



### THINKING IT THROUGH

BY ALLAN WILKS

## Opportunities in Hospitality

Thanksgiving is a time for extended families to gather and celebrate God's goodness—across the land, people open their homes to family and friends on this day. Yet, sadly, this one-day abundance of hospitality is far from the norm. Even the most generous of homes on Thanksgiving Day may entertain no visitors during the rest of the year.

This is especially egregious when it occurs among Christians. The Bible urges all followers of Christ to practice hospitality (see Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2, and 1 Peter 4:9). Christ Himself, even without a home to share, showed hospitality. For example, He fed the multitudes on two occasions, and He broke the bread and passed the cup at the last Passover that He celebrated with His closest friends.

So why is it that, even with these biblical precepts and examples, our homes tend to be shut tightly against visitors on most days? Possibly, we think our home is in no fit state to receive guests. Or we may have become overly possessive of our time and privacy, an attitude strongly encouraged by our culture. Perhaps we worry about the challenges inherent in developing relationships with others.

But we ought to overcome whatever roadblock is preventing us from obeying the biblical mandate to be hospitable. We might be encouraged to do so by the many opportunities for personal growth that present themselves when we are generous with our time and place.

For example, if I feel my home is too messy or too dirty to receive guests, then a desire to be more hospitable becomes an opportunity to develop better habits of cleanliness and tidiness. At the opposite extreme, if I can't bear the thought of others bringing dirt and chaos into my otherwise well-ordered home, then being more hospitable might help cure me of possessiveness toward what is actually owned by God.

Sharing my home is a way of showing love. Jesus said that the second greatest commandment, after loving God, is loving my neighbor as myself. Opening the doors of my home to others is one way I can live out this commandment. Additionally, hospitality affords the opportunity to deepen relationships. Even though I meet with my church family weekly, there is actually little time in the church setting for the hard work of personally encouraging and edifying one another. The warm, relaxed environment of a home offers a much better setting for these activities.

My home is a resource God has given to me. As with all such gifts, the Bible encourages me to share it with others. In the parable of the talents, the first man, who invested his God-given resources most wisely, was commended and, indeed, rewarded (Matthew 25:14–30). Having an open home is a way to be like this man—think of it as an investment opportunity.

In our home, my wife and I have lived by an open-door policy for many years. Family and friends know they are welcome to enter at any time without knocking, provided they announce themselves on the way in. Over time, this has led to a warm, inviting environment, many conversations, and deeper relationships. This policy was especially helpful for our children and their friends while they were growing up.

A consistent, long-term practice of hospitality can be draining, financially and emotionally. It requires sacrifices that are perhaps unwelcome. But it is also a practice that is full of opportunity and, over time, yields huge rewards. Hospitality, though clearly a Christian duty, is a faithful step in the giving of my heart to God. In the words of Isaac Watts's hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross":

Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were an offering far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my heart, my life, my all!

Lord, open my heart. May I not clutch to myself what is yours. Help me take every opportunity to share with others what you have already so graciously shared with me. Please make my home a place of comfort, welcome, safety, and light—a place where your love has opportunity to shine and all are welcome.

Allan Wilks, CMML vice president, technology

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COVER PHOTO: The Giralda (Seville)—Tracy Alemán









BY MANUEL & TRACY ALEMÁN

oman aqueducts, medieval castles, and Muslim architecture represent some of Spain's unique history and varied cultures. These emblems of antiquity garnish the landscape, revealing events and peoples that shaped the Iberian Peninsula, where Spain neighbors Portugal.

Spanish culture is deeply rooted in religious, Roman Catholic tradition, which permeates daily life, even for the nonreligious Spaniards. Holiday traditions pay homage to sculptures and images of the Virgin Mary (venerated as the Immaculate Conception), patron saints, or Jesus as He suffered on the cross. Andalusia, the southern autonomous region of Spain, where we live, is referred to as the "Land of the Most Holy Virgin Mary."

