

September/October 2025

MISSIONS



Colombia
A Bible Institute
Strengthens
Local Churches

Nicaragua
Believers Build Robust
Bible-Reading Habits

New Interview
"Parenting on the Mission Field"



THINKING IT THROUGH

BY CABE PILLETTE

Weakness Is Our Greatest Strength

We as humans tend to have a silent abhorrence toward being weak. Secretly, we may wish to eradicate any vestige of debility in ourselves, but such efforts are foolish because we are indelibly weak. Our souls long to be strong, but our unfulfilled aspirations for the kingdom of God eye us disapprovingly, informing us they are way above our pay grade. As it turns out, weakness might well be our greatest asset. We might have made the curious mistake of despising the very thing that has given the church its strength throughout the ages!

Weakness brought us to the cross

Weakness is the key ingredient in the soul that recognizes its inability to save itself (Ephesians 2:8–9). No self-confident soul ever came to Jesus with humble faith. Only those who discern their good works to be like dirty rags before the omniscient Judge will lean on Jesus to be strong in their stead. Only the weak can dig deep into God’s grace and find eternal strength. Our weakness and Christ’s strength are our only assets before the flames of hell.

Weakness makes us useful to Christ

In our own strength, we cannot fight the powers of darkness nor convince one of God’s children that obedience to Christ is always the best way. No one can haul a soul into the kingdom of God. The day we capture this reality, we are free to understand 2 Timothy 2:1 (ESV): “Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

How is grace, a gift, going to strengthen us for the spiritual life? Simple: when we rejoice in our own weakness, we can then lean on the gift of Christ’s strength in battle and finally become strong in Him. Odd though it may seem, weakness is our greatest strength.

Eternal fruit in our lives does not depend on our human strength (efforts, methods, abilities, etc.). When we put in what we consider a concerted effort but are discouraged by the

results, we have made the unhappy mistake of despising our weakness, putting God in our debt, and seeking eternal fruit in our own strength. We might find ourselves doomed to an Elijah-like depression (1 Kings 19).

Of course, we must not confuse godly weakness with a lack of effort. God’s faithful servants never wait around for something great to happen. They never tire in doing good (Galatians 6:9–10). Working hard makes us candidates for a harvest. If we do not sow, we will not reap (cf. Ecclesiastes 11:6; 2 Corinthians 9:6). If we till, sow, and water, we will reap in due time (Galatians 6:9). Beyond that, we are too weak to produce anything of eternal value. Fruit depends on God’s strength alone (1 Corinthians 3:5–6). A healthy weakness recognizes our inability to produce something eternal in our own strength (John 15:5).

Weakness is best expressed in prayer

Once we have the idea of inability straight in our hearts, then we know where to go: on our knees before God (Luke 18:1–8). Our inability stirs our faith in Christ’s strength to do something eternal, so we run to Him in prayer more often. In contrast, the more time we spend frustrated over the lack of fruit from our efforts, the less time we spend praying. And then, we wallow in the self-pity of our own strength. Discouragement in ministry may be normal for believers, but ironically, the source of that discouragement is often our own strength. When we confuse our exhausted efforts with power to effect eternal change, we lack the healthy perspective of creaturely weakness that finds unassuming joy in seeking God’s strength to win all the battles (Psalm 131:1).

If you feel weak, you are the perfect candidate for God’s gracious strength (2 Corinthians 12:7–10). The best day of our lives is the day a severe sense of weakness oppresses us. We must then no longer detest our weakness but rather rejoice in it so the power of Christ may rest on us. When we are weak, then we are strong. ■

Cabe Pillette serves in Mexico.

When we rejoice in our own weakness, we can then lean on the gift of Christ’s strength.

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FRONT COVER: Retreat at Villa Peniel in Colombia—Courtesy of Christian Ramirez BACK COVER: Pra-Loup, France—©AdobeStock





Equipping the Saints in *Colombia*

A Bible Institute Strengthens Churches in Discipleship, Evangelism, and Preaching

BY CHRISTIAN RAMIREZ

In the heart of South America, the Colombian church is experiencing a season of encouragement and growth. What a privilege it has been to witness and be a part of how the Lord is equipping and challenging believers to form a deeper commitment to biblical teaching, discipleship, and missions. Amid this beautiful nation's complexities and opportunities, God has been raising up believers who have hearts for the Gospel and are equipped and enabled to serve faithfully in their local assemblies and beyond. One tool the Lord has used continuously is FIEL Bible Institute, an initiative birthed with the vision of empowering the Lord's people for effective ministry through robust theological education.

