



# the REAPER

VOL. 67, NO. 2 | Summer 2022



And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

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**SLM** is a world-wide, disciple making, church planting ministry that uses the medium of Bible lessons for all ages in both printed and electronic format to achieve its goals. The International Headquarters in Madison, Georgia, its Discipleship Training Branches (DTB), and Associate Discipleship Schools (ADS), distribute lessons throughout the world.

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**the REAPER**

Dr. Ronald J. Barnes Jr.  
*Editor*

Brenda Barnes  
*Assistant Editor*

Eula Keener  
Melody Zink  
Betty Ingalsbe  
Shirley Rice  
Kimberly Thigpen  
Ray Walker  
*Reaper Staff*

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Ron Barnes III  
*Photographer*

Michael Ventrello  
*Prepress*

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**Corrections & Clarifications**

For the latest version of **the Reaper** go to [sourcelight.org/reaper](http://sourcelight.org/reaper)



# THE WEAK LINK

*A letter from the Editor*

Generally speaking, I am not an impulsive risk taker. I tend to be cautious about personal safety, but even more so in my work. I like a lot of variables to be answered before I am willing and ready to make a decision, probably more so now the older I have gotten.

Even when I was young, I wasn't much of a risk taker, which was why it was so surprising when I found myself on a platform being strapped into a bungee jump. It was at an amusement park in New Jersey with the young men I was responsible for in my dorm at the university. We had a "get to know you" retreat with the incoming freshmen, and at the time it seemed like an opportunity to bond... until I was standing on the ledge.

Ironically, I wasn't as much afraid of jumping from that height as I was the trustworthiness of the attraction. I looked over the somewhat frayed harness, the bungee cord itself, the

crane apparatus and the high school student running the bungee jump, who I am sure was more responsible than he looked. All of the variables seemed to be less than perfect, but perhaps just adequate enough to see me successfully surviving. Still, I had questions. I peppered the operators with questions about proper maintenance, proper positioning, weight limits, etc. It seemed like the prudent thing to do.

When the rotation came about and it was my turn on the platform, I edged my toes over the ledge. I couldn't bring myself to jump, so I urged the operator just to give me a push. He told me it was a policy that he couldn't help. He said he had never had anything break before; it was perfectly safe.

In that moment I had to make a decision. There was no way to know if everything was going to work as it was supposed to until I gave it the

test, my full weight suspended by all that equipment. So, I jumped. I clearly made it... I'm here writing the story!

**For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong**

**(2 Corinthians 12:8-10 KJV).**

Sometimes, it surprises us to learn that Bible heroes like Paul were just people too; facing the same trials, temptations, struggles, and doubts that we do. In fact, Paul shares here in 2 Corinthians, he had something he was insecure about, a "thorn in the flesh." In spite of speculations, nobody really knew what it was. All we really know is that Paul said it was something the evil one used to wrestle against him with. He even asked the Lord three times to take it away and God's response to Paul is something we all need to hear.

God reminded Paul that it was Paul's weakness that could cause him to fully know God's strength. It's easy for us to believe we can rely on our strength, on our own ability to handle all we face in life. But God reminded Paul that his and our inabilities, those weaknesses, those flaws, all let us know God completely.

We say we give our entire lives, every part to Him, but rarely is that true. We tend to hold back certain parts, like limited control would be anywhere close enough to resolve things in our own strength.

It feels unnatural to allow ourselves to freefall in God's grace. But freefalling is the only way to fully appreciate His strength. Our weakness helps loosen the grip of control of our own lives. We don't have to totally let go, but until we do, His power and grace cannot be completely known.

So, learn to welcome your weakness. Use its momentum to release the grip of control of your own life. We will never know the sufficiency of His grace until we let go of the platforms and handrails that hold us back from the expanse of His immeasurably great strength. We will never know the strength of His grip, until we see that grip flexed like a bungee cord, proving itself under pressure.

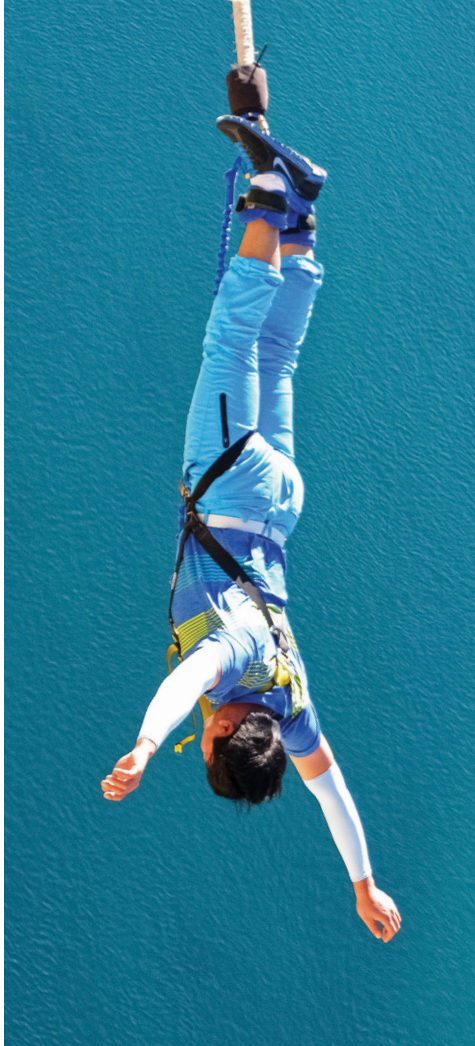
This edition of the *Reaper* tells stories from around the world of SLM missionaries and those to whom we minister who have experienced firsthand the strength of God's grip.

