

June 2021

MISSIONS



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Technology Expands
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Palawano

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THINKING IT THROUGH

BY PHIL BARNES

Do You Really Want to Hear God's Voice?

Isn't it amazing how gentle the Lord is? How He always leaves room for us to ignore Him if we really want to? How He often whispers when He could shout? We must understand that's the way it's going to be most of the time if we want to hear what the Lord is saying.

When Moses found himself far from what God made him for, he saw a bush on fire that never burned up. *Hmm, something supernatural.* Did he want to know? It was out of his way, but he decided to "turn aside and see." (Exodus 3:3) That action changed the course of history. "When the Lord saw that he [Moses] turned aside to look," God called to him and set in motion His plan (Exodus 3:4). But note that God gave Moses room to carry on his way if that's what he wanted to do. He had a choice, as we do: Do I really want to know what I will be expected to do?

The disciples were helpless in a storm when Jesus came toward them, walking on the water, and seemed about to pass by them (Mark 6:48). "It could be a ghost," the disciples may have whispered. "Do we really want to know who this is?"

In Luke 24, two disciples on the Emmaus road were prevented from recognizing Jesus while He explained everything about Himself from the Scriptures. He acted as if He were going to walk farther, and they, too, were forced to a crisis point: Do we want deeper fellowship, a more intimate relationship? Do we want to know?

Remember when, in 1 Kings 19, Elijah was in a funk and the Lord offered to show Himself? A wind rose up so strongly it shattered the rocks, then an earthquake, then a fire—that's more like it, lots of flash, noise, mighty power. But the Lord was not in those. And then came the still, small voice so easily ignored.

You may wonder, What about Saul on the road to Damascus? Yes, he witnessed a revelation he could not dismiss or ignore. However, he was the church's archenemy and Christ's chief

persecutor. We may expect it would take more to get Saul's attention than ours. The Lord comes near, whispers, and catches our eye but gives us room to ignore Him if we want to. Why is that, do you suppose?

In Luke 8, when the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in a parable, Jesus replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, 'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'" (v. 10, NIV) Jesus used parables to hide the truth from those who didn't want to know. Do we want to know?

Sadly, today, many professing believers are consumed with

conspiracy theories, the many secrets *they* don't want *us* to know. Yes, an evil mastermind works behind the scenes, wickedly manipulating every aspect of the kingdom of this world, but why have Christians started to behave as though Satan's work is new?

It began in Genesis 3. The Lord grants us knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God, but we don't want to know. We become consumed with trying to discover and expose the secrets of the kingdom of this world when they were exposed long ago in the Bible.

Peeling the lid off global conspiracies will not get you where the Lord wants you. Listening for the still, small voice; turning aside to that bush you see burning out of the corner of your eye; pursuing the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God—that will radically alter the course of your life. You will join the ranks of those who defy pharaohs, walk on water, and dine with the risen Christ.

But we can easily ignore the bush and the whisper, and He will let us. We cry out, "If only God would speak to me loudly and clearly." In so doing, we pander to our willful determination to ignore God by blaming it on Him for not shouting. ■

The Lord comes near, whispers, and catches our eye but gives us room to ignore Him.

Phil Barnes is the executive director of MSC Canada.

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FRONT COVER: Guatemalan family—iStockPhoto.com/globalfolkart

BACK COVER: Little Bradley Falls in North Carolina—Nathan Bramsen



Picking Up the Baton in Guatemala

A Missionary Uses Technology to Expand His Family's Ministry

BY SETH COCKING

In 1963, my family completed a journey across Mexico and made a pit stop in Guatemala. My parents, Jim and Carla Cocking (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 16), were new missionaries with CMML traveling through with plans of serving in Colombia. In the early '60s, much of Central America's infrastructure was largely undeveloped, and Guatemala was no exception. In fact, when we arrived, the main highway was being paved for the first time.

