

July, 2020

GLOBAL TRAINING
NETWORK

Our Itinerary



July 5: Mesa Baptist Church
 Aug 9: Calvary Crossroads,
 Wenatchee, WA
 Aug 16: East Wenatchee First
 Baptist Church, WA
 Aug 20-28: Online Class:
 International
 Aug 30: First Baptist Church,
 Quartzsite, AZ
 Sept 13: Sandy Ridge Com-
 munity Church, UT
 Oct 8-17: Malawi (tentative)
 Oct 18-24: Rwanda (tentative)
 Oct 25-Nov 7: Nepal (tentative)



More Important than Life Itself

We have a lot on our minds these days. Between, a growing pandemic, shrinking portfolios, toxic politics, deadly protests, and cultural pandemonium, a lot of folks are losing sleep at night. "What does it all mean?" we ask. It's an important question, but not THE MOST important one. These sorts of worries have one thing in common: they are all related to our outward world; our physical lives, our well-being and the physical world in



which we are temporary residents. Our lives actually consist of much more than these outward possessions and concerns. When Jesus said in Luke 12:15 that "one's life does

not consist in the abundance of his possessions," He was implying that REAL life is not about anything outward; not money, not health, not security, not power. Real life consists of things more precious than these; in fact, more precious than physical life itself. Throughout church history, there have been saints willing to physically die rather than renounce invisible truths which they deemed more important. Here are four such truths more valuable than physical life itself.

- **Relationships.** In the parable of the prodigal son, the father explains to the prodigal's older brother why it was necessary to celebrate the return of his lost son. He said, "**for this son of mine was dead and is alive again.**" With these words the father explained that the loss of his son to the enticements of the world was relationally a death. **That relational death trumped the mere fact that the son was physically alive. Father and son were separated by much more than distance or even by physical death! The boy's repentance and return constituted a relational resurrection! In many ways, this was more momentous than if he had been physically raised from the dead! It HAD to be celebrated!** Relationships are the REAL stuff of life—more important than mere physical existence.

- **Integrity.** In Proverbs 7:22-23 the poet describes the fate of one who sleeps with a married woman or prostitute as similar to that of an ox going to the slaughter or a bird stepping ignorantly into a snare. "**He does not know that it will cost him his life.**" Many things are lost when someone commits a gross sin. Integrity is at the top of that list. It is no accident that the poet describes this loss as a death. It's not (usually) a person's physical life that is forfeited in gross sin. It is one's inner world that dies. Life is about more than the mere physical existence common to all animals. The wages of sin involve more than mere physical consequences. We are made in the image of God! These are the most important aspects of our being! To compromise inner virtues diminishes and even destroys the quality of life God intended for us. **Again, part of the reason for the long list of martyrs in church history has been the refusal of godly saints to compromise the integrity of their lives in exchange for their physical well-being. They understood what was most important.**

Ministry Slowly Reopening!

In June our ministry continued at a slow pace thanks to COVID-19. All of our countries remain closed to international visitors and most will not even allow groups of any size to gather. However, I did begin another curriculum writing project. I also continued to teach an online Christian Stewardship class here in the U.S. Our annual Matching Challenge had a successful conclusion in June as well. Thanks to some generous last-minute giving, we actually exceeded our original goals with a total of \$25,500 given. This replenishes our travel funds and should be sufficient for what we hope will be a busy fall and winter travel schedule.

The pace of ministry is starting to increase. In July, I am devoting significant time to a new curriculum project. This involves writing simplified, abridged lesson plans based on my already completed theology curriculum. I am also now working with GTN colleague, Tom Shedd, to teach a different pastoral skills class online each month when I am in the states. These experimental classes will be for English-speaking students in multiple countries at the same time. They are designed as a supplement to 'in-person' training. I begin in August. My Philippine Marriage and Family class has been postponed (once again) until we can do the class 'in person'. We are hoping that this will occur in August as well. While these things are taking place, we continue to contact partners, visit our supporting churches, and make plans for international travel and training starting in the fall.