They have seen unimaginable pain, trials, and obstacles, and they have watched and experienced God prove time and time again His faithfulness.

**I have a front-row seat to these trials. I've watched missionaries abroad and missionaries here at the home office endure chronic pain, incurable sickness, and give their last ounces of strength to the cause of Christ.**

**Most of them don't let many know these challenges; they choose to serve faithfully, but silently. But their lives are living testimonies of God's grace and His power, particularly when they are weak.**

Our hope is that the stories in this edition of the *Reaper* will encourage you to trust in God's strength. The little dot on the map of ministry that Source of Light is continues to carry out its mission, the Great Commission, as frail servants of the Lord dependent on a great and powerful God, and we encourage you to continue to participate with us through your prayer and partnership.



Bungee Jumper — Photo by Jeremy Bezanger



After years of serving as a church planting missionary, **Dr. Ronald J. Barnes Jr.** now serves as the President & CEO for SLM.

Follow me  @RonBarnesJr

# STRENGTH TO SERVE THROUGH SUFFERING

By Ron Barnes

You have heard it said, that behind the scenes at Source of Light are many men and women of God who go through great sacrifices to serve here. But what many don't know, is that some of our people do so enduring great pain and chronic illness, for the cause of Christ.

These individuals are so committed to the Great Commission, they push through the exhaustion, pains, and discomforts associated with their individual illnesses. They faithfully and dutifully carry on with the tasks and assignments they oversee, rarely missing a deadline. Highlighting these individuals is not what any of them would desire; in fact, most would be glad if no one knew. But we hope that they might be an inspiration to those of you who also endure chronic pain and illness. Perhaps their stories will bring you some hope and fortitude to carry on with the calling of God in your life.

Eula Keener has served with Source of Light over 35 years. Together with her husband, Dave, she traveled to represent SLM in conferences and churches, and held various administrative positions at our headquarters. Eula served as the administrative assistant to the CEO for many of those years, and as one of the proofreaders for SLM's publications.



Eula at the Office Back Brace and All

Even through her husband's prolonged sickness, Eula cared for both her husband and faithfully cared for the responsibilities of her ministry. After Dave's death, Eula returned full time to the accounting office and proofreading responsibilities.

She was fortunate to have had exceptional health for many years but began to see some significant health issues within the last year. At the insistence of her friends and bosses, she finally saw the doctor, who eventually diagnosed her with Stage IV non-small-cell lung cancer. Throughout her treatments, she continued to serve, though visibly weak. Even when her administrators encouraged her to take some days off, she still persisted in returning to the office.



Kim Thigpen Handling Files

After a period of worsening illness, it was discovered that Eula's sickness had made her bones weak to the point where her back was actually broken. She received treatment and therapy and had a will to get healthy enough to get back to her desk. After three months, she returned to her desk at the office, still in a brace, walking with a walker, and with great joy has resumed the calling that God has given her.

Brian Thompson came to SLM 11 years ago, to head up our Madison Discipleship School, and has since also taken on the responsibility of Regional Director for North America and the Caribbean. He came to SLM with some health issues and pain, the results of a near-fatal car accident that left his body in bad shape. For years, he was on pain killers and medicines, saw specialist after specialist, and had surgery after surgery.

Brian was finally on a path to living pain free, thanks to some procedures that blocked the chronic pain in his feet, when after a bout with other symptoms, he learned he had polycythemia vera, which is a rare form of blood cancer. Between chemotherapy and doctors' appointments, Brian continued to lead his department and regions. COVID forced Brian to isolate away from the office, since his immune system was almost non-existent, but he stayed current on his responsibilities. The day of the writing of this article, Brian informed us, in person in chapel, doctors have discovered a fourth lesion and he is scheduled to have another MRI. Instead of staying home, convalescing, Brian heads to the office to do what he loves.

Kim Thigpen, Literature Coordinator during a crucial season of SLM's publications' ministry, is spearheading the creation of new lessons, writing for SLM's various publications, and coordinating the collection, storage, and archiving of courses, as well as facilitating new translations.

It is a big job, yet pushing through her own chronic illness, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, and the pain associated with it, she too dutifully carries out her tasks with great joy. In spite of severe and debilitating allergies, even to paper, surprisingly, with her oversight of the literature, she puts on a mask and gloves and heads into the dusty file room organizing and collecting.



Brenda's TN Affects the Left Side of Her Head

She recruits help from time to time, knowing what her limitations are, but still finds ways to carry out her job. If it weren't for the gloves and mask, you'd almost never know she was even sick. But it isn't an act, she just pushes through her pain, with joy.

Brenda Barnes has gone about her duties as the Director of Advanced Studies with great enthusiasm. She loves the department she serves in and, as a missionary for over 26 years now, has never been as fulfilled in ministry as she is now. And never has she been as busy.

Few would even know she has suffered with trigeminal and occipital neuralgia and chronic migraines for the last two years. She pushes herself constantly because of the great demand for and need of the WWBI and EZRA curriculum. She works day and into the night editing and updating both the printed and online courses, so that we can be providing the best possible materials to our students.

I pray constantly for each of these, that God would fully restore and heal them. It breaks my heart to see those who serve here, and the many others around the world whose stories I haven't told, suffer. But I believe God gives them a unique perspective, a unique strength, and a unique desire to persevere through hardship.

