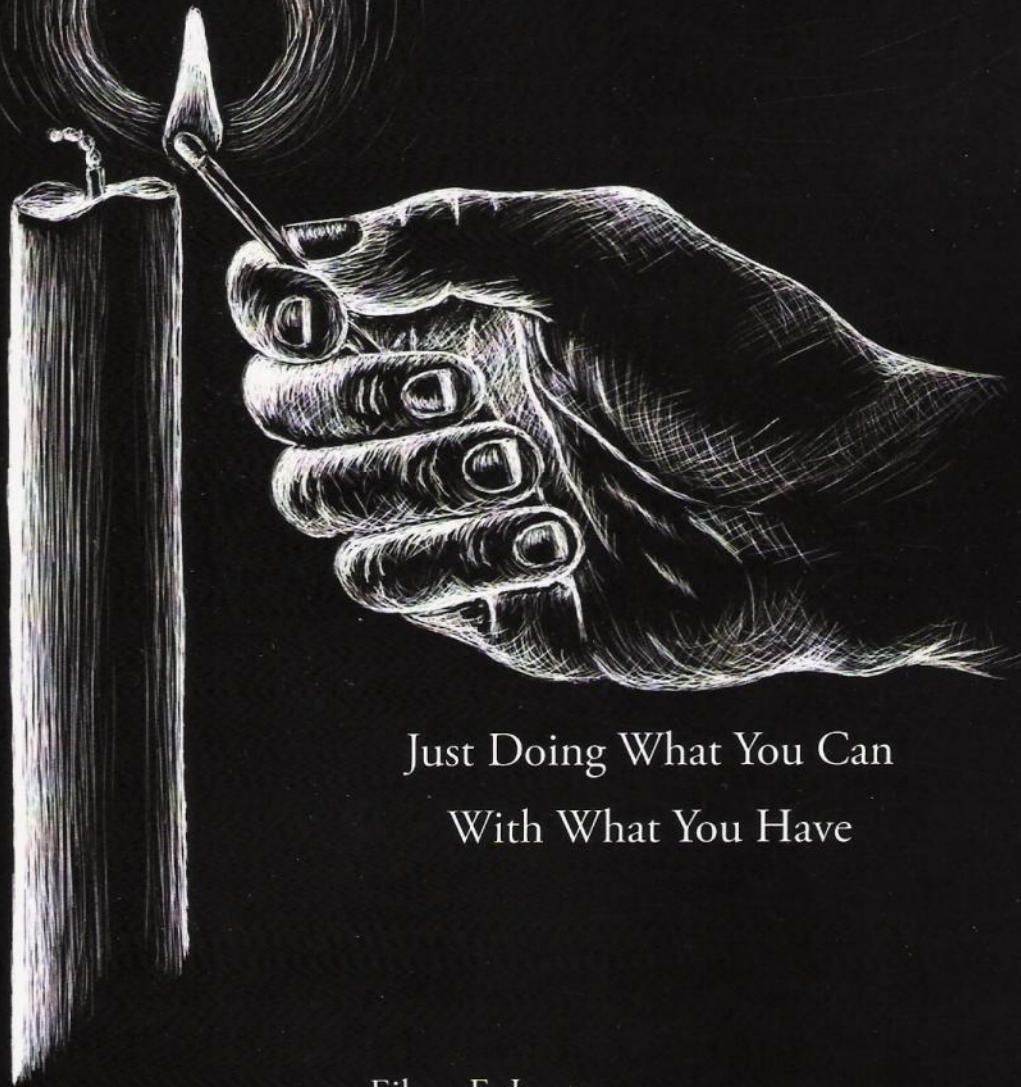


TO LIGHT A CANDLE



Just Doing What You Can
With What You Have

Eileen E. Lantry
with
Monroe and Patricia Duerksen

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Edited by Debbie Duerksen.

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Glossary of Characters and Places

With pronunciation guide for Spanish names

- Adventist** ~ An abbreviated form of the name Seventh-day Adventist.
- Alcedo Zubieta** ~ [ahl-SAY-doh soo-bee-EH-tah] Principal of the Maranatha School in the jungle.
- Anselmo** ~ [ahn-SELL-moe] The first snakebite victim Patti saw.
- Andres Rofner** ~ [ahn-DRAYS ROWF-ner] Neighbor who befriended Dale when he couldn't reach his port with his rubber inflatable boat.
- Becky** ~ Oldest daughter of the Duerksens, wife of David Gates.
- Betsy** ~ Second daughter of the Duerksens, wife of Ted Burgdorff.
- Bill Norton** ~ Husband of Bonnie, pilot who made rescue flights for the Duerksens.
- Bonnie** ~ Youngest daughter of the Duerksens, legal owner of the Maranatha property, wife of Bill Norton.
- Brenda** ~ Student missionary, Bonnie's friend.
- Campa** ~ [CAHM-pah] An Indian tribe of the jungle.
- Campesino** ~ [cahm-pay-SEE-no] Peasant.
- Chulumani** ~ [chew-loo-MAH-nee] Location of an Adventist hospital in Bolivia.
- Cobija** ~ [coe-BEE-hah] A jungle city in northern Bolivia.
- Collete** ~ French nurse who helped the Duerksens.
- Cunchi** ~ [COON-chee] A species of catfish, also a nickname for highland Indians who migrated to the jungle.
- Dale** ~ Husband of Patti. Full name, Monroe Dale Duerksen.
- David Gates** ~ Husband of Becky, son-in-law of the Duerksens.
- Dionisio** ~ [dee-oh-NEE-see-oh] An Uruguayan missionary in Bolivia.
- Ellen White** ~ One of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who was also a prolific writer.
- Emerson Panduro** ~ [EM-er-sun pah-DOO-row] Owner of sawmill who befriended the Duerksens.
- Freni** ~ [FREH-nee] Girl who was given poisonous sap from **oje** [oh-HAY] tree to kill intestinal parasites.
- Guayaramerin** ~ [gwhy-ah-rah-mah-REEN] Location of an Adventist hospital in Bolivia.
- Haydee** ~ [eye-DAY] Teenage girl who died of cerebral meningitis.
- Iquitos** ~ [ee-KEE-toes] Large jungle city on the Amazon River.
- James** ~ Nicknamed Jimmy, only son of the Duerksens, husband of Debbie Durichek.
- Jones** ~ Owner of tugboat and cattle ranch near the Maranatha property.
- Josefa** ~ [hoe-SAY-fah] First visitor to the Duerksens' Sabbath School.
- Juan Heidinger** ~ [HWAHN HIGH-ding-ger] Close friend who helped get the new school started at Maranatha.

Julius ~ Son of Steven, brother of Mary. Actual Spanish name was **Julio** [WHO-lee-oh].

Lander ~ [LAHN-der] Brother of Emerson, one-time mayor of Puerto Inca.

Leider ~ [LAY-der] Peruvian helper who joined Maranatha after Steven left.

Leoncio ~ [lay-OWN-see-oh] Foreman of a group of Cunchi laborers whom Emerson hired.

Lidvina ~ [lid-VEE-nah] Mother of Juan Heidinger, first cook for the new school at Maranatha.

Mamoré ~ A river in Bolivia.

Maranatha ~ Name the Duerksens gave their property in the jungle.

Markers ~ Argentinian couple who operated a medical launch in Bolivia.

Mary ~ Daughter of Steven, sister of Julius, actually used this English name.

Meraldine ~ Wife of Richard Gates.

Nevati ~ [neh-VAH-tee] First Adventist mission station for Campa Indians in Peru.

Pachitea ~ [pah-chee-TAY-ah] The jungle river where the Duerksens lived in Peru.

Pando ~ [PAHN-doe] The northernmost department (state) in Bolivia.

Patti ~ Wife of Dale. Full name, Patricia Mae Nicholson Duerksen.

Pucallpa ~ [poo-CAHL-pah] Large city on the Ucayali River at the end of the road from Lima into the jungle.

Puerto Inca ~ [PWAIR-toe EEN-kah] A small jungle town on the Pachitea River.

Quechua ~ [KEH-chew-ah] A large tribe of highland Indians.

Ramon ~ [rah-MOAN] Husband of Josefa.

Richard Gates ~ Husband of Meraldine, father of David, pilot at the air base when the Duerksens first arrived.

Rosa ~ [ROW-sah] Wife of Santiago, sister of Josefa.

Rosita ~ [row-SEE-tah] Wife of Alcedo.

Sabino Yupanqui ~ [sah-BEE-no yew-PAHN-key] Distant relative of the Heidinger family.

Santiago ~ [sahn-tee-AH-goh] A Peruvian staff member at Maranatha.

Schwisow ~ American doctor at the Chulumani Adventist Hospital.

Steven ~ First Peruvian full-time helper for the Duerksens, father of Mary and Julius. Actual Spanish name was **Esteban** [es-TAY-bahn].

Sungaro ~ [SOON-gah-row] A tributary river to the Pachitea River.

Tarapoto ~ [tah-rah-POH-toh] A tropical city in Peru.

Ted ~ Husband of Betsy, son-in-law of the Duerksens.

Teresa ~ [tay-RAY-sah] Juan Heidinger's wife.

Tournavista ~ [tour-nah-VEES-tah] A town on the Pachitea River.

Yarinacocha ~ [yah-REE-nah-COH-chah] Location of the Adventist Air Base on a beautiful lagoon near Pucallpa.

Yelka ~ [YELL-kah] Girl who choked on a coffee bean.

Preface

This book features a very ordinary Adventist couple who conducted an extraordinary experiment that had a profound effect on their lives and the lives of others who came in contact with them during the experiment. Few people outside their family and circle of friends have even heard of Monroe Dale Duerksen and the girl he married, Patricia Mae Nicholson. They were raised in ordinary Adventist families and went to ordinary Adventist churches and attended ordinary church schools and were baptized early in life together with school friends. As they grew up they learned to love the Lord, and their lives demonstrated that they were born-again Christians, even though now as they look back over their long lives, neither one can point to a certain time or place and say, "That's where I found the Lord," or "That's when I was converted." Apparently it was just a gradual growing-in-grace experience for them.

College days were very important in their experience, because it was at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California, that Monroe first met Patti. It was not a love-at-first-sight experience, but neither was it a fight-and-make-up kind of experience. Instead it was mostly a steady growth in appreciation and affection for each other. They were married on November 28, 1954. Their marriage was a happy one right from the start, and Monroe soon settled down into the career of a common church-school teacher. They soon started their family as well, which eventually numbered four children, which was not an uncommon number of children at that time, three girls and one boy to whom they gave the common names of Becky, Betsy, Jimmy, and Bonnie.

Monroe felt that God had led him into educational work and that the students in his classroom were his mission field. He was very comfortable with this belief until one day at a convention for church-school teachers he listened to the superintendent of education make an impassioned plea for the teachers to make greater efforts to develop an interest in foreign mission service among their students. He felt as though that talk was aimed right at him, and in his brain the thought was pounding, *I can't inspire my students that way if I'm not willing to go to a foreign land myself.*

He left that convention trying to shake off the conviction that God was calling him to be a foreign missionary, and for a couple of weeks he didn't even tell his wife about it. When he felt like he would burst if he didn't share

his burden with somebody, he finally confided to Patti that this turmoil was going on in his mind. Then he braced himself for the outburst that he expected to follow, but to his surprise she responded calmly but with conviction, "Well, if that's the way you feel about it, you'd better do it!" As a result they sent an application to the General Conference for a foreign mission assignment. A couple years later on April 4, 1962, they flew out of Los Angeles International Airport to begin a new and very different life in the heart of South America.

The changes were many, including a new language to learn to speak, some different foods to learn to eat, different ways of doing things, and even a different name. The mission president didn't like the name "Monroe," so he decided to use the middle name "Dale" instead, and somehow it stuck. For that reason in the stories that appear in this book, Patti's husband is always referred to as Dale rather than by his first name, which might be confusing to someone who may have known him earlier in life.

The Duerksens spent seven years in service in Bolivia, and then they returned to the States to educate their children and to further their own education as well. Patti had seen the great need for medical services in a third-world country, so she felt a burden to become a nurse in order to be able to help the sick more effectively. She enrolled in a school of nursing, and after she graduated and became a registered nurse, Dale decided they could probably make a better missionary team if he had a paramedical profession to go along with her nursing, so he took a one-year course in medical technology, and they worked together in hospital settings for a few years to sharpen their newly learned skills.

When their children reached college age, they felt that the time had come when they could return to the mission field. They wanted to do their part to fulfill Christ's great commission to take the gospel to all the world, so they once again sent in an application for mission service. This time they asked to be assigned to a pioneering project to open new work, or at least to a place where the work had just recently begun. They were dismayed when they were informed that the church was no longer sending American missionaries to such projects. They learned that the number of missionaries on the General Conference payroll had peaked shortly after their return from Bolivia and had been in steady decline ever since.

Now they struggled with the problem of how they could take the good news about Jesus to those who dwell in spiritual darkness if their church would not send them. The rather obvious solution seemed almost too frightening to contemplate: Just go the way the first disciples of Jesus went without the financial backing of any organization, simply trusting God to provide for their needs. But would that work in this modern age? Would it really be stepping out by faith, or maybe just presumption? They felt that

they must find answers, and mere discussion and argument would not be adequate. They must find out by personal experience if the fantastic promises in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White are merely lovely cliches that shouldn't be taken too seriously, or if they are the trustworthy Word of God. Thus was born what the Duerksens like to call their "Great Experiment," and that is the subject of this book.

When they began the experiment they had no idea how long it would last, and nearly seven years went by before they began seeing indicators that the time had come to move on to some other part of the world. During those years they followed the practice of writing a newsletter to friends back home whenever there were enough things they wanted to share to fill about ten typewritten pages. A complete collection of those letters, 38 in number, served as the basic source of information for this book although not the exclusive source. In a book of this size it is impossible to include all the experiences they recounted in their letters, but the writers endeavored to present a realistically balanced selection of the good and the bad, the happy and the sad, the encouraging and the discouraging events.

The Duerksens maintain that this "Great Experiment" was the most fulfilling and satisfying and faith building time of their lives in spite of many difficulties they encountered along the way, for God's providential working always provided a way through the difficulties. It is their hope that the publication of their experiences will encourage others in the common walks of life to test God's promises for themselves, and in the process to let their lights shine before men. Each light may seem like just a small candle, but thousands of candles together can produce a great light.

1 *The Light Obscured* by Fog



The year was 1980. The turbulent decade of the 70's had come to an end, but Dale and Patti Duerksen still felt its effects. They had come home from their first foreign mission experience with mixed feelings, some euphoric and some disillusioned. They had seen a lot of new and interesting places, had made many new friends, and had some thrilling experiences, but by the time they decided to ask for a permanent return to their homeland, they felt that their service had produced very little effect on the great task of taking the gospel to all the world. It seemed that the work that had been assigned to them did nothing more than attempt to maintain the status quo. Maybe with some more preparation and experience they could do a better job the next time around. Yes, they did anticipate that there would be a "next time" some day.

But then a scandal rocked the church, and also the controversial teachings of a prominent college professor threatened to split the church apart. Adding fuel to the fire there appeared an exposé that claimed Ellen White had "borrowed" extensively from other authors in the preparation of some of her books, such as *The Desire of Ages*, and many church members were reading and discussing a new critical book in circulation called *The White Lie*. It had been a perplexing time, but now as a new decade was beginning, the Duerksens hoped that it would bring a new birth to their beloved church.

Patti and Dale frequently shared with each other their concerns and hopes for the future. Obviously no transcript of their exact conversations exists, but enough is known regarding what they talked about to reconstruct their conversations in a reasonable fashion, and for convenience we'll present the substance of their conversations in the form of a montage as though it were all part of a single discussion back in 1980.

Dale: "This is the most satisfying job I've had since I finished my med tech course. A new hospital with a lab that's set up just the way I want it, a good salary and good working conditions—what more could I ask for? And I like living here in Columbia [Louisiana]. It seems like everybody knows everybody in a little town like this, and the people are all so friendly. And yet, Patti, deep down inside I feel like this isn't really what we were preparing ourselves for."

Patti: "Yes, I feel the same way. I like the people I work with, and I enjoy being the assistant director of nurses. I know I help a lot of people in my work here, but I also know that if this new hospital had not been built, the people would just keep on driving over to another nearby city for their medical attention. It seems like this hospital is more of a convenience than a necessity. I can't forget that during my nurse's training I told everybody that I wanted to learn everything I

needed to know to become a missionary nurse.”

Dale: “I remember at your graduation, they told the audience three times that one member of the class was going to go overseas to be a missionary nurse. I was so surprised that those instructors in a secular institution would be so impressed by a student wanting to be a missionary.”

Patti: “Right. And it was so clearly evident that God’s hand was at work in my training. In fact, they should not have even accepted me in the school of nursing, because I didn’t meet several of the requirements for entrance. I will always believe that it must have been the Holy Spirit working on the hearts of those ladies that impressed them to give me a chance to try the course anyway. And I’ll never forget the day the director told me that they never regretted that decision, because I never disappointed them. But now I don’t know how we’re ever going to fulfill that dream, since it looks like the church has stopped sending missionaries to the kind of pioneering projects we envisioned.”

Dale: “Well, we asked for God’s guidance when we were offered these jobs here in Columbia, and it certainly looked like divine providence opened the doors for us to come here. It would have been a different story if we had been out looking for a new job, but we weren’t. You know, the way the offer came our way, totally unsolicited and unexpected, we could hardly avoid wondering if God was trying to tell us something, and when we got the sign we asked for, that settled it. But still something doesn’t seem to fit quite right. We’ll never even begin to take the gospel to all the world by just settling down in our homeland.”

Patti: “Yes, that seems to be the story of our life, full of ups and downs. Something happens that’s so unusual and impressive that we’re sure it had to be God at work, but then something else happens that doesn’t seem to be consistent with God’s leading and doesn’t make sense at all. Like when we got our call to go to Bolivia. We told them I was pregnant and it would be better for us to wait until the baby was born, but no, they insisted this call was so urgent we had to go as soon as possible. So we tried to comply, but when you went to the Bureau of Vital Statistics to get a copy of your birth certificate so that you could apply for a passport, they informed you that they had no record of your birth.”

Dale: “That was quite a shocking revelation. My sister told me that I was born at home, but I had no idea that nobody bothered to record such an important event!”

Patti: “I was secretly kind of pleased, because I figured this obstacle would probably delay everything enough so that our last baby would be born here in the States. But you valiantly did everything you could to try to meet the schedule. You thought it would take too long to process an application for a delayed birth certificate, so you investigated the possibility of getting a passport on the basis of other documentation to prove citizenship.”

Dale: “Yes, I heard that occasionally that is done, but it didn’t work for me. All my efforts were in vain.”

Patti: “As I recall, it was just a week before we were supposed to leave for the mission field that you gave up trying to find a shortcut to a passport, so you finally submitted an application for a delayed birth certificate, and we told the Lord that if He wanted us to go on the scheduled date, He would have to take over and work it out, for we didn’t know what else we could do. It still amazes me that your birth certificate arrived by special delivery mail just a few days later, and your passport was processed super fast, and we were all on that plane together flying out of Los Angeles right on schedule. Fantastic!”

Dale: “Maybe ‘marvelous providence’ would be a better term to use, Dear.”

Patti: “Whatever. Then when we landed in Peru where we had to spend three months in Lima studying Spanish before going on to Bolivia, there was no sign of any urgency over there. So why did we have to rush down there anyway?”

Dale: “That’s the big unanswered question.”

Patti: "My due date came right at the end of our language study. Of course we were still far from being fluent in Spanish, but I had to go find a doctor I couldn't talk to who would deliver my baby. It was terrible! I'm glad I'll never have to do that again.

Dale: "Yes, Sweetheart, I know it was very hard on you, and I didn't like it either. I remember I had to go get the birth certificate for little Bonnie Ruth, and of course it said she was born in Peru. And then I learned that since our new baby wasn't included on your passport as the other children were, she would have to have her own Peruvian passport to leave the country to go to Bolivia with us. I didn't like that at all. I wanted my little girl to be an American, not a Peruvian."

Patti: "Of course later we found out that she would have U. S. citizenship too, so eventually it all turned out OK."

Dale: "But I still wonder why the Lord let things work out that way. If the brethren had just had enough patience to let us delay our departure about four months, Bonnie would have been on your passport along with the rest of the kids right from the start, and everything would have been much simpler."

Patti: "Maybe so. But we should probably keep in mind that the Bible tells us that God works for the good of those He calls according to His purpose.¹ If we keep looking for the purpose, eventually we'll probably see it more clearly than we do right now."

Dale: "You must be right—as you usually are. In fact, as I look back I can now recognize more of the ways the Lord was preparing us for mission service. For instance, when we moved to Paradise [California], we got acquainted with missionary Ana Stahl who had retired there to be close to her children. Since we had applied for mission service, we were eager to hear all we could about foreign missions, and we learned that she and her husband had started their work in the highlands of Bolivia and later moved to the jungle region of Peru. This sparked our interest in that part of the world, and I think it was more than mere coincidence that just a year later we got our call to Bolivia, the same place where the Stahls began their work."

Patti: "You know what really sticks in my mind about Mama Stahl? It was the time she chided me for having my children so close together. I thought that was none of her business! But I didn't let her remarks bother me very long, and now I'm convinced she wasn't quite right about that, because Becky and Betsy had so much fun growing up together, and it was precisely because they were so close to the same age. Remember when they were in college together how they loved to pretend they were twins—and they did look a lot alike. They were so pleased whenever they managed to dupe someone into believing that they actually were twins."

Dale: "And they wouldn't have had their double wedding if they hadn't been so close together. Boy, we saved big bucks on that one. Two marriages for the price of one!"

Patti: "Only a man would look at it that way. I just feel so blessed that our girls had the opportunity to get acquainted with such great guys down there in the mission field. I'm so grateful to the Gates family for providing their oldest son David for our oldest daughter and to the Burgdorffs for providing their second son for our second daughter. Wasn't that neat how that worked out?"

Dale: "Yeah, it sure was. And now I feel so fortunate to have Ted here working with me in the lab, and I'm sure you feel the same way about working with Betsy in nursing."

Patti: "Yes, I certainly do. It's wonderful to be able to reminisce with them about our adventures in Bolivia and share our hopes for the future."

Dale: "I wonder what the future holds. Remember how we used to go to the Young People's Meetings and repeat the aim, The gospel to all the world in this generation, and then with stars in our eyes we went to Bolivia to help make it happen. Statistical reports of the

¹ See Romans 8:28.

mission would trumpet the large number of baptisms our mission had, sometimes leading the whole world, but it seemed to me that all we were doing was just building up the work that was already established. Moving on into new areas was hardly ever being done.”

Patti: “But don’t forget that there was impressive medical work going on in that mission, and Sister White spoke of the medical missionary work as being the “opening wedge” for our evangelistic work.² I loved to go down to our Chulumani Hospital and follow Dr. Schwisow around as he visited his patients, and when we spent a whole week with the Markers on the medical launch floating down the Mamoré River, that was so much fun too. That van that we called The Rolling Clinic that traveled around the altiplano bringing health care to the sick “campesinos” was also impressive. Then there was that new hospital in Guayaramerin on the Brazilian border—at least it was new for us—which the Bolivian government turned over to us to operate on a 30-year contract. And then Dionisio found another hospital that was available to us. Remember that?”

Dale: “How could I forget! It still pains me to think about it. Dionisio came into my office so excited that day to tell me about his trip to Cobija. I knew that was the principal city of the northern jungle area known as Pando, but I had never been there since we had no work going on there for me to visit. He eagerly told me that he went there to do Ingathering, so first of all he looked up the mayor and told him about all the medical work we were doing in Bolivia, ending with the account of the contract the government gave us to operate the Guayaramerin Hospital. The mayor smiled and said, ‘Well, we have a hospital building sitting empty at the edge of our town, because we can’t find anybody to staff it. Why don’t you ask your church to come take over our hospital for us too?’ When I heard that, I just smiled and told Dionisio that we already had our hands full with medical work, and there was no way we could take on any more obligations.”

Patti: “What was so painful about that?”

Dale: “It was what happened afterward that was painful. It seemed like God was trying to tell us something by the events that followed in rapid succession. Shortly after my visit with Dionisio, some rabble-rousers in Guayaramerin stirred up the populace against the Adventists, and the people then pressured the government to rescind the contract and take back the operation of the hospital. Then Brother Marker had to return to his homeland, and we couldn’t find anybody to take his place on the medical launch, so it was sold. Next Brother Steger took his family back home to Argentina, and that left nobody to operate the rolling clinic, so the van was sold too. And then to top it all off, there was a revolution in the country, and the new government didn’t like the contract that the former government had signed with the Adventists for the operation of the Chulumani Hospital, so they simply annulled that document and took over this hospital that the Adventists had been running for over 30 years. It seemed like God was trying to tell us, *If you think you can’t enter a new area to start new work because your hands are full, I’ll empty your hands so you won’t have any excuse.* Within two years there wasn’t any Adventist medical missionary work left in Bolivia—and it was all my fault!”

Patti: “Honey, don’t blame yourself. You were telling the truth when you said our hands were full. There was no room in the budget for anything else, and we all know it takes a lot of money to start up a new hospital.”

Dale: “True. But something doesn’t seem to quite add up right. I’ve heard preachers quote Scripture that has God saying that the cattle on a thousand hills belong to Him,³ and He even claims that all the silver and the gold is His as well,⁴ so how can God’s work in the earth be

² Found in General Conference Bulletin, 1903, number 4, p. 7.

³ See Psalm 50:10.

⁴ See Haggai 2:8

crippled by a lack of funds? Yet it seems like funding is always the biggest problem.”

Patti: “I know what you mean. Here we are, wanting to do what we can to hasten the coming of Jesus by taking the gospel to all the world,⁵ so we’d like to participate in a new pioneering project somewhere, but the church won’t send us, because there’s no budget available for a project like that. Surely Jesus must want to come back even more than we want Him to come, and He must know a lot better than we do how His work can be accomplished. I have been reading in *The Desire of Ages* about Jesus sending out His disciples on a missionary tour, and He sent them out without a salary or any other financial support, yet when they returned He asked them if they had lacked anything they needed, and they admitted that they hadn’t. Then Ellen White makes some fantastic promises as she applies the principles of Christ’s method to our day. Maybe we should try going out to fulfill our dream the same way Jesus sent out His disciples.”

Dale: “That sounds almost too scary to even think about. Besides, after what we read in that book *The White Lie* where the author makes it sound like Ellen White was just a fraud who copied from other authors most of what she wrote, how can we be sure if she is telling us the truth?”

Patti: “I like Sister White’s writings. They inspire me, and I don’t like what the critics are saying about her.”

Dale: “I agree, and I don’t think the issue of her inspiration will ever be resolved by argument. After all, Joel’s prophecy says that in the last days God’s Spirit will be poured out on ALL flesh,⁶ so we can’t limit the application to just one woman and claim that is the complete fulfillment of the prophecy. If the Holy Spirit guided her in copying statements that He had previously impressed other authors to write, then those statements should still be just as valid and useful, regardless of who said them first. It appears to me that the only question should be, Are all those fantastic promises, not only in her writings but in the Bible as well, trustworthy? I’m beginning to think that the only way to ever know for sure will be to apply the acid test, to find out by personal experience whether these things are so.”

Patti: “I like that idea. Let’s do a study to collect all the instructions and promises we want to test, and then let’s go for it.”

Dale: “We’ll have to be careful not to presume God will do things for us that He never actually promised to do, for that would be – well – presumption!”

Patti: “And we should also avoid trying to do the things God wants to do for us and which we probably can’t do adequately for ourselves, because that would probably be an exercise in futility.”

Dale: “Let’s make this the focus of our personal devotions, and when we find something that seems very fitting we can copy it onto a 3X5 card, and then when we think we have studied the subject long enough, we can get together with all our cards and share with each other what we’ve found.”

Patti: “I bet Ted and Betsy would like to work on this study with us. Let’s go talk to them about it this evening.”

Dale: “Good idea. Yes, let’s do that.”

⁵ See 2 Peter 3:12 and Matthew 24:14.

⁶ See Joel 2:28.

2 Sparks to Light a Candle



Ted and Betsy eagerly joined the proposed study. It was all individual work, sometimes merely reading a devotional book and taking some notes, other times trying to track down specific instructions using a concordance or the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*. About a full year went by before they decided to get together to pool their note cards and discuss what they had found.

One of them said, "I think a good place to start would be the comments in *The Desire of Ages* about Christ's final instructions to His disciples before He returned to Heaven. Listen to what this card has to say:"

Thus Christ gave His disciples their commission. He made full provision for the prosecution of the work, and took upon Himself the responsibility for its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe, but know that My presence will be there. Labor in faith and confidence, for the time will never come when I will forsake you. The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time.

Desire of Ages, p. 822

Then somebody else said, "I guess that doesn't leave us out. We must be included in all the believers."

Another commented, "If Christ takes responsibility for the success of His work, then I'd say that will relieve us of a lot of pressure. But that statement that 'they could not fail' sounds too good to be true. It seems to me that anybody is capable of failure."

Further thought brought this observation: "Well, that must depend on whose definitions of success and failure we are using. We might make some big plans and think we are doing just great, while God might have a completely different opinion. Here is a quote that indicates that sometimes we humans may think we have succeeded when God does not consider it to be true success at all."

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."

There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.

Ministry of Healing, p. 143

The discussion continued with the opinion, "If this is the only method that will truly succeed, I guess it would be a waste of our time and efforts to try any substitutions. It's pretty clear we'll have to leave home and go to where the people are whom we are supposed to reach if we are going to carry out these instructions for personal ministry. Sounds like it's not good enough to just send a message by mail or radio or TV."

Another added, "Probably closely related to Christ's method is His purpose, the reason He does what He does. I sometimes tend to think of The Great Commission as just a very difficult task that has been assigned to God's people, but here's a card that makes it clear that Jesus must want the preparations for His return to be completed even more than we long for Him to come back."

Christ is seeking to reproduce Himself in the hearts of men; and He does this through those who believe in Him. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing – the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others.... Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.

Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 67, 69

"Christ seeking to reproduce Himself!" someone exclaimed. "That seems to imply that missionary work must be primarily His work, and that we should just be available to cooperate with what He wants to do. Here's a quotation I found that emphasizes whose work it really is and points out that He has already made plans how He wants it to be done."

Christ's workers are to obey His instructions implicitly. The work is God's, and if we would bless others, His plans must be followed... If we plan according to our own ideas, the Lord will leave us to our own mistakes. But when, after following His directions, we are brought into strait places, He will deliver us.

Desire of Ages, p. 369

"Looks like we're on the right track trying to find out what God's plans are, but I wonder where are we going to find them all, and what if we overlook some?"

"Listen to this quotation that expresses the same idea about God's plans that He wants us to follow, but it's stated in a little different way."

We have not wisdom to plan our own lives. It is not for us to shape our future... Christ in His life on earth made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will. As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps.

Too many, in planning for a brilliant future, make an utter failure. Let God plan for you. As a little child, trust to the guidance of Him who will "keep the feet of His saints." God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him.

Ministry of Healing, pp. 478, 479

“Here’s a card that further clarifies how we should get God’s plans for us day by day.”

Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, “Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.” This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God.

“Well, that sounds logical. Before you start the day’s work, you gotta talk to the Boss about what He wants you to do that day. And obviously this has to be your own personal visit with God. You can’t do it for anybody else, and nobody else can do it for you. That must be why He said, ‘When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.’”⁷

“Let’s see what we have on finances. It seems that lack of funds is the most common excuse for not accomplishing what we would like to do. I hate fund raising, but if my work has to depend on the money I have on hand, I’m afraid I won’t go very far.”

“Look at this card,” someone responded. “This is fantastic.”

The means in our possession may not seem to be sufficient for the work; but if we will move forward in faith, believing in the all-sufficient power of God, abundant resources will open before us. If the work be of God, He Himself will provide the means for its accomplishment. He will reward honest, simple reliance upon Him. The little that is wisely and economically used in the service of the Lord of heaven will increase in the very act of imparting.

Desire of Ages, p. 371

“Wow! What a promise! But did you notice that we have to start with what we have, even if it’s very small? Then the Lord will cause it to increase as we are putting it to use. That seems to fit perfectly with the words of Jesus when He said, ‘Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.’”⁸ So if we hang onto what we have and don’t give anything away, what will we get by the same measure? Zero. Nothing. Zilch.”

“Do you think this means a missionary could respond to the call of God and go out without a salary, and then he could expect God to somehow provide everything he needed? Or would that be dangerous presumption?”

⁷ Matthew 6:6.

⁸ Luke 6:38.

“It doesn’t seem to me that reading the words of Jesus in the Bible and ‘presuming’ that He meant exactly what He said could be labeled ‘dangerous presumption.’ Remember that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His listeners not to worry about what they were going to eat or drink or wear, because their heavenly Father knows what they need. They should just give top priority to seeking the kingdom of God, and then all the rest that they need would be given to them.”⁹

“Yes, and I think we can also learn from the way Jesus sent out His disciples on their first missionary tour. He didn’t pay them any wages, and He even told them not to take any extra clothes or money along,¹⁰ and later after they returned, He asked them how it went, and they gave the incredible response that they didn’t lack anything they needed.”¹¹

“But what about Paul? He worked to support himself in his missionary work. Maybe we should be ‘tentmaker’ missionaries too.”

“Well, it’s very plain that Paul was a very effective missionary, and the Lord used him in a mighty way. But I wonder if his effectiveness was because he supported himself by making tents, or could it have been in spite of that fact? You know, we didn’t find any instructions that we should copy Paul’s example, but we are instructed to follow the example of Jesus. He was probably as skilled in a trade as Paul was, for he was known as the carpenter’s son;¹² but after He received His call to public ministry at His baptism in the Jordan River, He never went back to the carpentry shop to support Himself and His ministry to others.”

“Not long ago I was reading in *The Great Controversy* the section about the final message from heaven going to all the world, and it says that the warning will be given by ‘thousands of voices.’¹³ That prophecy can never be fulfilled with salaried missionaries, because there’s never enough money in the church budgets to send out that many into new areas. I doubt that it can be done with self-supporting workers either, because I don’t think there are thousands of people who are capable of supporting themselves in a foreign land while doing missionary work. But if God wants to take full responsibility for the support of His workers, then anybody, virtually everybody, people by the thousands, could respond to the call. I like this card that suggests that God’s final work will not be limited to people endowed with specialized skills.”

The humblest workers, in cooperation with Christ, may touch chords whose vibrations shall ring to the ends of the earth and make melody throughout eternal ages.

Ministry of Healing, p. 159

“This all sounds great in theory, but when I think about actually applying it in my own life, to quit a good job and sell everything to go to some strange place ... that sounds pretty scary to me. What if we mis- understood what we have been studying? What if it doesn’t work the way we think it’s supposed to?”

“Well, if it doesn’t work, I guess we’ll just come back home before we starve to death after the money runs out, and then we’ll just have to start all over again from scratch like we did when we got married. In that case we will know by experience that all these detailed instructions and fantastic promises are just lovely cliches that shouldn’t be taken too seriously.”

⁹ See Matthew 6:25-34.

¹⁰ Matthew 10:1-16, Mark 6:7-13, and Luke 9:1-6.

¹¹ See Luke 22:35.

¹² See Matthew 13:55.

¹³ See *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

“It’s easy to say, ‘Just have faith,’ but I don’t think anybody can manufacture faith by just deciding to have faith. Paul wrote about ‘the measure of faith’ that was given to the readers of his letter,¹⁴ and I think any faith that a person has, whether much or little, had to be given by God. We can ask for it and put ourselves in a position where God can demonstrate what He will do for us, and when we see with our own eyes that God is trustworthy, our faith will naturally grow. I memorized a one-liner that I think is excellent advice to calm our fears. ‘We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.’”¹⁵

“OK, if God is supposed to be in charge of the finances, then we shouldn’t ever meddle in His business by asking anybody to give us money, right? That suits me fine. Any time I think I need some more money I’ll just talk to the Lord about it.”

“I think you’re right about that, but although we didn’t find any instructions that we should conduct fund raising campaigns, here is a rather long quotation that indicates we will have a responsibility to let others know what is happening to us.”

Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked with our own individuality. These precious acknowledgements to the praise and the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christlike life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.

Ministry of Healing, p. 100

“So where shall we go? That’s the next big question to be resolved. If we choose the place, we are very likely going to make a poor choice. Since God knows so much better than we do, it seems to me that He should be able to pick the best place and show us somehow where it is. Here’s a card with two short quotations on it that deal with that subject.”

Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 326

If the Lord desires us to bear a message to Nineveh, it will not be as pleasing to Him for us to go to Joppa or to Capernaum. He has reasons for sending us to the place toward which our feet have been directed.

Ministry of Healing, p. 473

“I guess that’s clear enough that God also wants to choose the place where He wants us to

¹⁴ See Romans 12:3.

¹⁵ *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9, p. 10.*

work. In fact, it seems that God wants to do all the hardest things. It looks like about all He wants us to do is to go wherever He indicates and to listen to His instructions day by day. Here is a card with a great promise that I think makes a good recap to our whole study."

As the will of man cooperates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings.
Christ's Object Lessons, p. 333

* * *

The actual discussion involved many more cards than space here will permit us to review, but these were the quotations that had the greatest impact on the thinking of the Duerksens (Patti and Dale) and the Burgdorffs (Ted and Betsy). They all decided to enter into a covenant with the Lord. They would not actively search for a place to go, but they would keep their eyes open to see if Providence would open the way to go to a place that would meet the criteria revealed in their study. If so, they would sell everything they had except a few things they could take with them that would probably be useful in their new work, and then they would go, no questions asked, depending on God to show them what to do after they got there, and they would stay until they saw clear evidence that they should leave.

They wrote to family members telling them about this compact they made with God, and then they settled down to watch and wait. After a few weeks they heard about a new project that would involve a school and a health clinic in Belize. They didn't know anything about that country, but it sounded like it would be opening work in a new area, so they wrote to the self-supporting institution that was spearheading the new project to express their interest in it. The reply they received indicated that they could not be considered as applicants to help in the new project until they had spent at least a year in the sponsoring institution to learn how self-supporting work operates. Since their study had not revealed any instructions like that, they concluded that this was not God's choice for them.

A few more weeks went by, and then a letter came from Peru from Richard Gates, father of David. Richard was the pilot at the Adventist Air Base operating in the Peruvian jungle. In the territory he served there was a mission station called Nevati that had a clinic building that had not been in operation since the last American missionaries had been replaced by Peruvians who had no training in the health sciences. He thought maybe the Duerksens would be interested in opening that clinic again. That did sound rather interesting, but they knew that Nevati was the first Adventist mission station established among the Campa Indians, and it had been in operation at least a quarter of a century. This would not be opening new work, so they also ruled out this one as God's choice for them.

Then a few weeks later a letter came from David himself. He had gone to the Pachitea River in an isolated part of the jungle in search of gold. He didn't find much of the precious metal in the river, but he did observe that there were quite a few people living there, and Adventists were not conducting any missionary work among them. There were no roads there, so the river and boats took the place of a highway with cars. He had found a place for sale there on the river, and he thought it could be a good place to start medical missionary work in this unentered area of the jungle. This place seemed to fit all the criteria for the kind of place that their study indicated God would probably choose for them, so they immediately decided they would go for it, even though they had never even heard of the Pachitea River before that letter arrived.

Betsy was expecting her first baby in September, so they decided to plan their departure date for the middle of October. They still felt rather reluctant to actually take the plunge, but as

soon as they announced that they would be quitting and would leave the hospital to go to Peru, that feeling was replaced by a euphoric feeling of freedom to do whatever God wanted them to do.

Now they had to get busy with preparations. David had a small airplane in Peru that he thought would be useful in their work, and Ted wanted to buy and fly that airplane, so he had to take flying lessons. And of course there was furniture to sell or give away.

Then one day one of the hospital employees lost everything in a fire, and the other employees decided to take up a collection to help this unfortunate family. For a moment Dale and Patti struggled with a decision what to do, for they were trying to accumulate money for their foreign mission venture, but they quickly realized it would be inconsistent for them to plan to help needy people in the jungle while ignoring the needs of somebody near at hand, so they dug into their pockets and gave \$100 to the collection. About two weeks later one of the nurses handed Patti an envelope saying that she wanted to help them with their mission project. Inside the envelope was a hundred dollar bill! Patti thought how true that Bible verse is that says, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again."¹⁶

And then there was Dr. Causey. He was a godly man, a faithful Southern Baptist, a deacon and pillar in his church. One day he stopped to chat with Patti in the hospital, and he said to her, "Patti, there's one thing I want you to know. First of all I'm a Christian, and secondly I'm a Baptist—and if you folks need any help when you're down there doing your missionary work in the jungle, just let me know and I'll be good for a thousand dollars." Patti and Dale knew that they would never do that, since they had resolved to never ask any man for money, but it was a tremendous boost to their courage just to see how God was already working on the hearts of people around them. (And about Christmas time when they were down in Peru, they got word that without waiting for them to ask, the good doctor had deposited that thousand dollars in their bank account anyway.)

One of the last things they needed to sell was their car. It was just a plain blue Ford Fairlane that Dale had bought in the used car lot of the local Ford agency. They had the car only a year and a half, so he decided to set a price on it that was \$600 less than he had paid for it, thinking that would allow for reasonable depreciation. Then he got a bright idea.

"Let's do a little test with this car," he suggested to Patti. "If the Lord was behind this offer in Peru, then He must want this car to sell so that we can go without delay. So I'm going to get the cheapest classified ad I can, and then we'll see if the Lord will be able to lead an interested buyer to us."

The next day Dale went to the local newspaper office. The cheapest ad they offered was 20 words to appear for four days without bold type or a box or any other special device to attract attention. He wrote out some basic information with a phone number, paid his fee, and then went home to wait for results. The first day there was one phone call, but the guy wasn't interested enough to even come out and have a look at the car. The second day there were a couple of calls, but again nobody came. The third day another call, but still not enough interest to come see the car. By then Dale was muttering under his breath that he should have tried harder to advertise widely. And the last day there were no phone calls at all. But there was a knock on the door that morning.

Dale answered the door, and there stood a man who was gazing toward the carport. "Is that the car you have for sale?" he asked.

"Yes, that's it," Dale replied eagerly.

The man responded, "Well, it looks pretty good. Can you go down to the bank with me to sign the papers?"

¹⁶ Ecclesiastes 11:1.

Dale blurted out, "Don't you want to take a test drive in it first?"

The man looked shocked. "Why? Is there something wrong with it?"

"Well, no, not really. It uses some oil, and the mechanic told me it needs new rings, but it still runs good."

"OK. Get your papers and you can ride down to the bank with me and I'll bring you back."

When they got there, the bank manager was waiting for them. He ushered them into his office, and when they were seated he asked to see the certificate of title for the car. Dale gave it to him, and he showed Dale where to sign. Then the bank manager handed him a certified cashier's check for the full price of that automobile – and the buyer hadn't so much as kicked the tires yet on that car!

When Dale got back to the house and showed Patti the check, all he could say was, "Wow! What a fantastic car salesman our Lord is along with everything else."

The last major obstacle was out of the way, and so on October 13, 1981, Patti, Dale, and daughter Bonnie, along with Ted, Betsy, and new little baby Heidi boarded a plane at Miami International Airport that would take them to the Peruvian jungle to begin what they like to call, "The Great Experiment."

3 *No Candle in the Darkness*



As Dale looked intently at the swift flowing muddy water of the Pachitea River, he muttered, “Now what shall I do, Lord?” He had come this far deliberately trying to avoid making plans for himself, and everything had worked out amazingly well—until now, that is. Now he felt nervous about going on, yet he knew he couldn’t go back.

Behind him lay the grubby little jungle metropolis that bore the exotic name Puerto Inca, all three streets of it. We use the name “streets” for lack of a better word. They were nothing more than wide footpaths, for there were no roads to Puerto Inca and therefore no motor vehicles in town either. The main street was about five blocks long at the edge of the river, for the river was the highway of commerce there in the jungle.

Up one level was the police station. Being right in the middle of that street put it strategically in the very center of the little town. A short distance down that street was the location of the spring with clear cool water which was the reason people settled here in the first place. The spring had been developed with a concrete retaining wall and a cement floor to prevent erosion. Several pipes carried water through the wall. One pipe was conveniently low to make it easy for the town’s people to fill their buckets and pots with drinking water. Another pipe about waist high poured into a large shallow basin where the women liked to wash their clothes. And a high pipe offered an excellent shower where you could cool off on a hot day—with your clothes on for modesty, of course, since there were usually spectators around.

The third street was on the top level where the land was quite flat. The Catholic Church and the municipal medical clinic were at one end of this street. This clinic had a reputation of being very poorly staffed and equipped. There were also a bank of sorts and the municipal office building on this street. The street ended at the grass airstrip that was long enough to accommodate the twin-engine cargo planes that occasionally came to Puerto Inca. Much more common were the small air taxis that flew in and out nearly every day. It was here on this street that Richard Gates bought a lot on which to build the Adventist Church. The congregation didn’t exist yet, but Richard, being an ordained minister as well as a pilot, envisioned with the eye of faith a group of believers being established here to be like a lighted candle in this little community.

