the Congo, but we did conduct conferences in the other three nations. Two groups of Congolese crossed the border to join us in Rwanda and Burundi.

We began the first week of June with an international conference where we met many of the Africans who would be our hosts. We were grateful for this effort made by our hosts and the individual facilitators as it made a difference when we arrived at the various places and already knew each other.

One time we finished a conference then learned that the host for the next conference thought it would start in his village the next day. In order to accommodate him, we traveled all night by bus for thirteen hours arriving in time to start the conference. The grati-tude participants displayed at the end of our confer-ences compensated for these kinds of difficul-ties. We also appreciated the occasional empty day with no travel or conference.

In the nearby photo, I am pushing a young boy on his wooden bicycle. This event occurred at the end of a conference for over 100 pastors and church leaders, refugees from Congo, living in Uganda. At this conference, we saw how difficult life was for refugees. They crossed the field with chairs in their hands, up over their heads, or on the backs of motorcycles. They seemed grateful for the teachings. It was just after that conference that I participated as a natural grandparent by helping this young man enjoy his homemade wooden bicycle.

Over our heads at that refugee camp was a leak in the cement roof. In that small one-roomed building rain water dripped on us during the night. We were laying on a mat on the floor, so we propped an open umbrella over ourselves to deflect the water so we could sleep.

RWANDA

We arrived safely in Rwanda and the border of Congo at Gisenyi. Across the border was Goma, Congo where we intended to conduct a conference. People gathered at the border to welcome us. However, we had been misinformed regarding the procedure for crossing that border and were refused entry. So a good group of Congolese twice, once each day for two days, came across the border to our hastily arranged location in Gisenyi, Rwanda. We could not get to them, so they came to us.

This fine couple were our hosts several times in Burundi

BURUNDI

During the question and answer session in our first conference in Bujumbura, the host pastor asked if we would present the two sessions regarding Character Development in our Mar-

riages to a broader group. So on Sunday afternoon, we again presented the marriage part of our conference to a larger group who came from other churches. Additional sessions and extra speaking/teach-ing opportunities are often offered, but this was the first time for this addition. What a privilege to share with the Africans who want to learn!

In our second conference in Burundi the participants again came across a national border. This also happened at Bujumbura, but farther south than the previous one. About 16 Congolese daily joined us from Congo all three days. We were reminded that we are not the only ones who exerted efforts to make these conferences happen. We admired and appreciated the efforts made by our hosts and the participants who traveled with great inconvenience in order to attend.

BACK IN UGANDA AGAIN

One of our best conferences was held in the northern part of Uganda. The organizer was an exceptional leader, so we completed six full sessions each day for the two days we were with him. Due to his help, the number of crying babies and interrupting cell phone calls was lower than usual. Learning without interruption is certainly a side-line, yet it is an important part of teaching the value of creating a good learning environment.

On this trip we often felt the protection and enabling power of the Holy Spirit helping us through the difficult times. Even when border crossings were possible, delays and difficulties occurred. Not all law-enforcement officers were honest. Some found interesting ways to add to their income by taking advantage of travelers.

Our final difficulty occurred on our way driving in the middle of the night from Tel Aviv to Tiberius. We had traveled all day from Kampala, Uganda then drove from 10 pm until one am. We thanked God for the Israel's developing highway system, but much of the improvements in road construction occurred during the nights when traffic was lighter. We came upon a construction-related roadblock and were unable to go farther on the road we knew,

with no instructions regarding which way to go or which road to take. For another hour or so we struggled to safely find our way home. God certainly had enabled us. Do I dare say it again? God did it!

Back in Tiberius we recuperated physically, emotionally and spiritually. We usually returned home exhausted. This trip was no different.

MOVE AGAIN?

We knew that we were no longer physically able to travel internationally then domestically at the pace we had maintained. How could we respond to the many sincere invitations to return when we were unable to travel as much as before? Ah! We could move there. Since we returned home to Israel, we prayed about a move.

Moving back to Africa would mean renting out our apartment in Israel and using that money to rent a place in Kampala, Uganda. Then we could shorten our "commute." We could serve in the five countries of East Africa—Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi for two - five years. We loved living in Israel but were determined to make a deposit in the pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and Christian leaders of East Africa.

The questions and challenges of such a move were enormous, but not impossible. As long as we enjoyed health, we sought to remain active in what God had given us to do. Our work and commitment to it would not change. We simply would seek a shorter commute. Our sons had always been great cheerleaders, and they approved of this idea. Following the example of others in the history of the Church, we wanted to finish well.

For two years we had been thinking and praying about helping to start a Bible and Bi-vocational School in Uganda. It would serve the 40 - 45 million Yikenyarwandan-speaking diaspora from Rwanda and Burundi who were scattered as a result of wars and the genocide in Rwanda. This school would train Christian leaders in Uganda, Eastern Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, and Tanzania.

We dared to dream and pray about addressing this opportunity.

No other post-secondary school existed that specifically addressed leadership-training for this unique and specific language group. Even as we aged, we could still teach Christian leaders if we remained in one place for longer periods of time. If you have a dream, give it to God. If He gives it back to you, it is yours to fulfill. If He does not give it back, it never was yours.

During December, 2018 we again celebrated with family in eastern United States. What a joy to be with our immediate and extended family!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN - 2019

Back in Israel the first of February, 2019, our third grandchild, Sam, joined us for the next three months. Sam enjoyed playing basketball with me and the other men of our congregation on Shabbat evenings just as his older brother, Joshua, had several years earlier.

Sam bonded quickly and easily with new Jewish friends. He stayed overnight with one friend several times and enjoyed doing things with the local young people—away from us. This independence was a healthy attribute. All three of us at-tended a Jewish wedding—a great experience with our believing Jewish friends.

CONTEMPLATING OUR MOVE TO UGANDA

For many months we prepared for the big move to East Africa. Although we had worked in almost twenty African nations for twelve years, this move represented the first time we would reside long-term in a non-western, developing country. Our living experiences in Korea, China, South Africa, and Israel were different as they were already developed nations.

In 1 Corinthians 16:9, Paul displays his optimistic attitude when he faced a *"great opportunity combined with much opposition."* He wrote *". . . because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me."*

If we were in Paul's shoes, we might have said, "but" instead of "and" as Paul actually did say. We might have explained why we could not use the advantage of the opportunity. Paul, however, took a different attitude, so we wanted to follow his example. We knew

difficulties would be involved in the choice we made to move to an underdeveloped nation and begin a new chapter. We chose to agree with Paul that we had opportunities and difficulties rather than because of difficulties we would remain where we were. We felt compelled to go.

The prospects of this wonderful opportunity were to serve the Lord by serving the pastors of East Africa. We hoped to establish a pastor-training base in Kampala, Uganda. Five different groups had invited us to join them in training their pastors, though some only expected a one-time conference. Others asked for long-term discipleship training.

What is required in a move of this nature? Here is a list of the challenging issues we faced. All seemed overwhelming and humanly speaking, impossible. Yet we saw God do it through us. It seemed as if we accomplished it, but we know God did it.

› Rent out our Tiberius, Israel apartment. Use the income to pay for housing in Kampala.
› Find the exact location in Kampala where the Lord wants us to live.
› Funds for the initial setup of our base.
› God's guidance regarding the location in Kampala for us to teach.
› God's wisdom in how to pace ourselves at a speed we could maintain.
› What invitations to accept and which ones to decline.
› Relationships with those under, with, and whom we serve.
› Legal matters, such as visas, work permits and rental contracts.
› Communications, i.e., phones and internet connections.
› Wisdom, strength, peace, grace, insight, discernment, understanding, courage and God-centered confidence.

At our ages this move required a total commitment. The Bible confirmed such a commitment: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matthew 13:44). We had bought the whole field before. We were ready to do it again. Examples of previously 'buying the whole field':

In 1973, we left Canada, leaving our parents in North America. We

took our two little boys and moved to Korea.
In 1990, we sold our house in Pennsylvania and moved to China.
In 2007, we sold our home and cars in Oklahoma and moved to Africa.
In 2019 and in the same spirit, we accepted God's call to East Africa.

With each move, we found treasures and bought fields.

The title of the series of three videos is:
HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN ADVERSITY.

As we neared the end of April, 2019, we were encouraged by three new videos recorded near the Sea of Galilee, edited and placed on the Multi Media page of empoweringchristianleaders.com. The number of organizations which invited us grew to eight. The network of conferences grew in a natural way, even without advertisements. We expected this would happen also in East Africa. We arranged to fly from Israel to Uganda on May 15.

In Acts chapter 10 Cornelius receives direction from God to invite Peter to come and teach them the ways of the Lord. We were reminded of this story when we received an email from southern Tanzania from one of the leaders of an association of churches, pastors, and churchmen from different churches and organizations. As

he prayed and searched the internet for someone to train pastors, he found our website.

As we communicated with each other, it seemed that God had been working in them and in us. They did not know us or that we were planning to move to East Africa. We did not know them or that they needed us to come teach them. This seemed like a miraculous sign, an open door of ministry of God's making.

Now that we look back, however, we are puzzled by how the COVID pandemic thwarted those plans and expectations. The sovereignty of God is often beyond our comprehension. Did He use this invitation to confirm that we were to move to East Africa, even though we never really made it to Tanzania? At age six, I determined to go to Egypt and tell the boys and girls about Jesus. But I never made it to Egypt. Char thought at age thirteen that she would go to Papua, New Guinea, but she never has gone there. God is God. He can lead us even if the ideas on which we base our decisions do not materialize as we expect. We trust and obey.

FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

As we prepared to move to Uganda, April 27, our 50th anniversary date, was just around the corner. We wanted to celebrate the goodness of the Lord in our mar-riage and family for the past 50 years with our friends. So we celebrated in Decem-ber, including a video our grandchildren prepared for us. View that video here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GKBA0GraiH3DpQqaHMp7KHeOZxkNpY30/view?usp=drivesdk

At 74 and 73 years old, we were aware of our constant need for God's direction, provision, protection and anointing as we followed His plan for each chapter of our lives. With a mixture of zeal for God's work and the spirit of adventure, we made the leap.

In Tiberius we celebrated our anniversary on April 27th. We took photos of each other and asked someone to take our photo togeth-

er. God has given us many blessings in life and ministry. Certainly one of the biggest is our affirming and encouraging friendship.

HOME IN UGANDA

We arrived in Uganda the evening of May 15 and busily began making our home. We decided on a centrally located fairly secure apartment which was a new construction. We taught in a Bible School for three days and conducted one three-day Leadership Em-

powerment Conference. Then we cleaned the apartment and moved in. Next we began the process of purchasing furniture, appliances, and various other household items along with two mattresses. We found two large department stores that adequately offered us what we needed. What a whirlwind! There was much yet to be done, but we were thankful the Lord was in charge of the move-in agenda.

We were happy to be back to Uganda and challenged with our work. In the next several weeks we met with Christian leaders who were also training pastors. They wanted us to teach for them too. We rediscovered and adjusted to the limitations in our strength levels. Happy to be based where we had a shorter commute. Now we could also control our conference schedule with greater flexi-bility and availability. And fall into a pace we could maintain for as many months and/or years the Lord would allow us to continue there.

In 2004, as I prayed about the website. The Lord asked me, "Do you think I care only about people who speak English?"

Elizabeth, Taylor, Char and I discussed at length the need for a multi-language feature on our website. It was great idea, but the time was not yet ripe.

I was never able to lose sight of that vision. While in Tulsa, USA, I invited my website manager, Taylor Holmes, and Elizabeth Marti, a professional linguist, for a two-day brainstorming session. We deliberated at length about what it would take to develop a multi-language dimension for the website. God was using the website to reach and encourage English-speaking pastors who were seeking training, and the vision of enlarging it to include more languages continued in our hearts.

We marveled at the possibilities of translating the website into the ten most used non-English languages of the world. Knowledgeable Christians had told us that the website was of good quality, but under-utilized. We needed to advertise and promote it. Each time we advertised, the number of 'hits' increased. We moved more persistently to pursue the multilingual website vision.

During this time we sensed the value of our praying friends as God helped us to complete teaching responsibilities and equip our apartment in Kampala. One of our sponsoring churches offered a generous gift to help us furnish our apartment. We are eternally grateful for their participation.

We began to feel comfortable and "at home." How can anyone do a demanding work and not be able to rest, eat and sleep in a peaceful place? The demands of our work required it, and God provided it.