A prime example of religious festivity occurs during Holy Week (*Semana Santa*), which immediately precedes Resurrection Sunday (that is, from Palm Sunday to Easter). The streets of most towns and cities host penance processions parading life-size idols that depict scenes of Christ's suffering and death. The central figure is the Virgin Mary, portrayed full of sorrow as she holds her lifeless son. For many, Holy Week signifies an opportunity to pay for personal sins, doing penance by walking barefoot through the streets while collectively bearing the heavy load of the gold-lavished sculptures they carry.

### Young hearts with a common aim

During our college years, the Lord directed each of our hearts toward reaching Spaniards for Christ. In this country, where Bible-believing Christians comprised less than one-half of one percent of the population, we observed two types of people: those devoted to the Catholic Church yet lacking knowledge of the Gospel, and those indifferent to or antagonistic toward anything religious. We spoke with elderly people who told us of times when the Catholic Church had prohibited them from reading the Bible. We observed a youth culture devoted to sensual living, rejecting the religious moral beliefs of their progenitors. Our hearts yearned for them to know Christ.

### Opportunities to build up churches

From the beginning of our ministry in Spain, in January 1999, we wanted to lead Spaniards to Christ and edify local gatherings of Christians. We have held firm to our aim of strengthening and establishing assemblies, following the pattern of the New Testament church, and over the last two decades, the Lord has provided us with opportunities. In our early years, God engaged Manuel's training as a Bible teacher, leading him to instruct classes in two Bible-education institutions and in several

assemblies. Currently, we are involved in our fellowship of believers in Seville.

Manuel delights in discipling, teaching, and helping men in our congregation become effective leaders in the assembly and in their families. We are filled with joy to witness these men grow in their love for the Lord and in their desire to live for Him. Three of them teach and lead in our local assembly. Others Manuel has discipled through Bible correspondence courses now participate in their churches' teaching ministries. We thank the Lord that He is encouraging us by manifesting spiritual fruit in the lives of these believers and that they, in turn, are building up the church.

### **Christian literature**

Working with Christian literature ministries is another way we have served the churches throughout Spain and beyond. Primarily, we have served with Emmaus Bible correspondence courses, *La Voz* evangelistic literature, and *Caminemos Juntas* women's magazine—tools that teach and edify.

Our involvement in the Emmaus courses began about 20 years ago, when we met fellow missionaries Gil and Carolyn Vargas (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 14), who serve the Lord in Salamanca, about four hours north of Seville. Gil, the director of Emmaus courses in Spain and the Spanish editor of Emmaus Worldwide, hoped to expand the Bible correspondence course ministry, so in 2006, he invited Manuel to open an office in Seville that would cover the southern region of Spain. At that time, Manuel began administering and grading the courses from students in our territory. By replying to handwritten responses

on the exams, Manuel built relationships with his students and personally addressed their biblical questions and concerns.

Over time, other believers from our assembly became involved in grading the courses, eventually assuming that responsibility so Manuel could devote time to course translation and revision. Today, the Emmaus office in southern Spain grades about 1,000 courses per year. The Lord is doing an extensive work through the Bible correspondence courses, reaching individuals and churches scattered throughout the country, presenting the Gospel to them, guiding them in understanding the Bible, and helping them love God and His Word.

### Believers' needs

Another way the Lord has led us to build up local assemblies is by meeting people's personal needs. For example, after Manolo's cousin invited him to our church meeting, we began learning sign language. We wanted to help him understand the Gospel and the thoughts shared in remembrance of the Lord each Sunday. The efforts the church made to communicate with Manolo in his language—something his siblings had never done—affected him. Formerly an ill-mannered alcoholic, Manolo saw God begin to change his heart, transform his life, and clarify his understanding of the Gospel. He received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and was joyously baptized sometime later.

### **Prison ministry**

Prison ministry is another area of service that has helped our assembly grow since two ex-inmates who studied the Emmaus courses from prison now form part of our fellowship. One



Top (L-R): Historian Gabino Fernández guides the Alemán's church through significant sites of the Spanish Inquisition in Seville, including Callejón de la Inquisición (Inquisition Alley) leading to the dungeon where the inquisitors held prisoners; Several believers gather for an intensive study of the Gospel of John; The Giralda, built as the minaret for Seville's once primary mosque, stands as evidence of the Moorish occupation of Spain from 711 until 1492. Bottom: Manuel shares in the teaching ministry on Sunday mornings. Opposite page (L-R): Manuel and Tracy enjoy providing hospitality in their home; At an evangelistic park gathering, hosted by the local assembly, unsaved friends and family become better acquainted and hear the Gospel; At her baptism, Isabel joyfully relates how God brought her to salvation.













of them, José, has faithfully met with us each Sunday since his release eight years ago. The other, Kenny, also meets each Sunday, although online while he works in Portugal for a time.

