



Foundation of Faith

Your Labor Is Not In Vain in the Lord

He Who Has Compassion for the Poor . . .

Who Is My Neighbor?

Acts of Love

Salvation Is the Highest Prize

*Your Neighbor
Needs Jesus!*

Content

YOUR NEIGHBOR NEEDS JESUS

4 He Who Has Compassion For the Poor

5 Your Labor Is Not in Vain in the Lord

6 Your Neighbor Needs Jesus

If we keep our eyes open and let God use us, we will find many opportunities to tell people about Jesus.

8 Help in the Greatest Need

10 Salvation Is the Highest Prize

After fifty years in sin, he experienced redemption. Since then, his life has meaning.

RADIO BROADCAST

12 Acts of Love

Many people are waiting for our works of love. Let us be diligent in them, for the reward is great in heaven.

3 Editorial

CHILDREN'S CORNER

11 The Greatest Labor of Love

YOUTH PAGE

14 A Heart Like Lydia

SENIORS' PAGE

16 "By the Way, God is Still Here!"

18 Who Is My Neighbor?

20 We Must Shine

FROM THE LIFE OF THE MISSIONARY

SAMUEL HEBICH

21 Powerful Evidence

22 The Book of Life

24 Update from the Bolivian Mission Field

27 Testimony

POEM

28 Saved, and Wishing to Save

FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

The apostle John writes in 1 John 1:3 that we should have fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Nor should we be alone. God has created us for fellowship, and He wants to help and bless us. In societies around the world, we have marriages, families, friends, and neighbors. These are foundational, because we need each other.

Solomon testified in his wisdom, “Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away” (Proverbs 27:10). A good neighbor can help you better and faster in an emergency than a brother who lives far away.

In 2 Kings 4:1-7, we read of a poor, indebted widow who was supposed to give her two children to the creditor to become his slaves. In her trouble, she went to the prophet Elisha and told him that she possessed nothing more than a jar of oil. Listen to the prophet’s advice: “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels . . . pour [the oil] into all those vessels” (2 Kings 4:3-4). She followed this advice, and God did a miracle. All the vessels were filled, allowing her to pay her debts. How good it is to have helpful neighbors!

Our Lord showed us the value of good friends and neighbors, ones who even wake up at midnight and give three loaves of bread because guests are coming (Luke 11:5-8). As God helps His children when they ask, so we should help one another carry burdens.

Neighbors also need us in a spiritual sense. We need to be a light and witness so they can find God and experience fellowship with Him. Salvation is the greatest treasure a person can find. Yes, we must share what we have experienced with others so they can be saved.

Dear Reader, your neighbor needs you.

H. D. Nimz



He Who Has Compassion For the Poor

Theory and practice are often two different things. There is also a great difference between knowledge or insight and our tangible physical actions. But God knows our hearts and also our responsibilities, and therefore uses remarkable ways to open our eyes. The following story is from ancient times, but its lesson is as relevant today as it was then.

Ferdinand, the son of a rich miller, unwrapped an appetizing lunch on a school outing. His mother had packed some sausage, ham, hearty bread, and a bowl of pancakes, as well as an assortment of snacks. His classmates sprawled under a shady tree, eating what they had brought from home.

Fritz, a little boy who looked very pale and miserable, sat next to the rich miller's son and ate the dry bread his mother had given him. A companion handed him an apple and a pear. How happy Fritz was about that!

The rich boy, Ferdinand, did not even think of offering poor Fritz anything from his bountiful meal. When he had eaten all the pancakes, with great astonishment he read the inscription on the inside of his bowl:

If you overlook the poor man still,
You do not deserve to eat your fill.

Suddenly, his conscience was stirred, and he handed poor Fritz a piece of sausage.

"Come on, Fritz, surely you can still manage the

sausage; it tastes really good. When we're back home, you should come over," Ferdinand said to him.

His father, the rich miller, prayed daily, "Lord, give the poor something to eat, too. It was a good harvest year, and no one should go hungry."

But when a needy person asked him for a little grain, he always said, "This may have been a good harvest year, but my supply is just enough for my family I'm sorry. Maybe someone else will help you."

One day, Ferdinand had heard him pray so piously again.

"Father," he said, "if only I had your grain!"

"My grain? What do you want my grain for?" he asked in amazement.

"Then I would answer your prayers and give some food to the poor."

The miller understood very well what his son was trying to tell him. When Fritz came to visit that afternoon, the miller sent a full sack of grain home with him for his mother. From that day on, the rich miller provided for the poor family and gave them many other things from his abundance.

Today, we generally live in unprecedented prosperity. But not all people are doing so well. Some may have come into great need through no fault of their own. When God opens our eyes to this, let us not close our hearts. Let us be faithful stewards of God's rich blessings. Helping someone in a practical way can often provide an opening to share words of salvation and make the Bible's words of comfort credible. ■

Your Labor Is Not In Vain in the Lord

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Years ago, a missionary once dared to set foot in the forbidden country of Tibet, where she wanted to share the gospel. Things did not go well for her. Foreigners were not allowed to enter this country because its citizens wanted to keep their own traditions and religion. Therefore, any intruders were dealt with accordingly.

Shortly after crossing the border into Tibet from China, she was attacked and kidnapped. After torturing her in various ways, the attackers had soldiers escort her back over the Chinese border. The people were satisfied, relieved to be rid of this uninvited guest.

However, the missionary had not been idle during her short stay in Tibet. Despite having been prevented from preaching, she still found a way into Tibet. She pointed people to Her Savior by occasionally dropping a page from her Bible onto the ground and asking the Lord to let these seeds bear fruit.

One of these sheets was found by a young man, who had soon read it through. What stood out to him the most was the wonderful verse, so familiar to us, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

He had never heard anything like it. “Eternal life!” he thought to himself. “None of our gods can grant that. I need to hear more about this God who loves us that much. But who can tell me more?”

In all of Tibet, nobody could. He showed his friend what he had found, and the two of them often went to a cave to read and reread the sheet bearing this incredible news of the God Who loves us. Finally, the two of them decided to brave the journey across the border to look for the missionary. However, they were intercepted and forced to return. What a shame!

Some time passed, and the young man decided to try again. This time, he went alone. He set out on his journey, and everything was going well. Suddenly,

a group of bandits appeared. The bandits in this area had a reputation for rarely leaving anyone alive. They stopped him and took everything he had. He was left with only his Bible page, which he had managed to roll up and hide. In the end, the bandits did not kill him, so he mustered up the courage to continue on his dangerous quest.

One day, it was quite warm, and he sat down on a rock to rest. As was his habit, he took out the sheet of Scripture and reread the words he had come to love. Lost in the text, he did not notice anything amiss, until he turned around and saw a Himalayan black bear. It had seen him, too, and seemed to have decided to make a meal of him. The young man had nothing to defend himself with, and it was too late to hide. Looking around desperately, he noticed a small cave to his right. He jumped up and sprinted towards it, running for his life. Confident of his prey, the bear came bounding down the mountain. Hot on the young man’s heels, the bear bumped into a rock with such force that the rock started rolling down ahead of him until, led by God’s grace, it crashed to a halt at the mouth of the cave moments after the young man dove in. With the rock blocking the entrance, he was safe. God so loves the world, that He personally revealed His love to this young man by saving his life. He was determined not to give up looking for God.