God's Hand moved on our behalf over and over again—even in the details of our apartment complex. The apartment was exactly where we were to be. We knew God put us there. As a bonus, I was invited to hold a Bible study with the workers and guards in our apartment building. We met every Saturday night for an hour. With hungry hearts they called me "our preacher." Even during the COVID lockdown, this small group continued to meet. For almost two years, this group studied and prayed together.

Over the weeks, we entertained a number of people who would be hosting conferences. Char's grandmother had taught her how to

make the best chicken and dumplings stew. She served this stew several times to nearly everyone's delight. Only two persons refused second helpings! Due to the high elevation the weather in Kampala is not as hot as in many parts of Africa. Chicken and dumplings go well with cooler weather. Getting to know these people and planning conferences eventually resulted in a schedule.

After teaching two weeks from July 14 - 24 at the African School of Leadership and Ministry in Kampala, we traveled to South Uganda near Mbarara for a conference conducted July 29 – 31. Then on August 1 we traveled by bus to Rwanda and August 4 – 31 conducted seven conferences in Rwanda in the Karongi area near lake Kivu.

The excitement of the leaders always brought joy. One bishop James, a leader of a Ugandan indigenous group of churches, signed us up to repeat the October 2018 schedule for two more years. Others also asked that we come. We were excited to see what God had in store! Although the COVID pandemic changed many of these plans, we believed in prayerful planning. Today we compare what we planned with what God actually did and have no regrets. He had a more permanent, longer-lasting, farther-reaching, and larger scale project in mind.

RWANDA

Our policy is to accept invitations. We were guests of a number of different host churches and district leaders of an indigenous group of churches in Rwanda. We completed more than the original schedule because of a change in the public school vacation dates in Burundi. We remained in Rwanda for an additional two weeks and at the same time were advised to come to Burundi later than scheduled. We thanked God for His involvement in our travel plans.

As we were prepared to open a conference in a village in the mountains, one curious learning experience occurred. A well-dressed and fine-looking man walked into the pastor's office where several of us were chatting and getting ready to begin the conference. Sadly, I detected his pride and self-centeredness as he walked across the room and sat down. He said he was a bishop and an apostle and

gave us his name.
Amazed at his arrogance, I responded, "I am a friend of the pope. I know how to talk with cardinals and archbishops but I don't know how to speak with mere bishops or apostles." I laughed, but he did not appreciate my sarcasm. Hoping to immediately defuse the situation, I quickly crossed the room and extended friendly arms, hugged him and said, "God bless you. I am glad you are here. Welcome!"

Later in the conference, he approached me in my room where I was praying while Char was teaching. He boasted about the number of pastors he knew and how he was able to host a large conference if I wanted to work with him. I politely thanked him and declined the invitation.

We need to know with whom we should partner but also with whom we should not. Big is not always best, and small is not always unimportant.

BURUNDI

From September 16 to 31, we were guests of the Foursquare Gospel Church in Burundi. We thanked the Lord for safe travel and strength to complete the schedules.

This trip was different from any other. We conducted two Leadership Empowerment Conferences for pastors, evangelists, and missionaries. Then we completed our first-ever Bible School Faculty Development Seminar. Our host gathered a fine group of potential faculty members for a Bible College he wanted to start. This was wonderful.

The Lord had placed this burden on the heart of our host, the Bishop of the Foursquare Church in Burundi. Serges Nsabimana followed through on his vision and invited us to conduct the special training session. We thanked God for this man of vision, and we finished the training with great joy. We came away from that new experience with the following thoughts firmly fixed in our hearts:

Burundi needed a Bible School.
Burundi church leaders knew they needed a Bible School.
Many Burundians were willing to be a part of the project.
Much training and educational efforts needed to be done if this vision was to be fulfilled.
Bible School Faculty development would take time—probably years, but it was a good place to begin.
We taught about 20 faculty candidates for 6 – 7 hours per day for two weeks. We taught and discussed doctrines, Bible interpretation, and conducted informal discussions regarding pastoral ministry. We also considered at length the differences between the Bible's teachings and church traditions. We thought together about a number of practical Christian life issues.

Another unique and first-time opportunity came our way when we were invited to make three presentations at a three-day open-air combination crusade- church- government leaders' conference. The subject was national cooperation and unity. The governor of the area and the president of Burundi's parliament as well as many pastors and Christians attended. Topics I taught were Nation Building and Public Servants while Char taught about Conflict Resolution.

HOME AGAIN IN UGANDA

We returned to Uganda both tired and happy. Tired, because we completed the schedule and happy, because we completed the schedule. Each year we felt that we would not work this hard for anything else. But we would do it for the Lord! As usual, we played for an Audience of One Who accepted the offering of our service. The conference participants were grateful for what we brought to them. These were our rewards.

This photo of Char was taken on the roof of our apartment building in Kampala. From the size and position of her shadows, notice that

the sun was nearly perfectly over-head. Such is life on the equator. We traveled to Kitgum in northern Uganda for a three-day conference. The conference went well, but there was another unrelated incident.

Sometime during the week, I had an isolated and unusual experience while shopping in the market area. It was already dark, but not late.

Many shoppers milled around. All of a sudden I saw a clenched fist headed for my face. I was unable to duck and caught the force of someone's grudge against white people on my cheek. At no other time, during all our years in Africa, did I ever experience physical abuse. I have had a computer and money stolen, but this was the only time to suffer physical abuse.

What were my assailant's issues? Perhaps he had been mistreated by a white man or had some other cause to hate white people. Some white people have mistreated the blacks in Africa, so the reaction of the Blacks against whites must be understood. This incident still causes me to be thankful that in thirteen years in Korea, five years in China, and fourteen years in Africa, this was the only abuse of my body I ever experienced. We thank the Lord for His protection.

We completed our thirteenth year of ministry in Africa still with no plans for retirement. We believed in refirement! So we finished 2019 with a December 10 – January 3 family visit in North America.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN - 2020

The year 2020 began as we traveled on January 3 to Tulsa, Oklahoma to take care of medical matters, inoculations, and church visits. Upon our return to Africa we planned to minister in Uganda for a while, then move on in February to Mauritius for two weeks.

MAURITIUS

This was our second trip to Mau-ritius. We found the brothers and sisters at our host church, St. Paul's Anglican Church, remaining hun-gry for teaching from the Word, vibrant in their faith and expres-sive of their love for God.

Preaching at St Paul's Anglican church in Port Louis, Mauritius

Our ministry of teaching, preaching, and counseling was every bit as fruitful as our first trip years earlier. We already knew the people and they knew us. We were scheduled to present a number of Bible teachings which were to include, but not limited to, Bible Character studies.

COVID, FLEXIBILITY AND A NEW TRAJECTORY

We had planned to move on to Korea for two weeks, then return to Uganda for a few weeks before going to Israel to renew our residents' visas. These visas would have allowed us back into Israel when we were finished in Africa.

We had left Korea years earlier in 1986 but never returned to visit our many dear friends. We were excited to be able to see them

again. Both Dan and Joel had returned to Korea as adults. Dan, the teacher, taught there for two years. Joel, the pilot trainer, taught Korean pilots for one year. His fifth child, Rebecca Joy, was born in Korea. Both of our sons saw our family and ministry friends on those trips. So in 2020, our denomination's Fiftieth Anniversary celebration was giving us the invitation and opportunity to return for two weeks. We were to teach and preach in Seoul and Taejon, the two Korean places we had lived.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Korea early and hard in Taegue, the very city they planned for our reunion and conference. The pastors reluctantly advised us not to come and we agreed. The planned two weeks of ministry in Korean churches and seminaries was postponed until March, 2021, but even this did not materialize. Someday, we will see those friends in heaven.

The remainder of the entire calendar year had been filled with scheduled events including conferences and faculty development seminars in the north and west parts of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and a trip to Israel to renew our residence visas.

The Mauritius part of the plan was the only thing that actually happened. COVID-19 interrupted plans all over the world. But God had His plan. COVID-19 did not stop us from moving forward in the training of pastors. God worked in spite of the pandemic with His better plan. How many stories were later shared about how God protected and redirected His ministers during the pandemic?

We received more invitations in 2020. Many of them requested Faculty Development Seminars for Christian organizations who wanted to start Bible Schools. This was an opportunity to influence the growth and maturity of the African Church for years to come, long after we would have gone on to our heavenly reward.

We always tried to be diligent in our reporting, because the prayers of our friends made a difference. If we kept them informed, their prayers for us could be more specific and effective. Ours was a team effort. We looked forward to appearing before the throne of God

with our praying friends. Together we would receive the reward that God alone can give. Again, we were playing for an audience of One and God was that One. This was an important concept for us.

LOCKDOWN

Uganda was one of the nations that survived the COVID pandemic before many people were infected. Even so, it eventually threatened Uganda too. The government put the nation on lockdown in mid-March. For a few days, things were quiet. Many people were out and moving about on foot, though most businesses were closed. For a number of weeks, it appeared that Uganda would not be much impacted. Of course, our conferences were all canceled. But because we lived right there in East Africa, we hoped to eventually reschedule them.

So, what did I do during March, April, and into May? The answer requires a background story. When we moved from Tulsa, Oklahoma to Pretoria in 2007, I had stopped my series of teachings from the life of David. I had presented them up to number thirteen in the series to the English-speaking congregation of the Tulsa Chinese Christian Church. Years later during lockdown, I picked up the David series project again. Even when we could not travel or conduct conferences, I prepared more lessons for leaders from the life of David. Even with no invitations to motivate me, I still worked just as hard as if I had been invited to teach a series.

During this time, I began to record lessons for leaders to be broadcast on SALT TV in Kampala—a life trajectory-altering pivotal point. I never thought I would teach Bible-based lessons to Christian leaders on television, then eventually internationally by way of the internet.

Each day I ran, prayed, researched and prepared lessons. I was unsure of how many more lessons I would finish before a new conference schedule took priority. Nevertheless, my new teachings would eventually be used. As it turned out, they were not only broadcast by SALT TV in Kampala, but also edited and placed on my own Seminar and New Videos pages of the website, empoweringchristianleaders.com.

Those lessons were eventually re-recorded and are now one of the four play-lists on my YouTube channel. The total number of recordings is 312, all of them will be available anywhere in the world at youtube. com/@empoweringchristianleaders. How did all of that happen?

In spite of the COVID lockdown and the cancellation of all the conferences, we were both well and happy to be safe in Uganda. On the roads and hills of Kampala I ran, walked to the markets and to the TV station where I regularly recorded my lessons for leaders. Char kept up with housework and some ministry via the internet. Now and then we experienced a slight case of cabin fever. We were grateful for our nice apartment in which to be locked down. We stayed quite busy studying and teaching even if the teaching was in front of a camera. For all those blessings we praised the Lord.

Paul wrote to Timothy in II Timothy 2:9 *". . . I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained."*

In three ways we continued to declare the Word of God in spite of the lockdown. The internet and TV waves still carried our message. We began to realize what God was doing.

Fourteen years earlier I had begun teaching and training Christian leaders via my own website: christianhabits.com, which was changed to leresources.com and now empoweringchristianleaders. com. Visit the website and see the multi-media, seminars, books, curricula, conference and author pages and the link to my YouTube channel (the "New Videos" button).

Our server reported that the Treasure Hunt Game on the author page attracted the most attention and traffic. This Christian conversational game is similar to the Ungame we enjoyed in Canada. I wrote the Treasure Hunt Game during a flight to South Africa back in 2002 when Char and I traveled to Eldorado Park near Johannes-burg. Since the new rendition is now on my website, visitors can simply click on "next question" and up pops another

question. With the random order, players can enjoy the suspense and learning opportunity that the questions make available. Meanwhile, the website underwent an almost complete transformation. The artwork was new while the responsive design technology allowed users of I-phones, tablets, and computers to access the teachings, curriculum, videos and the Treasure Hunt Game with equal ease. The David Series on the Seminar page was expanded to include seventy-five presentations for Christian leaders based on the life experiences of David.

In January, 2019, we met with our website manager and began serious discussions about improving and expanding the website. At the end of July 2020, we were about halfway through its complete reconstruction. Most of my site visitors in the world still used phones so when this new feature became available, the usefulness of the website multiplied exponentially. We also upgraded our search engine optimization (SEO) feature to make it easier for people who wanted leadership training for pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and church leaders to find us.

So how did I begin to broadcast my teachings on television? Not long after we returned to Kampala from Mauritius, I was running and happened to pass the SALT TV and RADIO broadcasting station, a local Christian ministry. I felt impressed to stop in—even in my running suit. As a native English speaker, I wondered whether they would be interested in my hosting a Christian talk show. At first, I resisted the impulse, thinking it was only my imagination. But after turning around and running back past the station, the impression returned. So I acted on it and found myself sitting in the office of a well-dressed well-mannered TV station manager.