We quickly realized the trailer we were towing was not up to the challenge of the rough mountain roads. We had to order a new axle from the United States, extending our family's "pit stop" in Guatemala by six weeks. Little did we know that those six weeks would sprout roots of a mission that still bears fruit nearly six decades later.

During our stay in Guatemala, my parents saw many opportunities to leverage their medical training to show God's love to the people around us. The Guatemalan people were warm and welcoming, encouraging my parents to stay rather than continue on to Colombia. My dad had graduated from Baylor College of Medicine but was not qualified to practice medicine in Guatemala. So he started attending Spanish classes and enrolled as a medical student at the Universidad de San Carlos. About a year later, he received a Guatemalan medical license—a tool he would use to serve the Guatemalan people in God's name for more than 50 years.

Translating the Bible into K'iché

Guatemala's official language is Spanish, but people in rural areas speak some 21 regional Mayan languages. After Spanish, K'iché is the most spoken language. In the last 60 years, Guatemala's population has roughly tripled to about 17 million, with about 10 percent speaking K'iché (approximately 1.7 million).

Growing up among the K'iché people gave me an understanding of and love for them, as well as a deep appreciation for missions work. Often, I accompanied my parents to their clinics, attended meetings with K'iché-speaking believers, and helped record Christian radio programs.

In 1977, an older K'iché believer, don Patricio Xec, asked my parents to assist with a Bible translation project. (At the time, the New Testament was available in K'iché, but don Patricio was determined to see the rest of the Bible translated into his language). The United Bible Society, which was developing ways to use computers for translation, sponsored the project.

A year after they started the translation project, I left Guatemala to pursue a degree in electrical engineering at LeTourneau University in Texas. Part of my education included computer programming courses, so soon, my parents and don Patricio asked me to apply my newfound knowledge to the translation project. While the skills weren't exactly aligned, I could solve some problems, including adding special marks to letters to designate sounds unique to Mayan languages and creating a



HOW CAN WE REACH PEOPLE WHEN THERE IS SO MUCH COMPETITION FOR THEIR ATTENTION?

K'ichè dictionary that the computer could use to spell-check the translation. My parents continued working on the project with don Patricio until the K'ichè Bible was published in 1995.

Returning to my Guatemalan roots

For many years after college, I worked in the US as an electrical engineer on high-tech research and development projects. During those years, I often thought about my childhood in Guatemala and found myself contemplating how the Lord could use me there. Even after my parents returned to the US in 2016, I felt an increased burden to spend time in Guatemala, eventually considering a full-time ministry there.

In 2019, Southside Bible Chapel in Colorado Springs, Colorado, commended me, and I became a full-time CMML missionary in Guatemala. I was some 30 years older than my parents were when God called them to serve Him as missionaries, but still, I did not have a clear idea of what ministry the Lord was leading me to. So I started working with a group of K'ichè-speaking believers and continued broadcasting Christian radio programs on a local station, which my parents had done for many years. I began to realize that, while many things had changed since I was a child, the challenges remained the same: people need a knowledge of God's Word and character so they can develop a relationship with Him.

Addressing the paradox

God's work is not new work; many have toiled for years for the sake of the Gospel, creating high-quality resources in numerous languages in the process. The sad truth is people don't use them anymore. Years ago, people enthusiastically received gospel tracts, and the novelty of showing the *Jesus* film in a

village attracted large crowds. Today, people are less likely to carefully consider a tract and don't really care about videos.

Bizarrely, we live in a paradox: the internet has made Bible-teaching resources more accessible than ever, yet the sophisticated media industry makes sure people spend their time and data on the content that generates the most ad revenue, not on what can truly transform them.