There are times I admit, I don't know what to pray. Perhaps what makes these people, and others who serve through sickness, persevere with joy and be as successful as they are, is their infirmity. Perhaps it is why Paul too, in spite of crying out to God on three occasions to take away his "thorn," God chose to leave it with him.

All I do know is that God is a loving God who shows strength and grace in proportion to their needs. But please continue to pray for these missionaries and the countless others who serve through suffering. That they too, as the passage states, may take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Corinthians 12:10).



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# IMPERFECTO

By Bruce Dare

Since moving to work full-time at Source of Light headquarters, a significant part of my initial training in the Publications Department included working with the various machines used in the printing process, not only to become comfortable operating them, but also to learn basic troubleshooting for occasional issues or needed corrections. Part of this was to “catch” repeatedly for our big King press. Notice I did not say “use” or “run” the press—it would take months of focused training or even a lifelong career as a pressman to become proficient at that. Rather, catching in this case involves simply taking booklets off the line, making sure they are stacked straight (called “jogging” in the industry—notice how well I’ve done picking up terminology), and placing them neatly into a bin (or “cage”) to be processed further in future. I found this to be more taxing than I expected, not necessarily the physical aspect needed to perform the task, but rather the mental focus to remember the steps under pressure.

Once on my own, I’d have a nice pile of mess if I couldn’t keep up. And due to the veiled dampness of the product, the slightest wrinkle or crease could

ripple into much bigger problems or literally jam up whole processes down the line on other machines.

The truth is, no matter how much of a bright and shining rookie star one may be, the “new guy” is bound to stumble, and it is not personal, but rather prudent to go behind him to double check his work and question any problems he may encounter. This is part of the human condition. Even the best human is only human. We all make mistakes. To use an older term, we err, and are naturally, pervasively, and hopelessly errant. I often experienced this keenly, as the most minimal delay or smallest missed step could cause myself a backup that was hard to overcome.

It was at one of these moments, near the end of the day when weariness was approaching and humanness becoming more obvious, when something ironically profound caught my attention. The booklet currently coming off was a Spanish lesson, but the English translation is easily apparent. The page facing me had near the bottom an illustration of a random man walking with the word “IMPERFECTO” written across him. That sure was the truth, and I was



View when “Catching” Booklets Off the Big Color King Press — Photo by Bruce Dare

feeling it. Later translation showed that underneath read, “My walk . . . the way I live on earth.” In stark contrast, the next column had a picture that was to portray the Lord Jesus and the man standing just below with the phrase “¡Perfecto!” overhead and the caption: “My position . . . the way God sees me in Christ.” So, even rote and repetitive tasks at Source of Light become the means of personal discipleship!

What an acute reminder that regardless of my human weakness, whether seemingly small missteps or maybe a colossal failure, my Savior is not only with me but is also strong for me. He makes up for my lack. Better yet, He not only enables my effort but also guarantees it will be successful. God is working in us both to will and to work (Philippians 2:13) and will perform what He has begun (Philippians 1:6). So, as I live for Him and try with all my spiritual imperfections, His brilliant perfection



Book 6, Lesson 11, Page 9 of A Country Called Heaven in Spanish (SP:TMCI-6) — Photo by Bruce Dare

is emblazoned across my life. As a result, any success that I experience or good that I possess is nothing more than another display of His greatness, another occasion to point to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Next time you make another “whoops,” whether big or small, remember that God is right next to you, ready to help you catch, catch up, or catch you! Take at least a moment to pray for His help, focus on the next best and right thing He tells you to do, and praise Him for getting you through. Perfectly. Imperfecto, anyone? Stand strong in the Lord!



**Bruce Dare** serves as the newly appointed Director of Publications at SLM. He and his family are grateful God opened this place of ministry full-time in 2021.

# ADVANCED STUDIES IN PRISONS AND BEYOND

By Brenda Barnes

In our Advanced Studies Department at the Source of Light Ministries International headquarters, we are able to assist colleges, institutes, ministries, and churches with their educational goals and needs with Bible-Institute-level courses for their ministries. We also have an active ministry to individual students through our World Wide Bible Institute (WWBI) courses and our EZRA courses, whether it be through correspondence by mail or through online study out of our office here in Madison, Georgia.

We love working with our students and watching them grow in their faith and mature into followers of Jesus who want to serve Christ and others. Out of all our students, who correspond through the mail, a little over half are prisoners. We have some prisoners who finished all their basic courses through the Madison Discipleship School but wanted to continue, to

study with us in our Advanced Studies Department. Only by receiving a scholarship are they able to continue so that the courses can be sent to them. They are so grateful for this opportunity and consistently work hard on their courses. They pray for us and regularly tell us so.

As Covid 19 became ubiquitous and people found it difficult to be confined to their homes, there were those who were in lockdown in prison cells. But, praise God, our students in the Advanced Studies program didn't get so discouraged that they stopped studying. Instead, they used that time to study harder and do more work in their Bible courses.

When Travis B. was finishing the course *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, he wrote, "I really enjoyed this review of doctrine and the opportunity to test my scriptural engraftment. It is truly thrilling to witness the

hidden treasure of Biblical doctrine being proven. To be able to recall His wisdom and act in tandem with the Spirit is so exciting." Just recently he wrote, "I truly enjoyed this study on *Doctrine of Last Things*. Today, I see the trends and threads. Thrilling and awe striking, I am ever humbled and assured by the Word! The human lexicon fails me in conveying my thanks in even the least adequate terms to our Lord God for His mighty Word being bestowed upon a least of these as myself. . . . I revel in the opportunity to take the next course; the privilege of this is immense. Thank you deeply!" Praise God for his sincere desire to study the Word of God!

