



## Editor's Note

Years ago, our kids used to enjoy children's activity books where you connected the dots and gradually a picture of something would take shape. Sometimes life is like that. Repeatedly, the Lord told His disciples to "Watch."

Helping local assemblies is rewarding work, but there is also sadness at the many congregations that are dwindling. Soon the light will go out. We pray for them and try to serve when we have opportunity. And we watch. Today in reading Jim Fleming's next article in his series on Missions [see Nov.

2021, March and July 2022], it seemed like a "connect-the-dots" moment. What was the one thing all the dwindling little assemblies I knew had in common? Outreach was weak or gone; involvement in missions (not necessarily giving), but involvement is lacking.

In this month's issue, Jim makes some hard hitting, practical suggestions for getting involved. This is a good place for leaders to lead! And perhaps the lamp will burn a little brighter as the oil of the Spirit begins to flow again!



## ***Biblical Principles: Elders and Missions***

### **Step 4: The Jungles of Missions are Different Today** *by Jim Fleming*

The purpose of this short series of articles on elders and missions was summed up in Step 1: "Elders, keep Missions on your Radar." In Step 2 we discussed "Sending out Missionaries the Bible Way" from Acts 13. Then in Step 3 we thought about "The Mission Mandate Morphing," showing how the concept of missions is morphing. But God's mandate of what to do has not changed.

In Step 4 we will delve into the jungles of 21st-century missions, which can be more accessible due to modern trends in missions, and God's way of fulfilling His mandate with as great an impact as ever in church history.

In 1951 Jim Elliot and my uncle, Peter Fleming, sailed for Ecuador with a passion to evangelize unreached tribes in the Amazon jungles. For five years they worked among various tribal groups seeing indigenous people coming to Christ. In 1956 they were martyred as they made contact with the unreached Huaorani people. While stories like Uncle Pete's from the era of pioneer jungle missions continue to impact missions to this day, the jungles that modern missionaries need to penetrate have changed. According to the World Bank Rainforest Foundation, "There are an estimated 500 million forest-dependent people of which 200 million are indigenous peoples." That means 6.5% of the world's population is basically out of the modern mainstream. Yet only 2.6% are considered extremely isolated or in the unreached jungle paradigm of missions still needing to be reached. The other 93% of the world's population is not geographically isolated.

Consider the following trends of modern missions—bringing the jungle to us, taking us

into more accessible jungles, even allowing us to do foreign missions without going overseas.

#### **1) Witness to city dwellers: An Urban Focus**

In 1900, only 13 percent of the world's population lived in cities. By 2020 it hit 56% and by 2050, that number is expected to rise to 70%! Missions is accomplished most effectively where the people live! Paul went to the main urban centers in the first century.

As before, the world's cities, including ours in North America, are "global villages." New York City claims over 200 nationalities living in their 5 boroughs. Forty percent of Detroit's population identifies as Muslim. Latinos make up 26% of Florida's population. As many as 400,000 Iraqis live in the United States, and the hub of Iraqi Americans is in Chicago.

I minister with Emmaus Worldwide; our director in England told me, "If I went to downtown London, within one hour I could distribute a copy of a course to a native speaker of all 85 languages Emmaus prints!"

Urban-focused missions give unprecedented opportunities in our generation. For those not called overseas, foreign nationals have come to our cities. Our challenge is to be proactive in how to reach out to them. Sharon and I live in the little town of Dubuque, Iowa, population 60,000. Our next-door neighbor and our neighbors behind us are both Iranians, professors at a local university. We have become good friends with them. Sharon walks with one of the ladies twice a week. We often share meals together. We cannot go to Iran, but Iran has come to us! The challenge is to get out of our comfort zones and find out who God

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I have been going over a few NT references on the character of individuals and the spiritual climate of the world in the end times, noting the amazing accuracy of predictions made 2000 years ago, and some of the helpful instruction given in the context of such warnings. Most pertain to unsaved people and the world in general. But a few of them seem to be aimed at the church, or should we say the “professing church” of the latter days.

My studies are not exhaustive, but I offer them here as an encouragement to elders and other servants of the Lord for two reasons. First, do not be discouraged when you see these things occurring; the coming of the Lord draws near. Secondly, it is extremely important that Bible ministry emphasizes sound doctrine to equip the saints to stand firm. Certainly the desire of all God’s servants is to have a positive, uplifting, and encouraging ministry. We strive to avoid a negative tone. The emphasis is rightly on the blessings of life in Christ and the coming of the Lord. But there are some sobering things written to prepare us for conditions as we await His return.

#### All Scripture...is Profitable

The essential truths of Scripture are presented as facts, simply stated and designed to be accepted as “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16). There are occasional examples, however, where unusual words or expressions arrest our attention, words which seem to call for extra diligence in hearing! Think of our Lord’s use of, “Verily, verily,” or “Truly, truly.” In another passage, the Lord again foretells events just ahead by charging the disciples, “Let these sayings sink down into your ears” (Luke 9:45). In other words, “Pay attention!”