How can we reach people when there is so much competition for their attention? Here in Guatemala, we're working hard to make sure people know about the valuable resources available to them. For example, the *Jesus* film is available on the internet in many languages, including K'ichè, but few K'ichè speakers are aware of it. Evidently, it never occurred to them to do a Google search for a video about Jesus in K'ichè. This reality led me to build a website with links to valuable Bible-related resources.¹ I also use it to host hymns and other materials in K'ichè that my parents developed. Now, I tell people about resources in their own language on the internet and distribute business cards advertising the website and the radio programs.

Solving problems through innovation

I am also involved with a group of young people who tutor grade-school children at rural public schools with limited access to technology. Through this group, I met university students who were seeking projects for their technology program. Their professor invited me to discuss possible projects with the class.

One of the university students, Wilson, began developing software for a "media box" that would operate on a low-cost, commercially available computer board. It resulted in a handheld device that stores the desired media in a memory chip and makes it available over Wi-Fi. Users can access the media, presented as



First two from left: Seth meets with the announcer of the local radio station, which broadcasts Christian programs (photo by Josué García); The original media box provides the contents of a website over Wi-Fi to a cell phone. Last two: The enhanced version of the media box acts as a Wi-Fi hotspot—the server box (left) is installed inside, and the antenna (right) is mounted on a pole outside.



Top (from left): When Seth speaks at the chapel, Martin Chan interprets his Bible messages in K'ichè (photo by Elena Chan); In March 2021, on enrollment day at Salitre del Conejo public school, Pueblo Viejo's mayor and council join the activities; On enrollment day, 40 families, representing more than 100 children, received media boxes on loan. **Bottom (from left):** A group participates in Seth's course Introduction to the Bible, which was part of a socially distanced series of classes in early 2021; The tutors who work with children in rural areas participate in a Bible-based leadership class, which Seth taught in 2019.

a website, from a smartphone over Wi-Fi without needing to pay for an internet data plan.

The tutoring group's concept was to use the devices to send educational materials home with students who lacked internet access. I was also interested in using them to distribute Christian media. This was the beginning of the media box project.

After Guatemala confirmed its first case of COVID-19, the government suspended in-person religious and educational activities and put other restrictions in place. I was largely confined to my apartment and focused on the media box project. With Wilson's help, the media boxes replaced the in-person tutoring. We also used them to deliver Christian messages to believers in their homes since they could no longer meet at the chapel on Sundays.

Next, we implemented a learning management system in the media boxes, used to provide the students with instructions, and updated the media boxes to serve multiple websites. We could also add Christian content to the educational content. People were pleased with the updates and told us that they served the needs of their entire family: children continued learning even though schools were closed, and everyone at home could learn more about God's Word.

Between the tutoring program and the local believers at the

chapel, we currently maintain about 100 media boxes. It is an opportunity and a challenge. Updating the content, which we must do in person, enables us to interact with people, but it is time-consuming. We would like to make even more content available and update frequently, but to do so, we need to improve the update process. In recent months, I have been communicating with people with technical backgrounds in the US. We meet regularly via Zoom and are investigating options, such as serving multiple households with a single media box and using the cell network.

Praying for the future

Please pray that God will give me wisdom during what seems to be a time of transition ahead. Pray that, soon, the believers at the K'ichè-speaking chapel in Chajabal will be able to resume meeting in person and that others from the area will be drawn to the fellowship. Pray that God will use this ministry—in all of its facets—to draw entire families closer to Him while it helps the students academically. ■

Seth Cocking is commended from Southside Bible Chapel in Colorado Springs, Colorado.



¹ Our website is AbriendoLaBiblia.org, which translates as "opening the Bible."



GOD USES A FAITHFUL FEW

40 Years of Persistent Witness in Roatán, Honduras

BY JIM HAESEMEYER

My heart is always warmed when missionaries in distant fields and nationals from other countries relate reports of gospel campaigns resulting in a thrilling harvest of souls. Yet, in a strange way, I'm just as encouraged to hear about years of faithful labor in proclaiming Jesus to the lost when the result is a trickle of conversions rather than a torrent.

