

March 2022

MISSIONS

A Sunday School Delivery in PERU

Witnesses for
Christ in **Turkey**

Interview with
New Missionaries
in **Mexico**



THINKING IT THROUGH

BY T. J. MARINELLO

An Attitude of Gratitude

Many readers of *Missions* live in cultures that celebrate a day or season of thanksgiving in the fall of the year. This yearly celebration is historically associated with the inbringing of crops, complete with samples of the local harvest arranged in colorful display. While annually recognizing God’s sustaining provision is a good practice, what might we consider about thankfulness more broadly, both in time and in scope?

The former long-serving leader of Operation Mobilization and assembly elder Peter Maiden writes in his book *Radical Gratitude*, “I realize how easily I slip into today’s entitlement attitude and culture. . . . It is high time to stop thinking entitlement and to start thinking gift, privilege, and grace.”¹ In 12 challenging but easily read chapters, Maiden goes on to present a biblical encouragement for developing an attitude of gratitude. Unsurprisingly, an even more succinct resolution to this challenge is found in the Psalms. How, then, might we develop and practice thanksgiving? The answer is recorded in Psalm 138.

Following David’s opening thanksgiving in verse 1—“I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart”—verses 2 and 8b remind us of God’s steadfast love and faithfulness (ESV). Believers should be cognizant of the Lord God’s covenantal faithfulness to His people, whether they be the Old Testament saints or His bride, the New Testament church. The psalm continues, recording thanksgiving for God’s thoughtful plan for us. As we cry out to God, He assuredly answers according to His plan for us (v. 3a; v. 8a). Our life is not an aimless wandering; God has a purpose for us. As part of that purpose, God strengthens and preserves us, delivering us according to His design for us (v. 3b; v. 7a; v. 7b).

We’ve seen for what we are to be thankful, but who should have this attitude of gratitude? In verses 4 and 6, we see that

Our life is not an aimless wandering; God has a purpose for us.

it applies to those whom the world considers great as well as the lowly. Even the mightiest rulers should sing praises to the Lord God, and the rest of us also should thank Him, knowing He cares for us; He well knows our needs.

But why should we have this attitude of gratitude? Having worked from the top and bottom of this psalm, we’ve arrived at its center, and here, we find the answer: “For great is the glory of the Lord.” (v. 5, ESV) Developing a habit of thanksgiving, an attitude of gratitude, is grounded in a certain recognition and celebration of the glory of God. We should learn to see and praise the great glory of God at work. All that He does and has done for us is yet another expression of His glory. How, then, should we proceed?

We should sense God’s glory in His certain, loving care for us every time we eat a meal or have a bed in which we can sleep—the Greater cares for the lesser—and we should be thankful (vv. 2, 8b). These material blessings are but some examples of God’s unmerited favor toward us. We should see God’s glory in His solid surety toward us, and we should be thankful (vv. 3a, 8a). God’s purposes for us are fulfilled, and He is with us whether we face family sorrows, financial hardship, or any other of life’s difficulties. We should see God’s glory as He preserves us and delivers us, and we should be thankful (vv. 3b, 7). His deliverance is at work whether in times of well-being or of pandemic, whether in seasons of peace or of war. Even greater, we should recognize God’s hand of preservation and deliverance through the Lord Jesus’s death in our place and His resurrection in victory. Because of the Son’s atoning work, we can have fellowship with the Father even now and know that, one day, we will be with our Savior forever.

How, then, do we develop and practice an attitude of gratitude? By the continual recognition and even celebration of God’s glory, especially as it is expressed toward us. ■

Dr. Marinello serves in the Netherlands.

¹ Peter Maiden, *Radical Gratitude: Recalibrating Your Heart in an Age of Entitlement* (London: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 3, 9.

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A Sunday School Delivery in Peru

ADAPTING A MINISTRY TO MEET COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

BY CRYSTAL CARRILLO

And He shall give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

When I first came to Peru in 2014, I had no idea how the Lord would lead me. I knew that I enjoyed teaching God's Word and helping young believers in their walks with the Lord. However, I hardly spoke a word of Spanish. As I learned the language, I worked as a preschool and English teacher at Strong Tower Christian School in Pueblo Nuevo for three years until the school closed in December 2017. During those years, I learned Spanish and met and married my husband, Luis Carrillo.