Dale was so grateful for Richard who had brought him to Puerto Inca that morning in the Adventist Mission’s Cessna 185. He had brought some supplies for the building that could serve as a place to hold evangelistic meetings and would later become the Adventist Church, and so he invited Dale to come along for a free ride.

Richard was always so thoughtful and helpful. Dale still remembered vividly their arrival in Peru at midnight just a couple months ago. They were dreading their layover in Iquitos, a tropical city they had never visited before, but there in the terminal building that night they spotted the smiling face of Richard, and their dread turned to joy. He had conveniently managed

to arrange to take care of some business in Iquitos at the time of their scheduled arrival, and he had also thoughtfully arranged for the use of some vacant rooms at the Ana Stahl Hospital where they could sleep the rest of the night.

A couple days later they were able to get a connecting flight to Pucallpa which is the large city at the end of the road that crosses the Andes Mountains and comes into the jungle from Lima, the capital city of Peru, a road about 500 miles long. At the edge of a lake near Pucallpa was the Adventist Air Base where Richard and his wife Meraldine lived, and Richard informed them that one of the staff houses at the base was temporarily vacant, and they could rent it for a few months for just a nominal fee, the equivalent of about US\$22 a month, while they were trying to get settled on their farm on the Pachitea River. They had made no plans and hardly any preparations for what they would do upon their arrival, but God apparently was already at work providing for their needs.

They were eager to see their new farm for the first time, so a few days after their arrival Richard helped them arrange for a flight to Puerto Inca, and he and his son David went with them to introduce them to Emerson Panduro, the previous owner of the property. Emerson proved to be a very friendly likable person, and he took everybody down the river in his large homemade wooden boat. When he slowed down and pulled up to the bank of the river, everybody wondered where the farm was, for all that they could see looked like nothing but jungle growth. After they climbed up the steep bank, they could see that there had been a clearing here at one time, but now the jungle was trying to move back in, and everything else was covered with a thick growth of kudzu vines. At one side was a banana plantation struggling to survive, and on the other side could be seen a few vine-covered poles that were all that remained of a couple of rotting buildings. Obviously it would take a lot of work to prepare this place for occupancy, but they weren't discouraged. With optimistic eyes they could see beyond the tangled vines to the possibilities that existed for this place that God had chosen for them.

Back at the air base Patti joined Meraldine in the small day clinic she operated for their neighbors. This gave Patti the opportunity to get acquainted with the kinds of medical problems she would most likely encounter in this part of the world and the medicines that were available in the local pharmacies.

Ted and Dale made a few trips back to Puerto Inca to start working on the homestead. Their new friend Emerson was now their contact man, and he continued to be very helpful. He owned a small house in town that he permitted them to use as a place where they could store their equipment and supplies and where they could even spend a night if necessary. He also had an extra boat that he let them borrow, and that was a great blessing to them.

One of their first projects was to clear a space for a small garden, and then they planted the seeds they had brought with them. Progress was very slow, however, so one day Emerson said to them, "I really should have cleared this land for you before you arrived. I have decided to hire some Cunchis to clear ten hectares (about 22 acres) of the river frontage for you."

"What's a Cunchi?" Dale wanted to know.

Emerson grinned. "That's really the name of a kind of catfish that lives in this river, but the local people use that as a nickname for the Quechua Indians who moved down here from the highlands to a settlement they call Sira that is about two hours down the river from us. They all belong to a religious group called The Israelites of the New Covenant. For some reason they believe they shouldn't cut their hair, so the men wrap it around on top of their head and cover it with a cap. But the Indian men aren't able to grow a bushy beard, and all they have on their chins are a few scraggly hairs that remind the local people of the whiskers on a catfish. So that's why we call them 'Cunchis,' but they're good honest workers who won't steal from you."

These were thoughts that passed through Dale's mind that morning as he stood there at the edge of the Pachitea River. He was all alone this time, because Ted was busy trying to get

clearance to use his airplane in Peru. The thought of going down the river by himself was rather frightening, but the Cunchis would be there working when he arrived. Furthermore he had read in his private devotional time the comforting promise, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you."¹⁷

The situation was further complicated by the fact that Emerson's extra boat wasn't available for Dale's use this time, but one of the principles in their covenant with God was that they would always do what they could with what they had on hand. In the storeroom was Dale's inflatable boat with a 5 h.p. outboard motor. He didn't like to use it anymore, because the floor of the boat had sprung a leak that made a mess of things, but since the large tubes that formed the sides of the boat provided most of the buoyancy and they were still airtight, there was little danger of sinking. He'd better go for it, so before he could change his mind he hurried over to the storeroom to get the boat and the supplies he would need.

It took him an hour to inflate the boat by mouth, and soon little boys gathered around to watch this strange spectacle. Then he planned carefully how to load his cargo. The tent and tools went in first, because they wouldn't be damaged by water in the bottom of the boat. His food went into two large canner kettles for protection. Bedding, towels, clothes, and perishable things went on top of the first items, and last the wheelbarrow was placed upside down on top of everything else. As he was loading the boat, he became alarmed at how fast the water was leaking in this time, but he didn't want to turn back now. "I'll just do a lot of bailing," he muttered to himself.

He tied a flotation belt around his waist. Then barefooted he shoved the boat away from shore until he felt it floating freely. He climbed aboard and proceeded to start the motor. After about the fourth pull on the rope, the motor sputtered to life, and he steered out to the middle of the river. He was just settling down for a pleasant ride down the river when the motor suddenly died. He tried a few more pulls on the rope but to no avail. He rechecked the gas tank, and there was plenty of fuel. He tried readjusting the needle valve on the carburetor, but nothing he tried would coax that motor back to life. "Oh, well," he said to himself, "this current is taking me fast enough in the direction I want to go. Let's see, when I get there I'll need a paddle to get to shore. I wonder what I can use as a paddle?" As he looked around he spied his long handled shovel. Yes, that would make a good paddle.

Dale wasn't very familiar with this river yet, so he had to keep a sharp lookout for the landing at his farm. After about an hour of free floating he finally recognized the place up ahead, so he grabbed his shovel and started paddling. A few strokes on the right side just spun the boat around to the left. That would never do, so he tried alternating one stroke on each side. That stopped the spinning, but it was so slow and cumbersome that there was no discernible progress, so he stood up in the boat so that he could alternate sides more rapidly. That was much better, and he concentrated on his rowing for a few minutes. But when he looked up again, he was startled by the realization that he was moving downstream a lot faster than he was moving toward the shore. He resumed paddling frantically as he cried out, "Oh, Lord, help me get to shore!" But no angel was sent to push him to the riverbank, and the boat fairly flew right past the farm.

He sank to his knees in despair. Where would he end up now? Maybe down on the Amazon in the middle of Brazil somewhere. But then quite a way ahead he saw a tree that had fallen over with some of its branches in the water but the roots still clinging to the bank. His hopes revived. If he could reach that tree, maybe he could pull himself and the boat over to the shore, so he stood up and started paddling furiously once more. As soon as he could tell that he

¹⁷ Isaiah 43:1-2.

was headed straight toward the tree, he laid down the shovel and sat down to grab the first branch he came to. He caught it, but to his dismay the pull of the current was so strong that it was all he could do just to hang on. He would wear out fast at this rate, so in desperation he grabbed a short chain that was attached to the motor and quickly wrapped it around the branch.

Now he could rest a bit, but the chain crossed one of his legs and pinned him down so that he could hardly move, and it pressed down so much on the edge of the boat that water started to lap in, and soon a miniature lake was forming in the bottom of the boat. The canner kettles containing his food began to float, and then they tipped over dousing all the food with river water. His little suitcase started to float as well, but it wasn't a good swimmer and quickly sank to the bottom of the boat. Things were going from bad to worse, so he released the chain and braced himself to get a better grip on the next branch. This was a definite improvement, but still all he could do was hang on. How could he ever escape from this predicament?

Then he heard a welcome sound, the sound of a boat coming up the river fast. The sound of the motor slowed down, and it was apparent that the occupants of the silver speedboat were trying to figure out what that strange brightly colored blue and yellow thing stuck in the fallen tree might be. Dale started yelling as loud as he could, "Socorro! Socorro! (Help! Help!)," and he was thrilled to see the boat turn and come toward him.

It was obvious that this boat could not come into the tree branches to get him, so he would have to let go and float out to open water. But when he did so, another branch hit the wheelbarrow and started pushing it off his boat. He desperately tried to save his precious wheelbarrow, but instead he lost his balance and followed it into the river. He quickly bobbed up to the surface again, and his inflatable boat was right beside him, so he reached out with his left hand and grabbed the rope that circled the boat. He felt sick about the loss of his wheelbarrow. He needed it so much. Since it had been upside down, he wondered if maybe it had trapped some air so that it wouldn't sink very fast. The river was so muddy he couldn't see a thing below the surface, but he moved his hand around through the murky water. It bumped into something hard and round, so he grabbed it, sure that it must be one handle of the wheelbarrow.

Now the silver boat was pulling along side, and a man reached over the edge and said in Spanish, "Give me your hand, and I'll pull you up."

"No," Dale responded as he raised his right hand above the surface of the water, still clutching the wheelbarrow handle. "First take my wheel-barrow." The man gave him a startled look as if he wanted to say, You stupid Gringo. Here you are about to drown, and you're still hanging onto your old wheelbarrow. But he actually said nothing as he hoisted the wheelbarrow into the boat, and then he pulled Dale aboard.

Dale tried to explain where he needed to go, and they showed a willingness to try to help him get there. Just then another speedboat roared up and pulled up along side. After exchanging a few words, they passed the wheelbarrow over to the other boat, and it took off again, leaving Dale with the sick feeling that he would never see his beloved wheelbarrow again.

His benefactors tried to tow his boat upstream, but it quickly became apparent that the inflatable boat produced too much drag, and that would never work. "Just take me to the shore, and I'll find some way to get back to my farm," he suggested, so they eased his boat to the nearest landing and left him there.

A woman was sitting there in her dugout canoe washing clothes. Dale dejectedly started bailing water out of his boat as he breathed a silent prayer, *Lord, thank you for saving me out of that fallen tree, but I don't know what to do now. I'm at the end of my rope, so you'll have to take over again.* He talked to the woman for a little while about his predicament, and then without making any comment she got up and walked away. She returned shortly and announced, "My husband will take you to your farm." A few minutes later the husband himself appeared, a tall man with a

European look. He introduced himself as Andres Rofner, and then they went to work transferring the gear from Dale's boat to his boat. They let the air out of the rubber boat, folded it up, and packed it in too.

When they arrived at the farm, Dale was thrilled to see his wheelbarrow there on the riverbank. They quickly unloaded everything, and then Dale tried to pay his new friend for his help. "No, never!" Mr. Rofner objected. "Neighbors help each other here."

"I'm very grateful to you," responded Dale. "My wife is a nurse, and after she comes, if you folks ever get sick, maybe we will be able to help you."

Dale was eager to see how the plants were doing, so he hurried up to the garden. The sight that met his eyes was very disappointing. The beans were just a row of sticks, completely stripped of leaves. Half of the squashes were dead, and the rest looked sick. The struggling little cabbages looked like a miniature machine gun had shot the leaves full of holes. Only the tomatoes and two cucumber plants still looked pretty good. But there was no time to mourn, for the sky was darkening for a rain. As he hurried by the one lone papaya tree, he noticed its heavy load of ripening fruit and was thankful to have at least that source of good food.

He hurried to pitch the tent, and even before he quite finished, the typical blast of wind with a few big scattered wet drops announced the arrival of the storm. Suddenly he heard a crash, and he turned to see what had happened. The sight almost left him in a state of shock. That one lone, beautiful papaya tree had blown over. The top had broken off, and the green fruits were scattered all around.

He wearily crawled into the soggy tent to escape from the rain. He was hungry, but his food had been doused with river water. He needed to get out of his wet clothes, but everything in his suitcase got soaked, so there was nothing dry to put on. He wouldn't freeze to death there in the tropics, but he still knew it would be a cold miserable night. He curled up on his cot and announced to nobody in particular, "God isn't blessing this experiment. Everything is going wrong. I'm getting out of here. I'm through with it all. THROUGH! I'm going back to the States to the comfortable life we had there, and I'm going to forget all about this foreign mission business."

Fortunately he couldn't implement that decision at that moment, and during that night of misery he sympathized with the words of Job, "How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, when his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness!"¹⁸ There was no candle shining on Dale's head that night, but another morning surely would come to dispel the darkness. When things can't get any darker, they always have to get brighter.

¹⁸ Job 29:2-3.

4 *A Flicker of Light*



The new day dawned with a clear sky, and never had the hot penetrating rays of the tropical sun felt so good. Dale rigged up a clothesline between trees and draped it with all his wet clothes and towels. He had some corrugated metal roofing sheets on hand, so he placed them in the direct sunlight, and by spreading his wet food on the hot metal he was able to dry and salvage most of it. When he checked on what he had lost in the previous day's ordeal, only two things were missing: His little butane lighter and his comb. The workers clearing the farm shared some of their matches with him until his dried out, and no one complained because he didn't comb his hair.

Hungry, he again went to the small garden. A lovely scalloped summer squash was growing on one of the remaining squash plants. Pleased, he thanked God for it and added, "Remember Your promise in Malachi that if we are faithful in tithes and offerings, You will rebuke the devourer.¹⁹ This place abounds in bugs that like to devour gardens, so would you please take care of this one little squash?" It needed to grow some more, and each day he monitored its progress until one day he said to himself, "Tomorrow I'm going to pick it and eat it." The next morning when he went to pick the squash, he was surprised to find the plant with drooping leaves. It had died during the night! He picked that one lone squash anyway and cooked it, and it was delicious.

Later he went back and dug up the plant, and he found a little white worm that had eaten up the stem just below the surface of the ground. Dale was perplexed. He had been a faithful tithe payer for years, and the promise in Malachi seemed so clear, and he had claimed the promise, yet that little bitty devourer had kept right on devouring. Why? That bothered him for many months until one day it finally dawned on him that this promise was not for him. It was addressed to thieves. Thieves of the worst kind, the kind who would dare to rob God Himself.²⁰ Dale was no thief. There were other promises for him, like the one that says, "My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."²¹ Even when pigs later on devoured what he planted, he never went hungry. God always provided what he really needed, just as that promise said He would.

But the day he discovered that the squash plant had been killed by a worm, he did not yet realize that the promise to "rebuke the devourer" had not been directed to him. He had come to this place to find out by first hand experience if God could be trusted to keep His word, and he had hoped that it would be a continuously faith building experience, but now it looked like there was a promise that God didn't keep, and he felt devastated by that. He thought about Jonah at Nineveh, and he empathized with the prophet when it looked like God was not keeping His word. That night Dale poured out his heart to God, pleading for some sign, some indication that

¹⁹ See Malachi 3:11.

²⁰ See Malachi 3:8.

²¹ Philippians 4:19, KJV.

He was still leading in this venture.

The next morning Leoncio came by for a visit. He was one of the Cunchis, a very likable young man, who was acting as the foreman of the group of men whom Emerson had hired to clear the land. He wanted to tell Dale about a dream he had that night. "In my dream," he said, "I saw your house, and it was all finished, and it was a beautiful house. And on the riverbank was an attractive light blue sign with a little roof over it to keep off the rain. I don't remember what the sign said, but everything was so neat and clean and pretty." When Dale heard those words, he felt goose pimples on his skin. He was impressed that God must have given that humble little Quechua Indian a small view of things to come, a vision that Dale was in danger of losing. He concluded that this must be the sign that he had asked for, and his courage was revived again.

That encouragement came at just the right time, because about noon Leoncio came back again to announce that they were all leaving. They had completed only about half of their assigned work, but they had decided that the work was too hard for the small amount of pay they were getting, so they were quitting. They gathered up their few belongings and went down to the edge of the river where they flagged down a passing boat, and then they were gone leaving Dale all alone. However, he was still feeling the euphoria generated by Leoncio's dream, so this was not the devastating blow it could have been otherwise.

Dale had a small radio to pick up news broadcasts, but he had inadvertently left it turned on and the batteries had run down, so now he didn't even have that much of a contact with the rest of the world. Well, there was nothing to be gained by pining about his isolation, so he went to the garden to see how the one lone cucumber was coming along. It was looking good, and he was about to pick it when he pulled back his hand, saying, "No, I'd better save that for Christmas. Tomorrow is Christmas Day, and I must have something special for Christmas dinner." And so the next day after feasting on rice and bananas and breadfruit seeds, he finished off with that yummy crunchy cucumber for dessert, and to this day he maintains that it was the most delicious dessert he ever ate.

A few boats went by on the river, but otherwise it was a very quiet day. It was the only time in his life that he ever spent a Christmas Day without a single human being to talk to all day long. He kept himself occupied with work around the place, and the day wasn't much different from any other day, except for that cucumber dessert.

The Cunchis informed Emerson that they wanted to be paid for their work, but before he would pay them anything he came out to see how much they had actually done. Dale made use of this opportunity to talk to Emerson about ideas for a house for themselves. They needed to get started on something as soon as possible, so he thought that the quickest and most practical way to go would be to put up something native style. Emerson agreed with that. There were remains of some old buildings on the place, and Dale had noted that the main supporting posts for those buildings still seemed to be sound, so he thought that maybe they could salvage those old posts for their building. Emerson wisely advised him not to try that. The natives make their posts from certain trees that have very dense wood that gets so hard as it dries that it becomes impossible to pound a nail into it, and that's precisely why it is so resistant to rot. It is better to use new posts for new construction so that the nailing can be done while the posts are still green.

"I have a friend who knows where to find good poles for building," Emerson said. "If you wish, I'll contract with him to get you some poles, and his fee will be reasonable. I'll deliver them here to your place. How many will you need?"

Dale smiled. "Oh, that will be great! Let's see, I'm thinking of a three-room building about twelve feet wide and thirty feet long. With that we can make three rooms that are ten by twelve. That will give Patti and me a bedroom at one end, and at the other end a bedroom for Ted and Betsy, and in the middle we can have a kitchen to use together. We'll have to start small, and

later maybe we can put up bigger buildings if we need more space. So we'll need four poles for the corners of the building and two poles to support each partition wall between rooms, so that will be another four poles. Let's order eight poles."

"That sounds fine," Emerson replied. "I'll take care of that for you right away." And with that he took his leave.

A few days later Dale heard a different motor sound in the distance. Excited he exclaimed aloud, "That's not a boat. It must be an airplane, and its coming low and slow. I bet it's Ted." He ran to the open yard just as the red-and-white Cessna came into view. What a beautiful sight to his longing eyes! He felt a thrill akin to what he imagined he would experience when he would see the cloud bringing Jesus back to take His children home. Ted dipped his wings as a salute and then flew on to Puerto Inca, but the day ended without Ted showing up at the farm, and Dale was disappointed.

The next morning, however, a boat stopped and Ted climbed out before the boat continued going on down the river. He explained, "Yesterday I couldn't find a boat that would take me, so I had to spend the night in town. I can't stay this time, but I just wanted to come see how you were making out. That boat is going back to Puerto Inca this afternoon, and they promised to stop by to pick me up. You can go too if you want to. I plan to come back next week to stay and work awhile."

Then Ted showed Dale the good things he had brought to make life more pleasant if he should decide to stay a little longer. There was some more food and reading material, and most exciting was some radio communication equipment. The air base was on a commercial radio network with the local mission office and the Inca Union Mission headquarters in Lima as well as a few isolated mission stations. With a borrowed transceiver and a car battery to power it and a dipole antenna cut to the right length, it should be possible to join the network, so they immediately set to work stringing up the antenna between two trees. The air base was in the practice of leaving their radio on standby all day long, so as soon as everything was hooked up and turned on, Ted made a call. He knew that there might not be anyone in the office, but somebody working in the hangar would probably hear the radio, so he made several calls at short intervals. A few minutes later they were thrilled to hear a clear call coming back. It was working beautifully.

"Thanks so much," Dale exclaimed. "Just seeing you and being able to talk to somebody in English means so much to me. And now I can talk to Patti every morning by radio. That will be the next best thing to her being here. Now I guess I can put up with another week or two alone. I'd better stay and keep preparing for the girls to move out here. I'll be looking for you next week, Ted."

5 *Light in the Darkness*



Since the Duerksens and the Burgdorffs had taken very seriously and literally the counsel to follow the example of Jesus who “made no plans for Himself,”²² they had come to Peru without doing any investigation into the most propitious time to make a move into this jungle area. As a result they arrived at the time of year that most people would consider to be the worst possible time, the beginning of the rainy season. Now Ted and Dale were trying to figure out how to get their work done with rains coming every day. The only shelter available, other than their tent, was a very simple structure that the Cunchi workers had made as a place to sleep. It was nothing more than a thatched roof, like an A-frame, and it was about six feet high, six feet wide, and nine long.

Watching the rain transform the ground into mud, Dale put his thoughts into spoken words. “Ted, we need more shelter from this rain. Why don’t we salvage some of the old poles lying around and try to put up a little general purpose building about ten feet square. We could try our hand at making a roof out of palm leaves like the natives do. Emerson said those old poles are too hard to nail into, but we have a drill in our toolbox, and I think if we drilled a small hole, we could drive a nail into it.”

“Good idea! Where do you want it?”

“Well, over there next to the garden plot will probably be a convenient place, but leave about a yard of clear space to walk past the garden. And to make it look like we have an organized layout, let’s line it up with the poles we’ve set up for the house.”

Forgetting the rain, Ted grabbed a shovel right away and began digging holes. By the time he had the four corner posts in place, Dale also ignored the rain and joined him. “Let’s not take the time to cut palm leaves and make a thatched roof just yet. Since the house is still far from being ready for its roof, let’s use some of the corrugated sheets for a temporary roof for this building.”

They made an inclined framework that was held up by the corner posts, and they laid the roofing sheets on the framework without nailing them down, so that they could easily remove them when it would be time to put the roof on the house. Then they laid wooden planks across the metal sheets to hold them in place. The rains usually came with some wind, so they could still get wet if there were no walls. The rains almost always came from the same general direction, so they decided to try to get by with just two walls on the sides that would give the most protection. The metal roofing sheets when placed on end produced a quick temporary wall, and a narrow board nailed between the corner posts provided something the metal sheets could lean against. Another narrow board nailed across the other side of the metal sheets would keep them from blowing away if the wind changed direction, and now their improvised structure was completed, all in one day.

²² See *Ministry of Healing*, p. 478.

"You know, there is going to be a lot of water coming off the roof," Dale observed, "and if it falls real close to the building, that could be a problem, don't you think? I wonder if there is some way we could divert the water away."

Ted pondered that problem for a moment, and then his face brightened as he said, "I have an idea." Dale watched with interest as he went to get the chainsaw. He walked over to a palm tree that had a diameter of about eight inches. He had discovered that this kind of palm tree has a hard outer layer but a pithy core, so he cut down the tree. Then he cut off the top of the tree, and that left him with a log about 12 feet long. Next he split the log with the chainsaw, and then he dug out the pithy core with a grub hoe. In short order he had two good rain gutters.

The two men stood back to admire their work. "Now we have a place to stand up in to prepare our meals when it rains," declared Ted. "I hereby christen this new building, 'The Cook Shack.' Now that we have more shelter, let's go get the girls. I know they're eager to come."

"You go get them," responded Dale, "and I'll stay here to get the last few things ready for their arrival."

While Ted flew to Pucallpa, Dale moved out of the tent to provide sleeping quarters for Bonnie and her friend Brenda Lang, a student missionary who was teaching the youngest Gates children at the air base. They were now on vacation, so she could get away for a few days. He also cleaned out the A-frame shelter, which they now dubbed "The Israelite Shack," to provide a place for Ted, and Dale put his own cot in the new cook shack. When he thought it was about time for their arrival, he put on a pot of soup to cook.

Just before dark he heard the group arriving in Emerson's boat. He almost flew down the riverbank to greet them. "Soup's on!" he shouted. "Come and dine in the fanciest restaurant on the Pachitea." And the way they went after that soup, you would almost have thought that he was right.

The girls announced that they had come to wash clothes and do the cooking, and the guys were happy to relinquish those tasks that took a lot of their time. It was amazing what tasty food the girls managed to concoct with the very limited ingredients that were available to them. They laughed together as they joked about becoming famous by writing a cookbook of ways to use bananas and breadfruit seeds.

When the rain turned the dirt floor of the cook shack to mud, the girls decided they would have to do something about that. There was an ample growth of cane near the river, so they took machetes and went to work cutting canes, which they laid, side by side on the ground in the cook shack. The round canes were hardly an ideal floor, but it was a lot better than walking in mud. Dale also helped the situation by digging a trench that permitted the water to run away toward the river.

"We need a table and chairs," Bonnie declared. Ted's clever mind went to work when he heard that. He found the stump of a tree that had spreading roots above ground, so he held the blade of the chainsaw parallel to the ground as he carefully cut through the roots. That produced a satisfactory pedestal for a table. Then he found a log that was suitable for lumber, and he sliced it up with the chainsaw to make five boards about an inch thick. He did an impressive job of nearly matching them all in thickness. He nailed them together and attached them to the top of the tree stump. What a luxury it was to have a real table! Then it was Dale's turn, so he split a short log down the middle. Then he cut a tree branch into pieces about 14 inches long, and when he attached those pieces as legs to the round side of the half logs, they had two benches so that everyone could sit down.

One day the Panduro family came to pay them a visit and check on their progress. As he looked around, Emerson observed, "You aren't making much progress on your house, Dale."

"I know," Dale sighed. "The next thing we need to do is put on the roof, but I don't have any lumber for rafters."

"Don't let that stop you," comforted Emerson. "Just let me know what you need. I can saw it for you in my sawmill this week, and I'll deliver it to you on Friday. I'll supply you with whatever lumber you need to keep building, and you can pay me later whenever you have the money." Dale was touched by his thoughtful concern for them. True to his word he showed up on Friday with the promised load of lumber, and it was an exciting day when the first truss was in place.

Now the time came to vacate the house they had been renting at the air base, and it was also time for Brenda to resume teaching the children. The evangelistic meetings that had been held in the new building in Puerto Inca had come to an end, and Richard was planning to conduct a baptism there on Sabbath, so he made plans to accomplish several things with one trip. He would fly to Puerto Inca on Friday with Patti, Betsy, and Baby Heidi, then on Sabbath he would have the baptism, and on Sunday he would return to the base with Brenda. He wanted to see how things were progressing down on the farm, so he got in touch with Emerson to see if he would be willing to go with his big boat Sabbath morning to pick up everybody who would like to attend the baptism. He agreed to do that, so Richard made plans to join the group at the farm Friday night. It would require roughing it, but it would be fun.

It was almost sundown Friday evening when the group arrived, so they all gathered in the cook shack for a short worship to welcome the Sabbath. Then they sat down at Ted's new table to enjoy the supper the girls had prepared. "How wonderful that we are finally all together in this place where we expect to soon establish the work God has planned for us," Patti spoke joyfully.

"It's also wonderful not to have to worry about rain, now that we have a good roof over our heads," Dale declared with assurance, for everyone had noticed that dark clouds were swiftly moving in from the north. "Maybe we should put some heavier planks on the roof," he continued, "because a few days ago the wind got strong enough to raise one of the roofing sheets a little bit."

The words were barely out of his mouth when a mighty gust of wind announced the arrival of the storm. It seemed that some unseen sinister force couldn't stand to see their contentment that evening, for the roofing sheets rose several inches and then came plunging down upon and around them. In a few moments the cook shack, so attractive, had turned into a disaster area. Everyone scrambled to begin the salvage process—that is, everyone but Dale. He just sat there, still trying to eat his supper in a kind of shocked stupor. In that moment he had plunged to the depths of despair and disappointment as all of his dreams seemed to come crashing down on his head.

Then Patti began to laugh. Nobody was hurt, and it looked so funny, and that laugh turned off Dale's feeling of despair as rapidly as it had come. Richard grabbed the new ladder Dale had made. He hastily climbed up to start putting the roof back on before they would get soaked, but haste makes waste, and the roofing sheets slipped out of place and crashed down again almost as fast as he put them up. Dale suggested that they start over to do the job a little more systematically. He got his rickety old ladder that the termites had been feasting on, and he gingerly climbed up to help on the other side of the shack. The girls got sticks with which they helped maneuver the sheets into place from below, and in a few minutes the roof was restored as good as new. As Dale stepped down to a lower rung on his ladder, there was a loud crack as the ladder collapsed, and he went crashing to the ground. But he wasn't hurt, so they again sat down at the table to enjoy their meal, safe and dry as the rain poured down.

Sabbath morning Emerson arrived with his boat as he had promised to do, and they all climbed in to go to Puerto Inca for the baptism. Several people had requested baptism at the end of the evangelistic meetings, but now when Richard went to find them, he was dismayed to discover that they all had left town—all, that is, except one young man in his late teens named

Marcos. But that's all it takes to have a baptism, so everybody hiked out to a little stream that had a pool big enough for baptizing, and there they all watched as young Marcos rose from the water to begin his new walk with Christ as his Lord and Savior, the firstfruit of the effort in Puerto Inca.

Progress on the house continued to be painfully slow, because rain kept interrupting the work. Ted, Betsy, and the baby were crammed into the Israelite shack, and Dale, Patti, and Bonnie had equally cramped quarters in the small tent. As Patti pondered over the situation she was in, she thought, *Finally here I am in the place I believe God called us to, but it seems like all I can do is fix meals, wash clothes, and listen to the rain come down. I want to help the people around here who need help, but I don't know where they are and who they are. I have no idea how to get started. Lord, if this is really where you want me to be to do Your work, You will have to show me what to do.*

And then one day it happened. A stranger appeared in front of the tent, and after a courteous greeting the woman said, "Entiendo que Usted tiene remedios," which being interpreted means, "I understand that you have remedies for health problems." Patti had no idea where she heard something like that. Patti did have her black "doctor's bag" with her in which she carried a few basic instruments like stethoscope and blood pressure cuff as well as a small variety of basic medicines, so she examined the woman as best she could right there in the mud in front of the tent. The woman obviously did not have a serious illness, but Patti gave her something for her ailment, and the woman must have gone away happy and probably told her friends about her experience, because a few days later another person came for treatment, and by the end of the month she had seen four patients. By then the roof was on the new house which made it possible to attend to her visitors on dry ground, and with that improvement in facilities the Lord sent her 16 patients the second month. The next month there were twice that many, and thus her work steadily grew without any effort on her part to advertise her presence and seek for patients.

Word came by radio that the stove and refrigerator that Patti had ordered shortly before leaving Pucallpa was on a cargo boat headed for Puerto Inca. That news caused a flurry of excited activity as the ladies planned where they would put the new appliances and the men discussed how they would transport them from the boat to the cook shack. It would be very difficult if not impossible to carry them up the narrow steps that had been cut in the steep riverbank. They decided that an inclined ramp would be the best way to go, so they went to work with pick and shovel making a ramp. Late in the afternoon the boat arrived, and somehow the boat captain knew where to make the delivery. A couple of crew members helped carry the appliances up the ramp, and how beautiful they looked in their place of honor in the cook shack. They both worked on kerosene which could be purchased at low cost in Puerto Inca. The stove had an oven, so now they could bake bread. The primary purpose of the refrigerator was the storage of medicines that needed refrigeration, but it had plenty of extra space to serve general kitchen needs as well. Now life would be much easier for those who prepared the meals.

Finally the roof was on the house, and they could work on the floor without being interrupted by rain, so the work advanced much faster. Since they were following native methods, they made the floor about 30 inches above ground level to permit good air circulation in that hot humid climate. The floor was supported by short pillars made from trees that were resistant to rot and termites. With everyone helping they concentrated on completing the floor for just the first room, and before the day was over, that part of the floor was done. Even though there were no walls yet, Ted, Betsy, and baby Heidi happily moved out of the Israelite shack with its damp dirt floor to the luxury of a wooden floor in their new room.

The next day they finished the middle room and set up the kitchen there, and the cook shack then became a storage shack. The third day they completed the last room, and Patti and Dale moved into their new bedroom. It seemed like a mansion compared to the tent.

Now they needed to do something about privacy. Ted had purchased a supply of corrugated metal roofing sheets which he anticipated using on the house he was planning to build for his family, so they “borrowed” some to make temporary walls and partitions in the same way they had done with the cook shack. It looked tacky, but it went up fast and served the purpose quite well.

They built a walkway or veranda about three feet wide along one side and one end of the house. To keep the baby from falling off the veranda they constructed a low wall with 30-inch pieces of cane and topped it with a wooden banister. To their surprise the cane when exposed to the sun turned red, then violet and finally a rich brown, and the colors made the house look more attractive. When Emerson came to see the finished product, he exclaimed, “Your house looks like a Swiss chalet! Since we can also cut all the cane we want free, I think I’ll give my house a face-lift too.”

They talked to Emerson about their transportation problem. Their rubber inflatable boat had deteriorated so much it was no longer usable, and the little outboard motor had broken down and could not be repaired. Often they could wave to a boat going by, and it would stop and give them a ride if there was room in the boat, but this wasn’t something you could depend on. They really needed a good boat of their own, but there were no stores along the Pachitea River that sold boats. Instead there were certain men who became skilled artisans in the craft of turning trees into useful boats, and the jungle trees provided a great variety of materials to work with, from ironwood to soft balsa.

Although each handmade boat was an original creation, they all followed a basic design that had proved to be very practical. They were long and narrow, usually about 25 to 30 feet long and 2 to 3 feet wide, so that they would glide through the water with a minimum of resistance. The craftsman would begin by cutting down a kind of tree that has wood that is so heavy it won’t float in water. With a chainsaw he would cut a log the length of the boat he wanted to make. Then using an adze he would carve out a keel from this log, and he would make curved ribs that he would nail to the keel. Then he would get boards of lighter wood from a sawmill to make the sides of the boat, overlapping two or three rows of boards. To make the boat waterproof he would force twine or other fibrous material into all the cracks between boards, and then he would pour melted tar into all the cracks to seal them. The finishing touch was to paint everything, and the result was a very attractive boat.

Emerson informed Dale, “I hired a man to make a new boat for me, and he managed to get two keels out of one log, so I told him to go ahead and make them both into boats while he is at it. Boats like that usually sell for about \$500 in Puerto Inca, but if you’re interested in having one, I’ll let you have it for \$400.”

“Oh, yes, yes!” responded Dale enthusiastically. “We want it. Please reserve it for us.” And as the days of waiting turned into weeks, they could hardly wait for the day when they would finally get their new boat.

* * *

Most of the sick people who came to Patti were suffering from intestinal parasites that were easy to treat, and response to treatment was often dramatic and quite impressive. But one day a mother came up to the house carrying her little girl who looked very different. Her hair looked bleached, her skin was sallow, and her face, arms, and legs were swollen. From head to toe her skin was flaky and dry with scattered open sores. Though 14 months old, she could not walk nor crawl and had just begun to sit up. She acted and looked more like a five-month-old, and she cried continually.

As Patti listened to the child’s heart and lungs with her stethoscope, she took longer than usual, for in her mind she was talking to God. *Lord, I am utterly helpless right now. I have no idea what to do. Please give me wisdom.* Thinking that part of the problem could be malnutrition, she

started treatment with the B-complex vitamins. She told the parents, "Your little Yelka needs constant help. You must return within one week for further evaluation and treatment."

For ten days she prayed and fussed and wished they had their new boat already. If only she could go and see baby Yelka. Stymied, all she could do was wait and pray.

Then shortly before sunset on Friday, Yelka's father came up the path to the house. Yelka looked worse. After checking her over carefully, Patti excused herself to go consult her books. Could it be pellagra? No, the symptoms didn't quite fit. As she leafed through the pages, she breathed a prayer, "Help me, Father, please guide me to the solution."

Suddenly she came across a strange word, "kwashiorkor." Knowing it was a protein deficiency disease, she checked out the symptoms. "Round, swollen face, poor or no physical growth, sores on body, skin peeling off, hands and legs swollen, loss of color of hair and skin."

"That's it, God! Oh, thank you, thank you! Now help me to convince the parents." Returning to the other room, she asked them, "What does Yelka eat?"

"She nurses some, but mostly she drinks a broth we make from boiled green bananas."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, she doesn't like anything else. She can't eat eggs because they make her break out in a rash. She spits out everything but the broth."

Patti outlined a high protein diet for the baby, but the mother shook her head and turned away promising to come back on Sunday. All that night Patti prayed. She knew she could get a protein supplement from Pucallpa, but would the mother try to learn how to mix it and put it in a bottle? Poor, dear people! Uneducated, but so precious.

That night as the family gathered for worship, Patti asked, "How can we make God's plan of salvation simple enough for these dear people to grasp it?"

"Mother, God gave me the answer in my Bible study this morning." Bonnie smiled and read, "If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday."²³

²³ Isaiah 58:10.

6 *Smiles Light the Candle*



The day the new boat finally arrived, everybody was about to burst with excitement. They could hardly wait to see what color the boat builder had painted it. It was sky blue with dark blue trim. "I love it!" exclaimed Betsy. "It's such a 'heavenly' color."

"Maybe we should paint all our buildings that color, too," suggested Ted. "Then when people see our blue boat, they will tend to associate it with the place where everything is heavenly blue."

"Good idea," admitted Dale. "We ought to give our place a name as well, and then we could paint the name on our boat so that if it gets lost, everybody will know where it belongs."

"I propose we call our place, 'Maranatha.' That will give us a good opportunity to tell people that the name means Jesus is coming back again." That was Patti's opinion, but everybody quickly agreed with her, and soon the people up and down the river knew where Maranatha was, and that it was a good place to go with their health problems.

A boat without a motor wouldn't be worth much, so once again Emerson came to the rescue. "I have an old peki-peki I don't use anymore that you can have. It might keep you going until you can get something better." What the people called a "peki-peki" was a locally concocted rig to propel a boat through the water.²⁴ It worked quite well, and they were happy to have their own peki-peki, even though the motor was nearly worn out.

Thoughts of little Yelka, the baby with kwashiorkor, weighed heavily on Patti's mind. Why didn't the mother return on Sunday as she said she would? Probably because they didn't have their own boat, and therefore they would have to catch a ride with somebody else. Patti couldn't go to their house, because she didn't know where they lived, so all she could do was wait impatiently. When the mother finally showed up, Patti was glad to see her again, but as she examined little Yelka, she was disheartened to see that there was no improvement at all in her condition. She turned to the mother and spoke as emphatically as she could. "You must force your little girl to eat what is good for her, whether she likes it or not. If she doesn't eat good food, she is going to DIE!" Finally there seemed to be a flicker of comprehension in the mother's eyes.

"Here is some oatmeal and powdered milk I am going to give you," Patti said. "You must make sure that Yelka eats some every day." She carefully instructed Mother how to prepare it,

²⁴ The motor used on a peki-peki was usually a 9-horsepower Briggs & Stratton. On the drive shaft side of the motor they would attach a 2-inch steel pipe about ten feet long, and into the pipe they would drive some wooden plugs with a 1-inch hole that would serve as bearings for a 1-inch shaft. One end of this shaft was connected to the drive shaft of the motor, and a propeller was attached to the other end. On the opposite side of the motor a piece of steel rod cut from construction rebar was attached to serve as a tiller. At a point where the whole apparatus was in balance it was connected to the rear end of the boat by a pivot that permitted turning the whole device in order to alter the direction it was pushing the boat. Start the motor and lift the tiller to drop the spinning propeller into the water, and away you go.

and then she insisted that Mother repeat the instructions back to her to be sure that she understood. Finally Mother seemed to grasp the seriousness of the situation.

She returned twice with Yelka for check-ups, and it was clear that there had finally been a change in the child's diet. The evidence of improvement was dramatic. The second time the little girl looked almost normal. With joy Patti saw the color in her face, a nice toast-like brown. She thrilled at her baby smiles. The little girl could now sit up alone, and she even tried to crawl. Patti felt greatly rewarded for her efforts to save this child's life.

* * *

Now the people at this place called Maranatha had to face the problem of visas. They had entered Peru on tourist visas that permitted them to stay up to 90 days. They had hoped that they would be able to get immigration to grant them permanent residence status, but they were disappointed as those efforts failed. Peruvian regulations permitted a 90-day renewal of their tourist visas, and after that a final extension of only 30 days. Now they were in their final month when they would be obligated to leave the country.

"The outlook isn't all bad," Dale announced one day. "I have learned that we don't have to go all the way back to our own country. The Peruvian officials don't care where we go as long as we leave their country. It seems kind of silly, but the fact is that as soon as we check out of Peru and cross the border into another country, we will be eligible to come right back as new tourists again."

They didn't want to leave Maranatha unattended during their absence, for there were always thieves around ready to take advantage of any opportunity, so they decided to go as two groups at two different times. First Ted, Betsy and Heidi went to Ecuador. Patti, Dale and Bonnie decided to go to Bolivia to visit old friends there when it was their turn, and Brenda decided to join them to see a little more of South America before she would have to return home to the States. A trip like that could easily cost about a thousand dollars apiece, but they really couldn't afford that much money, so they prayed to God to help them find the most efficient ways to travel and keep expenses low. They decided to pool their resources with Brenda, and Dale would keep track of all their expenditures, and then when they got back they would split the cost evenly four ways. After their return when Dale did the calculations, they were all amazed that it came to only \$201 apiece. God certainly did answer their prayers.

Bonnie wanted to go to college in the fall, but it seemed to be a financial impossibility. The picture changed when Brenda's father, who was the administrator of a nursing home, offered Bonnie a summer job with the invitation to stay in their home so that she could save all her earnings for college. She thankfully accepted the offer and returned to the States with Brenda.

* * *

In this isolated place the missionaries longed to visit with relatives again, so it was a very happy day when they heard that Ted's parents together with a few other relatives were coming to see them. The visitors arrived the first week of June, which was a very good time, since June is in the dry season. It seemed more like Christmas as the visitors unpacked all the goodies they had brought with them. As they opened a big box that contained a Maytag wringer washing machine with a little gasoline motor to run it, Patti couldn't keep back the tears. Now there would be no more of those hard, time consuming days washing clothes by hand in the hot sun down by the river. No longer would Betsy be threatened with heatstroke as she toiled in the blistering sun washing Heidi's diapers. "Oh, thank you. Thank you so much," they said from the bottom of their hearts.

Even though this was supposed to be the "dry" season, one day they got two inches of rain anyway, and the rain must have been even heavier somewhere up stream, because the river started rising fast. Whenever the river rose like that, it would produce a reverse current along their shore, but they had not yet learned that fact. When Dale went down to the river to check on

their new boat, he was alarmed to see that this reverse current had pushed it up stream to a fallen tree, and the point of the boat was wedged under the tree trunk. As the water continued to rise, the tree prevented the front end from rising. Thus the tail end of the boat now stuck up out of the water, while in front the water was beginning to lap over the sides of the boat. Dale hurried out on the trunk of the tree and tried desperately to push the boat back with his feet, but he couldn't budge it.

What could he do? The winch! Yes, maybe he could pull it back with his hand-crank winch. As he hurried up to the house he tried to think how he could improvise something solid enough to which he could attach the winch. He quickly grabbed the winch, a hammer and some nails, a shovel and two short poles, and then he dashed back down to the river. But alas! In those ten minutes their beautiful new boat had disappeared. He sadly trudged back up the path to break the news to Patti.

She wanted to see for herself, so together they hurried back to the river as Dale explained, "I tied the boat to a stake on the bank, and the rope is still there. Maybe if we both pull on the rope we can pull the submerged boat out from under the tree." So together they began to pull with all their might, but suddenly they felt something snap, and they were left with nothing but a limp piece of rope in their hands.

Oh, Lord, what can we do now? was the thought that flew heavenward. It wouldn't do any good to just stand there, so Dale carefully walked out on the wet slippery trunk of that tree once more. When he got to where he had last seen the boat, he knelt down and reached down into the muddy water. "Patti!" he called. "The boat's still here. I can feel it." He felt around some more and then continued, "Oh, oh. It's on its side now, and that's not so good. The motor could fall off. But I feel the short chain that's attached to the nose of the boat. I'll wrap it around the tree trunk so the boat can't get away, and that will also give us something we can attach to the winch cable."

Dale came back and set to work preparing a solid base for the winch. When everything was ready he asked Patti to turn the crank while he again tried to push the boat with his feet, and now the boat was moved back quite easily. That boat still wanted to float, but as it came clear of the tree it rolled some more, and now the keel of the boat barely broke the surface of the water. If the motor was still on that upside down boat, it would be a miracle. They pulled the boat to shore, and with much grunting and heaving they managed to turn it upright again.

"Just as I feared," Dale groaned, "the motor is gone. It's probably under 10 feet of muddy water now. I wonder if we'll ever see it again."

The river went down as fast as it had risen, and by the third day it was back to the level where it had been before the rain. Dale got a long pole, and while a visiting neighbor watched him, he poked around where he thought the lost motor might be. After several jabs at various places, the pole hit something big in water about three feet deep. "That must be my peki-peki!" he exclaimed excitedly.