For two days, the bear waited in front of the cave for his prey to come out. Then he left. The young man rolled the rock away, crawled out of his hiding place, found a place to sit, and, over and over, read the precious words about the God Who had loved the world and Who loved him too.

After this incident, his journey went smoothly, and he asked around about the missionary until he found her. She then led him to the Lord, and he dedicated the rest of his life to Him.

When our labor is done unto the Lord, it is not done in vain. ■

Your Neighbor Needs Jesus

This week, I had a remarkable phone call. A young man from a London financial company wanted to sell me his products. I interrupted him right after his first sentences and said we were not interested in his offer. But he turned out to be an extremely skilled and eloquent conversationalist who was not at all dissuaded from explaining who he was and what products he had to offer. So at the first opportunity, I briefly and clearly explained the reason for my disinterest and asked if I could at least tell him who I was.

After he agreed, I told him that we are people who have faith in God. We believe in God and intentionally live for Him every day. We ask His advice in all matters of life and experience how God helps and blesses us every day and provides answers and direction. We live with an eternal focus because we know that heaven provides the highest interest rate and the best and safest investment of our capital. I told him God has given us sufficient material goods, plenty for ourselves and enough to share with others. Therefore, we have no desire to invest in his products. Upon this frank discussion, a very interesting conversation ensued that he will likely not soon forget. When the conversation ended, I promised to pray for him as he requested. However, I urgently advised him to ask God what He had to say to him.

Does Your Neighbor Need God?

Especially during these times, it is quite obvious that people are very much burdened by insecurities and many fears and questions about life and the future. An oppressive feeling of helplessness and a lack of perspective weigh heavily on our society. Currently, the threat seems to come mainly from the Coronavirus, but doesn't the pandemic only reveal the core issue that was present long before, the absence of salvation through Christ? Without Jesus, none of us can possess true serenity, peace, joy, and contentment in our hearts. Without Jesus, the real meaning in life is missing. Sooner or later, the lack of meaning in life inevitably leads to serious crises, to deep sadness, and often to hopeless despair.

Very many people I have met and gotten to know better have no greater need than the grace and love of God. I am deeply grateful for each day I am able to share with someone what God has done for me and the treasure He has put into my heart. Opportunities are often found just where you least expect them.

In the last while, I sense more than ever the great tragedy of people struggling through life, even though there is help for everyone. God has prepared a table with the most substantial and delicious food, yet people remain hungry and starving. Shouldn't we extend a warm invitation, encourage them to reach out, to glean from the

Lord's table, to enjoy, and be satisfied?

The plan was that I would stay in the hospital for two nights after minor surgery. Therefore, even before being admitted, I asked God to give me a roommate with whom I could share something about God and have meaningful conversations. But when I saw her, my first impression was, "There's no point in saying a word to this young woman!" She had such a cheerful, confident manner. Her whole demeanor gave the impression of a positive attitude, contentment, happiness, and having a good handle on life. There was no indication of weakness or a need to hear anything about faith. The first evening, we went to supper together and talked about general topics.

But before going to bed, after reading my Bible and praying, God gave me an unexpected nudge. I felt I should simply ask my roommate if she would mind if I knelt by my bedside to pray quietly, as I was accustomed to doing at home. I was completely candid in that moment, as I asked her. No, she didn't object. Yet even before I could kneel to pray, a deep conversation about God and faith developed. My roommate opened her heart to share her longing for God, the questions, the doubts, and the need in her life.

As she told me later, it was the authentic, open confession of my faith that opened the door to her heart. How misleading my first

impression was! In the years since we met, we have developed a close friendship. She believes, prays, reads God's Word, and has experiences with God. In return, God works in her heart with love and patience. How grateful I am for this experience!

How Can We Meet People Who Need God?

If we have a sensitive heart, we will notice the many encounters God wants to ordain and direct. He creates opportunities to share about the riches in the Lord. Often, these are moments outside in the garden with neighbors or with workmen or service providers who are doing some work in the house. We run into friends and classmates of our children; we may be at a Christmas party at school. God gives opportunities in conversations with doctors and patients, with teachers, co-workers, in the gymnastics group, often with strangers we start conversations with, about some random topic.

The immeasurable treasure in our heart has such high value that we can and should proclaim it everywhere to everyone. A word spoken in love inspires hope and trust, reaches sad hearts and acts like soothing balm to the soul. Extremely rarely have I experienced rejection. Even if people happen to say they do not believe, or think that choosing faith is not for them, as a rule, they are considerate and respectful. The prerequisite is that

we not merely pay lip service but share an honest, vibrant, and joyful testimony of faith.

Is God Preparing Us for Opportunities to Be His Witnesses?

Looking back on my life, I can say that God has led me in special ways. Often, the path did not seem good at all. It was a path of gradually learning to let go of everything, especially what was near and dear to my heart. After many blessed and successful years as a young family, it pleased God to allow everything that was precious to us to shatter. That hurt so much for a long time, for many years. It cost me many tears, many struggles, much pleading and praying. But God's answer, which finally silenced every storm in my soul, was simply, "This path is the one I intended for you."

I clearly recall the time when things were becoming brighter again and God put it on my heart to visit a man we had known for many years. He had led an immoral life and sadly, after a stroke, he was confined to his bed. I remember especially well our first visit with him. Tears of joy and gratitude overflowed when he saw us again after years of absence. Therefore, we visited him often and God richly blessed these visits.

In retrospect, I know that during this difficult time, God opened my eyes to see others again and to recognize my duty to my neighbor. For many years, I had been stuck in my own misery. But

after this time, I learned that the soul of any person has no less value to God than the soul of my loved ones. Even the soul of anyone from any distant land is as valuable to God as my soul and the souls of those whom God has given to me.

God has repeatedly placed people in our path I would rather have avoided. Among them were professing Satanists, drug addicts, prisoners, and difficult personalities for whom every effort seemed pointless. But again and again, I can say God has richly blessed and rewarded us in this ministry. Last but not least, God worked in us and changed us through this ministry.

How Urgent Is This Ministry?

In the course of my life, one particular thought has been a powerful guide. When I am faced with the decision to do something or not to do it, I feel this gentle nudge urging me to pray, "Lord, let me not miss any opportunity you give."

I would rather venture to do something for my Savior than neglect to do it, even at risk of not hitting the mark one hundred percent of the time. How great the sacrifice God made for the salvation of mankind! God's work here on earth is that all should be saved. Living a life of true gratitude means doing whatever we can, wherever the opportunity presents itself. ■

*Claudia Wutke
Gifhorn, Germany*

Help In the Greatest Need

In a miserable apartment, a lonely mother sat at midnight at the bedside of her dying infant. But she was not the only one who kept watch in that large house in the silent hour of the night. Many a poor, trembling, and hungry woman waited to hear the shaky footsteps of her drunken husband on the stairs. Many a deeply-saddened mother's heart wept for her lost son, her lost daughter. But under that roof were also God-forsaken people enslaved by sin, spending the night drinking, gambling, and fighting.