FIEL Bible Institute: Its birth and mission

FIEL Bible Institute was launched in 2015 in response to Colombia's churches needing accessible, high-quality training to equip men and women for the manifold demands of ministry. The country is home to a vibrant, growing Christian community, the fruit of God's grace and the hard work of many missionaries and local workers who came before us. The institute's founders saw the need and the potential of online learning to fulfill it, bringing sound doctrine, practical tools, and a sense of shared mission to the believers.

Today, FIEL Bible Institute offers a comprehensive three-and-a-half-year program, crafted to lead students through

biblical studies and ministry skills. It is done online with mentors guiding the students, encouraging them to grow within their assemblies, and helping elders train and equip mature believers. In the last three years, we've had the privilege of serving the 30 assemblies that are part of the Aposento Alto movement, or the group of Brethren churches in Bogotá. We have provided training in areas such as discipleship, evangelism, and preaching.

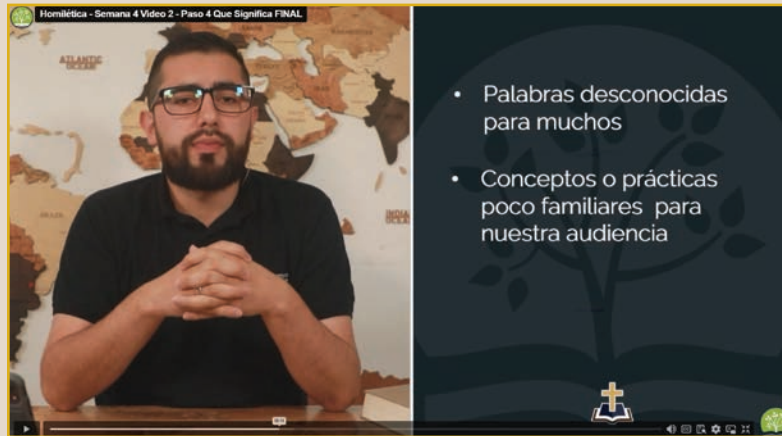
Adaptation for impact: The online learning model

To equip believers and promote teamwork in local assemblies, we have implemented a hybrid model of online training and in-person retreats. The model is simple but effective. Groups of believers from local assemblies enroll in online courses that run from six to eight weeks. The length allows them to balance their study with the demands of family, work, and ministry.

Each course is designed to not only convey information but also build community, apply knowledge to the students' service, and foster real growth in Christ. Video lectures, reading assignments, and practical ministry exercises form the backbone of the learning experience, and students typically invest about five hours of study per week. The heartbeat of each training course comes from its conclusion, when participants gather for an in-person retreat, a three-day immersion that transforms theory into practice.

Above: Men from about 17 assemblies attend the June retreat held at Villa Peniel, an assembly camp.

Left to right: The high-quality video lessons run 20 minutes or less and assign a reading or an exercise; During the retreat, each man preached a 15-minute message and received feedback from his peers; The sermon-giving exercise turned out to be fun for speakers and listeners alike.



Retreats: Where doctrine meets life

Since the students learn most of the theory during the online course, the three-day retreat becomes more than just a conference or seminar. It's a time for deep connection, mutual encouragement, and hands-on development.

Every retreat is structured around workshops and small group discussions that allow participants to wrestle through the practicalities of ministry, share their struggles and victories, and evaluate the current state of their assembly. They also plan how they can help and personally grow in the areas they studied. The students gain a sense of shared mission while they pray together and have honest dialogue.

This past June, Carlos Cruz (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 20) and I helped develop the newest training track, which focused on expository preaching. It included believers who have faithfully proclaimed the Word for years and those who are discovering their call to preaching. The course began with an assessment, classifying participants as either seasoned preachers, beginners, or those needing further biblical studies. This approach ensured that everyone received tailored training.