"I'll go get it for you," the neighbor volunteered. He quickly pulled off his shoes and pants and waded right in. He reached into the water with his strong arms, and up came the lost peki-peki.

The neighbor carried the motor to shore, and Dale set to work immediately dismantling everything. He must not permit any of the metal parts to rust. He thoroughly cleaned and dried the pieces, then after oiling the parts he put them all back together again. He put clean oil in the crankcase and fresh fuel in the gas tank, and then it was ready for the test. He pulled the starting rope, and about on the fourth pull it finally kicked off and started running. Amazingly the motor seemed to purr more smoothly than it did before it had its bath in the river! That evening with hearts overflowing with gratitude, Dale and Patti thanked their heavenly Father for keeping His eye on a fallen motor as well as He does with sparrows that fall.

* * *

One day a few weeks later a man ran up from the river and burst into the kitchen where Patti was holding clinic. "Come, see my granddaughter, very bad sick," he shouted. Patti followed him back to the boat. What she saw called for immediate help from her "Doctor in Heaven." A petition for divine aid formed in her mind. *Oh, God, you promised me, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."*²⁵ *Please give me wisdom.*

Before her, lying there in the boat was a little five-year-old girl the people called Freni. She was foaming at the mouth, her teeth were grinding, her head was rocking back and forth, and she did not appear to be aware of her surroundings. "Please bring her up to the house where I can examine her better," Patti requested, and the father picked her up and carried her up the path. He laid her on the floor, and Patti examined the child there. She was extremely emaciated, and there was no bowel nor bladder control and no reaction to light, pain, or pressure. With much probing, Patti finally got the parents to tell her what had happened.

"Freni was infested with worms, and Grandfather urged us to give her oje [pronounced oh HAY] to get rid of the worms, so we did, and that really cleaned her out as she passed a lot of those ugly round worms."

Patti had heard about oje. It came from a certain kind of tree and looked something like the milky latex from a rubber tree. Herbalists claimed that it was a potent poison that would kill any kind of intestinal parasite. Unfortunately it was about as hard on the patient as on the worms. The usual dose for an adult was one tablespoon.

"How much oje did you give Freni?" Patti wanted to know.

"Well, we wanted to be sure we got rid of all the worms, so we gave her nine tablespoons."

"Nine?" Patti gasped. "When did you give it to her?"

"It was 19 days ago."

"What happened when you gave her that big dose of oje?"

"She started convulsing, and she wouldn't eat, and she couldn't walk or talk anymore." Then with a desperate look in her eyes the mother pleaded, "Doctora, can you do something for her?"

Patti put her arm around the woman and asked her to sit down while she tried to explain to her. "Oje is a strong poison. It has been working in Freni's body for 19 days, destroying her brain. Unless the God of heaven works a miracle, your little girl will never be normal again."

The husband couldn't seem to understand. "Give her a shot and she'll get better," he insisted. "Do something!"

Patti felt deep compassion for them. The family couldn't believe that something that might produce a good result with a small dose could cause severe, irreparable damage with a large dose. Since the child looked like a skeleton, Patti fixed up a package of oatmeal and powdered milk hoping that if they could get the girl to swallow that, it would give her some nourishment. Then before they left she gathered the family around her as she prayed for them. With tears rolling down her face she watched the sad procession carry their limp, unconscious little girl back to the boat. After a few months with no signs of improvement, Freni died.

* * *

One night the family across the river was having a wild party, and the sounds of revelry that the evening breezes carried across the water made it hard to sleep. About 3:30 in the morning Patti decided to give up on sleep and have her morning visit with Jesus a little earlier than usual. Suddenly a neighbor appeared in the doorway and announced that he had brought a sick man. Patti got up and grabbed a flashlight, and just as she stepped out the door to go down to the

²⁵ Psalm 32:8.

river, she saw the patient himself staggering up the path. It was too dark to see what his problem was, so she brought him into the kitchen, and there in the lamplight she could see that he was covered with blood.

"What happened?" Patti asked.

The patient was too drunk to provide much lucid information, but the neighbor filled her in. "He got in a fight with another man over a woman, and the other guy got so mad he tried to slit his throat."

Patti wiped away the blood on the patient's neck to take a look at the wound, and she found that he had a deep clean-cut gash about four inches long that barely missed the jugular vein. This would have to be sewn up, and suddenly she felt very thankful that just the previous week she had been impressed to prepare a suture set ready to use in an emergency. All she had to work with was ordinary needle and thread for dressmaking, but she figured that would be better than nothing.

"Dale, can you get the stove going for me? Put the pressure cooker on with about an inch of water on the bottom so I can sterilize my suture set."

She asked the patient to lie down on the kitchen floor, and then she thoroughly cleaned the wound and surrounding area with Phisohex. When everything was ready, she tried desperately to remember how the doctors did it during the ten years she had worked in hospital emergency rooms, but her mind seemed to be a blank. It looked so easy seeing a skilled doctor suturing a cut, but trying to do it herself was a different story.

Dale focused a flashlight on the wound and Betsy stood by to offer suggestions as Patti began this new experience. She had no anesthetic for the poor man, but he was so sedated by the booze he had drunk at the party that he never jerked when she pierced his skin with the needle. The first stitch was a disaster, so she pulled it out and tried again. The second was a little better, and she continued improving with practice until by the time she finished with number 16, she felt like a pro. She advised the man to go to the clinic in town to be checked over, and apparently he did. She never saw him again, but she heard that he had a good recovery.

Early one morning at breakfast, Patti shared her thoughts with Dale. "Honey, I believe God sends me patients that He knows I have no knowledge how to treat. In this way He can show me how dependent I am on His daily, minute by minute care. I declare, God is the best Doctor I've ever worked for."

* * *

Patti began telling her patients that they could come any time on any day for a medical emergency, but they should not come on Sabbath for routine check ups, because that was the special day to worship God and rest from our common labor. One Sabbath morning while they were seated on the veranda discussing the Sabbath School lesson and wondering how they would ever be able to share the good things in the Bible with the river people, they looked up and saw Josefa coming up the path with her four children. She lived across the river where the wild party had been held. Patti didn't open her mouth to express herself, but inside she was thinking, *Why didn't she wait until tomorrow? None of these kids looks sick. This is no emergency!* But as Josefa drew near, she tried putting on her sweetest smile as she said, "What can I do for you this morning, Josefa?"

"Well, ... " and she kind of hesitated as if groping for words to say, "I was just wondering if it would be all right with you if we joined you for your worship this morning."

Would they mind? Why, that was exactly what they wanted!

"Yes, of course, we'll be happy to have you join us." And now as Patti noticed that the children were all scrubbed clean and were wearing their best clothes, she felt ashamed of herself for thinking they had ignored her request that they avoid coming for medical attention on Sabbath. She had prepared for medical emergencies, but now she was pained to realize that she

hadn't made any preparations for children who would like to attend Sabbath School.

Betsy and Patti put their heads together as they hastily tried to think of something they could do on the spur of the moment. They sang a few songs and showed the children a picture roll as they told some of the Bible stories. Josefa didn't have a Bible, so they gave her one they had on hand.

"Come back again next Sabbath, and we'll have more prepared for you," Betsy promised.

Josefa did come back, and she brought along a neighbor with her children. That time they had a well-organized program, and everybody loved it. Word got around what was going on at Maranatha on Sabbath mornings, and the next Sabbath about 20 people showed up. The adults participated in the simple activities right along with the children, and they all enjoyed doing it. Before long there was a regular attendance of about 30 people every Sabbath, meeting in the shade of a large tree.

Patti and Dale and Betsy and Ted didn't know how to get started, but God did—and He did it for them.

7 Great and Mighty Things



It was shortly after daybreak when Patti heard a boat pull up to their landing and stop. *Looks like we'll get an early start today*, Patti mused.

Soon a man appeared at the door and announced, "I want to buy some antivenom for my friend Anselmo. He got bit last night by a rattlesnake, and he's in bad shape."

Patti's heart sank. "I'm sorry, but we don't have any antivenom," she confessed. "Where is Anselmo?"

"He's at home in San Antonio Village. He's in terrible pain. We've got to do something for him. Can you come? I can take you in my boat if you'll come."

"Yes, I'll go with you to see what I can do for him. Give me a few minutes to get ready." She tried to sound confident, but inside she felt helpless. In all her experience as a nurse she had never seen a snakebite case, and she had no idea what she could do without antivenom. "Lord, help me," she breathed.

Dale was standing nearby. "Patti, remember that book we were looking at last Sabbath?" he commented. "It said something about snakebites."

"That's right!" she almost shouted. "Thank you for reminding me, Dear," and she dashed into the other room to find that book. It was a book about simple home remedies, and it was written by the Doctors Calvin and Agatha Thrash of Yuchi Pines Institute. She had no idea who had sent it to them, but at that moment she felt that it was a godsend. She quickly found the section that discussed charcoal and refreshed her memory how to use it to neutralize poisons. While she was reading, Dale set up their food grinder and used it to grind to powder some chunks of charcoal they had on hand. She also had some activated charcoal tablets in her medicine cabinet, so she put those and the powdered charcoal in her doctor bag, and then she hurried down to the waiting boat.

During the short trip down to the village, she prayed for wisdom, and when they arrived she felt at peace. She was ushered into a small, dark room where she found Anselmo on the bed writhing in pain. He had been bitten on the ankle, and his leg was swollen past the knee so tight it felt like the leg was about to burst. Blood was seeping out of his gums and mucosa, and he was spitting up copious amounts of bright red blood. This alarmed her, for she didn't know that rattlesnake venom is hemotoxic. She had read in the book that the body would try to expel the venom through the intestinal tract, so a large amount of charcoal should be taken internally to adsorb the poison and deactivate it as it is being expelled. She immediately gave him 10 charcoal tablets to swallow with water, and later she gave him some powdered charcoal mixed with water to drink as well. She set the family to work gathering charcoal and pounding it to powder with rocks, for she would need a lot for poultices on the affected area which needed to be changed about every 15 minutes.

After half an hour she noticed that Anselmo wasn't twisting and turning anymore. In fact,

he was peacefully sleeping. She was amazed at how quickly and dramatically the charcoal affected the patient. She worked on him for about two hours, and then she gave instructions to his wife to keep applying charcoal poultices until the swelling went down. Before leaving the house she called his children to her – there were 15 in all – and they knelt around his bed while Patti prayed for their father’s recovery. And recover he did. When she saw him again a few weeks later, he showed no signs of the terrible ordeal he had gone through.

* * *

One evening as they were having supper together, Patti told the others about the patients she had treated that day. “I really need to get things better organized,” she said. “When a patient comes back, I tend to forget what I did previously, so I have decided to start keeping records, a separate sheet for each patient that will remind me of his history and what I have done for him previously.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” Betsy commented.

“So far I have never charged anybody anything,” Patti went on, “but as our work grows, I wonder how long we can keep on this way. What do you think I should charge for my services – or should I keep on not charging anything? It’s a lot easier that way.”

Ted observed, “The Bible says that a laborer is worthy of his hire,²⁶ so you shouldn’t have any qualms about getting paid something for the services you render.”

“Maybe not, but the fact is I haven’t been hired to do this work. I came here of my own free will because I wanted to find out by my own experience if God could and would provide for all of our needs as we attempt to do His work in His way. It kind of seems to me that it would annul at least part of our experiment if I started charging for my services. Besides, it’s a lot more enjoyable to help people without charging them, especially when they are as poor as most of these people are.”

Dale now came in with his opinion. “You know, the Bible also says, ‘Freely you have received, freely give.’²⁷ Maybe we should always give our services free of charge, but when we have to use something that we didn’t receive free, like the medicines we buy in Pucallpa, perhaps we should pass on a charge to cover that cost.”

“That sounds reasonable to me,” Patti responded. “But I’m not going to deny medicines to any patients if they can’t pay for them. I’ll just tell them that I’ll write it down in their record, and they can pay me later. What’s more, I’m not going to bug anybody who has a bill to pay up. I’m going to leave it entirely up to God to be our collection agent.” And so they reached a consensus that this would be part of their operating system.

Setting priorities was a continual problem. Taking care of the sick of course was a top priority, but they couldn’t do that without medicines and other supplies, so Dale had to plan a trip to the city of Pucallpa about once a month to purchase supplies and get the mail, and each trip took nearly a week. They wanted a clinic building so that they wouldn’t have to take care of patients in their home, but it always seemed that there were more pressing things to do, so they never got beyond digging a trench for the foundation of such a building. First they needed to finish their little house by replacing the temporary walls with permanent ones. When they checked on the price of lumber at the local sawmill, they were surprised to discover that enough lumber to cover the walls would cost twice as much as the imported corrugated roofing sheets they had “borrowed” to make temporary walls, and so they decided to frame the walls with 2X4’s and permanently cover the framing with the less expensive sheet metal.

Ted spent much of his time working on his new house. He drew plans for a very simple house that perhaps could be called a hybrid or cross between local and American designs. He

²⁶ See Luke 10:7.

²⁷ Matthew 10:8.

followed local wisdom in supporting the house on pillars that raised the floor about 30 inches above ground level. This made it easy to check for termites, since these destructive insects always have to have access to moisture in the ground. The floor plan was typical of a small American house but unlike any other in the local area. It was about square, and one side consisted of two bedrooms, each with its own closet. There was a small indoor bathroom, and the remaining area served as kitchen-dining-living room without any partitions.

Ted worked fast knowing that they would need more room for the visit of his parents. As soon as the roof was on and the house was enclosed, they moved in, even though there was only the framing for the inside partitions. They could tack up sheets to provide privacy for their visitors. Patti and Dale remained in the first house, but they moved the kitchen over to the new house, and the former kitchen could then be used exclusively as an examining room, and the former bedroom became the patients' waiting room. That was a great improvement in their "clinic" facilities.

* * *

One day a couple of unanticipated visitors arrived. They were from the government's new development project that was building a road into that part of the jungle. They anticipated that the new road that was soon to be opened to the public would bring in a lot of new settlers, and this had the potential of producing conflicts over property rights, and so they were visiting all the homes along the river to verify who the current occupants were and what property they owned before new squatters could move in. Most of the people had merely cleared a piece of land and claimed it as their own without any legal documents to prove their ownership, so the government was now planning to issue official land titles to all these people. When those two government agents saw all the foreigners there at Maranatha, their attitude seemed to turn rather hostile. "You people aren't Peruvians, isn't that so?" one of the men wanted to know. "You can't have this property. Peruvian law does not permit foreigners to own property in our country."

This announcement struck their ears like a bombshell. They had been here about a year, many people already were coming to them for help, and they finally had a comfortable place to live. Was it now going to end abruptly like this? So far the "Great Experiment" had demonstrated admirably that God was able and willing to provide for all their needs. Could God handle this latest crisis?

Then Patti remembered. Yes, she had a Peruvian daughter! She almost ran over to the file of important papers where she frantically searched for the birth certificate and the old faded passport. When she found them she marched triumphantly back to the government official. "Here," she said as she handed him those precious documents. "My daughter is a Peruvian by birth. She will be the owner of this property."

The man carefully examined the documents. He muttered, "Born in Miraflores, and yes, she's of age." Then he looked up and declared, "I guess you're right. Get a certified copy of this birth certificate for me, and we'll put her name on the certificate of title for this property."

Now Patti finally understood why it had been so urgent for her to go to Peru before her baby was born. God had been at work preparing for this crisis 20 years in advance!

There was never any shortage of crises, however, and they felt very vulnerable to the things, both animate and inanimate, seen and unseen, that threatened them. After that experience when the boat turned over as the river was rising, dumping the motor into the water, Dale decided that he had better remove the motor after every use of the boat. The only problem was that the old peki-peki motor was heavy and very cumbersome to try to carry up the steep riverbank to the house. A better solution would be to leave it at a spot about half way up the bank, just before the steepest part. If they had another heavy rain and the river started to rise again, he would then

struggle to carry it all the way up to a more secure location. He covered it with an old pup tent before he left it there.

Ted was an accomplished photographer, and the leaders of the East Peru Mission requested him to do some filming for them, so he and Betsy went to Pucallpa for a few days to do this work. It was hectic for Patti all by herself trying to prepare meals while also attending to all the people who came during the day. At night she dropped into bed exhausted. The next day she and Dale needed to take something very heavy down to their boat, so early in the morning before any visitors came they worked together to drag and half carry this cargo down to the river. Suddenly Patti gasped in disbelief, "Our boat—it's gone!"

In stunned silence Dale scanned up and down the empty riverfront. *I know I tied the boat very securely. How could it possibly have broken loose?* he asked himself. The stake to which he had tied the boat was still there, so he walked over to have a look. There was nothing to see—except the prints of some bare feet in the mud. He looked up again, and then he pointed. "Look, Patti, the pup tent. It's flat on the ground. There's nothing underneath it. The motor's gone, too!"

Now the truth began to dawn. There was no way that rising river water could have washed away the heavy motor while leaving behind the pup tent. No, that motor undoubtedly had been carried by human hands to their boat. The full realization of what had happened slowly and painfully sank into their consciousness. After they had tried for nearly a year to help these needy river people, some of them had come under cover of darkness to steal their boat at a time when they knew Ted was gone and the Duerksens would be most vulnerable. How could those thieves be so ungrateful to do such a terrible thing?

All that day not a single person stopped by their place, nor the next day either. The silence was eerie. When the Sabbath came, instead of feeling the usual joy that blessed day brings, they felt enshrouded by a pall of gloom, but as they talked to their heavenly Father about this great loss, they remembered the ways the Lord had provided for them in the past. The gloom lifted, and their confidence and courage revived.

Monday morning a boat pulled up to their landing. By now they were eager for visitors. Two young men got out of the boat, and as they walked up the path, Patti and Dale recognized them as a couple of fellows they had met for the first time just a few weeks previously. As they visited together the conversation turned to the stolen boat. One of the fellows said, "We're going down the river to a place where there is a large sand bar, and we've heard it's a good place to pan for gold, so we're going to go try our luck. We'll be on the lookout for your boat. We remember that nice blue boat, and we'll recognize it if we see it."

After thanking them for their thoughtfulness, Patti and Dale waved goodbye to them and returned to their work. About three hours later Patti heard a boat coming up stream, and when she looked down at the river she saw the boys coming back in their boat towing a sleek blue boat. She became so excited she dropped what she was doing and ran down to the river, literally jumping for joy. Dale was out in the banana plantation with his chainsaw, and when he heard a boat slowing down to stop at their landing, he went to the river's edge to take a peek. When he saw that one boat was towing another, he quickly hid the chainsaw in the bushes and then ran all the way back to the house. Oh, what great joy they felt that day!

The boys gave a report to the eager listeners. "We thought that the thieves probably were only interested in your motor, since the boat would be easily recognized by most people here along the river. They probably wanted the boat only as a means to get away that night, and they would probably abandon it later. So when we came to a little creek, we thought that looked like a good place for thieves to stop and be hidden while they unloaded the stolen motor. We pulled into the creek, and sure enough, there was your boat. We looked around in some of the bushes to see if they might have hidden your motor somewhere nearby, but, we're sorry to say, we didn't find anything else."

"Well, thank the Lord we at least got our new boat back," Patti exclaimed with conviction. "We're just so grateful to you boys for finding it for us. I think God must have led you to that creek. Half the day is gone already, so why don't you fellows have lunch with us? In fact, why don't you stay overnight? Then you can get an early start in the morning."

They liked that idea, so they did just that.

While Ted was in Pucallpa, he decided to put his airplane up for sale. It still had American registry, and at first he was able to get a temporary permit to fly it in Peru, but when the permit expired the plane was grounded. As a foreigner in the country with nothing but a tourist visa, it appeared that it would be impossible for him to get Peruvian registry for his airplane. It had been very useful the first few months as they were moving from the air base out to the Pachitea River, but since the move was completed, the plane was hardly needed anymore. Fortunately he quickly found a buyer, so he made the sale.

A boat without a motor would not be of much use either, so they now decided to take the plunge to get a new motor. Dale made a radio contact with the air base to talk to Ted. "Please check out what's available in outboard motors, Ted. I don't think we can afford a big 40 horsepower motor like Emerson has, and besides that I don't think I could carry such a big motor up the riverbank to the storage shed. I've hit the half-century mark, you know, and I'm not as strong as I used to be. But I think we should have something a little more powerful than our old peki-peki was, so see what you can find and let me know."

A couple days later Ted called back. "I found a 16 horse Suzuki outboard for about 750 US dollars. What would you think of that?"

"That sounds great to me," Dale responded enthusiastically. "We can afford that, and it will be almost twice as powerful as the old peki-peki motor. Go for it, before anybody else gets it!"

So Ted made the purchase, and he brought the new motor with him when he returned to Puerto Inca. It was a lovely efficient motor, and it filled their needs perfectly. With the outboard motor it was much easier to make the boat go where you wanted it to go, and now even the girls discovered that they could handle the boat too.

As they met together for evening worship, they were all in a happy mood. They talked about the marvelous way the boat had come back to them and how blessed they were with the new motor. But then came an announcement that dampened their spirits—at least for Patti and Dale. Ted began by saying, "We have been thinking about our future. Some day we will have to go back home to the States, and I will have to find a way to support my family, which we expect will continue to grow. We have been talking about how long we should stay here."

Then Betsy spoke up. "While we were in Pucallpa we got a letter from Ted's folks. They have accepted a call to the Adventist University in Kenya. We have decided that we should go back right away, so that we can see them once more before they go to Africa."

"We'll miss you guys terribly," Patti said as she tried valiantly to hold back the tears that were threatening to come. "But you must do whatever you think you need to do now. We'll be praying for you, just as I'm sure you will be praying for us."

Dale added, "You have both been a tremendous help to us this first year. I don't know how we could have done it without you. For our worship thought this evening, let's look at Jeremiah 33:3, 'Call to me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' Right now we feel like we can't go on alone, and the thing we don't know is who we can get to replace you. We feel so vulnerable when we are alone, so in our prayers this evening I would suggest that we claim this promise and ask God to show us in His great and mighty way what He wants to do for us now."

8 *Shining Candles*



As soon as Ted and Betsy left, Dale and Patti moved into their house. Now the little three-room house that had served as their first home could be devoted entirely to medical work. Sometimes a man would drop off a patient, saying he would come right back, when in reality he wouldn't show up until the next day, or perhaps an OB patient in labor would come in the afternoon but wouldn't deliver until late at night. Situations like this always produced a difficult problem with so little room available, but now there would finally be a place to put a patient who had to stay over for some reason.

While Patti was pleased to have the extra room available, Dale was fearful that somebody would sneak up some night and break in and steal their supply of medicines, now that nobody was regularly sleeping in the building. No doubt there were thieves that would come during the day, mingling with the sick people and looking around for things they would like to take during the dark of night when nobody would be in the clinic. He felt so alone and vulnerable with Ted gone.

One busy day he noticed another boat pulling up to the landing, but the man at the tiller just sat there instead of tying up his boat. A man and two teenage children, a girl and a boy, quickly climbed out of the boat carrying full bags of something. Then they jumped back into the boat to get some covered baskets. As soon as they had removed all their things, the boat backed up, turned into the river, and disappeared. *Hmmm*, thought Dale, *something strange is going on here. Must be another drop off.*

He wandered over to have a closer look as they carried their baggage up to the top of the riverbank. He heard the sound of chicks emanating from one of the baskets. Now that was really strange! Then he watched as the man took the arm of the girl and started walking up the path to the clinic. She looked like a walking skeleton and obviously was very sick. They would take just a few steps and then stop to rest.

When it was their turn to see Patti, she began questioning them as she started another chart. This was Steven, age 40, with his children, Julius, 16, and Mary, 13. He had come from Victoria, a town about a day's journey by river above Puerto Inca.

"Where is your wife?" Patti wanted to know.

"She died in childbirth when Mary was just five years old. The baby lived two years, and then he died too." Steven said no more, but the desperate look in his eyes seemed to say, *And unless you can do something for my little Mary, I'm going to lose her too.*

As Patti continued taking the history, she learned that Mary had begun losing her appetite and losing weight a couple months before. She had developed a bad cough, and she had night sweats. As Patti examined the girl, she noted that she had a fever, and at rest her respirations were still 60 per minute. She listened to her lungs, and the left lobe sounded terrible. All the symptoms seemed to scream, "Tuberculosis!"

Patti explained to Steven that she didn't have any medicines to treat TB, but the government had a public health service that would provide her with free medicine. He would have to take Mary to the clinic in Puerto Inca for treatment.

"Why didn't you stop there on your way down here?" she asked.

"I did," he replied, "but the doctor was gone on a trip, so nobody could help me there. Somebody told me to go to Maranatha, so I caught a ride in a boat that was going this way. I brought everything I own, so there is nothing for us to return to in Victoria. Would you people please let us stay here with you?"

Patti explained to him kindly but firmly that there were no facilities at Maranatha to take care of anyone for an extended period of time, and they couldn't permit strangers to just move in at will and settle down on their property. She concluded by saying, "You will have to stay with your relatives or friends."

"I don't have any relatives or friends around here," he replied sadly. "I moved to Victoria from the coast about two years ago, and I don't even know anybody around here. I don't know where I can go."

Patti was beginning to feel sorry for the man. "Steven, go talk to my husband and see what he has to say," and with that she turned to take care of another patient.

Steven found Dale and started pleading with him. "Please let me cut down a little bit of the jungle where I won't be in your way, where I can have a little garden and make myself a little house and have a place for my chickens."

"No!" Dale insisted firmly. "We can't do that. If we did that, soon we would be overrun with squatters wanting to stay here. No, you will have to go stay with one of your friends somewhere."

"But I don't have any friends around here. I don't know where to go."

"Well, then, go over to our neighbors and see if they will let you stay at their place until your daughter gets better. Just follow that path that goes through the banana plantation. It's not very far."

So Steven obediently went down the path and soon disappeared from view. About half an hour later he reappeared. "They won't let me stay at their place either," he said glumly.

It was late afternoon, and Dale knew that his conscience wouldn't let him leave Steven and his children abandoned out in the open overnight. "Come with me," he said with a sigh, "and let's see if we can fix up a place where you can sleep tonight. But don't forget that this is ONLY for tonight. Tomorrow you absolutely must find someplace else to stay." And so together they rigged up an improvised lean-to and covered it with a tarp so that the little family could have some protection from the elements.

After getting them settled in their makeshift "motel," Dale trudged back up the path toward the relative luxury of his 2-bedroom home. As he walked, he struck up a conversation with God—not in audible words but just in the mind, yet the words were just as impressive as if they were audible.

Dale grumbled, *Lord, why do you let people like this drop in on us when You know we don't have facilities to take care of overnighters?*

And then the Lord responded, *But Dale, you have been asking me to send you somebody to replace Ted and help you out. Here he is. Why won't you accept him?*

No, Lord, you don't understand. We want someone we can talk to in our mother tongue, and I need someone who can really help with the work. This guy looks rather frail and anemic, and half his teeth are gone. And he probably doesn't understand our way of doing things either. Oh, yes, we also must have someone who shares our religion, and we don't know if this fellow even has any religion. And most important of all, we don't know a thing about his character. He might steal everything we have of value. No, Lord, not this stranger.

And then Dale felt like he was standing before the Great White Throne, and he heard those awful words, *I was a stranger, and you did not invite me in. Depart from me, you who are cursed.*²⁸

When he reached the house he found Patti and discussed with her what had gone through his mind. Those words haunted them all night. If ever there was a stranger in need, it was Steven. By morning it was decided. They couldn't turn away their Lord in the form of a stranger. Steven must stay.

Dale went out to see how the little family had made out during the night. As soon as Steven saw him, he started pleading again, "Oh, please, let us stay here with you."

Dale smiled at him. "Yes, Steven, we decided you can stay."

Steven looked shocked at the sudden change in attitude. After the way this man had talked to him the night before, surely he must not be hearing correctly now, so he started pleading all over again, "Please, just give me a little corner where I can ..."

But Dale interrupted him. "You don't need to ask anymore, Steven, because we already decided last night that you can stay. Here at Maranatha nobody receives any wages. We just work together and share what we have. If you are willing to do that, you can become one of us. Now let's go pick out a good place to put your house, and I'll help you make it."

Native housing is very simple, usually just a place to sleep and keep their clothes. A single room would do, so they found a suitable level spot and immediately set to work clearing away the brush. The jungle itself provided the materials for a crude structure, and by the end of the day Steven had a new little house with a thatch roof, and he was happy.

Meanwhile, Patti got down on her knees and reminded her heavenly Father, "Lord, you promised to provide all of our needs, and You have never failed us yet. You have sent us this stranger, so now You will have to send us enough food to feed another family. Thank You for never letting us down."

Amazingly the neighbors immediately began showering them with an abundance of papayas, pineapples, avocados, and other edible things, at least twice as much as they had ever given before. It was fantastic. Even the Duerksens' chickens, which usually laid two or three eggs a day, got in the act by laying five eggs in one day for the first time ever, so Patti gave Steven three eggs for his family and the Duerksens ate the other two.

Patti started Mary on a vitamin and iron supplement, and after a few days Dale took her to Puerto Inca to see the doctor. The clinic in town had no lab nor x-ray equipment, so the doctor couldn't prove Mary had TB, but he agreed that Patti had made the most probable diagnosis, so he provided enough medications for Patti to treat Mary for a month. After that he would examine Mary again and provide her with more medicines if necessary.

With good medicine and plenty of nutritious food Mary's health improved rapidly. She developed a voracious appetite, and during the first month she gained about 10 pounds. This little girl, who could hardly walk when she arrived, quickly turned into a very active and curious young lady. Patti became her surrogate mother, and everywhere that Patti went, Mary was sure to follow. She was fascinated by the washing machine, and even though she got her fingers caught in the wringer one day, that didn't intimidate her at all. That painful experience just taught her to be more careful, and she never lost her love for this wonderful way to wash clothes. Before long Patti was able to give Mary the full responsibility for washing the clothes, and that relieved her of a lot of work.

The thing that Mary liked best in the clinic was the picture roll hanging on the wall. She would ask a multitude of questions about each picture until Patti would throw up her hands and declare, "Mary, you have too many questions. I have patients to take care of and don't have time to tell you the whole story right now. When the patients are all gone, then I will sit down with

²⁸ See Matthew 25:41-43.

you and tell you the whole story.”

And Mary would never forget. As the last patient walked away, she would say, “Wait a minute while I go get my brother,” and soon she would return, not only with Julius but also with her father in tow, and then the three of them would sit on the floor as they listened in rapt attention as Patti told one of the beautiful Bible stories that most of us have known since childhood.

They also faithfully attended the weekly Sabbath School that was held under the big tree in the back yard. They seemed like sponges that eagerly soaked up everything they heard about Jesus and other Bible characters. They also loved the singing and soon learned the chorus songs. Steven’s favorite was the one that says, “I have decided to follow Jesus, No turning back, No turning back.” As he lustily sang that song, it was obvious that the words were coming from his heart.

After the service one Sabbath, Dale and Patti were discussing their growing affection for this little family. Patti commented, “When I first saw Mary, she was so sick I wondered if she would ever recover. But look at her now, so full of life and eager to learn. I never imagined what a big help that little girl would be to me.”

“Yes, and Steven, he has a heart of gold,” Dale observed. “He is always willing to do anything I ask him to do. I don’t know how we ever could have gotten along without him. And to think that we tried to turn him away! I certainly misjudged him the first time I saw him. Since that day he came, I have often thought of that memory verse I learned when I was a kid, ‘The Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’”²⁹

The next week after Sabbath School, Steven begged, “Please, couldn’t we get together more often to study the Bible?”

“Yes, yes, let’s do that. Can we? Can we?” the children pleaded.

“Well, yes, I think we could do that,” Patti responded. “I’ll tell you what let’s do. I have a set of Bible lessons. There are 21 of them. Maybe you can do one lesson each week. At the end of each lesson there are some questions to answer, so you can study the lesson together and then write out the answers. Let’s plan to get together in the middle of the week, on Wednesday evenings, to check your answers and talk about the lesson.”

They were thrilled with that plan, but soon there came a dis-appointment. Peruvian law requires all their young men to take military training, and Julius was inducted into military service before he was able to proceed very far in the Bible studies; but the other two eagerly continued with the studies, frequently completing as many as three or four lessons in a week, and when they studied about baptism, without hesitation they indicated their desire to seal their dedication to God in that way.

The Duerksens notified the mission headquarters that they had a couple of interested people ready for baptism, and then they waited to hear when a pastor could come. Month after month went by without a word. Then about five months after Steven had made his decision, the welcome news finally came that Pastor Richard Gates was coming for a baptism. He had a few candidates in Puerto Inca, but he decided to arrange for everybody to go to Maranatha for the baptism this time.

Word spread quickly that there was going to be a baptism, and that Sabbath about twice the usual number of people showed up for Sabbath School. Under a big mango tree Dale set up makeshift benches and spread blankets on the ground for people to sit on. Richard’s wife Meraldine was with her husband this time, and she conducted a program for the children that seemed to interest the adults as much as the younger ones. Then Pastor Gates gave a short Bible

²⁹ 1 Samuel 16:7.

study before leading everybody down to the river for the baptism. The first person into the water to be baptized was Steven followed by Mary. They had often sung in Sabbath School, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine," and as they came up out of the water, their example was shining like a lighted candle to all the witnesses there on the Pachitea River that day. As Patti and Dale stood on the riverbank looking on the firstfruits of their labors, their eyes overflowed with tears of happiness.

* * *

One day Patti reminded Dale, "You haven't forgotten the dream of Leoncio, have you? You told me that in his dream he saw a sign here on the riverbank. I was thinking about that as I was reading the Sermon on the Mount in my morning devotions. Jesus told his listeners that they are the light of the world. Then to illustrate His point He said that people don't light a candle and then put it under a basket. Instead they put it up on a candlestick so that it will give light to everyone who comes along.³⁰ It seems to me that if we had an attractive sign here at the edge of the river, it would be like a candle beckoning to the people who go by in their boats. Why don't you try making us a sign?"

"Yes, I remember well how impressed I was by that dream," Dale replied. "I still think about it every once in awhile. Maybe it is time for me to do something to make that dream become a reality."

He didn't have very good materials to work with, but he would do what he could with what he had. He didn't have any plywood, but there were lots of trees around, and he had his chainsaw, so he tried to slice a log into boards about an inch thick. He had a plane to smooth the boards, and although they didn't match very well in thickness, from a distance nobody would know the difference. He had enough boards to make a sign about four feet wide and seven feet long, and he put a post on each side of the sign to support it.

Since the sign in the dream was blue, he decided to use the same colors that were used on the boat and the clinic building. The background of the sign was sky blue with a white border. He painted the name "MARANATHA" in large navy blue letters. The beginning letter "M" was superimposed on a globe, and across the top were three figures in silhouette form that suggested flying angels blowing trumpets. Below the name was a short legend printed in white letters that stated (in Spanish of course), "This institute is dedicated to the complete development of man." Across the bottom of the sign, again in navy blue letters, was the declaration, "CHRIST IS COMING. GET READY!" Between those two sentences was a triangle with the three sides labeled, "Physical, Mental, Moral," to represent the essential aspects of the complete development of man.

Everybody at Maranatha was pleased with the new sign, but a few days after it was completed it looked like there was an unseen sinister force that didn't like the sign. The river started rising, and soon it turned into a raging torrent. Dale had to keep close watch on the boat, continually moving the stake to which it was tied, to higher and still higher ground as the water kept rising foot by foot. During the night he went out every few hours to check on the boat, and one time he found that the water had risen so fast that the stake was covered. His flashlight revealed only muddy swirling water. With a feeling of desperation he cried out, "Oh, Lord, if I don't move that stake we'll lose our boat. We need it now during this flood more than ever. Don't let it get away, Lord. I know it's dangerous, but I've got to go into the river to get that stake. Please watch over me and take care of me, Lord."

He pulled off his pajamas and dropped his flashlight beside them. Then he jumped naked into the frigid water that was up to his chest. The shock took his breath away for a few moments, and within just a few more moments he was shivering violently. He shuffled his way out to

³⁰ See Matthew 5:14-15.

where he thought the stake should be, and as he felt around with his feet he soon located it. He took a deep breath, ducked his head under water, grabbed the stake, and with a quick jerk pulled it out of the ground. "Thank you, Lord," he breathed through chattering teeth as he climbed out of the wild river onto the safety of higher ground.

The next day the river rolled over its banks, but it was still in no mood to stop. Inexorably the water kept moving up the path toward the clinic. Soon it reached the posts holding the new sign. Higher and higher up the posts the water rose until it reached the bottom of the sign itself. Now they started checking the water level by counting how many boards were still visible on the sign. When only the top board could be seen, a draw between the house and the clinic building filled with water about knee deep. That was really scary, for now the clinic building looked like it was perched on a tiny island with water all around.

"Look," Patti said, "the sign looks kind of lopsided, don't you think?"

"You just have an active imagination," Dale retorted. But even as they stared, it became evident that a subtle change was taking place. One side definitely was slowly rising higher than the other side. "I guess you're right," he finally admitted. "The dirt in the postholes must be turning to soft, oozy mud, and the sign is trying to float."

His words were confirmed when the sign flipped over on its back and slowly started to float away while they watched helplessly. A young visitor who was watching this little drama unfold was unwilling to just stand there doing nothing, so he jumped into the water and started swimming out to the floating sign. Thinking fast, Dale ran over to the shed to fetch a rope. He tossed one end of the rope out to the swimmer, who tied the rope to the sign, and then Dale pulled sign and swimmer back to land.

It seemed as though the angry river finally gave up after its efforts to destroy the new sign were foiled. After the water went down again, they calculated that the river had crested about seven feet above the top of the riverbank. With hearts overflowing with gratitude they thanked their heavenly Father for protecting them from any loss during the flood.

9 *Gross Darkness*



It was time for Dale to go to Pucallpa again to buy supplies, for Patti was running low on medicines. The new road into the jungle was finally open to the public, and he heard from his neighbors that many of the local people were now catching rides with service vehicles to get out to the city instead of flying out. That wasn't as fast, as comfortable, and as convenient as flying in an air taxi, but it was a more economical way to travel, so most people were now switching to land transportation.

Dale thought it was probably about time that he should try traveling on the new road. He didn't relish the idea of leaving Patti, but it wasn't quite so bad now that Bonnie had come back. After just one semester of college, she had decided that the major she had chosen didn't fit her aptitudes very well, so she returned home to help out while she decided what she really wanted to do with her life. Dale dreaded the thought of going to the city all by himself, but he wouldn't take Steven and leave the girls by themselves with no man around to help them. Steven would have to stay at Maranatha, and there was no one else who could go with Dale.

He heard from the owner of the cattle ranch across the river that he was going to send his tugboat towing a raft of logs to one of the large sawmills in Pucallpa, and he kindly offered Dale a free ride on his boat. The trip down the river would take about 30 hours, but the return trip against the current would take three days, so Dale decided to take the boat just one way. He would try out the new road for his return trip.

He arranged to meet the tugboat at Panduro's sawmill, which was located where the Sungaro River empties into the Pachitea River. That would be a convenient place to leave his boat so that it would be waiting for him upon his return. Patti, Bonnie, Mary and Steven could get along without a boat for a few days.

There were some unexpected delays along the way on the trip down the river, and when the tugboat finally reached the city it was late in the afternoon. He would have to wait until the next day to do his shopping, so he went to a hotel where he could stay for two nights. The next day he had to go to several pharmacies to find all the medicines Patti had ordered, and then he went to other stores to get the food items and other supplies that they needed. When he finished, he had four full boxes and one large sack in addition to his suitcase. He was becoming a bit concerned about how he was going to handle that much baggage alone.

He left the baggage in his hotel room while he went to a bus depot to inquire about how he could get back to Puerto Inca by land transportation. He learned that the new road did not come directly to Pucallpa. Instead it intersected the highway to Lima at a place that was called simply "Kilometer 86." There was no town at that point, nothing but a police station and a restaurant. The bus company issued tickets only to towns on the road to Lima, but a person could catch a ride to an intermediate point by making a personal arrangement with the driver. From Kilometer 86 on into the interior it would be just hitchhiking. The bus was scheduled to leave Pucallpa at 9:00 AM.

The next morning Dale hailed a taxi early and took his baggage to the bus depot. Since he didn't have a ticket, he couldn't check in his baggage, so he piled it against a wall where he could watch it closely and be on the lookout for thieves. When he saw the bus driver start putting baggage in the luggage compartment, he moved his bags closer to the bus. He knew that there would be police check points along the way where he would have to show his passport, so he opened his suitcase and pulled out the little black zippered bag where he kept the mail and his important documents. Then he went over to talk to the driver while still keeping an eye on his bags.

"Señor," Dale said, "I would like to go to Kilometer 86."

"All right," the driver responded. "We will have all the passengers with tickets board first, and after that you can board and pay your fare to me when you get on the bus."

"Shall I bring you my bags now?"

"No, I'm putting all the checked baggage on this side. Take yours to the other side of the bus."

Dale felt very nervous about being out of sight of his bags for even a few moments, but he breathed a prayer for help as he grabbed one bag in each hand and hurried around the bus to deposit them beside the driver who had opened the compartment on that side. Then he dashed back and was relieved to see that nobody had disturbed the four remaining boxes. He picked up a couple and carried them to the driver as fast as he could. Again he dashed back and was very relieved to see that the last two boxes were still there. Now he could breathe easier. He delivered the boxes to the driver and then went back to join the passengers waiting to board the bus.

After the last ticketed passenger had boarded, Dale stepped up to the door of the bus as he reached under his arm for his black bag ... but it wasn't there! *Where did I leave my black bag?* he asked himself incredulously. He turned and frantically looked all around where his baggage had been, but there was nothing there. He ran around to the other side of the bus and searched the pavement and looked up and down the street, but no black bag was in sight. He hurried back into the depot, but a quick look around revealed nothing. He asked the clerk behind the ticket counter if she had seen a black bag. She had not.

The bottom seemed to fall out of his stomach as the enormity of the situation struck him like a sledgehammer. His passport was gone. His tourist card was gone. His international drivers license was gone. The letters from home that Patti and Bonnie were eagerly waiting to read were gone. EVERYTHING GONE!

Dale knew that the theft should be reported to the police right away so that he could get some temporary documents for traveling, but the bus was ready to leave with his baggage at any minute now. He felt trapped as he stepped aboard the bus and paid his fare. The bus was crowded, but he spotted one vacant seat next to a window about half way back, so he sank into the seat as the bus began to roll. *What can I do when the police ask to see my ID?* he worried. *They ALWAYS pick on tall white foreigners.*

He didn't have long to worry, because there was a checkpoint right at the edge of the city. The bus stopped, and a policeman came aboard. Dale didn't have the courage to look at him, so he gazed out the window at nothing in particular. The officer walked down the aisle and back again without saying anything to anybody. The driver closed the door, and the bus began to roll again.

Now Dale could breathe easier, but not for long. A few miles farther down the road the bus stopped at another checkpoint, and again a policeman came aboard. He started down one side of the bus apparently picking a few passengers at random to show him their identification documents. He questioned the fellow right across the aisle from Dale quite extensively. Then he made his way to the back of the bus and started back examining the other side. Dale tried to

crouch down and look inconspicuous, but there was no room for much crouching in his cramped quarters. He desperately tried to think of something reasonable and convincing to say when his turn came, but his mind seemed to be a blank. Now the policeman was right beside him—and he walked right on by as though he hadn't even noticed that blond head sticking up like a sore thumb amidst the sea of black-haired Peruvians. Several miles farther down the road there was a third checkpoint, and there it was a repeat performance. It was really incredible—or maybe a better word would be “providential.”

But still the thought of his tremendous loss continued to hang over him like a heavy cloud, and as if to match the mood the clouds outside got darker and darker until they let go with a torrent of rain. He closed the window, but the creaky old bus was hardly waterproof. Soon a tiny rivulet was running across the ceiling toward his seat, and when it was directly over his head it decided to let go. Drop! Drip! Drop!

There was no place where he could go to flee from this water torture chamber, so he just had to sit there and endure it. Each drop seemed to drum into his head: *You're alone. Nobody cares about you.* Drop! Drop! Drop! *Alone! Abandoned! Alone!* His heart seemed to echo the pathetic cry of David, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”³¹ Now he could understand a little better the forsaken feeling Jesus must have felt as he hung on the cross between two thieves.

After it rained so hard that it seemed it couldn't rain any harder, and the driver could hardly see the road, the rain began to let up. Dale didn't expect to find any shelter at Kilometer 86, and rain could wreck his pasteboard boxes filled with medicines, so out of habit he desperately started praying for clear weather. He didn't really believe it would happen, for how can you have a faith that will not fail when you have just gone through a faith-shattering experience? But soon the rain stopped and the heavy clouds started to break up, and when a tiny piece of blue sky showed through, hope revived. And when the bus stopped at the junction about noon, the sun was out and shining in all its glory.