In my last year at the school, I started teaching Christian education to the preschoolers. One of my responsibilities was to visit the students' families alongside my coworker and friend Jorge Saavedra (a Peruvian believer who passed away from COVID-19 last year). Most of the students did not come from Christian families, so we offered an evangelistic Bible study to interested parents. Soon, we were leading multiple Bible studies every week.

When the school closed, I decided to stay in Peru and continue serving the Lord. It was an easy decision, really. Because I had married a Peruvian, I no longer needed a work visa to stay, and I had a lot of Bible students I wasn't ready to abandon. I was finally doing what the Lord had placed on my heart: teaching God's Word. As Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." It has been so rewarding to see how the Lord has been working in my life, leading and guiding me every step of the way.

SERVING IN THE CITY OF TWO FAITHS

My husband and I serve in Ferreñafe, in northern Peru. We live on the coast, about an hour from the Pacific Ocean, with a beautiful

view of the Andean foothills from our rooftop. The climate is dry year round and especially hot in the summer. Even though we live in the desert, the main crop here is rice. Irrigation ditches bring water down from the mountains.

Ferreñafe is often called *la ciudad de la doble fe*, which translates as "the city of two faiths." The majority of Ferreñafanos would identify as Roman Catholic; however, many adhere to superstitious beliefs too. Most Ferreñafanos participate in different spiritual rituals to ward off evil spirits—they call it "doing a cleaning." And many will visit a witch doctor when they are sick or when they want to buy potions and amulets for warding off curses or making someone fall in love.

I have seen the fear of evil spirits and curses even among some evangelical Christians; they have grown up with these beliefs. For some, it is difficult to understand what the Lord says in 1 John 4:4: "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

Ferreñafanos love to celebrate, so they are always looking for a good reason to throw a party. Unfortunately, these parties usually include large quantities of alcohol. Alcohol abuse is a big problem. Many families struggle to put food on the table day to day, yet somehow, they can celebrate all



From left: Miguel shows off his Sunday school paper and answers a few questions about the Bible story; Once some neighborhood kids have finished their coloring pages from *El Dominical*, they knock on Crystal's door and ask her to tell them the Bible story.



night when someone has a baptism or birthday; many families even celebrate the birthdays of dead relatives with Mass and then a party afterward. For a city where most people would call themselves Christians, it is spiritually dark.

WORKING MYSELF OUT OF A JOB

Over the years, our ministry has changed and grown. We are involved in the local church as youth leaders, and in 2020, I became the Sunday school director. I am involved in discipleship and have had the immense privilege of leading several people to the Lord. There is nothing like seeing someone come to understand who Christ is and what He has done for him or her and then watching that person grow and begin to serve Him.

For a city where most people would call themselves Christians, it is spiritually dark.

Alongside several women from the assembly, I work with the adolescent girls at Morning Star Children's Home, which Tom and Carol

Clark (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 22) run. Last year, I was excited to see some of those women begin to serve the Lord on their own. Eli started an evangelistic Bible study with one of the teens from the youth meeting, and Laura started a Sunday school in her home.

I remember my dad telling me once that the goal of missionary work is to work yourself out of a job. My hope is that more women here will grow in their Christian walks and start serving the Lord.

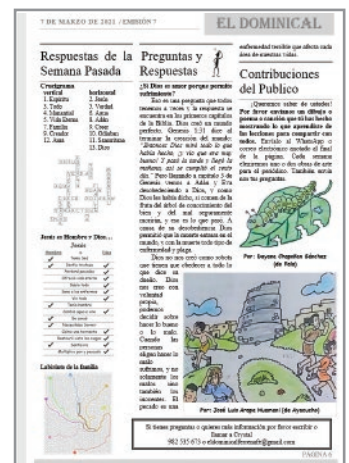
DELIVERING SUNDAY SCHOOL DOOR TO DOOR

A couple of years ago, we started a Sunday school in our home for the neighborhood kids. Anywhere from 3 to 20 kids attended each week. I enjoyed getting to know them and seeing some of them paying attention to the Bible lessons.

