

**ACROSS the LANDS***Jeff & Joanna Davis, Director***“Jeff, are you here to recruit?”**

Those were some of the first words spoken to me as I stepped onto the campus of **Maranatha Baptist University** for the first time. I smiled and replied, “I take issue with that word. Agencies don’t send missionaries. Churches do. So should we really be recruiting?” Apparently, that answer resonated, because early the next morning my phone rang. “Jeff, do you want to preach in chapel today? It starts in forty minutes.” “Absolutely! I’m already prepared.” Thankfully, I had preached at **Appalachian Bible College** just a few weeks earlier!

September and October are usually busy months for me. Mission conferences, Christian schools, pastors’ conferences, and Bible colleges fill the calendar. In addition to a fairly full church schedule, this year includes three pastors’ conferences and visits to three different Bible colleges. This coming weekend, I’ll also be preaching at **the Wilds Christian Camp** for their **Father-Son Campout**.

(Continued on p.4)

When Missionary Lives Still Speak

Bring the Books

What is Your Role in God’s Plan to Reach the Nations?

As Paul sat in a cold Roman prison, near the end of his life, he asked Timothy to bring him his books, “especially the parchments.” I have always loved that detail. Paul had walked with God, planted churches, suffered for the gospel, and written much of the New Testament. Still, he wanted to read. Still, he wanted to learn. If Paul needed books at the end of his race, surely we need them for ours.

Maybe God has been stirring your heart about your place in His plan to reach the nations. If so, do not brush that stirring aside. Missionary biographies have a way of giving flesh and blood to a calling. They show us what obedience costs, what grace supplies, and what God can do through an ordinary life fully surrendered to Him.

George Jensen, (former EMU Director) was greatly used by God as he preached missionary stories gleaned from the many biographies he read. I too have developed several missionary messages as God used these books to lead me out of pastoral ministry and into full-time missions.

Here are six reasons I believe every Christian should read missionary biographies. Each one has been proven in lives marked by sacrifice, suffering, and a stubborn refusal to turn back:

Distant Mentorship:

We will never sit at the same table as **Hudson Taylor** or **William Carey**. Still, through their biographies, we can learn from them. Their hard-won wisdom becomes a kind of long-distance discipleship. For example, Hudson Taylor learned that spiritual power does not come from pushing harder in our own strength. It comes from abiding in Christ. That lesson sustained him, and it is one we need just as much today. (*Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*).

Clarifying the Call and Taking the First Steps:

A sense of calling can be exciting, but taking the first step is often difficult. Reading how others discerned God’s direction and kept going when people they respected urged them to stop can give us courage to obey.

(continued on p.3)

Marco & Gwendolyn Nuñez
Missionaries in Cancún

GLORIFIED by LIFE or by DEATH

Little did we know when we ended our August missionary update with this petition, *"Pray we would be faithful and that Jesus would be glorified in us by life or by death..."* that **Pastor Ciro Alvarado**, who **Marco** led to Christ and who was the first national pastor Marco trained for pastoral ministry, would in fact pass away less than a month later. Both Ciro and his wife **Dolores** had a COVID-type illness in July and never quite seemed to get over it. On September 10, Ciro's son **Jose Luis** took him to a doctor in the nearby city to check on his shortness of breath. They gave him three injections. After the first one, he called us, quite relieved to be taking medication that would supposedly help. The next day Ciro passed away.



Ciro & Dolores Alvarado

His son **Toño**, the Assistant Pastor here in **Cancún**, and his wife flew to the funeral in **Chiapas** and made it just 30 minutes before the service began. Toño preached, and approximately 150 people in the small town of about 350 heard once again of salvation in Jesus Christ. Many offered kind words in memory of Ciro, and several returned for the service on Sunday evening. Only a handful are believers. Ciro's wife Dolores also has health problems and is not doing well. Please pray that God is glorified.



Marco & Gwendolyn

A Bright Light Shining in a Quiet Corner



Santa Martha is a small village of approximately 350 people near the Guatemala border of Mexico in the State of Chiapas

Pastor Ciro Alvarado was born on the San Pedro Ranch in **Chiapas**, Mexico—on the very ground where a cemetery now stands. He asked to be buried there, and so it was.

Ciro's father worked as the ranch manager, and from age eight, Ciro cared for the ranch owners' young son. As he grew, he became a ranch hand and formed a marimba group that often played at parties. There were eight members, drums, cello, bass, and it must have sounded wonderful. It is a shame there are no photos from those days.