There at the junction was a control gate across the new road, and beside the gate was a police booth. A few people were standing around the gate waiting for any vehicle that might have room to give them a ride. Dale sized up the situation. *It looks like the police are checking everybody who wants to go out on the new road. Maybe I can sneak around the back side of the control booth and come out on the road farther away where the police aren't likely to see me. On second thought, if they see me sneaking around, then for sure they will be suspicious, and then I'll be in deep trouble. No, I'd better act like I belong here and have nothing to hide.* So he picked up his suitcase and forced himself to walk directly toward the control booth.

Just then a policeman came out of the booth and headed directly toward Dale. *Oh, oh, I'm in for it now,* he thought. But the policeman just smiled at him, said, “Good Day,” and walked right on past him. With a great sense of relief he piled up his baggage near the control gate and settled down to wait.

Nothing happened for about four hours. Then a dump truck appeared, but it wasn't going the direction the waiting people wanted to go. The driver stopped at the highway, and as he got out of his truck he shouted, “I'm coming right back, so get your things ready to go.” Everybody happily scurried around getting their belongings together, but within ten minutes they acted like they had forgotten all about the dump truck. When a pickup loaded with people stopped at the control booth to enter the new road, everybody scrambled and struggled to get on board. And somehow everybody did manage to hang on somewhere on that overloaded pickup. Everybody, that is, except Dale. There was no way he could get on with all his cargo, so he was left alone waiting for the dump truck to return.

The sun went down, and it got dark. Finally the truck arrived about two hours after the

³¹ Psalm 22:1.

driver had said he would come “right back.” Dale shoved his suitcase and his boxes up onto the high bed of the dump truck, and then he climbed up. To his dismay he discovered that there was about an inch of water in the bed of the truck. There was no other place to put his things, so first he put down his suitcase and one box that he thought would suffer the least water damage, and the rest of the things he stacked on top. As the truck bounced along over the dirt road, it was a continual struggle to keep everything in place. After traveling about an hour, the truck pulled over at a highway construction camp. The driver climbed out of the cab and announced, “I’m going to spend the night here. We’ll go on to the Sungaro in the morning. What are you going to do?”

Dale gulped. He hadn’t expected this. “Well ... I don’t know. I guess I’ll just have to stay right here on the truck with my stuff.”

“No, you can’t do that! It might rain tonight. Here, hand me your things, and we’ll see if the guys who sleep in this little cabin here will let you put your things inside overnight.”

The driver knocked, and quickly the door opened. One glance inside revealed that the small room contained as many men as it could hold, but they willingly agreed to pile all the baggage in a corner. Outside Dale noticed that there was a bench below the eaves of the building that would probably provide some protection from a possible rain that night.

“Do you suppose I could sleep on this bench?” he suggested.

“No, I don’t like that idea,” the driver responded. “I’ll let you sleep in the truck cab. Come,” he commanded. He opened the cab door, reached behind the seat, and pulled out a one-inch foam pad that he spread across the split seats. “You should be able to sleep on that tonight,” he commented before disappearing into the darkness.

It really did make quite a comfortable bed, and it felt so good to finally be able to relax after a long stressful day. Now he could visit with his Father in heaven without distractions or interruptions. “Father,” he said softly, “I felt so helpless and utterly abandoned this morning, but now I can see that you really were watching over me all the while. You must have been at work keeping the police from questioning me. Thank you, Lord. And the rain was so discouraging, but thank you for turning the rain into sunshine when I got off the bus. And thank you especially for helping me get a ride with this driver who has been so considerate and helpful. I have no idea what lies ahead of me tomorrow, but please provide for me whatever I will need. I love you, Lord, and I long to feel your presence with me each step of the way. Amen.”

Early in the morning a bunch of workmen climbed aboard the dump truck, and once again they were on their way. About an hour later they stopped at the end of a line of several vehicles, and the workers jumped down from the truck. The driver explained to Dale, “There’s a small creek right ahead of us, but the bridge across this creek washed out last week, so we can’t drive any farther. But you can walk across the creek, and beyond that it is an easy walk on the road on over to the Sungaro River.”

Easy walk did he say? Sure, for somebody walking empty handed, but for someone with cargo to transport it was a different story. And then to make matters worse, the handle on Dale’s suitcase broke, and the only way he could carry it now was by wrapping both arms around it. As he stood there trying to decide what to do next, the foreman of a work crew came walking by. He eyed the pile of boxes for a moment before he declared, “Man, this is a dangerous place for you to be. There are a lot of thieves around here.”

Dale’s first impulse was to retort bitterly, “So what else is new, Mister?” But he knew that would sound too sarcastic, and the man was probably just trying to provide a helpful warning, so he kept his mouth shut and said nothing. He picked up his suitcase and carried it about ten feet, then put it down and went back for a box. One piece at a time he moved the baggage, and in five minutes he had moved the whole stack ten feet farther down the road. Then he repeated the whole process to move everything a little farther, never being very far from his precious cargo.

At this rate he thought he might reach the river about noon.

When he came in view of the washout, he was dismayed by what he saw. There before him was a deep gully, probably about 50 feet deep. Many trampling feet had formed a muddy path down to the creek, where a log had been thrown across the creek to serve as a footbridge. Some 2X4's had been nailed up on one side of the log to form a handrail, and some steps had been cut in the steep bank on the other side. There was no place along the steep path where the baggage could be stacked up, so each piece would have to be carried down to the creek and up the other side without stopping, leaving the rest of the baggage unattended and vulnerable to possible theft for about five minutes on each trek. *Lord, help me, Dale pleaded. Remember that these medicines are for your work. Please send Your angels to guard what I can't.*

There were some spectators on the other side watching the tractors that were working on a detour and temporary log bridge across the creek. He didn't trust them, so he waited until they moved on. Then he started moving his things as fast as he could, down the slick path, across the creek, and up the steps on the other side. As he walked across the log while holding the suitcase with both hands, he bumped into the handrail which upset his balance. For a moment he thought he was going to fall into the creek, but just in time he somehow regained his balance. He wondered if it was an angel hand that steadied him at that moment. The words of the Psalmist flashed into his mind, "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."³²

Finally he had everything across without the loss of anything, and gratefully he slumped down to the ground beside the baggage almost exhausted. Just then a truck backed up to where he was and stopped to unload some tanks of acetylene and oxygen. The driver noticed him sitting there. "Put your things on the truck," he said, "and I'll take them to the river for you." That sounded like music to Dale's ears.

When they reached the Sungaro River he saw a boat at the river's edge loading passengers and cargo. He hurried over to the boat and asked for a ride to Panduro's sawmill. Soon they were on their way, and the boat pulled up beside Maranatha's boat that was still tied up right where Dale had left it several days before. They quickly transferred his cargo from one boat to the other, and in half an hour he was home again.

It was a bittersweet homecoming. Dale recounted his tale of woe, concluding by saying, "It seemed so unfair to me for God to let my passport get stolen. I couldn't see how all things could work together for good in what happened."³³ Then I thought about the little book I had in that black bag. It was *El Camino a Cristo* (Steps to Christ). Maybe God wanted the thief to have that book. At least we can hope and pray that he'll read it."

Then Patti told her tale. "Last night," she said, "Steven heard a noise in the direction of the clinic, so he got up to investigate but found nothing amiss. But in the morning when he went to grind corn to feed the chickens, he couldn't find the grinder in its usual place, so he came and asked me if I had done something with it. I hadn't, but I went with him to hunt for it. We searched high and low but couldn't find it anywhere. Then we discovered two sets of footprints between the back of the clinic and the river directly below the chicken house. As you know, it's very steep there, and nobody in his right mind would choose to come up here at that place unless he had some evil intentions."

"Those sneaking thieves! What rascals!" Dale exploded. "After all we've tried to do for these people, I can hardly believe that somebody would be so unappreciative as to come in the dark and steal our little food grinder. I'll bet they were planning to break into the clinic and take all they could from there too, but fortunately Steven heard them and interrupted their little

³² Psalm 91:11-12.

³³ See Romans 8:28.

scheme. I'm so thankful we have Steven here. It was a big comfort to me on my trip to know that he was here to keep an eye on things."

Patti stared at Dale with somber eyes before she continued, "Are you ready to hear some more bad news?"

"No, I've heard enough for one day. I don't want to hear any more. But I guess I'll have to find out sooner or later, so we'd just as well get it over with. Go ahead. Tell me."

"Steven wants to move to Puerto Inca."

10 *Carry Your Candle in the Darkness*



Although Dale felt distressed at the thought of losing the faithful service of Steven, he couldn't criticize the man for wanting to get out on his own again. After all, no one knew how long Maranatha would continue to function, and when it came to an end everyone would have to go somewhere else. Dale went over to his house to discuss his situation with him.

"Steven, have you found a place to live in Puerto Inca?"

"Yes, I found a lot with a small house in town for sale. The house isn't in very good condition, but I can fix it up. I would also like to add another room so that Mary can have her own bedroom. Could she stay here with you until I get the house ready?"

"We will be delighted to have Mary stay. She is very helpful, and she will always be welcome here. How much is your house and lot going to cost?"

"About a hundred dollars," he replied with a bit of concern in his voice.

"Do you have enough money to pay for it?"

"No, not yet. But I think the owner will let me pay by installments. I plan to work as a traveling salesman, and as I earn some money I can pay off the house."

"Steven, that sounds like a pretty shaky proposition to me. You might earn barely enough to keep food on the table. We don't want you to leave Maranatha empty handed, so we'll help you buy your house. And I can help you build that extra room, too."

"Oh, thank you! You're so kind," he said as he beamed from ear to ear.

"But first I'll need your help a little longer," Dale continued. "I must go to the American Consulate in Lima to get a new passport since a thief stole mine. I don't want the girls to be here alone, so would you be willing to stay here while I'm gone?"

"Oh, yes!" he willingly agreed. "I'll be glad to do that."

And so Dale went back to Pucallpa where he got a dose of bureaucratic red tape and delays before he was able to go on to Lima. His report to the police had to be presented on "official" paper. This was lined paper with a special seal or stamp on it that was printed in the government printing office. Dale bought a sheet of this legal paper and typed out his report of how, when, and where his passport had been stolen. He took this to the police station and handed it to the officer at the desk, who read it over gravely. Then he got out a huge bound book with blank pages. For some unknown reason (probably just custom) all this information would have to be written by hand in this book. He had all the information before him neatly typed out that he could have copied, but no, instead he asked Dale for each item of information as he wrote it down. When he got through, Dale had to sign his name and apply his fingerprints.

Next the police officer sat down at a typewriter to prepare a certified copy of the report that Dale could take with him to present at police checkpoints along the way and at the immigration office in Lima. Just then the power failed and the lights went out, so the officer said, "Come back

tomorrow. The office opens at 8:00." Dale thought that should be early enough to complete the certified copy before the morning bus would leave at 10:00, so he went to the bus depot and bought his ticket.

In the morning Dale went back to the police station shortly after it opened to finish up his business there. The officer on duty typed up the copy for him, but then he couldn't find the chief who was supposed to sign the copy, and nobody seemed to know where he had gone nor when he would be back. Dale heard the familiar words, "Come back tomorrow." He looked distressed as he responded, "But my bus is going to leave in an hour!" When they heard that, they took pity on him and decided that maybe somebody else could sign it after all, so somebody else did, and they stamped it with their official seal, and farther down the line nobody knew the difference.

In Lima, Dale went to the American Embassy to find out how he could get a replacement passport, and he found out that his experience was far from unique. A sign on the wall showed how many tourists had lost their passports in Peru during the previous six months, and the average was about 20 per month. He filled out an application, got his picture taken, paid a passport fee, and the next morning at 10:00 AM it was ready for him. Then he took it to the Peruvian immigration office to get a duplicate of his lost tourist visa, and that fortunately turned out to be much easier than he expected it to be.

Before returning home he went to the Inca Union Mission offices where he met Dwight Taylor, the director of OFASA (now known as ADRA Peru). Dwight asked him if his wife could use some medical supplies out at Maranatha. Why yes, she certainly could. Usually donated items are things like cold tablets, headache pills, and band-aids, but this time it was different. Dwight gave him a whole case of PVM, a protein-vitamin-mineral powder for treating malnutrition. There was also Ringers lactate and other IV fluids as well as lots of worm medicine to treat the most common health problem in the jungle. Nurse Patti would be thrilled to get this. And it was all free! Dwight wanted to give him so much that Dale finally had to cry out, "Stop! This is wonderful stuff, but I can't handle any more boxes!"

As Dale thought about this marvelous windfall, the realization began to dawn on him that he would not have received any of it if he had not come to Lima at this time, and he would not have come if his passport had not been stolen. Once again he could see how true it was that "all things work together for good to those that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."³⁴

* * *

God was also working for them in another way which they didn't recognize immediately. Actually it had started about four months pre-viously when a young man came to Maranatha with a complaint of hoarseness and general malaise. Patti started a chart for him, and he said his name was Leider. She couldn't figure out what was wrong with this 23-year-old single male who should have been in robust health. He had a scar on his leg from a previous case of leishmaniasis, so she thought this might be a recurrence that had migrated to his throat. She would have to keep an eye on that possibility, so she made a note of it on his chart. She treated his symptoms and told him to come back if he got worse.

Now during Dale's absence he did come back, and he obviously was worse than before. As she watched the now gaunt figure struggling up the path gasping for breath, she noted immediately the certain sallow look that she had learned to recognize, and her first thought was, *Oh, oh, another case of TB!* She took his history and checked him over. He was down to 95 pounds, a loss of 30 pounds. He had a bad cough. Pulse 150. Respirations 70. And he was having night sweats. Yes, the picture was clear now. He had a full-blown case of tuberculosis, and he would have to go to Puerto Inca to the public health unit there to get the medicine he

³⁴ See Romans 8:28.

would need.

Leider pleaded, "Can I come back and stay here at Maranatha after I get my medicine?"

"No, Leider, we aren't set up to have patients stay here," Patti responded almost automatically. But then she looked into his longing eyes and was reminded of Steven and Mary. She had been praying that God would send them someone to replace Steven now that he was moving to town, and she suddenly felt an almost overwhelming sense that God wanted this young man to stay. Her attitude softened as she continued, "Well, I'll have to talk to my husband about it, so you can stay at least until he gets back from Lima."

When Dale returned and met Leider, he was thrilled. He too felt that this was God's answer to their prayers. So what if Leider was physically debilitated and couldn't do much? They had come to this place to help the needy, and this certainly was another soul in need. Besides, after witnessing Mary's rapid recovery, they had confidence that his recovery would also be dramatic with good treatment and good food.

Leider was very shy, and the first Sabbath he didn't even venture out of his room during Sabbath School. By the following week he was feeling more comfortable with what was going on at Maranatha, and from then on he regularly attended all religious activities. He also needed to carry some responsibilities in order to sense that he really was a part of the group now, so Dale put him in charge of feeding the chickens, a job that required very little physical exertion but had to be done every day. He made a good recovery and before long was able to help with heavier work as well.

* * *

By now Patti knew very well what to do for TB patients. More frightening for her were the cases of vomiting and diarrhea that were all too common. That can debilitate a person so rapidly, and it is especially dangerous in small children like little baby Walker. He was brought in very badly dehydrated. He would soon die unless he quickly received some fluids to replace what he was losing. Patti tried desperately to get an IV started, but to no avail. He was too far gone, and his veins had disappeared. "Oh, Lord, help me!" she breathed. "What else can I do?" Then suddenly an idea popped into her head, or perhaps we should say a divine hand put it there. She knew that the intestines are very absorbing organs of the body. *I wonder if maybe ...* She pulled the needle off the end of the IV tubing in her hand, and then in desperation she quickly but gently inserted that tubing right up the rectum into the intestine of the baby boy. She had never heard of doing such a thing, but it was worth a try. She turned on the IV, and as that precious life-saving fluid steadily dripped into the tubing and slowly ran into the intestine, it stayed in. And it worked, too. In a few hours Walker went home completely recovered.

Patti never claimed to be anything but a nurse working for God as her medical director, but as her work grew, the appreciative people she served began addressing her as Doctora, the Spanish way of referring to a respected female physician.

* * *

One day a silver speedboat came zooming up to their landing. A young man quickly got out and hurried up the path. He was one of the local paramedics whom the government had trained to give first aid and simple medications to the people of these isolated areas.

"Is the Doctora here?" he inquired, and then he continued in an urgent tone, "We have a man here who is dying!"

That announcement was like pulling the trigger of a gun that sent Dale flying down the path to the boat. He helped to lift out the crumpled form of a young man and carry him up the path to the clinic. They laid him on the floor of the waiting room, and Patti came over to check him.

After listening to his heart and lungs, she commented, "He doesn't sound like he's dying. There's something strange here – might be psycho-logical."

She couldn't quite put her finger on what was wrong, but there was definitely something

weird about this case. He wouldn't—or couldn't—talk. He just kept his teeth clenched tightly together, and a white frothy discharge kept oozing out of his mouth, which his companions would wipe away for him.

Patti put her hand under his head and asked him to relax, but he wouldn't cooperate. His body remained rigid. *What's going on here?* she wondered. And then for the first time she noticed the dirty bandage on his bare foot. Quickly she pulled it off exposing an ugly machete cut about four inches long. It had been sewed up, but the wound must not have been well cleaned, for it was obvious that it was now badly infected.

She turned to the paramedic. "Did you suture this?" she asked, and he nodded. "Did you give him a tetanus shot?"

"No, I didn't have any," he responded.

Lock jaw! Could it be? No, it seemed impossible. That's the sort of horrible thing you only studied about ages ago in nurse's training, but you never saw an actual case. She hurried into the next room to consult her books, and the description of tetanus she read gave a perfect picture of the poor young man lying there on the floor. The rigid arched back. The locked jaws. The frothing mouth. Deep tendon reflexes hyperactive.

She hadn't checked his reflexes yet, so she went back to where he was lying and lifted his leg. She tapped the tendon just below the kneecap, and he just about kicked her in the face. Yes, his reflexes were hyperactive all right, and there was no doubt they had a full-blown case of tetanus on their hands.

The seizures he went through were terrible. When he had an attack he couldn't talk. In fact, he couldn't breathe. His hands would clutch at them desperately as his eyes seemed to plead, *Please help me!* The paramedic would press down hard on his chest to force a little air in and out of his lungs. After one of the seizures had passed and he could talk again, he asked, "Doctora, am I going to die?"

Patti knew the prognosis was very poor. Her reference book suggested injecting a massive dose of 40,000 to 60,000 units of tetanus antitoxin as the only thing that might help a little—and all she had was five little bottles of 1,500 units each. She told him as gently as she could that there was very little hope for him unless God would intervene with a miracle, and she suggested that he make sure everything was right between him and his God. "Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation," was the message in the Bible for him.³⁵ Then she knelt beside him and prayed for him.

When she finished praying, he made the sign of the cross. Several minutes later he said, "Estoy tranquilo ahora." (I'm tranquil now.) She smiled at him, for she thought that he meant the tranquilizer she had given him was working, and that he was resting and feeling a little better. But he realized that she didn't quite understand, so he pointed upward as he continued, "No, I'm at peace with God."

Pucallpa was the nearest place where the patient could get a massive dose of antitoxin, so Patti advised the relatives to try to get a plane to fly him to the city. The speedboat took them to Puerto Inca to make the arrangements, and then they returned with the news that the plane would arrive in about an hour. They strapped the patient to Dale's little camp cot to use as an improvised stretcher and carried him down to the boat. Bonnie went along to help take care of him. On the way he had such a severe seizure that she thought he had died, but he finally started breathing again. They had just a short wait at the airport before the plane arrived to take him to the city.

A few days later word came back that the poor man had died on the half-hour flight to Pucallpa. It made the Duerksens sad, knowing that his death could have been prevented so

³⁵ See 2 Corinthians 6:2.

easily if he had come to Maranatha Clinic immediately after cutting his foot instead of waiting a week. At the same time, however, they felt comforted by the knowledge that he had not waited too long to commit his life to God.

11 *Delays, Thieves, and God*



The Duerksens were relieved to have the lost passport problem resolved, but they still had to live with the uncertainty of their status in this foreign land. The government didn't want them to be permanent residents, and their practice of leaving the country when their visas expired, only to come right back as tourists again, was quite time consuming and costly as well as rather dangerous and nerve wracking. They could never fully escape the nagging fear that some day they might be declared "persona non grata" and denied entry into Peru, but this seemed to be the only way they could continue their work, so they willingly put up with the inconveniences and difficulties.

As a typical example of what these trips were like, we will recount in detail one that took place after they had been in the country about two and a half years. They took their boat to Puerto Inca where they left it in the care of one of their friends in town so that they would have a way to get back home upon their return. Then they caught a ride on a boat that provided transportation between the town and the construction site of the suspension bridge that would take the new road across the Sungaro River.

By now entrepreneurs were providing transportation in small pickup trucks for people who wanted to go to Pucallpa, so Dale and Patti found one that was collecting passengers, and they climbed aboard. They expected a three-hour ride to Pucallpa, but when they got to the intersection with the main highway at Kilometer 86, the gate was closed, and the police refused to open it for anybody.

Passengers started peppering the nearest policeman with questions. "What's wrong? Why won't you let us go on? Has there been an accident?"

The policeman replied indulgently, "Haven't you heard? This is the day of The Great Lima to Pucallpa Road Race. The racers must have a clear road, so we can't permit any other vehicles on the highway until the race is over."

"I can't believe this!" Dale muttered to Patti. "The ONLY road between two major cities, and they close it down for a stupid car race! Incredible!"

But all the Peruvians seemed to be eager to see the racers go by, and they didn't show any concern about the delay. After a half-hour wait the first car roared past. It had the number 730 painted on the door. Dale felt like groaning, *Does this mean there are 729 more to go?* Ten minutes later another car raced by. It was number 803. That was worse yet. Then he heard somebody say there were only 60 cars in the race. That was a big improvement. Later he heard somebody else say that 26 cars left the town of Tingo Maria. Things were getting better by the minute! After half a dozen cars had gone by, somebody said there were 17 more to go, so Dale started counting. When his count reached 18, he knew of one more person who had spoken with an air of authority when in reality he didn't know what he was talking about.

As the sun set, the police could tell that the waiting truck drivers were getting restless, so after one more racer zoomed past, they finally opened the gate, and the long line of waiting vehicles started their own race to Pucallpa. Unfortunately the pickup in which Patti and Dale

were riding was near the end of the line, so they were traveling in a thick cloud of dust most of the way to the city.

The next morning while Dale took care of some other business in town, Patti went to the bus depot to get tickets to Lima. There she found good news and bad news. The good news was that this was the last day of a promotional discount fare 30% off the regular price. The bad news was that all seats were already reserved for this last day. But the clerk seemed to take a special interest in getting them on that bus for some reason, and she told Patti to just wait a minute. While she waited, Patti silently talked to her Heavenly Tour Guide about how wonderful it would be if they didn't have to waste a whole day waiting to get a seat on a bus to Lima.

After a short wait the clerk motioned for Patti to come to her. "I have two seats available," she said, "but they aren't together. They are both aisle seats not too far apart."

"That will be all right," Patti replied without hesitation. "I'll take them."

A couple hours later the bus arrived, and this same clerk checked off the passengers on her list as they boarded the bus. When she saw Patti, she told her, "I'm going to ask the person who has been assigned the seat next to you if he would mind trading places with your husband so that you can sit together." That was very thoughtful of her, but the chance that he would give up a choice window seat in exchange for an aisle seat farther back seemed quite remote.

When the man appeared, she made the request as she had promised to do. He took a good look at Patti before he remarked, "I know that woman! I went to her clinic once, and she treated me well. Yes, for her I'll be glad to trade places with her husband." And so it was that Dale and Patti, in spite of getting tickets at the last minute, were able to ride together in choice seats just two rows from the front of the bus.

All night long the bus rolled on and on over crooked mountain roads making it almost impossible to sleep, and the frigid thin air of the high Andes only made matters worse. Shortly after sunrise the bus crossed the last mountain pass and began a rapid descent to the coastal plain below. About noon they pulled into the bus terminal in the great metropolis of Lima where a third of the people in Peru reside.

They wanted to go south this time, and they were hoping that there would still be room on the bus that afternoon headed for Tacna, a city near the border with Chile. By traveling at night they would avoid the cost of a hotel. But the bus depot was strangely quiet that day, and they soon learned why. This was May 1, which is Labor Day in Peru, an important holiday for the Peruvians. Although some busses were arriving from distant cities, none were leaving on this holiday. There was no way to avoid a one-day delay, so they bought tickets for Wednesday's bus to Tacna.

Now where could they spend the night? They couldn't afford a 4-star hotel, so they would have to look for something cheaper. They remembered reading in a tourist guidebook about a place called Hotel Europa that was popular with backpackers because it was very inexpensive, but they had not brought the address with them since they had not anticipated the need to spend a night in Lima. They did remember, however, that the book said it was not far from the presidential palace, and they knew where that was.

"We have nothing else to do this afternoon, so let's go hunt for the hotel on foot," Dale suggested. After 24 hours sitting on a bus, some exercise would be good for them, so they set out walking toward the palace.

"Look, there's a street vender," Patti observed. "He ought to be very familiar with this part of town. Ask him for directions." That sounded reasonable, so Dale approached the man and made his request.

"Yes," the man replied, "Hotel Europa is on Rimac Street. I don't know the exact address, but it's not far from here. You can find it easily," and he directed them where to go. But when they got there, they found nothing, and none of the pedestrians they talked to had ever heard of

such a place.

Finally one man gave them some good advice. "Go into the lobby of the first hotel you find, and ask the clerk to let you look in their phone book. The hotel you are looking for probably has a telephone, so you should be able to find not only the phone number but also the street address." They thanked the man and followed his suggestion, and it worked. They discovered that they were on the wrong street! They needed to go to 376 Ancash Street, an address not far away and easy to find.

As they walked into the lobby of the Hotel Europa, they saw several backpacks behind the counter for safekeeping. There was something strange about those backpacks. Each one was wrapped in a gunnysack. When they asked about the purpose of that, they learned that the backpacks were surrounded with chicken wire, and the sacks held the wire in place. This was to foil the clever thieves in the city who had learned how to slit a backpack with a razor blade so deftly that the person carrying the pack was totally unaware of what was happening. Later the owner of the pack would be shocked to discover that things were missing from the pack.

Dale asked for a room with two beds. The cost was about the equivalent of US\$3.50 for one night. They soon discovered why it was so cheap. There was no room service. There were sheets and a thin blanket on each narrow cot, but there were no towels. There was only a common bathroom for both men and women, there was no hot water, and there were no locks on the shower stalls! Neither was there any air conditioning, but that was quite tolerable since the breezes from the nearby Pacific Ocean usually keep the city quite cool. At least the thin mattresses were not lumpy, and the place appeared to be relatively clean. It definitely was better than trying to sleep on a bus.

Early Wednesday morning they returned to the bus depot. The bus was scheduled to leave at 2:00 PM, so they had plenty of time on their hands. "Since we've had this delay," Dale commented, "we won't be able to get back to Pucallpa before the Sabbath. I think I ought to go to the Union Mission office this morning to see if we can arrange for the use of one of their guest rooms over the weekend."

"That sounds like a good idea," Patti concurred. "I'm not eager to stay in Hotel Europa again. Besides there's a little kitchen in connection with the guestrooms that we can use, so I can prepare our meals there. We'll have better food, and it will cost less."

"I feel a little bit nervous about leaving you here to guard our luggage. This place has such a bad reputation for thievery, and you will probably look like an easy target by yourself."

"Don't worry about me. I promise I'll stay alert. And don't forget that we asked for God's protection before we started out this morning. Remember the promise, 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.'³⁶ I'll do my part by sitting in one of those chairs over there by the windows. I don't think a thief can sneak up behind me there."

Dale helped her get settled with the bags right beside her chair on the side opposite the exit from the depot so that if anybody grabbed one of her bags, he would have to pass right in front of her to leave the building. She hadn't been sitting there very long when she heard a voice calling through the open window, "Señorita! Señorita!" She wondered if someone out there might be calling to her, so she turned to see who it was. A man out there immediately started talking to her, but his words sounded so garbled she couldn't understand what he was saying. Something seemed suspicious about this, so she quickly turned back again. In that short interval a man wearing dark glasses had appeared and was now standing right beside her luggage. She quickly reached out her arm and put it over her bags. The man outside continued to call insistently, but she refused to divert her gaze from the stranger wearing sunglasses, and in a few moments he nonchalantly moved on and melted into the crowd.

³⁶ Psalm 91:11.

A little while later a young woman came by carrying a suitcase. She had a concerned look on her face as she stopped by Patti and asked her where she was going. When Patti told her, she responded, "Tacna! I'm going to Tacna too, but I haven't bought my ticket yet." Patti offered to watch her suitcase for her while she bought her ticket, so she gratefully put her suitcase beside Patti's luggage and then joined the line at the ticket counter.

Shortly after the girl returned with her ticket, Patti decided she was tired of sitting, so she stood up and turned around to face her empty seat while keeping an eye on the luggage right beside it. A few minutes later her new seatmate got up and came over to stand right beside the luggage as well. She no sooner left her seat than a girl wearing sunglasses plopped down in it, and leaning way over toward Patti in a manner exuding friendliness she asked, "What time is it?" Patti gave her the information without looking at her. Then she wanted to know where Patti was going, was she traveling with this other girl, and so on.

Patti's curt answers didn't encourage conversation, so after a few minutes of futile efforts to distract Patti's attention, Miss Friendly Sunglasses gave up and went over to try her conversational skills on Patti's new friend who was guarding her suitcase. For an opener she started with the question, "What time is it?" Patti thought, *This gal must have a very short memory. I told her the time of day not five minutes ago!* Without taking her eyes off her suitcase, Patti's companion replied, "Eleven o'clock" (just a made up answer). It was obvious that this girl also was too suspicious to be a good conversationalist, so Miss Sunglasses soon moved on seeking a better target.

The new friend slumped back into her seat with a sigh of relief as she exclaimed, "We almost got robbed!" Then she continued, "You didn't see those four "rateros"³⁷ who were right behind you, did you?" Now it was Patti's turn to feel alarm, but she also felt grateful that there were heavenly angels present to guard her in this den of thieves.

After a few minutes her seatmate exclaimed excitedly, "There they go now!" as she pointed out the window. Patti turned and saw Miss Friendly Sunglasses walking by rapidly on the sidewalk accompanied by four nicely dressed men all wearing dark glasses—and one was carrying a suitcase! They jumped into a waiting car that quickly sped away. How thankful Patti was that they didn't have her suitcase, but at the same time she felt very sorry for the poor soul who would make the heart-sickening discovery that his or her suitcase had disappeared.

Their bus was behind schedule when it started loading passengers, and it finally pulled away from the depot about an hour late. It hadn't gone far, however, when the driver turned onto a side street, and they soon found themselves in a garage for ailing buses. A mechanic came over and stuck his head in the motor compartment. After half an hour of restless waiting, the driver came back on board and announced, "We have a problem with the air brakes that can't be repaired today. Take all of your things and get on the bus that is right ahead of us."

The "new" bus was a retired Greyhound from the States, and it looked like it was about ready for the junk yard; but it held together all the way to Tacna, and they arrived about noon on Thursday. They hurried over to the street where cars were waiting to take passengers to the Chilean border. Ordinarily a driver waits until his car is full, and then he charges each person about the equivalent of US\$5.00. Dale and Patti didn't want to wait for a car to fill up, so they asked a driver what he would charge to take them right away by themselves. He offered them a rate of US\$18, and they said, "Let's go!"

At the border they walked into the Peruvian immigration office where an official stamped their passports to show that they were leaving his country. Then they drove about a hundred

³⁷ The word "ratero" was a local expression for the professional thieves that plagued the city. It was widely believed that in a secret place somewhere in the city they had a school to train people how to steal without getting caught.

yards down the road to the Chilean immigration office. Here they filled out a form requesting a tourist visa, the immigration agent stamped their passports, and they were free to tour the countryside for as much as 60 days. But they weren't on vacation, and they wanted to go back home to Peru as quickly as possible, so they walked around the building to the incoming entrance on the other side and entered the same building once more. Dale felt embarrassed as he handed the passports to the same man who had given them their visas not ten minutes earlier, but the agent acted like this was a common occurrence as he checked them out of his country.

Back at Peruvian immigration they filled out the usual forms and handed them to the clerk, who took them to his chief sitting at his desk. The man examined their passports carefully. It was obvious that they had repeatedly left Peru only to come right back. They wondered, *Is he going to give us a hard time?* He looked up and asked, "How long have you been in Peru?" *Oh, oh, here it comes!*

Patti told him briefly about the medical work she had been doing in the jungle for about two and a half years, and he acted very interested in what she was saying. Dale was silently praying that he would be favorably impressed, for the length of time they would be granted on their visas was in his hands. He stamped the passports, scribbled his initials, and returned them to the Duerksens. They were overjoyed to see that he gave them the maximum 90 days this time.

At 1:30 they were back in town, and their hopes soared that they might be able to get on an early afternoon bus for the return to Lima. Dale went to every bus station in town, but he was disappointed to find that they were all scheduled to leave at 7:30 that evening—all, that is, except one bus line that they had never tried before. The posted schedule said their bus would leave at 7:00. *Well, we'd just as well try a different bus line for a change and save half an hour in the process,* he reasoned, so he bought two tickets and went to find Patti. They had plenty of time to go to the market to buy some food for their return trip, and then they settled down to wait.

Seven o'clock came and went with no sign of their bus. By eight o'clock all the other buses had left town, and still they waited for the first sight of their bus. It was nearly 9:00 when a bus finally pulled up to the depot to drop off its passengers. The waiting people lined up hoping to board as soon as the bus was empty, but the driver shooed them away. "I have to fuel up first," he informed them, "and then I'll come back to get you." Obviously this company was so short of equipment that the same vehicle had to turn right around and go back without proper servicing and maintenance. About three hours late they finally left town.

All night and all the next day that rickety old bus struggled to keep going down the highway while it seemed that every other vehicle on the road was passing it. When the sun set that Friday evening to usher in another Sabbath, they were still about 250 miles from their destination. Patti and Dale bowed their heads, and together they asked God to help them keep this special day holy in spite of the unfavorable circumstances in which they found themselves.

It was a little past midnight when the tired old bus finally pulled into the terminal in Lima. It would be very dangerous to venture out into the dark streets at such an hour, so they decided to spend the rest of the night in the waiting room. Most of the other passengers had the same idea, so they weren't alone. One wall of the room was a plate glass window from floor to ceiling, but it was completely covered by heavy drapes. There was a row of chairs in front of the curtains, and Patti and Dale decided to sit there.

Nearby an Indian woman was sitting, sound asleep with a baby in her arms. On the floor was a basket that probably contained her personal belongings. Dale thought, *How stupid of her to leave her basket so unprotected.* Then he saw a hand reach into the basket. *Oh, I didn't notice that she had another child on the floor. He must be hungry and wants something to eat.* Dale got up to have a closer look, and he was shocked by what he saw. *There is no child under her chair. That hand belongs to an arm that's coming through the drapes from the outside!*

Dale leaped forward and grabbed the probing arm at the wrist. The arm jerked away, and

he heard the sound of glass shattering on the sidewalk outside. He parted the curtains and discovered that there was a jagged hole in the window. He looked down the street and saw the running form of a young man who was holding his right arm with his left hand. He must have cut himself badly when he jerked his arm back through that jagged hole in the glass. Dale felt a warm glow of satisfaction knowing that he finally got his hands on one of those despicable thieves, even if it was for just a moment. But the good feeling was short lived, for soon he began to feel real concern for that fellow who might be bleeding very badly, and where could he get medical attention at that time of night?

In the morning the Duerksens took a taxi out to the suburb called Miraflores where they found the man in charge of the guestrooms who gave them a key to their room. They quickly cleaned up and then went to church. They spent most of the afternoon catching up on lost sleep, and after sundown Dale went downtown to buy tickets for their return to Pucallpa. He went to the bus line that had the best reputation, but he was disappointed when the ticket agent informed him that all tickets were already sold for the Sunday bus. He didn't want to delay another day, so he decided to try a new bus company that he had heard about. Perhaps with relatively new buses they would be more reliable. They still had seats available for Sunday's bus that was scheduled to leave at 6:00 PM, so he bought two tickets to Pucallpa.

When the bus left the depot it was only about half full, so the driver tried to augment his revenue by picking up local travelers along the way. He would stop for anybody who would try to flag him down, and he would let them off whenever they asked him to stop, so there was a lot of slow stop-and-go driving for the first couple of hours. Then the bus climbed up into the high Andes, back and forth around hairpin turns, up and up, higher and higher, until about midnight they crossed the highest pass a little over 16,000 feet above sea level. The air was thin, and many of the passengers were suffering from lack of oxygen. Patti had a bad headache, and many people were vomiting.

Suddenly a woman shrieked, "Help! My child is dying!" The driver seemed to ignore her distress, so other passengers started shouting, "Driver, stop! Stop the bus!" and when the din became loud enough, the driver slammed on the brakes, pulled over to the side of the road, and turned on the interior lights. Patti's emergency room instincts took over, and in a flash she was out of her seat and beside the frightened mother. The child lying on her lap, probably about three years old, was turning blue and had stopped breathing. It was evident that the child had been throwing up and probably had choked on his vomitus. Patti grabbed the child, but the distraught mother clung to him.

"Let me have him!" Patti commanded. "I'm a nurse."

When the mother heard the word "nurse," she let go. Patti turned the child face down and slapped him sharply on the back to try to dislodge the obstruction, and she reached into his mouth with her finger to clear an airway. Then she turned him over onto his back again and started mouth to mouth resuscitation. Very soon the child was breathing again.

The driver didn't even get out of his seat to come see what was going on. After a minute or two he started driving again and turned off the interior lights. Fortunately Patti had her flashlight with her, so she checked on the child every few minutes for about half an hour. He had no more problems as the bus headed down to lower altitude.

About 9:00 AM the bus stopped in the little foothills town called Tingo Maria. It looked like everybody was getting off the bus, so Dale and Patti decided to get off and stretch their legs too. When they walked into the small waiting room, the ticket agent motioned for them to come over to her. "We have a little problem," she said. "The motor on this bus was recently overhauled, and it needs some adjustments now, so we won't be able to take it on to Pucallpa today. We will put you on another bus line that has a bus going out at 3:00 this afternoon."

I don't believe that tale, Dale said to himself. I bet you just made that up because all the other

passengers are staying here, and you don't want your bus to go the rest of the way for just two passengers. But when he opened his mouth to speak, he didn't accuse her of being a liar. Instead he replied as courteously as he could, "If we wait for that afternoon bus, it will be after dark when we reach Pucallpa, and that will be a problem for us. If you would just refund us the unused portion of our tickets, we will find another way to reach our destination." And just as courteously she opened her cash drawer and handed them the amount of money that would be the normal fare for the remainder of their journey.

They walked the few blocks to the edge of town where they thought they would have the best chance to catch a ride. It wasn't long before a little green bus with a sign in the window that said "San Alejandro" came into view. They knew that little village was in the direction they wanted to go, so Dale stuck out his hand to signal the driver, and the bus stopped to pick them up. In San Alejandro they went into a cafe and struck up a conversation with a man who was going their way, and he offered to take them along as far as Kilometer 86, and from there they easily caught a ride on to Pucallpa, arriving long before night fall. They spent the night with friends out at the Adventist air base.

The next morning they got a ride on one of the pickup trucks transporting passengers to the Sungaro River, and from there a riverboat took them to Puerto Inca where their own boat was waiting for them. It was wonderful to be home again.

"I dread the thought of having to go through this ordeal again in just a few months," Patti commented as she sank wearily into her familiar chair. "Right now I feel too weak to ever tackle such a trip again."

"Frankly, Patti, I was amazed at your stamina. I didn't know you had it in you."

"I didn't have it in me," she responded. "It came from an outside source that the Psalmist tells us about. 'God is our refuge and STRENGTH, an ever present help in trouble.'"³⁸

³⁸ Psalm 46:1.

12 *Hold Out Your Candle for All to See*



“The Great Experiment” was going well. God was faithfully fulfilling His promises to the Duerksens, including the one that says, “The work is of God, and He will furnish means and will send helpers.”³⁹ Although they had to live very frugally, there was always enough money to meet their basic needs, and when they needed helpers, God demonstrated His ability to send them as well. First there was Steven and then Leider. Now the medical work was growing to the point where it was almost overwhelming, so Patti reminded her Lord of His promises and then waited patiently to see what would happen.

She didn’t have long to wait, because even before she made her request, her God was at work preparing to fill this need. After all, He had told Isaiah a long time ago, “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”⁴⁰

Mike and Kathy Mahoney were newlyweds. More important for the work at Maranatha, Mike was a newly baptized Adventist, and Kathy was a newly registered nurse. Someone at the church that was nurturing this young couple was receiving the newsletters called “Maranatha Vital Signs” that the Duerksens were sending to friends in the States, and Mike and Kathy saw some of those letters. Although the letters were not actively trying to recruit personnel, the Mahoneys decided they would like to spend a year there in the jungle helping Patti and Dale. Their church helped them raise money for plane tickets to fly to Peru, and it was a happy day for Patti when she heard that a nurse was on her way to help Patti begin her fourth year in the jungle.

Another promise that the Duerksens were testing in “The Great Experiment” was the one that says, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you and watch over you.”⁴¹

They never had visions in which a heavenly being gave them instructions, neither did they ever hear an audible voice from the sky telling them what to do, but frequently other human beings willingly taught them things they needed to know, and they believed it was divine providence that caused their paths to cross. Emerson Panduro was one of those teachers.

Dale needed lumber, but buying lumber was so costly that he could never afford as much as he wanted. There was timber on his property that was suitable for lumber, but there was no way he could transport logs to a sawmill. He began to think, *I wonder if I could make myself a small simple sawmill.* He was very ignorant of how to do such a thing, but the next time he saw Emerson he brought up this idea.

Emerson encouraged him right from the start. “Sure, you can make yourself a little sawmill

³⁹ *Desire of Ages*, p. 370.

⁴⁰ Isaiah 65:24.

⁴¹ Psalm 32:8.

that you can power with a peki-peki motor. You can get everything you need for it in Pucallpa. Buy yourself a circular saw blade and take it to a machine shop. Tell them to make you a mandrel on which to mount that blade, and they can tell you where to get the right kind of bearings. The shop can also make pulleys for you. The place where you buy the saw blade will probably have flat belt material four inches wide that you can buy by the foot. Twelve feet should be enough to serve your needs. When you get all the hardware, you can make a wooden table to mount it on. Make an adjustable guide to put on one side of the blade so that you can set how wide you want each cut to be. Then you'll be ready for business."

Dale was thrilled with this free lesson on how to make a sawmill. The next time he went to the city, he bought a 24-inch diameter saw blade and the necessary belt material. He found a machine shop where he ordered the mandrel and two pulleys with 4-inch diameters. When everything was ready, he eagerly took it all to Puerto Inca to show Emerson.

His friend shook his head. "I'm sorry, Dale, but I forgot to tell you that you can't use the same size pulley on the saw as you have on the motor, because if you do, they will both spin at the same speed, and that will be much too fast for the large saw blade. You really need to have a pulley on the saw that is three times as large as the one on your motor in order to reduce the speed adequately without lugging down the motor. But don't get discouraged. I have a wooden pulley with a 12-inch diameter that I made, but I'm not using it right now, so I'll let you use it to get started until you can get yourself a better one."

Then Emerson looked at the saw blade. "Hmm, this is for a crosscut saw," he said. "You will need a blade with a different kind of teeth for cutting with the grain to make lumber. They probably didn't have any of that kind in Pucallpa. But don't worry. I can modify this one so that it will work for you. First of all I will break off every other tooth on the blade, because with so many teeth it will overheat too quickly. Then I will reset the teeth that are left. The teeth are sharpened at an angle like knife blades for crosscutting, but you will need teeth that are filed straight across to make them like tiny chisels that will rip out a groove in the log you are sawing. I'll make that modification for you too."

So Dale went home and made a sturdy table about eight feet long and about three feet wide. When the saw blade was ready, Emerson's oldest son Herbert brought it down to Maranatha with plans to stay overnight so that he would have plenty of time to help Dale get everything set up and running. They cut down a tall straight tree with the chainsaw and then cut it up into 8-foot logs for easy handling. Then Herbert demonstrated how to push a log through the mill without cutting your fingers off. It was very exciting to see the lovely uniform boards being sliced off the log, and Dale felt like he was overflowing with gratitude for friends like the Panduros.

Not long after the little sawmill was operational, neighbor Fernando Vela came over for a visit. After a bit of courteous preliminary chitchat he announced the purpose of his visit. "I have collected about 70 logs on my place, and I need some lumber to fix up my house. Can I hire you to saw my logs for me?"

Dale's first thought was, *I made that sawmill just for our own use, not for a business sawing lumber for other people.* But then a Bible verse popped into his mind. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."⁴² He had seen Fernando's house that looked more like a pigpen than a human dwelling. There was no denying that his young wife and little baby needed a better place to live. But he also knew that Fernando must be dirt poor and couldn't afford to pay what it would be worth to saw his logs into lumber, so Dale pondered a long moment before he made his reply.