In that lonely dwelling, no light and no warming fire burned in the stove, because wood and coal were missing. The moon shone softly and revealed the baby's pale face to the distressed woman. Now the poor little one whimpered and stretched out her scrawny little hand for food. The milk was ice cold. The mother warmed the bottle against her chest and with her breath before she wet the child's dry lips with it. The little one sank into a restless sleep again, and the poor mother, who could not speak to anyone in the big, strange city, poured out her heart aloud to God:

"O Lord, God of my fathers, I was a wicked, ungrateful child when I willfully left the home of the devout parents You gave me. In spite of all warnings, I trusted the false love of an ungodly man. O dear God, have mercy and lead me back to my parents. Father, to You I give this child of my heart; take her to Yourself. Do not let her grow up to curse You. O, take her to You, that she may be safe. I will bear the punishment, for I have sinned. Chasten me, but let not my child suffer for my sin. Thank You for seeking me and finding me, for forgiving me of all things. O, take my child to You and save my poor husband. I will give You eternal thanks. Amen."

God heard the prayer for the innocent child. When the morning dawned, she had died. The young mother sat next to her in deep sorrow, wondering how she would bury her. She knew no one, and she did not know where her husband was. To whom should she turn? "Oh God, send me help," she sighed.

And where was the child's father, who had plunged the daughter of devout parents into unspeakable misery? As a criminal, he now sat in prison, having at last fallen to the arm of justice which he had so brazenly defied. The woman did not know this, but the others in the house did. Although they were not a hair better than the unfortunate man, none of them came near to comfort the lonely soul; instead, they all studiously avoided her. Only a boy who was playing on the stairs once opened the apartment door and recoiled in fright when he saw the little corpse.

Just then, a woman came in the front door, a poor washerwoman from the neighborhood who had to get something in the house. The boy yelled out to her, "There's a dead child in there!"

"A dead child!" The washerwoman's eyes grew moist. Oh, she knew how much meaning those three words contained. After all, she herself had had to close her little child's eyes. Without hesitation, she entered the cold apartment where a pale, emaciated, lifeless baby lay on a dismal bed, and next to it, the mother knelt sobbing, cold and motionless.

Then a warm hand pressed gently on her head, and a voice said aloud, "Poor soul, I am so sorry for you! I, too, have seen my child die. And my heart would have been broken if Jesus Christ had not stood by me."

The weary young woman straightened up, looked into the kind face beside her, and burst into a flood of healing tears, crying, "You know

Jesus Christ? Please tell me about Him before my heart breaks!” The mourner had found a friend. God had sent her help.

When the washerwoman had learned the whole sad story and had brought the comfort of the Gospel in simple, heartfelt words to the heart of the lonely woman, she went home again, prepared a warm, hearty meal, and brought it to the half-starved woman. She also carried a basket of wood and coal and heated the apartment. Then she went to the police herself, reported the death, arranged everything necessary for the funeral, washed the little corpse with tender care, and wrapped it in a beautiful, little white shirt that she had kept as a memento of her sweet baby. After paying the house rent for the struggling neighbor, packing up her few belongings and taking them over to her own simple but clean apartment, she wrapped the deceased child in a shawl and, accompanied by her mother, carried her there also. She had already ordered the funeral to be held at her house.

The poor washerwoman, who had to earn her own daily bread with laborious, hard work, was the saving angel in God’s hand for this lost being. She was able to lead this precious soul not only out of hunger, misery, and loneliness, but out of deep hurt from a longing, lonely heart, into the friendly sunlight of eternal love. Until the weary soul gained courage and faith and her nearly-broken heart strengthened and revived, she would remain with the washerwoman, who did not rest until the parents of the believed to be lost woman forgave her everything and lovingly took her back into their home and hearts.

She had done what she could. And even if no one here below praises her deeds, one day Jesus will say to her, “You did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40). ■



Salvation Is the Highest Prize

The higher up a mountain you climb, the better you can see the valley below, and observe how far you have already come. Valleys and cliffs, footpaths and dangerous crags, meadows and outcroppings can all be seen from up high. Although the path below stretches into the distance, you can clearly see the way you have come.

In a similar manner, an older person looking back on his or her life can see many things in the past, resembling a scene clearly seen from a higher vantage point. Things seem clearer in retrospect. We were able to visit an older brother in Christ, Brother Dieter Weckerlein, who shared some of his life's experiences with us. At 82 years of age, he told us some of his notable memories.

At the age of 50, he committed his life to the Lord Jesus. That changed many things, yet it did not spare him from tragedy. In 2007, his son had a fatal accident and died right before Brother Weckerlein's eyes. Eight years later, his wife, with whom he had been happily married for 51 years, passed away. Five more years have now passed. As he shared his story, you could tell the memory was still painful, yet there was no bitterness or any complaint made against God or His leading. We asked him what it meant to live with Jesus as his Lord.

He answered, "Since I gave my life to Christ, life has meaning. I know where I am going. There is a place prepared for me in heaven." Finding solace in a familiar scripture verse, he quoted, "[T]he world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17). But how did it come to the point in his life that he had this blessed assurance?

Brother Dieter explained, "I have always believed in God. Although I grew up without a father, my brothers and I always knew God-fearing people who were good examples to us. My grandmother had a great influence on me through her exemplary life, and she would tell us about Jesus. Without question, we would go to church on Sundays. Despite the war, my childhood and teenage years were pleasant. At the time of my confirmation, we had a very enthusiastic youth pastor who was a good example to us. The Bible verse given to me at my confirmation was 'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also

called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses' (1 Timothy 6:12).

"Later, during my studies and apprenticeship, I went to church regularly on Sundays. Even after I got married, I continued attending church with my family, even though my wife was not a believer. Unfortunately, God did not play a role in my everyday life. I lived like all the other good citizens around me. Once in a while, I would read something from a Christian devotional calendar, but I had no interest in reading the Bible, God's Word. In 1978, in Bad Cannstatt, I attended an evangelistic tent meeting. When an invitation was given to commit your life to the Lord Jesus, I almost responded, but somehow I hesitated. Years later, a co-worker became the catalyst for me to start a new life with God. During lunch, I noticed he always read in a book. When I asked him what he was reading every day, he answered, 'The Bible.' That surprised me. I told him I was also a believer, but it had never occurred to me to actually read the Bible. My colleague told me that to actually know Jesus as personal Savior is different than just believing in God. That sparked a desire in me to find out more. He invited me to come along to visit his congregation. Surprisingly, my wife also wanted to come with me. We found a small group of about 25 people gathered in a home. By the love that these friendly people exhibited, we felt right away that Jesus must be in their midst. We started to attend regularly.

"My wife and I began to realize that the life we had lived up to that point was not acceptable to the Lord and that we would not be able to stand before Him in that condition. When we confessed our sins and consciously accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, our faith became active and alive. The Word of God became the rule of faith for our lives, and we began to align ourselves with its principles. Our faith was no longer symbolic; rather, it became the foundation on which we based all we did. Through faith, we found fulfillment and peace.