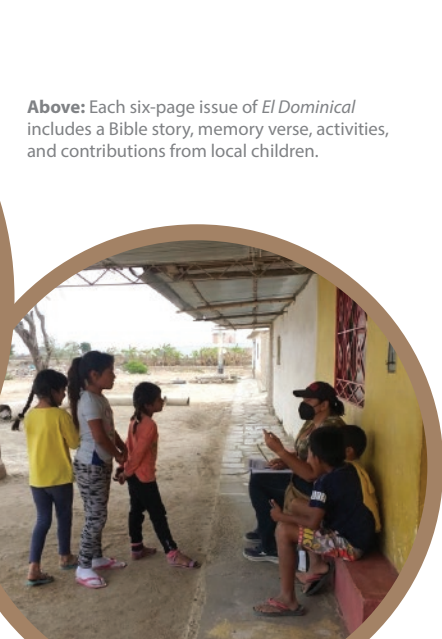
When the whole country went into quarantine at the beginning of 2020, we could no longer host the kids in our home. We kept waiting, thinking, *Next week we can start up again*; and then, *Hopefully, next month*; and then, *Hopefully, next year*—all the while asking the Lord for wisdom.

As 2021 approached with no change to the COVID-19 emergency protocols, we felt it was time to do something, but we weren't really sure what. As we continued praying, an idea started forming, and in January 2021, we distributed the first *El Dominical* to the neighborhood kids.

El Dominical is a newspaper-style Sunday school program, which we write. With it, we operate a weekly Sunday school delivery in our community. Soon after we first distributed it in our neighborhood, we decided to share it with the kids at Morning Star Children's Home too. When it was equally well received there, we also began delivering it in Fala—a small town about five minutes south of Ferreñafe.



We were surprised to see how the people in Fala received the newspaper. For the first week, we made 60 copies and went door to door offering a newspaper to everyone who



Above: Each six-page issue of *El Dominical* includes a Bible story, memory verse, activities, and contributions from local children.

wanted one. Even though the residents responded with some suspicion that week, we ran out of copies and had to return home before we covered the whole town. For the second week, we took 80 copies and ran out again. The following week, we distributed more than 100 copies. By that time, the people's attitude toward us had changed: They started inviting us into their homes and pulling out chairs for us to sit on. Some of the families that hadn't received the first few newspapers started seeking us out in the street and asking if they could sign up too.

We noticed that many people didn't own Bibles; we began awarding points to those who completed the worksheet included in each issue so they could win a Bible. More than 60 people—children and adults—signed up to win Bibles. We're excited to see how the Lord is working. A few people in Fala have expressed their faith in the Lord, and one of our Sunday school kids from Ferreñafe received the Lord as his Savior last year. A couple of people heard about what we were doing and started distributing the newspapers in Ayacucho (a city in southern Peru) and in El Milagro (a tiny town just north of us).

Every week, we hand out a new copy with the help of some of the teens from Morning Star whom I disciple. It's exciting to see how they connect with the kids and their eagerness to serve. I was especially encouraged to watch Belén, a young woman whom we are close with, as she made the ministry her own—taking time to ask the kids questions and see how much they understand from each lesson. She often taught them a mini-Sunday school lesson in the doorway of their houses. (Belén no longer lives in Ferreñafe.)

Opposite page (L-R): As Crystal and her helpers visit door to door, they often share a mini-Sunday school lesson since many of the kids can't yet read the lesson included in *El Dominical*; Violeta and Anayelli display their newspapers; Every week, this small group of kids waits, papers in hand, for Crystal to arrive.

Right (clockwise from top left): Crystal leads the high school Sunday school class in their study of John; Belén and Majo, two of Crystal's helpers, teach two kids in Fala a Bible lesson; Some of the kids from El Milagro work on their Sunday school papers. (Photo by Ana Rodriguez Ballona.)

PRAYING FOR THE WORK

Please pray for us as we continue the newspaper ministry. Please pray that the children and their families who receive *El Dominical* will understand all that God has done for them, receive Him as Lord and Savior, and enjoy His transforming power. Please also pray that the people whom we are discipling will continue to grow and will learn the importance of serving the Lord. "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37–38) ■



Crystal Carrillo is commended from Heidelberg Bible Fellowship in Heidelberg, Ontario. She serves with her husband Luis, a Peruvian national.



Above (from top): Neli, one of the adults who participates in *El Dominical* and has professed faith in Christ, receives her Bible; The Morning Star boys are proud of their coloring pages.