"Fernando, I really don't know what I should charge, so why don't we just work out a deal.

⁴² Galatians 6:2.

You need lumber and I need lumber. You provide the logs and I'll provide the equipment and the fuel. You take half the lumber and I'll take half the lumber. That way you won't have to put out any money. Oh, and you can have all the slabs too. How does that sound to you?"

"Sounds good to me," he said with a smile on his face.

The equipment was easier to move than the logs, so Dale set up the sawmill right beside the log pile. When about half the logs were sawed, Dale stopped for a break to shovel away the accumulated sawdust and to rest a bit.

Suddenly Fernando asked a question that took Dale by surprise. "How can I be baptized? I've never been baptized, but I'd like to be."

Dale replied, "If you love Jesus so much that you are willing to do anything He asks you to do, then you can be baptized to show the whole world that you have chosen Him as your master and savior. If you want to find out what Jesus asks His followers to do, you can come to our house to study the Bible with us. Bring your wife too."

They set up a weekly schedule, and the young couple did come faithfully. Fernando had a high school education and displayed a sharp mind. His wife had no formal education and therefore did not know how to read, but she listened and learned quickly. They completed the series of lessons and faithfully attended church services on Sabbaths, but before a baptismal service could be arranged, they suddenly moved away without telling anybody where they were going. The Duerksens completely lost track of them, so they never knew if Fernando's wish to be baptized ever became a reality.

* * *

Patti also was being taught by God in her on-the-job training. Early on she sensed the need to get close to the people in order to most effectively serve their needs. When she started keeping records on her patients, she set up a small table where she could write down the useful information. One day when she was looking across the table at the patient on the other side, she got the strong impression that the table was serving as a barrier between her and the patient. After that she pushed the table against the wall, and she and the patient sat side by side at the table while they talked together. She had learned Rule Number One: To get close to someone psychologically, you must also get close physically.

One busy day when there were several sick people waiting to be seen, Patti called in a man with his little boy. With just a quick glance at the child she immediately recognized that he had pink eye, a very common and easily treated ailment, so she hurried over to her medicine shelf, picked out a bottle of eye drops, and held it out to the father as she said, "Your child has pink eye, and this will cure it."

"Aren't you even going to check my boy?" he exclaimed with a frown on his face.

"Oh, yes, of course," she replied. So she got out her stethoscope and listened to his heart. Perfect. "Now take a deep breath," she said as she listened to the lungs. Nothing wrong there. "Open your mouth and say, Ah." Throat looked good. She peered into both ears. No problems there. Then she finally pulled down an eyelid. "Your son has pink eye," she declared solemnly as she stood up. This time Father beamed as she handed him the eye drops and told him how to use them. And so Patti adopted Rule Number Two: Always touch your patient, even when you already know what is wrong with him.

It didn't take her long to learn Rule Number Three: It is OK to admit that you haven't found what is causing the problem, but never tell patients there is nothing wrong with them, and always do something for them. After all, they wouldn't go to all the trouble to come see you if they weren't convinced that they have a problem. This was well illustrated by a woman from Puerto Inca who brought her 11-year-old daughter to Patti.

"That doctor in town says there is nothing wrong with my girl," she stated indignantly, "but she still has a fever. Who ever heard of a fever going away by itself?"

Patti examined the girl. She found nothing to explain the low-grade fever, but she knew she had to do something. She also knew that those people had a lot of confidence in injections, so she got out a hypodermic syringe and needle, and the mother's eyes brightened when she saw that. Since malnutrition is common along that river, Patti knew that a nutritional supplement wouldn't hurt and might help, so she gave the girl a shot of B-complex vitamins. Then she counted out three lovely golden capsules containing cod liver oil.

"Take just one every other day," Patti instructed.

Mother smiled as she appeared to be thinking, *My, this must be very potent medicine if we can take only one capsule every other day!*

Since virtually everyone in that area had intestinal worms, Patti started the girl on worm medicine as well and also gave her a medication to bring her fever down. As they left the room, Mother was heard exclaiming, "What a good doctora we have here at Maranatha!"

Rule Number Four is closely related to the others: Don't act like you know it all, but listen carefully to whatever your patients want to tell you, for by so doing you will learn a lot of valuable information and will gain useful insights; and above all, don't ever ridicule or make fun of anything they say nor treat them as ignorant savages. By following this rule Patti frequently discovered that a person often had a heartache that was more severe than the physical ailment that brought the patient to the clinic. She would sympathize with them and sometimes would literally cry with them, and by so doing her heart was bound to theirs resulting in an extremely loyal clientele.

One day a woman came to the clinic with her four children. Patti carefully examined each child and prescribed treatments, mostly for the ubiquitous intestinal parasites. Then it was the mother's turn. She shoed all of her children out of the room and closed the door behind them. Then she looked out the window to make sure nobody was trying to peek in. Next she pulled the privacy curtain shut. She listened intently for a moment to see if she could pick up the sound of anybody outside who might be trying to eavesdrop on her. Finally convinced that they had complete privacy, she leaned over and whispered in Patti's ear, "Doctora, I have a backache."

Patti had to bite her tongue to keep from laughing out loud, and although it was a struggle, she succeeded in regaining her composure. With just a smile on her face she gave the woman some pills for pain and sent her on her way.

Since good communication is so important, Patti decided that her Rule Five should be: Learn to talk like the people around you do. She would listen intently to the way they would express themselves, and then she would try to use the same kind of expressions in her speech.

One day when she was in a pharmacy in the city of Lima buying some medicines to take back to Maranatha, the clerk who was waiting on her made the comment, "You must be from the jungle."

Surprised, Patti responded, "Why, yes, I am, but how did you know?"

"Oh, I can just tell by the way you talk. The people from the jungle talk a little bit differently than we do here on the coast."

And one day when Dale was in Puerto Inca buying some paint at the only store in town that carried that product, the Chinese merchant said to him, "Do you know why the people prefer to go to Maranatha instead of to our government clinic here in town?" Without waiting for a reply he went on, "It's because the Doctora speaks our language." The fact is that Spanish was spoken in both places, and no doubt the health care providers who came from the coastal area to work in the town's clinic were more fluent in correct Spanish than Patti was, but apparently there was something about the way she spoke that the local people were used to, and they appreciated it.

An unexpected box that Patti received one day impressed her to adopt Rule Number Six: Maintain an open mind that is willing to accept anything God sends you to use. Inside the box she discovered a good set of dental tools. She hadn't asked for them, and she didn't know who

had sent them, so she concluded that God must have sent them to her for a purpose. She had no idea how to use them, but she knew that there were many people around her who were suffering because of aching rotten teeth. If she could learn how to pull those troublesome teeth, she could relieve a lot of suffering, so she accepted the challenge of learning how to do it. Somewhere she found a book with detailed instructions how to deaden a nerve with Novocain and how to extract a tooth. She studied the book diligently and even practiced injecting Novocain into her own gum until she felt confident that she could do it on somebody else. She tried applying what she learned, and it worked, and before long there was a steady stream of people coming to her seeking relief from the pain of aching teeth.

Patti's study of the way Jesus treated people convinced her that Rule Number Seven should be: Show respect for traditional practices that are not harmful, and be willing to participate in customs that are not contrary to your religious beliefs. She put this rule into practice in one of her contacts with the Rivera family.

The Riveras had seven children, and they regularly attended Sabbath School at Maranatha for several months. The Duerksens were highly impressed by this courteous well-ordered family. They especially liked fourteen-year-old Haydee, the oldest child, and the family was greatly missed when they moved to Puerto Inca so that the older children could attend school.

One day Steven came by. "Haydee has a boil on her eye," he said, "and her mother asked me to pick up some medicine for her."

That upset Patti. *Why do they do this?* she thought. *I can't treat her effectively from a distance. I need to examine her to decide what the problem is.* But she sent some penicillin back with Steven anyway hoping that it might help the girl.

A few days later Dale had to make a quick trip to Pucallpa, so Leider took him to Puerto Inca. Before Leider returned to Maranatha, he went to the Rivera home to find out how Haydee was getting along. She didn't look good. Obviously the boil was getting worse. "I'm going back to Maranatha in a few minutes, and I can take Haydee to the Doctora if you wish," he suggested. "I can bring her back tomorrow when I return to pick up Mr. Duerksen."

Mrs. Rivera didn't want to do that. Perhaps she didn't feel comfortable about the idea of her teenage daughter going down the river alone with this young man. Instead she took Haydee to a nurse practitioner who gave the girl a shot of something and then assured Mrs. Rivera, "This is nothing serious. Don't worry about it. She will soon be better."

But Haydee didn't get better, and by Thursday night she couldn't talk anymore. The parents finally became alarmed, so Friday morning they put her in their dugout canoe and paddled down to Maranatha. Since she was no longer able to walk, Dale helped them carry her up to the clinic.

When Patti saw the girl, she gasped, "Oh, no! Why did you wait so long to come?" Haydee had a huge ugly boil between the right eye and the bridge of the nose. It was directly over the sinus, which Patti knew can be like a highway to carry infection to the brain. She examined the girl, and her worst fears were confirmed. Meningitis!

Immediately she gave Haydee a heavy dose of potent antibiotics and put a charcoal poultice on the boil to try to neutralize or draw out some of the toxins. Her fever raged around 106 degrees. Although the girl couldn't communicate, she would still respond slightly to some commands at first, but before long she slipped into complete unconsciousness. After awhile she began making erratic grasping motions with her left hand, but only the left hand. Patti interpreted this to be a bad sign, for it appeared to indicate that the right hemisphere of her brain, which controls the left side of the body, was being affected. In one of the wild clutching swings of her hand she knocked the poultice off her face. The boil had opened, and it was amazing to see the great quantity of pus that poured out.

Many earnest prayers ascended heavenward pleading for the restoration of this sweet girl.

Toward evening her temperature dropped down to nearly normal, and her restlessness calmed down. Patti told the parents that she thought the crisis had passed, and everyone was encouraged to hear that. But then about sundown she detected fluid collecting in the girl's lungs, and that filled her with foreboding. Haydee showed signs of difficulty breathing, so Patti inserted an airway, and that helped.

It was amazing how fast news spread along that river. Several concerned neighbors had gathered outside the clinic, so when it got dark Dale got out the projector and a filmstrip and conducted a Bible study on the lawn to begin the Sabbath. It was a lovely evening, and everything seemed so quiet and peaceful.

But the tranquility was abruptly shattered when Patti exclaimed, "She isn't breathing!" Dale sprinted into the clinic to see if he could help. Patti quickly pulled the girl over onto her back and tried suctioning her throat, but she didn't get much out. She checked her pulse. It was still strong. She dashed into the other room and hurried back with her Ambubag. Dale helped her as they tried desperately to force some air into the girl's lungs, but they didn't seem to have any success. Finally they were gratified to see the rib cage rise slightly—but when the air was exhaled it brought with it a gush of fluid tinged with blood that poured out of her nose and mouth. Patti put her stethoscope on the girl's chest once more. "Her heart is still beating, but it's slowing down," she said sadly, and they knew they had lost the battle. Haydee was drowning in her own body fluids that were collecting in her lungs, and there was nothing more they could do about it.

With heavy hearts they turned to break the sad news to the parents who were seated nearby, apparently still rather oblivious to what had just happened. Then the weeping began, but it was well controlled, not like those who have no hope. The parents shook the small children who were asleep to tell them that their big sister had just died. Dale wondered why they did that. Certainly the morning would be soon enough for them to learn the tragic news.

Mr. Rivera approached Patti with a request. "Would you permit us to hold the velada right here at Maranatha tonight? If we take the body up to Puerto Inca for the velada, there will be a lot of drinking and gambling and coarse talking and laughing, and we don't want that."

Patti knew that the "velada" was the custom of staying up all the first night to watch over the dead body. "Yes, we'll be happy to let you have the velada here," she assured him. "I'll get you some candles you can use." Mr. Rivera gave her a smile of appreciation as she turned to go get the candles.

By midnight about 50 people had gathered for the velada. Some of them had never attended any of the religious services at Maranatha. Although Patti was very tired after a busy day of work, she determined to spend the all-night vigil with them. She spoke words of comfort as well as expressing her own grief and sometimes crying with them. She used this opportunity to talk to them about the hope of the resurrection, salvation that comes only through faith in Jesus, and the place that He is preparing for those who love Him. Everyone listened respectfully, and they all seemed to be greatly impressed by the fact that this foreigner would show so much concern for them. She had tried to follow Jesus' method of reaching the people, a method that includes weeping with those that weep,⁴³ and she was glad she did.

⁴³ See *Ministry of Healing*, p. 144.

13 *A Lighted Candle Goes Out*



A good watchdog should solve the problem of thieves coming in the middle of the night to break in and steal. That's what they thought. In fact, during their first year at Maranatha, Ted found somebody who was giving away a couple of pups, and he took them both. He named them Borkney and Brutus. But quickly the vision of vicious creatures scaring away evil intruders was shattered.

Borkney loved to travel, and when patients would get into their boat to return home, Borkney was inclined to get in with them. Twice Dale went in search of the straying pup and brought him back home again. After that he gave up and let the dog go his own way. Brutus, on the other hand, was a homebody and never tried to run away. When he was full-grown he was only about the size of a Cocker Spaniel, so his size didn't intimidate anybody. Furthermore he loved everybody, and whenever a thief came in the dark of night, no doubt Brutus greeted him with a wagging tail. He was just a worthless mutt, but the Duerksens loved him anyway and let him be a part of the Maranatha family.

One day an interesting couple came to Maranatha just for a visit. The man had spent some time studying in the United States, and while there he had fallen in love with an American girl and had married her. Now he had a small cattle ranch a few miles upstream from Puerto Inca. When they heard that there were some Americans at Maranatha, the lonesome young wife decided she wanted to get acquainted with those people from her native land, so that was the purpose of their visit.

This new friendship didn't last very long, however, because after a few months they announced that they had decided to sell their ranch and go back to the USA to live. "We were wondering," the wife said, "if you folks might like to have our dog. She's a Doberman, and she's only a year old. Her name is Sophia Loren, and she's a good watchdog. Our neighbors would like to have her, but we don't like the way they treat their animals. We know we could trust you to take good care of her. Would you please take her?"

Patti's eyes lighted up. "We'd be delighted to have her! That's just what we need, a good watchdog," she exclaimed.

And so it was that Sophie came to live at Maranatha. One night Dale heard her barking wildly, so he got up to investigate. He found her in the moonlight with the hair standing up on her back, obviously very frightened by a small tree that had fallen over, and now some of the roots were sticking up in the air. With Dale by her side to give her courage she very cautiously approached this strange looking "creature," and after smelling it and discovering that it wasn't dangerous after all, she ceased her barking. "Looks like you're going to be a worthless mutt too," Dale muttered to the dog.

Fortunately that turned out to be an invalid assessment, and Sophie quickly demonstrated her ability to be a valuable guardian. She could be vicious when necessary but generally not too vicious. One day a man came up the path making a noise she didn't like, so she ran straight to him, planted her front paws on his chest, snapped at his shirt and tore off a button. Then she

turned and ran back to the house. The poor man was scared to death by this encounter, but he wasn't hurt at all.

Sophie got used to people coming to the clinic and was no longer bothered by their coming and going. That is, until one day a little old man came hobbling up the path on crutches. That looked very different from anything she had ever seen before. She must have thought that he intended to harm her with those crutches, and she attacked him viciously. Dale ran down the path shrieking, "Sophie, stop! Stop it! Come here!" He grabbed her by the collar and pulled her off the poor little man. She had bitten him quite severely, and Patti was extremely embarrassed. She apologized profusely, and fortunately he was amazingly good-natured about this painful incident. Patti promised him that the dog would be tied up in the future whenever patients were around so that this wouldn't happen again.

Rumors traveled fast that there was a ferocious dog at Maranatha, and she would jump on you and go straight for your throat. Patti didn't try to squelch the rumors. Instead she told people that Sophie would be tied up during the day, but she would always be roaming freely at night. As expected, all evidence of thieves coming under the cover of darkness stopped after the word got out about Sophie.

Yet the Duerksens were troubled about some things still disappearing. Were these things just lost as a result of carelessness or forgetfulness—or were they stolen? That was hard to determine. For instance, they had two hammers, but one day only one could be found. And when Patti checked her cash box each day, she began noticing that there was less money than she knew should be there. One day Dale was making a barbed wire fence when he was called away. He wasn't able to go back to finish the job until the next day, and then he discovered that the remainder of the roll of wire he had been using had disappeared. This looked like an inside job, because Sophie would have raised a ruckus if a stranger had ventured very far from the clinic to snoop around. Could it be that their trusted helper Leider had sticky fingers? How they hoped that wasn't the case, but they knew they had to keep their minds open to that possibility.

They began keeping a watchful eye on Leider, and before long Dale had evidence that he was indeed engaging in dishonest activities. "Leider, I need to talk to you," he said, and then he confronted the young man with some of the evidence he had gathered. When Leider saw the evidence that he could not deny, he confessed that he had done it and said that he was sorry.

"Leider, God can forgive you, and so can we, when you confess what you have done wrong and show a willingness to change your ways. The Bible tells us, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'⁴⁴ But you must confess everything you have done. We won't be able to have any confidence in you in the future if you try to hide anything from us now. Tell me, is there anything else you are hiding and need to confess today?"

"No, Señor Duerksen, I told you everything. I'm not hiding anything."

"Oh, Leider! Leider! This makes me so sad, because I know you're lying to me. I didn't tell you everything I know on purpose, because I don't want you to confess only those things that you know you can't hide anymore. We don't want you to be like Achan, who refused to confess that he had taken something that did not belong to him, until his sin was exposed, and then it was too late.⁴⁵ Please don't put it off too long. I will give you one week to think about everything you have done that you know was dishonest and to make things right. Pray to God about it, and we will be praying too that the Holy Spirit will give you courage to do it."

Day after day went by with no response. After seven days Dale again confronted him, but he still refused to admit to any other wrongdoing. With a heavy heart Dale said, "Get all your

⁴⁴ 1 John 1:9.

⁴⁵ See Joshua chapter 7.

things together and take them down to the boat. You can't stay here with us any longer, so I'll take you to Puerto Inca this afternoon. Even though we know you have stolen some money, I will give you some more money anyway to help you make a new start in life, because we don't want you to be destitute when you leave Maranatha." It was a sad parting complete with tears, but the Duerksens knew it had to be done.

* * *

But even as it appeared that one candle was being extinguished, they were encouraged to see others being lit. For instance, there was the lovely Heidinger family, Teresa and Juan and their four children. They were descendents of German immigrants. Teresa had a lingering illness that was very debilitating, but none of the local medical practitioners could figure out what was wrong with her. Finally she went to the city to seek medical help, and there she was diagnosed as having tuberculosis of the kidney. When she returned with that diagnosis in hand, Patti knew how to help her, and so she became a regular visitor to the clinic.

Patti took advantage of opportunities to talk to Teresa about spiritual things. She invited her to bring her children to Sabbath School, and she did. Her interest grew rapidly, and it wasn't long before she decided she wanted to be baptized. Her husband Juan was a very nice guy, and everybody liked him. He had no objections to his wife's decision for baptism, but he seemed to show no interest in religion for himself. On the day of Teresa's baptism it was quite disappointing to see that Juan didn't even show up to witness this event that was so important to his wife.

Another newcomer to their Sabbath School was Josefa's sister Rosa with her children. They lived on the farm adjoining Maranatha, and that made it easy for them to walk over every Sabbath morning. They attended very faithfully, but, as was so typical, her husband Santiago didn't come with the family. After several months, however, his curiosity must have prevailed, because one Sabbath he did show up with his wife and children to see for himself what was going on. The Duerksens were already acquainted with him, and they cordially welcomed him to the service. Afterward they invited him to come back again, and the next Sabbath he did return. In fact, he never missed another Sabbath! It was a thrilling sight to behold.

With a growing membership they needed a better place to meet for worship. Meeting under the spreading branches of the big tree in the back yard was fine on a beautiful dry morning, but when it rained they had to crowd into the small waiting room in the clinic building, and that felt like being in a can of sardines. It was time to build a church. If they planned a big beautiful structure with perhaps a steeple and other adornments of a typical church building, it would take years to plan it and collect enough money and construct their plans. They needed something quickly, even if it was nothing more than a roof over their heads. "Yes, that's it," Dale said. "Let's make a roof. We'll do what we can with what we have. Everything we need for a roof is right here in the jungle."

They discussed the idea in Sabbath School, and everybody was interested. "We'll need some help," Dale pointed out. "We have not had experience making a thatch roof, so we need somebody who knows how to show us the way to do it. Any volunteers?"

Santiago willingly, perhaps even eagerly, offered his services, and without delay they went to work. They cleared an area about 12 feet wide by 24 feet long, and after packing the loosened soil they covered it with sawdust to be their floor. Every week they could sprinkle some fresh sawdust around to give a fresh clean appearance to the dirt floor. Santiago helped them find good trees to make the supporting poles for the structure. Dale cut lumber on his little sawmill to make rafters for the roof. Santiago told them they would need cord to tie the thatch to the rafters, but his idea of "cord" was much different than Dale's idea. He demonstrated his skill and knowledge by selecting a certain tree and stripping the bark from it. The inner layer of the bark proved to be supple and tough, and he sliced that inner part into strips about a quarter inch wide,

and these strips he called "cord."

After he had the quantity of cord that he deemed would be sufficient for the job, he set everybody to work cutting palm branches for thatch. He showed them how to bend the leaves over one way for thatching one side of the roof and bending them over the opposite way for the other side of the roof. He himself skillfully wove palm leaves together to form the covering or cap of the ridgepole. Then he climbed up onto the rafters, and as the others on the ground handed him the palm branches, he tied them in place.

The work progressed rapidly, and before the week was over the roof was completed. It was a tight roof that didn't let a drop of rain get through, and it didn't cost them a penny except for a few nails and the small amount of gasoline to run the sawmill. Everybody liked the new "church," including the dogs. Since the dogs were a distraction and weren't really welcome in church, the next week the men went to work cutting the abundant wild cane into four-foot lengths which they used to create a low wall enclosing the structure, and Dale made a door out of boards. Now the dogs were kept out while everybody else could come in.

Dale made a small simple pulpit, and he started giving a sermon every Sabbath. When Emerson came by to see what they were doing, he declared, "I like this little house of worship you have made, but I don't like the odd assortment of crude benches you have. I want to have a part in this too, so I'm going to make you six sturdy matching benches." He kept his word, and all these things contributed to the feeling that this was a special little spot in the jungle reserved for the worship of God.

Friends in town indicated that they would like to come out sometime to see the new little church, so Patti and Dale invited them to come the first Sabbath after Christmas. They planned a special service complete with a fellowship meal for that day, and about 30 people from Puerto Inca accepted the invitation.

Patti planned a Sabbath School program that was centered around the children, because usually so little is done for them. She wanted this to be virtually a training session for the adults as well so that they would return to their church in Puerto Inca with ideas of what they could do for their own children. The visiting district pastor preached the sermon in the second service, and Dale felt refreshed by being able to listen to a sermon for a change instead of doing the preaching himself.

After a simple meal of rice and beans with a fresh vegetable salad, everybody gathered for the afternoon meeting. This meeting made use of the flannel board, and everyone loved to watch the beautiful pictures being developed before their eyes. The theme was Christmas. It began with the manger scene followed by the scene of the angels announcing to the shepherds the birth of Jesus, and then the wise men coming to see the newborn king. As Dale set up the flannelgraph figures in each scene, the preacher read aloud the corresponding passages in the Bible. Between each story they sang a Christmas carol. They ended by looking ahead to the future with scenes of Jesus coming back again and the new earth that He will prepare for His people. They closed with the beloved hymn, "Mas Allá del Sol" (Far Beyond the Sun), and they really made the rafters ring as they sang that one. It was thrilling. Reluctantly they parted, but it was dangerous to navigate the river at night, so they had to make sure they would get home before dark.

* * *

Now that it was no longer necessary to use the clinic waiting room for church services when the weather was bad, Patti decided that it was time for some remodeling. She called to her jack-of-all-trades husband, "Dale, please come here and take a look. I badly need a place where I can put an OB patient waiting for a delivery, or a critical patient who needs to be under observation overnight. Let's see if we can figure out some way to make a couple of patient rooms. I think we could get by with even less space in the waiting room. Some visitors can wait outside if necessary. And our little store is taking up more space than necessary. You could make some

shelves right here by the window where we could put the few things we stock. Then when a visitor wants to buy something, he can come to the window, and I will sell it to him through the window. I think that will actually be more convenient than what we have now. Do you think you could do that?"

Dale scrutinized the layout, scratched his head a bit, and took some measurements. Then he nodded his head slowly as he proclaimed, "I can make you two rooms that will be 5 by 10 feet if you can get along with something that small."

"Oh, you're wonderful!" Patti exclaimed as she threw her arms around Dale and gave him a big hug and a kiss. "I just knew you could do it."

So Dale went to work with a saw, a hammer, a square, some boards and some nails, and in short order the little day clinic was turned into a two-bed hospital! It was none too soon, for barely were the partitions in place before a very sick patient came who really needed overnight care. Of course a number of relatives stayed as well, thirteen in fact! How they all managed to find space to bed down for the night was a mystery to Patti, but those people were used to sleeping in cramped quarters and didn't seem to mind. After those patient rooms were initiated, at least one was occupied most of the time.

* * *

One day a boat pulled up to their landing with a pregnant woman whom Patti had been monitoring. She was surprised to see this girl, because she wasn't due for two months yet. Her husband said she had started bleeding and was having pains, so he brought her in. It appeared that she really was in labor, so Patti examined her and found that she had dilated about 4 centimeters.

The situation didn't look good at all, so as usual she sent up an SOS to the Great Physician for help. She told the relatives, "It looks like this baby is going to come ready or not—and of course at seven months the baby won't be quite ready. A premature infant needs special care, and with the meager facilities we have here, we can't provide that kind of care. But I promise you that I'll do everything I can with what I have to try to save the baby's life." The relatives nodded and said they understood.

Labor continued all afternoon, and early in the evening she delivered. What came out looked so strange in the semi-darkness of the twilight that Patti thought she had delivered a monster. She turned it over, and then she gasped as she discovered that this was the placenta and everything. It had all come out at once. Suddenly she realized that the baby was still inside the bag of waters that had not burst yet. Quickly she punctured the bag and pulled out the tiny infant, so small that she could hold it in one hand, and a quick look revealed that the wee little girl had no apparent physical defects. Patti suctioned the mouth and throat, but the little tyke wouldn't breathe, so she started mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. For five minutes she worked with no response. *Shall I give up*, she thought. *No, I'd better try a little longer*. Five more minutes went by, and still there was no response by the baby. It was so obviously hopeless, and yet she couldn't bring herself to stop trying, not just yet. She really didn't realize how much time was going by, so intent she was on getting that baby to breathe; but Kathy was there helping and keeping track of the time, and she maintained that Patti worked over that baby a full 20 minutes before the baby gave her first feeble gasp. At that encouraging sign of life, Patti dunked her in a pan of cold water. No response. Again. Still no response. A third dunking finally produced another gasp. Then she applied mouth-to-mouth breathing a few more times, and at last the little one began to breathe on her own—and Patti breathed a prayer of thanksgiving.

But the struggle wasn't over yet. The baby needed an incubator to keep her warm, but there was none available, neither at Maranatha nor in Puerto Inca. They would just have to do the best they could with what they had, so Kathy and Patti took turns all night long holding the baby girl with a rubber hot water bottle to keep her warm, and she continued to breathe without further

assistance.

In the morning the mother was very happy that her baby was still alive, for she had expected it to be stillborn. In fact, she was surprised to see that the baby even had a head, for she had the strange idea that at seven months a baby hasn't developed a head yet! In the morning light of the sun, Patti did a thorough examination of the infant, and she was amazed at what she saw. There were no retractions, no rails, no flaring of the nostrils, none of the symptoms of stress usually seen in a premature infant.

She got an eyedropper and took it to the mother. "Try to squeeze some colostrum from your breasts," she suggested, "and suck it up in this eyedropper. Then give the baby a few drops of it, and see if she will be able to swallow it. I hope she will. I'll be back after awhile to see how you're getting along." With that she left to take care of some other responsibilities.

She returned about two hours later, and she found the mother holding her baby to her breast, and to her amazement she saw that the baby was nursing! She could hardly believe her eyes! Except for the baby's tiny size, you would have thought that she was a full-term infant. She continued to do so well that after a couple days Patti sent mother and baby home.

A few days later the doctor from the clinic in Puerto Inca stopped by for a short visit, and Patti told him all about the premie. "My, you were lucky!" he exclaimed.

"No," Patti responded, "it wasn't luck. I believe it was just a miracle from God."

* * *

One day a sleazy-looking character came up to Patti and announced, "Liboria, my mother-in-law, has a bad toothache, and she wants you to come pull her tooth. She lives up at the end of Sungarillo Creek."

Patti resisted the urge to retort with the irritable words that exploded in her mind. *So why didn't you bring her down here to the clinic where I have all the instruments I might need? We have our hands full just taking care of the patients who come here without going out on house calls.* But she didn't say that, because the still small voice of the Holy Spirit reminded her that she would be doing this for Liboria, and she knew about the sad history of this poor woman. About two or three years previously her husband got mad at her, and in his rage he pushed her off the high porch of their house. She fell over backward and broke her neck when she hit the ground. That scared him, and he took off, leaving her a partially paralyzed invalid. She had never seen him since.

Patti could not forget the words of Jesus, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."⁴⁶ And so she opened her mouth and said, "If you will take us to her place, Kathy and I will go. Just wait a few minutes for us while I collect a few things I will need."

They went about as far up the Sungarillo as it was navigable, and then they tied up to the bank and climbed a long slippery trail up through the jungle growth. When they came into a little clearing, they saw Liboria sitting in her house smiling down at them. It wasn't through the window that they saw her, for the house didn't have any windows. No walls either. Just four posts supporting a thatch roof and a floor about three feet above the ground.

They climbed up onto the high floor, and Patti took a quick look around at the furnishings in the house. It didn't take long to take it all in. Liboria was sitting on her bed propped against one of the corner posts. Her bed consisted of a blanket. And that was all the furniture. The kitchen was better equipped. There were two pots, a big one and a little one. And that was all. There wasn't anything else.

Patti prepared the anesthetic and injected it into the jaw. When the area was deadened, she extracted the aching tooth. Liboria was so cheerful, so happy for the visit. Patti read to her from the Bible for awhile and then prayed with her before leaving. As she walked away she didn't

⁴⁶ Matthew 25:40.

have to look back to remind herself what she was leaving. It was easy to remember. Just four posts, a thatch roof and a floor, a blanket and two battered old pots. That was all. THERE WASN'T ANYTHING ELSE.

Oh, God! Forgive us for being so mean, so hard hearted, so tight fisted. We have so much. We live in a mansion of four rooms with a tin roof and walls and screened windows. We have a bed with a thick foam mattress. We have a table and chairs, two kerosene stoves and a refrigerator. There are a variety of shiny pots and pans in our kitchen, and the shelves are full of plastic dishes of all kinds. We have everything we need – and yet we worry that somebody might take advantage of us. Oh, Lord, help us to realize that it is better to let some people use us and cheat us occasionally than to make our policies and practices so rigid that some poor soul like Liboria might be deprived of the help they so desperately need.

14 *God Lights Many Candles*



Again it was time to renew visas. This was never any fun. The trip to Lima by bus was long and hard and dirty, and they never knew what kind of reception they would receive in the Department of Immigration. It seemed that the rules were continually changing, and the same could be said of the attitudes of the officials. If they were in a good mood, they would permit the maximum extension of 90 days. If they got up on the wrong side of the bed that morning, more likely they would give only 60 days. And if they happened to be upset with the United States of America, it was possible they would allow you only 15 days to wind up your affairs and get out of their country.

"Patti, I have a good idea to improve our relationship with the immigration officials," Dale confided one day. "Since Emerson's brother Lander is now the mayor of Puerto Inca, and he likes us, I'm going to ask him to write a letter as a local official describing the work we are doing to benefit the people here on the Pachitea River. I'll bet a letter like that will really impress those guys in Lima and make it easier for us to get a long extension to our visas." And so Dale went to town to visit Lander and discuss this idea with him. He was very agreeable, and he immediately set to work composing a letter praising the work of the Duerksens. Not only did he sign it, but he also got the chief of police and a couple of other dignitaries to sign it as well, and they stamped it with their official seals, and it looked quite impressive when they got through.

It was permissible for a man to get a visa renewal for his wife without her presence, so they planned for Dale and Mike to go while Patti and Kathy remained at Maranatha. Patti helped Dale pack his suitcase for the trip. "Do you want to take our airline tickets along?" she asked.

"Yes, put them in. Immigration usually wants to verify that we will have a way to leave Peru before they will issue an extension on our visas."

Soon the men were on their way, and the next day as they were nearing the capital city, Dale decided to check over his documents. He had both passports, but he was stunned to discover that he had only Patti's airline ticket and not his own.

Dale turned to Mike. "Did you bring your airline tickets?" he inquired.

"No," came the reply. "You didn't tell me I should." And Dale's heart sank as he realized how true that was, and of course Mike had no idea what documents he would need to renew his visa, so it wasn't his fault.

Now what could they do? If they went back home to get the tickets, it would take so long that their visas would expire before they could renew them, and then they would at least have to pay a fine if not getting into even more serious trouble. Maybe if they could just get the identification numbers on the tickets, they could somehow convince the officials that they did have return tickets to the USA. It was worth a try, so at the scheduled time for the radio net, they went to the radio room at the Inca Union Mission office to contact Maranatha.

"Patti, all I have is your airline ticket, so give me the number on my ticket and also the numbers on the Mahoneys' tickets."

"But I sent yours with you," she protested. "Well, just a minute. Let me look," she continued, and sure enough, there it was. It was a mystery how it got left behind, but somehow it did.

Now that he had the ticket numbers, Dale planned his strategy. *I'll type out the requests for visa renewal putting in the ticket numbers just like I always have in the past. It will look like we filled these out before we left home. We'll just forge our wives' signatures, and nobody will know the difference. I'll hand these request forms to the official with the letter from the mayor right on top, and he'll read it and be greatly impressed. Then when he asks to see the tickets, I'll tell him I'm sorry, but I forgot to bring them along this time. We have already been in Peru over three years, and we have renewed our visas several times. Of course we always have tickets to leave the country, but we don't have time to go back and get them now. Then out of the kindness of his heart, he will tell me that because of the good work we are doing in the jungle, he will let it go this time, but don't ever let it happen again!* It was a beautiful scenario—but it didn't work out quite that way.

Dale heard that there was a branch office of immigration in the Miraflores suburb not far from the mission office. It would be simpler to go there instead of going to downtown Lima, so that's where he went. He handed the documents to the clerk at the window. The clerk was terribly unimpressed by the letter. "There is absolutely no way you can get your visas renewed without presenting your airline tickets," he insisted.

"Would you please let me explain our situation to the captain who has to sign the visas?" Dale requested politely.

The captain came over to the window, and Dale gave him a brief explanation of the problem and asked him to read the mayor's letter. He glanced at it briefly and then looked back at Dale with penetrating dark eyes as he declared, "It makes no difference who you are. From the lowest to the highest, EVERYBODY has to present a return ticket before getting a visa renewal." He turned and strode back to his desk, and that was that! That was the law, and there was no way around it.

Dale felt devastated as he started to turn away, but suddenly another thought struck him. Virtually everybody has a boss somewhere. Maybe he could find a sympathetic ear higher up the chain of command. Turning back to the clerk he said, "I think I'll go talk to the Director of Immigration himself and see if he won't make an exception this time. I suppose his office isn't open in the afternoons, so I'll have to go tomorrow."

The clerk kind of shrugged and replied, "You'll have to go to downtown Lima for that. They are open till 1:00 PM. If you hurry you might still make it today."

Dale glanced at his watch. It was a little past 11:00. Yes, there should still be enough time, so he called Mike to come, and they dashed out to catch a taxi. At Immigration headquarters he boldly marched up to the director's office, although he didn't feel very courageous inside. The secretary asked him what he wanted, so he gave her a brief explanation of their problem. "You have come to the wrong place," she said. "You need to talk to Colonel Gonzalez. He is the one in charge of such matters. He's sitting right over there," and she pointed to a desk in the middle of the large room.

Dale decided to try the mayor's wonderful letter once more, hoping and praying that it would have a better reception this time. He handed the documents to the Colonel with the letter on top. Gonzalez read it through, and then he exploded, "Why, this is illegal! You are just tourists, and you can't carry on a business like that! It's illegal!" Dale looked away, wishing he could find a hole somewhere to crawl into. He didn't know what to say, so he just stood there stupidly not saying anything. *Why, oh why, did I try to help God out by getting that letter? We would have been so much better off just leaving things in God's hands. Now we are going to be deported – that is, if they don't throw us in jail instead.*

Colonel Gonzalez looked like he was fuming inside as he shuffled through the papers

circling a few things with his pen and looking at the passports. "Go to window 18," he commanded as he handed all the documents to an aide.

Dale walked away in a confused daze. What might await him at window 18? He had a short wait in line, and when it was his turn he gave the clerk the names on the passports. She quickly found them and announced, "That will be twenty dollars for each visa, eighty dollars total." He already knew that fees regarding international activities were charged in US dollars rather than local currency, so he was prepared to pay. He counted out four 20-dollar bills and handed them to her, and she handed him the four passports.

As he walked away in a daze he opened the passports to check on what was inside. Yes, there were the extended visas giving them another 90 days in the country. What had been absolutely impossible just an hour earlier at the branch office had turned into a possibility. Nobody at the head office had even mentioned airline tickets. Incredible! "Not by might nor by power, by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty."⁴⁷ And the top man in the department accusing them of illegal activity and still giving them their visa extensions anyway was also incredible—and awesome too!

On their return home Dale had some business to take care of at the mission office in Pucallpa. He went there and found the president, and after greetings were exchanged he stated his business. "We have some young people who have been attending our services at Maranatha for several months, and we have gone through a series of studies with them, and now they want to be baptized and join the church. Can you arrange for a baptismal service for us?"

"We were just discussing plans for a baptism in your area," the president replied. "We heard that there are several candidates in Puerto Inca who are ready for baptism. Just a minute. Let me check the schedule... Yes, here it is. We're planning to send up a pastor for a baptism on Sabbath, May 25. Will that date be all right for you folks as well?"

"Yes, Pastor, that will be fine. But last time we all went to town for the baptism. Now don't you think it should be our turn? I don't think the people in town would mind coming down to Maranatha."

"That sounds fair enough. I think we should be able to work that out."

And so the plans were made. When Dale announced the date for the baptism in Sabbath School, Santiago and Rosa said that they would like to be baptized too, and when Josefa heard that her sister was going to be baptized, she said that she would like to join them in baptism as well.

One day when Mike and Dale were exploring the perimeter of the property, they discovered that a large creek crossed one corner. At one point the creek formed a big pool of clear water.

"Hey, this would make a great swimming hole," Mike suggested.

"Probably so, but I was just thinking what a great place for a baptism this could be," was Dale's comment. "We're surrounded here by these tall majestic trees that provide shade, and it's so quiet and peaceful back here. There would be no distraction by boats going by on the river. Let's make a path from here to the house, and I'll bet with a good path it wouldn't take more than fifteen minutes to walk out here." So they set to work making the path, and before long it was done.

When the day for the baptism came, all the church members from town came down to Maranatha in a big borrowed boat. Many other friends also showed up for the occasion. Nobody bothered to count how many were present, but it must have been over a hundred, and it taxed their facilities to the limit. There was no way they could all fit into their new little church, so they had to have another outdoor meeting. But it was a lovely sunny day, so that was no problem.

The visiting pastor conducted a preparatory examination of the baptismal candidates, and

⁴⁷ Zechariah 4:6.

one of his questions had to do with marriage. Out in isolated jungle areas it is quite common for a couple to just decide to live together without going to the trouble of having a marriage that is recognized by the government as legal. Santiago and Rosa passed the examination with flying colors, but not Josefa. Her husband saw no need of going to the expense of legalizing their marriage, and so the pastor refused to baptize her, and she was very disappointed. So were her friends.

* * *

Not many days after the baptism it was time for Mike and Kathy to return to their homeland. "We're really going to miss them," Patti remarked. "God has been so good to send us helpers when we needed them, just as He promised He would. I wonder whom He will send us next."

"I have been thinking the same thing," Dale responded. "God has never failed us yet, and I'm sure He won't now. I am beginning to feel that maybe God has chosen Santiago to be that person. There seems to be something special about that man. He is so faithful in coming to church, and he was such a big help when we built our new little church."

"You know, Dale, that has been going through my mind too. But I just don't know if they would be willing to come join us. I guess it won't hurt to ask them, but first let's pray that God will make it clear to us what we should do."

But the next Sabbath Santiago and Rosa didn't show up for church. After church Patti cornered Josefa and asked her, "Where's your sister today?"

"Oh, she and Santiago went down the river to look for a new place to live," she responded.

Patti's heart sank as she heard that bit of news. "Don't they like living here?"

"Well, that's not the problem. You see, they have been living on my parents' property. They aren't Christians, you know, and when my father gets drunk, he can be pretty hard to live with. Santiago wants to get out of this situation, so he's looking for a place of his own."

The following Sabbath the missing family was in church again. After the service Dale approached Santiago to talk to him. "We missed you last week and we're so glad to see you back again. Josefa told us that you are looking for a place to live. Did you find anything you liked?"

"No, we didn't find anything suitable," he replied dejectedly. "I don't know what we are going to do."

Dale felt like shouting, *I'm so glad to hear that!* Instead he tried to sound sympathetic as he said, "I'm sorry you didn't have a very successful trip, Santiago. However, I've been wanting to talk to you about something. We're all alone here now, and we badly need some helpers. We would like to invite you and your wife to join us. We don't pay any wages here. We just share together what we have. We provide all the food and medical care and whatever else our workers need, and we also give a small monthly stipend as long as there is money available, so that they will have some cash to spend as well. Would you be interested in becoming a part of our Maranatha family?"

"Well, I'll talk it over with Rosa, and we'll pray about it, and then we'll let you know what we decide."

Several days of praying and hoping for a positive response went by, and then Santiago came over again. "I want to thank you for your kind invitation," he said. "After talking it over, we have decided to accept your offer. Where do you want us to put our house?"

Dale beamed at that good news. "We're so happy you are going to come join us. You can put your house anywhere you want. If you would like, you can put it right next to our buildings, or if you prefer more privacy, you can go out to the backside of our property. I can go with you right now to select a site." And so they did.

Santiago preferred to stay close to the river, so he chose to put his house just beyond the little house that had been Leider's. Then began a demonstration of the jungle version of a mobile

home. Dale went with Santiago to his old house to help him move. There were no nails in his house, for it was all tied together. He had already torn off the thatch roof to be burned. There were plenty of palm trees around to provide fresh leaves for a new roof. He disassembled the remainder of the house, and together they carried all the poles to his new building site where he put the house together again. Previously the house had just a dirt floor, so Dale provided him with boards that he had cut on his sawmill, and with these he made a smooth wooden floor. It looked so nice, and everybody was pleased with the new house.

* * *

One evening Patti told Dale, "I had a patient today who came from the new road. The poor man had five boils on his arm! He tried to find his way through the jungle, because he couldn't afford to hire a boat to take him the long way around by river via Puerto Inca. There are some trails out there in the jungle, but they aren't marked and well defined. Obviously none of the trails comes directly here. It took him all day to find our place, but at least he demonstrated that it could be done. He's going to stay here tonight, and he'll hike back out tomorrow. I think we ought to make a trail out to the road and mark it with signs, and no doubt that would bring us a lot of suffering people from that area who need help that we can give."

"I agree with you," Dale said. "In fact, a good path through the jungle would be a blessing in more ways than one. Judging from what I have seen from the air as we fly over, I'm sure it's not more than three miles out to that road. The path we made out to the baptismal pool goes in the direction of the road, so that's a good start. As I have free time I'll work on extending that path farther into the jungle, and some day we'll get there."

And so Dale and Santiago started working half days on the new trail. Sometimes a neighbor would also come to help them for awhile, for the neighbors also had an interest in a good path out to the road. Dale decided to make the path about four feet wide, for he thought that someday he might get himself a motorcycle to provide improved transportation.

The Adventist Air Base had a change of pilots, and the new pilot was a single fellow named Vern Anderson. The daily radio contacts kept him posted on the progress of the new trail through the jungle, which seemed to interest him very much. One morning he announced, "I bought myself a new motorcycle, and after you finish the new trail, I would like to try to ride all the way out to your place. In fact, I have been thinking that I would like to spend the Fourth of July weekend with you. That's about a month away. Do you think you will finish by then?"

"We don't know how far we have to go yet, Vern. We just follow the compass knowing that if we keep going the right direction, eventually we will have to hit the road. We'd love to have you come, and we'll do our best to get it done."