"Unfortunately, we could not share our joy with our relatives and our grown children. They thought we had joined a sect. When we tried to share with them our hope in Jesus Christ, we were rejected and even ridiculed. Along with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we prayed much for the salvation of our children. In 1990,

our son had a serious traffic accident. The doctors gave him no hope of recovery. While he was battling for his life, we pleaded with God not to let him die unsaved. I wanted to share the gospel with him. God heard our prayers. Our son miraculously recovered. He not only became healthy in body but also in his soul. Both our children lost their antagonism towards the gospel and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We moved to Hohenlohe, and here God gave us a number of wonderful years together. We saw how God changed our

lives one step at a time. We found a congregation in Kirchberg where we felt loved and at home. One of my favorite songs expresses the hope and direction of my life very well: 'Salvation is the sweetest thing that mortal ever found. My soul can never cease to sing. Such love and peace abound. Jesus, our Friend and Redeemer, Jesus, our wonderful Light. Saved by His grace we're forever praising the blood that makes us white.' ■

*Arnold Damm
Kirchberg, Germany*



Many years ago, the first Sunday School had opened in a town on the Rhine River. Among the children was five-year old Sara. She was the daughter of a poor, godly widow and had a seventeen-year old brother, Abraham, who worked in a coal mine.

From an early age, Abraham's mother prayed with him daily, and he was a devout boy. Unfortunately, influenced through bad friends, he began to drink and then to neglect going to worship services. He became indifferent to God's Word and stopped praying. He quickly descended down the slippery slope of ruin. Abraham lived with his mother, but he took his earnings to the tavern and often came home drunk.

Sara had learned the verse in Sunday school, "Walk before Me and be blameless." Although she was still little, she knew that her brother was not godly and therefore was not saved. Yet she loved him so much; he was the only brother left to her after three of her brothers and her father had died of cholera.

It was Pentecost. Sara had gone to church with her mother in the morning and to Sunday School in the afternoon. Abraham, however, had gone to the tavern and came home late in the evening, drunk. His mother

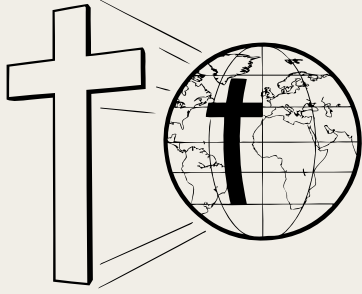
helped him take off his clothes and put him to bed.

Sara was asleep in the same room. She was awakened by the crashing about of her drunken brother. When she thought he was asleep again, love and concern for her unfortunate brother drove her out of bed. She threw herself on her knees in front of his bed and prayed, "Dear Savior, you know how much I love my brother and how much I want to be in heaven with him. Forgive his sins and give him a new heart so he may become Your child. Amen."

No sooner had she said amen, than she heard him crying. Her brother took her hand and said, "Sara, dear little Sara, the Lord has answered your prayer. Never, never will I enter a tavern again."

The prayer of his little believing sister not only made him think about the danger his soul was in, but led him to the decision to repent and to find forgiveness for his sins from God. He became a new person and walked in the ways of the Lord.

His little sister could not have done a greater service of love for her brother than to pray for him. This is also the greatest service of love we can do for our fellow man. Let us be faithful in intercessory prayer. ■



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Acts of Love

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Good works are acts of love. They come from a good mind, good intentions, and good hands. They are acts of benevolence that bring about joy and blessing. “God . . . does great things which we cannot comprehend,” we read in Job 37:5. Sometimes, we don’t comprehend the loving intention behind it.

The Lord Jesus often discerned that people were offended by His deeds, His words, and His sermons. Reactions of this kind are still quite common today. This offence can lead to evil actions. According to John 10:32, Jesus once said to His adversaries, “Many good works have I shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?” Here, He had seen the reaction fraught with danger for Him. These people had not understood His good works, nor the pure, divine goodwill behind them.

The position our Lord took teaches us to realize that our acts of love might not always be rightly judged nor understood. We may sometimes experience great disappointments, and the desired effect we hope for may fail to materialize.

Many people experienced this, especially in the post-war period. I remember the war years in Poland. Fellow countrymen were disenfranchised, and not all were doing particularly well. The German farmers sta-

tioned there did their best to help others. However, in the post-war years, some proudly and contemptuously passed by their benefactors and acted as if they did not know them at all.

In other cases, however, the good works were not forgotten. Many lives were even saved. In Hebrews 13:16, we are told, “But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” The harvest shows what is sown; it will inevitably come.

In a village in Russia, with great effort, a father built a house for himself and his son’s family. When they were ready to move in, a large, impoverished refugee family showed up in that village with no place to stay. A deep compassion seized the old man, and he said, “We cannot leave this needy family on the street.” So he let them move into his new house. This act of love was not forgotten. The old man lived alone for a time, and when the refugee family received permission to immigrate to Germany, they took the old man along and lovingly cared for him until his death. Acts of love are often associated with humility and self-denial.

When I was twelve, I fled from a Polish farm and was now being hunted. The hand of the Lord was upon me, for I found refuge with a widow who had a small



hut and owned two goats. She kept me hidden for ten days and fed me daily with bread and milk, which was a delicacy for me, coming from her loving hand. So I learned through others to do good as well.

Are there still sacrificial acts of love in our lives? Or are we so focused on ourselves that we no longer see our neighbor in his time of need? Brother Rudolf Fichtenberg wrote:

Down in this weary, troubled world
are many wounded hearts,
who plaintively and longingly
are looking heavenward.
So many hopes and plans destroyed,
they can't trust anymore.
O lift them up, and gently lead
them to our loving Lord.
Brother, Sister, pray and work today,
Work in earnest, don't delay.

Acts of love have shown many a downcast soul to Christ. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). We learn that doing good helps others and brings blessings to ourselves. "Cast

your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Our acts of love are not forgotten by God. "For indeed your reward is great in heaven," Jesus said (Luke 6:23).

The greatest act of love was given by God Himself. It became visible for the entire world through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. John wrote, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This act of love by God, in the giving of His Son, surpasses all acts of love that ever existed on this earth. It has also borne the greatest fruit, for through Jesus' death on the cross, reconciliation with God and eternal life have become possible for all people. Our Lord is therefore justified in expecting acts of love from us as well. In Hebrews 6:10, we read, "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister."

Remember, many are waiting for acts of love that provide light in the darkness. Therefore, do not let them be absent from your life, for they bring joy to despondent hearts, and the Lord God will reward them one day. ■

A Heart Like Lydia

FROM RICHES OF PURPLE TO RICHES OF THE GOSPEL

Who was Lydia anyway, and what was so special about this woman? What can we learn from her? (Acts 16:13-15)

Let's start at the beginning. Paul was on his second missionary journey. The route was originally planned differently; however, led by God, he traveled to Macedonia (now Europe) to the city of Philippi.

According to custom, he approached the Jewish Christians first. Because Philippi was a Roman colony, Paul could not find a synagogue, but a place of prayer outside of the city by the river. At this special place, he encountered a group of believing women and struck up a conversation with them. One of these women was Lydia.

Who was Lydia?

Lydia was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira in the province of Asia. Thyatira was a trading and industrial city known for its purple dye factories. The purple color was gathered from purple sea snails in the Mediterranean Sea. Some internet sources say that to gather one gram of purple, thousands of snails were needed. Therefore, purple was valuable and mostly used for kings and royalty in the Old Testament. This allows us to infer that Lydia was wealthy or at least well-to-do.

The riches didn't make her happy, though. She longed for more. Riches may provide us comfort and ease in life, but they are only short-term joys that quickly vanish. The heart remains sad and empty if Jesus and His peace are missing. You can't buy this peace for your heart with the riches of this world.

Lydia was a Gentile. She needed a lot of courage to belong to a group of Jews, because the Jews were looked down upon by the Romans. But she did not mind that. She found what idol worship could not give her: the living God and peace with Jesus. Are you also determined to follow Jesus courageously, no matter what may come?

