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MISSIONS

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THINKING IT THROUGH

BY THOMAS J. SCHETELICH

Healthy Body, Healthy Soul

To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. (3 John 1–2)

A few months ago, my wife, Vicky, and I went on a cruise in the Greek islands, and we toured several of the ancient sites, including Ephesus in Turkey. In the first century, Ephesus was the fourth-largest city in the Roman Empire. Its magnificent port was the engine of the city's economy, the arrival and departure point for everything west.

Just outside the city and up a hill is the burial place of the apostle John. John lived the latter years of his life in Ephesus, and from there, he wrote his gospel and letters. From the spot, you can see the ruins of the great Temple to Diana in Ephesus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. I stood there and thought about John and the arc of his life, imagining him in that place:

Just outside the metropolis of Ephesus, within sight of the greatest heathen temple ever built, sits this very old man, now approaching 100 years of life, remembering and writing. He was born a Jew but now lives in a secular, Hellenized city. He had fished the quiet waters of Galilee but now lives in this bustling metropolis. He had been raised to observe the Torah but now lives within view of the greatest heathen temple in the world.

John's gospel, his three letters, and Revelation are the last books of the New Testament to be written. As John sits here writing, it has been about 65 years since Jesus was crucified and almost 30 years since Peter and Paul died.

Christianity is still new, a tiny ship in the ocean of pagan religions and gods worshipped for centuries. The churches, though small, are coming to an embryonic form that you and I would recognize today. They are mostly Gentile, with the texts of Paul, explaining the doctrine, widely distributed and the synoptic gospels circulating. A new generation is rising to the challenge and moving ahead.

John is so old, a rumor circulates that he will live until Jesus returns. John will write about that at the end of his gospel to set the record straight. Everyone else in the church at Ephesus, or in any church anywhere, came to faith in Jesus Christ the same way you and I did: somebody told us, or we read of it. But John had known Christ. He is probably the last living person who actually knew Jesus of Nazareth. He writes as the voice of a generation almost gone.

Throughout his letters, John makes little comments about getting old. He writes what we call Third John to his friend Gaius and begins with a most interesting and lovely greeting: "I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." Or, in other words, "Hey, old friend, how are you? I pray that your body is as healthy as your soul." I have taken to using this verse on birthday cards.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the outward man is dying day by day but the inward man is renewed day by day. What if we could see that and could see the soul the way we can see the body? If so, some people who today look old and infirm would suddenly look the picture of robust health. Some who appear strong would be feeble.

Often, we remember in prayer Christians who are sick. John's verse is great for those prayers: *Lord, you know this person who loves You. I pray his body, her body would be as healthy as his soul, her soul.*

So may it be with us. For though we cannot see the Lord, we can know the same fellowship with Him as those who did (1 John 1:3). We can love Him just as His closest companions in His ministry (1 Peter 2:7). We have the special blessing of believing without seeing (John 20:29). So shall we be sound and healthy in our souls and so in our bodies also (as the Lord wills). ■

Thomas Schetelich is a CMML director.

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FRONT COVER: Sunday school class in Costa Rica—Kory & Rebecca Crawford

BACK COVER: Rainforest in Costa Rica—©AdobeStock



Pursuing True Peace in Costa Rica

Sharing the Gospel in a Country Growing Indifferent to Religion

BY KORY & REBECCA CRAWFORD



Costa Rica has been marked by peace for many years. The common slogan *pura vida* is a catchall phrase that describes the general sentiment of Costa Rica's residents. It means "life is good," "no worries," and any number of other expressions communicating a generally laid-back and worry-free way of life.

This general peace is also reflected in Costa Rica becoming the first country in the world, in 1948, to abolish its army. It remains the largest country in the world, in terms of land size, without an army. This fact is a point of pride: the country celebrates Day of the Abolition of the Army as a national holiday on December 1 each year.

Unfortunately, even though Costa Ricans enjoy physical peace, a sense of freedom from danger—more than many other countries in Central America—the country is not necessarily full of people experiencing spiritual peace. Costa Rica is a religious country in name and identification, but religion and works will never bring true peace. True peace comes only through being justified before God by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

Almost 50 percent of Costa Ricans identify as Roman Catholic but many in a nominal sense. Church attendance is not overly common. The number of churches throughout the country is low, having sharply decreased over the decades while the number of people identifying as nonreligious, currently at 27 percent, has drastically increased.