### Scarce and scattered churches

Besides building up local assemblies, we see a great need to proclaim the Gospel and establish new assemblies throughout Spain. Christian churches are scarce and scattered. According to 2019 statistics, only 0.56 percent of Andalusia's 8.5 million inhabitants are Bible-believing Christians. In Seville Province, 26 towns with populations greater than 5,000 inhabitants have not one Christian church, and countless smaller towns lack any Christian witness. In whole, Spain is cluttered with thousands of towns hosting no Christian church and receiving no evangelistic outreach. Pray that the Lord will send Christians with hearts to reach the many unsaved people in these small towns.

Isabel, who became a Christian through the Bible correspondence courses, meets virtually with our assembly, because there is no Bible-teaching church in her town and she cannot drive long distances. Since she came to Christ, she has been a missionary to her own people, sharing the Gospel with those she encounters while she walks to the local stores for shopping. We began visiting her each month to encourage her and support her evangelistic work: she invites her contacts to her home for coffee while Manuel offers a gospel message and addresses the quests' questions.

In the town of Huétor, Puri (one of Isabel's contacts) recently opened her home to us and others for coffee and a Bible study. A woman named Ángela visited that day and asked us questions. Once she understood, from Scripture, the Trinity, she became convinced of her need to leave the Jehovah's Witnesses and seek a Bible-teaching church. She reads her Bible regularly and virtually attends a midweek Bible study. We deem it important to make the two-hour trip to Huétor to encourage and disciple these women and others who have shown interest in the Gospel. We also offer them Emmaus courses to help them continue growing in their understanding of God's Word. Pray that God will raise up an assembly there.

Santa Olalla, only 45 minutes north of Seville, is another town we visit weekly to study God's Word with the three believers who live there. They carpool to Seville each Sunday to meet

with our church, and they faithfully participate in the online prayer meetings on Tuesdays. One of them, Jesule, who does odd jobs around town, spends his days talking to townspeople and sharing the Gospel. We encourage the believers in Santa Olalla while we hope to see an assembly form there also.

Please join us in prayer for our small-town outreach as we endeavor to see more churches that follow New Testament meeting principles established. We look to God's help and guidance to communicate the Gospel and disciple new Christians, teaching them to reach out to their communities with the good news of Jesus Christ.

### The effect of genuine faith

Presenting the Gospel in Spain is difficult, since Spaniards generally remain closed to conversations about God or faith. However, we build on relationships in which people have gotten to know our family over the years. They noticed how God helped us raise and home-school our children. They observed when we cared for Manuel's mother, who lived with us for several years before the Lord called her into His presence.

The people around us watch to evaluate whether we live up to the faith we profess. They sense when we are genuine about our faith in Jesus Christ and our love for God and His Word. Consequently, we see God's purpose in placing us in the small town where we live.

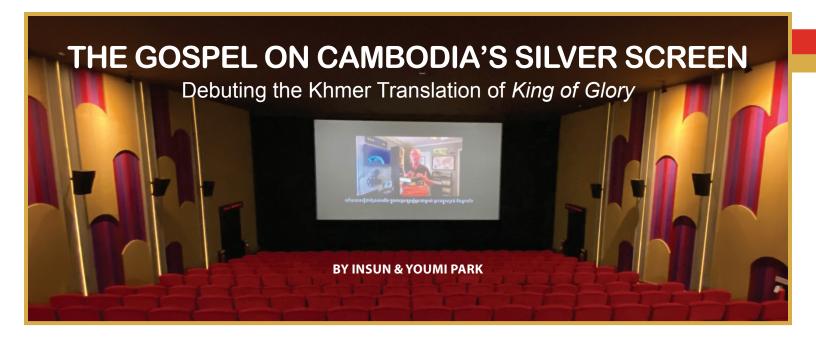
As we become empty nesters with flexibility to adjust schedules and invest more time in our contacts, we pray God will open their hearts to the Gospel, help them throw off the burdens of religious tradition that enslave them, and bring them to repentance of sin, receiving Jesus Christ as their all-sufficient Savior and Lord.

