

August 2023

GLOBAL TRAINING
NETWORK

Our Itinerary

**August 3-26: Philippine Ministry****Sept 17: Floris Baptist Church, Floris, Iowa****Sept 28-Oct 29: Rwanda Ministry****Nov 30-Dec 17: Nepal Ministry**

In His Grip

The Living Present

A few days ago, I walked into a Filipino classroom to begin a five day class. On the blackboard were portions of a poem by Longfellow used in an earlier class to urge students to make the most of each day. One stanza urged readers not to “trust in the future, how e’er pleasant,” to “let the dead past bury its dead,” and instead “Act—act in the living present.” It made me think, as good poetry often does. As Christians what should be our attitude toward the past? The future? The present?

Many believers would like to forget the past entirely. They suggest that Paul’s words about forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what is ahead mean that, “there ain’t no future in the past!” On the other hand, there are many who cannot let go of past injustices, or wrongs done to them, or their own past failings. The past is a burden they carry

daily. A more biblically balanced approach follows Paul’s example of letting go of past wrongs and failings, yet learning the valuable lessons the past has to offer. The same apostle who wrote of forgetting what is behind also warned us to consider the outcome of the Israelites past sins in the wilderness, pointing out that “*these things happened to them as an example, but they were written*



Where in the World Is Bob This Month?



a key point in their lives to teach them about attitudes and disciplines that make for healthy spiritual lives and harmony in their homes and worse. It is a privilege to help them begin to process those experiences as adults, to see them from a biblical perspective, and to experience healing in their hearts. From here, I will move on to Mindanao where I will be training for three days in Tagum, Davao Del Norte, and three days in North Cotabato. Eileen is not with me on this trip because some of the areas I will visit on Mindanao may not be especially secure. I want to “get the

Greetings partners! I am spending most of August ministering in the Philippines. As I write, I am in my first week here working with students at the Berean Bible Institute in Cauayan, Negros Occidental in the Visayan Islands of Central Philippines. The course for this week is part of the Timothy Leadership Training curriculum called “Harm to Harmony: Overcoming Harm and Violence in the Family.” The students are young and single making this



lay of the land” and avoid exposing her to unnecessary risks. My subjects that week with two groups of pastors will be Pastoral Care and Christian Stewardship. From Mindanao, I plan to return to Manila where I will be leading a class at the Conservative Baptist Seminary of Asia dealing with Systematic Theology. On the final Friday, we will hold our theology class in the evening, and during the day I will be leading a different group of pastors in a one day seminar on “Pastoral Survival Skills” based on my book, *It Only Hurts on Monday: Why Pastors Quit and What You Can Do About It*. The following morning I will be on a plane to Tokyo and from there to Minneapolis, then on to Des Moines, Ottumwa, and home. Five groups of leaders in three weeks means I am very busy this month, but I love these people and this ministry. I love to get on the plane and go. The only thing better is coming home afterward. ∞

The Living Present (cont'd)

down for our instruction on whom the end of the ages has come" 1 Cor 10:11. Billy Graham said it plainly: "Don't be bound by the past, but don't forget its lessons either."

So the past is instruction for us, but we cannot live there. Perhaps we should be looking more to the future? In his book Future Grace, John Piper argues that Christians are often too narrowly focused on God's past grace as a motivation for godly behavior in the present. He contends that while the apostles cited past events and teachings in support of their

theology, their main motivation for godly behavior was not God's past grace, but the grace lying yet ahead. Thus Paul strained forward for what lies yet in store and wrote in eloquent language of God lavishing His matchless grace upon us throughout ages to

come. Thus Peter comforted the suffering with the promise of a bright hope of future blessing for all who suffer. Thus John wrote of a glorious day when God will wipe every tear from our eyes. These are powerful and inspirational motivations. As great as God's past grace has been, God's future grace is greater—eternally, infinitely greater!


So the past provides instruction for us and the future provides motivation. Yet we cannot live in either place. We cannot change the past nor summon the future. We exist in a paper thin reality called "Right Now." We deal with all of life in the moment. The good news is that "Right Now" is where the past and the future meet. Right now we can make good decisions informed by the past and motivated by the future. It is a waste of time to look back with



regret if we don't also learn lessons we can apply right now. It is also useless to dream of a desired future if we don't act right now to realize that dream (Prov. 28:19). We only directly affect the present. Nevertheless God in His grace has given us a view of both the past *and* the future, and thereby has given us both instruction *and* inspiration!

I am convinced that God's purpose in doing this is that we might make the most of the *present*! We are those 'on whom the end of the ages has come.' As believers, left in this wicked

world for now as a testimony of God's grace and righteousness, each moment of our lives is an important moment. We must use these moments for they are precious! This is no time for us to sit and reminisce about how the past was better than the present. Nor

is it the time to sit and dream wistfully of Christ's future return to set things right, and it is no time for us to despair or shrink back because the world is growing hostile to our faith. No! This is the time to rise up and shine like stars in the universe holding forth the Word of Life! This is the time to work while it is still day knowing that the night is coming when no one can work! This is the time to be found faithfully serving by ministering God's grace in its many forms! This is the time to share the gospel and love people into the kingdom! Don't give up! Don't sit down! Don't be quiet! Serve God by serving others with all your heart and soul and mind and strength! You were born for *this* moment. There is no time like the present. Indeed, for us, there is no time BUT the present! 



Our Praises & Prayer Requests



- Praise God for a good break after a long series of training events with short turn-arounds.
- Praise God we have settled in our new home in Ottumwa, IA without interrupting ministry.
- Praise God for new opportunities for ministry in the Philippines.
- Please pray for the Philippine ministry taking place through most of August.
- Please pray for safety as I travel to some less-than-secure areas of Mindanao.
- Please pray for Eileen as she remains behind due to security issues on this trip.

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)

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