Interview with Nathan & Julissa Cedarland



New Missionaries Share about Daily Life

In 2020, with commendation from Kaleo Grays Harbor and Cosmopolis Gospel Chapel, Nathan and Julissa Cedarland and their children—Eva (14), Benjamin (12), Ana (10), Caleb (8), Daniel (6), Gideon (4), and Jonathan (1)—moved from Aberdeen, Washington, to Puerto Escondido, Mexico. Nathan is helping to establish a local church, which now has more than 100 people attending on Sundays. Apart from preaching regularly, he trains and mentors men to serve as elders and leaders, to plant new churches, and to share the ministry load. Julissa disciples and mentors women while supporting Nathan in his leadership calling. They are excited about opportunities for sharing the Gospel and for discipling believers in Puerto Escondido and beyond.

What foods do you eat?

We eat *tlayudas*, tacos, *tinga*, tamales, crickets, cactus, and lots of incredible tropical fruits. And we drink the best coffee in the world.

What is the weather like?

It is hot and humid year round. The humidity drops in the winter, which makes November through February pleasant. The rainy season is in the summer. It usually just downpours for a few minutes in the early morning or late afternoon, and the rest of the day is sunny.

What cultural behaviors or traditions do you find interesting?

For most Mexicans, family and food are probably two of the most central aspects of their culture. Traditional dances are also important and maintained across generations. In Oaxaca State (where we live), each region has its own folk dance. People's sense of time is much more laid back. Showing up 30 minutes late is often considered acceptable. Here on the coast, the culture is relaxed and friendly, but we also have a strong New Age influence. This blends with the surfer subculture and the pre-Hispanic cults (Mayan spirituality). Puerto Escondido has some of the top surfing spots in the world, which draws people from all over—including a plethora of tourists and a large international community that stays year round.

What is the dominant religion in your area?

Catholicism is still dominant, but it has much less influence here than in the rest of Mexico. Most Catholics in our area are nominal, and many have embraced aspects of the New Age. There are many Pentecostal churches in town, though few of them preach a clear gospel message. As I (Nathan) mentioned previously, the New Age scene is growing, including expressions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and pre-Hispanic mystical practices.

What does a typical week look like for you?

On Sundays, we gather for worship in the morning and conduct a beach volleyball outreach in the evenings. We train interns and host a men's leadership training on Mondays. Tuesdays are devoted to sermon preparation and soccer practice. On Wednesdays, we do more intern training. Julissa and I also reserve some time for a date night. On Thursdays, we host a youth Bible study and have soccer practice. On Fridays, we do intern training again and have a women's group (twice per month). Fridays also include our family night. Finally, on Saturday, we have soccer games or family time at the beach and conduct pre-marital counseling. Julissa home-schools our three oldest children, and our younger three (except for one-year-old Jonathan) attend a Christian school that closely partners with our local church.

How do you relax?

We go to the beach, body surf, read a good book, and read to the kids.

How do you get to know people?

We get to know people at the beach and at shops around town. Making relational connections comes naturally in this culture.

What is challenging?

The heat is difficult to manage (most places don't have air conditioning). Being far away from family is also challenging and so is dealing with false teaching.

What is exciting?

There are many opportunities for evangelism and discipleship. It has been especially encouraging to see God work among numerous teens and college-age young people. Seeing their interest in serving the Lord and their hunger for His Word is amazing. Every Sunday, whether at morning worship or at the volleyball outreach, we have visitors from places like South Africa, Austria, El Salvador, Canada, Holland, and the US—many have not heard the Gospel.

Do you feel settled?