It is our joy and privilege to serve our loving Savior in Spain. Please pray with us that God will increasingly use us to build up the local gatherings of Christians, reach small towns with the Gospel, and help establish new assemblies.



Manuel and Tracy Alemán are commended from Westside Bible Fellowship in Hillsboro, Oregon.

<sup>1</sup> Evangelismo a Fondo (EVAF), "El Desafío Misionero en España y en Europa," 2019, Estaticos.gdq.com/swdata/files/702/702528463/El-Desafío-Misionero-en-España-y-Resto-de-Europa.pdf.



ow do you share the Gospel with Cambodian Buddhists, whose unique worldview mixes with animism? Quoting John 3:16 or quickly walking through a tract is not enough. For a Buddhist, saying a sinner's prayer may not seem much different from performing another religious ritual to get what you want—wealth, health, and prosperity. Such a "quick and easy" evangelistic approach results in no lasting fruit.

Presenting the Gospel in a way that brings souls to true repentance and faith in God and His completed work of salvation is more critical than ever: although a Buddhist nation by law, Cambodia is the most religiously open country in Southeast Asia and is bombarded with the prosperity gospel and other false gospel teaching.

Several years ago, we helped proofread the Korean translation of the *King of Glory* picture book, written by Paul Bramsen (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 27). We thought the whole curriculum (picture book, movie, study guide, and coloring book) was exactly what we needed in Cambodia. The content points out foundational truths about God, man, sin, and salvation; it uses five Old Testament sacrifice stories to explain why the Messiah had to die; and it presents a panoramic, cohesive view of God's story in chronological order. So we desired to translate it into Khmer, the heart language of the people we serve.

### A process with challenges and blessings

The Khmer translation of *King of Glory* kicked off in 2015, but we encountered many delays due to our circumstances: the needs of our children, ongoing ministry demands, and a major shift in our ministry focus. Initially, we planned to publish the book first. But, when the COVID-19 pandemic began affecting Cambodia, we noticed that more Cambodians gained access to the internet—where the *King of Glory* movie would eventually be available for viewing and downloading. And we already knew that most Cambodians prefer to watch something, not read. So we changed our direction to finish the movie first.

We spent many hours translating, proofreading, and editing the content. When we finally started recording the movie's narration track, we faced an intense spiritual battle. In the greatest challenge, Insun had a heart attack right before the final check of the recording. Despite everything, God used the images, Bible verses, and stories from *King of Glory* to minister to our hearts and give us incredible peace as He reminded us of His power, faithfulness, and goodness.

### A memorable premiere

When the movie was ready for release, the Lord led us to consider premiering it at a commercial movie theater. Such an event would introduce the wider Christian community to *King of Glory* and encourage God's people to use it to strengthen young believers and clearly present the Gospel to all ages across Cambodia and beyond. As we explored the possibility, God opened doors—one after another. We booked a 266-seat auditorium from Major Cineplex, a leading commercial movie theater located inside the largest mall in Phnom Penh, the capital city. The date was set: July 9, 2022. The month marked 30 years since God had led Paul and Carol Bramsen to start their media ministry, which would later produce *King of Glory*. By God's grace, the Khmer *King of Glory* was the 50th language to be released.

We sent out invitations, and many were excited and interested in this unprecedented event. More than 200 guests came, and among them were church leaders, Sunday school teachers, and young people from more than 10 churches. A group of believers from the Jarai tribe traveled farthest—a 10-hour bus journey! Missionaries and full-time workers associated with a dozen Christian organizations, mission hospitals, and campus outreach groups also attended. Some guests invited their unsaved family and friends to join them, making it an evangelistic event too. The production team also joined, with much excitement to see the fruit of their labor.