**Timothy D. wrote during his study in the course *Doctrine of God*, "I have learned that God is abundantly merciful, forgiving, and loving, and is relentless in His pursuit of His children who go astray. This has given me hope, peace and purpose."**

He also said, "the awe of God in my life is kind of a combination of the knowledge that there is nothing He can't do, nothing He doesn't know, and the fact that out of that greatness, He still sees fit to be aware of me and do amazing things in my life, and my gratitude is for that. We should always feel reverence for God so that we don't take Him for granted

or diminish Him in our minds."

During his study in our course *Matthew*, Joseph W. wrote to us. "In prison there are many ups and downs, more downs than ups. With this Covid-19 and those of us who haven't taken the vaccine, we are being singled out. We can't be with those who have taken the vaccine. When I say can't be with, I mean celled up with each other. So right now, we are forced to cell with people we don't want to be with. Right now, I'm in this situation with a young guy who didn't want to cell with me because of what he heard about me, and he didn't want to leave the cell he was in. God is amazing in how He works. I love Him for His mercy, His love, His protection, and His encouragement. I prayed that His protection would be on me during this situation I am now in. I trust in God for all He has promised me, as I accepted Jesus into my heart and life. . . ."

Our numerous ministries continue using our curriculum, and those who have used it in the past are renewing their interest again because it is timeless material. As Covid has caused many ministries to rethink through their strategies, WWBI is coming back to mind for many. Ephesians 4:11b-12a says that the Lord gave to the church pastors and teachers; for the perfecting [equipping, training] of the saints, for the work of the ministry. Every church should be training the saints

to do the work of the ministry. WWBI uses the Programmed Instruction Method (PIM) which, when properly utilized, allows the student to learn at his own speed, understand and retain the information taught, and then helps the student to apply that material learned to their lives. This systematic study equips students with the knowledge of the Bible that will deepen their relationship with the Lord, and then prepares them to be Biblical church leaders.

This spring, we had a call from Scott K. in Greenville, South Carolina, who has been using WWBI curriculum in his prison ministry for 11 years. He has had 1,500 students over those years; 400 students finished all the courses in year one and 300 students finished all the courses in year two. WWBI is a great structured Bible program for such a ministry as this. He is expanding his ministry in 2022.

An institute in Fiji called us to assist them with courses again. Because of Covid, this particular institute is not able to get to their extension study sites in remote areas of the country. They would like to use WWBI again to keep their students in those areas studying. They have students who can't get to the extension sites either, but do have access to the Internet. It is a good thing we have the World Wide Bible Institute (WWBI) fully functioning ONLINE and it can be offered to those students.

One great thing that has come from the Covid pandemic is that we all have had to become more creative in how to accomplish our goals. We have adjusted our thinking in how to get the job done. If you can utilize our Advanced Studies Curricula and would like more information on WWBI, EZRA, or ONLINE learning contact: [training@slmin.org](mailto:training@slmin.org).

If you have a burden to give to our Advanced Studies Scholarship Fund to help a prisoner receive courses, you can give to that today online at: [www.sourcelight.org/give](http://www.sourcelight.org/give) or by mail at SLM 1011 Mission Rd., Madison, Georgia 30650. Designate Advanced Studies Scholarship Fund.



**Brenda Barnes** has served as a missionary with her family in Hungary and the Czech Republic and now serves at SLM as the Director of Advanced Studies.

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One of SLM's goals is to enable our international missionaries to produce the lessons on their own soil. However, many cannot because of the high cost of paper. Your generous gift will reach people in the US and overseas.

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# SLM 2021 Year at a Glance



1.7 Million  
Lessons Sent

537,057  
Lessons Graded



87,098  
Certificates Issued

518,039  
Active Students



35,797  
Salvation Decisions

## SLM International

37  
Branches  
Around the  
Globe

100+  
Languages  
Translated  
Into

824  
Full-time  
Missionaries  
&  
Volunteers

6378  
Associate  
Schools

### MISSION AND VISION



Source of Light Ministries International exists to bring people of every nation, language and ethnicity into a mature relationship with Jesus Christ and into fellowship with a local church family.

#### Through:

- Evangelism
- Discipleship
- Church Planting
- Leadership Development and Training
- Develop & Distribute Bible Resources

### New Ministries in 2021

37 / 249

New Churches / House Groups



632

New Cities or Villages



202

New Bible Studies



70

New Children's Clubs



# MISSION SPAIN 2022

By Ron Barnes

Bordered by Portugal and France along the Iberian Peninsula, Spain is known for its picturesque Mediterranean coast and mountain ranges. The stable economy among Latin nations and their close proximity to northern Africa make it an ideal resettlement location for immigrants.

Roman Catholicism is by far the largest religion, representing about 70% of Spain's total population of 51.5 million, but most Spaniards, particularly the younger generation, do not participate in regular religious worship. As many as 25% of Spaniards profess no religious affiliation. With many Spanish cities and towns having no evangelical witness, Spain is a difficult environment for missions. In fact, Spain is often referred to as a graveyard for preachers, evangelists, and missionaries.

Jorge Vechiarelli was well aware of Spain's reputation, but acting on an invitation from pastors in Spain, he and his wife left their beloved homeland of Argentina, transitioned from a lead administrator ministry role for South America, and headed to Spain to see how God might use them.

