

June 2011

Dear Friends,

Thirty years ago this month we began our missionary service in Ecuador. For 13 years we ministered in the northwest provinces of Esmeraldas and Manabí, carrying out various tasks related to making disciples and training church leaders. In 1994 World Partners sent us to the Alliance Bible Seminary in Guayaquil, where we help prepare ministers for many denominations. God who calls us is faithful, and He provides what we need while working in and through us to accomplish His good purpose. We're writing so that you can share our gratitude for the ways God is using our partnership in the gospel.

Over the years Dave has developed over 40 courses and taught hundreds of men and women who minister all over Ecuador and as missionaries in North and South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Sometimes we are asked to visit congregations led by our students.

In March several former students invited us to spend eight days at a thriving church in the eastern jungles. Dave spoke six times and we met individually with about 30 leaders who direct strategic ministries or work in influential media and government jobs. Church members operate the city's most respected school, a Christian radio station, a television station, and a home for abandoned kids. They reach out to their neighbors, nearby towns, indigenous groups, and prisoners in jail. The pastoral team is developing programs for training leaders and sending missionaries. We were supposed to counsel and encourage these believers, but—as so often happens—we came away challenged by *their* vision and commitment.

In May four of Dave's students—the young pastoral team of a growing church—invited him to preach. Some 300 persons attended each service that Sunday morning. It was heartening to see the church's warm fellowship and joyful worship, its zeal for evangelism and careful discipleship, its well-rounded program for training leaders, its compassionate ministry to the suffering, its outreach to nearby unreached towns, and its involvement in world missions.

But the real story is transformed lives. The Sunday after our visit a stranger entered the sanctuary after being invited in by members greeting passers-by on the sidewalk. Hours earlier, driven to despair by a cheating husband, she had put a loaded gun in her mouth and pulled the trigger. When it didn't go off, she began to ramble aimlessly through the city. That day she heard about, and gave herself to, a God who feels our pain, forgives our sin, heals our wounds, and never leaves us. The next Sunday she was back with her husband and they are working on repairing their relationship.

Another dramatic conversion took place in the life a prominent judge. The corrupt magistrate's power and wealth seduced women and enabled him to support his own family plus seven lovers and their kids. When the judge surrendered his life to God, he invited 35 friends (including some of the city's leading citizens) to a meal to tell them that he has renounced his sin in order to follow Christ, whatever the cost.

Seeing the fruit of our students' ministries is encouraging, but usually we attend a small slum church where Dave preaches most Sundays. There, too, we see God at work changing attitudes and transforming relationships. Among the poor, common-law "marriages" and sexual infidelity are the rule rather than the exception. But we are seeing couple after couple giving up sinful lifestyles and deciding to get married. Just last week a man who for 17 years shuttled constantly between two "wives" and two sets of kids decided to marry one and stay with her (while still supporting the kids he had with the other woman).

Serving in churches gives us regular contact with recent converts and unbelievers, but our main ministry is still developing pastors and missionaries. This semester, which runs from April to August, Dave is teaching a total of nine courses, with at least one two-hour class each day from Monday to Saturday, and a class schedule that begins as early as 7 a.m. and ends as late as 10 p.m. He also plans the daily chapel services, runs a book deposit for the students, supervises the men's dorm, counsels many believers, and serves on various committees. Lolly keeps up her own routine: doing domestic chores, helping Dave, serving as campus nurse, doing the mission bookkeeping, and looking after many visitors.

Regardless how busy we are, we think constantly of our four children living in the U.S.A. **John-Paul** keeps working on his doctoral dissertation at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, while teaching writing and philosophy to undergraduates. “God and Morality” was the course he taught most recently. He expects to study and teach one more year at Cornell. **David** is giving up his career as a substitute teacher, restaurant bus boy, and soccer coach to do a graduate program in philosophy with an emphasis on ethics at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. **Mary** has just finished a challenging year teaching remedial reading to Hispanic kids in a rough inner-city high school in South Bend. She hopes to continue at the same job next year. **Stephen** completed his freshman year at Bethel College, where he studies History and Humanities, and then delighted his parents by coming home for the summer.

We are deeply conscious of our limitations and failures, and of God’s grace in calling us to serve him. And we are very grateful to the individuals and congregations that give generously to make our ministry possible, and then undergird it with fervent, faithful prayer. Please keep us in your prayers. Pray that:

1. God will deliver us from evil and produce in us the fruit of the Spirit.
2. God will give us health and strength and wisdom for our work.
3. God will continue to give us opportunities to make disciples and serve people.
4. God will provide our needs as well as the needs of our children and our students.
5. God will guard us from danger (so far this year just in Guayaquil there have been more than 240 murders, 310 kidnappings, 2,640 muggings, and 760 attacked or stolen vehicles).

Thank you so much for your partnership in the gospel.

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### *THEN AND NOW*

