

## March 2023

Thank you so much for your faithful support this month. We truly appreciate you, and the Lord will use your giving for the kingdom as we place it in His hands with faith. Here's where we are in...

### Fundraising

Thanks to the Lord and the Lord through you, we have reached the goal for two years of ministry to be launched. With one-time gifts and pledges as of February, we are at 22% of the cost of the third ministry which is \$50,067.44.

A very positive thing happened: Rocio got her U.S. citizenship! We thought this would happen in August, but it happened in March, which is a huge blessing from the Lord. We postponed the Peru trip in April because Rocio also needs a U.S. passport. Please also pray that our sons Stephen's and Noah's passports are shipped so we can visit Peru, Rocio's family, and my family. It has taken longer than expected.

By God's grace, I have been very encouraged to help Pastor Beto lead two online Bible study sessions this month, in which both the Holy Spirit touched me and others through it. I have been given the opportunity to teach seven times with seven different Scriptures by God's grace. This was such a blessing to me! It also has brought me much peace from the Lord about sharing Christ in Peru.

### Circumstances

One of the prayers I've been working on is to react well under fire. What I mean or compare this to is fire is a positive thing because, as it says in 1 Peter 1:7, "These (trials of many kinds) have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." Comparing that fire to stress or stretching for us this month. A quote from Freedom Tools by Andy Reese says: Christ said, "In the world you will have tribulation." You will have stress. It was a promise. You will have pressure, strain, anxiety, tension, and hassle in your life. No exemptions. When you are going in the right direction, you will meet the enemy head-on. Those meetings are not random." This quote is encouraging because God can use all these things to refine us as gold, to purify us from all dross, and help us to depend entirely and solely on him- "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is in Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. (1 Cor. 3:11-13)." So, it was my plea to the Lord and still is to respond in worship as Job did and in joy, as Paul says, because this makes us more like Christ and strengthens our faith.

When under stress or stretched; first, a reaction is grace. Ask God for grace! This verse has helped me this month also "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Col. 4:6)." Notice this verse says how to answer, not necessarily speak, meaning how to react. So, in those moments when our patience is tested, we can ask God for grace! You know we all have moments we need grace, and everyone else

does too. Even if we may not completely understand a person, even if we see flaws or weaknesses in a person- they need grace as much as we do. Lord, give me the grace to react in trust from You, which flows a peace that comes from having Your reign and kingdom before me and prioritizing You above all else, especially above me, so that heaven can come down to earth in those moments. "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

Another positive reaction to stress or fire is forgiveness. How do we react to offenses? Disrespect? Hurts? Deceit? Etc. I am learning that it is not good to respond in anger. We need to calm down and decide what to do in a healthier emotional state. David says in 2 Samuel 22:18-19, "He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me." Notice the enemy attacks on the day of disaster! Not when we are strong in the word and alarmed and ready, on that day when everything seems to be going wrong, on that day of disaster. But then David immediately says, but the Lord was my support.

Jesus had different seasons in his life. Some Gospels' studies call these the year of preparation, the year of popularity, and the year of passion. Each season has different characteristics, and we can have similar seasons. The year of preparation is time in the desert being conformed to the image of God- in character, in spiritual maturity, in discipline, in strength for His eternal purposes. Circumstances and those around us push us to seek God and cry out to Him in faith for breakthroughs. The year of popularity is when we see the hand of God at work, prayers are answered, and God is speaking to us in His word; we have a strong sense of purpose because the Lord is using us for His glory and kingdom. Then there's the year of passion when Jesus sets his face to go to Jerusalem and the cross. This season is of receiving rejection, mocking, all his disciples forsake and disown Him, false accusations, and for Christ for a moment, even separation of the Father, and then the cross. For us, the year of passion may also feel like a cross to the flesh; however, the Lord can use this. If we die to the flesh (to pride, sin, self-confidence, etc.), we learn from Christ that it is to our advantage. This way, we can know Christ and the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attain the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11).

We all go through these seasons as Christ's followers; sometimes, they may cycle or overlap each other, but it is good to recognize which one we may be in to get a sense of what God wants to do in us or around us. Ultimately Jesus, on the cross (which is much more than just fire), says, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." He laid everything in God's hand, including his own life. He left the judgment and vengeance to God and trusted God to bring justice. "When they hurled insults their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. "He himself bore our sins: in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live in righteousness: "by his wounds you have been healed (1 Pt. 2:23-24)."

Ultimately, trust is the way we want to react. When we place our trust in God, we no longer have to fear holding onto control of the results of how things go. This trust brings us patience. A

patience that is rooted in the fact that God works in all things for the good of those who love him. Thus, even under pressure, we can choose to be close to God and react out of the flesh, but under submission to the Spirit, He will produce- love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If we choose to try to go our own way or do things ourselves, or in our own timing- much more manifestations of the flesh are bound to come in. May life and the abundance of life- Jesus- flow forth from our hearts, mouths, and lives, and the aroma of triumph, not the stench of death (2 Cor. 2:14-16). May we always choose to glorify God under any circumstance.

### *Spiritually*

There's one more thing that encouraged me this month, I was reminded of how in the past, I was always about was that when one is at the end of himself to take one more step when he's got nothing left, and God will carry him the rest of the way, or he will experience joy in the Spirit. I've come to feel that faith is that step that, despite the difficulties, despite our current condition, we still follow the Spirit's leading even when it's not easy, even when it may seem like it goes against the current. Sometimes, we can wrap ourselves around in chains of excuses or complaining. Complaining is also a negative reaction to fire, but when we tie ourselves around in those chains of reasons why we can't, it can cause discontent/ self-pity. What will break those chains is follow Christ even when it seems like time, money, etc., which can be legitimate reasons, but don't get wrapped up in those and at least take steps to try to break out of that and think out of the box with creativity to walk by faith! Many times excuses inhibit us from walking by faith- sharing with others about Christ, fellowship in Christ, connecting with brothers and sisters in Christ, and also using what you have (what God has given you). An active faith causes us to move and be expectant for the Lord to move and helps us break the chains of discontent and find true joy in the will of God. I need more of this, and we all do. I think of the people who are remembered in history, and it usually is because, despite many things, there was a triumph. After all, they tried and tried and ultimately had enough hope or faith to move beyond themselves and circumstances to do what was right (the conviction) or what they wanted to see happen. But it can only occur at a cost. Hebrews 11:1-2, "Now faith is the conviction of what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients did and were commended for it."

A wrap-up is that despite perceived rejection in the past, we do not sit in that, nor close off the area in our life, but continue to walk by faith, knowing that can be the answer "no," even from the Lord, but to continue to walk in the plans of the Lord. This makes me think of the phrase- some of the most successful have most likely failed the most. Philippians 3:13-14, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."



Stephen's Birthday was March 17<sup>th</sup>! He is 4 years old now.

