

**Dear Friend, Encourager, Partner-in-Mission,**

**“God, as it turns out, does not require good people in order to do good work. He can and does work with us in whatever moral and spiritual condition He finds us. God...does some of His best work using the most unlikely people.”**

Eugene H. Peterson from “The Message; The Bible in Contemporary Language”.

*If there ever were 2 unlikely candidates for missions, it would have been us! Thirty years ago, we were not following the ways of Christ. Twenty years ago, we'd be one of the first in our congregation to find an excuse to sleep in on any Sunday morning that a missionary would be giving a presentation. We had no idea of the importance of “The Great Commission”. Ten years ago, we thought “missions” was only for “special people” who had to meet certain requirements in order to go abroad and do special things. We simply didn't see ourselves as being “fit to participate”.*

**In the Book of Ruth, the Author of “The Message” describes Ruth as an outsider who was not born into the faith and felt no natural part of it. But she found herself gathered into God's story and given a quiet and obscure part that proved critical to the way everything turned out.** *Ruth, a non-believer and a widow, devotes herself to taking care of her widowed mother-in-law and as a result, the love she showed her made a great impression on others. Not only is Naomi encouraged but Ruth ends up following God, re-marries, is well-taken care of, and gives birth to a son in the ancestral line of Jesus! The life of the widowed, impoverished, alien Ruth turns out to be essential for God's story. **No matter how ordinary we think our lives are, we count – every last one of us. And what we do counts.***

**In 2011,** *we spent 6 months here in Ecuador to made our first attempt to understand the language and the culture. We did not yet have a mission agency nor the support of our church. We were taking this one step at a time and were trusting God that “someday” He would use us for His work here. **Little did we know that God was already planning to “quietly” use us in the lives of 2 families.***

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**The first week of language school, Elisa, Sondra's professor, came to school announcing that her mother unexpectedly passed away the night before.** *Elisa was in shock, distressed, bewildered, and was now questioning the ways of God even more than she had already had been. After Elisa returned to work the following day, Sondra spent the next few months listening, comforting, and praying for and with Elisa. Before leaving Ecuador, she gave Elisa a NIV New Testament Bible in Spanish.*

**Last Sunday, we were invited by Elisa for a meal at the house of her relatives.** *In a private conversation with us, Elisa shared how difficult the following year was after her mother's death and our departure from Ecuador. Due to changes in government laws, she lost her job of 22 years, had to fight for her severance pay, pay off the lawyer, lost her place of residence, and moved herself and her son in with her sister's family. Also, she ended up with strained relations with the rest of her family because her former boss, her cousin, had pitted her family against her for fighting for legal work rights.*



**This night, tears filled Elisa's eyes as she thanked God for "sending her an angel" to be with her during the death of her mother. She thanked us for the love, support, listening ears, and prayers that we shared with her.** Elisa now has a new job working for the embassy, much better pay, and a new apartment. But she is still hurt by the distance created between herself and her family. She explained that she only has 3 friends - - - her son, her one sister, and her friend and co-worker, Rocio. We reminded her that she has 2 more friends and she is a part of our family. **Please pray for us as we plan to invite Elisa to our home for meals and for further conversations about the work and faithfulness of our Lord in her life.**

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**During those same few weeks in 2011, Rosita, another professor of Sondra's, received a phone call in the middle of class informing her that her husband, Patricio, had been wrongly accused of a serious crime and was immediately imprisoned.** Despite being found "innocent", twice, by the courts, Patricio spent several months in prison, lost and bewildered. Darrell decided to spend one of his class days accompanying Rosita during a visit to the prison to see her husband. Sondra spent the next few months listening to Rosita, comforting her, sharing Scripture with her from a NIV New Testament in Spanish which she gave her. Rosita read her own but said she could not understand most of what she read. Darrell gave another copy to Rosita to give to her husband. Patricio typically did not read the Bible but would soon begin reading it in prison. Patricio and Rosita had to borrow \$30,000 from relatives to pay off the lawyers and to pay the courts. As a result they had to sell their home, their car, and the majority of their possessions, and move themselves with their 2 children into the house of Patricio's mother. This family would soon need to lean on the words of God to persevere through the future.



**Two Sundays ago, Rosita and Patricio came to share a meal at our house.** They have paid off \$20,000 of the \$30,000 debt they owe to their relatives and they still live with Patricio's mother. Rosita makes approximately \$3 per hour teaching Spanish to foreigners. Patricio, was having difficulty finding a job because of his age and his imprisonment. He recently completed a course and has started a small business but does not have many clients yet. **One would expect them to be greatly discouraged but instead they shared with us that they thank God for the trials because they now have much more appreciation for the things of life. Patricio now speaks well of the Lord and believes that He has helped them and will continue to help them.** **Please pray for wisdom in how we can be supportive of this family and for our future invitation to share a meal with them at Rosita's mother's house in the near future.**

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**Somehow, we seem to get it in our heads, that we have little to contribute to God's Story.**

We seem to think that we need to have a theological degree, special training, or an official assignment to "make a difference".

But the Bible is filled with stories of ordinary men and women, who, with all their faults, weaknesses, and lack of formal education, were used by God to "make a difference" in the lives of others and in the story of His great plan for the salvation of the world.

**We pray that you be open to the ways  
that the Lord will reveal to you  
to be "available" to others,  
so that God can quietly use you  
- - - in His great story!**

***This year, these are some of the activities Reach Beyond is working to do:***

- *Conduct 40 mobile clinics in areas of Ecuador where basic medical and hygiene care is lacking.*
- *Complete 11 clean water projects in process in remote areas of Ecuador.*
- *Build latrines and provide basic hygiene training for people in remote regions in Nepal.*

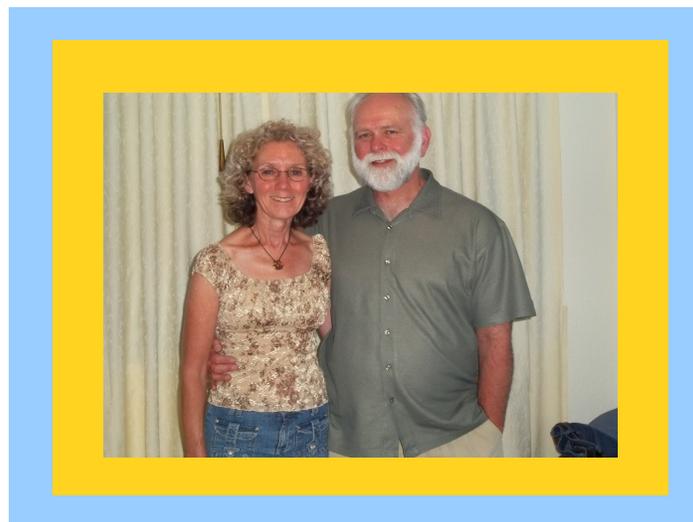
***Regardless of the activity or location all of these initiatives are conducted in Jesus' name with the goal of leading people to Christ by demonstrating His love in practical life-changing ways.***

***Join us in prayer and with financial support to help change lives and communities in Jesus' name!***



***Darrell and Sondra Holden***

***Serving with Ripe For Harvest, Partnering with Reach Beyond***



***in Ecuador, South America***



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