The manager received and reviewed the entire 15 hours of "LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE" which we had recorded at 15 historic Bible sites in Israel. He recommended the series to the pastor/CEO of SALT TV and RADIO ministry who invited me to broadcast those 15 hours. He also asked me to record others. From then on, every Thursday and Friday morning, Christian leaders could access biblical teaching materials intended

specifically to help them become more effective, successful in God's eyes, fruitful and influential.

Every week I recorded four segments and every week they broadcasted two of them. The longer this continued, the more they were prepared to continue the series long after I left Kampala. The feedback was positive as listeners recognized the unique aspect of my teachings for Christian leaders. My target audience was narrow, but targeting a specific group impacted that group more forcefully than a more generic or general presentation. Since I spoke directly to the issues that pastors, evangelists, missionaries, church leaders, and Christian teachers needed to learn—the teachings were helpful.

Fewer listeners with deeper, greater impact. My thought for later in semi-retirement was to purchase the necessary camera and equipment to continue to record sessions and send them back to Kampala via the internet. That was just a dream in those days, but God did exactly that.

With the COVID lockdown in effect, I increased my efforts at teaching internationally via

Zoom. Every Saturday I hosted an interactive meeting with a group of growing Christian leaders in Burundi. We continued meeting for a number of months, then tapered the series off as Char and I prepared for the next move God directed us to take.

The COVID-19 pandemic had not chained the proclamation of Gods Word. All our ministries continued from our home even after Char retired in 2021.

God's outstanding work and open doors etched the words of Isaiah into our thoughts. *"All that we have accomplished, you have done for us,"* (Isaiah 26:12). Jesus' statement reinforced it, *"Apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). As we faced these opportunities of an internet-based, digital teaching ministry far beyond our ability to accomplish, we were not afraid. God was doing it.

During that period we also conducted three groups of on-site Leadership Empowerment Conferences organized by a young friend in Uganda. We traveled by motorcycle to and from the conference sites each day. There are thousands of motorcycles, called "Boda Boda." Most are operated by men eager to find paying riders. A Boda Boda ride in Kampala is an adventure in itself!

A BROADER MINISTRY VISION

We continued to think and pray about another dream—our forward projection and the eventual relocation of our work base.

All over the world, people were learning a new way to advance their educations. COVID forced folks to receive their educations online, so it seemed the time was nearing to prayerfully consider produc-

ing a multi-lingual site. Although I am technically challenged, the least likely to envision developing such a website, God blessed us with a gifted nephew, Taylor Holmes. His technical and artistic skills brought nothing but praise from many places because of the good work he did with empoweringchristianleaders.com.

God has also blessed us with a grandson skilled in computers and a large dose of patience. He helped me learn how to work with Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook, video editing and other digitalized ministry matters.

God must have had this in mind when we eventually arrived at our new base in Texas. His plan continued to unfold. God continually prodded and reminded me of what He had said in 2004.

"Do you think I love only those who speak English?"

The question surprised me, but I immediately knew what God was communicating. The website went through many revisions over the years. Since that time, I have prayed, hoped for, and thought off and on about the possibility of multiplying the number of languages that would enable people of the world in the ten most used languages to have access to my teaching materials. They are now available at the leresources.com and empoweringchristianleaders.com websites.

Leadership Empowerment Resources was my calling card then, but it was limited to English. My vision was to provide in multiple languages, at no cost to the site visitor, materials, training, instruction in Bible study, lesson and sermon preparation, etc. I prayed that godly men and women on all continents would be able serve God's people with greater finesse, effectiveness, fruitfulness, influence and success in God's eyes.

In contemplating the language expansion of the website, I studied four charts: 1.) The ten largest language groups, 2.) The ten countries with the highest number of internet users, 3.) The ten countries with the largest populations, and 4.) The Ten Top Languages

used on the Internet. We focused on the largest numbers of persons who use the internet. If we put empoweringchristianleaders.com materials into nine more languages, over 75% of global internet users would have access to teachings for pastors, evangelists, missionaries and Christian leaders in their languages.

Scripture is clear that the day will come when no one can buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast. Only in recent years have we been able to conceptualize what it might be like to use digitized money instead of currency. This may mean that the Christian who is unwilling to become a part of the antichrist-led, digitalized, money-using segment of society cannot use his or her money. The antichrist will take what we have not already used. Our currency will be of no value to anyone. If we don't use it; we lose it. Personally, I hope to have only a little currency remaining unused by then. I want to use what I have and use it constructively.

The empoweringchristianleaders.com multilingual, ministry training website may be worthy of investment in view of this "use it or lose it" reality. Celebrate with me the fulfillment of a vision which has gradually become clearer through the years.

The fields in these various languages are ripe for harvest. The resources on my website could help pastors in remote areas around the world share the gospel more effectively. The only drawback was that those pastors must be internet users. Nevertheless, our friends prayed with us about the vision of using digital teachings on a multilingual, ministry-training website to reach the world. Obviously it involved an enormous amount of money to translate my teachings. Translation is tedious work and requires a special skill.

During those months of lock-down we realized our teaching and broadcasting could be done from anywhere in the world. This truth gradually confirmed our desire to relocate and continue our work from the States. We were still busy and happy in Uganda, but as we neared the end of 2020 we knew we would be moving our inter-national, internet-centered, Zoom and website ministry base from Uganda, Africa to Texas.

Meanwhile, our son Joel was nearing retirement from the United States Air Force. For many years he had moved from place to place. Each time his wife, Elizabeth, packed up the household items and moved the family to Daddy's new assignments. Joel told Elizabeth that when he retired, she could select the place for their permanent residence. During part of her life, Elizabeth was raised on the east side of Dallas. She was familiar with the beautiful forests and countryside there, so she chose east Texas.

Joel and Elizabeth's home and property search dove-tailed with our move to the United States—another subject for chapter fifteen. God was quietly and beautifully at work preparing a place where we could be close to family after so many years of separation. At the same time I would continue my internet-related ministry of teaching.

Late in 2020, we fully intended to travel to Israel to ship our things to the United States. But international travel was complicated by the pandemic. Israel was closed to any visitors or returning residents. We were locked down in Uganda for almost four more months. Even within the delays, we look back now and see how God was protecting and guiding us. The following year was a continuation of God's provision and care. God continued to do it.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN - 2021

Perhaps this chapter should be named: "Move the Base and Enlarge the Scope" because that is what happened in 2021. Many details helped us through the challenges of such a vast change. God performed miracles to move us to where He planned—a place just for us. A quiet and beautiful place of His choosing.

Joel and Elizabeth's move was equally good for Char and me. Most of our lives we overcame obstacles in order to get to and stay on the mission field. Now we followed the leading of the Lord of the harvest back home. The miracles continued as we followed the Lord.

A LARGER SCOPE

An appropriate verse for this time was Isaiah 54:2, *"Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes."*

As we navigated this transition as older people, we remembered the promise God gave His people through Joel 2:28, *"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."* I still had a dream, and God was giving me a chance to pursue it.

Another favorite verse of Scripture gives all of us the courage to pray for extended and expanded opportunities to serve Him and His people. First Chronicles 4:10 says, *"Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request."* Over the years, in the spirit of Jabez, my focus was to pray for the opportunity to reach more Christian leaders.

Jabez lived in an agrarian society, so for him to ask for a larger territory was his prayer to be able to do more. As a teacher, I expressed my desire for a larger classroom, microphone, camera and platform—thinking and praying metaphorically. Throughout the years

of praying, little did I think that God would answer in a literal way. Yet He gave me an internet platform, a microphone to record teachings and a camera opening to a larger classroom. My listeners could see their teacher as they watched and listened to valuable teachings on this digital platform.

God can do more than we ask or imagine as stated in Ephesians 3:20-21, "*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen*" God carries to completion the good work He begins in us. Paul said it well in Philippians 1:6: "*. . . being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*" God can open doors man cannot. If He can and it is best, He will. Isaiah 22:22 says, "*I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open*" (Isaiah 22:22). God not only can open doors, He opens good doors. He opens the best doors.

In late July of 1950, soon after my 6th birthday, my grandmother and I had a time of prayer in the basement of our home in Keokuk, Iowa. Before that prayer I stated that I wanted to be a missionary. As we folded towels together, I wrapped one around my head like a turban and announced that when I grew up I was going to Egypt, to wear a turban and tell the boys and girls about Jesus. Grandma prayed that God would help me become the grandest missionary possible.

That experience was unforgettable as we faced the prospect of moving from Kampala, Uganda to Pittsburg, Texas. Specifically, on August 23 of 2020, about 70 years after my experience in 1950, while walking and praying on the roof of our apartment building in Kampala, the above Scripture verses reminded me of my childhood dream to become a missionary. They also strengthened the more recent and ever-increasing desire to see the influence of my teachings reach a broader audience.

God was speaking, so in February, 2021, I had a clearer under-standing of what that increased opportunity might look like. Char and I were to move our base of ministry from Kampala and Tiberius, to Pittsburgh, Texas. Joel invited us to place a home and establish a ministry base on a corner of his recently purchased farm.

The more I prayed about this vision and desire the more convinced I became that God wanted to expand the ministry of the website. Joel indicated he would assist me logistically and legally with issues of covering this online missions effort with his non-profit organization. He would help make this dream possible. God was making it happen.

Char and I have long been grateful that both our sons have been supportive and encouraging. We were ever so proud of Dan, his pastoral ministry responsibilities, and his work with the Canadian government. He has always had a place in his heart for people in recovery. It was our joy to see him doing that in Ottawa, Canada.

We are also proud of Joel and his military career in the United States Air Force—how God developed him. God gave him the desire to facilitate the dream in my heart.

Approximately 75% of the the world's population would be able to read these Christian materials if we added nine more non-English languages.

› English 25.3 %
› Chinese 19.8%
› Spanish 4.8%
› Arabic 4.8%
› Portuguese 4.7%
› Indonesian/Malaysian 4.1%%
› Japanese 3%
› Russian 2.8%
› French 2.8
› German 2.2%
› Other 23.1%

The "Other" included several populous language groups in India such as Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Bengali. We wanted to include all of them, but with limited resources we needed to make affordable choices. We thought we needed to choose the languages with the most internet users, even if they were not necessarily the most populous groups. Those 10 language groups were the target audience in my thoughts and prayers. However, God had in mind an even greater plan, a plan and scope worth waiting and praying for.

BRINGING THE UGANDA PHASE TO A RESPONSIBLE END

We were safe and comfortable in Kampala. We thanked the Lord for that. Each week I recorded four teachings at Salt TV and continued to partner with my website manager to upgrade the website. At the same time, I was eager to move to the next phase of what God had planned. Ephesians 2:10 says, *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* What we always want to do are the good works God has planned for the Meyers.

We prepared to leave Uganda. We wanted to responsibly pass the furniture, appliances and household goods on to Christian ministries. That was a miracle story in itself. Not one item of furniture or any appliance would not be used in God's continuing work in Uganda. The investment made in these items would not be lost but would continue to serve an eternal Kingdom purpose. We were happy about that.

God performed miracles to help us get our proof of being COVID-free so we could purchase our tickets and fly to the States on April 23. The problem was that airport and airline policies required our COVID testing to be current. So we had to wait until close before the time of departure to be tested. Yet, we also had to have flight reservations prepared well in advance. God helped us through this impossible conundrum.

An even greater series of miracles occurred as the Lord helped us liaison with a friend in Israel. In our absence he would sell our apartment and prepare it for the new occupants. Another series of

miracles happened as we worked with a group of friends in Tiberius to pack and ship our furniture and household items from Tiberius to Texas. We were locked down in Uganda and prohibited from returning to Tiberius to handle these matters ourselves. *"Ah, Lord God you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power. Nothing is too difficult for you."* (Jeremiah 32:17).

THE MOVE

On April 22 we left Kampala and arrived the afternoon of April 23 in East Texas. We began establishing our new place of operations. Because of COVID-19 we had already transitioned our teaching work almost completely to the Internet. So we prepared for our continuing work. We cleared trees from a spot where we could place a modest house and a separate small shed where I could set up an office/studio/workplace. We call it the "Shack."

We stayed in a camper where I set up a tabletop on a bunk at one end to be used as a desk. We were comfortable there and enjoyed the sheep, chickens, and ducks in our yard. For the first time in 52 years of marriage, we set up housing and a work situation in the United States with a sense of "arrival" at home. We had lived far more years as adults outside of the US than the short duration of our times in the States.