Over the years, he worked as a bricklayer, farmer, beekeeper, and by the grace of God a preacher. He married and began a family. At least once, he and his wife were chosen to carry a new idol for the Catholic church from town to town, which was considered a great honor. Yet despite being religious, they faced marriage problems, money problems, and most of all a sin problem. Their solution seemed to be for Ciro to travel to Cancún, twenty-four hours away by bus, because they had heard there was work and money there.

In March of 1997, Ciro was working construction on a new furniture store on a corner lot in Cancún. Just two houses down, missionary Marco Nuñez had rented a home and was inviting neighbors to hear the Word of God on Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. Marco brought water and Cokes to the men working on the corner and invited them to hear the Word.

At the first service Ciro attended, he was saved. He said, "When I heard that Jesus died to pay for my sin and give me eternal life, how could I pass that up?"

The next Sunday, he returned and told Marco that every other Saturday, when he was paid, he would go straight to

have carne asada and drink with his friends. "But this Saturday," he said, "I didn't go. I didn't get drunk."

He began reading the Bible and praying with Marco. His favorite hymn soon became Amazing Grace. When he went home to visit his wife and children, he told them about Jesus and that he was now a believer. As the leader of the home, he could not allow idols in the house, so he took them out and threw them away. His family, especially the aunts, were angry with him, but it was a strong testimony, because idols are nothing.

Ciro continued working in Cancún and traveling back and forth to tell his family what he was learning. In time, his wife and children were saved.

He wanted to learn more so he could return to his town and preach the Word of God. His family moved to Cancún for three years of Bible training with Marco. When he finished, they returned to their hometown to share the gospel. Many townspeople came to the opening service, though most stopped coming after the initial interest faded. A few were saved and later moved away. Still, Pastor Ciro continued sharing the Word and helping anyone in need.



Ciro (left front) at a wedding in his church in Santa Martha



*Back: Ciro with his sister Candy.
Front: Odalis (daughter), Dolores (wife),
Karina (daughter-in-law), Toño (son).*

In later years, he developed problems with his knees, and during the COVID lockdowns he was on oxygen for a time. It seems he never fully recovered and had been unwell for quite a while. God, in His mercy, took him to heaven on September 11, 2026.



Funeral Procession for Ciro Alvarado

Ciro is survived by his wife, Dolores; two sons; one daughter; and three grandchildren. He was one of the most pleasant and helpful men we have ever known. He had a good testimony among believers and unbelievers alike. As much as was within him, he lived at peace with all men. He faithfully shared the gospel and carried the light to that small place. He was faithful to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ until the day he was taken to heaven.

And now, on the ranch where he was born, where the cemetery stands today, his body has been laid to rest. ✝



George Jensen preaching in Uruguay twenty years ago. Marianne Rauter translating.



Dr. Jensen preached all over the world. God used his missionary biographical sermons to inspire many people to heed the call to missions. Watch this 25-minute message on **"David Livingstone's prayer."** Then talk to us about how we can help you discover the role God has for you in His plan to reach the nations.



emuinternational.org/history

Bring the Books *(continued from p.1)*

William Carey met fierce resistance from senior ministers who dismissed his burden for India. Their skepticism could have stopped him before he began. It did not. Carey kept moving in the direction God had set before him. (*Faithful Witness*)

Resilience in Trials:

Missionary biographies do not hide the grief, danger, disappointment, or resistance. They show ordinary believers who kept walking when almost everything around them said, "Go home." **John G. Paton** buried his wife and newborn child soon after arriving in the New Hebrides. The grief alone might have sent him home. Danger pressed in around him as well. Yet Paton stayed at his post. (*Thirty Years Among South Seas Cannibals*).

Hope Through Grace:

These men and women were not flawless heroes. They struggled with failure, family strain, discouragement, and loss. That honesty is one reason their stories help us. We see again that God works through weak people who learn to depend on His grace. **Adoniram Judson** endured brutal imprisonment, political upheaval, and deep personal grief in Burma. He also passed through a season of spiritual darkness. Yet God sustained him,

renewed his faith, and enabled him to complete the Burmese Bible translation. (*To the Golden Shore*).

Broader Perspective:

It is easy to approach missions with preconceived expectations masked by our own blind spots. Missionary biographies take us beyond our own experience and help us see the world through other cultures, languages, and ways of life. **William Cameron Townsend** discovered in Guatemala that a Spanish Bible could not speak clearly to people whose heart language was something else. That simple realization changed the course of his ministry and helped carry Bible translation to isolated language groups around the world. (*Uncle Cam*).