Over six weeks, the students dedicated themselves to an intensive journey. They invested several hours each week in guided exercises and video lessons, which emphasized the centrality of Scripture in preaching—the Bible is not simply a source for ideas but the very heart and authority of a sermon. Participants learned to move from text to message, handling the Word carefully and crafting sermons that were sound, clear, and compelling.

When the time for the in-person retreat arrived, anticipation was high. Workshops on sermon preparation, exegesis, and delivery filled the three days. Each participant preached a 15-minute sermon and received constructive feedback from peers and mentors alike. The process, though daunting, proved deeply encouraging and formative.

During the retreat, the students shared stories, lifted prayers, and strengthened the bonds of fellowship. Our goal was to help them realize that although preaching is an individual endeavor, it does not need to be a lonely one. Teams can work together within a local assembly to help, encourage, study, and lovingly speak the truth with the intent of sharpening each other's preaching.

A joyful surprise: Resources for ongoing ministry

As the retreat drew to a close, we presented a happy surprise. Through the generosity of CMML and other supporters, everyone received a collection of resources to aid their ongoing ministry: a hermeneutics guide, a Bible dictionary, an original-language dictionary, an atlas, and William MacDonald's *Believer's Bible Commentary*.

The announcement of this remarkable gift was met with cheers and applause, a tangible expression of gratitude for the tools that would serve each participant long after the retreat ended. These resources represent more than just books on a shelf; they are investments in the future of the Colombian church, seeds that, we pray, will bear fruit for years to come.

Past successes: Evangelism and discipleship

Previous years saw similar cycles of online learning and in-person retreats, each designed to equip believers for specific areas of ministry, such as evangelism and discipleship. Colombian Bible teachers experienced in evangelism and discipleship helped create the online courses, which provided the biblical foundations, definitions, and characteristics of these two critical ministries. The retreats helped the believers

Participants return to their assemblies energized, better equipped, and eager to apply their new knowledge.





pray for their assemblies and evaluate ways in which their local churches could grow in these endeavors.

Again and again, the impact has been clear. Participants return to their assemblies energized, better equipped, and eager to apply their new knowledge. We pray that local churches will increase their engagement in outreach efforts, build deeper relationships among their members, and renew their sense of missions.

Looking forward: Hope for the church in Colombia

At the heart of all this work lies a simple but profound prayer: that the Colombian church will be strengthened to fulfill its calling in this generation. The vision is not merely for better programs or more knowledgeable leaders but congregations transformed by God’s Word—communities marked by love, faithfulness, and a passion for the Great Commission.

The challenges to this vision are real. Colombia, like many nations, faces social, economic, and spiritual pressures that can sap the energy of even the most committed believers. Yet the opportunities are even greater. As the Gospel continues to take root and thrive, there is a growing sense that the Lord is at work, drawing people to Himself, raising up a new generation of leaders, and opening doors for witness and service.

We hope and pray that as discipleship deepens, evangelism flourishes, and expository preaching becomes the norm, the Colombian church will bear fruit beyond its own borders. We

long to see believers engaging in ministry at home and catching a vision for the world’s spiritual needs. May they pray, send, and give so the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth.

When we look back over the past three years, we see that God has been gracious. FIEL Bible Institute is but one example of how God is equipping His people for ministry as He builds the church for His glory. Through online courses, practical retreats, and the generosity of supporters, believers across Colombia are being empowered to serve with skill, confidence, and conviction.

The journey is ongoing. There are more leaders to train, more churches to encourage, and more communities to reach. Yet as we reflect on what the Lord has done and look forward in faith, we are filled with gratitude and expectation.

May the Lord continue to bless His church in Colombia by raising up many more faithful servants who will disciple, evangelize, and preach the Word with boldness and love. And may we, together with our brothers and sisters in Christ across the globe, remain steadfast in the mission He has entrusted to us until every nation, tribe, and tongue joins in the song of the redeemed. ■



Christian and Pilar Ramirez are commended from Edmonds Lane Bible Chapel in Lewisville, Texas.



Left to right: Christian prepares a surprise for the men: a collection of books; Carlos Cruz (left) and Christian worked hard to create the expository preaching course and lead practical exercises during the retreat; Carlos presents a session on homiletics; Believers focus on a practical exercise.