Insun, the director of Emmaus Cambodia, started this memorable event with a word of welcome. Then, through a video message, the audience "met" Paul Bramsen and heard the fascinating story behind *King of Glory*. For the next 3 hours and 42 minutes, the audience took an intense, exciting journey through the Bible. During intermission, complimentary popcorn and soda pleasantly surprised many guests.<sup>1</sup>

### **Encouraging feedback**

When the movie ended, there was a moment of silence. The audience was deeply moved, but then, they started to clap—to the glory of God! Later, some of the believers shared encouraging feedback about the Khmer King of Glory: "It was wonderful to confirm what I believe," said an elder's wife, "and I was reminded of whom I serve, from the beginning to the end. It encouraged me to serve God with all that I have." And a campus ministry leader said, "God will greatly use it in Cambodia."

The movie affected nonbelievers too: "It was a good opportunity," said a Christian worker, "for my brother-in-law and his niece to hear about Christ, and I was so excited that they both watched the movie until the end." The unbelieving father of another Christian worker said, "Now, I have a better understanding of what my son and the other elder preach at church."

The day after the premiere, the Khmer *King of Glory* movie was finally released on YouTube. Since then, we have been encouraged to see the number of views increase steadily, currently climbing above 600.

### Praise and prayer for God's work

We praise God that an event like this was possible in the capital of a Buddhist country, where Christians are considered a minority. We praise God for the freedom. We also praise Him for the outstanding teamwork among our Emmaus coworkers and volunteers, the friendliness of the theater staff, and the help and encouragement from Paul Bramsen and his team.

As the Lord leads, we plan to translate the *King of Glory* picture book, study guide, and coloring book into Khmer, enabling movie viewers to go deeper. Please pray that God will use this excellent gospel tool to move the 16 million Khmer-speaking people to bow their knees before the King of Glory.



Insun and Youmi Park are commended from Overbrook Gospel Chapel in Greenville, South Carolina, and Community Bible Chapel in Bel Aire, Kansas.















**Opposite page:** Before the screening starts, the team tests a video message from Paul Bramsen. **This page (from top, L–R):** The Park family, their Emmaus coworkers, and eight volunteers prepare for the Khmer *King of Glory* premiere; Excited guests wait, tickets in hand, for the event to begin; Insun opens the movie premiere with a word of welcome; The audience prays together after the movie; Emmaus workers welcome guests and distribute tickets; During intermission, volunteers offer quests refreshments.



# European Christian Workers' Conference 2022

### COME AWAY AND REST A WHILE

#### BY PHILIP C. PARSONS

n Mark 6:31, the Lord instructed his disciples to refresh themselves physically and mentally: "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." Each year, assembly-commended workers in Europe apply these principles to their lives at the European Christian Workers' Conference—a week of refreshment, rest, and spiritual enrichment. From August 20 to 26, 2022, these believers and their families gathered in Saint-Jorioz, on the shore of pristine Lake Annecy, for the 45th conference.

### A week of precious fellowship

Attendance was less than expected. Some prospective participants contracted COVID-19 and canceled their reservations, and some regular attendees chose to take furloughs during the summer months. Still, 53 adults and 18 children attended the conference.

Of special note this year, some of the helpers were MKs who, as children, had attended the conference with their parents. Their contribution was a powerful testimony to the value of the retreat and their desire to give back. From the Glock family (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 10), Anastasia helped with the nursery, and Pascal led the music each day. Rebecca Toal, daughter of Kathy M. (MPH Day 11), helped with the "middlers" program (ages 6–13). Anna Remans-Gifford, daughter of Peter and Joanna Gifford (MPH Day 9), and her husband, Jesse, led the ministry to teens and organized a spirited family fun night.

The keynote speaker was Paul Davis (the Evangelical Alliance Mission), a longtime missionary in France with his wife, Karan. His encouraging ministry on the theme "Living Joyfully Even Though . . ." came from Philippians. Using his personal experience, Paul demonstrated that we can be joyful by expressing

thankfulness for the past, counting it a blessing to participate in God's plan of salvation, putting others first, and learning contentedness and generosity.

### An engaging yet relaxing schedule

First thing each morning, my wife, Mary, and I led prayer time for the women and men respectively. After breakfast, Paul Davis presented two ministry sessions, with a break in between, and the children met with their program leaders.