These seemingly less spectacular accounts encourage me for two reasons: First, I believe that such is the common experience. Second, and more importantly, I admire the determination of saints who push forward in sharing Christ despite, at times, less than hoped-for results. My admiration deepens when those faithful believers are few in number and of limited resources.

To this remarkable category belong the 300 or so assembly Christians found on the small, relatively unknown Caribbean island of Roatán, where I have had the joy of visiting occasionally for ministry trips, most recently in February 2021.

Dagoberto's mission

Roatán is one of three rocky but beautiful islands dotting the clear waters off the northern coast of Honduras. Although Spain originally claimed Roatán, by the 1700s, it came under British control, even serving as a quasi-penal colony for the Garifuna,

an ethnic Caribbean people group. In 1859, Britain ceded its control to Honduras after the latter gained independence.

For years, Roatán's pristine reefs and unspoiled beaches went largely unnoticed, and the island built a small fishing industry as its primary source of income. This same industry attracted a young Honduran man, Dagoberto, to the island in the early 1980s. With him, the story of assembly outreach begins.

In his new life on Roatán, Dagoberto spent his days working on the shrimp boats. In the evenings, he would tread French Harbor's muddy streets, sharing the good news of salvation in Christ with anyone who would listen. By the end of his first year on the island, seven precious souls had come to know the Lord and started meeting in one woman's home.

In 1985, the Christians, numbering 35, began a gospel outreach in a small community called Sandy Bay, more than 12 miles from French Harbor. Such an outreach was no easy task, given that none of the believers owned a car. They would take the afternoon bus to Sandy Bay, but by the time the evening meetings ended, the only way to return home was by foot. Those faithful Christians would sing hymns of praise as they plodded the dark, deserted road, finally arriving at their homes well after midnight, exhausted but thankful.

From top left: Many island children, like these pictured in front of their home, still need to hear the Gospel; The lack of space for children to play at the Sandy Bay chapel prompted the idea of a campground; Antonio and Jim discuss plans for the development of property in Sandy Bay for an outreach to children.

Hope springing from tragedy

Many of the Christians in French Harbor lived on a swampy piece of land crowded with wooden shacks. One day in 1991, a witch doctor who also lived there was burning sorcery candles when one fell on a mattress. He didn't notice until a fire was already raging. The conflagration eventually engulfed his house and 30 others, including that of Antonio, a dedicated believer.

The Christians united to build Antonio and his family a new house, and Antonio asked them to build it in Los Fuertes, a *barrio* (neighborhood) they had been trying to reach with the Gospel. In subsequent years, Antonio's faithful witness to his new neighbors led several to the Lord.

Again, the believers on Roatán pooled their money, this time to buy property in Los Fuertes on which to build a chapel. All they could afford was a small lot clinging to a steep hillside; it was difficult to access, and a cluster of buildings completely obscured it from the road. Even hidden from view, the assembly became a shining lighthouse to the lost.

Cayos Cochinos and beyond

Soon, the Christians on Roatán began to cast their eyes beyond their own shores. In 2002, the (now four) assemblies purchased a small, open boat equipped with a well-used 45 horsepower motor. They would lade the boat with plantains and bags of beans and cornmeal and then make the precarious journey to the cays known as Cayos Cochinos. There, they would share their food with the impoverished residents and preach the Gospel.

Over the next few years, several of the islanders came to Christ, and it seemed that an assembly would soon form. At this time, however, foreign investors contracted a 40-year lease on the cays to build a tourist resort. The residents, including the new believers, were displaced to the mainland.

Undaunted, the Roatán Christians began praying for their neighboring islands of Guanaja and Utila. In 2017, a young man volunteered to move to Utila to preach the Gospel. Four years later, after countless hours of witnessing and evangelizing, 11 believers worship there and have built a small chapel.

Looking to more distant fields, the Roatán believers commended a believer to establish an assembly in the remote department of Lempira, on mainland Honduras. Even farther afield, they sent a believer and his family to the Catholic city of León, Nicaragua, where he and another Honduran missionary have helped form a small church.