Now with a definite date as their goal, the men were spurred on to work harder and longer on the project. A few days they dedicated the entire day to trail building, and on July 4, Dale called the Air Base by radio to announce, "We did it, Vern! Our trail is open all the way. Now we can easily walk out to the road in an hour, and if we push ourselves hard we can do it in just 45 minutes. There are still a few rough spots that need some more work, and one place the trail goes through a nearly dry creek bed that has a steep bank, but with a little bit of help I'm sure you can make it. We'll go out to the road to meet you so that we can help you through the bad places. This is going to be exciting!"

It took Vern about three hours to ride out from Pucallpa, and the men were waiting on the road to show him where the trail began. As he started down the trail, they ran along behind, but soon he left them in the dust. His motorbike was so agile it didn't need any help. However it suddenly quit running about a hundred yards from the house. It seemed that it lost compression, and he couldn't get it started again, so he pushed it the rest of the way. That was hardly the dramatic arrival they had expected! Still it was a thrilling sight when that shiny red Honda crossed the last bridge and entered the Maranatha compound.

Saturday night Dale started the generator to provide electric lights, and Vern took the motor apart. He didn't find anything wrong, but he suspected that a chip of carbon might have prevented a valve from closing properly. He cleaned everything thoroughly and put it all together again, and the motor started easily and ran perfectly. The next day he returned home without any problems, and the friends he left behind felt that a new day had dawned for Maranatha.

15 *The Light of God's Face*



It had been another busy week, and Sabbath after church Patti said, "Dale, I've been around people all week and I'm tired of seeing people. I just feel like getting away for awhile. Let's go for a walk this afternoon."

"OK. Where do you want to go?"

"Let's just walk out on the new trail."

So after eating their simple lunch, they strolled hand-in-hand till they came to the pool in the creek. This tranquil and beautiful spot was so inviting that they just sat down on the bank and totally relaxed as they listened to the birds in the treetops. They tried to spot the one with the shrill call that sounded like a sailor whistling at a pretty girl, but it always remained hidden.

"This place reminds me of one of the camping grounds we used to go to on the California coast," Dale commented. "The lovely trees, the little creek, the birds. I wonder if we could make this into a campground. There's a good supply of clean water here."

"Why would you want to make a campground here on our property?" Patti queried.

"Well, I was thinking about our church members. I have such wonderful memories of going to the Redwood Camp Meeting and what a blessing it was to us, but I've never heard of a camp meeting down here in South America. I think our members here deserve something inspiring like that too."

"Better be careful or you're liable to bite off more than you can chew. Sounds like a pretty big undertaking to me."

"Yes, we couldn't do anything large-scale overnight—maybe never, I don't know. But at least we could try something small, like a weekend retreat for the interested people in Puerto Inca. Let's go do a little exploring and see if we can find a place nearby that could be used as a place for meetings."

So they followed the creek to be sure they wouldn't get lost in the jungle. The creek soon approached a hillside, then it changed course away from the hill, looped around, and came back to the hill once more. The small area inside that loop was flat and clear of trees. As Dale stood there his eyes sparkled. "This is where the preacher can stand," he exclaimed, "and right there in front of us on that hillside is a perfect place for an amphitheater. This is great!"

"Well," Patti suggested, "I think you ought to talk to Pedro about this and see what he thinks of your ideas."

Pedro was the young ministerial intern whom the mission had recently appointed to supervise this district. The next time Dale saw Pedro he told him about his dream, and Pedro immediately latched onto it. "The school children are in their midterm break right now, so let's do it this weekend," he proposed enthusiastically.

"Just a minute, Pedro. Not so fast. There's a lot of preparation to do. We'll need at least a month. We have to clear a place to camp, and we need to think about how the people can prepare their food and where they are going to sleep. Do you think we could borrow some tents somewhere?"

Pedro responded, "I heard that the mission has a few tents. The next time I go to Pucallpa I'll see if we can borrow them. Let's plan for a baptism too, because I've got some candidates in Puerto Inca that are ready. We'll make it a big event they'll long remember."

"Fantastic! And I have one more suggestion. Let's plan to celebrate the Lord's Supper on Friday night to begin our spiritual retreat. I don't think any of our members around here have ever had the privilege of participating in a communion service yet."

They set the date, and then everybody got busy. Santiago went to work with his machete clearing a space to pitch tents, and Dale used his chainsaw to cut two-inch planks to make rustic benches in the amphitheater. Patti found fresh grapes in the market and bought two kilos, and Rosa helped her extract the juice to be used in the communion service. And Pedro borrowed three tents, one for the men and boys, another for the women and girls, and the third to serve for supply and food storage. He also made a request that the mission send out a minister to conduct the baptism and participate in the other services.

The Mission Executive Committee met to consider the request, but they couldn't find an ordained minister who was available that weekend. Should they recommend that the spiritual retreat and the baptism be cancelled? That did not seem wise, for when one has died to sin, there should not be much delay in "burying" him in the baptismal waters. Finally the president spoke up. "Our church policies permit us in certain situations to authorize an ordained local church elder to perform a baptism if a regular minister is not available. Since the group of church members in Puerto Inca is not yet an organized company of believers, Brother Pedro is not an ordained elder of that group, so we aren't free to ask him to conduct the baptism. But I've been thinking of Brother Duerksen. He was a missionary in Bolivia for several years before he came here, and I know that he has served as an ordained local church elder in the past. Perhaps we should ask him to conduct the baptism this time." The other members of the committee quickly agreed with that suggestion, and it was voted.

Vern, the pilot, decided he could use a little dose of spiritual retreat himself, and Don, a student missionary who was working with him, decided he would also like to attend. They were the first to arrive that Friday. A little later the boat from town arrived with Pedro and 15 other campers plus the three large tents. This was a totally new experience for them, so they didn't have the foggiest idea what camping is all about. They just stood there helplessly or wandered about aimlessly not knowing what to do, so Vern and Don hoisted the tents onto their shoulders and herded the group down the path to the campsite where they helped set up the tents.

It had rained hard all morning, and everything was soggy wet that afternoon. Furthermore they were woefully unprepared for camping. Apparently they had given no thought to what they would need to survive for a couple of days. Discouragement quickly started setting in, threatening to ruin the spiritual retreat; but Pedro spoke words of cheer, and Patti loaned them kettles and matches and a couple of kerosene lamps and a machete and gave them bananas and sold them some other food staples – and slowly the mood began to improve.

The beginning service Friday evening was held in their new little church. There was fresh sawdust on the dirt floor, and the walls were decorated with wild flowers. Dale had made six wooden candle holders that he attached to the six supporting posts of the building, and the soft light of the candles in that rustic setting produced a warm, cozy feeling. They sang a hymn to welcome the Sabbath, and Pedro gave a short talk about the Last Supper. Then they separated for the foot-washing ceremony, the men going to the clinic waiting room while the women stayed in the church.

Now they were ready for communion. Of course they didn't have professionally produced communion utensils in gleaming silver containers, but neither did Jesus the first time. They just had a couple of plastic plates from their kitchen for the unleavened bread, and the smallest glasses they were able to find in Pucallpa which were about twice as big as the usual communion

glasses, but they would make do with whatever was available. Dale broke the bread and handed it to Pedro to serve the people. Then they reversed roles for the serving of the wine. They had only 20 glasses, and about two dozen persons were participating, so after serving the first 20, they rinsed a few of the glasses in a bowl of cold water and quickly refilled them to serve the rest. Such a practice would probably be viewed with horror in a more sophisticated culture, but out there in the jungle nobody seemed to consider it to be anything unusual. It was really a lovely and impressive service, and this reminder that our Lord died that we might live seemed to be a perfect beginning for their spiritual retreat.

Sabbath morning when Dale caught sight of Josefa, he motioned for her to come over to talk to him. "We have six people from town who are going to be baptized here today," he began. "Would you like to be baptized too?"

"Oh, yes! Yes, I would," she said eagerly, "but last time the pastor wouldn't baptize me because Ramon and I aren't legally married."

"Yes, I know, Josefa. But I also know that you have five children, and you have been faithful to your husband all these years, and he doesn't have any other women. In my country we would call that a common law marriage, and it would be recognized by our government as a legal marriage. Therefore since you could be baptized if you were in my country, I don't see any good reason why I can't baptize you today here in your country. So I'm just going to do it! Now get yourself a towel and some dry clothes to change into, and come join the others when we announce the baptism." With a beaming face she hurried away to make those preparations.

They went out to the amphitheater for the Sabbath services. Many of the neighbors who had not come out at night showed up that morning. They counted 64 present at Sabbath School. Dale had made 12 benches each seven feet long, so they had nearly a full capacity crowd. After the study of the lesson Pedro preached a short sermon, and then they all made their way to the nearby pool. Dale waded in to where the water came up to his waist. The singing began, and the first person to come down into the water for Dale's very first baptism was dear faithful Josefa, the first person who had attended their Sabbath School more than three years before and had been an encouragement to them ever since. He felt like his heart was about to burst with joy. He could hardly control his emotions as he pronounced the solemn words, "Now I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." What a thrill it was! There were seven baptized that day, a perfect number for a perfect day.

Many of the people were aware that Patti and Dale were vegetarians, and several had expressed an interest in learning how a person could get an adequate diet without the use of meat. And so Sabbath afternoon Dale gave a talk on general principals of nutrition, discussing the body's need for water, carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, and minerals. Then Sunday morning Patti continued the topic with a discussion of the selection of meatless foods available right there in the jungle that would provide all of a person's nutritional needs. She also went over the body's organ systems discussing the problems that can develop in each one when it is not properly nourished. She used the flannel board for visual aids in her talk, and her audience showed intense interest in everything she had to say. With that the weekend retreat came to an end, and everyone left saying they hoped there would soon be another one.

* * *

If people were learning to take better care of their health, it wasn't very evident to Patti as she attended to her patients in the clinic day after day, for the patient load kept right on increasing. There was a noticeable increase when the path through the jungle to the road was opened, and by the time they had been at Maranatha five years, the monthly patient load was exceeding 500. That wasn't too difficult when she had another nurse to help her, but when she was by herself—and frequently that was the case—it seemed like the heavy burden was about to crush her. Many a night after seeing 50 or more patients during the day, she would drop into bed

utterly exhausted. At times like that she was grateful that she at least had Rosa to help with the cooking and laundering for in-patients.

It didn't take long to get used to the common ailments in the jungle, and Patti became quite adept at diagnosing and treating them. But sometimes her first impressions turned out to be quite wrong. That happened when a mother brought in her baby girl Margarita. One glance told Patti that the poor child had been badly burned, for most of her little body was covered with huge blisters, and where blisters had burst there was raw oozing flesh. It obviously was very painful, and the little girl cried pitifully.

"How did Margarita get burned so badly?" Patti inquired.

"She didn't get burned, Doctora," came the reply.

"Are you sure? This looks like a bad burn to me."

"No, Doctora, I'm telling you the truth," she insisted. "Margarita didn't get burned. Nothing unusual happened, but a few days ago she just started getting these blisters for no apparent reason."

Patti examined the child more closely and concluded that must be the truth. Whatever was causing those blisters was certainly weird. What could it be? She felt stumped—and yet there was something about those blisters that seemed vaguely familiar. She racked her mind for a memory that had all but disappeared. *Lord, help me remember where I've seen blisters like this before.* And then it suddenly came back to her.

Years before, when she was in training in a large hospital in Louisiana, a patient covered with blisters that looked like these was admitted to the hospital—and she died! Now Patti remembered that it was diagnosed as pemphigus, so she got out her medical books to see what they had to say about this disease. It is very rare in most of the world, but it is endemic in a part of southern Brazil where it is called Savage Fire. Since Brazil borders on Peru, and the area where the disease is rampant was not very far away as the crow flies, Patti concluded that she must have a case of Savage Fire on her hands.

The books didn't offer much hope. They recommended treatment with corticosteroids in high dosages, so she began treating Margarita accordingly. She also administered antibiotics to prevent secondary infections, and she gave fluids with electrolytes to counteract the dehydration caused by the bursting blisters. And of course she gave the suffering child pain medication, so at least she could rest even though no improvement was seen the first couple of days.

The distraught mother remarked, "If my little girl can't get better, I hope she will die quickly so that she won't have to go on suffering like this for a long time."

"Yes, I know it must be very hard for you to see her in so much misery, but don't give up hope. Our God is powerful and merciful, and I'm praying for Margarita. I believe she will be healed."

After a few days no new blisters developed, and it appeared that the disease was arrested, so Patti cut back on the corticosteroid, for that is a rather dangerous medication. Immediately some new blisters appeared, however, so she had to resume the high dosage. Margarita continued to improve slowly, but before Patti felt that she was really out of danger, the parents insisted on taking her home. A few weeks later the father stopped by Maranatha once more, and he reported that his little girl had no more blisters and was doing just fine, and everybody was thrilled to hear that.

* * *

Another morning shortly after breakfast Patti and Dale heard the familiar sound of an outboard motor slowing down as it neared their port. The motor stopped, and a moment later they saw a man hurrying up the path to the clinic. He quickly rang the bell and looked around anxiously. When he saw that Patti was coming, he ran away. Very strange behavior indeed! Was he trying to play a joke? But when he got to the riverbank, he called down to someone in the

boat, "Come! The Doctora is here!" And when Patti reached the clinic, the mother was coming up the path with her five-year-old daughter in her arms.

It was little Milka, whom Patti had seen growing up since her first visit when she was just a year old. This day her breathing was very labored, and she was turning blue. As Patti opened the clinic door, the parents poured out the story of what had happened. Milka had been sucking on a fresh coffee bean, which has a sweet juicy covering, when somehow she inhaled the bean, and it had lodged in her windpipe. "We have confidence in you, Doctora," the man concluded. "We know you can do something."

Patti wasn't so sure about that. This was serious. "I can't do anything without God's help," she corrected him. She wanted him to look to God instead of to her as his primary source of help.

The coffee bean must come out. That was obvious. So she put the little girl on the exam table and let her upper torso hang down over the edge while she beat on her back trying to dislodge that bean. And dislodge it she did, but it only moved to a new location where it completely obstructed the airway, and all breathing stopped!

Now Patti pounded desperately on the child's back, but to no avail. Finally she pulled Milka back up onto the exam table and rolled her over onto her back. She stuck her finger in the child's mouth and reached as far back into her throat as she could, but she felt no foreign object. Milka's face had turned an ashen gray, the pupils of her eyes were dilated, and her mouth was frothing. Patti sadly shook her head as she murmured softly, "She's gone."

"But Doctora, why don't you get one of your instruments and pull out that coffee bean?" the father pleaded.

"That requires a very specialized instrument that I don't have," she explained. She put her stethoscope to the child's chest, and she could hear the heart still beating strongly. Oh, where is my Ambubag? she wondered. She knew she had recently put it in a "better" location, but now she couldn't remember where that place was. Oh, well, to try to force air into Milka's lungs now would probably just push the coffee bean farther and tighter into the airway.

She couldn't just stand there doing nothing while waiting for the heart to stop beating. "Oh, God, help me!" she cried aloud, and then she bent over and tried mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. She could feel the rib cage rise under her hand, so she knew air was now getting through somehow. After a few more tries the child gave a little gasp. That encouraged Patti on to renewed efforts. After several more tries little Milka finally started breathing on her own once more.

"We knew you could do it, Doctora!" Father exulted.

But Patti shook her head. "We are only back where we started from, and Milka is still in as grave danger as when you arrived. Only by God's grace is she breathing again, and only a miracle can remove that bean without surgery." She went on to explain to them that a bean in the lung could, and probably would, produce some terrible consequences, and she spared no words in painting the frightening picture.

She put Milka in one of the patient rooms, so that she could keep her under observation. Milka was still breathing with difficulty, and her lung sounds were terrible, as though they were filling up with fluid. Patti went to her medical books to see what suggestions she could find, but the only solution offered was surgical removal of the foreign object, and that was out of the question in their situation. The family was too poor to fly the child out to the city, and she certainly could not stand the trauma of the rough trip by land.

Patti decided to start an IV, more for the psychological impact of doing something than for any other reason. As she inserted the needle the girl made no move, for she apparently was still unconscious. She started the fluid dripping but soon noticed that it was infiltrating, so she pulled the needle out and tried again. This time Milka tried to pull her hand away, so she was finally beginning to regain consciousness.

Now that the IV was running, Patti decided that it would be a good idea to give the girl an antibiotic to try to prevent infection in her lungs, so she went to the medicine cabinet to get some ampicillin. As she opened the door, she noticed a free sample of a medication that a pharmacist had given her once. She had never used any, in fact had never even heard of it before. It was called Dexacillin Balsamico. It was an antibiotic with a bronco-dilator, and she suddenly felt impressed that she should use it now instead of the ampicillin, so she did. Then she went to the house for lunch, and as they bowed their heads to thank God for the food, Dale also offered up a fervent appeal for Milka's life.

As soon as they finished eating, Patti went back to the clinic. As she walked into the small patient room, she asked, "How is Milka doing?"

The mother looked up with a smile as she explained, "Milka said she was thirsty, so I got her a cup of water. As she started to drink, she choked up. She started coughing, and out popped the coffee bean!" And she held it up for Patti to see.

Patti took the bean and said, "I want to show it to my husband." When she found Dale, she held up that little coffee bean, and with tears in her eyes she said, "Look!" That was all she needed to say, for at that moment they both realized how quickly and dramatically their noontime prayer had been answered. With that obstruction gone, the congestion in Milka's lungs quickly cleared, and the next morning she went home completely recovered.

Dale ended his next newsletter by writing, "Maranatha Clinic is nearly 5 years old, and we are entering into a very critical phase of our development. Our prestige is growing, our influence is steadily spreading. People are telling us that we are the greatest, and we are in grave danger of believing them, of thinking that OUR wisdom and OUR skills are responsible for the marvelous things that have taken place here on the Pachitea River. So please pray for us that God will help us keep our eyes fixed on the real source of our skill and understanding and our resources. To HIM be the honor."

These words from a Psalm seemed fitting for them as well, "It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Psalm 44:3.

16 *When the Light of a Candle Shines on You*



Teresa Heidinger and her four lovely children were always a welcome sight at Sabbath School, but one Sabbath they announced that they wouldn't be coming anymore, because they were moving to Puerto Inca. Juan had bought a house for them in town so that the children could walk to school.

Patti shared her disappointment with Dale. "I'm going to miss those kids. I'm sure they'll go to the Sabbath School there in Puerto Inca, but I wonder what effect the public school will have on their spiritual life."

"It probably won't be any worse than the local school here in San Antonio, and maybe a lot better," Dale responded. "I heard that last year the teacher here came to school drunk about half the time, and all too frequently he wouldn't even come at all. I can see why the Heidingers would want to go somewhere else to educate their children."

"I wish we could have our own school right here," Patti sighed.

"Yes, I feel the same way," Dale agreed, "but there's no way you and I can start a school by ourselves. I've talked to the Lord about it, and if He wants a school here, He will have to send us teachers and help us get whatever else we would need for a school. In the meantime we have our hands full just taking care of the sick people who come to our door."

That comment about "hands full" was especially true when 10-year-old Miquias was brought to the clinic. (Let's just call him Mike for convenience.) Mike was a Cunchi boy who liked to climb trees, but one day he climbed too high and had a bad fall. Three days passed before his parents brought him to the clinic. Perhaps it took them that long to find someone with a boat who was willing to take them to Maranatha. The crooked angle of his right leg made it clear to Patti that he had a fracture high up, but the leg was so badly swollen that she couldn't tell if just the femur was broken or if the hip was involved as well.

Patti just shook her head as she said, "This needs to be x-rayed, and we can't do that here. And the leg will need to be immobilized in a cast so that it can heal properly, but I don't even have any plaster to make a cast. You will have to take him on up to the clinic in Puerto Inca."

So they put Mike back in the boat and went on up the river. In the afternoon they came back with Mike and a note from the doctor. The note simply notified Patti that he also had no x-ray machine and no plaster. Once again the Duerksens were faced with the need to do just what they could with what they had. It had become their practice to begin every day by asking God to give them wisdom to handle any unexpected problems that might arise during the day, and they were getting into the habit of expecting their heavenly Father to do just that.

Patti called Dale over for a consultation. "Since we can't make a plaster cast, we'll have to try to improvise some other way to keep his leg straight while it heals. Do you have any ideas?"

He wrinkled up his forehead as he put his mind into gear searching for a good idea, but after a minute or two of intense concentration he slowly admitted, "My mind's a blank. I don't

have any practical ideas for a substitute for a cast."

"I'm starting to get an idea," Patti responded, and then she paused momentarily as she struggled to picture in her mind how her idea might work. "Do you suppose you could make me something like a narrow box that the leg can fit in. Of course it would have to be open at each end, and the top would have to be open, so the box would have just three sides. Maybe I should call it a channel instead of a box. Do you suppose you could make me something like that?"

"Sure, that would be simple to make. Maybe I should make it out of balsa wood since balsa is soft and very light weight. Just give me the dimensions you want, and I'll go to work on it right way."

There were a lot of balsa trees in the jungle, so the source of the wood was no problem, and it wasn't long before Dale had constructed the device. They put a little padding in the box and then carefully laid Mike's leg in it. After straightening the leg just so, Patti taped it in place, and it looked great! Everybody felt like cheering. However, there was one little problem. You can't keep a little boy quiet. Mike wiggled around, and soon his leg slipped out of position and was crooked again.

"We need a device that will continually pull his leg straight," Patti declared in frustration.

Bonnie was temporarily back home again at that time, so she and Patti pored over a picture of a traction device in one of the medical books in their meager library. Soon their heads were full of ideas, so they went to work with hammer and nails, with empty spools and stiff wire to create improvised pulleys, and with a rock tied to the end of some stout cord to provide a steady pull. It looked like a hodge-podge contraption, but it worked and did a nice job of keeping the leg straight. That was all that really mattered, and as the swelling went down, Patti became convinced that only the femur and not the hip was fractured.

Soon Mike got tired of lying quietly in bed all the time, and one day they caught him peeking out the window. Of course that messed up his traction apparatus, and so they had to get him situated in bed once again and redo it all. They scolded him for getting out of bed, but he was such a likable little kid that they couldn't really get mad at him.

About two weeks after Mike's arrival, the relatives came and announced that they were going to take him home. Patti objected, saying that they couldn't take him yet, because his leg needed to remain immobilized for six weeks in order to heal properly. Her words fell on deaf ears, for Mike was feeling good and looking good, and the parents couldn't see any reason for him to stay any longer. Finally Patti just walked out of the room crying in her frustration, and they took Mike home. She never saw him again, but several weeks later she did hear that he was walking again, apparently quite normally. Perhaps the broken bone knit much faster in the growing child than she thought it would.

* * *

One afternoon Maria, who was one of their regular Sabbath School members, hurried up to the clinic. She was carrying her four-month-old baby Jose, and he was screaming and jerking in an alarming manner. This was frightening to Patti, for she had never seen anything quite like this before. "What in the world has happened to Jose?" she inquired of Maria.

"He was sleeping in the hammock when he suddenly started screaming as though something had bitten him. I went over and pulled the blanket off, and I noticed that something dropped down. My daughter told me the bug was now on me, so I lifted my skirt to see what it was, and then it stung me too. It was a scorpion!"

"How long ago did this happen?"

"I guess it was nearly noon. It took me about three hours to find a canoe I could borrow, and then I paddled down here to Maranatha as fast as I could. I hope it's not too late to help my baby."

Patti ran to the house to get a medicine out of the refrigerator. It was a Brazilian product

called *Especifico Pessoa* that was a general purpose antivenom to be taken by mouth, and it was quite effective against a wide range of poisonous bites. She didn't know if it would work for a scorpion sting, but it was worth trying. She also wanted something for that abnormal jerking and apparent intestinal colic, and she was afraid the baby might develop respiratory problems as well, but she had no idea what else to use. *Lord, what shall I do?* she pleaded.

Suddenly she felt impressed to use a medicine that she commonly gave to children with severe diarrhea. It contained Atropine and Phenobarbital. *That's crazy*, she thought, but the impression wouldn't go away, so she gave baby Jose a dose. After about half an hour the little fellow was asleep. He still had a few involuntary jerking motions, but the screaming had stopped. Within a couple of hours the jerking also had stopped completely, and he had no more problems. As Maria carried her precious baby down to the waiting canoe, Patti's thoughts flew heavenward. *Thank you, Lord.*

* * *

Isaiah and Lucia were an exceptional couple. They had two lovely children, a girl and a boy, and realizing that they couldn't properly take care of more children than that, Lucia came to the clinic for contraceptives. But as the months turned into years, she got careless about taking her pills regularly, and one day she realized she was pregnant again—and her youngest was already seven years old!

To make the best of the situation Lucia began coming to the clinic regularly for prenatal care. As she neared full term, on one of her visits to the clinic Patti noticed that her ankles appeared to be swollen, and she called attention to it. Lucia just laughed and said, "Oh, my feet always swell when I'm pregnant."

The next month when she came back, her face was noticeably swollen as well, and her legs were so badly swollen that walking was becoming difficult. Patti was very concerned about these symptoms, and when she took Lucia's blood pressure, she became alarmed. It was 210/120. "This is serious!" Patti told her forcefully. "You must go to the hospital in Pucallpa immediately!"

But Lucia just laughed. She and her husband didn't seem to grasp the gravity of the situation, so Patti pulled down a medical book she had that was written in Spanish for laymen, and she showed them what it had to say about toxemia in pregnancy. It described Lucia's symptoms perfectly, and when Isaiah read the statement, "This condition can be fatal," the reality finally dawned on him, and he began to cry.

They finally agreed to go to the city, but first they would have to sell a cow to get money for the trip and for hospital expenses. About ten days later they came back again. This time Lucia had to be led up the path, for she had lost most of her eyesight. Her blood pressure had risen to 240/120.

"Why haven't you gone to Pucallpa yet?" Patti wanted to know.

"We still don't have any money," Isaiah replied. "The man who usually buys cows has gone on a trip, and I haven't been able to find anybody else who will buy my cow. There's nothing else we can do."

"We will loan you the money," Patti assured him, "and you can pay us back when you are able to sell the cow. Just go! Right away! Don't wait any longer! There's no time to lose!" Then Patti prayed with them for safety and healing and sent them on their way.

When they reached Pucallpa the next day, Lucia was completely blind. They went to one of the private hospitals in town where better medical attention was available than in the general government hospital. The doctor immediately admitted her and induced labor. It wasn't surprising that they lost the baby. They almost lost the mother as well. After that ordeal her sight returned, and she had a slow but complete recovery. And yes, Isaiah eventually did sell that cow, and he paid off his debt.

* * *

One day Juan Heidinger, a good friend of Isaiah, stopped by Maranatha. He also had a bill to pay in the clinic. "Could I settle my bill with rice?" he asked Dale. "I had a good crop this year, and right now I have more rice than money."

"Sure, we can always use rice," Dale responded. "That will be fine with us."

"Good. I have a sack of fresh hulled rice down in my boat. I'll bring it up to you."

After they deposited the bag of rice in the house, Juan asked as he was leaving, "Are you planning to go to the baptism in Puerto Inca this weekend?"

"No, I don't think we will this time. Patti is usually so tired by the end of the week that she doesn't feel like going anywhere." Then Dale continued, "By the way, is anybody getting baptized this time that we know?"

"Why, yes," Juan responded quietly. "I am." Dale's mouth dropped open in surprise. Then Juan added, "And so is my mother Lidvina."

Dale blurted out, "Well! In that case, you can be sure we'll be there! I'm so happy to hear this, Juan. We wouldn't miss this for anything!"

Now Dale and Patti had to figure out what to do about their own Sabbath School. They would like to take everybody to town with them, but their boat couldn't carry that many passengers. Then Dale got a bright idea. Sabino Yupanqui might be the solution. They had been wishing that they could somehow interest him in religious things. This might be their opportunity, so Dale got in his boat and went down to the Yupanqui farm.

"Sabino," he said, "you have probably heard that Juan Heidinger is going to be baptized in Puerto Inca this Sabbath.⁴⁹ We are going to attend his baptism, and many of our neighbors want to go too, but we won't have enough room for everybody. Would you be willing to take your boat to pick up the rest of the neighbors who want to go?" Dale deliberately emphasized the name of Juan, because he knew that Sabino and Juan were distant relatives and were very good friends. Just as expected, Sabino readily agreed to do that.

Sabbath morning as they were getting into their boat, here came Sabino with his boatload. They were happy to see that he had picked up Amelia Rofner, a neighbor lady whose husband, a staunch Catholic, had been giving her a hard time about wanting to attend their Sabbath School. And wonder of wonders, there in the boat right beside Amelia was husband Andres himself! Dale crossed the river to pick up faithful Josefa and her children, and to their surprise and joy her husband Ramon decided to come along as well that day. Two wonderful surprises in one day!

It was a beautiful sunny morning that Sabbath, and as they entered the church several members greeted them warmly. When the group from Maranatha was all inside, the place was packed, and some people even had to stand in the aisles. And a well-known figure was leading out in the Sabbath School. It was the mayor of Puerto Inca himself!

The services that morning were all carried out smoothly and were truly inspiring. Then everybody took the 20-minute walk out through the jungle to a lovely little creek where Juan and Lidvina along with about 15 others were symbolically buried in the crystal clear water. Oh, what a joy it was to see another family united in their dedication to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They were reminded of the words of Jesus, "If your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted as when the light of a candle shines on you."⁵⁰

In the afternoon when Patti had an opportunity to talk with Juan, she asked him, "What led you to make your decision to be baptized and join the Adventist Church?"

"It was my wife's illness when she was sick with TB for a year," he said. "I could see that God was doing His part by restoring her health, but I wasn't doing my part, so I decided I

⁴⁹ The Spanish language uses the word "Sábado" for both Saturday and Sabbath.

⁵⁰ Luke 11:36.

needed to change that.” After a brief pause he added thoughtfully, “And there was also something else. It was your life. I saw how you always treated your patients so kindly, and I decided I wanted that kind of life too.”

The words of the Apostle Paul came to Patti’s mind. “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”⁵¹

* * *

It was amazing to see how many people who weren’t Peruvians somehow found the Duerksens in their isolated place on the Pachitea River. Dale finally put up a small building with two identical rooms that he called his motel rooms to provide a place for visitors to sleep.

One very interesting couple was the Birkels from France. Maurice Birkel was a professor of Spanish at the University of Bordeaux, and his wife Colette was a nurse who worked on the neurological ward of a large hospital in the same French city. Maurice decided to use his vacation to become better acquainted with the Spanish culture in South America, and his wife decided to accompany him. When they heard about Maranatha, they wanted to visit the place and see for themselves what was going on there. They couldn’t speak any English, and the Duerksens didn’t know any French, so all their communication was in their second language, Spanish. They were highly impressed by what they saw. In fact, they enjoyed their short stay so much that Maurice said they intended to come back again the next year on their vacation.

While the Birkels were visiting, a difficult case came to the clinic. It was Jose, a local businessman, and he arrived on a stretcher, for he was unable to walk. He had gone to the bridge on the Sungaro River to wait for a man to bring him a large amount of money. Word that this money transfer was going to take place must have leaked out, because a group of five fellows, who apparently thought Jose had already received the money, jumped on him with the obvious intention of robbing him. Even though he didn’t have much money on him yet, Jose tried to fight them off, and in the scuffle he got stabbed in the back.

Somebody took Jose to the doctor in Puerto Inca. The doctor cleaned the stab wound and sewed it up, and then he released Jose telling him that he would be walking around again the next day. But the next day he still was not able to walk, so his friends put him on a stretcher and took him to Maranatha. As Patti examined him, she could see that he had been beaten very severely. He had knots on his head, his left eye was hemorrhaging, and his vision was blurred. His right arm and leg were trembling, his abdomen was very rigid, and he had a high temperature.

Several men and a policeman had accompanied Jose to Maranatha, so she told them, “I’m afraid this man’s condition is too serious for my capabilities. He needs the care of a good doctor, so you had better take him to Pucallpa.”

“No,” they replied, “we don’t want to do that. We have confidence in you, and we want you to take care of him.”

She didn’t argue with them very long, because she could see that poor Jose was in terrible pain. The doctor in town had given him just a couple of aspirin before sending him home, and he had been in agony from that stab wound all night. The cut was over two inches long, and it was dangerously close to the spinal cord. It was amazing that the knife didn’t puncture his lung.

Patti put Jose to bed in one of the patient rooms. She started an IV and gave him pain medication, antibiotics, and an anti-inflammatory drug. She kept him under close observation, and soon she could see evidence that he probably was having cerebral edema. She needed something better to bring down the swelling in his brain, but she didn’t have anything else.

⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 3:2-3.

Knowing that Colette had worked on a neurological ward, Patti knew that she must be well trained and experienced for cases like this one, so she asked Colette to come in for a consultation. Colette agreed that it looked like Jose was suffering from cerebral edema. "You need to give him some Decadron," she suggested. "In fact, I have several ampules of Decadron that I brought with me from France. I don't know why I stuck it in my suitcase, but it's here and you're welcome to use it for your patient." She went to her room and got the medicine, and there was plenty for Jose's need plus several ampules left over for future use.

The right person at the right place at the right time with the right medicine seemed to be more than mere coincidence. Patti and Dale were convinced that the Holy Spirit must have impressed Colette to put that Decadron in her suitcase, for that is not the kind of medicine that one would ordinarily expect to use on a vacation trip to Peru.

Jose made slow but steady progress, and he stayed a little over a week. During his stay he read extensively in the books *Steps to Christ* and *The Great Controversy*. On Sabbath he managed to hobble out to evening worship with some assistance, and he was quite impressed by the songs, the Bible story, and the prayer for the healing of the patients. When he left, he still had some impairment, but Patti was pleased to see that he was able to walk down to the boat by himself. She continued to pray that his healing might be not only physical but spiritual as well.

Before the Birkels left to return home, Colette talked to Patti about something that was on her mind. "We have enjoyed our stay here very much. In fact, I wish I could stay here a lot longer. At the end of this year I will be eligible to take a one-year sabbatical leave from my work at the hospital in Bordeaux. Would you be willing to let me come back next year to stay and work with you all year?"

Patti's face broke out in a big smile. "Of course, Colette, I would be thrilled to have you come help us. I have been praying that God would send me another nurse, and this must be His answer to my prayer."

They parted with bright hopes for the future.

17 *Let Your Light So Shine*



When the Duerksens first came to the jungle to begin “The Great Experiment,” one of the main things they wanted to test was God’s ability and willingness to provide the means to accomplish His work in His way. They still weren’t completely free from the common misconception that if you just have enough money you can accomplish anything, and so they tended to think of the word “means” as being a synonym for the word “money.” The cash they had on hand when they arrived was enough to last only a few months, so if God replenished their funds as they were used up, they would take that as evidence that God was in charge and wanted them to stay. And that’s what happened. Year after year they always had enough money to buy the things they really needed.

On the other hand they believed that the command to go to all the world in the Great Commission given by Jesus mandates that His followers must not settle down forever in one place, for you obviously can’t “go” by staying where you are. They expected God to show them by His provi-dential working when it would be time for them to move on, and they thought this would probably happen by their source of funds drying up.

As their work grew their expenses also increased, but there didn’t seem to be a corresponding increase in donations. At the time they finished their fifth year Dale withdrew all the money that remained in their bank account according to his records, to convert the dollars into local currency with which to buy supplies. This was the first time in their experience that they no longer had any cash reserves. *Is this a sign that God wants us to close our work now?* Dale wondered.

Shortly after he returned to Maranatha with the supplies and the remainder of the money, they received a strange message by radio. The president of the Inca Union Mission was requesting them to come to Lima to see him as soon as possible. It was urgent the message said. *What could be so urgent?* they wondered. Maybe the government was going to refuse to grant them any more visas. Maybe this was going to be a sign that they must now close their work and go somewhere else. All kinds of thoughts and questions raced through their minds.

The next day they went to Pucallpa. Even though their money was running low, they decided they had better fly to Lima this time instead of taking the slow bus, since there was such urgency. Fortunately they were able to get reservations for the next day’s flight. Unfortunately their plane was very late, and it was after dark when they reached Lima. All the offices were closed by then, so they had to get a room in a hotel for the night.

Early in the morning they went to the mission headquarters arriving just in time for morning worship. People smiled, but nobody said anything to them until worship was over. Then the president came over and shook hands with them. “I want to talk to you,” he said. *Yes, of course, they thought. That’s precisely why we came. Don’t keep us in suspense.*

He politely ushered them into the inner sanctum of his office, and he pulled up chairs and invited them to be seated. Then he sat down behind his big desk, and a moment later the secretary and the treasurer walked in and sat down, one on each side of the president. This

seemed to be a very solemn occasion, and they acted like Dale and Patti were some kind of VIP's.

After a brief but dramatic pause the president began to speak. "We have been observing you," he said, "and we have been quite impressed by the work you are doing out there in the jungle. But it appears to us that you are kind of like sheep without a shepherd. We have seen you passing through Lima on your way out of the country to get your tourist visas renewed, and we have felt sorry for you having to do that so frequently. In our last executive committee meeting we discussed your situation, and we decided it is time for the Inca Union Mission to step in and do something to help you get your official residency established in Peru."

By then Patti's and Dale's faces must have been beaming, for that was mighty good news! But what followed was a real shocker. "Since the medical work you are doing is right in line with the work of OFASA [the welfare and service organization of the church which later became ADRA Peru], we have decided to designate you two as volunteer OFASA workers. Our working arrangement with the Peruvian government permits us to bring in as many foreign workers as we need. The government issues most of these workers residency permits that we call the blue card. However for a few of our top leaders we get a special green card that extends to them semi-diplomatic status as well. We are very selective in whom we choose for this privilege, but for you as our representatives out in the jungle we have decided to request the green cards. Just leave your passports with us, and we will take care of all the arrangements."

Dale and Patti were awestruck by the confidence this man was showing in them, a couple of independent workers over whom they really had no direct control, and they determined to be very careful not to ever betray that confidence.

But they weren't quite through yet. Now the treasurer spoke up. "When you go back downstairs, go into the assistant treasurer's office and give him a report of what it cost you for this trip. I have authorized him to reimburse you for your expenses."

Wow! Their cup was running over. They felt like God had spoken through these men, and the message was, *Don't start packing to leave Peru just yet, and don't worry about the money. I'm in charge of your finances, and I still have some more work for you to do here.*

As usual Dale found a newspaper to read. Out in the jungle he rarely heard about anything going on in other parts of the world, so every time he came to the big city he looked for an opportunity to read a newspaper. It seemed that he always found at least one story about the Shining Path guerillas staging an attack in some place he didn't know anything about. That made it seem like it was very far away, and it didn't concern him much. Then he heard that a bomb exploded on the tourist train to Machu Picchu killing several people. That news shook him up a bit, for that was familiar territory. And now as he read the newspaper, he found an account of a terrorist attack on a police station near Huanuco. That was on the highway connecting Lima with Pucallpa, and he had gone past that police station many times in his travels. The terrorists were getting too close for comfort now.

When Patti and Dale returned to Maranatha, they heard more disturbing reports about the teacher of the school across the river. He continued to drink his booze, and he would even bring some to school to share with the students, and he would make fun of those who wouldn't drink any. He frequently wouldn't show up for classes, sometimes staying away for a week at a time. He regularly stayed home when it rained, and rain was very common there in the jungle. The community leaders finally got fed up with him and fired him. For several weeks they searched for a new teacher but without success, so they finally gave up and took back their old teacher again. Apparently they felt that some schooling is better than none at all.

"I feel so sorry for these sweet kids around here," Patti confided to Dale one day. "It's disgusting to see what they are exposed to in that school over there. And some kids live too far away to attend school every day. Like Maria's boy. He's 12 already, and he's never had a day of school yet. I enjoy having him in Sabbath School, but the poor kid can't read and doesn't even

know how to count to ten. He's not dumb. Just hasn't had a chance to learn, and my heart goes out to kids like that."

"Yes, Dear, I too feel a burden for the children here on the Pachitea River. Remember last year we heard that some of the school children were paddling their dugout canoe to school one day when the river was running high and wild, and their little boat capsized dumping them in the river. One little girl would have drowned if one of the larger kids who knew how to swim pretty well had not dragged her to shore."

"That was scary," Patti continued. "And the whirlpools that develop when the river is high can be dangerous, even for a motorboat. We need a school here with boarding facilities so that the children won't have to travel on the river every day."

"You're right," Dale agreed, "and I've been thinking about this problem a lot lately. It seems impossible to do anything without any teachers in sight and no money in the bank. I ask myself, *What would Jesus do?* And then I think about what He did when there were 5,000 people who needed supper. All He had available that day was five loaves and two small fishes, so He started with what He had and He fed the whole group. Fantastic! I guess I could do the same thing, start with what we have and see what God might do after that."

Patti exuded encouragement. "Go for it, man! With God's help I'm sure you can do it."

"OK, I will! Since I don't have to travel to renew visas anymore, I suppose I could even try my hand at teaching if necessary. I probably can't do any worse than that guy across the river. You can start telling some of your patients that we are thinking of starting a school, and let's see what kind of response it produces. I'll draw some plans for a building, and I can cut down some trees and saw them into lumber as long as we don't run out of gas. This just might turn out to be exciting."

Word spread quickly that the Duerksens were making plans for a school, and many people started making inquiries. There obviously was a lot of interest in this idea, and that was encouraging.

One day the new district pastor, a young man named Alcedo Zubieta, came by for a visit. He had replaced Pedro, and this was his first year in ministerial work. He had a sad look on his face that day, and after chatting for awhile about various things, he confided to Dale the reason for his gloom. "The Mission has advised me that they aren't going to hire me for another year. The president says I obviously am not cut out to be a minister, because I haven't been able to meet the baptismal goal they set for me. At the end of this year I'll be out of a job."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that," Dale sympathized. "I think you make a good pastor."

He didn't know what else to say, so he just stood there thinking for a bit. He knew that Alcedo had been a successful teacher before he entered the ministry. Now he was soon going to lose his job right at the time that a teacher was needed at Maranatha. Would he be willing to go back to teaching? Might this be God's answer to Dale's prayers for a teacher?

"Alcedo, I want to make you an offer. You are an experienced teacher, and we need someone like you to direct the school we want to start here. We don't pay salaries here, because we all work together as volunteers, and the institution supplies all of our needs. Would you be interested in joining us?"

The expression didn't change on Alcedo's face. "I'll talk to my wife Rosita about your proposal," he said, "and we'll pray about it, and then I'll let you know what we decide."

About a week later Alcedo returned, and Dale eagerly asked him, "Have you made your decision?"

"Well, I talked to Rosita about your offer, but she wants to continue her education. She can't do that out here, so we have decided to go back to Pucallpa where she can continue her studies. But thank you anyway for considering us."

Dale and Patti were disappointed to hear that, but they knew that if this was truly God's

work, they could trust Him to provide whatever was needed, even a teacher.

One day Juan Heidinger stopped by to ask about the proposed school. He wasn't very well satisfied with the public school in town. Dale explained his plan to have a boarding school so that the children wouldn't have to travel every day. Juan liked that idea. He showed Juan his drawing for a building. To maximize the amount of enclosed space with a minimum of materials, he planned a square building, 36 feet on each side, and to increase the area covered by a costly metal roof, he planned to make the structure two stories high. On the main floor there would be two small apartments for teachers, and above the apartments would be dormitory rooms for students.

After examining the drawing, Juan looked up and asked, "Do you have the materials you will need to make this building?"

For a moment Dale felt embarrassed to admit that he didn't even have enough money to buy all the nails he would need, let alone the roofing and lumber, but then he quickly decided he had better be frank and open about it. "No, Juan, I don't have anything yet, and I don't know where I'm going to get it, and I'm about out of money. But I have a conviction that God wants us to have a Christian school here, and I believe He is going to help us get everything we need."

"What kind of lumber do you need?" was Juan's next question. "I have a small sawmill similar to yours, so I can help you with some of the lumber."

"That will be great!" Dale responded. "Let me do some figuring how much we'll need." So he got a pencil and paper and made some calculations. Then he continued, "I'll need a variety of sizes for floor joists, studs, and rafters, so I'd better plan to cut all those on my mill. But we'll need a lot of one-inch boards for floors and siding. I calculate that just for the floors we will need 2,200 board feet."

When Juan heard that, without a moment's hesitation he declared, "You can count on me to provide all the floor boards."

"Oh, thank you, Juan! We're off to a good start. Praise the Lord!"

A week or two later Alcedo came for another visit, and this time he brought his wife along. When Rosita was alone with Patti, she suddenly asked, "Can you still use us?"

Patti, somewhat startled by this sudden change, replied, "Why, certainly. We don't have anybody else, and we would still be very happy to have you come. What made you change your mind?"

"Well, I started thinking about our little girl. She's just a baby yet, but we don't want her to grow up in the city, so we decided it will be better to accept your invitation to stay right here. We will finish our obligations to the mission in December, and we'll take our vacation in January, and after that we will come to start working on the school."