So when Paul writes of end-time dangers to his son in the faith Timothy, he prefaces it with this note of urgency: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times...” (1 Tim. 4:1). The Spirit of inspiration is very clear about this; there is no room for doubt or cloudy thinking. Again, in his second letter Paul begins his warning section, “This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:1). As stated

above, I am not now thinking of the lists of evils that characterize men of the world, but those that describe “professing Christians.”

How can we study these warnings and still think on things that are “of good report?” (Phil. 4:8).

For one thing, we can see the positive side of warning passages; they are “written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). We must remind the saints that God is still on the throne! And we can affirm that it is always good news that God tells us the truth, even about evil. Keeping the blessings and warnings of Scripture in balance is part of our equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12). It can shake the faith of young believers when they see people they have considered stable Christians believing strange things and even challenging clear Scriptures. Yes, warning the flock about dangers is an important part of shepherding work.

With this in mind, I’d like to list a few noteworthy passages, adding brief comments. The point? An old saying is, “Forewarned is forearmed.” We are warned that these things will become prominent as the days darken. Rather than lament, true believers can (and do) say, “The coming of the Lord draws near.”

And here is an important point in this study: the contexts of Bible warnings about end-time dangers are not simply lists of problems. They often provide valuable instruction to help us stand firm and take appropriate action. This can be a positive source of peace and joy in troubled times. At the end, we’ll think about some practical steps that might be taken.

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#### Sober Warnings

**Matthew 24:12:** “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold.”

This word spoken by the Lord is chilling. Think of it—“cold love.” Have you encountered it? Sin in the life causes love to grow cold, affecting marriages, families—and yes, churches. It contrasts with that heartwarming “warm love” we all cherish, the Lord loving people through us!

Note to remember: sin and love can’t live together.

**2 Thessalonians 2:3** refers to an apostasy, literally “the apostasy.” *Apostasy* means falling away, and most naturally refers to an abandonment of truth, and of so large a scope that it receives a distinctive title: “*The* apostasy.”

It’s not our place to be dogmatic about who or when this refers to, but when we hear of multitudes of professing Christians and so-called “Christian churches” endorsing teachings and practices contrary to Scripture, we cannot help but think of “doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1).

Note to remember: the context supplies the key to stability, “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him” (2 Thes. 2:1).

**1 Timothy 4:1** (referred to above) in which Paul gives the fearful warning that some who have held “the faith” depart from it by listening to “seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.” The reference is not to blasphemous information obtained at gatherings of “Satan worshipers,” but to “Christian” religious instruction that “has a form of godliness, but denies the power thereof” (2 Tim. 3:5).

A careful study of the devil’s seductive method in Genesis 3 provides a good example.

Note to remember: the passage before this warning details the need for godly spiritual leaders; the passage that follows it (vv. 6–16), their attention to sound doctrine.

**2 Timothy 3:1** seems to be a general


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description of world conditions in end times, but can apply to professing Christians who trouble the church.

One item stands out: “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (v.7). Godly Christian families and a healthy church fellowship are the outworking of the “sound doctrine” referred to throughout Paul’s letters to

Timothy and Titus. Disciple-making is not creating “doctrine collectors” who have bulging notebooks but empty lives!

Note to remember: the goal of Bible doctrine is to develop spiritual maturity, “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

In the next issue, we’ll finish our list and suggest some practical measures for elders to consider. 

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## **Missions** (cont’d from page 1)

has brought to us to befriend.

### **2) The Witness of non-western missionaries**

For the past 200 years a large percentage of missionary work has been done by people sent out from Europe and America. Some lament that there is a declining number of Western believers who are willing to go into foreign missions. But look at it this way: apparently God has used the missionaries to accomplish His mandate of building His church throughout the world and that church is now strong enough to be sending their people both nationally and internationally. There are South Korean missionaries doing exceptional ministry, including with Emmaus Worldwide, in countries like Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and China.

These countries may be politically impregnable “mission-jungles” for Westerners, but open to other nationalities. However, western assemblies can still be very involved. How? By facilitating and supporting nationals who come to North America for education, to either go back to their homeland, or go to other limited-access countries with the gospel. Our youth may not be able to go, but God has given us foreign nationals to send out. There are now many of these examples in the *CMML Missionary Prayer Handbook*, especially in the “Other Overseas Service” section.

### **3) Witness to the diaspora.**

We can get involved in heated debates over the Mexico-United States border migrant situation or we could start praying that the Lord would open our eyes to this mission opportunity.

The Center for the Study of Global Christianity estimates that 1 in 8 people

globally live as part of a diaspora. This includes settled migrants who live outside their traditional homelands as well as current migrants. People in diaspora potentially are more open to a Christian witness than they might be in their homeland. For example, it is extremely difficult to witness in any tangible way in Morocco, but Spaniards are free to witness to the 750,000 Moroccans in Spain!