Strengthening Our Faith Together

An Assembly's Bible-Reading Challenge Bears Fruit

BY MITCH & LORI PARENT

"How can we help the believers read the Bible?" That was the question that started it all. In 2024, three leading men in our assembly in Nicaragua expressed a concern that many believers do not read the Bible on their own, and they wanted to help our assembly develop the habit of reading every day. In response, we implemented a reading challenge.

It started simply, with the sole purpose of encouraging the believers to read one chapter per day from the New Testament. While we prepared the "what and how" starting in late April 2024, we presented seven sessions on the value and purpose of Scripture during our weekly Sunday meeting. After explaining the challenge's details to everyone interested, we set up four WhatsApp groups, and each one began reading Matthew 1 on May 11, 2024.

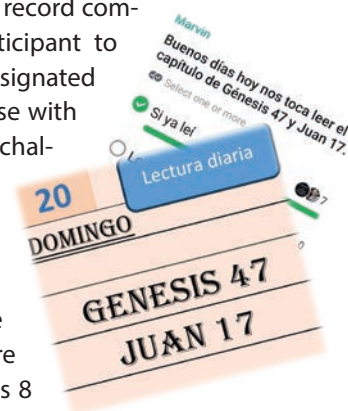
Day by day, growing individually

Every day, the group leaders would send a reminder for the daily reading and include a survey to record completion. They encouraged each participant to check off four daily tasks: read the designated chapter, mark the survey, share a verse with the group, and post the day's reading challenge and the verse as their WhatsApp status or on their Facebook timeline. Several additional people have asked to join a group after seeing the challenge published on these platforms. Today, we know of more than 40 Nicaraguan participants, ages 8 to 80, currently involved.

In July 2024, after seven weeks of reading, we presented an introduction to the New Testament and followed it with a weekly overview book by book from Matthew to Revelation. Each included information about the book and its author while focusing mostly on the outline and highlighting the main themes.

Daily and monthly, growing together

We also began meeting in person once per month to keep everyone motivated. The participants would share thoughts with their group and ask questions that had come up during their reading. We would have supper together and finish off by distributing prizes.



We would reward the participants who had memorized the names and order of the 27 New Testament books and those who had answered the question-of-



Right column (from top): Each day, the group leader sends out a reading reminder and survey (Photo by Marvin Morales); The participants meet monthly to review their progress and encourage each other.

the-day challenge. A few times throughout the month, I, Mitch, would send a question of the day based on the last few chapters we read. The purpose was to encourage everyone to read with intention and understanding and to reread the chapters while looking for the answers.

Along the way, we learned a few interesting tidbits about the New Testament: In total, there are 27 books, 260 chapters, and 7,958 verses. When counting by chapters, the halfway mark is Romans 13, but when counting by verses, the halfway mark is Acts 7:7. It takes about eight-and-a-half months to read the New Testament one chapter per day, and a chapter requires, on average, less than five minutes to read. The total reading time is less than 20 hours.

Twice as nice

We finished reading Revelation 22 on January 26, 2025. On the following Friday, we held a celebratory supper. A believer prepared a quiz of 100 questions about the New Testament, and we enjoyed a competition on Kahoot!, a game-based online learning platform. It was a great way to review the reading and remind us how much we still have to learn and remember.



When we concluded the reading challenge, we were thrilled to learn that most of the participants wanted to do it all over again. So, on January 27, we restarted and are now well into our second reading of the New Testament. This time, we have added one Old Testament chapter daily—from Genesis, Judges, Psalms, or Proverbs—to include history, worship, and wisdom.

Adding to God’s family and the challenge

The effort has been rewarding in other ways too. Three participants have professed faith in Christ since we started. Many believers have also commented on how the daily reading has helped them more clearly understand their salvation and responsibility before the Lord. Paul’s words in Romans 10:17 ring true: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Participants shared the following comments:

“The reading challenge has greatly impacted my life; through it, I have come to know Jesus Christ.” —MS

“The reading challenge has helped me develop a good habit. The Lord is helping me practice everything He tells me in each reading.” —LP

“The reading challenge has motivated me to read the same book repeatedly, allowing me to explore, understand, and analyze God’s message with greater clarity and determination, without wanting to miss a single detail.” —MC

While visiting an assembly in another country, I briefly shared the encouragements from our reading challenge. A group found it interesting and asked for more details. We eventually set them up as a Zoom group of 12 participants. After they encouraged their family and friends to join, the group grew to 28 members, bringing our reading challenge’s total to about 70 participants.