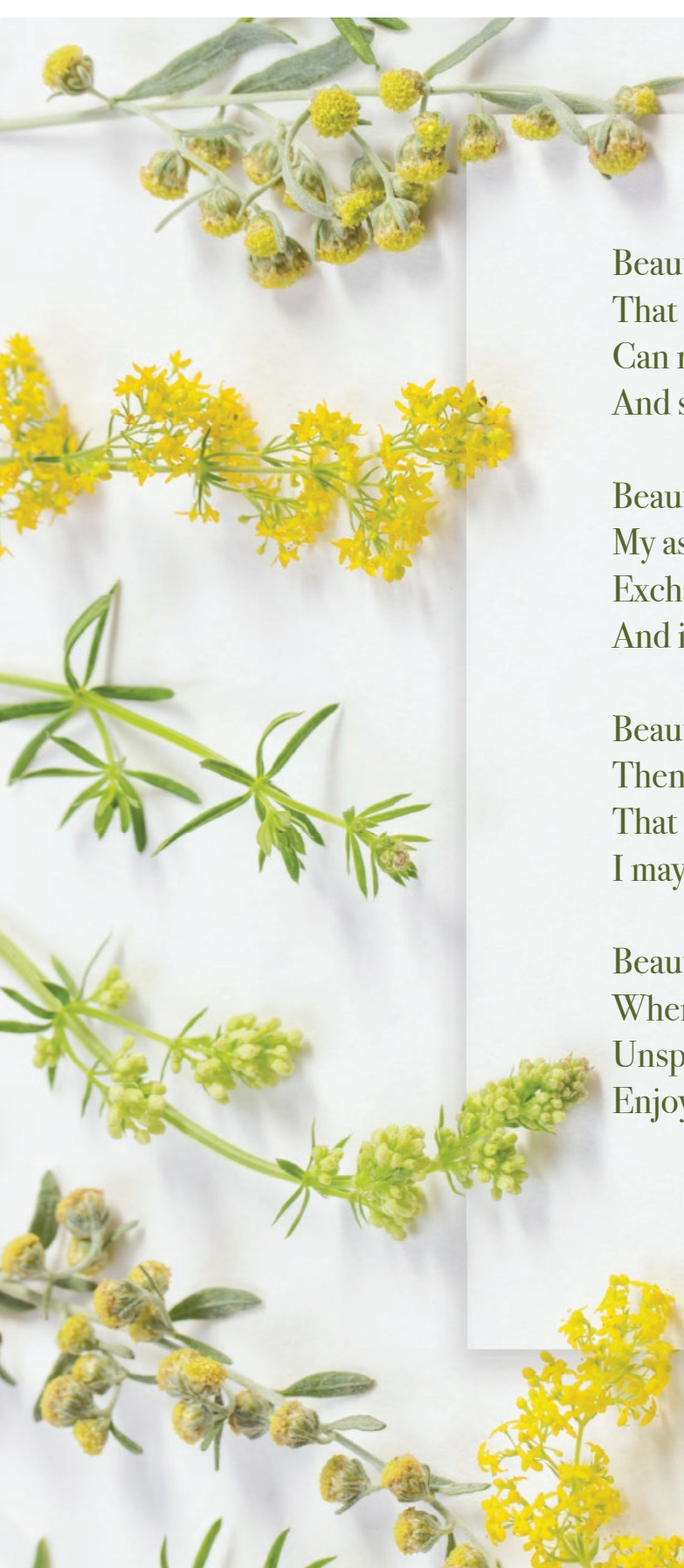
Yes, overall, we do. We love it here. Julissa's sister, Rosalia, and her husband had been living here too, which helped us feel more connected to family. They moved in December 2021, so that has been hard on all of us.

How can we pray for you?

Please pray for wisdom in knowing which opportunities we should pursue. It is not a matter of looking for opportunities; they come to us daily. Pray for the continued development of a leadership team to share the teaching and shepherding load with Nathan. Please pray that Julissa will adjust to not having her sister here. Pray that our oldest daughter, Eva, will fully recover from the health issues she had last year. Pray that God will provide a larger facility for our Sunday gatherings since we have outgrown our current space. (We are looking for a facility that can accommodate the K-12 Christian school as well as our church gatherings). Pray that our lives will magnify the Lord Jesus continually. Thank you so much! ■

Right (from top): Believers in the local church sing during a meeting; Nathan preaches at the local church; On Sunday evenings, the Cedarlands host beach volleyball games as an outreach; Eva Cedarland (back left) and other young people chat over a meal.





Beauty for ashes! What miracle is this
That sinners cleansed and saved by grace
Can radiate His glorious face
And share eternal bliss.

Beauty for ashes! How grand it is to know
My ash of ugly selfishness
Exchanged for His own righteousness
And in His beauty grow.

Beauty for ashes! What promise rich and rare!
Then help me, Lord, each day, each hour,
That through Your grace and mighty pow'r,
I may Your image bear.

Beauty for ashes will one day be complete
When we behold Him face to face,
Unspotted then from sin's last trace,
Enjoy communion sweet.

—Esther Logan Howell