Dale was just as thrilled as Patti was to hear that news. It was beginning to look like God was leading them in this venture. And after Dale went to Pucallpa for more supplies, they were sure of it, because when he picked up the mail, there was a letter from the bank with the December statement. It showed that deposits for the month totaled more than \$5,000. That was the most they had ever received in one month since coming to Peru. Now there was nothing to prevent them from moving right ahead with the new school.

* * *

Meanwhile even as they were preparing to do something special for the local children, the Duerksens were not neglecting their own children. In the effort to keep this story focused on what was happening on the Pachitea River in the Peruvian jungle, we perhaps can give the impression that Dale and Patti cut all ties to their family during this time. That definitely was not the case, and so let's clarify that point by taking a little "detour" from the main narrative to highlight a few facts regarding their personal family relationships.

From time to time it became necessary to restock important supplies that they couldn't find

in Peru, and so they returned to the States for such purposes about every two years, and on such occasions they visited family members as well. Their children also visited them in Peru, but since those visits had little to do directly with the development of the story being told in this book, those events were left out of the narrative.

Their oldest daughter Becky with her husband David came down for a visit shortly after their first child was born. A few years later they went to Mexico for mission service, and a detailed account of what happened to them there can be found in the book *Mission Pilot*.

Second daughter Betsy and her husband Ted were prominent in the first few chapters of this book, and then they returned to the States and disappeared from view in this narrative. Actually they also came back to Peru once for a visit which wasn't mentioned, and they joined Becky and David for a short time in Mexico. Ted later went back to school to take nursing, and he became a registered nurse.

Son James made two trips to Peru to visit his parents. He enrolled in Southern Adventist University to study industrial arts, and there he developed a very close friendship with the son of his major professor, John Durichek. Seeing that James was so far removed from his parents, the Duricheks kindly invited him to come live with them in their home. Dale and Patti were very grateful to them for taking such an interest in their son. The end result of that friendship was that James and the oldest Durichek girl, Debbie, decided to get married.

Youngest daughter Bonnie took awhile to make up her mind what she wanted to do with her life. When she decided she wanted to become a nurse, she accepted the invitation of her aunt Lolita to live in her home in Loma Linda, California, while she was taking her training. She enrolled in the one-year course leading to the LVN degree (Licensed Vocational Nurse). Dale sent Patti back to the States to attend Bonnie's graduation while he stayed behind to take care of things at Maranatha. When she arrived in Loma Linda, she discovered that a young man named Bill Norton was also planning to attend Bonnie's graduation.

Bill was an MK (Missionary Kid). His father had been a pilot flying as a self-supporting missionary in southern Mexico, and that was where Bill grew up. From an early age he dreamed of becoming a pilot himself. When his dad tragically lost his life in the crash of his airplane down there in Mexico, Bill determined that he would carry on the legacy of his father in mission aviation.

After Bill earned his pilot's license, he decided that he should also become a skilled aircraft mechanic so that he could make sure that the airplanes he would use would be mechanically safe to fly. He enrolled in an aviation A&P Mechanic course in a school in Kentucky, and as fate would have it, David Gates was there at the same time taking the same course. David and Becky invited Bill to share their apartment with them in order to reduce expenses.

One day Bill said to Becky, "I wish I could find a nice girl like you to be my wife."

Becky smiled sweetly at him and said, "Well, Bill, I have a sister who isn't married, and she doesn't even have a boyfriend yet."

She gave him Bonnie's address, and soon letters were flying back and forth, and a romance began. The moment Patti first met Bill she had the feeling, *This is the man for my daughter*. At the graduation she extended the invitation, "Bill, I think you ought to come down to Peru to visit us. I'm sure my husband would like to meet you too."

"Oh, I'm going to!" he said with conviction. This young man knew where he was going and what he was going to do. There was nothing indecisive about him.

Bonnie returned to Maranatha with her mother, and a few weeks later Bill arrived for his promised visit. While they were there, Bill proposed to Bonnie, and she said Yes. Then he had to ask "Dad" for permission to marry his daughter. Even though Dale briefly tried to give Bill a hard time, he actually was very well pleased with his daughter's choice of someone to share her life, and he readily gave his permission and blessing.

The wedding date was set for June, and Patti and Dale made plans to leave Maranatha for a few weeks to attend that important event. James and Debbie decided to get married the same month, and that made it possible to take in both weddings on a single trip back home to the States.

Not long after their marriage, Bill and Bonnie sent in an application for foreign mission service to the General Conference. Stay tuned for the rest of the story as you read the remainder of this book.

18 *God Does the Impossible*



A new year was beginning with plans for the new school and bright expectations for this new venture. In this part of the world the school year would begin about the first of April. That would be the end of the rainy season, but they couldn't wait until then to start building. To have a school that year they would have to go to work immediately, rain or no rain.

Most of the materials other than the lumber would have to come from Pucallpa. A place to store those supplies until they could be put to use was the first problem Dale faced. In addition to the building planned for housing teachers and students, they would also need a classroom building, and he decided to start with that building. His strategy was to set up the twelve supporting poles and then construct the tin roof. The walls could wait, but a roof was urgent. They would then have a place to store their construction materials protected from the rain while they worked on the other building.

At the end of his vacation Alcedo showed up ready for work as he had promised to do. The first thing they needed to do was to compare their ideas for a school and settle on goals to aim toward so that they would be working together in harmony. They agreed that they wanted to provide a Christian education that would be available to the poorest as well as those who had more money, but they didn't want it to be completely free, because usually that which costs nothing is little appreciated. They concluded that as a bare minimum it should be fair to expect the parents to provide enough to at least feed the children and the teachers.

To set a monthly fee in terms of Peruvian money posed a problem, because the country was in the midst of economic difficulties that produced runaway inflation at an annual rate of nearly one hundred percent. They needed something with a more stable value, so they chose to set the fee at two grams of gold. There was still some gold in the river sands, and most of the people were capable of panning for gold. Those who preferred to pay cash could do so by paying the amount that the local bank would pay for that amount of gold on the day that payment was made, and that would take care of the constant fluctuations in prices produced by inflation. Those who had no money or gold could pay with a sack of rice if they preferred. Another option would be to work out a custom deal to pay with other food items. And as a last resort for the man who had no money, no gold, and no food that he could give, they would accept in lieu of payment five days of work each month to help them raise food to feed the children. It was obvious that the fees would not be enough to cover all the costs of operating a school, but they would just trust the Lord to provide the rest.

They invited the interested people to come to a public meeting to hear an explanation of plans for the school. The meeting was held about the middle of February, and about 40 people showed up. They were pleased to see that many, because they had decided they would have to limit the enrollment to no more than 40 students their first year. The meeting was held under the roof of what was to become the classroom building, so that everyone could see that they were serious about starting a school. The intense interest shown during the meeting was very

heartening. At the end of the meeting, however, when Dale asked for volunteers to help with the construction work, only five hands went up, and that was disheartening. Alcedo started taking applications, but incredibly a few parents maintained that they couldn't afford to send their children to this school!

Everybody went to work with a will, but progress was painfully slow because so much time was taken up just sawing logs into lumber and transporting supplies. When the month of April arrived, the month when school should begin, the classroom building still had no walls, no floor, no desks, no chairs, and no blackboards. The other building that was supposed to provide the teacher's living quarters and a dormitory for students had progressed to nothing more than a wooden floor that was 30 inches above ground level. At that moment it appeared ridiculous to even think they might have a school that year.

However, Alcedo had some wise counsel for the Duerksens. "Before the other schools around here open their doors for the new school year, we had better give the parents a definite date when we will begin classes here at Maranatha. Otherwise everybody who has applied for our school will give up on us and will enroll their children in other schools. We can't wait much longer if we are going to have a school this year."

"No doubt you are right about that," Dale responded, "so let's go ahead and set a date. How about the first Monday in the month of May? That will be kind of late, but hopefully not too late, and that will give us a month of preparation yet. Then we'll have to start no matter what. We'll just have to do a lot of improvising and do what we can with what we have." Everybody agreed to that, and now this definite target date produced a frenzy of activity.

"We ought to include the first year of secondary school in addition to our primary school," Alcedo recommended. "There are no high schools around here, and I think there are quite a few young people here on the Pachitea River who have nothing more than an elementary education who would like to continue their studies. Maybe we could add one grade of secondary school each year until eventually this school could become a complete high school."

"There's nothing wrong with having big dreams," was Dale's response to this idea. "You are the principal, and if you think we can do it, I'll back you up. Let's go for it." Dale knew that in Peru the elementary schools had only six grades, so the first year of secondary school would actually be just the equivalent of seventh grade in his own country.

Alcedo immediately went to work on scheduling. He gave himself the biggest job. He would teach all of the primary grades using a student helper, and as if that were not enough, he would also teach some of the secondary subjects. His wife Rosita would help out by teaching some of the classes in spite of the fact that she had a baby to take care of. Dale was assigned to teach English, math, and manual arts.

When the word got out that the Maranatha School would be offering the first year of high school, that produced an additional influx of applications, and soon they reached their maximum of forty. A few days later an 18-year-old boy walked in on the path through the jungle and announced that he wanted to sign up for the secondary course. He was very disappointed when he learned that there was no room left for him. "Please let me come," he pleaded. "You can just stick me in a corner somewhere. I don't care where you put me. Just let me come to your school. I need some more education. Please let me come."

Although Patti was too busy in the clinic to help with the teaching load, she did help with planning and with the screening of applicants. "How can we turn down someone who is so eager to learn?" she said.

"Probably not everyone who has signed up will actually show up," was Rosita's observation. "Perhaps we could accept a few more than our quota."

Dale expressed his opinion too. "I think that's a good idea. I'll vote for it if our principal is in favor." And so it was that this young man became number 41 in their stack of accepted

applications.

In places like the jungle where most of the people were very poor, there was very little use of textbooks. Instead the students usually used blank notebooks. Chalk was cheap, so the teacher would write on the blackboard the things the students needed to learn, and they would copy the information in their notebooks to be studied later. The blackboard was indispensable, so Dale set to work making one. He selected half a dozen of his straightest six-inch boards and carefully planed and sanded them smooth. Then he put them together to form a chalkboard three feet wide and six feet long. He painted this creation with two coats of a flat-finish black paint, and although the narrow cracks between boards remained visible, it served its purpose quite satisfactorily.

The next time Dale went to the city to get supplies, he went to a mattress shop to find out what was available. Most of their mattresses consisted of nothing more than a sheet of foam rubber enclosed in a cloth cover. Their cheapest mattress was a single-bed size that made use of a one-inch foam pad. That wasn't much padding, but it would have to do for the students. Many of them probably didn't have even that much to sleep on at home. He bought 40 of the thin mattresses and arranged for transportation back to Maranatha.

By the end of the month the framing was done for the first floor walls of the dormitory building, but they didn't have the lumber for siding yet. Time was running out, so they urgently needed to apply some ingenuity to close off the rooms for privacy. They found the solution to the problem in plastic sheeting. Local merchants carried rolls of blue plastic that was a meter wide, and it was very low cost, so Dale bought 50 meters of the material to use as a temporary covering of the walls. It went up fast and actually served the purpose very well. As soon as the first apartment was enclosed, Alcedo and Rosita moved into their new home. Since there were no other teachers yet, the other apartment would be the place for the girls to sleep. Since there were no beds, they would just have to put their thin mattress pads on the floor.

What to do with the boys was a bigger problem to solve. Although they asked God for wisdom at the beginning of every day, no inspiration came for several days. Then one day as Dale was walking by the classroom building, he looked up at the roof, and the thought suddenly struck him, *There is some good usable space up there in the attic area that is well protected from rain. Maybe we can put the boys up there.* He quickly fetched a ladder and climbed up to take a closer look. Yes, it did look feasible to put in some boards to make a temporary floor, and then the space could be utilized. He climbed back down to get a few boards, and when they were in place he tried it out to see how well he could maneuver through the area. Although the roof was too low for him to stand upright, he could easily crawl through on hands and knees, and he could even walk through by bending way over. Mattress pads could be put on both sides of the walkway, and there would be adequate room for all the boys they expected to enroll. They now had their solution. This attic space would be the provisional boys' dormitory.

There was still one big hurdle in the way. Food Service. Who would be able and willing to cook for all the children? They couldn't think of any suitable person, so all they could do was remind the Lord of the promise, "The work is of God, and He will furnish means and will send helpers, true, earnest disciples, whose hands also will be filled with food for the starving multitude."⁵² Just in time Lidvina, Juan Heidinger's mother, felt impressed to offer her services. The four Heidinger children, three girls and one boy, were planning to attend, so Grandmother decided she would like to be close by to keep an eye on them. She set up her bed in the girls' dorm, and thus she virtually became the girls' dean as well as the school cook.

They had no kitchen facilities yet, so Santiago took on the job of producing a temporary cook shack. He made a lean-to with a thatched roof, and under the protection of the roof he made a

⁵² *Desire of Ages*, p. 370.

dirt mound with a fire pit on top. The sides of the fire pit supported a steel grate, and this became their improvised wood-burning kitchen range.

The facilities were very primitive, but Alcedo and his helpers were ready to do what they could with what they had. Sunday morning, May 3, the students began to arrive. As anticipated, not all who had applied for admission actually showed up to register. They began classes Monday morning with 24 primary grade students and 12 in the first grade of secondary. There still were no desks or even chairs available, so they got the benches out of the little church to give the students something to sit on.

Dale remembered that he had once seen a clever idea in a handyman's magazine. It was a bench with a backrest that was adjustable, and when it was turned to a horizontal position by moving two bolts, the backrest became a narrow tabletop. Dale thought this could be an ideal dual purpose piece of furniture for their school, a desk with attached seat for classes or a bench with back rest for general assemblies. Relying on his memory he drew up plans for this desk, and then he tried making one. It worked out just fine. Then he took the finished product and the plans to his class in manual arts. He made another one while the students watched to see how he did it, and then he assigned them the task of making their own while he supervised their work. Soon all the students had these homemade desks that made it much easier to write in their notebooks.

This school was definitely a mission school, and worship services were a prominent part of the educational activities. Although the majority of the students had no Adventist background, they eagerly listened to religious instruction, and how they loved to sing! Their joyful praises to God vied with the birds at the breaking of dawn each morning. Patti commented, "I don't need an alarm clock anymore, because I always hear the children singing when it is time to get up."

The admissions committee had accepted one little girl rather reluctantly, because she came from a home that didn't appear to be at all religious. Her father maintained two homes, one in Puerto Inca and one in Pucallpa, with a wife in each one! Somewhere in his ancestry there must have been a Britisher, because his last name was Jones, definitely not a Spanish surname. Señor Jones was a very successful businessman who owned the tugboat that towed log rafts to the sawmills in Pucallpa. He also owned a store in Puerto Inca and the large cattle ranch directly across the river from Maranatha. One Friday afternoon he came to take his daughter home for the weekend, but she refused to go with him. She wanted to stay at school so that she could attend Sabbath School the next morning. And one day when her teacher assigned the writing of essays, this little girl chose to write about the pig. Her essay declared, "We Adventists don't eat pig, because it's an unclean animal." Obviously she was already beginning to identify herself with Adventists.

And then there was Emily who came from a very different background. Her parents regularly attended church on Sundays, and Emily herself taught a Sunday School class. When she enrolled in the Maranatha School, her pastor apparently wasn't very happy about it. But she was happy, and she especially enjoyed learning new chorus songs.

One Sunday she decided to teach one of these choruses to her Sunday School class. Although the song only spoke of God's greatness and power and made no mention of any exclusively Adventist doctrine, the pastor must have felt threatened by the fact that she was teaching something she had learned at Maranatha. He accused her of trying to spread the "Sabbath teachings" she was picking up at the school, and she was stripped of all her responsibilities in her church and was virtually excommunicated.

Poor Emily felt crushed by this turn of events and shed many tears. Her mother was very upset as well. When she brought her daughter back to school after the weekend, she poured out her tale of woe to any ears willing to listen. Patti sympathized, "I'm so sorry to hear this. I know it wasn't fair, but Emily doesn't have to be deprived of church fellowship. She will always be

welcome to participate in our religious activities here at Maranatha." The mother seemed to be comforted by this assurance, and Emily did continue to take an active part in the worship services at the school.

Meanwhile the flow of patients to the clinic continued unabated. In fact, the very month that the new school started, all previous records were shattered as Patti attended to 695 patient visits that month. This "success" was about to break her, and she was feeling dangerously close to burnout. It was frustrating to her that so frequently she would barely begin a household task when the bell at the clinic would ring, and she would have to drop what she was doing to go take care of another sick person. The knowledge that Colette would soon be coming back from France to help her gave her courage to keep pressing on.

Dale also felt the pressure. There was a limit to how many boxes of medicines he could handle at one time, and so with the increased demand for medicines he had to go to Pucallpa every two or three weeks to restock. That severely limited the amount of time he could spend working on school buildings, and that too was frustrating.

Then Santiago announced one day, "I have found some land just a short distance above Sungarillo Creek that nobody has ever claimed. The reason is probably because it is hard to get to the property. The riverbank is very steep and high at that place, but I have found a spot where I think I can make a suitable port. I want to clear some land and start a plantation, and when I have enough things growing to feed my family, I will move them out there."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that you are going to leave us," was Dale's disappointed reply. "You have been such a big help to us during hard times. But I know how much you have wanted to have a place of your own, so I can't blame you for taking advantage of this opportunity."

Santiago responded, "We probably won't be able to move up there until next year, and in the meantime I can continue to help you part time."

"I appreciate your willingness to keep on helping us, and I'm sure we are going to need all the help we can get. I don't suppose you will be able to move your house to the new site this time, will you?"

"No, I'm afraid not. I'll just have to find new materials right there on the property to make a new house for my family."

"Well, we can make good use of your house here at Maranatha. It will make an excellent boys' dorm next year, so I'll pay you for it. How much do you think it is worth?" After discussing the matter briefly, they settled on a price that was about the equivalent of US\$500.

About this time something else was taking place that also had elements of sadness mixed with happiness. Vern, the pilot, had come to the end of his term of service, and he was planning on a permanent return to his homeland. For a couple of years Dale and Patti had talked to him by radio nearly every day, and they enjoyed his visits so much. They had learned to love him like a member of the family, and they were going to miss his quiet dignity and considerate ways. He showed his thoughtful consideration one more time by postponing his departure until one week after his replacement arrived, so that he could give the new pilot some orientation for the job.

When the Duerksens heard the name of the new pilot, all sorrow turned to joy, for it was Bill Norton—and of course he was coming with his wife Bonnie, the legal owner of the Maranatha property. Before they left the States, they were required to attend a one-week training course conducted by Mission Institute at Andrews University. They found it to be a very inspiring and helpful course, but one day when the mission appointees were discussing how to deal with culture shock when they would enter a new and strange environment, Bonnie commented, "For me it is going to be just like going home."

19 *A Light in a Dark Place*



About half way through the school year two of Dale's adult nephews, Gary and Ed, decided to go down to Peru to see for themselves what was going on at Maranatha. In Gary's work he had done a lot of flying on Eastern Airlines, and he had accumulated so many frequent flyer miles that he was able to get three free bonus tickets to Peru. Gary gave the third ticket to his dad (Dale's brother), and the arrival of the three men for a two-week visit proved to be a godsend.

When they saw the deplorable condition of the unfinished dormitory building, they announced that they wanted to work on the construction. That was like music to Dale's ears, so he immediately put them to work. By then he had enough siding prepared to cover the walls of the first floor, so they started taking down the temporary plastic and nailing up permanent siding in its place. They worked fast, and by the end of the first day the walls were nearly done. Now the structure was beginning to look like a real building.

Juan had kept his promise to provide all the lumber for the floors, so Dale thought the next job ought to be laying the floor for the second story, but Gary had a different idea. "It will be very cumbersome climbing ladders to put in that floor," he said. "Let me make the permanent stairs first, and then it will be much easier for us to go up and down as we lay the floor." That made good sense, so that's what Gary did. With the convenience of the stairs the laying of the floor progressed rapidly, and soon that job was done as well.

It was exhilarating to finally see things rapidly taking shape after months of delays and slow progress. The fellows still had some time left, so they wanted to tackle the framing of the upstairs walls. Unfortunately Dale didn't have enough studs yet to complete that job, but at least they could start with the materials on hand. By the time they left they had framed about two-thirds of the second floor walls, and a few weeks later that job was also completed.

Now they could finally put a roof on the building. To provide adequate rain protection clear down to the first floor, Dale decided he should make the eaves extend out four feet from the sides of the building. That meant he had to make the trusses forty feet wide. He laid out a pattern on the ground, and then he proceeded to cut all the pieces he would need to make ten trusses. The next day he rapidly assembled them until he had all ten trusses leaning against the side of the building, ready to go up to the top of the second story.

Dale looked with satisfaction on the trusses he had made, but then he looked up to where they were supposed to go, and he said to himself, *How in the world are we going to raise these monsters twenty feet straight up? I didn't think about that little problem. I need to rent a crane, but there's nothing like that available down here in the jungle. I'd better talk to Patti's "Heavenly Physician" about this, because He must be a good construction superintendent too.*

Early the next morning in his time alone with God to seek guidance for the day, Dale reviewed the counsel of James: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."⁵³ With that assurance in his

⁵³ James 1:5.

mind, he knelt and asked his Divine Manager to give him the wisdom he needed to finish the building.

As he walked over to the building site while searching his mind for ideas, he thought about his old boat winch with the hand crank. Maybe he could rig up some kind of a device using the winch that would be able to lift those trusses. He went to the shop to find the old winch, and when he took a good look at it, he could see that it was essentially worn out. It had two gear wheels, one large and one small, to produce the mechanical advantage of a winch, but the teeth on the larger gear wheel had become so badly worn that they were no longer functionable.

It appeared that this old winch was ready for the junk heap, but Dale had learned that in the Lord's work you often have to do what you can with what you have, even if what you have doesn't seem to be good enough. He could see that the winch could be disassembled, so he removed the large gear wheel and took it over to his gas-welding outfit. He carefully welded a bit of metal onto the worn part of each tooth. Then he got a file and tried to file each tooth back to its original shape. It was a long tedious job, but eventually he got it restored to the extent that the two gear wheels again meshed together properly. Once more he had a winch he could work with.

One problem was solved, but an even bigger problem was how to use the winch. There was nothing on top of the building to which he could attach a winch. The only possibility it seemed would be to devise a plan that would permit attaching the winch to a firm platform near ground level. As Dale thought about it, he realized that this would be feasible if he could attach a pulley to something strong about six feet above the top of the building. Then the cable from the winch could go up to the pulley and back down the other side to the truss that needed to be raised. He had a suitable pulley in his shop, and now all he needed was a high tower to which he could attach that pulley.

There was a certain kind of tree that grew in abundance in the jungle. It had a hollow core, and the woody part was similar to balsa wood. Logs from these trees would be light weight and easy to handle yet relatively strong, and Dale thought they would be perfect for his temporary tower. He picked two trees, each with a diameter of about six inches, and he cut them down to make logs thirty feet long. He placed them on the ground in a V-shape. The point where the logs came together would be the top of the tower, and the other end where the logs were about four feet apart would be the base. About every twenty inches he nailed a board across between the two logs, and when he got through it looked like a huge ladder. After digging two holes close to the building for the legs of this apparatus, he got the schoolboys to help raise it into an upright position, some of the boys on the ground pushing and others upstairs pulling on ropes. Then they raised a third log which they leaned against the first two in order to provide a tripod arrangement, and Dale climbed up to the top of the tower to securely tie things together and attach the pulley with the cable inserted in it.

Now the time had come for the test. He sent two of the fellows upstairs with instructions to climb up onto the framing in order to pull the truss onto the building—if it arrived. It was an exciting moment when he attached the cable to the first truss and started cranking the winch. It required considerable force to turn the crank, but the truss moved right on up the side of the building at a slow but steady pace, and within a few minutes it was on top ready to be nailed into place. What a thrill!

But then he noticed something that wasn't thrilling. The newly repaired gear wheel on the winch was already visibly worn after hoisting up just one truss. "At this rate it won't hold up for nine more," he muttered. "We'll have to come up with some way to reduce the stress on the equipment." It was time to quit for the day, so they just let the matter rest till morning, and in the meantime Dale prayed and thought and hoped for some inspiration.

When it was time to start work again the next morning, the inspiration did come. As Dale

watched four men carrying one of the trusses into position where the cable could be attached to it, the thought came to him, *Those men have no trouble lifting that truss. The only problem is that they can't lift it twenty feet at one time. If the men can do most of the lifting bit by bit, and if the only thing the winch has to do is hold the truss in place while the men reposition themselves for another lift, there should be much less stress on the equipment.*

Dale explained what he wanted his helpers to do, and then they tried the new strategy. He called out, "One, two, three, LIFT!" Together they lifted that heavy truss about three feet off the ground while he furiously cranked up the slack in the cable. Then he shouted, "OK, let go!" and the winch held the truss suspended in midair a few feet off the ground. The men took up new positions, and then they repeated the process to move it a little higher. Next they tied two ropes to the truss, and two of the men went upstairs to pull from above while the others got poles to push from below. The plan was working beautifully, and within five minutes that second truss was up on top.

All went well until a couple of teeth on the large gear wheel gave out when truss number nine was on the way up, but somehow they still managed to get it all the way to the top. *Now will we be stymied with just one more to go?* Dale wondered. He breathed a silent prayer, "Lord, we need this roof so much. Please help me keep the winch turning somehow just one more time." And so they started raising the last one, and whenever the winch started slipping at the stubby worn teeth, he somehow managed to coax it past the badly worn spot. When that final truss was on top, a cheer broke out. The old winch was completely worn out, but nobody cared about that now. Its work was done, and now it could rest in peace on the junk pile.

The men who were helping had to return to their homes, and school classes had to continue. There was still a lot of work to be done on the roof, but it looked like it would come to a halt. Just then, however, Santiago came by with some welcome news. "I'm all caught up with the work on my new farm," he said, "so I'm going to help you full time for a few days. What do you want me to do?"

"Oh, thank you, Santiago. Yes, we need help to get that roof done. Let's finish up the framework, and then you can nail the corrugated roofing panels in place while I hand them up to you."

Santiago was an impressive worker who didn't believe in an 8-hour day. He worked from dawn to dusk, and in a few days the roof was completed. After he pounded the last nail into the ridge cap, he crawled over to the makeshift crane that had raised the trusses, and he climbed down the tower to the ground. It was no longer needed, so Dale got his chainsaw and quickly cut through the poles. The tower came down with a mighty crash, ready to be turned into firewood. And the roof was completed none too soon, for the next night there was a heavy rain. The new roof didn't leak a drop, and that was good reason for rejoicing.

* * *

Another reason for rejoicing was the return of Colette, the French nurse. When Patti was alone trying to take care of 50 patients—and sometimes even more—in one day, she felt frustrated because she couldn't spend more than ten to fifteen minutes with each one. She wanted to teach her patients principles of healthful living and to talk with them about their personal problems and to pray with them. That was the way to really get close to the hearts of her patients and win their confidence, and then she could invite them to follow Jesus, but with so many patients there was no longer time for that. But now she and Colette could spread out the load. Returning patients of course would want to see Patti again, but Colette could take the new patients, and that plan of operation generally worked out quite well.

Margarita was a new patient. She was a small young woman, full term in her first pregnancy. Since Colette had no experience in obstetrics, Patti decided to take this one. When she checked the girl, she had a hard time finding the fetal heartbeat. She finally heard it above

the umbilicus. That usually means a breach presentation, and Patti was scared of breach deliveries.

That evening Margarita started hard labor, and dilation proceeded normally. Then Patti could feel the baby's head in the birth canal, and she was relieved to know that this wasn't going to be a breach delivery after all. But her relief was short lived, for now all progress stopped. The baby seemed to be stuck. She worked on Margarita all night with no further progress, and by morning it was obvious that the pelvic opening was just too small for that baby to get through. Now, after having delivered many babies all these years, Patti's worst fear finally became a reality. She had a patient who needed a C-section, and the woman's husband was not there to take her to the hospital a hundred miles away. Patti again called on her Heavenly Physician to show her what to do. He had given Dale wisdom to know how to solve his construction problems, and she trusted Him now to give her wisdom in dealing with this crisis.

Patti's mind went back four years. She remembered that trip back to the States when she met a doctor who was an OB-GYN specialist. She had talked to him about delivering babies, and he told her, "You need to learn how to do a symphysiotomy. In places with very limited facilities such as your situation, this procedure can often serve as an effective substitute for a caesarian section. I have a book that describes the procedure, and I'll send it to you." He took her address, but the book never came. *Why, oh why didn't he ever send me that book?* Patti wondered.

She called Dale over. "Please get the boat ready," she said. "We'll have to take this girl to Puerto Inca. I can't do any more for her here, and her condition is getting desperate. I heard that there are three doctors in town now. They don't have a very good reputation, but maybe one of them will be able to do something for Margarita. I wish Doctor Cristofer was still there."

The Catholic Church had brought Dr. Cristofer from Germany to run the municipal clinic in town. He had visited Maranatha several times, and the Duerksens had developed a good working relationship with him. Then after about a year the government sent three young doctors from the coast to Puerto Inca. They arrogantly announced that they were taking over the clinic, and they ordered Dr. Cristofer to get out, and so he moved to a nearby village.

Dale and Patti put Margarita on a stretcher and carried her down to the boat. When they reached Puerto Inca and were tying up the boat, somebody walking by saw the woman on the stretcher, and he remarked, "There aren't any doctors here. They all left for the holidays."

Patti was stunned. How could they be so irresponsible to all go at the same time, leaving nobody in the clinic for emergencies? Dale suggested, "Why don't you go up to the clinic anyway to find out for sure if nobody is around? You know that these people often tell us things that aren't so."

There was nothing else to do at the moment, so she hurried over to the clinic. There she found a nurse who confirmed the incredible report. All three doctors had gone. As Patti turned away with a completely helpless and hopeless feeling, the nurse commented, "Oh, I saw Dr. Cristofer in town yesterday," and suddenly hope revived.

"Would you please go see if you can find him?" Patti pleaded. "Tell him that the nurse from Maranatha has a serious problem, she needs to talk to him about it right away."

The nurse went off in search of Dr. Cristofer, and soon she returned with him in tow. Patti quickly gave him a rundown on Margarita's condition. "But I'm not authorized to use the facilities here anymore," he objected.

"There is nobody else here to help her," Patti countered, "and if she doesn't get some help pretty soon, she's going to die!"

Dr. Cristofer pondered that assertion briefly and then responded, "All right, bring her in, and I'll see what I can do." So they brought her to the clinic, and he examined her. He agreed that she was in critical condition, but he wasn't sure what he could do for her either. Surgery

seemed to be the only solution, but he was not a surgeon. Although he had done a little bit of minor surgery, he had never attempted a C-section.

"Have you ever heard of a symphysiectomy?" Patti suggested.

He thought a moment. "Yes, I have," he replied. "In fact, I have a book that describes the procedure, but I've never checked it out, because the book is written in English which I don't understand very well. I think I know where the book is, so just wait a minute while I go look for it." Soon he returned with book in hand. "I'm willing to try it if you'll help me," he said as he handed her the book. "You read what it says, and then tell me in Spanish what I'm supposed to do, and I'll do it."

And so they started their preparations. A male nurse was present, so the doctor asked him to start an IV on Margarita. The clinic was almost devoid of medical instruments, but fortunately Patti had brought along some of hers. The only scalpel they could find was a very small one, but they would have to make do with what they had. The instructions in the book were clearly written, practically in recipe form, first do this, then do that, etc. In front the pelvic girdle is not really continuous bone. Where the two sides of the pelvis come together, they are connected by cartilage in what is called the pubic symphysis. When this connection is severed, the pelvis can spread, almost like a hinge opening a little wider, and that permits the birth canal to expand. When the doctor made that cut, the baby popped right out!

The poor baby had suffered a lot of trauma. Her little head was all out of shape and had a large hematoma on it. She didn't breathe, but she still had a strong heartbeat, so Patti went to work on her with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. What a joyful moment it was when the baby let out a little cry and started breathing on her own!

Now the crisis was over, and they could relax—or so they thought. But just then Margarita went into shock! Patti quickly checked her blood pressure and found that it had dropped dangerously low. Then she checked the IV and discovered that there was no IV running. Just a loose plastic tube was dangling from the IV bottle. She had been unaware that the male nurse had failed in his efforts to get it started. Patti quickly remedied that by starting the IV herself and elevating Margarita's feet, and in a few minutes her blood pressure returned to normal.

Now the crisis was really over, and there was time to thank God for His goodness, for the wonderful way that everything had worked out in the end to save the life of both mother and baby.

* * *

The school year came to a close the middle of December. It had been a good year in spite of the difficulties they had struggled through—or maybe it was because of the difficulties. It seemed that when everyone worked together to overcome obstacles and build up an institution from scratch, it had a way of drawing them close together. Oh, yes, they had a few disciplinary problems, but they weren't very serious, and although a few disgruntled students dropped out, by the time they got to the end of the year, they felt like they were all just one big family.

They closed the school year with a little program something like a graduation ceremony, although they didn't have a graduating class as such. The parents all came. The meeting began with the singing of the national anthem. Then one of the students gave a touching tribute to the teachers. Next the principal recounted the major events of the school year, and Dale discussed the plans for the next year. After that the report cards were handed out, and with that the first year of the Marantha School passed into history.

20 *Efforts to Put Out God's Light*



About this time national elections were held in Peru, and inflation became a major issue in the political campaign. The socialists promised to put a stop to rising prices. Their arguments must have been effective, because for the first time in history the leftist party APRA was swept into power. They immediately implemented their promises, and they kept prices low by imposing price controls. Unfortunately they overlooked an important economic fact. A merchant won't sell something if he can't earn a decent profit, and a manufacturer will stop producing a product if he can't cover his costs. The inevitable result was shortages and rationing. What good are low prices if you can't find what you need?

Patti was disturbed to see the supply of medicines on pharmacy shelves dwindling, and when no more snake antivenom was available, she felt frantic. "What can I do for my snakebite cases?" she asked a pharmacist in desperation.

"I have heard of a successful experiment that substituted calcium gluconate for antivenom," he responded. "I have no idea why that would work, but the report insisted that it DOES work."

Not long after receiving that advice Patti did have another snakebite case. She applied her usual charcoal treatment, and then in place of anti-venom she gingerly gave a small dose of calcium gluconate. The patient recovered about the same as ever with no serious complications. Did calcium gluconate deserve the credit? Or would the patient have recovered just as well with nothing more than the charcoal treatments? Or would God have healed him anyway without any treatments at all? Patti didn't know the answers to those questions, but she did know that the bite of their local poisonous snakes without treatment could be lethal.

Another serious shortage was kerosene. They could substitute candles for lighting and wood fires for cooking, but there was no substitute fuel for the refrigerator that preserved their perishable medicines. Jones was the only merchant in Puerto Inca who had a franchise to market petroleum fuels, and when his boat broke down, it took only a week or two for the supply of kerosene in town to run out. The Duerksens heard that kerosene was for sale at a gas station in the little village that was developing by the Sungaro Bridge on the new road, so when they were getting perilously close to the end of their supply, Dale and Alcedo decided to hike the seven miles to the bridge to see if they could find some more of the precious fuel. When they reached the gas station, they were disappointed to find it closed, and they met a man who told them that the owner had gone to Pucallpa to get more fuel. And so they had to return to Maranatha empty handed.

That weekend their prayers included a petition that God would help them get more kerosene. Sunday morning Dale poured the last drop into the tank of the refrigerator, and he knew that would be barely enough to keep it going for two or three more days. Monday the fellows decided to try Puerto Sungaro once more. This time they took the wheelbarrow and a 15-

gallon barrel, so that they could bring back a good supply if they found kerosene for sale. The gas station was now open for business again, but the owner had brought less than a full load of fuel because of the muddy condition of the road, and so he was limiting kerosene purchases to a maximum of five gallons per person. They were disappointed to hear that, but when the man discovered that they were from Maranatha, he said, "For the clinic I'll let you have twice that much." And so they returned home with ten gallons of kerosene in the barrel and praises on their lips.

Work on the school continued during the vacation period in spite of the shortages. Dale kept himself busy making bunk beds for the dormitories so that the students wouldn't have to sleep on the floor anymore, and when Alcedo took his vacation, he looked for a teacher who could help them as they added another grade to the school. He found two young men who acted very interested in teaching at Maranatha, but then they disappeared from view and he never heard from them again.

* * *

Dale and Patti were very happy that their son-in-law Bill Norton was now the pilot at the Adventist Air Base. When he and Bonnie came for visits, they would usually talk about how much more convenient it would be to have a landing strip for the airplane right there at their place. Bill and Dale walked around on the property looking for the ideal location with level ground and a good approach path, but eventually they came to the conclusion that there really was no good location for a landing strip at Maranatha. But they weren't ready to give up the idea of having a place where the airplane could land that would be closer than Puerto Inca.

Dale offered a suggestion. "We have noticed the last few months that Jones has been clearing more of his property right across the river from our place to provide more pasture for his cattle. We saw the heavy smoke as they burned the trees they had cut down. Let's go over there and see what it looks like now."

And so the two men got in their boat to cross the river, and in a few minutes they were tying up on the other side. Before them was a steep escarpment rising perhaps a hundred feet. They struggled to the top of the escarpment, and up there they found a flat plateau. Bill was impressed by what he saw. "An airstrip here would have a great approach over the river," he said, "and from the other direction we could also have a good approach by taking out just a couple big trees that are in the way. I like the looks of this place. Do you think you could get permission to use it?"

"Sure, I think Jones would let us put in a landing strip here, especially since his daughter attends our school. After all, it will be a grass strip, so it won't reduce his pastureland at all. In fact, his cows can keep the strip mowed for us by eating the grass! I'll ask him the next time I see him."

They walked inland until they came to a shallow ravine. Bill commented, "I'm going to step off the distance from here to where the drop off to the river begins, to see how long a strip you could put in here without moving much dirt." He counted his steps and found that the distance was about 450 meters. "We like to have 500 meters," he continued, "but 450 will do. There are a few logs that didn't burn up completely that will have to be moved and maybe three or four stumps will have to be dug out, and then you can have a good grass airstrip here."

Before they left the area they set up some markers to show where Bill wanted the landing strip to go, and a few days later Dale asked for and received permission from Señor Jones to proceed with the project.

* * *

One day Patti fell and hurt her left shoulder. Although it was quite painful, she didn't give it much thought, and a few days later she noted that it was definitely getting better. That day, however, she went with Dale on a short trip in the boat, and as they returned to their port, she

stood up so that she could quickly jump out of the boat to tie it to a stake on the shore. The nose of the boat suddenly hit the shore and stopped with a jerk, which sent poor Patti sprawling. She landed on her already wounded left shoulder, and this time the pain was excruciating. She thought it would get better with time, but instead it got worse. Her range of motion became very limited, and that made it very difficult to take care of any patients. She was very thankful that Colette was there to help her.

Patti went to see a doctor in the city, but he was unable to do anything for her. That made Dale decide that he should take her back to the States to see a medical specialist, for they were afraid her shoulder might freeze up completely without good medical attention. They also wanted to attend their son's graduation on this trip, so they planned to leave in April just before the new school year would begin in Peru.

About a month before school was scheduled to begin, a couple working in the highlands of Peru heard about the work at Maranatha, and they decided that they would like to join the work in the jungle. The man, whose nationality was Mexican, was a qualified teacher, and his wife, who was a Peruvian, had taken nursing. That sounded like an ideal combination for the work at Maranatha. They promised to come in time for the beginning of school, and the Duerksens were happy to hear this news before they left on their vacation.

The visit to the specialist in California was profitable. He prescribed some exercises to correct Patti's problem. "Get yourself a box of Kleenex to wipe your tears," he warned her, "because it is going to be a painful and long-drawn-out ordeal, but I can assure you that if you are faithful in doing the exercises, you will regain your full range of motion." What he promised eventually did come true.

When they returned to Peru, it was almost time for the birth of Bonnie's first baby. Of course "Grandma Patti" wanted to stay with her daughter for the delivery, so she sent Dale on to Maranatha by himself. He planned to walk in on the trail between the road and Maranatha, so he sent a message by radio to let Alcedo know when to expect him, and he hoped somebody would be at the trailhead waiting to help him carry his baggage.

The condition of the road turned out to be the worst he had ever seen. Some places there were mud holes so deep that the mud piled up on each side of the road was as high as the top of the pickup truck. Often the passengers had to get off and push. At one place they came upon a mud hole about a hundred yards long, and it appeared to be impossible to get through that one. Fortunately a large logging tractor came along at the opportune moment to pull them through. It was very slow going, and the sun was setting when he finally reached his destination. He didn't think anybody would wait that long for his arrival, but when he came in sight of the trailhead he saw somebody standing there. Then he saw another ... and another ... and another. Why, the whole school had turned out to meet him! He felt deeply touched by the warm welcome they gave him.

The students had prepared torches so that they could find their way through the dark jungle. It had rained that day, and the trail was a slick muddy mess. Dale slipped and fell down countless times. When he finally reached home, he was very tired, very hungry, and very dirty. Supper was waiting, and that quickly solved the hunger problem. A good shower would soon solve the other problems as well. It felt so good to be home again. Then Colette came up to him and said in a low voice, "We want to have a meeting with you tomorrow night, but without the new teacher and his wife present." Suddenly Dale felt sick inside. During his absence something must have gone wrong here, terribly wrong! Something that couldn't be solved with a warm meal or a good shower.

The next day Dale started asking questions and listening to answers. It quickly became apparent that almost from the start there must have been friction between the newcomers and the oldtimers. There were charges and counter charges. As he listened privately to each side, they

both sounded reasonable. He tried desperately to smooth things over. How he wished that Patti were there! She was more skilled in personal relations than he was. He called everybody together and pleaded with them to try to forget the past and make a new start. They agreed somewhat reluctantly to give it a try, but it seemed like just an uneasy truce with tension still running high.

Dale felt like he was sitting on a powder keg about ready to explode, so he went to his Bible to try to find wisdom and insight into this kind of personnel problem. His mind was drawn to the experience of two successful seasoned missionaries, Paul and Barnabas. When they were preparing for a second missionary tour, they ran into a problem. The writer of the story said, "They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company."⁵⁴ The author didn't attempt to attach blame to anyone. Instead the two mighty missionaries were pictured as having widely differing temperaments, and the conflict appears to have resulted from an irreconcilable clash of personalities. The only solution was for each man to go his own way, and what threatened to be a disaster turned out to be a blessing in the end as one missionary team turned into two successful teams.

Two weeks went by at Maranatha, and then "the powder keg" did explode. The new teacher and his wife packed up their belongings and left. Dale was sad to see them go, but there probably was no other solution to the undesirable tension. Patti returned to help pick up the pieces. The teaching load was redistributed. Dale took over several classes, Alcedo and Rosita increased their heavy load, and Patti even took on one class, and thus they managed to keep the school going.

* * *

Several weeks went by, and then one day Patti heard excited patients in the clinic talking together about something frightening that had occurred. "What are you talking about?" she wanted to know.

"Haven't you heard yet?" came the response. Then the story unfolded. The previous morning a pickup truck loaded with passengers was on its way from Pucallpa to Puerto Sungaro. As they came around a curve in the road not far from the police station at Kilometer 86, they saw several men carrying assault rifles and waving their hands in a gesture for the truck to stop. The driver slammed on the brakes, and then the leader of the group walked over and politely requested the use of his vehicle for awhile. The driver was in no mood to argue while he was looking down a gun barrel, so he quickly climbed out of the cab leaving the keys in the ignition. One of the other armed men went to the back and invited the passengers to please get off. "Just wait here on the road, and we'll be back shortly to return the vehicle," he said courteously. Wide eyed the scared passengers quickly jumped off the truck, and the armed men took their places.

The band of guerillas sped off down the road, and soon they came to the police checkpoint. A policeman came out of the control booth as usual to check on what was in this vehicle, and then the terrorists opened fire. They killed a few policemen and the rest fled. They burned up the control booth and the police barracks as well. Then they jumped into the truck again and calmly drove back to where the driver and his passengers were waiting. The leader thanked the driver for the use of the truck, and he apologized to the passengers for any inconvenience they may have caused, and then these guerillas melted into the jungle leaving behind virtually no clues of who they were, where they came from, and where they went.

As Patti listened to the account, her heart began beating a little faster. The terrorists were beginning to invade her familiar territory, and that was frightening. The neighbors started showing signs of fear as well, and soon some of the parents pulled their children out of school. Patti even noticed a drop in the number of patients coming to the clinic. The latest terrorist

⁵⁴ Acts 15:39.

activities became the major theme of conversation, and the people were getting scared.

In this disturbing situation the making of the airstrip took on a new sense of importance and urgency. Dale discussed it with Alcedo one day. "We haven't made any progress on the airstrip lately," he declared. "I think we need to make it a high priority. I am getting concerned about the bad condition of the road, and I'm also a little worried about what the terrorists might be up to next. They could blockade the road or set up ambushes to prevent any supplies from getting through by land, so I think we should have a viable alternate plan for getting supplies."