Costa Rica prides itself on education and its impressive literacy rate (98 percent) and has dedicated many resources to its education system. However, these efforts seem to have fostered a postmodern way of thinking among the younger generation, greatly contributing to the increase in the nonreligious portion of the population. We pray that this generation of skeptics and relative thinkers will find the true answers to life's important questions in Christ Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

Developing ministries

We arrived in the capital city, San José, in September 2017 with our firstborn son, Matias, who was just nine months old. We spent much of the first year adapting to and supporting the assembly in Ciudad Colón. We focused on gospel outreaches in the areas surrounding the assembly, gospel series in homes and on farms, kids' ministry, and literature distribution. We also encouraged and presented opportunities for the younger generation to get involved in the gospel work. One young believer, Ricardo, greatly encouraged us during that first year as he enthusiastically joined several gospel outreaches.

Looking back over the last several years, we see how much has changed since our first weeks and months in the country, but we thank God for His unchanging faithfulness and mercies toward us. We are also thankful for the many people who heard the Gospel, accepted a tract, or received a Bible during those

Above (L-R): Two boys on Costa Rica's Atlantic coast receive a Bible text; Kory teaches children at a coffee farm; Although Costa Rica takes pride in its national peace, it needs spiritual peace and is susceptible to natural dangers, such as the recent floods that destroyed homes.

years as we ministered in rented buildings—both community centers and storefronts—in different areas of San José.

In 2019, Johnny and Mabel Marin (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 15) joined the work in Costa Rica and began laboring on the Pacific coast in a small village called Quebrada Amarilla. It is located just 15 minutes from the popular beach town of Jacó, where Johnny grew up. They remain there today, and they plan to construct a new building for their meetings because their



core group continues to grow. Please pray for building permits. Pray, too, that the believing men will be built up in their faith and be consistent as they prepare to take a bigger role in leading and preaching in the future.

Difficult soil but precious souls

At times, when people think of the mission field, they may have idealistic ideas of packed attendance at gospel outreaches and new churches springing up every few years. The soil in Costa Rica has been difficult over the years, but the Lord's

promise still stands: if the seed is continually sown, a part will fall on good ground and yield a crop—"some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:8) We rejoice that the Lord is still working, and although at this time and in this place, He is not saving people by the thousands, He is adding individuals to His kingdom. Each soul is precious to Him, and we pray for help to never forget that.

Seeing God work in redeemed hearts years after their precious souls were rescued from a lost eternity is wonderful. One particular family is an encouragement to see each Sunday. More than four years ago, an elderly believer from one of the assemblies asked to have the Gospel preached near her home so she could get her grandkids and son-in-law to hear it. Now, her son-in-law and teenage grandson, who were saved during the months of preaching near her home, are actively involved in the assembly and give thanks to the Lord each Sunday for saving their souls. How rare, yet invaluable, to see an entire family unit actively involved in the local assembly here.

God's Word for young minds

A great passion in our hearts is work among children and teens. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself stated, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:14) Each soul is precious in His sight.

Work among children and teens is an open door for the



Top: Men participate in a Bible study that Johnny Marin organizes. **Above: (Top row, L-R)** Kids pose for a photo during a week of Bible classes at the San Juan de Dios church; Teens and helpers had fun and learned about Christ at a youth camp in January 2023. **(Bottom row, L-R)** Children in Quebrada Amarilla enjoy singing during a Bible class; The class in Ciudad Colón involves fun visual aids.

WE PRAY THAT THIS GENERATION OF SKEPTICS AND RELATIVE THINKERS WILL FIND THE TRUE ANSWERS TO LIFE'S IMPORTANT QUESTIONS IN CHRIST JESUS.

gospel in Costa Rica. Our ministry among youth consists of special Bible class outreaches, camps, and weekly kids' meetings connected to the local churches and in new areas. Many of the children come from broken homes, so displaying the love of Christ and being positive role models in their lives is a worthwhile labor. As is often the case with children's work, we have not seen immediate fruit, yet pouring God's Word into these young minds may well bear fruit in the years to come.

A fruit-bearing project

Our special interest in gospel literature distribution and printing has led us to print several thousand gospel calendars each year with support from the International Bible House Publishing Society. Local churches in Costa Rica and Panama have used these calendars, more than 60,000 of which have been printed and distributed over the last three years. This work has been a real blessing and has led to several contacts for the assemblies in Costa Rica and Panama.



Newfound unity

We know of few New Testament assemblies in Costa Rica, but we support those that are here in several ways: gospel preaching, children's ministry, camp work, and Bible teaching. Each assembly has sought help and support to differing degrees. Over the last several years, we have supported the introduction of a traditional Bible-teaching conference at a few of the assemblies, which is an area of great encouragement. This has greatly increased interassembly fellowship and contact and has brought unity as the believers sit

under the same teaching from God's Word and share in the common bond of doctrine.

