



Christian Light Foundation Costa Rica

EVANGELISM and DISCIPLESHIP

in the hard places of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Venezuela

March, 2024

250th consecutive monthly newsletter

For NOTHING will be impossible with God.
Luke 1:37

250 Newsletters

We arrived in Costa Rica over 21 years ago to learn Spanish. During the nine months we were in language school, God opened our eyes and hearts to the poor, broken, forgotten, and abused living near us. As we began to go into some of those areas that few others wanted to go into with the gospel and a desire to disciple new believers, we also started a monthly newsletter to share prayer requests and how the glory of the Lord was going before us. Since this is the 250th newsletter, we would like to share with you again some of the things God continues to teach us.

We are learning that when God calls, it is difficult to get out of it, and we don't have the right to understand God's plan before we obey. Over 21 years ago, we wondered if it was possible that God was asking for more than monetary contributions but was asking for a personal consecration to His service. Is there something to be learned from the lives of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and David? God called them out from their ordinary environment and set them apart to serve Him. **"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going."** (Hebrews 11:8)

We are learning that resources are God's business and not our worry. God tells us to store up our treasure in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroy. However, it is all too easy for us to focus on worldly treasures that can be seen. **We want to see mercy as something much more precious than money.** We want to experience the joy of giving. So, we must seek forgiveness for wanting the security of keeping what we think is ours. Why does God have to continue to remind us that if He called us, He will provide for us?

We are learning what life is like for people experiencing poverty. Talk about poverty, and people think of hunger. It's a place to start. Hunger is the image of the emptiness of poverty. People are hungry for food, but they are also hungry for safety, shelter, clean water, protection from criminals, education and training, decent jobs, protection from abuse, and love. Hopelessness, loneliness, and the feeling of being unwanted are prevalent in the slums of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Venezuela. The danger is a daily reality. Do you ever wonder why God doesn't step in decisively to punish evil people and help the poor? We often wonder why God's people don't step in decisively to resist evil and help the poor.

We are learning how exciting it is to attempt things doomed to failure unless God shows up. It is interesting what we are being told is impossible at times. **"You're going to learn a new language? At your age?"**

That wasn't encouraging to hear just as we left for language school. **"Where will you get the money to purchase property in Costa Rica when you barely have enough to live on each month?"** It seemed ridiculous and quite impossible during those days of praying for La Finca. **"You're going to expand the ministry into Nicaragua? With what resources?"** We give God the glory for the language acquisition and the purchase of the property. Both are miracles, no doubt. And we praise God that the gospel is being shared and there are many disciples, not just in two countries, but in four today. This would be a long list of all of the "impossible made reality" in the last 21 years if everything were to be listed here. **Thank you, Lord, because nothing is impossible for You.**

We are learning that we don't have the right to complain. We see people living in dirt poverty every day. We cry with those being abused. We pray against the violence in the homes. We grieve for those who will not listen to the Truth, knowing that their eternal destination will be an unspeakable horror. There is so much more, from hunger to lack of education to dangerous gangs. **We count it a privilege to go into these areas talking about our Lord; no whining is allowed.**

We are learning that being with the majority is not always good. In Numbers, chapters 13 and 14, God promised Moses that He would give them the land of Canaan. Why, then, did 10 of the 12 spies end up saying that they could not go up against the people because they were too strong for them? And they accepted the majority report! The dangerous areas that God has called us are overrun by giants. Many will not enter these places. **We want to believe God and not let the power of the majority be elevated over God's omnipotence.**

We are learning that there is a difference between conviction and emotion. We were full of emotion as we left the United States 21 years ago. We were overcome with emotion as we got to know the people living in the slums and began to understand what their lives were like. As God's still, small voice became louder and more precise, would we have the conviction to follow

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where He was leading in the following months and years? For us, a conviction is being so thoroughly convinced that something is true that we will take a stand for it regardless of the consequences. Daniel had conviction as he stood firm in his belief even in the face of hungry lions. His friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, stood firm in their conviction as they entered the fiery furnace.

Are we so convinced that Christ and His Word are objectively true and meaningful that we will act on our beliefs regardless of the consequences? People don't die for beliefs. They die for convictions. We have come to agree with Andrew Murray, who said, "The enthusiasm for the kingdom is missing because there is so little enthusiasm for the King."