Space fails me for writing of the children's gospel campground that the four assemblies are developing, their weekly gospel preaching from one end of the island to the other, the new outreaches in Crawfish Rock and El Paraíso, or of their frequent gospel campaigns.

Top: French Harbor Chapel, Roatán's original chapel, continues today through the faithful work of local believers, including Antonio (left). **Bottom (from left):** Over the years, the island assemblies have sent four men to Módulos Bíblicos, a leadership training program; Roatán's story of assembly outreach begins with Dagoberto.

Dogged service, everlasting reward

More than 40 years ago, Dagoberto first set foot on Roatán's shores. Sadly, in January 2021, he passed into the Lord's presence, a victim of COVID-19. Yet his example of perseverance and sacrificial service lives on.

Forty years of faithful, dogged service have resulted in perhaps 300 conversions on Roatán. Some evangelistic campaigns see more people come to Christ in a single evening. Nevertheless, my heart is overwhelmed with admiration and thanksgiving for the believers on Roatán and their unwavering desire to serve the Lord Jesus and reach others with His message of love.

American standards would consider the Roatán believers impoverished. However, they have an indescribable, everlasting reward awaiting them in eternity. "These . . . having seen [the promises] afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. . . . Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:13, 16) ■



Jim and Sharon Haesemeyer serve in Other Overseas Service to Honduras. They are commended from South Plains Bible Chapel in Lubbock, Texas.





Meet the MSC Canada Team

MSC Canada is privileged to serve mission workers around the world. We appreciate that many *Missions* readers faithfully pray for us (especially on Day 31 of the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*, where we are listed). We humbly ask you to continue upholding us in prayer.

STAFF

The MSC staff is a team of servants who work diligently to support the Lord's work globally. We are grateful for the roles we are privileged to play in the Great Commission.



Phil Barnes, Executive Director

Under the National Committee's guidance, Phil provides leadership and direction to MSC's work and vision and oversees its day-to-day operations. Phil connects with workers around the world, remotely and in person.



Edith Masuello, Secretary

Usually, Edith is the first voice you'll hear if you call MSC. She also handles mailings, helps maintain our contact database, and compiles content for the weekly Mission Prayer Items email.



Sandra Barnett, Administrator

Sandra oversees administrative operations, including the office's daily financial activities, and serves as MSC's liaison with mission workers by phone and email.

Profile removed for security reasons.



Jerry Bolton, Communications Director

Jerry manages MSC's voice and direction in social media, print, email, graphic design, website content, photography, and videography. He provides IT support for staff and mission workers.



Kevin Shantz, Financial Director

Kevin oversees MSC's financial aspects and the development of our internal database system. He is a member of the National Committee and is its treasurer and secretary.



Conrad Lechelt, Program Director

Conrad directs MSC programs, such as WorkerCare, as well as our regional representatives, who represent MSC across Canada.



Gerrit Van Essen, ACCTS Coordinator

Gerrit heads up ACCTS Mission Shipping by coordinating shipments and volunteers. He also manages MSC's warehouse, which is connected to our office.



Savitri Manickam, Administrative Asst.

Savitri processes the donations received online and by mail. She also manages the pre-authorized donation plans, maintains database integrity, and handles many other office tasks.



Ted Windle, Short-Term Teams Coordinator

Ted serves as a resource to outgoing short-term teams. He also heads up TeamWorkers.

WORKERCARE

WorkerCare is designed to provide mission workers with personal care, encouragement, and support.

Lisa Barber, *Debriefing, Transition, and Reentry Coaching*
Ron & Robin Hampton, *Serving workers in Europe*

Phil & Marilyn Barnes, *Serving workers in Africa*
Conrad & Becky Lechelt, *Serving workers in Asia and South America*

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

MSC's National Committee, made up of directors and members, provides representation and oversight around the country. MSC is blessed with leaders who seek to serve the Lord in every decision they make. Please remember our leadership in prayer.