Arriving in the midst of the Covid pandemic, his interactions with

ministries, churches, and leaders led him to the conclusion that discipleship was at the center of Spain's greatest need, and resources were necessary to respond to that need. This conclusion led back to a connection he had in Argentina, with a ministry he had been partnering with for some time, to see if perhaps that organization would be willing to work together with them.

That missionary was Jorge Ovando, Director of Source of Light Argentina. Through a series of conversations with local and regional administrators, it was decided that a couple of us should see first-hand the need and evaluate the situation to determine if we should consider making Spain Source of Light's newest Branch.

A board member, Darwin Blandon, and I made our way to Sant Celoni, a 20-minute drive outside of Barcelona and spent time becoming acquainted. Our first desire was to get to know Jorge Vechiarelli and his family, and determine if they were a fit for the very high standards we have for our missionaries at SLM. Their sincerity, kindness, strong testimonies, and commitment to the Gospel were unmistakable.



Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Sea Seville, Spain — Photo by Henrique Ferreira

Another desire was to make contact with key individuals and see what kind of need and partnership would be necessary. One of our first meetings was with the General Secretary of the Baptist Union. We began to share about what SLM has been effective in doing around the world, and it was clear from his perspective that the SLM resources are a crucial need for the church and for reaching unbelievers. The Advanced Studies resources, our Bible-college-level curriculum, were also of interest due to the lack of training facilities and resources for pastors.

The next day, we met with the head of the mission's branch of the denomination, and he shared about the opportunities for not only reaching Spaniards, but also the many immigrants they receive. He is active in immigrant ministries personally and was extremely encouraged to learn of SLM's reach into many other languages besides Spanish.

Wheels began to turn in both of our heads as he shared what the Spaniards are doing by way of outreach outside of Spain in Spanish, Portuguese, and French-speaking countries through their missionaries. Opportunities to provide those missionaries with materials and training in the mother tongue of those countries was of significant interest, and SLM is in a position to respond.

We also learned of a unique opportunity among the sovereign territories of Spain on the African continent, in Muslim countries where proselytization by Christians is illegal and dangerous outside of those territories, but perfectly legal within. We discussed using those areas as places to train and disciple Christians and ministry leaders, as well as the possibility to begin a Seminary or Bible Institute.

In typical "God-fashion," we were amazed at the opportunities in Spain



Valldemossa, Spain — Photo by Patrick Baum

and the great need. We began to strategize and make a plan to bring Jorge on as the Branch Director for Source of Light Spain. With so many open doors, we knew we couldn't waste any time or else risk losing momentum. We began the process of training required to become a director and to run a SLM Branch.

Would you pray? Spain is a dark place, and the Gospel is slow to be accepted. We are praying that God would surround Jorge Vechiarelli and his family with partners who can come alongside and help him in the ministry, partners who can help him on the ground in Spain, partners who will support the ministry in prayer, and partners who will commit to support the ministry financially.

Woefully under supported, Jorge and his family have started the work, trusting God to provide for their needs. But in order for us to truly carry out this ministry, we will

need some start-up resources as well as ongoing support. Would you consider joining us in this venture? Pray with us that the Source of Light Spain ministry wouldn't end up being the burial ground the enemy would intend, but that it would become a holy ground of committed believers and churches, and a sending nation for the Gospel. Yes, the odds are against us, except we serve a God whose power is made perfect in weakness.



After years of serving as a church planting missionary, **Dr. Ronald J. Barnes Jr.** now serves as the President & CEO for SLM.

Follow me @RonBarnesJr

# AN OPPORTUNITY IN DOOM

By Kimberly Rae Thigpen

*"They fight every day. They kill every day, killing a lot. All the young people also, the children even, they kill. So we are really afraid to go out anywhere. My area is under martial law. We cannot go out after six o'clock when it gets dark. Better to hide in our house. If we hear gunfire, we hide and turn every light off. Even a candle. Everything off."*

Philip, Myanmar

Myanmar, large compared to neighbors Bangladesh and Laos, comparable to neighboring Thailand and India, and tiny below bordering China, is a country of over 100 ethnic groups and famed for a sixth-century, Shwedagon Pagoda. Beautiful, golden, full of Buddhist relics, the pagoda perhaps symbolizes the country, at least as it once was.

Known as Burma until renamed by the military in 1989, the Myanmar of today is less famed for beauty or religion than the violence that has claimed the land. Its 54 million inhabitants are caught up, by choice or not, in what has become a civil war.

Myanmar is no stranger to invasion or forced rule. After gaining independence from Britain in 1948, it was under rule of its own armed

forces from 1962 until 2011. A new government brought new hope, but 2017 saw hopes crushed when the Rohingya minority were killed by the thousands, and nearly a million fled as refugees.

In February of 2021, the military took the country in a coup. Philip\*, Source of Light's DTB Director in Myanmar, is living through what the United States Secretary of State has called a "reign of terror." During the very limited time of electricity, he had for the day, "thirty minutes . . . maybe two hours, three hours, then off," as he said, Philip met with Regional Director Scottie Staab over Zoom. He shared, "The killing is continuing. The military government cannot support the military soldiers and bullies. They cannot get the salary from the government, so they take away the things from the people. Not



Doing Lessons at the DTB — Photo by P.T.



Children at the Ministry's Orphanage — Photo by P.T.



Book Binding of Lessons — Photo by P.T.



Baptism — Photo by P.T.

only do they rob things, but if they see the ladies, they rape, and then not only that, they burn the houses and buildings. A lot of buildings and a lot of houses.”

“Soldiers and police have become terrorists. They should be the protectors of the people in the country; however, they are hurting instead and becoming enemies of the people.”