For December 2024, I sent out a special challenge to our various groups: read the entire New Testament in one month. Though a tall ask, nine out of the 70 finished within the month. A few others completed the special challenge in January, and most managed to read at least the Gospels and Acts.

Building on that, a monthly challenge for 2025 has gone out on the first day of every month to the 70 participants. It involves reading three chapters per day from selected books related to a theme. So far, we have read books based on wisdom and worship, Paul’s letters to churches, Paul’s letters to individuals, the law and works compared to grace and faith, the writings of John and Corinthians, and prophecy and the end times.



A useful tool for all believers

Though many assemblies have used Bible reading plans, they are something new for our assembly, and I find it encouraging to note this communal reading of God’s Word when I travel. When asked, one of the men leading our challenge commented, “I would recommend that other assemblies use this initiative. It is something very useful for growth and developing fellowship and for discussing very important topics.” Another said, “The Word of God does not return void; it always influences our lives. I would recommend that all assemblies implement a plan, because we always benefit from reading the Scriptures.” Our continuing prayer for the participants echoes the words of Christ in John 17:17: “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” ■



Mitch and Lori Parent are commended from Englehart Gospel Hall in Englehart, Ontario.

Above (L-R): The year-end celebration included a 100-question Kahoot! quiz about the New Testament; In person, reading groups can interact with comments and questions.

Ask a Missionary

Missions work around the world is unique—different from what friends and family at home encounter day to day. So, to learn about life on the field while getting to know our missionaries better, we asked them to share their firsthand experience or advice.

QUESTION: What is your favorite season, or time of year, in your country of service? Why do you enjoy it?

BRAZIL

Jeanne Lipsi



My favorite season is fall because, usually, summers in Brazil are very hot and there are many extra activities from November to January. The weather starts cooling off, the rainy season ends, and there is a burst of beautiful colors from flowering trees.

JAPAN (REFOCUSSED)

Bob Longo



My favorite is definitely autumn, which, here in Kurashiki, is mainly November and half of December. Gone is the oppressive summer heat. The weather is pleasantly mild, with a mixture of comfortably cool days. The larch trees (pine family) turn lemon yellow, and the maples a distinct shade of red. It's a great time of the year to enjoy the outdoors and God's beautiful creation.

COLOMBIA

Angela Loudon



Christmas is special in Colombia. We don't have any change in seasons, so Christmas is the one time each year when things look different, with lots of lights and decorations. Our church spends more time together in the weeks preceding the 25th; we do Christmas devotionals together and eat festive foods.

SO. KOREA

Doug & Ho Sook Neiswender



While we enjoy spring, fall is a beautiful time in South Korea, a land of four distinct seasons. Autumn is a time of harvest holidays here. It is similar to Christmas in the United States, with generous gift giving. After a hot, humid summer, the cooler, refreshing days of autumn are much appreciated. The blaze of beautiful leaves is awesome before they drop for the dead of winter. This change of seasons has a deep spiritual lesson for us as seniors, maybe soon to depart and be with our wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May we finish well and be beautiful in God's sight!

FRANCE

Maureen Crow



My favorite season is spring. Nature awakes around us with new life and beauty. It is also the time when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, when He conquered sin, death, and all that brought misery to humankind. Just as Christ arose from the dead, the earth awakes from its sleep and new life springs forth. It reminds us of the transforming power of Jesus Christ not only over nature but also over sin in our lives and all that is negative. He lives forevermore! ■

ASK YOUR QUESTIONS! Visit [CMML.us/askamissionary](https://www.cmml.us/askamissionary) to submit your question—it might be selected for a future issue!

My God Is So **Great**

BY ANONYMOUS

*My God is so great, so strong, and so mighty!
There's nothing my God cannot do!
The mountains are His, the rivers are His,
The stars are His handiwork too.
My God is so great, so strong, and so mighty!
There's nothing my God cannot do!*