Which characteristics set Lydia apart?

1. She Feared God

What does it mean to fear God? Does it mean we must live in constant fear of God, with the expectation of being punished? No. If we have experienced peace and reconciliation with God, we need not be afraid. You have the privilege of having a loving Father in heaven. But remember, you are not dealing with a pal or a buddy, but with the living God, the King of kings. Remember, He gave everything for you because of His unending love and grace. so you can have access to Him. Do not abuse this love and grace by gambling with sin. Fearing God means preserving childlike respect (dignity, honor) in love towards God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. He is worthy to be honored by our lives.

2. She Listened Attentively

It says that she listened and paid attention to what Paul said. Attentiveness is a learned trait. How do you manage to be an effective listener if you're present at a worship service but afterward have no idea what the sermon was about?

- Pray before the service and ask God to speak to you. Pray for the pastor or youth leader through whom God will be speaking.

- Attend the service/youth session with an expectation of receiving a personal message.

- When you are there, quiet your heart and thoughts, and tune into God speaking. It has often surprised me how precisely God speaks to us. Sometimes it feels like the speaker knew exactly what my situation was, and that the message was intended for me. It is not the speaker, but rather, God Who knows exactly what preoccupies and moves us. Often, the speaker gives such clear and accurate answers that we can only thank God. We need to attentively listen for that. It seems obvious, and yet it is still a fight not to get distracted in your mind.

- Ask yourself what you can take away and learn.



Think about the impact it can have on your life and how you can apply it to your daily life.

- Talk about it with a good friend. Share what you found interesting, what became important, and what you have learned. This will help strengthen what you have heard and at the same time create interesting, blessed conversations.

3. God Opened Her Heart

There are two sides to true repentance. First, there is the human side. We saw Lydia's fear of God and her interest and longing. This wasn't enough, however. God had to begin His work and open her heart for Him. Now the spoken word, which she attentively listened to, was manifesting itself in her heart through the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, she understood and claimed the message of the crucified and resurrected Jesus in faith for herself. She demonstrated this by being baptized, and by her words to the apostles: "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay"

(Acts 16:15). It wasn't a fleeting emotional high, but a visible work of God within her heart. She wasn't just content with what she had received, but immediately began a new life of service. She invited Paul and Silas to her home and took care of them. She opened her house for further gatherings. The circle became broader. After Paul and Silas were released from prison in Philippi, they went to her house again and also met Christian brothers and sisters there. From the letter to the Philippians, we read that a church (the first church in Europe) existed there. Yes, when God works, it will have an effect.

Has God been able to open your heart like Lydia's and make the message come alive in you?

In a fitting song, we sing, "O give us an open heart and ear like Lydia; come through the closed door and be here among us." ■

*Dina Grötzingler
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“By the Way, God Is Still Here!”

None of us would have thought that life could become so complicated. Yes, there have always been difficulties. Hardship and misery have always been part of world affairs. But what we have experienced in recent months is more than a local hardship. Around the world, the Coronavirus has affected humanity, and it is predominantly the elderly who are afflicted.

This rampant hardship naturally raises questions about the future. Or should we rather call these questions “worries”? The distinction between questions or worries is clear. No matter what lies behind us, no matter how problematic it may have been, we have overcome with God’s help. In the lives of those of us aging, it is often the future that makes our lives difficult.

When we speak to others about the future, someone always adds another word and speaks of the “unknown future.” And that encompasses everything. Allow me to clarify. We are completely helpless in the face of the “unknown future.” More precisely, we do not hold the steering wheel in our hand and have no influence on where the path leads us. We don’t know what to expect, and we don’t know what may come upon us. Facing this kind of difficulty, even the strongest can get scared.

Do you still read the daily newspaper? Or maybe you’ve dared to get acquainted with technology and get your information via the internet. No matter how, the

supply of news is abundant. We are informed. Whether everything we see and hear is true, nobody knows. In any case, we absorb news, information, opinions, and ideas. The more we expose ourselves to this news, the more complicated our world becomes. I’m sure you’ve experienced this as well. It almost seems to me that people become over-informed. They become weighed down. Fears complicate life, and for some, it is almost to the point of intolerability. Since we are “generous,” we don’t keep the fears to ourselves but then burden others with them as well.

“Angst.” This German word, meaning fear, says so much that it has been incorporated into the English language. Angst knows no national or linguistic boundaries. It is everywhere, and is constantly looking for new victims. Someone said, “I am like David; I am facing Goliath. Only I have two Goliaths!” Perhaps it is a little exaggerated, but nevertheless, thereby much is said. It seems it cannot go on.

The Bible also speaks of fear. One example is found in Numbers 13-14. Before taking the land of Canaan, Moses sent out twelve spies. They were to scout out the land that lay before them and then report back. Upon their return, ten insisted that this land was impregnable. They spoke of a people who would be “too strong” for them and even mentioned giants they had encountered. When this news was heard and received by the people, a great fear settled on all of them.

They shouted, cried, and grumbled, and wanted to appoint a captain who would take charge of leading the people back to Egypt. They listened to the report of these men, and fear overcame them to the point of despair.

Fear has a paralyzing effect. Fear robs us of courage and zest for life. Fear attacks our health. Fear keeps us from performing our tasks and duties. Fear does many more things that could be mentioned here.

Is there a cure for fear? How can we become master of the situation?

I once came across a book that was a great help to me. Maybe it can help you too. Actually, I didn't even open the book. I did not take any ideas from the book. I did not even read the author's remarks, although they were surely good. It was the title of the book. Big letters stared at me, and on the cover I read, "By the Way, God Is Still Here!" I wrote those words down and attached them to my filing cabinet with a magnet. When fear wants to overcome me, I take one look at the statement, "By the Way, God Is Still Here!" How many times have these words directed my gaze to the Lord and lifted me up!

May I go back to the scouts? Ten "gave a bad report of the land," it says. But let us not overlook the other two spies, Joshua and Caleb. When the people spoke of returning, they were of a completely different opinion. They saw the situation through different eyes. In

their assessment of the situation, they included the living God: "Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them" (Numbers 14:9). In plain language, "By the way, God is still here!"

What the future will bring for us, we do not know. It is unknown whether a vaccine will get the Coronavirus under control, whether the economic situation will soon improve, whether . . . , whether But one thing we do know: "By the way, God is still here!"

And this great God has promised to be with and for us. Hebrews 13:5 says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." We know that the New Testament is a translation from the Greek. Linguists speak of this verse as containing a fivefold negation and actually translates literally as, "I will not forsake thee! Never! No! Never and in no way will I forsake you."

Brother and sister, do not let the mountain of negative news weigh you down. Do not let fear overwhelm you. Let me say it again, "By the way, God is still here!" Only seven words and yet what a tremendous encouragement! You could also do as I did and write down the seven words and mount them somewhere. That way, they can remind you every day that God is there and will help you through every day. ■

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Who Is My Neighbor?

In Luke 10:25-37 we read how a scribe comes to Jesus with an important question and receives an answer that he probably did not expect.