Spiritual Catalyst:

Some books inform us. The best missionary biographies disturb us. They expose comfortable faith, awaken compassion, and press us toward generous, wholehearted service across the street or around the world. I'm always moved by the stories of **Jim Elliot, Nate Saint**, and their fellow martyrs, and how they turned tragedy in Ecuador into a testimony that still calls believers to costly obedience. These men did not hold back. Their lives leave us with a question worth consideration: What might God do with a life fully surrendered to Him? (*Through Gates of Splendor and Jungle Pilot*).†

- *Thirty Years Among South Seas Cannibals* by John G. Paton
- *John G. Paton* by Paul Schlehle
- *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd* by David Brainerd (Author), Jonathan Edwards (Editor)
- *Through Gates of Splendor* by Elisabeth Elliot
- *The Journals of Jim Elliot* by Elisabeth Elliot
- *Jungle Pilot: Life and Ministry of Nate Saint* by Russel Hitt
- *Bruchko* by Bruce Olson
- *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor
- *A Chance to Die: The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael* by Elisabeth Elliot
- *Amy Carmichael: Beauty for Ashes* by Iain Murray
- *Uncle Cam: The Story of William Cameron Townsend* by James and Marti Hefley
- *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* by Courtney Anderson
- *Adoniram Judson* by Vance Christie
- *William Carey* by S. Pearce Carey
- *Evidence Not Seen: A Woman's Miraculous Faith in the Jungles of World War II* by Darlene Deibler Rose
- *David Livingstone* by Vance Christie
- *How I Know God Answers Prayer* by Rosalind Goforth
- *By Searching* by Isobel Kuhn
- *Gladys Aylward: My Missionary Life in China* by Gladys Aylward
- *Behind the Ranges* by Geraldine Taylor
- *Mountain Rain* by Eileen Crossman
- *Dispatches from the Front: Gospel Advance in the World's Most Difficult Places* by Tim Keese
- *Christian Heroes Then and Now* by Janet and Geoff Benge



PO Box 790
Taylors, SC 29687

Return Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GREENVILLE, SC
PERMIT NO. 1371

Across the Lands *(continued from p.1)*

I recently told my wife, **Joanna**, "Wouldn't it be great if we had N.I.L. money like college athletic programs?" Of course, God doesn't work that way. We don't recruit missionaries with scholarships or signing bonuses. Instead, as I visit these campuses, I challenge young people to seriously consider a much bigger question: **Is God calling me to missions?** In fact, some of the most meaningful moments happen outside the pulpit. I spend a great deal of time talking with students, faculty, and even pastors about discerning the will of God.

Perhaps God has been stirring your heart too. If He has, I would love to talk with you. Just reach out. For now, take a few minutes to read "**Bring the Books.**" I believe with all my heart that someone reading these words needs to take the next step toward missions. Maybe that someone is you.

Kornel & Tanja Crnković continue leading the revitalization of the **Baptist church in Virovitica**. New visitors, a recent baptism, a Friday Bible study, and monthly church lunches have been encouraging. Please pray for needed



The Krung-Bras Bible School in Cambodia welcomed over 120 students

building repairs before winter and for their son **Natanael** as he begins college in **Osijek**.

Matt & Becky Hancock are nearing completion of their new home after fifteen months of construction and they praise God for the many gospel conversations along the way. They are also rejoicing that "**Grandpa Kim**," a longtime believer reached through their village outreach, is preparing for baptism on October 11. Pray for continued church ministry, their move, and preparations for a nine-month furlough beginning in November.

Jeremy & Bonnie Ruth Farmer and **Brian & Lydia Kane** have both recently returned to Cambodia after furlough. The Farmers rejoice in new believers added to the Lao

church in **Na Ong**, ongoing evangelism through faithful national partners, and the continued fruit of the **Stung Treng Bible School**—while also asking prayer for laborers and for those facing spiritual opposition. The **Kanes** report a smooth return, a joyful reunion with their local church, and an encouraging fall session of the **Krung-Bras Bible School**, which welcomed over 120 students and, for the first time, believers from the **Kavet** minority. Pray for both families as they resume full ministry schedules and continue strengthening the churches of northeastern Cambodia.

Please pray for **Ken and Joan Jensen** as they travel to Uruguay this month. Their last visit was in March of 2020—right as the world shut down. For most of EMU's history, "**Jensen**" and "**Uruguay**" have been practically synonymous, so I'm eager to hear their report. And who knows, maybe we can coax Ken out of retirement long enough to enjoy another round of his writing.

Across the lands, God delights to use ordinary believers for His glory—the same theme running through every missionary biography. We'd love for you to join us.†