A documentary would add foreboding music to the background as Philip states, “All these things are going on and going on, till today.”

Schools have been closed for two years. According to Philip, who knows firsthand, “All offices are unable to run properly. The country’s current power is unstable. Many people lost their jobs as most of the big companies could not run properly without electricity.”

And then there’s Covid, which has been infecting and killing along with the military. “Furthermore,” adds Philip, “we are facing one more obvious problem, which is famine.”

The list of tragedies is long, but not over. Civilians rose up in response to the coup and created a militia. “They take up guns and they form a PDF – People Defend Force,” says Philip. “In every village and every town, they form themselves. All the businesses support them. So right now, the situation is the bullies and soldiers are fighting with the people. This is a big problem.”

There’s risk staying home, but more risk going out. The color red represents the democratic party, so they have to be careful not to wear any red, not even on their masks or in their hair, and also not to have any photos on their cell phones that include someone giving the three-finger sign against the government.

How can anyone have any kind of ministry in such a war zone? “Right now, it is not easy to have a ministry in Myanmar,” Philip shares. “Many times, I think to myself to keep quiet and stop ministry by not doing many things. As a human being, I am afraid of going out, sharing the Gospel, and visiting . . . since there are strict restrictions announced by the military and the infection of Omicron.”

“On the other hand,” he continues, “the Lord speaks to me through Scripture: *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world* (1 John 4:4).”

For a season, Philip and his fellow workers had open doors. In 2015, Myanmar became a democracy, giving them more freedom for missionary work. He shared about an unbeliever, Mala, who hated Christians and was very much against anyone sharing

the Gospel with her. But one day she somehow got a Source of Light Bible lesson. She read it, and God changed her heart. Mala came to Christ.

But what about now? Philip shares that people are struggling mentally and physically, and there is much despair. “People are searching for security and peace,” he says, “but they cannot find it in the world and can never be satisfied.” He quotes the words of Jesus, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you* (John 14:27).

The Myanmar DTB continues translation work, currently translating *A Country Called Heaven*, though getting the text onto the computer is a slow process with their limited power. Philip assures us that his family is currently safe. They go out short distances and for short amounts of time. He can contact ministries through the Internet, when

and if it is on. "Online we normally share with each other. Sometimes we call by phone to pray and encourage, two to three minutes, and then we pray for them.

"Those I contact [among the lost], they are really blind, so very sad. They just stay at home. They cannot go out at all, so they are much more depressed, more than me, so we can encourage them.

"Before the political crisis and pandemic, the majority of people never liked to listen to the Gospel. However, now people like to listen to the Gospel as they acknowledge that only God can give everlasting life, peace, and joy."

"Therefore, we should not give up. We may not be preaching to a big crowd but a small group or sharing with personal evangelization. People need the Lord. I just visited a very extreme Buddhist family and shared the Gospel. Before when we visited, they wouldn't accept anything we said. This time, we sat together, and we shared with them, and they listened carefully and asked about the Lord Jesus Christ. They accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. They have a desire to study more the Word of God. They are taking SLM lessons and studying every night. I am baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19."

"This is really wonderful. Everybody asks, where is the peace? Who can

they ask? They are really scared. That is the Gospel opportunity."

It is, as Philip terms it, "an opportunity in doom."

Please pray for Philip, for his family, for all the missionaries continuing on through unimaginable difficulties. They need much courage and much wisdom. Pray for Myanmar, for peace, and for stability in the government. Pray for more open doors, even now, especially now, for the Gospel. Pray for provision for his family and the ministry's financial needs in this time of crisis.

"I encourage myself; I should not stop," Philip says, "even though we are facing hardship and difficulties."

Indeed, greater is He that is in Philip, than he that is overtaking Philip's country. "All the time," Philip says, "My stand is on the Word of God. All the time."



*Full name withheld for protection.*

*Quotations edited for understandability.*



**Kimberly Rae Thigpen**, SLM's Literature Coordinator, is currently recovering from Covid.

## INTRODUCING LEXI STAAB!

Source of Light is so blessed to have an excellent artist join our team to help create our new children's courses. Let's find out more from Lexi herself.

I've been interested in art since I could walk. I started out decorating my parents' couch with a black Sharpie marker, and from there I became a regular doodle monster. Everyone loves stories and, for me, there is just something so special and powerful about narrative artwork. Whether it comes in the form of classical paintings in the Louvre, storybook illustrations, comics, or animation, art is the most beautiful way to get your point across. I like sketching with pencil and paper, but I also like coloring digitally on the computer. It gives it a clean, animated look, and I'm a huge fan of animation.

I was born in the United States, but my family moved to Romania to be



missionaries when I was five years old. I have three siblings. All our names start with "L": Lauren, Lexi, Liam, and Luke.

I'm actually a second-generation missionary kid. My mother was born and raised as an MK in Japan. I got to visit once as a child and I hope to go back one day.

Growing up in two different countries definitely gave me a unique perspective on cultures. I didn't feel like I was American or Romanian, just out of place. I know that sounds terribly sad but I understood what being a Christian in a fallen world meant. I grew up a misfit, surrounded by a bunch of other misfits from places like China, Japan, Brazil, Turkey, and Africa, all struggling and growing together. It was the greatest experience of my life.

There were things I liked and disliked about both cultures. I like how, in Romania, time seems to slow down. You spend hours at a restaurant talking or, like me, doodling on napkins waiting for your delicious meal to come out. No one was in

a hurry. You could just enjoy life together. America is very convenient, though. You can get what you need quickly and efficiently.