"So what do you have in mind?" Alcedo wanted to know. "It costs a lot more to travel by air than by land, you know."

"Yes, that's true if you are talking about transportation for only a single person, but if we're dealing with cargo, that can be a different story. Bill told me that use of the mission plane costs \$70 per hour of flight time, no matter whether it flies empty or full. He told me how much weight the plane can carry, and when I figured out how much the cost per pound would be when hauling a full load, I was amazed to discover that it wouldn't cost any more than bringing in the same amount of cargo by land."

Alcedo added, "And it would be a lot easier and faster to fly. But what ideas do you have for finishing the airstrip?"

"Well, I've been thinking of a plan to get the students to help us. I don't think any of them has ever had a ride in an airplane, so I want to make a deal with them. Anyone who puts in at least 20 hours of free labor on the airstrip will be given a free 5-minute airplane ride when it is able to land here."

Dale presented his plan in the next student assembly, and the response was very enthusiastic. Everybody wanted that free airplane ride, so he started organizing daily work crews to cross the river to work no more than a couple of hours, so that they would still have time for their studies. On Sundays they would usually put in a full day of work. First they had to make a good path to get up to the top of the escarpment, then they cleared away the brush and kudzu vines, next they dug out stumps and moved logs, and last they filled holes, smoothed rough spots, and moved dirt from high spots to low spots.

About two months after the big push to finish the airstrip began, Bill and Bonnie came out to spend a few days. Bill was pleased with the progress that was being made, and he gave a few pointers on what was most important to be done first to make it usable as soon as possible. He declared that about 300 meters was already in usable condition, and if necessary he could already fly in and out with a very light load. That was very encouraging news, and the students were spurred on to renewed efforts to finish the airstrip. And when Bill returned to Puerto Inca to fly back to Pucallpa, he first went to talk to the police and local town officials. He explained to them exactly what was being done on the Jones Ranch so that they wouldn't think that some clandestine operation was going on out there.

A few weeks later during the routine morning radio contact, Bill made a thrilling announcement. "I'm going to fly out your way today. I'll have a very light load, so I'm going to fly over the new airstrip, and if it looks good I'll circle around and come in for a landing."

When the school children heard the news, they couldn't keep their minds on studies anymore. This was too exciting! For the first time a real airplane was going to come to their airstrip, the one they had worked on so diligently with pick and shovel and wheelbarrow. Everybody wanted to go witness this historic event. But somebody had to stay behind. It wouldn't be a good idea to just abandon everything for an hour or two, so Patti graciously volunteered, "I'll stay here and keep an eye on things while the rest of you go watch the plane land. I'm sure it will be something you will never forget."

Dale put the outboard motor on the boat, and the students and teachers eagerly climbed aboard. Patti sat on the riverbank as she watched the boat cross the river. While Dale tied up the

boat, the children raced up the path to the airstrip. They didn't have long to wait. Soon they heard the sound of the motor in the distance, and as the airplane came into view, excitement reached fever pitch. Bill flew low over the airstrip as he took a good look, and then he pulled up a little higher as he crossed the end of the strip. The plane banked in a wide turn, and it was obvious that the pilot had decided to come in for a landing. Everybody watched intently as this silver bird settled onto the runway. It was a beautiful landing, although it was a bit rough since the ground wasn't smoothed out very well yet.

All the while Patti on the riverbank back at Maranatha was watching all that she could see. The landing strip was not visible to her, but she looked up as the plane flew right over her with flaps down, and she continued gazing until it disappeared from her view on the other side of the river. Now she could only imagine the excitement of the students and teachers as they surrounded the airplane.

Then Patti heard the blup-blup-blup-blup sound of a helicopter off in the distance. She looked in the direction of the sound, and way out there near the horizon she caught sight of two helicopters apparently headed toward Puerto Inca. *Must be looking for terrorists*, she mused. A few minutes later she realized the sound was getting louder, so she looked again. Yes, they were definitely closer now, and she began feeling uneasy. Soon it was very clear that those helicopters were headed directly toward the new airstrip, and fear began clutching at her heart. When they were directly across the river, they began circling, slowly descending a little lower each time they went around, and her sense of panic rose a little higher with each spiral. She felt so alone, so abandoned and helpless.

When the helicopters were so low that they disappeared from her sight, Patti was utterly terror stricken. "Oh Lord, my God and my Helper," she cried out in her distress, "please don't let anything bad happen to everybody over there. Is this the way our "Great Experiment" is going to end? Are we all going to end up in prison? Please, Father, send angels for our protection. Help me to be strong and courageous no matter what happens. Thy will be done."

21 *A Candle to Light a Way of Escape*



As the helicopters were circling above the runway, it was quite apparent that the occupants were getting a good look at what was there on the ground. No doubt they noted the identification number on the wing of the airplane, and they probably radioed their headquarters to check on the identity of that aircraft. It appeared that they were going to land, but by the time they got down to about 25 feet above the ground, they must have decided that none of these people looked like suspicious characters, so they flew away at low altitude toward Puerto Inca.

Poor distraught Patti on the riverbank back at Maranatha couldn't see the helicopters leaving, because they were flying so low. But then she saw some figures walking down the path to the boat. She started counting, and when she realized that everybody was still there, she breathed a huge sigh of relief. Her emotions had been so up tight during this time that now the fountains in her eyes let go and tears of gratitude began to flow down her cheeks.

* * *

Shortages continued to be a serious problem. It was becoming difficult to find enough canned milk to supply the needs of the school. Dale was saddened when he heard that somebody had denounced his favorite merchant in Puerto Inca for selling milk at more than the controlled price. The local authorities raided his shop and confiscated his stock of milk and imposed a fine on him to teach him a lesson. About a week later Dale went to town to pick up some supplies for the kitchen. He didn't know what he would find when he went to this same shop. Ahead of him at the counter was a woman who was asking for a can of milk.

"I'm sorry," said the proprietor, "but I don't have any milk. You will have to go to the Municipality Building to get your milk."

Dale's heart sank as he heard that. He knew that the Municipality was rationing milk, just one can per customer. The lady walked out, and the proprietor turned toward him with a smile. "What can I do for you today?"

"I wanted to get some milk," Dale replied with a sad note in his voice, "but I heard what you just said to the lady ahead of me, so I guess I won't find any here."

"How much did you want?" the man asked.

"Well, I was hoping I could get a whole case today, but if I can get any at all, I'll be happy with whatever amount I can get."

There was no one else in the store at the time, so without another word the owner turned and walked into the back room. A minute later he reappeared with a full case of canned milk for Dale. It pays to have friends! No wonder the Good Book says, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, and there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."⁵⁵

The kind of shortage that concerned Patti the most was the shortage of medicines. Throughout the nation, that must have turned into such a serious crisis that the government

⁵⁵ Proverbs 18:24, NKJV.

finally gave in and removed price controls from all medicines. Overnight the prices on all medicines jumped about 400%, but that huge price increase quickly brought back the medicines that had dis-appeared from the shelves. It was quite shocking, but costly medicines were still better than no medicines at all.

August came, the time for Colette to return to her home in France, and once again Patti had to carry the full load of the clinic alone. Even though the patient load was dropping as terrorists were moving into the area and frightened people were moving out, it was still too much for her to teach her class in the school while having all the responsibility for patient care. The principal and his wife were also overloaded, but all efforts to increase the staff of the school had come to naught. Dale was feeling the strain too as he struggled to keep up with classes while taking care of maintenance problems and going to the city for supplies. All were trying to work beyond their capabilities, and it was showing in the deteriorating quality of the work being done. Something had to change.

They prayed fervently that God would show them clearly what He wanted them to do. Then a few weeks later they all met together one night to make a decision about the future of the school. They reviewed how God had blessed their efforts the first year in spite of almost overwhelming obstacles. They also noted how the picture had almost completely changed this second year. Even their student body had dwindled down to about half the beginning enrollment. They couldn't go on this way, so they decided to make the painful announcement that their school would not continue another year.

Rumors were flying that the terrorists were brazenly threatening to attack Puerto Inca, even giving a date when they would do it. The day came and went without anything unusual happening, but if the rumors were deliberately planted to try to upset the people, they certainly succeeded. The school year was supposed to end just before Christmas, but in view of the unsettled political situation, Alcedo decided to wind things up a month early, and nobody objected.

The last day of school there was no celebration, no ceremony of any kind. It seemed like a burned out candle making its last flicker. It was evident that the few remaining students had liked this school, for many tears were shed as they said their goodbyes, knowing that they wouldn't be coming back. Then they just sort of faded away one by one. It was a rather sad conclusion to what had begun as such a lovely dream.

* * *

"There is nothing to be gained by pining about the death of our school," Dale declared. "Let's think positively and make a new start. I think with very little remodeling we could turn this empty school building into a great clinic building."

"I've been thinking the same thing," was Patti's eager response. "For seven years I have been longing for more room to take care of my patients. Here in this building we can have a big waiting room and a couple of exam rooms. There's space for an office, a stock room, and a dental room. Upstairs in the old girls' dorm we can have a ward for patients with ten beds. This makes me excited just thinking about it!"

"Then we should move out of the building," Rosita observed. "Maybe we could move into the old clinic building when it is vacated. We would have more room over there, and I like the view out over the river."

"That sounds like a good idea," Dale said. "While we are making the change over, you can temporarily move into one of our 'motel' rooms."

Getting involved in a new project was like a shot in the arm for their sagging morale, and everybody felt better. When Bonnie heard about the plan, she offered to come help make the move, and her mother-in-law, who had come to Peru for a visit, also wanted to help. With so many hands at work, the transfer was accomplished in one day.

As the month of December was beginning, they were running very low on kerosene again, and Dale couldn't find any for sale anywhere. He heard that Jones had sent his tugboat to Pucallpa to get more fuel, so all they could do was hope it would come back before they ran out of kerosene. Late one afternoon they heard the distinctive sound of the powerful diesel motor, and as the boat went by, Dale could see that it was loaded with barrels. *It's going to take them a long time to unload all those barrels, so I'll wait until tomorrow to go to town,* he said to himself.

They were now in the midst of the rainy season, and it was nothing unusual that the next morning dawned dark and dreary. "I don't want to go to town in the rain," he told Patti. "The riverbank gets slippery like ice when it rains. Maybe it will clear up this afternoon, and then I can go."

Sure enough, by noon the rain stopped, so after lunch he bailed the water out of the boat and put on the outboard motor. Then he discovered that he needed to make some minor repairs, and by the time he had everything ready to go, it was nearly 3:00 o'clock. He went back to the house and declared, "It's getting so late, I think I'll wait until tomorrow morning to go to town."

"I think that's a good idea," Patti responded. "Some of the stores close at noon, you know, so the morning is usually a better time to buy supplies."

It was decided, but as Dale walked back to the boat to bring the motor back to the security of the shop, he couldn't shake a nagging impression that he still ought to go that day. That didn't make sense, because he had seen with his own eyes that there were lots of barrels of fuel on that tugboat. He glanced at his watch again, and he realized that there was no time to waver on a final decision. If he was going to go and get back before dark, he would have to leave immediately. Dale is not normally an impulsive person, but that afternoon he suddenly jumped into the boat, started the motor, and headed up the river.

When he reached Puerto Inca, he went directly to the place that sold fuel, and he asked the attendant for ten gallons of kerosene. "I can't give you that much," the man said. "The boat brought us mostly gasoline yesterday, only three barrels of kerosene this time, and it's just about gone already. It's a good thing you came when you did, because tomorrow there wouldn't have been any for you. I'll give you all I have left."

He emptied the remainder of the barrel into Dale's container, and as he headed for home with five gallons of precious kerosene, he fervently thanked his Heavenly Father for that strong impression that he shouldn't wait another day. But this is only half of the story of why it was so urgent for him to go to town when he did.

Early the next morning a large group of men—and some women too—boldly strode into Puerto Inca carrying heavy belts slung over their shoulders, heavy because they were loaded with cartridges for the high-powered automatic rifles they carried in their hands. **THE TERRORISTS HAD ARRIVED!** One witness said there were at least 20, another claimed there were 40, and it's doubtful that any of the frightened people did any counting. Their faces were painted to make recognition difficult.

At least some of the terrorists must have visited the town previously as spies, because they knew exactly where to go for what they wanted. They were after government officials, but the mayor was one person who took their threats seriously, and he was conveniently out of town. The judge also escaped, and the police all fled, so the terrorists met no armed resistance.

One of their first acts was to round up the radio transmitters in town and throw them into the river, so that nobody could send out a call for help. Then they went to the police station. They heard somebody in a back room, so they yelled for him to come out with his hands up. They didn't realize that he wasn't one of the police, and he couldn't come out, because he was locked up in jail, accused of stealing a motor from Andres Rofner. They fired a sweeping burst into the room, and it caught the imprisoned man in the legs, severing some of the major blood vessels. He screamed for help, but everybody was afraid to leave their houses to go to his aid.

Eventually one of the terrorists broke into the jail cell and took the bleeding man to the town clinic. There was no doctor there, so the poor thief bled to death.

The terrorists went to the Municipality Building and shot the lock off the door. Then they invited the town's people to come help themselves to the canned milk, rice, and other basic commodities that were stored there. Many did. They also broke into the Miners Bank where they found picks and shovels that the bank sold to miners. "Come help yourselves!" they shouted, and again many did. Thus these outlaws got the people to virtually become partners in crime with them.

For their finale they went to the Chinaman's store and demanded red paint, their favorite color since they were communists. He didn't have any red, so he offered them black instead which they accepted as better than nothing. They painted their slogans on the public buildings in town—and also on the Chinaman's store. Fine expression of gratitude that was for the man who had given them free paint! Maybe they wanted to castigate him a bit for being notorious as the merchant with the highest prices in town.

When their "work" was done, they departed in three groups. One group crossed the river and commandeered a truck to take them away by road. Another group walked away on the path by which they had come, and the third group forced a boatman to take them all the way to Pucallpa by river. When they got to the city's busy port, they nonchalantly got off the boat and just melted away into the crowd. The next day the two helicopters flew to Puerto Inca taking in a new contingent of police.

But everything was still peaceful out in the country at Maranatha. Dale and Patti tried to carry on as usual, for their friends were telling them that the terrorists never attacked without first giving a warning. Furthermore the terrorists only wanted to overthrow the government and weren't concerned about foreigners. Still the Duerksens couldn't help but feel jittery about the things that were going on around them.

With all the stress they were under they decided to adopt a policy to get away for a few days of recuperation every month. Patti made a sign announcing that the clinic would be closed for a week beginning on Wednesday, January 25. She posted the sign by the door of the clinic so that the word would get around, and she talked to Bill to make arrangements for him to plan to fly out to pick them up on that day if the weather permitted.

Sunday, January 22, began dreary and raining. No patients came all morning. They usually didn't venture out when it was raining unless it was a real emergency. At noon the rain stopped, and shortly afterward a man whom Patti didn't recognize showed up at the clinic.

She got out a record sheet to take down information on this new patient. He said he was from Galicia Creek, and that immediately raised a red flag in her mind. If he had really come that far, he must have walked in the rain. But this was no medical emergency, so there was no good reason why he should do that. Something didn't quite add up right.

"I just recently moved into this area," he said, "and I wanted to find out about your school so that I can enroll my children next year."

Everybody around here knows that we aren't going to have a school next year, she thought. And why would anybody come in the rain to ask about a school when the beginning of the school year is still months away? But she tried to tell him pleasantly that she regretted to tell him that they weren't planning to operate their school another year.

He didn't have any medical problems, but he did have a lot of questions. Why did they close their school? How much did she charge for medicines? Did they have a path down to the river? Were there any other paths between the river and the road? Strange that he should have such an interest in paths.

He ended by asking, "Would you mind if I went fishing in your port?" And Patti wondered, *If he wants some fish, why didn't he go fishing in Galicia Creek before he left home?*

She tried to hide her suspicions as she replied, "This isn't a good time for fishing, because the river is so high and muddy. Nobody fishes when it's like that. But I'll go ask my husband if it's all right with him." She really wanted an excuse to go talk to Dale about this suspicious character.

She stepped out the door of the clinic, and she was shocked to see another stranger right outside as though he was standing guard. He had his back toward her, so she didn't see his face. When she got to where she could see the path that went through the jungle to the road, she caught sight of another stranger who was standing guard at the edge of the jungle. Each of these men was carrying a backpack, something very unusual around the Pachitea River. Patti hurried over to the shop where Dale was working, and with a worried look on her face she told him about these strange men.

"I'd like to finish this job I'm working on, so why don't you ask Alcedo to talk to them?" he suggested, so she did.

After thinking about it for about ten minutes, Dale decided he had better leave his work for awhile and go have a look at these men for himself. When he got to the river, they were already gone. Alcedo observed, "They didn't try to fish at all. They just left on the path through the banana plantation to Corpanchos." They all believed that these men were just spying, and it made them feel very uneasy.

Monday morning on the regular radio contact with the air base, Patti told Bonnie all about those three strangers whom they thought were spies. Bonnie was alarmed. "It's getting too dangerous for you guys out there, and you need to come to Pucallpa right away," she insisted.

Patti tried to sound brave as she responded, "Now, we mustn't be rash about this. We really don't have anything concrete to go on yet. Nobody has pointed a gun at us, and neither has anybody threatened us. We haven't even heard any shooting yet, and we're only speculating that those three men were spies. God brought us here, and we will trust Him to take care of us and tell us when it is time for us to leave."

Bonnie sputtered, "I think your school drying up and the attack on Puerto Inca and now these spies coming to your place are God's way of telling you, It's time to get out! If you ignore the message and say you believe God will protect you no matter what happens, that is presumption, not faith!"

"Well, Sweetie, I'll admit that we're nervous. In fact, I guess to be honest I'll have to say that we're getting kind of scared. But remember that we're planning to come to Pucallpa anyway for some rest and recuperation on Wednesday, and that's just two days away, so let's hang in there until then. I'll talk to you again tomorrow. Bye for now."

That evening they heard on the radio that the terrorists had announced that they were entering phase three of their strategy. From now on they would no longer give warnings before their attacks, and they would begin killing any foreigners who were helping the government. Patti and Dale didn't sleep very well that night. They knew that most Peruvians expected their government to provide them with health care. Would the terrorists think that Maranatha Clinic was helping the government?

Tuesday dawned bright and clear. On the morning radio contact Dale asked Bill, "What are your flying plans for today?"

"I'm scheduled to fly to Tarapoto this afternoon. Why do you ask?"

"Well, we're getting kind of worried. Do you think there would be time after you get back from Tarapoto to come out and pick us up instead of waiting until tomorrow?"

"Yes, that would be feasible if the good weather holds up that long. It's beautiful flying weather right now. I could go get you this morning if you want. Could you get ready in an hour and a half?"

"Sure thing. In fact, our flee bags are already packed. We'll be waiting for you."

“Roger. Leave your radio turned on, and I’ll give you a call when I take off so that you can estimate my time of arrival. Oh, and one other thing. I want you to be standing by the side of the runway without waving when I arrive if everything is OK. If I don’t see you, or if you are waving, I’ll assume something is wrong and I won’t land.”

“Roger.”

Now they had to hurry to tell Alcedo and Rosita about their sudden change in plans and the reason for it. They looked very sober when they heard about the terrorists’ announced plan to begin phase three. “Here are the keys to our house,” Dale said. “We want you to go over there to talk to us on the radio each morning at 7:00. Get the boat ready now to take us across the river, and we’ll go get our bags. We’ll have to hurry to be sure we get to the airstrip before Bill arrives.”

They made it in time, but just barely. Usually Bill would come into view quite high, and then he would circle around a couple times to take a good look at the runway before setting up his approach for a landing. But not this time. When the plane first came into view it was low over the treetops directly across the river, and the flaps were down. He saw Patti and Dale standing passively beside the runway, the sign that all was safe for landing, so he set the plane down right at the end of the strip and quickly braked to a stop. They hurriedly loaded their things and climbed aboard, and within 15 minutes the plane was airborne again.

Their minds were in turmoil, for at that moment the future appeared so uncertain. As they looked down at the place that had been their home for seven years, their eyes filled with tears. They wondered, *Will we ever see our beloved Maranatha again?* But when they landed in the familiar tranquility of the air base on beautiful Lake Yarinacocha, they felt the knots in their stomachs begin to unwind. It was such a comfort to be with their loved ones again.

22 *The Light of the World*



The next morning Patti was up and around earlier than Dale, so she made the radio call to Maranatha at 7:00. Alcedo was there right on time.

"Good morning," she greeted him, "and how are things going at Maranatha?"

"Not so good," he reported. "Remember those three suspicious men who came? Well, yesterday shortly after you left, they came back again!"

Suddenly Dale and Patti felt their stomachs getting tied up in knots again. They thought, *Those men must have read the sign at the clinic that told everybody we were leaving on Wednesday, so they probably thought that if they returned on Tuesday they would find us still there – but we had jumped the gun and already slipped away.*

Alcedo continued, "They talked to me for awhile, and then they went over to our Corpancho neighbors again. Later Corpanchos came over and told me that those men said the people at Maranatha were very bad, that they were getting rich off the poor people by charging exorbitant prices for medicines, and a lot of other lies. They said they were going to come back at the end of the month to wipe out the foreigners and blow up Maranatha, and if the Peruvian couple over there didn't leave, they would get killed too." Alcedo admitted they were scared and wanted to get out, and he asked for instructions about what to do.

Patti had faced many a medical emergency, always well organized and cool as a cucumber, for she was well trained in how to handle such crises. Now, however, she was facing a much different kind of crisis for which she had no training, and she appeared to be going to pieces. She was trembling as she shouted somewhat disorganized suggestions into the microphone. She was so distraught that she seemed to have forgotten for the moment that she didn't have to carry the whole burden alone.

Dale stepped up behind her and grabbed the mike out of her hand. "Listen, Alcedo," he said, "we need a little time on this end to discuss these latest developments and make some plans. So don't do anything just yet, and we'll call you back at 8:00."

It was now apparent that a complete evacuation was necessary, and they had only about half an hour to make some plans. They needed to organize their thinking, set their priorities and get their options clearly in mind. The most important thing was to remove people at risk from a dangerous position, and the first to go should be the woman and her child.

"Bill, can you make another flight for us this morning?"

"Yes, I can do that, since the good weather is still holding," he responded.

And so it was decided: Dale would fly back to Maranatha to organize the evacuation, and Bill would bring Rosita and the baby back to Pucallpa. If the situation suddenly got critical out there, the men could quickly disappear into the jungle and fend for themselves, if they had no women and children around to take care of.

At 8:00 they talked to Alcedo again and told him the plan. It would be well to take advantage of the flight to send out some cargo too, so in addition to their personal baggage, he

should gather up all the medical instruments he could find in the clinic and maybe some of the medicines as well. So that was settled, and about 9:30 the plane landed for the pick up, and Rosita was there ready to go.

Some of the neighbors had come to help, but everybody seemed to just walk around in a sad daze not knowing what to do. Dale immediately started giving orders putting people to work, and right away an improvement in the mood could be felt as strong positive leadership took over. He sent Alcedo to town to try to find a cargo boat going to Pucallpa that could take their things. On the way back he should stop by Santiago's house to ask him to come over. What they couldn't take they wanted to leave under his supervision.

About noon Alcedo came back with Santiago and his wife. While in town he had learned that the farmers of Peru were calling for a general strike to put pressure on the government. They were blockading the roads, and no trucks were getting through. He found a boatman willing to take their cargo down the river to Pucallpa, but he must have thought that the "rich" Americans were desperate, because he set an exorbitantly high fee for his services.

"We're not desperate, and we will not pay an outrageous price like that!" Dale declared emphatically. "Forget about the boat. We came here thinking from the very beginning that some day we might have to abandon everything. We haven't quite come to that extreme, however, because we are able to take out some things by air, and everything else I am just going to give to our most faithful supporters."

Dear Josefa, their first and most faithful Sabbath School member, got one of the most coveted prizes—Patti's treadle Singer sewing machine. Santiago got the lion's share—the boat, the motors, the sawmill, most of the tools—in appreciation for his years of faithful service and his leadership in the small company of Adventist believers.

The plane came back about 3:00 PM for another load, and this time it took out mostly medicines. If these were left behind, probably no one would know how to use them correctly, and they would be a total loss. They represented an investment of several thousand dollars, and Patti wanted to donate them all to the Ana Stahl Hospital in Iquitos.

The next morning the weather was still good for flying. It was amazing to have such a long stretch of fair weather in the middle of the rainy season. Bill made an early flight, and this time Alcedo's brother-in-law came along to lend a hand. He wanted to help Alcedo take a refrigerator and a stove to Pucallpa by river, so these two men would not be flying back.

When everything was collected that Dale wanted to take, he gave Bill another call on the radio. "We're just about ready for another flight, but don't rush. Eat lunch first. What's left isn't very heavy, just bulky, so maybe we can squeeze it all in on this next flight. I hope so. This will be my last radio transmission, because I'm going to pack the radio now. Over and out."

Dale took one last walk around the place with Santiago to give him some final instructions. His plan was to offer the property with the buildings and their furnishings and some of the equipment to the local Adventist mission with headquarters in Pucallpa, perhaps to be used as a base for the district pastor. The offer would hold good until the first of April. If nobody came to take possession before that date, then everything would revert to Santiago.

Now everybody who was there crossed the river to meet the plane, but they barely reached the other side when they heard the roar of the motor. Dale hurried up the steep path as fast as he could, but he was too late. Since Bill didn't see anyone standing beside the airstrip, he concluded that it might be a signal that something was wrong, so he added power without touching down and went around for another approach. This time Dale was standing there without waving, so he came in for the landing.

There was quite a pile of cargo stacked up, so Bill started weighing it. When he got through, he announced that it fortunately was within weight limits. He filled the belly pod and piled things clear up to the ceiling inside the little cabin, and somehow he managed to get everything

inside.

Now came the part that everyone had dreaded, the time to say goodbye. Dale took Santiago into his arms, and for about five minutes they just clung to each other letting their tears mingle freely. They had learned to love each other like brothers, and they knew that they would probably never see each other again in this life.

Finally Dale climbed into his seat, and Bill took his place at the controls. The plane taxied to the end of the runway and turned around. The final check out was completed, the motor roared, the brakes were released, and the plane began to roll for the final departure from Maranatha. Faster and faster the Cessna rolled down the grass strip. About half way the plane hit a bump and bounced into the air only to touch down again. A little farther on the wheels again left the ground and again touched down. Dale was getting nervous as a third time the wheels left the ground only to touch again. There wasn't much runway left ahead of them now! He glanced over at Bill, and Bill's face showed nothing but complete confidence. This pilot obviously knew perfectly well what his Cessna 185 was capable of doing. He was aware that this plane had already reached flying speed, but the airstrip was on a slight incline, and the ground was rising about as fast as the plane was climbing.

About 15 feet from the end the strip leveled off, and the plane finally remained airborne. Now the ground dropped off at a steep angle to the broad river far below, and for a full mile ahead there was wide open space in which to pick up speed and gain altitude. The plane made a wide circle, and as it crossed high over the airstrip it dipped its wings in a final salute to the forlorn little figures still huddled together at the edge of the airstrip. In half an hour they landed at the air base. On the horizon they saw heavy black clouds rolling toward them, and within an hour the rain was coming down in torrents, but the evacuation of Maranatha had been completed just in time.

The situation in the city of Pucallpa didn't appear to be much better than what they had left behind in Puerto Inca. The slogans and initials of the guerillas were painted on walls all over town. Reports of atrocities were heard daily. Explosions and gunfire were sometimes heard at night. Some boys were caught with a homemade bomb at the airport. The people were scared, and armed soldiers were patrolling the streets.

The president of the local mission called for a meeting in his office to discuss the current crisis, and he requested all the foreigners in their midst to come to the meeting. First of all he asked Dale to give an account of what had happened at Puerto Inca and Maranatha. After that they discussed the disposition of the property. Dale also expressed his concern for Alcedo's future. He didn't want that young man who had helped them so faithfully to be left destitute. Since Dale still had some money in reserve, he made a proposal to the mission officers. If they would be willing to try to reorganize the district of Puerto Inca and offer employment to Alcedo, he would give them a check for \$5,000 to help with the financing. They accepted his proposal, so he wrote the check and gave it to the treasurer.

The president felt the need of some outside counsel, so he picked up the phone and called the president of the Inca Union Mission. After this man had listened to the briefing on the latest developments, he gave his verdict: Get all the foreigners out of your territory as soon as possible. That of course would mean the closing of the mission aviation program, since there were no Adventist Peruvian pilots available at that time. That was a sad thought, but nevertheless everybody felt relieved that a high-up administrator had finally made a definite decision concerning the crisis situation. This also meant that Bill and Bonnie would be going back to the States with Bonnie's parents.

Dale and Patti were a bit worried about Alcedo, and they prayed for his safety as the crisis continued unabated. On February 1 a newscast reported that the government had finally declared Pucallpa to be in a state of emergency. And that same day Alcedo finally reached

Pucallpa. He came out to the air base to tell the story of his adventures.

He found a boat headed for Pucallpa with a load of cattle, and the owner agreed to take the refrigerator and the stove for a reasonable fee. But when they reached Tournavista, about five hours downstream, they heard that farther on the river was blockaded. The boatman dropped off Alcedo and his cargo, and he headed back upstream to find pasture for his cattle. So poor Alcedo was stranded, since the road from Tournavista to Pucallpa was blockaded too.

The next day he found a small boat that was going to try to get through the blockade. He could go along, but he would have to leave his cargo behind. When they got to the next town, boats came out and intercepted them, refusing to let them pass. They waited several hours wondering how they could get through, when suddenly a government gunboat appeared and escorted them through the blockade.

After they got well past that town, they continued on by themselves, but at the next town they encountered another blockade. Again they had to wait until the gunboat arrived to escort them through that one too. That was the last blockade, and Alcedo was very thankful to be with his wife and little girl once more. And Dale was very thankful that he didn't try to take his things out of Maranatha by river.

* * *

With time on their hands before they could leave Peru, Dale and Patti reminisced about their adventures during "The Great Experiment" that had now come to an end.

"When I think back on what we did at Maranatha," Dale commented, "it seems like there were so many ups and downs. Some things we did worked out so well, while some other things we attempted to do failed miserably."

"Yes, I know very well what you mean," Patti responded. "I felt so good whenever I had a difficult medical case, and God answered my prayers to save the patient's life. On the other hand, when I had a case like young Haydee, and God didn't restore her to health, I felt like a personal failure. Just this morning I read something in *Desire of Ages* that was a big encouragement to me. Just a minute. I'll go get my book and read it to you."

She hurried into the bedroom and soon returned with book in hand. "Listen, it says here, 'As the world's Redeemer, Christ was constantly confronted with apparent failure. He, the messenger of mercy to our world, seemed to do little of the work He longed to do in uplifting and saving.' That sounded incredible to me. Seemed to do little of the work He longed to do! I can relate to that. Sounds just like me. A little farther down it says, 'He knew that the life of His trusting disciples would be like His, a series of uninterrupted victories, not seen to be such here, but recognized as such in the great hereafter.'⁵⁶ Wow! Uninterrupted victories. Will we someday be able to see the experiences with our school as a series of uninterrupted victories?"

"That's fantastic, isn't it?" observed Dale. "It seems to go right along with that classic quotation about Christ's method of reaching the people that we reviewed so often as we worked for the people on the Pachitea River. After describing Christ's method in detail, it ends by saying, 'This work will not, cannot, be without fruit.'⁵⁷

"That was one of the promises we found during our study in preparation for 'The Great Experiment,'" Patti reminded Dale. "We wanted to find out by practical experience if it was really true, and it passed the test with flying colors. When we tried to faithfully follow Christ's method of reaching the people, our work did bear fruit."

"The thing I most wanted to test," Dale said, "was the promises that God would provide everything necessary to accomplish His work.⁵⁸ My training and my experience as a treasurer

⁵⁶ See *Desire of Ages*, pp. 678-679.

⁵⁷ *Ministry of Healing*, p. 144.

⁵⁸ See *Desire of Ages*, pp. 370-371.

had taught me that you must have a budget, or you're doomed to failure. I think that's still true when we are making and following our own plans, but I have to admit that I had not been fully following Christ's simple method when a budget was necessary. Nobody can deny that Jesus didn't have a budget, and he didn't pay any wages when He sent his disciples out as missionaries.⁵⁹ It was so easy to think that His financial method—or should we call it a lack of method—would only work in a very primitive society, not in our sophisticated world today where everybody seems to think that insurance is a necessity. I'm so glad God gave us the courage to test His promise to supply all our needs."⁶⁰

Patti observed, "I have talked to people when we went home on visits who would tell me that they would never have enough faith to do what we were doing. They couldn't seem to believe that we had plenty of doubts ourselves when we came down here. You don't have to have faith to begin, just a determination to put yourself in a position where you can test God's promises, and anybody can do that. And when you see God doing what He said He would do, and it happens time after time, the inevitable result is that your faith grows. I can testify that these years we have spent here in the jungle have been a tremendous faith building experience for me. Now I know what I can expect my God to do."

"I can say the same," Dale concurred. "I came down here really thinking that in three or four months our money supply would run dry and I would have to go back home and go job hunting again. After a few years of no fund raising efforts on our part, I finally became convinced that God was making out quite well without my 'expert' assistance. I guess that's when I got the idea that money running out would be God's way of telling us it was time to leave. Now it's obvious that it didn't turn out that way either. We're leaving with ample evidence that it is time to move on, but there's still more money in the bank than when we came."

"The test of God's desire to make all the plans for us and to reveal His plans to us day by day was the most impressive part of "The Great Experiment" for me," was Patti's opinion.⁶¹ "It still seems incredible to me that we came down here without any idea how we would get started, yet the people just started coming to us for medical and spiritual help. And time after time when we encountered what looked like a problem without a solution, we would ask God for wisdom, and ideas that worked would pop into our heads. It was fantastic."

Dale added, "It was just as fantastic the way God kept His promise to send helpers.⁶² We didn't go looking for Steven and Leider and Santiago and Colette and Alcedo and many others who came for a very short time, but God sent them to us right when we needed them."

"When the terrorists came, it seemed like we were facing our greatest danger, but I found something in my *Desire of Ages* that was even a greater danger to us. Let me see if I can find it for you quick.... Yes, here it is. I have it underlined. 'As activity increases and men become successful in doing any work for God, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is a tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a savior of our activity. We need to look constantly to Jesus, realizing that it is His power which does the work.'"⁶³

"How true that is. I suppose that may be the case because we tend to plan things big and spectacular to attract a lot of attention. But it appears to me that the simple method of Jesus will usually result in something quite small but very personal and not necessarily very prominent and attention getting. Yet it can be very effective, the only method that will have true success in

⁵⁹ See Matthew 10 and Luke 10.

⁶⁰ See Philippians 4:19.

⁶¹ See *Ministry of Healing*, p. 478.

⁶² See *Desire of Ages*, p. 370.

⁶³ *Desire of Ages*, p. 362.

reaching the people.⁶⁴ I don't know who it was, but someone once said, 'It is better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness.' Just think of how much light can be produced when thousands of people light just one small candle. Together they can produce a great light. That must be what Jesus had in mind when He said, 'You are the light of the world.'"⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See *Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

⁶⁵ Matthew 5:14.

Epilogue: Dale Answers Questions

Q: You showed so much faith in other things, so why didn't you have enough faith to stay where you were when threatened by terrorists and just trust God to protect you?

A: Faith is demonstrated in doing what God tells you to do. We made a practice of asking God every morning for an understanding of what He wanted us to do that day. Some of our best instructions we found in the Bible, and that's where we found the counsel of Jesus, "When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another."⁶⁶ So that's what we did.

Q: Did you ever go back to that place in the jungle?

A: No, we have never returned to Peru since we fled from the terrorist threat.

Q: We heard that the leader of the Shining Path guerillas eventually was captured and put in a maximum security prison on a life sentence and that the terrorist activity in the country has been eliminated, so why didn't you go back to resume your work there?

A: It was because God never told us to. We went to Peru with the understanding that God wanted to make all the plans for His work, and that He would reveal His plans to us day by day. We never received any instructions that we should spend a lifetime in just one place. We tried to follow the example of Jesus, and He went back to Heaven when there were still a lot of sick people around whom He could have healed and unbelievers who had not accepted His teachings. After we had spent twice as much time in our ministry in the jungle as Jesus spent in His public ministry, it really was no surprise to us when we received the indications that it was time for us to go somewhere else.

Q: Did the terrorists come back and destroy what you left behind?

A: No doubt word spread quickly that we had gone. They may have come back one more time to make sure that Alcedo was gone as well. As far as I know, they didn't try to destroy any buildings after they knew we were gone.

Q: Do you think anybody is still using the facilities?

A: I doubt it. We heard that the mission sent a district pastor to live there for awhile, and after a year or so he left the place abandoned. Without somebody living there to continually fight the termites, they would quickly eat the soft wood and the buildings would decay and collapse.

Q: It sounded like Patti was practicing medicine without a license. Was that legal?

A: No, it was not legal, but neither was it illegal. By that I mean that there was no Peruvian law that demanded that a person like her had to take care of sick people, but neither was there any law that prohibited what she was doing. When we first arrived, somebody advised her to try to get her nursing license validated in Peru, and so she did submit such a request to the proper government agency. Several months later she checked to find out how things were progressing,

⁶⁶ Matthew 10:23.

and they verified that they had her request on file. After that she decided to do nothing more about it, just leaving the matter in God's hands. The government never did refuse her request, but neither did they approve it. It just disappeared into limbo as it were.

At first we thought we would make a big beautiful building with an attractive sign on it that would let everybody know this was the Maranatha Clinic, but I soon got so tied up with other work that I never had time to make that building. As I look back, I think that was providential. If we had succeeded with that plan, I think we would have been in big trouble. Later when the government sent Peruvian doctors to Puerto Inca to replace the foreign doctor in the municipal clinic, we heard rumors that they intended to close down the clinic at Maranatha, but they never did anything, for how can you close down something that never opened up?

We built ourselves a home on our daughter's property, and that was our legal right. We developed friendships, and our friends naturally started visiting us, and when they were sick we would try to help them. We used medicines that we bought at retail in the pharmacies that were available to anyone else without a doctor's prescription. We never charged anything for our services, and we only asked our visitors to pay us the amount that we had paid for the medicines. There was no legitimate basis for anyone to claim that we were conducting an illegal business. Patti never made any claims to being a doctor, although her friends soon started calling her "Doctora." We never publicly called our place a medical clinic, even though we privately used the term among ourselves. Likewise we never put up a sign designating any of our buildings as being a clinic, and we never conducted any advertising campaign to get patients to come to us. It was just by word of mouth that people heard about what we were doing. They wanted what we could do for them, and so they came to us, and nobody could deny them that privilege.

Q: Why did you think it was important to work without a salary? Doesn't the Bible tell us that "the laborer is worthy of his hire?"⁶⁷

A: Yes, it does. When you diligently do the work your employer asks you to do, you deserve to be paid for that work. However, the big question to be considered when responding to the call to go to all the world to make disciples for Jesus is this: Who is going to be your employer? If you are paid by a person or an organization, you will be obligated to do what that person or organization tells you to do. If God Himself is your employer, then you are obligated to go directly to Him each day to get your instructions for the day. And if God is your employer, it must be His responsibility to "pay" you for your services. Of course, those "wages" that are paid by your heavenly Father probably won't consist in much cash but just provisions of all that you really need.

There seems to be a commonly held belief that Jesus tells us in the Bible that we should send out more missionaries, because the harvest is great and there are so few workers to bring in the harvest. And if we send out workers, we need to pay them a decent salary. But when I examine that passage more carefully, I find that's not quite what it says. It tells us that we should "ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field."⁶⁸ If the Lord himself is to be the one who sends out the workers, then He himself must also be the one responsible to provide for their needs. The work must be His to be done in His way from start to finish.

For over a century we as a church have sent out salaried missionaries, and for several years I was one of those salaried missionaries. It was a good life, and we did a good work. I have no intention of denying that. But I have to admit that although this way of doing missionary work was good, it was not good enough. If it had been good enough, we would have been in the Kingdom ere this. There is only one method of finishing the work that will have true success,

⁶⁷ See Luke 10:7, KJV.

⁶⁸ See Luke 10:2.

and that is the method of Jesus, which included sending out His workers without a monetary salary.

Q: Have you had any contact with any of your Peruvian friends since you left?

A: We exchanged a few letters with Santiago, and in one of his letters he said that he and some of his friends were going to try to get a school started again. Shortly after that we went overseas again, and we had no further contact with him, so we don't know if his school ever became a reality or not.

For many years we had no further information about what had become of our friends on the Pachitea River. Then in 2003 Alcedo met David Gates when he happened to be in Peru, and Alcedo got our e-mail address from David. As a result about the first of the year 2004 we were surprised and very pleased to get a letter from Alcedo, and we have continued to have regular e-mail contact with him and his wife ever since. We learned that after we parted in Pucallpa, he got a job teaching Bible in an Adventist high school near Lake Titicaca. They weren't used to the high altitude, and they suffered a lot from the cold.

After just one year he was given a pastoral position in a town in one of the Andean valleys where the climate was much warmer, and they were very happy for that change. We had given them our set of the Spanish version of *Uncle Arthur's Bible Stories*, and Alcedo told us an interesting story of how one of those books literally saved a young lady's life. They had let this girl borrow one of the books, and while she was reading, she got drowsy and lay down to take a nap with the open book covering her face. While she was sleeping, somebody fired a shot at her house, whether deliberate or accidental wasn't clear, and the bullet came through the window and lodged in the book without causing her any harm. And so they believe that this *Bible Story* book that the Duerksens took to Marantha to serve the people there, also saved the life of this girl.

In the year 2002 Alcedo was transferred to the North Pacific Mission of Peru where he was put in charge of a district of eight organized churches and sixty companies of believers. Last year (2003) in his district 458 souls were baptized. That is quite a record for a man who was dropped from the ministry earlier in his career because he couldn't reach his baptismal goal!

We have not heard much about other friends we left behind. We did hear that Josefa, the woman I had the privilege of baptizing, has moved to Puerto Inca and continues to be a faithful member of the church. We were saddened to hear that Sabino Yupanqui, our friend who took a boatload of people to Puerto Inca to witness Juan Heidinger's baptism, was killed, probably by terrorists.

Q: What did you do after you left Peru?

A: First we joined the staff of the Monument Valley Mission Hospital in the Navajo Indian Reservation in Utah. After a few years there we served as volunteers in Africa, first at Riverside Farm Institute in Zambia and later at Kibidula Farm Institute in Tanzania. By then age was taking its toll on our strength and health, but before completely calling it quits we spent nearly a year of volunteer service with David and Becky at Kaikan in Guyana.

Q: Do you think your work in the Peruvian jungle had any long-lasting effect?

A: Oh, definitely! Not long ago David Gates visited the Adventist University of Peru, and while there he saw the Heidinger children. They had attended our school at Marantha, and their father had provided us with all the lumber for the floors in the school building. Now they were enrolled in the university, all four of them at that time. Each one wrote us a letter for David to deliver to us. Their letters thanked us for introducing them to Adventist Christian education. It was very touching for us to read those letters. Since then the oldest girl has graduated and

married, and she has gone with her husband to Paraguay as missionaries. Her brother completed a degree and then decided to continue studying for a degree in theology as well, because he decided he wants to be a pastor. I think our work there in the jungle was like a pebble dropped in a pond, and the effects are like ripples spreading out far and wide.

Q: If the readers of this book would like to ask you any other questions, how could they contact you?

A: Since we are retired and living in a rented house, we don't know how long our present address will be valid, but as long as we are here we will be happy to communicate with anyone who would like to ask more questions. Our mailing address is 2265 High Desert Circle NE, Rio Rancho, NM 87144, USA, our e-mail address is patidale2@juno.com, and our telephone number is (505) 896-9505.

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The family in this book decided to experiment with a new method of doing missionary work. Actually it was a very old method, about 2,000 years old!

- Make no plans for yourself, but ask God each morning to reveal His plans for you for that day.
- Let God choose the place where you should go, and wait patiently for Him to reveal it to you.
- Don't depend on committees for guidance.
- Work without a salary or other human financial guarantees, so that you will be completely free to do whatever God asks you to do.
- Use whatever you have, expecting God to provide you with more resources if He wants you to accomplish more.
- Trust God to supply you with wisdom and power to accomplish things that may appear to be impossible.
- Show sympathy for people around you and minister to their needs, and when you win their confidence, invite them to follow Jesus.
- Limit evangelistic campaigns to no more than one day in length.
- Don't try to establish an institution that will endure in one place for centuries. Instead just stay in the place where God sent you until He calls you to go to another place.

Sounds like a perfect formula for failure, doesn't it? It also sounds like the method Jesus used in His public ministry.

As you read the brief account in this book of this experiment that lasted seven years, you may think it was a stupid way to go. On the other hand, you just might get inspired to try a similar experiment yourself.

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