Scholars often describe the teachings of Jesus as “revolutionary” for His time period. But, the two greatest commandments Jesus gave were not unfamiliar to the religious leaders. In Luke 10:26 Jesus asks an expert of the law for his interpretation of the law. The scholar responds, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). The first commandment comes from Deuteronomy 6:4, and the second from Leviticus 19:18. Though the religious leaders knew the two greatest commandments, they failed to recognize who their neighbor was. Today, some people think like the Pharisees did 2,000 years ago: Only those on equal spiritual footing are their neighbors (a brother or sister in the local church).

In Luke 10, after the religious scholar correctly answers Jesus, he asks Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (v. 29b). Unfortunately, the man asked this question trying to justify himself. We can assume he expected Jesus to say that his fellow Jew was his neighbor. We can further assume the man did in fact treat his fellow Jew well, perhaps even as well as himself. Although Jesus knew he wanted to justify himself through his question, Jesus uses the opportunity to explain to him who his neighbor really was. Through the parable of the Good

Samaritan, Jesus reveals to him that it was the Samaritan, typically seen as an enemy of the Jews, who was the real neighbor to the man who fell victim to the thieves. Remarkably, it was the Samaritan, not the Jewish priest or Levite, who bandaged the victim’s wounds and paid for his medical costs.

According to the Strong’s Dictionary, the Hebrew understanding of the word “neighbor” was “any member of the Hebrew nation and commonwealth.” But the same word used in the New Testament refers to any man regardless “of nation or religion with whom we live or whom we [may] meet.” The two definitions are very different from one another. As Christians, we can fall into the same prejudiced thinking as the Pharisees, if we are not careful. It is very easy to treat non-Christians as lesser people because of their sinful lifestyles. However, God has called us to be a good neighbor to all. In James 2:8–9 we read, “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”

Furthermore, Jesus even calls us to love our “enemies.” In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells His listeners, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good

to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:43-45a). In the fallen world we live in, it can be difficult to love others, especially those who have wronged us or are currently treating us poorly. Nonetheless, we are to love others as we love ourselves.

Love does not mean acceptance of every person’s lifestyle, though that is what today’s society would argue. At times, we as Christians are labeled as unloving and judgmental because we refuse to accept lifestyles that are contrary to the will of God for man. Scripture clearly illustrates that God indeed loves every soul, but He does not love every lifestyle. God does not want us to condone sin, but He calls us to love the soul within every sinner. If we look at sinners merely as broken vessels no longer of any use to society or God, we will not have a burden or love for their souls. But if we see them as clay that can be molded into beautiful and useful vessels by the hands of God, then we can see the spiritual potential contained within every person. Learning to love people because they have an eternal soul will automatically affect the way we deal with them in specific situations.

Also, the original Hebrew word used for “love” in “love your neighbor” is the same word used in “love the Lord your God.” Both refer to

an agapé love, an unconditional, sacrificial love. Jesus wants us to love our neighbor unconditionally and to put others' needs before our own. This is the kind of love mentioned in Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

God wants our love for our neighbor to be selfless as well. We can do this by placing others' needs before our own. Giving preference to others could be as simple as giving our seat on the bus to someone who needs it more, or volunteering our time to visit the sick or elderly. If our lives are focused on putting others first, we won't have time to complain about others or to talk negatively about them. Imagine how our relationships with others would improve if we would put their needs before our own.

Jesus commanded His followers, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31b). Before we can put this into practice, we are forced to reflect on who our neighbor is. God's Word is clear, our neighbor is every person, whether Christian, atheist, friend or foe. Jesus demonstrated that our love for our neighbor should be impartial, unconditional, and self-sacrificing. This kind of love for our neighbor will surely impact our interactions with people and our effectiveness in God's Kingdom. ■

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We Must Shine

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). “You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men” (Matthew 5:14, 16).

God sent Jesus into this dark world so we might be saved through Him. He is the light of the world, and Jesus sends His followers into the world to shine for Him. It is He who still walks unseen among the seven lampstands of His church. His church is the beacon through which He lets His light and life shine out into this world of darkness. In this sense, His followers are the light of the world. If they are right with Him and with the world, then streams of living water flow from them, along with the warmth of love and the light of truth. This is a high calling for the disciples, to proclaim the virtues of God, Who has called them from darkness to His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

All disciples of Jesus who walk according to their high calling can be a light in this dark world. The Lord says to His faithful church in Philadelphia, “I know your works. Behold, I set before you an open door, and no one can shut it: for you have a little strength, have kept my word, and have not denied My name” (Revelation 3:8). What matters is that we keep His word and do not deny His name.

The Lord Jesus said, “You are the light of the world,” but He also said in Matthew 5:13, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” Followers of Jesus must be both light and salt if the Father in heaven is to be glorified by their conduct and works. Unfortunately, in many cases, some have only salt and do not shine, and others try to shine but have lost their salty flavor. Their speech and conduct is “sweet” but not seasoned with salt, and for others, it is well-salted, but the sweet friendliness and attractiveness is missing.

There exists a glorious trio: life, love, and light. When the Lord Jesus says, “You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,” He meant for His children to exemplify His life, after He left this world to be with

His Father. By shining brightly in the world, His children would actively love mankind as Christ did. Is not the love of God poured out through the Holy Spirit into the hearts of God’s children? With this love, His own life flows through them. We are to live our lives like Christ did, let our light shine as His did, and allow His love to shine brightly through us. Our life is indeed “hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). But when the Holy Scriptures say that this life shall be revealed with Christ in glory, it does not mean that it does not already manifest itself in some ways.

The hidden glory of this hidden life is love: pure, true, sincere love. Christ’s Love should already be recognized in us by all people who are not closed to the truth. In the same sense, the apostle exhorts the children of God in Colosse, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering But above all these things put on love” (Colossians 3:12, 14). Jesus modeled this garment of love.

If you want to know what light and true perfect love is, look at Jesus Who said, “I am the light of the world.” If you want to spread the fragrance of love, follow in His footsteps. He said, “He who follows Me will not walk in darkness” (John 8:12). In John 13:34, He says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.” He not only taught love but lived love perfectly, under the most difficult circumstances imaginable on earth. Indeed, He endured the most terrible trials and temptations that came at Him from all sides, even His disgraceful and agonizing death on the cross.

God is love, and this love has been revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Let’s join Him, have fellowship with Him, abide in Him, look up to Him in all temptations within and without, so we can live a life of love to Jesus’ glory and praise, Who loved us and saved us. We are to praise this love throughout our lives, and to be a letter of Christ addressed to all who come in contact with us. This letter should be recognized and read by all people. This is what the Lord meant when He said, “I am the light of the world,” and we are the “light of the world.” ■

M. R.

From the life of the missionary Samuel Hebich
by Wilhelm Jörn

Powerful Evidence



Samuel Hebich once told this story:

A few years ago, the officers in one of our regiments in India were having a meal at which I was present as chaplain. A very young officer, Lieutenant Parker, who had loosened his tongue with much wine, began to talk rather wildly, aiming to make fun of me. He thought he was very clever and said, “Pastor, you know yourself that what you preach is not true. There is no God. There is no soul. There is no afterlife. Everything is matter and matter is everything. Whether we stand or fall means nothing.”

I let the young man talk and ignored him. But he wanted to argue and argue, and got very loud. Finally, to make him understand the folly of such speeches, I got up from the table without saying a word, took my chair, picked it up, laid it on the floor, and then put it back on its feet.