Upon arrival in the United States, we each received two COVID inoculations. I recovered from a light case of the virus in two days. At first, Char suffered nothing. However, later she was in the hospital for her cancer-related surgery and contracted COVID there. She hurt so much for a week that she was barely aware of the surgical pain.

When I was a professor at Oral Roberts University I traveled regularly to Sweden to teach missions in a Christian university. During that time Irina Schiau, a dedicated and talented young lady from Romania, was one of my students. When we moved our base to east Texas, Irina volunteered to disseminate my teachings through social media and a daily internet publication. For seven months I had used my personal email program and WhatsApp to share with 250 persons. That was cumbersome and time-consuming, though it did send my daily devotionals out to my friends.

The new platform Irina used, SubStack, allowed these messages to be sent to a greater number of persons automatically—without the need for daily postings. Another important benefit of SubStack was that anyone could unsubscribe. Approval could be expressed with one click and comments made. Past postings were available for review in an archive, and the artistic layout was nicer than the plain text I had used.

HEALTH ISSUES

Living back in the States on Joel's farm was wonderful, but we experienced a serious accident that began a series of physical challenges for Char. On May 15, 2021 she slipped on the middle step of the camper, fell on her left hip, then on her face. Her hip broke with a clean break just below the ball.

At the hospital in Mount Pleasant, about 20 miles north of Pittsburg, she waited three days for the Orthopedic specialist who would perform her hip replacement surgery. Yet that tragedy was not as bad as it might have been. When Char came home from the hospital, we fixed a bed for her at Joel's home while I prepared meals in the camper across the yard and delivered them to her bedside. Not long after that, we learned of her cancer and the need for major surgery.

We finalized the floor plan for our home and contracted to purchase it. We also bought a 10' x 20' shed and engaged a skilled craftsman to remodel it. I needed an office/study/studio and hideaway in which to work. At the same time we continued the internet

ministry opportunities God had given us in Uganda.

Below are four outstanding reasons to praise the Lord:

One, we would never have developed an internet-based ministry unless COVID-19 stopped us from traveling. Because we developed this alternate system of delivery for our teachings we were able to continue that same ministry from our new location.

Two, the TV ministry with Salt TV in Kampala was an opportunity we would not have pursued had it not been for COVID. As soon as the shed was converted into my workplace, I began to record teachings and sent them to Uganda for broadcasting. My Zoom Bible studies also were a result of COVID.

Three, because of the lockdown, we could not travel. During the months that followed, I completed the 75-segment series based on the life of David. This would not have happened if we had been traveling.

Paul would not have written many of his books had he been able to travel. Being prison-bound, Paul wrote letters and the Christian body has benefitted for many centuries. I am not the Apostle Paul, but the idea is the same. The COVID-19 "prison" necessitated writing. The David series on leresources.com was complete and usable as the resource from which I prepared daily short messages. I still continue this ministry.

Four, through a series of miracles, our personal effects in Israel were shipped to Texas and our apartment in Tiberius was prepared and sold to a believer. We were happy that the place where we enjoyed so many times with the Lord would continue to be a blessing to another of God's children. Now we looked forward to years with our family and fruitful ministry on this quiet and beautifully wooded farm.

Psalm 34:19 says, *"The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all."*

Char's broken hip was the beginning of a series of difficulties. She was still learning to walk with the help of a cane when her gynecologist informed her that her tests had revealed uterine cancer. She needed surgery. So off we went to Dallas for her pre-op consultation on October 4. God had directed our path so that we were in the US where this surgery could be done. And the surgeon said the disease was discovered early enough that an operation would probably be successful.

After the successful surgery, Char went through months of chemotherapy. As you might expect she lost all her hair. The medical literature indicated that chemotherapy would either cause or exacerbate existing neuropathy. Char had already been suffering with restless leg syndrome, an early form of neuropathy. So it did not take very long for her case develop into a serious one.

Whether we were trekking through an airport or climbing up a mountain path, Char has always had the grit and personal fortitude to remain strong. She was always determined to complete the task. I have always appreciated her strength. Without that grit, we could not have done what we did. Through the series of physical and medical challenges she faced after our return to the States she has demonstrated the same determination. She is a fighter, a warrior, a woman of faith and prayer. I try to help her and she encourages me to continue what I am doing.

TWO REVERSALS

During that period we experienced some set backs and disappointments. The story of 2021 would not be complete if we did not relay two of them. Remember I have determined to be transparent in this book.

In Kampala walking to Salt TV one Wednesday morning, I pulled my sweater off. In the process, I dropped my glasses on the sidewalk but did not discover it until I was at the TV station. I ran quickly back, but could not find my glasses. A street sweeper told me she had found my glasses and passed them on to the appropriate person. Together we ran to find him and retrieved my glasses.

To reward her, I created a job in which she volunteered to work for businesses of her choice. I would pay her but if the businesses succeeded because of her efforts, the businesses could reward me. The plan was not successful, but through the process I met her creative brother, Tucker. He made CD copies of my recorded teachings complete with labels and jackets. The disks would disseminate leadership materials in Uganda. I bought a duplicating machine, provided a computer for Tucker, and set up a workplace at one end of my bedroom next to my own office in the adjacent enclosed balcony.

Tucker arranged for a number of conferences in local churches. I trusted him and thought I was making progress in discipling a potential Christian leader. However, one afternoon the envelope in which I kept cash in my desk drawer was missing. We were getting ready to buy tickets for our return to the States. So the envelope contained about $2,500. Tucker was the only person who could have taken the envelope. Working with the local police, we tried in vain to recover the money. It was a total loss.

Our first year in Pittsburg, Texas included a similar situation. After purchasing the shell of the "Shack," we received several bids for the interior finishing project. The young man who gave the lowest bid said he was a Christian, so I wanted to give him the opportunity to get his business going. I gave him money to purchase supplies, then a few weeks later another $1,500. He needed it for truck repairs because without his truck, he could not complete my work. After that he never showed up. I lost the down payment and the extra money I had added.

My "Shack" where I study, record and edit videos and receive guests.

Both of these events happened within a year. Do we stop trying to help people because they are dishonest? No. We act out of who we are. We continue to be who we are and do things consistent with who we perceive ourselves to be. We maintain this posture even when we meet reversals. We help potential Christian leaders become what God made them to be. We remain faithful to the assignment regardless of other factors.

AN APPRAISAL

We continued these six ministries:

Continue to record 28-minute broadcasts for SALT TV serving Uganda by direct TV and available all over the world by internet. God miraculously provided a specific donation to purchase a Cannon EOS camera capable of recording TV quality broadcasts. A "shotgun" microphone was also purchased, capable of recording sound for TV broadcasts. My studio, the "shack" was finished and set with drywall and insulation, installed near where our house would be located. The walls were spackled, textured and painted. The electricity, water, and a septic system were connected to that part of the property long before our home arrived a year later.

I received training and instructions about how to move teachings from a camera and mic in Texas to TV screens in Kampala. This involved 1. recording 2. importing 3. editing 4. saving 5. storing on a third-party site in an I-cloud and 6. sending the site address to users of the recording. This stretched me technologically, but it was required if I wanted to continue this ministry from the US.

Use the internet to provide Zoom Bible Studies for pastors in Africa and India. These would be conducted Saturday mornings in the US, which would be Saturday afternoons in Africa and Saturday evenings in India. We planned to begin as soon as the studio was ready.

Continue to maintain and update empoweringchristianleaders.com.

Continue working with Irina, posting daily brief Bible studies via Substack.

Continue making new teaching available the via the internet.

Char would continue to be active with her Facebook account—counseling, praying, encouraging, posting my daily Bible studies, and interacting with many friends.

These ministries were observations of God's goodness.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN - 2022

There is a direct relationship between what God does in our private lives and the work He does in our public ministries. God worked in us individually as He continued to prepare us for more public service.

PERSONAL MATTERS

Char responded well to the chemotherapy infusions. At the beginning of 2022, she had completed four out of the six scheduled treatments. She had received a cat-scan ten days after the third infusion with no remarkable observations. Her internal organs appeared normal. We praised the Lord for that favorable sign.

We agreed with her oncologist to proceed with the full dosage for the remaining two infusions. She was scheduled to receive her final infusion in mid-March. And she wore a hat because her hair style was bald just like mine. However, her strength level was low. We found our hearts drawn together more intimately than ever before in all our fifty-three years together. We worked our way through my meal preparations, housekeeping, laundry, shopping, and cleanup duties. Even though our hearts were heavy with these difficulties, we still called this a good period. We hoped Char would be a cancer survivor.

Several months later we reported more victory in Char's health and recovery. It had been three months since her last chemotherapy injection and her blood test indicated no problems developing in either liver or kidneys. Her organs had handled the strong cancer-killing chemicals without being damaged.

On June 20, Char was scheduled to see if there were any lingering cancer cells. Recovery from chemotherapy normally takes 3-12 months, and she had three months behind her. Her hair was growing, and she showed faint signs of regaining strength. Sometimes her pain level diminished slightly, so we anticipated she would begin physical therapy soon. She went through a cycle of physical therapy, but with a weak body she never regained her physical strength.

Meanwhile, we had another victory related to my study and workplace. The "shack" already had electricity and temperature control. After the house delivery, water and internet would be connected to both the house and the shack. My "man cave" was 25 steps from where the back door of our house would be. I had already been using the shack for video recordings. It took two hours to set up and focus the camera, adjust the lighting, and record two 28-minute videos. Then it took five hours per video to edit and attach the titles. Then an hour and a half to upload each one to my YouTube channel.

As the months passed, the walls of the camper drew closer and closer, the camper seemed smaller and smaller. From May 16, 2019 until December, 2022, we had lived out of our suitcases. We were ready for our home to be delivered. Grateful to stay rent-free in Joel's camper for 13 months yet we longed to get into our home. Enough of temporary arrangements! We were eager to get into something larger and permanent.

Yet we were happy with life and ministry and glad for access to medical care and to be near family—all important blessings. Once in a while I sang, "My home is in heaven just waiting for me and when I get there how happy I'll be." We would be able to rest and work better if we were in our own home, using our own furniture and furnishings.

A DIFFICULT TECHNOLOGY ISSUE

Knowing that many video viewers would be looking at handheld I-phones with small screens, my face shot needed to be bigger with not so much screen space in the background. So in most of the recordings that year the camera was positioned close to me. Some were recorded in the camper, the yard, our grandson's office or the shack. However, since my face filled the majority of the screen my friends at SALT TV said my videos were not good for television. Oh my! So I re-recorded all the videos in which there was not enough back-ground. That decision required many months of tedious work, yet it needed to be done.

MOVING INTO OUR NEW HOME

What a happy day it was when our home arrived! It came in two parts which were joined together to become one house. The biggest part of the next three months we spent moving into our new quarters. We also made the shack into a useful tool for international ministry.

It was interesting to watch the building being moved onto the site, brought together, then connected. It was a happy day and reminded us that Jesus is preparing an even better eternal home for all his children.

First we placed the north half of our house on the north part of the building site.

Then we moved the south half into its position next to it.

Here the two halves have been brought close together in preparation to be connected.

Many of our possessions and clothes had been in storage for four years. With a major move of this nature there seemed to be no end to making necessary connections, hanging items on the walls, repairing this, adjusting that etc. Nevertheless, we were delighted to have water, electricity, septic tanks, heat, internet, a wood-burning stove, decorations on the walls and tools in place. Our clothes were in closets, books were on shelves, dishes were in cupboards. A deck, pergola and stairs were all where they belonged. We even had a drive-way made with crushed concrete.

With the house in place and the shack improved, I was glad to be back to recording videos, writing my daily blog for SubStack and WhatsApp. I also prepared a list of participants who indicated an interest in the next series of Zoom Bible Studies for Christian leaders.

Life is usually filled with a combination of good and bad. God knows how to balance these. We were encouraged by the good things He allowed which sustained us through the difficult things He simultaneously permitted. We have experienced this pattern most of our lives. While we were glad to finally be in our house, Char suffered more and more from neuropathy and remained under care in the pain management section of Titus Regional Medical Center. Her organs survived the chemotherapy, but not the nerves in her legs. It seemed at times that she was slowly gaining strength

as she tried to learn how to pace herself. She could fix meals from time to time. We kept hoping.

She was given a nice diversion from her pain when she was invited to present two Bible lessons at a nearby church. Accepting those invitations was good for her. Her oncologist's office reported that she was cancer free. That was good news.

