

MISSION UPDATE

OCTOBER 2016

LOVE BECAUSE . . . (PT 2)

BY FRED BISCHOFF

GOD LOVES BECAUSE HE is love. Unselfish love describes the essence of His character and the relational joy of His existence. He asks us to love *because* He has designed us to enter into this joy.

Even after sin's removal of love within us, we are still enabled to love as He asks, *because* He continues to love us. In fact, that continued love—loving the unlovely—is what the Bible means by His gold being tried in the fire (Revelation 3:18). In ourselves, especially because of the selfishness (fear, insecurity, self-focus) sin brought, we have no ability to love, except for the fact that He still loves us. If we love at all, it is “*because* He first loved us” (1 John 4:19)—it is “as I have loved you” (John 13:34).

God's gold in the fire means loving sinners before they can respond, and even if they do not respond in love. Since sin, this is the essence of faithful love. Calvary revealed this love to us (1 John 3:16). This faithful love establishes and fulfills the law (Romans 3:31; 13:10) of our original design.

So when we respond to this love, by receiving it into our hearts and passing it on, we begin to experience the same “gold-in-the-fire” emotions. There is pain and joy.

Reflect on the pain of no response, by measuring the enormity of His love.

“The consciousness that His compassion was unappreciated, His **love unrequited**, His mercy slighted, His salvation rejected, filled Him with sorrow that was inexpressible.” Near the end of His time here, He found “all around Him . . . reminders of His **unrequited love**. Even the disciples who were so dear to His heart, had, in the hour of His humiliation, reproached and forsaken Him” (Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 393, 830).

“Christ pleaded, He invited; but His **love was unrequited** by the people He came to save” (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, p. 188).

“In the intense pain of **unrequited love**, he exclaimed, ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee’” (Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, February 22, 1898).

“**Unrequited love** broke the heart of the Son of God” (Ellen White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume 2, p. 395).

Where was “the joy that was set before Him” that enabled Him to endure this pain leading through the cross (Hebrews 12:2)? The joy was in the promise, the evidence, and the realization that some would respond. Likewise, we are empowered to love as He loves *because* of the same joy—His joy (John 15:9-11; Nehemiah 8:10).

Love *because* . . . there is no other joy. 



SHARE THE WEALTH: A MISSION UPDATE FROM MADAGASCAR

BY ANNELIESE WAHLMAN

THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT Programme's most recent data ranked Madagascar 154 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index.¹ That's basically a sterile way of saying that, as a country, Madagascar doesn't seem to have much going for it. Rich in biodiversity and culture, but seemingly poor in just about every other area, Madagascar is a land of extremes—extreme natural beauty juxtaposed with extreme poverty.² In a population of nearly 23 million people, a staggering 75% live below the international poverty line.³ Children with haunting eyes and distended bellies wander the streets. Young girls hang around the local night clubs looking for a way to make

some money in exchange for their innocence.⁴ It all seems rather bleak.

But through the horrifying misery the Malagasy people endure, they are open to the gospel. While the Western world has been anesthetized through materialism and excess, Madagascar is open to its true need—Jesus Christ.

After visiting the country, Light Bearers Publishing Correspondent Meiring Pretorius described this time of religious receptivity as “a golden opportunity to flood the Island with our message” and believes that “the printed page will do extremely well here.”

Since 2012, Light Bearers has sent two containers of literature to the church in Madagascar, and in the last four years the fruit has begun to show. Meiring writes about the church, “They are baptizing an average of 13,000 people per year. They feel that this number is largely the result of the literature from Light Bearers.”

Some Malagasy pastors have been using the Bible studies in small groups, and are experiencing a very positive outcome. One pastor, Meiring wrote, “has started dividing his churches into 4 groups. He has a total of 58 groups in his district. This resulted in 122 baptisms since they started. This also helps to strengthen the new members in the church. He uses the 24 Bibles lessons printed by Light Bearers.”

In a land so impoverished, His word is enriching even those living in the darkest pockets of this country.

