

What do you Treasure?

Bruce A. Howell,

General Director of Foreign Missions

Take the next exit off the fast track freeway of life. There is a rest area right ahead. Pull over there. I want to get your attention and cause you to think for a moment; to take a life inventory. It won't take long and you will be back on the road again. Have you come to a stop? Are you clear from any distractions? I have a question or two for you. What do you treasure? Who do you treasure? If you are like me, you have special people in your life that you treasure: a wife, children, or a friend. Of course, your relationship with Jesus Christ tops your list. Then, you move into sentimental treasures: a father's day homemade card from one of the kids, an encouraging, life-changing note from a mentor, a special picture, a watch passed down from your great-grandfather, and the list could go on.

We, in the Foreign Missions Division equally have treasures: souls! God has placed incalculable value in a soul, and so do we. To us, every soul counts. I rejoice in thousands that receive the Holy Ghost in a single crusade, or in one soul added in a field where a missionary or pastor has labored for years to reap a seemingly small harvest. Is it worth it? Certainly! I lament when souls walk to a crusade altar call, receive the Holy Ghost, and then are not grounded or disciplined in truth. Worse still is to have souls saved, rescued from hell, and no one to pastor them. Like John, the apostle said, I want to bear fruit, but I desperately long for that fruit to remain.

I heard Brother Elias Limones speak about former missionary, Sister Lucille Farmer. Brother Limones was born in Ecuador and his father was a pastor. He remembers going with his Dad to the airport to meet Sister Farmer. Years later, after Brother Limones moved to the United States, and was pastoring, he went to Oregon to see her. She directed him to pull out a cardboard box of pictures kept in her humble room. It was her box of treasures. They enjoyed looking through the pictures of his family when he was a child. Sister Farmer was poor and didn't have much more than a cardboard box of memories. But, oh what rich treasures she left behind in Ecuador. While in Quito, for the Spanish Summit, I saw over 1,500 ministers and wives representing Spanish-speaking nations in attendance. Just in one church in Quito, Brother Leonardo Becerra pastors some 2,000 saints.

Brother and Sister Coolbaugh have faithfully handled treasures at their Bible school in Thailand. They expect to have fifteen graduates in 2009. He writes, "It is thrilling to see how the Lord is planting witnesses to the Truth and Spirit throughout Thailand!"

The Sisco family does an outstanding job serving as principal of the Bible schools in Ghana. Each year they personally oversee the planting of a new church pastored by one of their graduates. They serve in the former Gold Coast and recently took a weekend trip to an area of the country close to gold mines. They were on a treasure seeking expedition. They were looking for things more valuable than mere gold. They visited three areas pastored by recent Bible school graduates. Rain started pouring before their arrival at one church. Electricity went out. Thank God for candles and the fire of the Spirit. Two were filled with the Holy Ghost.

Gerry and Darla McLean in populous Nigeria, West Africa recently reported twenty-four new students in their Bible school. Many of their students come from Trinitarian

fellowships and are hearing the Oneness message for the first time. They are diamonds in the rough and will be transformed into beautiful treasures for the kingdom. Eight immediately were baptized in Jesus' name upon receiving a revelation of the Mighty God in Christ. Brother McLean believes, and has proved it many times over, that by winning these ministerial students, in some cases we are also winning entire churches.

Richard and Margaret Carver, along with a faithful missionary team, are seeing phenomenal growth in Papua New Guinea. Just recently sixty-six students attended a Bible School leadership course. They have been sent out to reach the nation with the Gospel, and will return in one year to complete their course. We, in the Foreign Missions Division, aim at a balance between education and evangelism in our training programs. We want both the theory and the practical. We teach to win souls. We teach to send souls!

The Foreign Missions Division has embarked on a colossal effort to preserve our treasures and stay true to our apostolic doctrine and heritage. Through the new Global Association of Theological (GATS) and the Global University of Theological Studies we are able to equip potential ministers for effective service in God's kingdom. Our desire is to meet the needs of an advancing global society and to raise the standard of ministerial excellence throughout the world. Our association potentially brings together over 160 Bible schools globally. Lynden Shalm, Regional Director of Asia, described GATS as: "the most important project to impact the Foreign Missions Bible schools in at least three decades." Our endeavor provides an ever-improving, cutting-edge curriculum on several levels: certificate, diploma, associate degree, and bachelor degree. In the midst

of global diversity GATS fosters uniformity through basic Bible curriculum. Nearly one hundred courses are to be developed and translated into major world languages. An online and offline distance education program will reach and teach students in every nation of the world, speeding the spread of the Gospel. We also have a faculty education program educating our instructors in the fine art of training the next generation of apostolic treasures.

Brad Thompson, GATS Regional Representative for Central America/Caribbean is thrilled about the program's potential. He writes, "We are thankful for the newly established Global Association of Theological Studies (GATS). This has been a long awaited program in Foreign Missions, and it will ensure that students all over the world are receiving a quality Bible college training from well equipped instructors. GATS is taking our Bible schools to a much higher level. Some of the schools are well established, productive schools and others are just beginning. The beauty of GATS is that no matter where the school is in its development there is a level that will fit their need. The resources available through GATS are amazing. Whether it is for faculty education or new, dynamic course material, it is being developed by professionals connected with GATS. GATS personnel are also available to help countries develop workable programs. The Bible schools are the seedbed for future ministers and church leaders. When students come to our schools we are expecting life-changing results. Each teacher has a list of desired qualities posted throughout their syllabus and

understands that they need to focus on molding them into the lives of the students that God has placed in our responsibility. The Institute of Pentecostal Ministries in Guatemala has become the heart of the church in our nation. It has had been one of the main factors in the stability, development and consistent growth that the UPC of Guatemala has been experiencing for many years. We offer a wide range of training programs designed to give all our ministers and church leaders the opportunity for solid training. Recently, we celebrated the 16th Graduation from the Bible School in Guatemala. There were **thirty graduates** from our ministerial training program. This represents our largest graduation class. We had ten graduates from our new three-year program among the Indian people. The excitement is very high in Guatemala and the other Central American countries concerning the Global Association of Theological Studies (GATS). It looks like we will pass the three hundred mark for students in 2009 in our country alone! We have 168 students in our night class program here in the capital. In the first year alone there are seventy-seven students beginning their training for ministry. We divided the class in half and formed two first year classes. I am very impressed with the students. The night classes are primarily geared for church leaders, but we do have pastors, assistant pastors and pastor's wives in the program. You would not believe the excitement in the air at the Bible School in Guatemala. Our forty-three teachers and approximately three hundred students are electrified! It's a new era for the school! Receiving GATS approval and the teachers beginning the faculty

education program has already taken us to a new level and the expectations are high.” We are anticipating amazing growth in the near future and have earmarked this as “The Year of Multiplication.”

Check out all of the UPCI’s largest overseas works: Philippines, India, Pakistan, Madagascar, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, (the list could go on and on) and you will find a common denominator. Each revival, growth-oriented field has a strong Bible school program. For example, over forty-four years ago when a young couple, Bennie and Theresa DeMerchant arrived in the city of Manaus, and the Amazon Basin, there was not one apostolic believer. Not one person had been baptized in Jesus’ name. Today, there are over 650 churches there, and they now have over thirty-five Bible schools and over 1,000 students studying at any given time.

The UPCI is considered to be one of the fastest growing churches. Why? It is because we treasure winning souls and training ministers. What do you treasure?