For years we have prayed together each night. When I hear Char praying for me, I know I am a blessed man. When Char hears me praying for her, she is a happy woman. This habit has long been a source of encouragement and strength to both of us. Since 2021, prayers for Char — for less pain and more strength — became a regular and very sincere feature of those prayers.

Through the internet's various means of communication we were doing about 85 – 90% of the ministry we had been doing since lockdown in Africa. We were glad for access to good healthcare, and we became accepted and active in a local independent church where we enjoyed excellent expository preaching/teaching from the Bible. God had good works prepared for us to do, so we were eager to find and do them. In the spirit of Jabez, we continued to pray, *"Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain"* (1 Chronicles 4:10).

BIBLICAL OPTIMISM

Bible-based optimism is a belief in the goodness of God —that He created the best of all possible worlds. That belief has become one of my core values. It carries me through my dark valleys. This belief contributes to my faithfulness. Such a belief can carry anyone through struggles and adversity. Because of its importance I feel I must share it here.

My story of 2007-2025 must include this reflection on the goodness of God. Such a belief increases the likelihood of anyone experiencing God's goodness as demonstrated in the remaining chapters. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's book, Theodicy, has influenced my belief in the goodness of God.

God is perfectly good, all-wise, and all-powerful. He wants to do what is good because He is good. Because He is all-wise, He knows what is best. Because God has all power, He makes good happen. He can do what He wants. God's goodness and wisdom lead Him to create the best of all possibilities. This belief is true at both universal and individual levels. The created universe is the best that could have been. If we fully cooperate individually with God's plans, what happens to us individually will also be the best possible.

So what about evil and hardships? The presence of evil makes possible a greater good than if there were no evil. God uses evil to develop a better good. Any universe other than the one God chose to create would not be, could not be, as good as the one He did create. If there could have been a better universe, God would have created it. This belief applies to my individual situation and the delay in placing multiple languages on my website. Neither my website nor I would have been ready for multiple language pages in 2004. Both were almost ready in 2022. God's plan, including a twenty-one year delay was not only good, but was the best possible.

Bible-believing Christians do not believe in the foolishness of fate like the ancient Turks. That belief encouraged irresponsibility. It abandoned hope. Ancient Stoicism emphasized virtue regarding what could be changed and the acceptance of what could not. It too was a form of fatalism.

We Christians do not believe that "whatever will be will be." We do not believe that we should do nothing to try to make our attitudes, behaviors and circumstances better. Rather, because we believe God is all-good, all-wise and all-powerful, we will struggle against all opposition to our godly God-given goals. For example, I contended in prayer and still contend against all opposition to make a website-based ministry the best possible for God's glory.

Christians do not deliberately drink poison. Neither do we intentionally engage in even a small evil that would be harmful to us. We will not do anything but the best we can do. We avoid evil, do good, and follow our Father's example to fulfill the goal of making

all things the best possible. The flip side of this line of thought has a positive application. We become willing, even eager, to intentionally do everything possible to bring good for ourselves. A fatalist makes no serious effort to prevent evil. Neither does he vigorously push himself to do something that will bring good. He is a fatalist.

But a Bible-believing Christian will do both. We plunged ahead even during years of not knowing the eventual results of our efforts. Biblical optimism helped us move forward, looking for and expecting good — based primarily on the belief that God is perfectly good, perfectly wise and perfect in power.

Not only Bible-believing Christians, but also secular scholars and thinkers see the good in the world. Socrates looked at the universe and said, "What I have understood thereof pleases me; I think that the rest would please me no less if I understood it."

Notice that far more good exists in the universe than evil. Far more houses than prisons. Though many people will perish without God, overall the good outweighs evil by far. It is sad that some will spend eternity without God because of their wrong decisions. But let us celebrate that millions from every tribe and nation will gather some day before the glorious throne of God in joyful praise. We all deserve to be damned, but look at how many of us are not!

When Satan and his angels were thrown out of heaven they were cast down to this earth. It is possible that other places in the universe have inhabitants who are not exposed to the evil (and possible victories) of this world. The broader universe may have a great deal more happiness in it than we know. Perhaps other creatures in other places in the universe may be envious of the rewards we receive, rewards which are only possible for those who resist the devil and his demons who came to our planet. We don't know the whole story yet.

God is intentional. He does nothing by caprice. Nothing can come from God that is not consistent with His goodness. What God has done is the best. Some things we do not understand, but ultimately

that does not make them less than the best. Our faith in the goodness of God, the goodness of what He has made and what He has done is founded on the correct understanding of the Bible. This may seem to be too good to be true — beyond belief. In fact, one of the early Church fathers, Tertullion, compared his belief with the beliefs of the polytheistic heathen world around him saying God is ". . . credible because absurd, certain because impossible."

The lofty truth of the true God could not have been fabricated by the imagination of a mere human mind. The truthfulness of the Bible is indicated and supported by the bold record which man would not have concocted on his own. We learn to believe profound things, even when we cannot understand them. Consider the reasonability that faith-building, optimism-allowing biblical optimism is valid. I dare to believe God can use a multi-language Internet-based website precisely (among other reasons) because it is more than I would have imagined.

Can we believe without understanding? Yes. God's ways are past finding out. His ways are the best even if we do not understand them. Of course there are mysteries in God's best. However, to wish to know what the best Master does not want us to know is mistrust-ing and unwise. We must learn to be content in not knowing. By faith we keep plodding. With faith we believe without an explanation, whereas without faith we would not believe even with an explanation.

The universe could have been different, but God created the best. Why is it best? This mindset invites us to investigate and discover. We find what we look for. God's ways are not only good, not only the best, but the best possible. This recognition opens us to more readily see and clearly appreciate the good God has done and continues to do. This mindset invites us to find the reasons why what is is the best and glorify God. This belief reveals the greatness, wisdom and profound wonders of God.

Why were so many underutilized teachings on my website? They had the potential of bringing so much good to pastors, evangelists,

missionaries, church leaders, and Christian teachers. Yet they sat in my computer files and on my website, only useful to English readers. They needed to be translated into multiple languages. We reason logically from the macro to micro scales in discovering God's good works. Biblical optimism described above motivates us to search for and find the good.

Our wise, powerful God used something very evil for something extremely good. Human sin and guilt produced the need for a great salvation. The salvation of mankind would not have happened if there were no evil that produced a need for this wondrous accomplishment of grace. The presence of evil makes possible a greater good than if evil did not exist. If God could do that, He could take my English-only website and make it more visible and useful.

I kept praying and plodding. Some might argue that prayer is not possible if what "is" has already been caused by a deliberate God. But God built prayer's possibilities into His best possible universe. Some might say if all is ordered in the best possible universe, then God cannot make the changes miracles require. I maintain that miracles are included as possible in the world God made, or else God would not invite us to pray. Neither would He act when we do pray. Our prayers may seem like just a possibility. Right! When God created this world, He decreed the possibility of prayers and miracles—He acts when we pray and does not when we don't. Our participation is a part of it all being the best possible good. This is why optimism is best.

We cannot afford to ignore prayer and its power to change things just because we cannot understand how God performs miracles. My knowledge of the Word and my experience with prayer tells me God does some things if I pray that He does not do if I do not pray. Prayer is efficacious and miracles are possible in the world that is the best possible of worlds. So I keep plodding and praying.

The future is undoubtedly planned but since we do not know that plan, we must do our duty according to the intelligence God has given us. We work according to the rules He has prescribed for us.

We must nurture a quiet mind. We leave to God Himself the care of the outcome. He will never fail to do what is the best, not only generally (macro) but also in particular (micro), for those who have confidence in Him. That confidence is composed of true godliness and strong faith. Through these virtues we serve, striving as much as is humanly possible to neglect nothing of our duty in His service. Developing a website is just one way one can serve.

We serve God from our own individual perspectives. We strive to carry out and contribute to the fulfillment of His plan. God is moving toward the good we know, unless events show us He has stronger reasons to bypass our plan for the greater good of His own design. This is true whether we understand His superior plan or not. We assume His plan is better—the best.

Nothing can come from God that is not good. God has intentions and He will do something. Because God is good, wise and powerful we can reasonable and logically say "Something good is going to happen." We can expect good.

If we were only robots who thought and did everything obediently but without willing or wanting it ourselves, we would receive only an obedient robot's reward. What is that? Nothing actually. But when we cooperate with God, we deliberately decide, choose and submit our wills to His and thereby earn His approval. Overall it is better that man has free will because that creates the possibility of reward. If God had either not given us a free will or had not allowed evil, that would not have been the best good. God could make us all instantly happy, but He has a higher aim. He would have been at fault had He made it easier.

Furthermore, what we think we see, what we perceive, is not always accurate anyway. Appearances are often contrary to truth. Our misperceptions may cause us to think God made a mistake, but we must learn not to trust our perceptions and assumptions. God is right all the time.

O how wise God is! It is foolish and absurd for man so limited in

knowledge to question Him. Let's rest in and trust His wisdom and goodness.

When we try to define what is truly the best in the larger picture, we must include the afterlife with its rewards and punishments. Our earthly life is not always an accurate reflection of what is good. Consider the whole. Some day, it will be clear that God is good and just. Faith to believe this does not require comprehension. Personal objections against faith which are based only on experience, do not have the force of "proof." God is not only wonderful but also worthy of love beyond everything.

God saying something is good does not make it good. Rather, God says something is good because it is good. God Himself knows that what He created is good. In Genesis God says His creation is good. This includes the tension we feel between the time we establish a goal and the time we see it achieved. Then is when it is best to exercise biblical optimism. If God is content with the universe He made, we should be too.

We may experience some chaos or adversity in the prayerful pursuit of our goals. I don't know what deep water I must wade through to get to the fulfillment of my website dream. Comparatively minor disorders do exist. Yet these disorders too are part of an overall orderly scheme. Prehistoric upheaval may have seemed pointless and evil, but look at the beauty and utility which that chaos produced. We enjoy a beautiful earth. Romans 8:28 ". . . in all things God works for the good . . ." Who is this that works for good? The God who is loving, wise and powerful. If He is working for good, then I want to watch Him work even if my wife is ill and developing the website I envision entails challenges beyond my ability.

Knowledge, understanding and insight bring their own joy. These inner qualities exist regardless of exterior physical circumstances. Good far outweighs the bad. How fortunate are those who know their own good! One pessimist said that the highest good was not to be born. But if I exist, my existence must be good because God who is good made me. Furthermore, if everything always went well,

we would be unaware of it. Where would thankfulness be? The truest good would not allow evil unless evil brought greater good. I want the envisioned website to exist now, but the delay is producing a higher good which includes the development of my faith. Evil or adversity are not my focus. They are part of the conditions which make the best good possible.

In God's universe, errors, sins and adversity are not only punished but are overcome to an even clearer advantage and greater good. A broken but healed bone is strongest at the place where the break had been. Can you think of a better universe? Sin, evil or adversity may cause us to resolve to do better or pray more fervently. Is this not good coming out of evil? If God had not allowed adversity, He Himself would have sinned by not allowing something to exist which He knew would make the best good possible.

In creating a good universe God makes this statement: It is better for the universe to exist than for it not to exist. That is why God made it. He likes it when we accept that truth and cooperate with His plan.

God uses hardship to bring good. Observations in life testify to this truth. We may often observe that good people have been made good by their misfortunes. And we also see that many a fortunate person has been spoiled by prosperity.

At one stage in his life Noah may have thought life was not good. But he lived to experience a time when he could heartily say, "Ah! This is good." At one time in his life Job wished he did not live. But in the end? With twice the wealth he had possessed earlier, seven sons and his three daughters the most beautiful in the land, watching his great great grandchildren play—he surely saw that God's overall plan was good—the best.

The greatest happiness on earth lies in the hope of heavenly happiness. For evil people, whatever happens to them could lead to further corruption or to repentance which is good if they yield to God's working in their lives and improve by yielding. But to good

people, nothing happens except what could lead to their greater good. A good God makes it so.

The delay that occurred between 2004 and 2025 was the best possible good for our ministry. It was what an intentional and good God allowed for my development. The website has more and better contents by far now than if I had tried to put multiple languages on it with the limited finances I had in 2004 or used only the limited technology that was available then. The teachings, website, translation software and technical mechanisms for disseminating these ideas are now ready. Yes, God, you love more than just English-speaking people. The wait and the adversity we experienced were good for us, the best possible.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN - 2023

Much of this year was spent doing the same thing over and over. Day after day, week after week, month after month I continued to re-record and re-edit the entire David series, teaching after teaching. But the quality of the recordings is much better now. I have no regrets about spending the year reworking everything. Significant improvements were made in the quality of the videos. More screen space is now devoted to better backgrounds.