Russell Sutherland, President

A network engineer, Russ oversees the executive management committee and sits on the audit committee. Russ visits many workers in Europe.



Paul Huston

Director of corporate security for a national retail chain, Paul serves as an MSC director and as a regional representative in Quebec. He also advises MSC on security matters.



Vladimir Paserin, Vice President

A scientist, Vlad is a long-time MSC director who has a special interest in the Lord's work in Eastern Europe, especially his native Slovakia.



Rod Joyce

Rod works for Deloitte and has served as a director for many years. He is also a member of the audit and executive management committees.



Ruth Bell Asselin

Ruth is a personal coach and business consultant who has had a lengthy career in the insurance field. Ruth became an MSC director in 2019.



Stefan Parent

Stef works in education and has been a director for the past decade. He is very involved in reaching the large Chinese community in northeast Toronto.



Paul DeJager

An estate planning specialist, Paul has been a director since 2019 and serves on the executive management and audit committees. He is our regional representative to the Atlantic provinces.



Viji Roberts

A learning consultant, Viji served as a director for many years, and he recently moved into a member role to contribute his expertise to MSC's processes and protocols.



Keri Halliday

A marketing support manager by trade, Keri serves as a member and supports our communications efforts with her expertise in graphic design.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

These volunteers serve in their region as a resource to inform local churches and prospective workers about MSC and connect them to it. Regional representatives are members of the National Committee.

Jean-Pierre Cloutier, *Quebec*
Paul DeJager, *Atlantic Canada*
Carl Dorozio, *BC Lower Mainland*

Ron Hampton, *the Prairies*
Paul Huston, *Quebec*

Conrad Lechelt, *Alberta & BC Interior*
Matthew Robertson, *Northern Ontario*

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: Do you have a close friend on the mission field? How has that friendship encouraged your ministry?

JAPAN

Tim & Christiane Marcy



Some of our closest friends in Japan are a believing Japanese couple named Masatoshi and Reiko. They encourage our ministry by doing all they can to support our outreach. For example, for more than seven years now, they have hosted Tim's English Bible class in their home. They have edited Tim's Bible messages in Japanese and assisted Christiane in her translation work. We often share our prayer requests with each other. It is such a comfort to know that they are fully behind us, share our vision for reaching the Japanese with the truth of the Gospel, and pray for us faithfully.

FRANCE

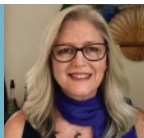
Matt & Sylvie Glock



In October 2015, God led Sylvie and me to move to Paris to serve among the assemblies here. As we prepared for this move, we prayed that God would give us new friends. In November of the same year, we met Frantz and Nelly Galland—I should say remet as our paths had crossed in the 1990s. The Gallands have become dear friends to us and a great support. They have often blessed us with their hospitality and generosity. They pray for us daily and are also active partners in the work among the assemblies. They are an essential part of what we do in Paris.

BRAZIL

Jeanne Lipsi



Yes, I do! In fact, I have many prayer warriors with whom I share prayer requests, a few even on a daily basis. Even though we don't see each other often—especially now because of the COVID-19 pandemic—we keep in touch through WhatsApp or other electronic means. It is a great comfort and encouragement to have these friends. Brazilians are a gregarious people, a characteristic I appreciate very much.

OTHER OVERSEAS SERVICE

Karl Peterson



Missionary work is lonely. New workers need to prepare for this reality, and commending churches need to recognize it in the missionaries they send and serve. It's crucial to develop friendships on the field with whom we can share our burdens. My close friend in Mozambique, Patrick Mulenga, would share his family with ours and enjoy much laughter and prayer. We would laugh at all the mistakes we innocently made as new missionaries and the frustrations we both faced. Missionaries need to make time for friendships!

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