Then I went over to the officer and without saying a word I took him in my arms, laid him on his back, and then put him back on his feet. That made him very angry, of course. He drew his sword and tried to pull a prank on me to avenge this vile insult. The other officers, however, prevented bloodshed.

When everyone had calmed down, I said, “Gentlemen, Lieutenant Parker requested an argument with me, and I have now answered him. He says a person

is just a thing like a piece of wood or stone. If that’s true, how can he say that I have attacked his honor by doing what I do? I picked up the chair, laid it on the floor, and then put it back on its feet. The chair didn’t get angry or protest; it just let me do whatever I liked with it. If this young man has no mind and is only a thing, why should he protest and get angry when I treat him like the chair? I think he does mean after all that he has a spirit. Why is he still so unwilling? A thing cannot be unwilling and cannot avenge an offense!”

The young officer was unable to answer this straightforward explanation. He went home reflecting on this timely lesson on the deception of materialism and then soon started considering, “If I have a soul, what must I do to get it saved? It is immortal. Where will I spend eternity?”

Soon he came to me again, sought and found light in Jesus and became a humble follower of the Lord, Who had also saved and called him “with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:9–10). ■



The Book of Life

Mrs. Haller lived with her little dog in a beautiful large house. However, the children who walked past it to school every day rarely got to see her. If for once she was in the garden and the children called out a greeting to her, she never returned it. Only Verena, who shopped twice a week for her, knew her a little. And because Verena's mother was Mrs. Haller's cleaning lady, she had heard many things about her.

Sometimes, Verena had to wait in Mrs. Haller's living room for the shopping list. There she would

sneak a look at the two large photos on the piano. One showed a radiant bridal couple and the other a pretty young woman with a small child. Verena almost couldn't believe it was Mrs. Haller, and yet she knew it was. Her mother had told her that Mr. Haller and little Peter had died in a terrible accident and that the poor woman had acted so strangely ever since.

Yes, Mother had taken pity on her. Verena had often heard her pray, "Dear Savior, please open poor Mrs. Haller's heart so you can enter with Your light!"

Verena could not understand this. What? She was poor? No, she was rich, really rich! She had the most beautiful house on her street! And she would scold you for every little thing.

Verena continued to make an effort to be nice to Mrs. Haller because that was what her mother wanted. It certainly wasn't easy, because she became more demanding and quarrelsome with each passing year.

Verena was also getting older, and the last day of school was coming closer. But before that,

something special happened to her. While reading the Bible, Verena realized that until now, she had left Jesus outside of the door of her heart. Now she wanted to open it for Him. Because Jesus' light now entered her heart, Verena slowly began to see what was inside. Gradually, she realized that not just beautiful things were found within her heart. She had really only loved herself, hardly anyone else. Especially not Mrs. Haller. How that must have saddened the Savior! Verena was sorry. She asked Jesus to forgive her and to govern her life.

Soon after, Verena moved to another place where she began training to be a nurse. When she came home on vacation, she heard nothing good about Mrs. Haller. She was suffering from a terrible disease and now had to have continuous help. But no one ever lasted longer than a month because she was unbearable. Once, Mrs. Haller's sister had wanted to come to her but had been turned away with nasty words.

"Poor Mrs. Haller," Verena thought. "Savior, help her," she pleaded from the bottom of her heart. He really did help, but He used Verena to do it.

Right when Verena had vacation time again, Mrs. Haller's help ran away, and simply no one could be found who wanted to take care of her. That's when Verena agreed to take over. The longer she was with her, the more compassion she had on her. In the evenings, when she gave her her medicine, she often thought, "If only I could give her some medicine for her hard, unhappy heart!"

While she was once again counting the drops, it suddenly occurred to her that there was a medicine that could probably make very sick hearts well. Hadn't even Verena's heart been changed by the Word of God? She fetched the Bible, sat down at the bedside, and loudly and slowly began to read words that the Savior Himself had shown her. Mrs. Haller was too surprised to protest.

One evening, Verena read of the great, holy God Who sat on the throne and of the many people who stood before it, while books were opened, in which everything about each person was written down. She also read about the Book of Life in which was written the name of every person who belonged to the Lord Jesus. Mrs. Haller's face was like stone. Was she even listening at all? Did she understand anything? Verena was sad. The thought that Mrs. Haller might die without being saved plagued her.

The next day when Verena wanted to say "good morning" to her, the sick woman was crying. Startled, Verena took her hand, sat on the edge of the bed, and stroked her hair. The love of Jesus flowed through Verena to Mrs. Haller, and that's when the ice melted.

"I dreamt," she said. "There were books, the ones you read about yesterday. One was open where my name was. Ida Haller was written large across both pages. On one side there was room for good, on the other for evil. O Verena, one side was almost empty. But the other, the guilt side, so much was written there! How I hate my sister, and am jealous of her because she has children and a dear husband. And the resentment I have in my

heart against God. How I've always rejected everyone who asked me for help. Once, when my sister was in need of money, I laughed at her and scoffed, 'Let your God help you; you are His favorite. He never cared about me!' There was still so much written about the employees I plagued. O Verena, this record of debt!"

How fitting that Verena already knew what to do with this record of debt. Even as Mrs. Haller was speaking, she was looking for the passage in the Bible where it says, "God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13b-14, ESV).

Now these two women had so much to talk! The home was not cleaned that morning, and the mailman wondered why the snow on the garden path had not been cleared away. But much more important things were happening in the big house on Carnation Street. Mrs. Haller brought the Savior her entire burden of sin; He tore up the record of debt and inscribed Mrs. Haller's name in His Book of Life.

Mrs. Haller did not live much longer. When Verena had to leave again, Mrs. Haller's sister came to take care of her. The Lord Jesus gave grace to the two sisters to reconcile and to love each other from then on. Peace had finally come to 27 Carnation Street.

When Mrs. Haller had to leave this world, she knew she was going to Jesus and would abide with Him forever, because her name was now registered in the Book of Life. ■

Update from the Bolivian Mission Field



CONGREGATION IN VIA GRACIA

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we would like to share a brief update on the Lord's work here in Via Gracia.

Two years have passed since we started our ministry here. Currently, there are eleven families living in Via Gracia, who also regularly attend the worship services, thirty-two children, and two youth. In total, we are fifty-six souls in the congregation. As you can see, there are many children. Extra effort is made to engage with the children with Sunday School, and on Wednesday evenings during Bible Study and prayer time, the children also have a Bible story time.

We have meetings for the youth, and we have a women's meeting once a month. Last year, we also had some evenings specifically for married couples.

We also have a school here where the children attend elementary school from the age of five and up. For the year 2021, we will probably have twenty-six students in various grades from Kindergarten to seventh grade.

To ensure that the children in the school get a better education, we need more teachers.

We are thankful to God from the bottom of our hearts for His guidance, direction, and power. Since He has helped wonderfully, we are encouraged, and we trust that God will continue to help us and further build His work in Via Gracia.

Your prayers are, of course, very much appreciated.

Hans und Tina Klassen



Helping Hand in the Children's Home

CHILDREN'S HOME "HOGAR DE PAZ"

The children's home "Hogar de Paz" ("Home of Peace") was founded in January 2019 by the Mission of the Church of God in Bolivia. Until June 2020, the Henry Hildebrandt family from Bolivia was in charge and cared for the children responsibly and lovingly. In addition to some employees from Bolivia, the Marina and Roman Ped family (from Winnipeg, Canada) and Leo Grötzingler (from Eppingen, Germany) are currently working here.