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The U.S. government often consolidates and settles the diaspora in national groupings. Another Dubuque example: the government has settled 800 Marshallese residents in our little town, the largest Marshallese population in Iowa. Two downtown churches are purposefully reaching out to these displaced people.

What people groups are in your community? Would your assembly get involved with one of them? It would ignite the renewed passion in your assembly you have been praying for!

Prisoners are another form of diaspora that needs the love of God brought to them. Our assembly has men’s and women’s teams going into the local jail on Sunday nights to befriend the prisoners and hold Bible studies.


### **4) Witness through the Global Economy**

Business is gaining an integral role in facilitating missions in this century. In

today’s globalized economy, the doors of many unreached countries are closing to traditional Christian workers, but they are opening to professionals. Many global cities even offer generous benefit packages to attract Western expat talent. These opportunities are usually in urban centers where the masses need to be reached. And the companies are paying us to do missions! No need for raising support. No problems trying to get a visa as a religious worker. The company does all the paperwork, and you get paid to be a witness to your national coworkers, find creative ways to do outreach on your time off, plus give your family the amazing education and adventure of living in a foreign country for a period of time—whether for a year or a decade. My question is, why aren’t there more of our young families lining up to take advantage of this?

Yes, jungle missions have changed from the rainforest to the urban jungle; from the illiterate tribes to the educated; from the worker being the intruder to the diaspora being our neighbors; from lack of finances limiting the work to the possibility of being financed to do the work!

Watch the news. Know the times. Understand the trends. Pray for a mission vision. Regroup as an assembly and do something for missions this year.

Lord, move us to get out of our comfort zones. Open our eyes to people groups in our own towns. Open our hearts to send our children and grandchildren to the urban jungles of our country or the world! Lord, keep our assemblies at the forefront of modern missions. For the Glory of Christ, Amen” 



## Wives' Corner

### Spiritual Motherhood *by Kimberly Moffitt*

“*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*” —3 John 4

The summer I turned 40, I counseled at a week of Bible camp. It was difficult. I felt the effects of aging. Lying in my bunk one night, feeling discouraged, I asked the Lord, “What am I even doing here?” Then I heard a knock on my cabin door. A little girl in the cabin next to mine was homesick. The young counselor had run out of ideas and asked if I might help. I talked with the little girl, prayed with her, and dried her tears. The next day another counselor approached me. “There’s a situation in my cabin and I don’t know what to do. I just need a mom to talk to.” I put my arm around her and we prayed together. It was then that the Lord answered the question I had put to Him the night before: “You are here to be a mother.”

Today’s culture idolizes youth. It is difficult for women in our society to grow older. In Judges 4 and 5, Deborah gives Christian women the perspective that the Lord wants us to have as we mature in years. Deborah saw her role as being “a mother in Israel.” The Church needs older

*“You are here to be a mother”*

women today who are willing to take on the role of spiritual mothering.

The first thing we learn about Deborah is that she was a prophetess. She was a woman who knew God and His Word. The children of Israel came to her for judgment. God could trust her to faithfully share His words with His people. Are you a woman who knows and loves God and His Word? People should receive more than just your opinion when they come to you with a problem. In order to give true spiritual help, you must direct others to the Lord Himself and to His Word.

Deborah was available and approachable. This is what God wants of spiritual mothers. A mother is someone who knows you, yet loves you unconditionally. She wants what is best for you. She is always there to listen and can be counted on to give wise counsel. This kind of relationship takes time to build. Are you investing in the young people around you? Do you spend time listening to them, praying for them, loving them instead of being critical of them?

As a mother in Israel, Deborah was an encourager. She understood the plan

that God had for Barak and charged him to follow the Lord God fully in it. She also understood his fear. Yet instead of despising him for it, she agreed to go with him into the battle. As spiritual mothers, we want the young people we work with to know that we will be there for them but that they must learn to rely, not on us, but on the Lord Himself. Still, wherever they go, we can assure them that our prayers will go with them.

When the battle was over, the Lord had given Israel the victory, just as He promised. Deborah and Barak together sang a song of praise to their God. When our young people experience a victory in the spiritual battle, we need to rejoice with them, being

careful to help direct their praise to the One who truly deserves the glory.

The world places little value on motherhood and often looks down on women who choose to give their lives to that work. However, God regards it as a great and noble undertaking. A spiritual mother is not looking for recognition or applause. Her joy comes from seeing those “children” that God has given her going on well for Him.

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## THE SMALL PRINT

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Specific Bible versions used are indicated at the first quotation in each article.

Note: All words referring to God have the initial letter capitalized. While the original languages of the Bible do not use capitalization, this is the convention in some translations but not in others. So at times there may be inconsistencies in usage in ESN articles.

“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers” 1 Peter 5:2a NKJV