Moving back to America for college was very strange. I remember being able to taste the sugar in the pizza at the airport and being completely dumbfounded why everyone was staring at their phones all the time. The culture shock has definitely worn off by now.

I've always wanted to use my art and creative writing skills to spread the Gospel, so when my father, Scotte Staab (Regional Director for Asia and Europe), told me SLM was looking for an illustrator, I jumped at the opportunity.

I see SLM as a means for building up God's people all around the world:

discipling them, helping them grow in their faith, and assisting in spreading the Gospel. My contribution will hopefully bring forth literature that is both visually engaging and easy to understand.

I don't know what God has in store for me, but as long as this is what He wants for my life and provides for me, I'll continue working at SLM. I'm excited for what we are trying to accomplish with these new lessons and I love illustrating them. My goal is to make artwork so engaging that people from all over the world will want to read the new material and get closer to Jesus and have a better understanding of His truths.

I hope I can leave behind something timeless that will further the creation of high-quality Christian materials.

# GAYLORD WALTER MAXWELL MEMORIAL

## *It Only Takes a Willing Heart*

God can use any man with a willing heart, for "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: . . ." (Psalm 37:23 KJV). But life didn't begin that way for Gaylord Walter Maxwell, known to most as Max. He grew up on a farm in Iowa, where he and his older sister Norma and their parents lived with their grandparents through the Great Depression. There was no interest in attending church.

Max served in the Navy after high school graduation and then joined the Air Force. While he was stationed at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Mississippi, he attended church in New Orleans, Louisiana. He heard the Gospel for the first time and he accepted Christ as his Savior. Within a few months after his conversion, he changed from Radio School to the Chaplain's Section where he served fourteen years as an assistant. After attending Midwest Bible College for two years, Max returned to the Chaplain's Section and retired in Phoenix, Arizona in 1971.

Following his retirement, he and his wife, Hazel, began praying about what to do next, but the Lord took her home to be with Him in 1974. After reading an article, in *Power for Living*, about a Christian printer who was unable to go to the mission field, Max felt a strong urge to go in that man's place. This led him to Bible Christian Union, where he served as

a missionary-printer in Germany for nine years. While there, he stayed in the home of a single missionary, Millie, who had returned to the States to care for her parents. A relationship developed between them, and later they were married. He printed with BCU for several years and also ministered with HCJB and Baptist Mid-Missions. Millie passed away in 2000, but Max's heart remained true to the call of God while he continued to serve with other organizations, such as CEF.

Max was introduced to Source of Light Ministries and helped as a volunteer for several months before moving to Madison and working in the Print Shop and then answering correspondence in the Madison Discipleship School. He retired from active Christian ministry in 2015 and moved in with his daughter Susie in Fayetteville, Georgia, spending more time with grandkids and great-grandkids. He moved into assisted living in 2019 and was able to stay in the Georgia War Veterans Home in Augusta after his daughter moved there.

He never stopped serving the Lord, always asking people if they were Christians. He loved the Lord and is now serving Him in Heaven after he left his earthly home December 7, 2021.



Characters for our New Children's Courses

## **WANT TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT LEXI OR PROVIDE FUNDS FOR THE NEW COURSE PROJECT?**

You can give online at: [www.sourcelight.org/give](http://www.sourcelight.org/give) or by mail at SLM 1011 Mission Rd., Madison, Georgia 30650. Designate "Lexi Staab" or "New Course Project"

## PRAYER

◆ The Source of Light ministry in Uganda needs to replace their vehicle. James Byakika, the National Director, shares that the car they are using is 45 years old. It requires a lot of maintenance, and they waste a lot of time when it breaks down. They are praying that God will provide \$13,500 to allow them to get a vehicle that will better serve their ministry. They are also praying that God will provide \$750 for a new laptop computer for one of their staff members who works with the school ministries. This Branch reported that 1,215 people were saved in December and that 3,182 people were saved in January. Pray for the discipleship of these people and the resources in both staff and means to serve them.

◆ SLM's Director in India's Northeast Zone, K.J., asks us to pray that God will provide the resources to print *New Life in Christ 2* in Nepali and the children's courses in Hindi.

◆ SLM's Director, S.S., in the North Zone of India, is praying that God will provide \$7,000 that is needed to buy a ministry vehicle that will seat eight people, \$2,300 for two motorbikes (one for a tribal pastor, and one for an office assistant), a suitable teacher for their tailoring school, and the funds needed to print *New Life in Christ 1, 2, and 3, Explorers 1 and 2, Practical Christian Living, Understanding True Love*, and the children's courses in Telegu.

◆ SLM Kansas is praying that God will provide all the funding needed to install a water well.

◆ SLM Romania has ongoing needs for funding to print literature. Please

pray that God provides the resources for printing so that more people can receive the Gospel and discipleship through the Bible lessons.

◆ Please pray for Bosun Dosunmu in the passing of her husband, Sanya, who was our Branch Director in Nigeria. Bosun will continue the SLM ministry in Nigeria. Please pray for wisdom and the Lord's provision for all the needs of this Branch.

◆ Our SLM Director in Myanmar, P.T., asks us to pray for the political crisis they are experiencing. They are praying that the schools will reopen soon. They have been closed for two years.

◆ Please pray for our SLM Headquarters staff, Brian Thompson, Hugh Jarrell, Eula Keener, and Kimberly Thigpen, who are struggling with ongoing health issues.