As the literature has been diffused throughout the island, God's love is making an impact. Meiring also shared how the church is using the tracts in a non-traditional way to influence their community:

“The church in general is encouraging church members to start centers of influence. One such center was started by the Conference to teach people to speak English. During the classes they use the Bible lessons as a tool for study. This method has reached many hearts for Christ.”

Another pastor shared a testimony with Meiring about a Malagasy traditional healer “who came to his [the pastor's] meetings and studied the Bible lessons. God's Spirit convicted him and he wanted to get rid of the idols he was worshiping. They helped him in his faith and he abandoned all his practices.” Please pray for this Malagasy man as he is considering baptism.

It is undeniable that God is working in Madagascar. In a land so impoverished, His word is enriching even those living in the darkest pockets of this country.

A layman named Mamy is proof of this. After spending time in prison and being converted, Mamy felt a strong call to take the gospel behind bars. He began his prison ministry in 2004 and now has access to all detention centers. He is seeing the Spirit move as he works with those who are in the same position he used to be, men who are held captive, not merely by walls of cement and barbed wire, but by walls of selfishness and pride.

“Now he is using the Light Bearers Bible lessons in the prisons with great success,” Meiring reports. “Recently 150 prisoners were baptized and 45 more are awaiting baptism.” Liberty is being proclaimed and captives are being set free.

For those prisoners who have recently been released, a church has been built outside one of the main prisons. Now the newly freed inmates can be part of a safe community as they transition back into normal life.

Martin Luther once said, “If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write.” As witnessed in Madagascar, it's absolutely stunning to see what God can do with just 26 letters written on small pieces of paper, each carrying the weight of God's glory. May we always be willing instruments in God's hands, ready to write, speak, print and share the wealth of God's love in even the poorest of places. 🔥

1. “Madagascar,” *United Nations Human Development Programme Human Development Reports*, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MDG>.
2. “Population in multidimensional poverty, headcount (%)” *United Nations Human Development Programme Human Development Reports*, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/38606>.
3. “Population below poverty line,” *The World Factbook*, 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2046.html>.
4. Aaron Ross, “Madagascar, where child prostitution is common, cheap and ‘trivial,’” *MINNPOST*, January 31, 2014, <https://www.minnpost.com/global-post/2014/01/madagascar-where-child-prostitution-common-cheap-and-trivial>.



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SPEAKING SCHEDULE

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ASI Spain Conference
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www.asi-spain.org
Ty Gibson

OCTOBER 8, 22

Cascade Adventist Church
Bend, OR
www.cascadesda.org / 541.749.9005
James Rafferty

OCTOBER 14-22

Hope Trending (a live, global series
with speaker Dwight K. Nelson).
<https://hopetrending.org>
Ty Gibson

OCTOBER 29

Oregon Conference Women's Retreat
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<https://orgcwomen.netadvent.org>
Risë Rafferty

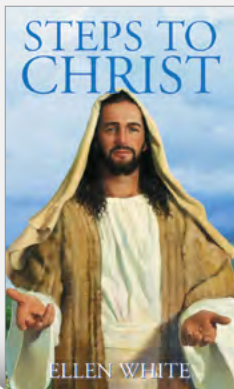
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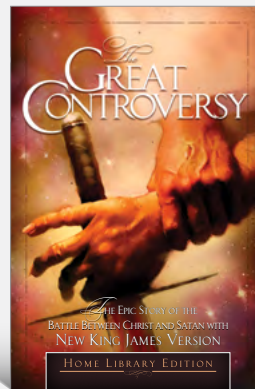
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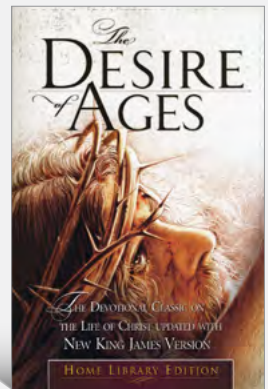
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