THE GOOD I DID NOT KNOW ENOUGH TO EXPECT

When we decided to move to east Texas we did not know about the thousands of stately pine, maple, oak, and cedar trees that flourish there. It is like living in a park. These trees are a beautiful feature of the area around our home.

Here you can see the finished house with the deck we added. We are comfortable here in the quiet woods. Jesus said to "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be

added to you." God is taking care of us. The improved backgrounds I use for video recordings are painted, but they are a reflection of the beauty of the forest in which we live. And they greatly improve the quality of the videos. The green screen I use allows any background I choose.

My website manager, Luiz Sifuentes, built a teleprompter so I can maintain eye contact with my listeners, looking straight at the camera lens through the words on the screen. This makes for a much better recording. The viewer has a better connection with me as well. The Lord deserves the best that we can offer.

Every week I recorded, edited and uploaded two new videos to my YouTube channel. In order to accommodate those who want listening-only materials I arranged that the videos would be made available in sound-only podcast form. Each month I sent Irina another month's teachings which she put in the SubStack system to be released each day. Every evening I copy that day's SubStack post and forward it to five WhatsApp groups.

Meanwhile Char continued to suffer from neuropathy which (as explained earlier) was exacerbated by her chemotherapy treatments. We continue to pray for her increased strength and decreased pain as the Lord heals her.

For a number of months, we regularly traveled an hour and a quarter to Tyler, Texas to visit a neurologist. Later we made weekly hour and a half trips to an acupuncture expert in Texarkana, Arkansas. From each of these fine people Char received sincere help, but it was limited.

Char often responds to new Facebook friend requests with a personal touch, introducing them to the website and videos.

■ PRAYER—ASKING FOR HELP

Several significant philosophical and theological reflections help us appreciate what God does. One reflection focuses on increased prayer and the other on better praying. My decisions, actions and

the work accomplished did not detail the unseen hours only the Lord knows about. Yet I said I would be transparent, tell like it is. The most significant human effort any of us can make in service to the Lord is prayer. To God be the glory for all He has done during our lives. Receiving God's answers to prayer and His blessings for having prayed give Him the applause. Scripture is unmistakable that our prayer time is to be in secret, but how do I train Christian leaders to pray and lead by example, yet not miss the blessing for having done it secretly?

My prayer experiment is written in *Rise to Seek Him*, on the book page of empoweringchristianleaders.com. Check out what happens if a teacher seriously prays.

Jesus is clear. Matthew 6:1- 2, 5 and 16-18 says, *"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full."*

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full."

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

I receive what Jesus said. So I will not tell you my secrets. But I will say this much—that before I do anything else each day, I pray for a number of hours. Also, I keep a schedule for each year and fast regularly. As I pray, God works, and, as I fast, God hears my prayers.

It is a partnership. God knows how many hours I pray and I do it for Him. God will use you too if you seriously pray. Give time and attention to prayer, it is a remarkable exercise.

A personal mission statement is helpful for each of us. It helps us define ourselves and clarify our goals. After I began my experiment in prayer, I wrote an addendum to my mission statement. That was years ago, but it still holds true today Here it is:

"Prayer is my most important activity to help make God's kingdom come to earth. I match this belief with the daily practice of giving prayer more priority in importance, time, and sequence than anything else I do. Of my own choosing and with a sense of privilege, I gladly arise in the night or early morning to ensure that I complete my predetermined number of daily prayer hours—after breakfast as necessary. Imperfect human that I am, I watch the clock so that prayer is increased. Logging so many hours in prayer is not the goal; increasing my prayer is. I exercise holy discipline and self-control in this intentional personal commitment, fully confident I am heard based on the truthful Word of God. My appoint-ment with God is first usually and takes me longer than anything else I do in the day.

"Prayer is addressed to God who is able to do immeasurably more than I can ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20) Jesus said He would do whatever I asked in His name if I remain in Him and His words remain in me. (John 15:7) Jesus instructed His disciples to always pray and not give up. (Luke 18:1) *The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.* (James 5:16) *Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, soar on wings like eagles, run and not grow weary, and walk and not be faint.* (Isaiah 40:31) *With men, many things are impossible, but with God, nothing is impossible.* (Matthew 17:20)

"Since my practice of prayer illustrates its importance, I risk possible misunderstanding when speaking openly about my commitment to prayer. The challenge is for Christians to pray. Talking about my prayer life is not the goal. It only serves the higher objective of stimulating others to pray.

"As a partner with God, I do not make requests inconsistent with His plan. Always, I seek to know His agenda and pray accordingly. Passion in prayer is important, but accuracy is more important. When the right direction for prayer is known, I persist, insist, labor, plead, reason, and persevere in the spirit of Jabez who prayed, "*Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me …*" (I Chronicles 4:10) and with the tenacity of Jacob who said, "*I will not let you go unless you bless me*" (Genesis 32:26).

"In prayer, I do not overcome God's reluctance but rather grasp His willingness. Spiritual forces oppose me, but they can be overcome. To be fruitful in God's kingdom brings more glory to God than to be unfruitful. As Jesus said, to bear much fruit is even better (John 15:2, 8). Therefore, with neither shame nor selfish ambition, I pray with confidence to be more fruitful for Him.

Give priority to prayer. Understand its value and be encouraged to pray more.

SEEKING GOD'S WILL IN PRAYER

A second emphasis in prayer is vital to see how prayer has been an important part of Leadership Empowerment Conferences and the more recently developed internet-based ministries. This is a qualitative issue. Not only is it helpful to pray more. We also need to pray better.

Prayer is not a matter of the Christian imposing his or her desires on God. It is more an issue of finding out what God wants to do and doing it with Him. If we pray the wrong way or pray for the wrong things we lose time because we are praying for things that are not on God's agenda. Going to Africa then Israel were God's ideas. Conducting pastors' conferences was God's idea. Throughout the adventures recorded in this book, God was leading, prevailing and showing us how to pray and what to do.

The Israelites in the wilderness were not content with God's provision of manna. They wanted meat. Providing that meat was obvi-ously not God's plan. Numbers 11:33 says, "*But while the meat*

was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague." They showed no concern for God's plan but sought to fulfill their own.

1 Corinthians 10:11 reminds us that the Old Testament gives us warnings. It says, "*These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us.*" Romans 15:4 tells us, "*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us.*" We can learn from Israel's failures. James 4:3 encourages us to pray according to the will of God, not according to our plans. "*When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*"

Psalm 106: 13-15 tells us what happened to Israel when they asked amiss. "*But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold. In the desert they gave in to their craving; in the wilderness they put God to the test. So he gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease among them.*" How did that work out?

God's plans are more lofty than ours. Isaiah 55:9 says, "*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" I prefer to spend my prayer time praying according to God's thoughts, not mine.

God is able to do better than we can think, imagine or pray. Ephesians 3:20 says, "*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*" Why would I limit my praying to only things I understood or could imagine?

The wisdom of Proverbs 3: 5-6 can readily be applied to prayer. "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*" Time and again God made our paths straight in Africa, Israel and India.

Matthew 6:10 says to pray, ". . . *your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*." This is possibly the most important prayer recorded in the Bible. In nation after nation and conference after conference, this was our desire and the theme of our prayers for each step.

Second King chapters 19-21 tell the tragic story of Hezekiah's original successes only to be followed by his selfish prayers which led to Manasseh's evil reign in Judah. Hezekiah, at this later stage in his life, was not letting God set the prayer agenda. He had his own plan.

However, 2 Samuel 5:17-25 tells the great good that came to Israel when David repeatedly "*inquired of the Lord*." David knew the power of moving in the will of God. We saw that same power work in our conferences time and time again. Doors closed. Others opened. We changed plans and moved with God to the best of our ability.

First Kings 17:1-5 and James 5:16c - 18 describe the strange story of Elijah praying for no rain when everyone needed rain. As a result of Elijah's effective praying for what God wanted, Baal, the Canaanite rain god, was defeated and Israel experienced miracles from the true God.

"Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.' Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: 'Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.' So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there."

"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops."

My message is more important than I am. We continue to pray that God will bless and use these two internet-based means of disseminating the ideas and the scriptural teachings God has entrusted to our stewardship: youtube.com/@empoweringchristianleaders and empoweringchristianleaders.com.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN - 2024

One day, a hare was making fun of the tortoise. "You're so slow. Do you ever get anywhere?" he asked with a mocking laugh.

"Yes," replied the tortoise, "and I get there sooner than you think. I'll run you a race and prove it."

The hare was much amused at the idea of running a race with the tortoise, so for the fun of the thing he agreed. So the fox, who consented to act as judge, marked the distance and started the runners.

The hare was soon far out of sight. To make the tortoise feel ridiculous for trying to outrace a hare, he lay down beside the course. Waiting for the tortoise to catch up, the hare took a nap.

Meanwhile, the tortoise kept going slowly but steadily. After a time, he passed the place where the hare was sleeping. But the hare slept on. When at last he did wake up, the tortoise was near the goal. The hare ran his swiftest, but he could not overtake the tortoise in time.

"*The race is not to the swift*." (Ecclesiastes (9:11a)

■ THE VIRTUE OF PLODDING

As a plodder, I am not flashy, stellar, blessed with a magnetic personality, or excelling in public performances, sermons or teaching situations. But I believe content is important in lesson or sermon preparation. Producing meat for preachers and speakers who are too often satisfied with giving mere entertainment and inspiration is important to me. My goal is to be consistent, dependable, trustworthy and faithful.

Different philosophical, even non-Christian schools of thought, generally agree on the value of faithful consistency. Steadiness is more important than spectacular emotional performance. Yes, non-Christians may arrive at this conclusion through different reasoning. Yet, he burst of energy, while impressive, is often fleeting and unreliable.

Consistency, on the other hand, is the slow deliberate work that builds character and creates lasting results. Major philosophical traditions, including Aristotelian ethics, Stoicism and Confucian-ism, emphasize that consistent faithful actions are superior to a spectacular but isolated surge of zeal. These philosophies argue that true character, happiness and meaning are not built in single momentous acts but through the steady repeated application of virtue and discipline.

Aristotle believed that moral excellence was not an inborn trait, but was developed through consistent practice and discipline. He famously taught, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." A single generous deed does not make someone a generous person, but consistent kind acts do. Aristotle taught that virtues like courage and temperance are found in a "golden mean" located in the center on a scale between excess on one side and deficiency on the other.

This balance is not discovered in a fleeting moment of inspiration but is cultivated over time through deliberate practice. From this perspective, the person who occasionally performs an amazing feat but lacks consistency is not as virtuous as the one who performs a steady stream of good deeds. Consistent effort is the foundation that enables moments of true greatness, not the other way around. The tortoise did better than the hare.

The Stoics believed that basing one's actions on fleeting emotions or "motivation" makes a person a "prisoner of emotions." A life based on rational decisions and consistent effort, regardless of mood, is far more honorable and free. Epictetus taught, "To live a life of virtue, you have to become consistent, even when it isn't convenient, comfortable or easy." True virtue is revealed when a person is tested by fatigue, frustration or temptation—not when it is easy.

Like an athlete training for a marathon (my favorite kind of race), the Stoics understood that success comes from the accumulation of small steady improvements, not a single spectacular performance. This daily unglamorous effort builds true inner strength and resilience.

In Confucian thought, Xin is a composite of the Chinese words for "human being" and "speech," highlighting the coherence and consistency between one's words and actions. A trustworthy person is true to his or her word which forms the basis for trust in all social bonds. The steady and reliable behavior of individuals is what builds trust in relationships and consistent productivity. This stability is more highly valued than charismatic but unreliable grand gestures.

Leaders, according to Confucianism, should lead by moral ex-ample, cultivating their virtue through consistent and deliberate practice. This creates a lasting culture of responsibility rather than relying on spectacular but fleeting displays of power. Ultimately, the question of consistency versus a spectacular burst of energy is one of character and values, whether one builds a virtuous life slowly and reliably or risks everything on a single transcendent leap. Little wonder, that the Bible emphasizes faithfulness and endurance.

■ APPLICATION

If reflecting on the value of consistency is apparent even in secular thought, let's think about a Christian application. When I realized the need to produce materials in multiple languages, I continued to plod. From 2021 until 2025, I no longer served abroad as a missionary. But I still continued to plod, preparing recorded materials for international broadcasts. In my shack, in East Texas I was the plodding tortoise until 2025, when God's miracle made His vision possible.