The themes and speakers have varied over the years. Some conferences cover whole books of the Bible, such as James, Ephesians, and Daniel; other conferences cover timely topics, such as convictions or marriage and family. Speakers come from a variety of countries—Canada, the US, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama—to help with the teaching. The believers have extended their realm of fellowship to believers and churches outside Costa Rica, enjoying fellowship within the universal church.

The Psalmist put it best when he penned, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) Unity among the assemblies has grown as a result of these conferences, for which we thank the Lord.



While we rejoice over this growth and unity among the believers, we pray that the nonreligious Costa Ricans, nominal Catholics, and many others will realize their need for spiritual peace. Please pray that the truth, peace, and love found in Christ Jesus will break through this secular society and save souls—young and old, one by one or by the thousands. ■



Kory and Rebecca Crawford are commended from Nash Road Gospel Hall in Hamilton, Ontario.

Left (from top): Working house to house, the Crawfords and their fellow believers distribute Bible texts and invitations to a gospel meeting; This Bible conference in the San Juan de Dios assembly focuses on marriage and family. **Right (from top):** People gather in a believer's garage to hear the Gospel; The Crawfords support the assemblies in Costa Rica, including the local assembly in San Juan de Dios, in the heart of San José.



HIDDEN

When Missionaries Return Home

IMMIGRANTS

BY DONNA BRISTOW

I'm standing in the supermarket at checkout, fumbling with my credit card. Hesitantly, I hand it to the young cashier.

"You can just swipe it," he says, "or I can do it here for you."

"I'm sorry, but I'm new in the country," I apologize. "And, where we were living, the cashier always took it."

"Wow, you speak amazing English!" the young cashier exclaims.

"Oh no, I'm an American; I grew up here. I've just been living outside the country for a long time."

And, with that, we have a good laugh.

The cashier thought I was a foreigner, an immigrant. To be honest, sometimes I feel I have a lot in common with people who have recently arrived in the United States from another country—awkward, unsure. Yet, from the outside, I look just like everyone else, a "typical" American.

Learning to navigate life

I grew up in New Jersey and later moved to Chicago for work. To be sure, there are differences to learn even when you move within the US—certain ways you do or don't behave on the East Coast or in the Midwest. But still, the regions have certain common things that you find familiar and know how to do regardless of where in the US you're living.

Then, I lived in Istanbul, Turkey, for 35 years, serving the Lord with my family. I have spent more than half my life in another

country now, having moved to Turkey at age 28. So, for more than 30 years, I knew how to shop in the local markets and bazaars, how to navigate the Turkish medical system, how to meet people, and how to cook Turkish meals. My husband, George, and I knew what government offices to go

to for legal work, how to do our banking, how to get a driver's license, and how to drive in Istanbul.

For our kids, there is even more that is familiar about Turkey and even less that is familiar about the US. Our oldest, Amy, was two years old when we moved to Istanbul, and our other three were born in Turkish hospitals. All four went through a big transition when they packed their suitcases with all their belongings and moved to the US for college. It was a big adventure with its fair share of awkwardness and first-time experiences.

Children like ours are known as third culture kids. David Pollock, who wrote the book *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up among Worlds*, developed this definition:

A third culture kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any.¹

Understanding our identity

My husband and I have just transitioned back to the US. Of course, we find many things familiar here because we grew up in the States. But I am finding that I have experiences and feelings similar to what my TCKs have known. About a month after we moved back, I was talking with a fellow missionary friend and sharing some of the new things I was experiencing. "There's a name for it, Donna," she said. "Hidden immigrant!"

That term, coined by Pollock and his colleague Norma McCaig, enables me to understand why I sometimes feel I have more in common with immigrants than my fellow native Americans. *Hidden immigrant* can apply to children of missionaries who return to their passport country as well as to the adult missionaries themselves when they leave the country in which they've been serving.

In *Third Culture Kids*, Pollock explains that although hidden immigrants may now view life through a different lens—one their home country does not share—people all around them, of course, presume that they are culturally aware and hold a worldview like theirs.² Because these TCKs and missionaries



look “just like everyone else” in dress and speech, no one guesses the struggle they may be facing. The question “How are you adjusting?” often requires a long answer that is difficult to even formulate.