◆ SLM Colombia Director's wife, Sandra Vanegas, continues to struggle with health problems. Please pray that God will heal her. She is an integral part of the ministry there. This ministry is also in need of more workers.

◆ Sika Yawo, SLM Togo's National Director, is trusting God for the daily provision for the children in their orphanage, the orphans who are doing internships, and for people who have sought them out for refuge from various difficult life situations. Please pray that God will provide all the financial resources for these people, and for his family's needs as well. Sika's family is trying to set up a microenterprise to help with the ongoing expenses. Please pray that God will provide for the microenterprise and that it will be a successful endeavor.

## PRAISE

◆ Source of Light's Director, S.S., in the North Zone of India, praises the Lord for 49 new villages that they were able to visit and share the Gospel in throughout December and January. Also, a new church was started in Nepal.

◆ SLM's Director in India's Northeast Zone, K.J., is praising the Lord for funding provided to print 30,000 copies of *Who is Jesus Christ?* in Bengali. A new church was also established in the Northeast region. During the Christmas holiday season, 28,519 New Testaments and 16,552 Bible lessons were distributed. The Gospel was shared with 6,540 people, and 66 of these people were saved. In January, a special outreach was conducted to the Gangasagar pilgrims, and 7,000 New Testaments were distributed. During January, this Branch reached out to 7,093 people and 19 of these people were saved. They also did outreaches in five new villages and established two new children's clubs.

◆ Miguel Sánchez, Source of Light's Branch Director in Bolivia, praises the Lord for new converts in their church congregation. He is also rejoicing in God's provision of the finances needed to replace their truck.

◆ SLM Director, D.W., in India's Central Zone, praises the Lord for 12 people who made decisions for Christ and for seven people who were baptized in their village ministries.

◆ Our SLM Branch in Haiti praises the Lord for 32 new believers in 2021. The National Director, Claudy Jean Baptiste, also praises God that his children have finished all the SLM courses.

◆ SLM Kansas praises the Lord for the financial gifts that have come in recently for their ministry.

◆ Source of Light Uganda is praising the Lord that they are now working out of their new SLM office. They are grateful to the Lord for all His provision that has enabled them to purchase land and build their own office. This will free them from rent obligations and give them a building that the ministry can use in years to come.

◆ Our SLM Director in Myanmar, P.T., praises the Lord that even though the situation is very intense in the country, they have been able to continue their Source of Light ministry.

◆ Jorge Ovando, National Director in Argentina, praises the Lord for the recent visit from Source of Light's President, Ron Barnes. He expresses that it was a great blessing and inspiration to the staff there.

◆ Our SLM Kenya Branch is praising the Lord for how He has healed staff members who were sick and for the Lord's protection of their staff as they travel on the busy roads. They have also been able to recently print 29,000 Source of Light booklets.

◆ The Madison Discipleship School shares that they had 156 decisions for Christ reported in 2021.

◆ SLM Romania praises the Lord for the provision of all the funds needed to purchase a vehicle for their ministry. They have been praying for this for some time, so it is a blessing to see this prayer answered.

◆ Tina Hidalgo, one of Source of Light's missionaries in the Philippines, praises the Lord for 21 souls who came to know Christ through the course *A Country Called Heaven*.

# GLOBAL OUTREACH FUND



Source of Light International in Madison, Georgia operates and ministers to each of its missionaries without any administrative fees charged. We rely solely on gifts and regular donations in the same way as any of our missionaries, purely by faith. In order to continue to operate this way, we are asking God, by faith, to raise up new individuals, churches, and foundations to support the work of the home office through the Global Outreach Fund.

Would you prayerfully consider partnering with SLM through the Global Outreach Fund?



## DONATE YOUR USED CAR

SLM is in dire need of replacing its old fleet of vehicles. We have an urgent need for an SUV, a minivan, and a smaller car that gets good gas mileage. If you have an interest in helping, contact Ron Barnes at [rbarnes@slmin.org](mailto:rbarnes@slmin.org) or call at (706)342-0397.

## IN MEMORIAL

### *In Honor of...*

Phil and Vera Winder by  
Bethany Baptist Church

Ann Moore by  
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Tim Neal by  
Joan Neal

John and Susan Cranmer by  
James and Cindy Kinard

### *In Memory of...*

Annette Dick by  
Darrell and Joyce Dick  
Paul Leichty

Russell Eaton by  
Willing Workers Sunday School Class  
Frank and Mary Eaton  
Martha Maddox  
Salem Baptist Church

Donald Gilbertson by  
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Dr. Dale Linebaugh by  
Don and Betty Lowry

Myron Mattocks by  
Mattocks Living Trust

Frank and Irene Forbes by  
Pertti and Judy Paularinne

Camella Raye McGregor by  
Ken and Deanna Stemler



Source of light  
INTERNATIONAL

*Dear Friend,*

*Let's remember His words...*

Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Paraphrase Matthew 6:19-21)

*...for in heaven we will be glad we did.*

*Yours for the harvest,*

Dr. Ronald J. Barnes, Jr.  
President & CEO

Give Online at:  
[sourcelight.org/donate](http://sourcelight.org/donate)

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Each gift will be used as preferenced with the understanding that when any need is met, the remaining gifts will be used where most needed. Gifts are acknowledged and receipted with an official receipt for income tax purposes.

***We are grateful to you for being a part of the ministry of Source of Light through your prayers and financial support.***





**Source of light**

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1011 Mission Road  
Madison, GA 30650-4908

p. 706.342.0397

f. 706.342.9072

e. [slm@sourcecelight.org](mailto:slm@sourcecelight.org)

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