It was a glad day in 2023 when I completed the re-recording of the 150 Lessons for Leaders from the Life of David. These were turned over to faithful Luiz, my website and YouTube channel manager. He and his team placed them on the YouTube channel along with the new intros and outros.

Luiz and his team also attached Scriptures to the videos so viewers could read the Scriptures as well as hear it read. This was a great milestone. These 150 new re-recordings were added to the 68 videos in the Lessons for Leaders from the Lives of the Patriarchs

series and the 48 videos in the Lessons for Leaders from the Life of Moses series. It was then that I began to envision developing and recording another series of Lessons for Leaders, this one from the Lives of the Prophets.

Luiz also began posting "shorts" on my YouTube channel. These reached a far greater number of viewers with messages only about one minute in length. The average daily audience for the shorts was about 800 when You Tube, TikTok, Instagram and other platforms were all considered.

By October, we had worked together for five months to update and improve both the Empowering Christian Leaders website and the YouTube channel. About ten more months were required to complete the project. Intros and Outros improved the artistic appeal.

We needed to further develop and refine our Search Engine Optimization (SEO) capability so the materials could be found more readily. Other technologically advanced improvements were also being proposed by Luiz. All of these time-consuming projects were still underway when the vision for the multilingual global page suddenly took precedence.

But, my point is that all of the above developments demonstrated the value of plodding. It was a happy day when we discovered how to produce materials in multiple languages. None of this would have materialized if I had not continued to plod. Because I had plodded I was equipped with materials ready to translate into many languages and publish on the internet when the time was right.

■ THE PARADOX OF THE DIVINE AND HUMAN PARTNERSHIP

Prayer is the major factor in what we accomplish. Add to prayer the idea of partnership with God. Prayer and faithful plodding go with the reality of a divine-human partnership. I want to demonstrate in this chapter how prayer, partnership and plodding work together with God's miracle working power to accomplish something good for Him. It is the basis for claiming that "God did it" as I write about the nineteen years described in this book.

"*All that we have accomplished you have done for us.*" (Isaiah 26:12). Partnership with God is marvelous. He works through our personalities, vocabularies and temperaments in an amazing blend of the divine plus human elements. He works so perfectly that we may be tempted to think we are the ones who preach, teach, comfort, counsel and minister effectively. But if we take Isaiah's statement seriously, whatever we appear to accomplish, God actually does. Our years of work demonstrated this truth. Through the whole process it seemed as if we were doing it, but it was God Who was doing it. It is a paradox within a partnership.

This paradox is demonstrated in God's promise to Joshua. "*I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses*" (Joshua 1:3). Joshua and the people of Israel walked on the land and fought for it, but it was God who gave it to them. They walked and God worked simultaneously. It was a perfect combination of human and divine elements both at work in their partnership.

Another illustration of this principle is the story of Eleazar, son of Dodai, one of David's mighty men. This was another close blend of the human and divine working together. "*Then the Israelites retreated, but Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The Lord brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead*" (2 Samuel 23:9–10).

The Lord worked so mightily through Eleazar that it seemed difficult to determine where the human hand stopped and the sword began. God worked through the man and God worked through the sword—both were used of God. Eleazar did it and God did it.

Psalm 44:3 says, "*It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them.*" They worked together in such a way that the unit of the two accomplished what neither half of the unit could do alone.

Jesus taught us that without Him we cannot do anything. He said,\

"*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5). How foolish for the branch to boast about what the vine enabled it to do. The vine and the branch work together in partnership.

Later, Paul restated this concept. Today's New International Version of the Bible helps us understand it: "*I can do all this through him who gives me strength*." (Philippians 4:13). Some translations render this verse, "*I can do all things*," indicating that we can do anything. But surely the Bible does not literally teach this idea. We cannot fly. Neither can one Christian minister alone save the world in his or her lifetime. Paul wrote that he knew how to abound and how to be abased. He could do this, both abound and be abased, ". . . *through him who gives me strength*."

It is more consistent with the teaching of the whole Bible to believe that what we accomplish, we do through His strength. "All that we have accomplished you have done for us." (Isaiah 26:12). "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13). We do it, but only with His enabling strength. The human and the divine work together. God uses the tool. The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet—we could hinder it if we choose to.

The same concept is included in the future action of placing crowns at the feet of the One on the throne in heaven: "*Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being*'" (Revelation 4:9–11).

The Bible does not explicitly underscore this, but the verse implies that when we get to heaven, we too will likely lay our crowns at His

feet. We will acknowledge that it was God who made it all possible. We realize the impossibility of our ministry situations and pray sincerely that God will be involved and help us. Then we state that we will be careful to give Him all the glory. We must seriously admit that God does work miraculously through us. He works so cleverly, naturally, and in ways so perfectly consistent with our personalities, temperaments, vocabularies, training and intellectual gifts that we seem to be doing the ministry well. If we could grasp the danger of this handicap and get out of God's way, would He not work even more mightily through us?

Our hearts can deceive us. Sometimes we inwardly accept the credit for what God does through us. I may say the right things such as: "All the glory goes to God." "I give Him all the glory." "God did it; not I." But I need to honestly seek to not only mouth those words, but also believe and mean them.

A little mouse took a ride on an elephant's head. When they came to a bridge, the bridge shook from the weight of the elephant. After arriving at the other end, the mouse shouted into the ear of the elephant, "We surely made that bridge shake!" Are we as foolish as that mouse when we believe that we did something—when in reality, God did it?

Any servant of the Lord who thinks they did what God did through them, make about as much sense as that mouse. GOD DID IT.

What if the donkey on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem heard the crowds shouting praises to the Lord as he, clip clop, clip clop, plodded along? What if he thought "Wonderful! This crowd really appreciates me?" Would we be so foolish?

THE NEXT GENERATION

All we ministers of the Gospel walk across the stage of life, we eventually reach the other side and exit. What we have passed on to the next generation of Christian workers continues. A young man, John Niyonzim, translated for us during a conference in the north part of Rwanda. He demonstrated great potential for ministry and in the

years since, he has responded well to the materials on the website. I am glad that he appreciated them.

Recently, I received the following email from this fine young Christian brother. It shows the value of supplying pastors' materials and coaching via the internet to increase effectiveness in ministry.

"Dear Papa Ron,

"Oh, may our Most High God always richly bless you. From 2013 I learned more things about how to live missiologically from the Bible using the teachings you continue to send to me in my per-son-al email and on your website. I saw how you prayed together with Dr. Char for everything before and after the training sessions. I saw all the efforts you put into teaching, preaching, advising and even giving your Christian dedication testimony. You told us what you did in the USA and outside of your country for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

"I had them in mind but did not realize how to put them in action even though I had trusted God to be my Guide. You came with God's messages to me and at once I realized you had been sent to me by God. I noted them all and thanked Him for His incomparable provision for His servants.

"Now, I have taken the initiative to become a tool of God in serving as a Voluntary Missionary by empowering Christian leaders using all the opportunities our dear Lord makes available.

"Please pray for us as we serve Him with a free diligent heart. Amen.

"John"

From time to time I receive encouraging emails like this. In partnership with God, I plod and pray. That is why I so readily and truthfully say, "God did it."

CHAPTER NINETEEN - 2025

We are glad we persisted through the nineteen years reported in this book. Now we joyfully share some amazing surprises.

■ PHILOSOPHICAL OBSERVATIONS

Ours is only a story of two faithful servants plodding through life and ministry, enduring what came our way in the line of duty. Nothing heroic. Hebrews 12:1 says, *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."* We have tried to do what this verse describes. God does not require heroism, but He does honor obedience and perseverance.

Romans 15:5 expresses Paul's wish for his readers, *"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had."* According to this verse, the encouragement and the endurance we demonstrated as we moved through our experiences, were from God.

1 Corinthians 6:4 helps us realize how others endured. We can too. "*Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships, and distresses.*" We only boast of what God has done and only claim that we have persevered and endured just as many other believers and servants of the Lord have done before us.

As mentioned earlier, many thinkers over the centuries widely regard endurance as a central defining aspect of success. Rather than focusing on a final victorious outcome, they emphasize that the continuous consistent acts of overcoming challenges through discipline and perseverance builds character and ultimately gives meaning to the struggle itself.

So we acknowledge that what we do repeatedly determines who we are. The marathon runner and the master musician both achieve excellence through the slow painful accumulation of consistent

effort, not a single burst of brilliance. Somewhere between the extremes of cowardice on one side and rashness on the other, there is a balanced position that enables one to maintain courage. This is what Char and I have tried to do.

Endurance allows an individual to remain steadfast in the face of fear and suffering, pursuing what is good without being reckless. Success is not about controlling external events but mastering our reactions to them. External hardships and setbacks are inevitable, so we must learn to accept what we cannot change and act virtuously within those constraints. So adversity is not a roadblock, but rather an opportunity for growth and the display of virtue. We learn to use obstacles as steppingstones.

THE USE OF MEANS

In this section we will look at the means, the tools, we can use. The illustrations are so powerful that we may loose sight of the fact that they are illustrations of a principle. I hope we will grasp that principle as we consider the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Kingdom work.

A helpful idea is worth more than money. Use every neutral tool possible for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Artificial Intelligence may help translate my Bible seminars and books. AI-generated interpretations may help with recording videos. This tool will multiply outreach and enlarge the audience of the Christian Leadership materials on the empoweringchristianleaders.com and https://www.empoweringchristianleaders.com/global websites.

Included in the best of all possible worlds is the development of AI which can be used for good or for bad. It has the potential to add to the destructive influence of pornography. It can produce incomprehensible evil in the form of imagined sex objects. Porn is bad enough, but now there exists the possibility of creating conversation-capable sex partners. These "partners" seduce and destroy the minds of foolish persons who yield to the temptation. They mentally commit whatever lewd sins their evil hearts desire.

AI is neutral and though it, in itself, is not sinful yet can be misused in a sinful way. On the other hand, Christians could just as readily use it to further godly projects. AI will undoubtedly produce many temptations for sinful misuses, but it also makes possible a tool for almost unimaginable good in disseminating the wonderful truth God has committed to us in multiple languages. The decision to use AI for God can produce devotion to God and His holy will. This is a good thing.

AI is a tool I use to train Christian leaders internationally—a major shift in the scope of internet-based, digital, Christian Bible teachings. We can hopefully appreciate the use of neutral mechanisms for spiritual causes.

"Neutral mechanisms" include rhetoric, printing presses, radio, television, the internet, and AI which are themselves morally neutral. They can be used for immoral entertainment or highly beneficial spiritual Bible teaching. If the ungodly can use this neutral instrument for an ungodly and immoral purpose, could not Christians utilize it for spiritual, godly, life-giving and beneficial purposes?

The Bishop of Hippo, Augustine, taught that rhetoric (neutral in itself) was essential for Christian pastors to effectively convey religious truth, but it must always be subordinate to and in the service of truth. He urged that eloquence was necessary to make the Word of God clear, pleasing, and persuasive even if it meant adopting techniques from classical pagan sources.

Augustine defined boundaries and insisted that a wise speaker without eloquence was preferable to a foolish one with eloquence. The purpose of using rhetorical expressions must always be to make God's Word easier to understand. He believed the primary goal of a Christian orator was to present truth effectively. This involved using rhetoric, not to manipulate, but to move the audience toward faith and virtuous action. A pastor's eloquence should prioritize clarity, and when necessary, even use less "correct" grammar if it promoted better comprehension—never allowing style to overshadow wis-

dom. Augustine argued that if falsehoods could be promoted with eloquence, Christian pastors could use rhetoric to more effectively promote truth.

The aim of Christian eloquence is to show truth, make truth pleasing and influence the audience so listeners are moved to faith, hope and love. The utmost priority for a Christian teacher is the clarity of the message, not the beauty of the words. Nevertheless, Augustine encouraged pastors to read and listen to eloquent and wise speakers and eloquence. Eloquence, he thought, should never be employed without wisdom and truth. Even using rhetorical skills, of course, Augustine still believed it was the Holy Spirit who truly persuades the hearers.

A speaker who is wise but not eloquent should still speak wisely. The preacher's goal is to persuade and to do so with clarity. Augustine used an interesting biblical example as a basis for his beliefs: what Moses and the Israelites made of gold from Egypt. That gold had been used for ungodly purposes in idolatrous Egypt. Yet because gold is morally neutral, it could also be used for godly purposes by godly people in furnishing the tabernacle. We too partner with God but still use neutral tools—artificial Intelligence software— on our website.