In “TCKs as ‘Hidden Immigrants,’” a helpful article published at OneChallenge.org, Diane Morris gives good advice on how those of us who are hidden immigrants and TCKs ought to view ourselves: She says we need to learn that our true identity is in Christ and remember that our citizenship is ultimately not in any country but, rather, in God’s heavenly kingdom (Philippians 3:20). Yet we can live here as happy sojourners. We are “assigned” to live in this world as He did—accepting, loving, and enjoying others for who they are, gradually taking on the parts of the culture that are good and even enjoying the differences.”

Bringing Turkish culture with me

Having arrived in the US 10 months ago (and with a two-month trip back to Turkey during that time), I have slowly learned things such as how to do self-checkout at the grocery store, pump gas without an attendant present, and get a license and a library card. I now know how to greet or not greet the people I pass at the park, and I remember to ask about food allergies when I invite someone over.

I am also finding that I can share some of the things I have learned from the Turkish culture with people in the US. In Turkey, you can essentially invite yourself over to another person’s house for a visit. I jokingly told a new friend this and asked if I could stop by that week. I wanted to have a quiet place to visit with her and an opportunity to pray together. We had a great visit at her house, and later, she texted me saying I could invite myself over anytime.

Returning to the US, or any passport country, and adjusting to life here requires some of the same skills as moving to another country and learning a new language and culture. It requires listening well, loving well, and trusting God in the adjustment. I have to remember to be gentle and patient with myself. And it certainly helps to have a sense of humor! ■



Donna and George Bristow are commended from Terrill Road Bible Chapel in Fanwood, New Jersey. They are now Other Overseas Service missionaries.

¹ David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up among Worlds*, revised edition (Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009), 13.

² Pollock and Reken, 55.



Our citizenship is ultimately not in any country but, rather, in God’s heavenly kingdom.



Opposite page: In this favorite Turkish dish (*dolma*), which Donna prepares, peppers are cooked with stuffed grape leaves. **This page (from top, L-R):** In Istanbul, Donna shopped at her neighborhood’s open-air market; Donna figures out self-checkout at a US supermarket; One means of transport around Istanbul is the tram system, which Donna navigates proficiently after 35 years; Longtime friends Hulya and Donna enjoy visiting together; George and Donna returned to Turkey for a visit this past spring.

MK CORNER

Missions Magazine Chats with Missionary Kids

INTERVIEW WITH THE JOHNSON SIBLINGS Burundi, Day 1

BY SARAH DUNLAP

Recently, Ruth, Lydia, and Elijah Johnson, who were visiting the CMML Missionary Guest Home, helped me picture life in Burundi. We sat down on the sofas in the great room to chat while the signs of life at CMML surrounded us. As the clock chimed in the hallway and the sun shone through the tall windows, the home-schooled siblings told me about the sun-drenched, animal-filled yard of their home in rural Gisuru. Looking over their property's walls, they can see the buildings that form Gisuru School for the Deaf, part of their family's ministry. But their world isn't limited to Gisuru. With their parents, Daniel and Anne, they travel around Burundi—this year, with the goal of visiting every assembly (a different one most Sundays)—and visit neighboring countries. Using detailed descriptions and illuminating hand gestures, the siblings explained aspects of their lives, including fried termites and uncertainty about which culture they belong to. Please pray for Ruth, Lydia, and Elijah as they navigate life in Burundi and the US.

Tell me about Burundi.

Ruth: It's kind of in the middle of Africa.

Elijah: Some people call it the heart of Africa.

Ruth: It's next to Tanzania and Congo, and it's right below Rwanda, next to the head of Lake Tanganyika.

Elijah: It's really small. We are on the other side [of Lake Tanganyika].

Ruth: We go there a lot. Usually, Daddy will go down there for the bank or teaching sometimes. Sometimes, we go down too. Some of our cousins live there as well.

Were you born in Burundi?

Ruth: Lydia and Elijah were both born in Bujumbura [Burundi], but I was born in America.

So which feels more like home: Burundi or the US?

All: Burundi.

What languages do you speak?

All: Kirundi.

Lydia: And we're learning French and a little bit of sign language.



Elijah (7) is in second grade, Ruth (11) is in fifth, and Lydia (10) is in fourth.

What are your favorite foods?

Ruth: Maybe my favorite American food is french fries. And, in Burundi, I like mangos and guavas. I like flying termites [*ishwa*]. Once I ate a little bit too many of them, so I don't like them quite as much.

Elijah: So there's a bunch of termites around the mound, and the flying ones fly out, and we catch them. And we put them in a bowl, and then, we get their wings off and then fry them.

Ruth: We put in a little bit of salt.

Lydia: I like french fries and macaroni and cheese. And I don't really know what's my favorite Burundian food.