The afternoons were purposefully unstructured so families could do as they pleased, choosing to relax or participate in optional activities. Kathy M. organized a trip to the quaint village of Annecy, a visit to the Paccard Bell Museum, and tours of Conflans (a medieval city) and Chateau de Montrottier (a medieval castle). For those seeking a more vigorous and stretching activity, Dr. Tom Marinello (MPH Day 13) led a hike up a nearby mountain trail that rewarded participants with a breathtaking view of Lake Annecy.

At the retreat center, families could rent bikes and swim in the pool. Or they could spend time with Dr. Paul and Rita Rabideau (New Jersey): Rita led three fitness sessions for women, and Paul, a biblically trained counselor, met with anyone seeking counsel. Over the years, many have appreciated his advice and guidance.

Participants could choose to attend seminars before dinner. Over two sessions, Dr. Paul Rabideau spoke on "Knowing God's

Many offered thanks to God for the blessings of the spiritual enrichment, friendship, and fellowship. Will." Marti Pasquale (MPH Day 12) presented "The Worst Crime of the 21st Century: Sexual Trafficking," and Paul Davis addressed the topic

"Adapting Missions Strategy to the Changing Times." On the final afternoon, in place of a seminar, Pascal Glock performed some of his original music (instrumental and vocal) while his sister Anastasia and mother, Sylvie, accompanied him.

The week's scheduled evening activities included a family fun night and ministry reports from the workers. During the conference's closing meeting, led by Steve Luibrand (MPH Day 14), the children gave parents an overview of their week through songs and skits. Then, Steve invited the adults to share what the week meant to them. Many offered thanks to God for the blessings of the spiritual enrichment, friendship, and fellowship. The conference organizing committee announced next year's retreat for August 19–25, 2023, at the same facility, Lord willing. ■

Philip C. Parsons, CMML missionary care and security









**Left (from top):** This year, 53 adults and 18 kids attended the European Christian Workers' Conference; Hikers snap a photo in front of their reward: a stunning view of Lake Annecy [Photo courtesy of Tom Marinello]; Jesse Remans and Anna Remans-Gifford teach a session for the youth.

**Right (from top):** Anastasia Glock helps supervise outdoor playtime for the nursery kids; Liz Basle (France), Pascal Glock, and Adam Marczak (MPH Day 13) lead the group in singing; New and old friends have fun together during the family game night.







Missions work around the world is unique—different from what friends and family at home encounter day to day. So, to learn about life on the field while getting to know our missionaries better, we asked them to share their firsthand experience or advice.

## **QUESTION:** How can believers at home best encourage and support you while you're on furlough?

## Dr. Scott & Leslie Walt



Organize a place to stay where the missionary or missionary family can be alone at the end of a busy day. Living with someone is challenging during a furlough, an already intense and demanding time. Sometimes, we just need to be able to wear our pajamas.

# CROSS-CULTURAL MIN. Stephen Roughton



Besides having their material needs, such as a place to stay and a vehicle to drive, provided for, missionaries on furlough need to be encouraged to rest. Perhaps lend them a vacation home or offer them tickets to an event. There are multiple ways to do this; just get creative.

# SPECIAL AREAS Barb

Understand that the transition from one country to another consumes time before we leave and after we arrive (especially during pandemic times). Allowing us time to recover and regroup is much appreciated.

### SPAIN





After we inform believers at home that we are planning a furlough, I appreciate when, ahead of time, they offer a place to stay or a car to borrow. Their advance offer greatly helps our planning, logistically and economically. We are also blessed and encouraged when people invite us to their homes for a meal and fellowship once we're on furlough.

# Andres Segovia

An invitation to share a meal or dessert and a cup of tea is meaningful and heartwarming. Taking the time to provide transportation (for example, to and from airports, stores, the bank, and church meetings) is such a blessing. Taking us sightseeing or to a special event would be going the extra mile.

# SPECIAL AREAS

We feel encouraged and supported when believers minister to our children.

**ASK YOUR OUESTIONS!** Visit **CMML.us/askamissionary** to submit your question—it might be selected for a future issue!