"Lord, we want to make a difference for you that is utterly disproportionate to who we are," Mark said publicly at our commissioning before we left for Costa Rica. It is still our heart's deepest desire more than 21 years later.

We are learning that God's Word is what changes cultures, communities, and families. "Who are you to go and try to change the culture in that place?" A friend challenged us with this question over 21 years ago as we prepared to leave behind everything and move to another country. What a great question! Sadly, we didn't have an answer immediately, but we did shortly afterward. It is not us! Evil is evil, no matter the culture, language, or customs.

"Jesus wept." (John 11:35) Mark's first verse to memorize in Spanish for the obvious reason: it's the shortest! Have you ever wondered why this verse reads this way, as Jesus is with the friends and family of Lazarus, who died days before? Why doesn't it say something like: "Wait! Don't you know who I am? Don't be sad! Wait until you see what happens next! You may be sad now, but wait!"

At that moment, his friends were in pain; they were hurting. We are thankful for this example from the life of Jesus because, at times, that is all we can do: weep with those who are hurting and grieving. But wait! Where is the conviction amid this emotion? **We believe with conviction that Jesus rose from the dead and, with the sovereign Lord, we can be more than conquerors.** Instead of being angry, losing heart, giving up, or asking where Jesus is in the midst of incredible evil, we know that one day all will be right. Lord, help us to remember this amid the fierce battle.

Why does God allow tragedy and suffering, abuses and unspeakable evil? It's hard. **But we believe with conviction that a loving, sovereign God can cause even the most senseless tragedies to work together for the good of those who love God.** It can be so easy for us to dwell and even become obsessed with the raw evil around us. We must remember that our sovereign God never loses control of things, not even at history's darkest hour, on Calvary. **Oh Lord, may we never doubt your sovereignty, even in the most painful times!**

We are learning more and more about compassion. Compassion is not just pity or sympathy. It is more than being moved to tears or stirred up emotionally. It is more than just speaking out against injustice.

Compassion combines pity and mercy with the desire to help. It's not just a feeling; it is an action. Sympathy is about feeling. Compassion is about doing! **Genuine compassion should move us to do something, but the lack of compassion is often very easy to justify.**

Jesus didn't just teach about compassion; He lived it. At one point, as Jesus stepped off a boat onto the shore, the multitudes followed along and were waiting for Him. In desperation, they had brought their lame, their blind, their dying, and their demon-possessed. What did Jesus do?

He gathered up His disciples for a meeting. He analyzed the problems and discussed the sins that had brought society to such a terrible place. He pointed to the people and tearfully said, "Look at what sin does to people. It's tragic! See the wages of sin at work!"

It wasn't that way? Perhaps this is what happened. Jesus looked at the vast crowd of people and said to them, "Look, I'm exhausted! I've worked hard ministering to you, and now I'm exhausted, and I need to go and talk with my Father. You can be sure that I feel your pain! I'll tell you what: I will call my disciples together and have a prayer meeting for you. Now, go in peace."

No! Matthew 14:14 tells us what happened. Jesus saw the great multitudes, felt compassion for them, and healed the sick. He took action!

One of the things that compassion does is meet the physical needs of people. We feed, clothe, shelter, visit, protect, educate, and provide school uniforms, all in the name of Jesus. And we do it, not because they deserve it, and not only because they need it, but because we minister to Christ himself in doing these things. What an incredible privilege this is! **"The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me."** (Matthew 25:40)

We are learning that God must receive the credit and the glory. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) **We don't want our compassion for the people to be detached from our passion for the glory of God.** It is not primarily out of compassion for the people that we share the gospel, pray for the lost, start churches, train and raise up disciple-makers, or do good works of any kind. It is first and foremost for the glory of God and because we love Him. God is a jealous God and shares His glory with no one. God loves it when we boast in HIM, and God hates it when we boast in the things of man. **"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."** (2 Corinthians 10:17) **"Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."** (Galatians 6:14)

We are learning and reminded often that the ministry can be very hard. It is no surprise that Satan wages a fierce battle against the advance of God's kingdom. There have been times of deep discouragement. There have been those times of despair and crying out to God. And there have been times over the past 21 years to jump and shout and rejoice.

**Thank you for praying! Please don't stop.
Thank you for partnering with us!**