Are there any Burundian foods you don't like?

Ruth: Lydia doesn't like *lengalenga*. We don't like *lengalenga* much—me and Elijah will sometimes eat it. It's called amaranth. It's the leaves. They cook the leaves. I don't like *ubugali*. Lydia and Elijah like it a little bit.

Elijah: It's a sticky bread.

Ruth: They put the flour into boiling water and stir it up or something like that.

Do you dislike any bugs or animals in Burundi?

Lydia: I don't really like the poisonous spiders.

What animals do you like?

Elijah: We have lots we do like. [*He says with a big smile on his face.*]

Lydia: Pigs and rabbits and then our *duikers*.

Did you say tigers?

Elijah and Lydia: No, *duikers*! [*Everyone smiles.*]

Ruth: They're like a little antelope, about the size of a goat.

Elijah: Like a *dik-dik* but bigger. [*A dik-dik is another small antelope.*]

Ruth: We have five that live inside our [yard's] walls.

What pets do you have?

Ruth: We have a parrot. It's funny. It doesn't talk in English usually. It'll talk a little bit in Kirundi and a little bit of Swahili and a little bit of French. He doesn't talk a lot, but he talks some.

Lydia: He makes jokes.

Ruth: Sometimes, I can pet it on its head. Sometimes, it's just grumpy, and it'll just glare at me.

Lydia: We also have three lovebirds. They're about this big [*motions with her hand*], and they have blue and orange faces.

Ruth: It's cool how the birds use their beaks and feet as hands and feet.

Elijah: We also have monkeys. They're kind of pets. We have lots of guinea pigs and rabbits. The day before we left, there were seven new babies. And then, the next day, there were two more guinea pigs.

Lydia: I think we probably have more than nine babies, because the other mom had more babies. But we just heard the dad died.

What do you do for fun?

Ruth: We invented a game called sneakers, where there's one person who will sit at a certain spot and then the other people have to go from one area to another area without that person seeing them. Just the three of us play. But then, at Sunday school, there were a lot of games we could play—something like freeze tag. Another game was a little bit like dodgeball, with a bunch of people in a square and two people on the sides throwing balls, trying to hit you.

Do you have any MK friends in your area?

Ruth: No, but when we go to Bujumbura, there are our cousins [*the children of Jesse and Joy Johnson (MPH Day 1)*]. The two older kids are at school in Kenya, but Elliot—he's like 12—is there. Another family lives there, and they have a little girl who's four and another who's eight.

Elijah: And then Alec.

Ruth: A little boy who is one. [*This family is Jeremy and Sonja Bassett and their children, Reese, Maisie, and Alec (MPH Day 1)*]. So we play with them as well. But they are on the other side, when we go to the capital city. We see them maybe twice a month—or once.

What do you want to be when you're older?

Lydia: I want to be an author.

Elijah: I think I just want to be a dad.

Ruth: I know a long time ago, I said I wanted to be an artist, but I don't know now.

Where do you want to live?

Lydia: I think I want to live in Burundi.

Elijah: Um, I want to be in Burundi.

Ruth: I think I would either like to live in Burundi or Tanzania.

What about being an MK is difficult?

Ruth: You're kind of half and half in both places. You don't completely belong in either place.

What do you like about being an MK?

Elijah: Visiting people.

Ruth: You can live in two different places so you can know what two different countries are like, instead of just one. ■



From top (L–R): The siblings enjoy being outside; Lydia and Elijah feed their pet lovebirds inside the birdcage; The Johnson children celebrate their friend and Sunday school teacher, Deborah, at her high school graduation; Lydia and Ruth visit with their neighbor Belyse and her son; Lydia holds a baby goat.



A MIND AT *Perfect Peace*

BY HORATIUS BONAR

A MIND AT PERFECT PEACE WITH GOD,
OH! WHAT A WORD IS THIS!
A SINNER RECONCILED THROUGH BLOOD;
THIS, THIS INDEED IS PEACE.

BY NATURE AND BY PRACTICE FAR,
HOW VERY FAR FROM GOD!
YET NOW BY GRACE BROUGHT NEAR TO HIM,
THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS'S BLOOD.

SO NEAR, SO VERY NEAR TO GOD,
I CANNOT NEARER BE;
FOR IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON,
I AM AS NEAR AS HE.

SO DEAR, SO VERY DEAR TO GOD,
MORE DEAR I CANNOT BE;
THE LOVE WHEREWITH HE LOVES THE SON,
SUCH IS HIS LOVE TO ME.