What about theatrics—another neutral tool which can be used for good or bad? My dad and mom sat under the teachings of Aimee Semple McPherson who used theatrics in her Gospel work. I grew up listening to stories of her accomplishments. She incorporated elaborate stage productions, "illustrated sermons," and modern media to make her messages more engaging and contemporary. Aimee staged biblical stories with live animals like camels and tigers. She rented costumes and scenery from Hollywood studios. She hired a Vaudeville-trained professional stage manager. She was a pioneer in using radio to broadcast her sermons, recognizing the power of new media to spread her message.

The layout of her church, Angeles Temple, was like a theater which created a spectacular and popular experience that attracted large

crowds. Her services were so popular, they sometimes ran three times a day, seven days a week, drawing huge standing-room only crowds. Aimee wove current events and popular culture into her sermons to make them feel more immediate and relevant to her audience. She used theatrics, neutral in itself, for a spiritual, godly, and noble cause.

As for television, another neutral tool, we can learn from the story of Rex Humbard. In 1954, Rex persuaded Oral Roberts to use television when Roberts brought his tent revival to Akron, Ohio. As an early pioneer of televised ministry, Humbard convinced Roberts to film several of his tent meetings, and Roberts was thrilled with the powerful results. Years later Roberts stated, "Rex was very instrumental in suggesting that I do this, and I owe him a lot for it." The Humbard family was grateful for the way God had used Oral Roberts in the healing of their son years earlier.

Lighting was a technical problem in the tent, but the broadcasts were revolutionary. The televised programs successfully captured the healing line, testimonials and fervent crowd reactions that characterized Robert's famous healing revivals. Roberts was ecstatic about the films and believed he had found a way to share the spectacle of his healing ministry with a national audience. He had previously experimented with filming his sermons but disliked preaching to a camera lens. It lacked the "presence of people." But Humbard and the production company, Pathescope, offered a way to film the authentic atmosphere of a live tent meeting.

Yes, television has sadly been a source of immoral influence in today's world, though television itself is neutral. It can just as credibly be used for spiritual and godly purposes. So can AI-empowered software that allows for economical and fast translation of written materials and interpretation of spoken messages.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, our family did not have a television in our home. My parents did not want the evil influence of the programing to contaminate our minds as we grew up. I understand their concern. However, eighteen years after I left home for Bible

College, my mother and father founded "ChristVision." Through it the entire community of Keokuk, Iowa and the surrounding area had access to 48 hours of Christian television broadcasting every twenty-four hour day.

At any time of the day or night anyone could tune in to professionally produced broadcasts. Many Christians in the community contributed to the expenses and participated in occasional simple productions. ChristVision became a force for righteousness in our small community, an illustration of how (neutral) television, often used for evil, could also used for good.

The use of means is allowable for Christian ministry. After all, Jesus taught from (used) a (neutral) boat.

TEAMWORK

Halfway through 2025, I reached a milestone. We celebrated with our family the completion of the recorded teachings of my most recent series: Lessons for Leaders from the Lives of the Prophets. On Wednesday, June 25, I finished the last video recording. Four series were then recorded, three of them were already available on line:

› Lessons for Leaders from the Lives of the Patriarchs - 68 videos
› Lessons for Leaders from the Life of Moses - 48 videos
› Lessons for Leaders from the Life of David - 150 videos
› Lessons for Leaders from the Lives of the Prophets - 46 videos

It would take considerable time for all the intros, outros, and Scriptures to be added. But when this part of the project is completed, 312 videos designed to empower Christian leaders will be available. My tech team and I estimated that these videos would all be available in the next eight months. We rejoice in the goodness of God who, in answer to prayer was helping us supply leadership materials to support and empower Christian leaders throughout the world.

The quality of the teachings was much better than I alone could have produced. I stood on the shoulders of Bible scholars and preachers of the past and attempted to take their tried, tested and proven ideas into our present digital generation to empower today's Christian leaders.

The English language has changed considerably in the last 312 years since the Bible scholar Matthew Henry (1662-1714), and his friends completed his commentaries. Even the English used 174 years later by the prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon (1851-1892), may be difficult for some to understand. Yet the ideas and empowering insights of these men are still credible for God's chosen pastors, missionaries, evangelists, Christian teachers and church leaders. I try to move their good ideas from archaic to modern English and from the printed page to digital, on-line, readable or understandable recordings using contemporary English.

As a developer of Christian leaders, my ideas are included in these teachings, but I readily acknowledge the assistance of giants of the faith from previous generations. I join with these great men of God in prayer that a knowledge of biblical ideas will bless the Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

After recording and editing a lesson, I often felt overwhelmed. The quality of the lesson I had just recorded and edited was far better than I could have produced. My excellent resources and God were helping me.

I will always be grateful for Luiz Sifuente, the manager of the website and projects, his technician sister, Elisa, videographer, Michael Hilsden, who produced the intros and outros (soon to be attached to the videos) and our son Joel who encouraged me to use AI. We continually pray that God will use this team to make His Church strong and growing in our generation. We have tools no preceding generation had.

■ TODAY'S NEARLY MIRACULOUS NEUTRAL TOOL

Month after month my prayer was that the Lord would use this project to build His Church and make it stronger. But I was still only thinking about English materials. God, who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, had a wonderful surprise waiting.

I identified the 10 most used languages in the world and also the

ten languages most used on the internet. Many times I looked into the question of how to make my teachings and the 312 new videos available to the billions of people included in the ten most used languages. Surprise! God had in His mind far more than just ten! As 2025 came to a close, my team was working toward 125 languages and dialects in spoken form and 60 in written form. The project would require months, perhaps years, to complete, well beyond 2025 and into the future, but the team was focused and motivated.

The internet and recently developing translation techniques and software make this task more possible today than ever before. The vision for multiple languages will eventually become a reality.

Several significant factors contribute to the magnitude of this project: One, in the previous twenty-one years I had written more materials designed for the development of Christian leaders. Many were on the seminar page of empoweringchristianleaders.com., recorded, edited and placed on that same website and YouTube.

Two, because of the development of AI and the related translation software programs available today, tools had been developed, refined and perfected to the degree that a translation could be produced at a low cost. Luiz had investigated several of the translation programs, compared the prices and quality of the programs available, and made his recommendation.

These two factors converged. More materials were ready and translation software was in place. Also new and better translation software is continually being developed. Near the end of 2025, my team was making great progress toward developing language sections on the global page of empoweringchristianleaders.com. When we know native speakers, we use them as translators. By working with original language speakers, rough drafts produced by language translation software can be edited and made available on the new multi-language global page now under construction.

When I can, I still use live people. For example, I arranged with a brother in Punjab, India to have his team translate Habits of Highly

Effective Christians (17 Chapters) into Hindi. This same book was translated into Spanish some years ago and will soon find its way onto a newly-created Spanish page of the global section.

A Chinese sister, Weixie Kong, volunteered to edit a Chinese translation of Habits of Highly Effective Christians. It is also in the planning for Urdu in Pakistan. God provided Christian translators in India, Pakistan, and from China with whom to work. As we neared the end of 2025, the translation, editing, and recording of the Leadership Empowerment Conference Video Series (fifteen hours in thirty 28-minute videos) into Urdu was making good progress.

Three, Char and I have always rejoiced that both our sons have been affirming, encouraging and helpful in our work. Now that we live on the west end of the same property with Joel and his family, it is easy for us to meet and discuss the development of the empoweringchristianleaders.com website including its global page. We also make decisions related to youtube.com/@empoweringchristian-leaders

Joel is a visionary, a gifted entrepreneur with managerial and leadership experience dealing with personnel and finances. His ability to envision the future developmental potential of these websites exceeds mine. He has begun to have input in the forward thinking of this operation. He, Luiz, and I have spent hours discussing the potential of using Artificial Intelligence, translation and interpretation software programs for the glory of God.

God is enabling us to make our materials available to many more people than I would have dreamed possible 21 years ago, when I first began to pray about reaching non-English speakers. Not as many Christian teaching materials are available in the world or on the internet for non-English speaking people. We are able to address this need with what God is doing with our project.

The team is setting up the website platform and infrastructure that will be needed to host many language and dialect sections. This involves the on-going expansion of the global page on the website.

Eventually each separate language will have its own SEO mechanism, attracting viewers from each language group. Luiz and Elisa are working hard on all of these projects. They are key parts of the testimony of God's provision of helpers and tools to make this vision possible.

Ours is a team effort, and not just the tech team. The prayers and encouragement of our friends go a long way toward making Em-powering Christian Leaders an internationally influential reality.

Jesus said, "*I will build my Church*." He is helping us use modern, effective, economical, technological language software tools to help make that happen. We follow the examples of Moses, Augustine, McPherson, Humbard, and Roberts to speed up the process and broaden the scope of Empower Christian Leaders materials. Using technology, will never fully replace the personal face-to-face intimate dimension in the work of the Lord. We workers are people, not machines. We must keep all ministry factors in perspective. Person-to-person mentoring is still a powerful tool of ministry. I recently received an email from a former student which reminded me of this. Aby Kallimel served many years successfully as the CEO of India Evangelical Team. He wrote:

"Dr. Meyers,

As Thanksgiving approaches, I've been slowing down and thinking about the people who have made a lasting impact on my life. You are one of them, and I'm truly grateful.

"There isn't a day that I don't think about the influence your classes and you personally have had on me. What stayed with me most wasn't just the skills or lessons, but the deeper formation that took place: learning to follow God more fully, to serve others with humility, valuing continuing growth, and to think with both depth and strategy. These have shaped the way I live and lead.

"It's often said that transformation happens when we find ourselves

in the right place, at the right time, with the right people. Looking back, you were that right person for me in that season, pointing me to the right books, drawing out abilities I didn't know I had, and letting me learn through your example.

"I want you to know how thankful I am. A part of who I've become and what I've been able to do carries your influence. Thank you for being such an important part of my journey.

"With gratitude and respect,

"Aby

"*For Christ's love compels us...and those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.*" 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

AFTERWORD

My four core values follow:

What Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz gave to the body of Christ—biblical optimism—is a valuable truth. His simple logic has the potential to add courage, bravery, faith and nobility to Christians. How can courage, bravery and perseverance be developed when there are no damsels in distress to rescue, no dragons to slay nor enemies to overpower? Any ideal universe would have been too easy and not conducive to personal character development had God not allowed evil and adversity. Life would have been too easy. There would have been no challenges. We would not have been able to grow.

Prayer allows us to partner with God. God does things when we pray that He does not do if we do not pray. We must not be passive. We must not assume that whatever will be will be. Through prayer, we can and must make a difference. Answers to prayer are not mere coincidences. When we pray the "coincidences" occur. When we do not pray, they do not occur. We must not take the risk of refusing to pray.

The Divine-human partnership gives the appearance that we are being successful—that we are the ones doing what we are doing. Sorry, my friend, but that is an illusion. God is at work and He so skillfully uses our personalities and gifts that we only think we are doing it. No, it is God and He knows how to hide. We must learn to discern His involvement and give Him praise. "*All we have accomplished you have done for us*" is the inspired Word of God.

Reaching the whole world with the good news of salvation through Jesus and the establishment of His Church in every land is our grand project. We Christians should dedicate our prayer, personal efforts and finances when possible toward this mission. It is a great joy to know that Char and I have given ourselves to this project. We sincerely hope that readers of these pages will be challenged. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus invites us to serve with Him:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

ADDENDUM

As the Holy Spirit prays through a human vessel, God is speaking to God. As a person prays, the creature and the Creator partner together in an amazing, on-going creation process which is just as beautiful as it is mysterious.

So why make a point of saying, "God did it?" Because He is frequently left out. What God does through humans is often wrongly perceived to be what humans are doing.

God not only works through humans, but also controls circumstances. Circumstances make some things possible and render others impossible. God, not we, controls these situations. It is appropriate to look at circumstances as well as what He does through us and say, "God did it."

Remember Jesus invites us, "*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. . . . For my yoke is easy and my burden is light*" (Matthew 11:29-30). A yoke is made for two, but God carries the heavier end. "I did it" is true, but "God did it" is certainly more true.

The God who did it continues to do it. The work goes on. This process will carry over until Jesus returns. I hope to keep up with His ever-unfolding plans.

I seek to honor the Master Craftsman for what He did through this tool. It is my joy to credit the Winemaker for the wine He fermented in this vessel. I want to give glory to the Composer for the melody He wrote on this page.