More Important than Life Itself (Cont'd)

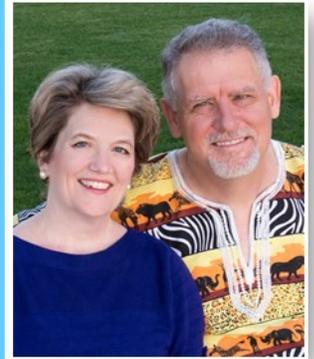
• **Freedom.** I'm talking about something more important than the freedoms defined by politicians for their own **purposes**. The apostle Paul described spiritual death in Ephesians 2:3 as living in **"the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind."** **To knowingly do what is wrong and harmful to one's self is to be enslaved to one's nature. Christ set us free from this** (Galatians 5:1). He granted us the freedom to, instead, choose to do the right thing, to choose a good course for our lives, to say 'no' to temporary desires in order to embrace larger, more precious and transcendent truths. **If enslavement to sin IS the nature of spiritual death, then freedom from such enslavement IS the nature of spiritual life in Christ. To be alive in Christ is to be free from enslavement to sin!** Is it worth dying for? Well, Jesus thought so.

• **Salvation.** In John 5:24, Jesus said, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."** Obviously, His hearers are physically alive. But He defines them as either dead or alive based on their spiritual standing before God. Eternal life is far more important than our temporary physical lives. But the issue goes beyond the longevity of one's existence. It involves the *quality* of life. Jesus said in John 10:10 **"I came that they may have life and have it ABUNDANTLY"** (emphasis mine). He defined spiritual life as involving more than eternity. It involves an abundance—not of material wealth or other such temporary blessings, but a spiritual abundance, a richness of soul that involves a deepening relationship with God, a set of affections that go beyond the fleeting desires and ambitions of this life, a spir-



itual integrity that guides and protects us, and a freedom exercised by exploring the many avenues of goodness through which we can bless others and honor God. This is where human relationships gain an eternal focus. If, in your friendships with others, you can steer someone toward the abundant life found only in Christ, you have accomplished something far more important than physical life itself. As Jesus said, **"whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these"** (John 14:12).

These themes and others like them are woven like gold thread through the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. Ultimately, life is not about the physical, the tangible, or the temporary. It is about the non-physical, the intangible, and the permanent (Hebrews 11:1). The things that make our lives unique and eternally valuable cannot be touched or seen. They are inward. I used to think that our hearts were important because our hearts determine our actions for good or for evil. **I now think that our actions, whether good or evil, are important because they demonstrate the state of our hearts. It is our hearts, our souls, that God wants.** It is for our souls that Jesus died. It is in our souls that abundant life is experienced. It is also from the overflow of an abundantly blessed soul that we act in outward ways to bless other souls and to honor God. This perspective changes the way one approaches...almost everything. **It is an entirely different focus!** It sets new priorities, creates new motivations, and advocates for a larger sort of anticipation. The Apostle Paul said it very simply in Colossians 3:2, **"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."** Yes! These are the things more important than life itself!



Our Praises and Prayer Requests



- Praise God our Matching Fund drive closed out with \$25,500 raised.
- Praise God for new opportunities to do "virtual" international training via Zoom.
- Praise God for a much needed opportunity to visit family and quickly growing grandkids.
- Please pray for one another as we get back to work after this pandemic.
- Please pray for upcoming "virtual" training events.
- Please pray for me as I continue a writing project for GTN in July.

Ministry Partnership

Your financial partnership is essential as we carry out our God given ministry. Please follow the instructions below or on the enclosed response card (US mail version).

"Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account... And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:17, 19)

You may give online at:

www.globaltrainingnetwork.org

Just click on "Give," then scroll down until you can click on our picture. A new page will appear with an online giving form.



Support also accepted at:

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(Please include a note indicating that your gift is preferred for the Edmondsons #435.)



Come visit us at

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Please call GTN at 623-217-3867 if you need any assistance.