The children's home "Hogar de Paz" takes care of children from difficult homes, where alcohol, drugs, or other family problems are often present. To overcome these, the parents are offered a three-month stay in a German rehabilitation center, where they receive spiritual counseling and loving support throughout the day. The children spend this time in the children's home.

Furthermore, Hogar de Paz keeps its doors open for those cases in which single parents lack the necessary time for the children or in which the parents are simply overwhelmed and do not want to seek help elsewhere.

As a rule, these children lack a school education. Therefore, we as employees try to provide them with an adequate education at least during their stay at Hogar de Paz. The school lessons take place in the morning and include a daily devotion in which the children are taught biblical stories and Christian principles.

After lunch, "quiet time" is on the program. The children spend this time in their rooms. There, they can sleep, talk, or play games. Afterwards, they work on their homework.

After completing their homework, the children have free time, where they can choose to play indoors or outdoors. We often take them for walks or other excursions. If there is work to be done around the house, the children are, of course, allowed to help.

After dinner at 6 p.m. and the devotion that follows, the children are free to spend their time as they wish. From about 8 p.m., the preparation for the night's rest begins: cleaning up, bathing, brushing teeth, etc.

Our goal is to teach the children the basic life principles, such as mutual love, respect, order, obedience, and discipline, which unfortunately have been neglected in many children. Often, this requires a lot of effort and patience, but always with plenty of love.

However, our greatest desire and constant prayer is to provide them with a pleasant, loving, and educational home, where they can hear about Jesus Christ and learn how to know Him better, especially through deed and word.

Thus, we ask that you support both the children and us staff members in prayer.

Leo Grötzingler



NEW SPANISH ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN “5 DE JUNIO”

Without question, the year 2020 was a “special” year, to say the least! But would it not be a pity if we remembered it merely as the “COVID-19 year?” Surely the Lord of the harvest had quite different intentions for this virus than the politicians or the World Health Organization presumably had.

We were able to experience one of the positive effects of the Coronavirus time here in Shalom in June 2020. Of course, the quarantine and restrictions had its effects in our neighborhood. As a result, the youth decided to do an outreach by handing out about five hundred hot meals with tracts and an invitation to worship services in the neighborhood. Interestingly, we later noticed that the day the youth went out to our neighboring village named “5 de Junio” was “coincidentally” precisely June 5, 2020. The following Sunday, beyond our expectations, about thirty neighbors showed up at our German service. Of course, we didn’t have enough translation headphones and we were forced to improvise with translation for a few Sundays. Soon it became clear to us that the wish of the new visitors to start worship services with

them in the adjacent settlement, in a church building which had been empty for years, was really meant seriously.

So, on June 14 we began there, first with a children’s Sunday school and then from June 21, with a full Spanish service. Looking back on the past six months, we can say that the Lord has done great things, for which we are grateful. Right now, we are waiting for someone to come to do the Spanish church work full time and more effectively. Please pray especially that the Lord would bless this part of the harvest field abundantly as well.

Our Master said in John 9:4, “I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.” It is good that by “night” He did not mean a “virus”!

We sincerely continue to ask for your intercessions for the various branches of the work here and appreciate all your prayers lifted to the throne of God for Bolivia in the last fourteen years. ■

Roland Stieben

Testimony

I am very thankful to God that He helped me to pass my final exams for my medical assistant program in mid-July 2020.

Going into the oral exam, I was nervous because we had done only a few blood samples during the practical portion of my studies. I knew that I would be fully dependent on His help for the practical exam on laboratory procedures. Since March, we had been allowed to come to school only for written examinations, unlike the other classes, because we come into contact with people every day. Normally, all students in this particular program get an extra practice course for laboratory work after the written examination, but this was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, a teacher showed us around the school laboratory via video.

At the beginning of the exam, we had to choose from one of several theoretical scenarios. I prayed one more time before sitting down to go through the case file and take notes. At first, I was confident. I had practised the second task with my colleagues several times and knew God would grant me success. The third task had to do with drawing blood, and although I knew exactly how to conduct the procedure, I did not know what each tube color meant or what the standard values were. Turning the page, I saw another laboratory task that I had a reasonably good understanding of. However, when I read the last task, I felt tears spring to my eyes because I did not know anything about this procedure.

They had told us in advance to enter the exam room with confidence, so I opened the door and stepped in. I gave them my name, but before I could say another word, the examining teacher quickly told the other examiners who one of my two bosses was. This did not give me a chance to explain that,

apart from the blood sample, none of the test procedures would be part of my daily practice.

The test began, and with every word I spoke, I felt worse. For the blood sample, we switched rooms and went into the big school laboratory. I was supposed to select the blood sample tubes and then, due to coronavirus restrictions, just explain the procedure instead of performing it. I pointed out that we would not test for these values in my particular practice, but the teacher told me to pick out some of the tube packages lying in front of me anyway. She seemed satisfied with my explanation of the procedure, and we moved on to the next task. The doctor let me choose whether to conduct the test or just to explain it, and I settled on the latter. Then she asked me for which diseases the test was applicable and what certain results could indicate. I answered as best as I could, but she did not seem satisfied. For the last task, we returned to the classroom, and I tried to read the task extra-slowly. I again felt the urge to cry, but I bit back my tears and confessed to the examiners that we had only covered this test briefly because of the coronavirus restrictions. The teacher pushed a test towards me and said that I could read the operating manual and repeat it in my own words.

Overall, the doctor testing me did not seem satisfied, and the third examiner did not appear to be pleased either. All of my initial courage was gone. Only the teacher was smiling, and only she had a kind word for me when I left the room.

I was certain I had failed the exam, but, thanks be to God, I passed with a grade I am relatively content with. I am very grateful to God and to everyone who prayed for me.

Katharina Raiser, Pforzheim (DE)

Saved, and Wishing to Save

I've received mercy, God Almighty,
Freed from death by Your death alone;
Kept by Your arm, so strong and mighty,
For all my sin You did atone,
Accept with gratefulness my thanks due.
Oh God, how can I ever thank You
Enough for what You did for me?
You saved me from sin and great sorrow
And gave me sure hope for tomorrow!
I praise you, Savior, that I'm free.

But yet, alas, so many others
Are lost in sin, blinded by night;
I pray for them and for my brothers,
O save them, Lord, by Your great might.
By Your mercy, as You did for me,
Save them, Lord, so that they might be free
From cruel death and chains of sin.
You alone can give them peace and rest;
You, Lord, alone, are forever blessed,
O Jesus, Savior, yes, amen.

To save the lost, You want us to be
Fellow workers with You, my Lord.
Fishers of men, now saved and set free,
Let us go forth spreading the Word.
You are the great King, mighty and high,
Wishing that none should perish and die.
To save their souls, You gave Your best;
Let us rescue those drowning in sin,
Sharing the gospel, bringing them in
To the Father's house and to rest.

O, let me be a tool in Your hands
That many lost souls may be saved.
O, let the perishing understand
Their salvation is what You crave.
Fill me with love and with Your Spirit
That souls may be touched by Your merit.
Give me strength and humility;
In this short life, there's nothing better
Than to lead souls to our dear Savior
And bring fruit for eternity.

Dora Rappard