

# world vision

NOVEMBER 1978



## LATIN AMERICA

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and Need



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## world vision®

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**We sometimes wonder** about reporting, month after month, the many disasters taking place in the world. This has been a year for tragedies. There was drought again in some of the Sahel countries of Africa; homeless refugees in the Shaba Province of Zaire; Vietnamese boat people suffering and being ignored on the high seas; cyclones and flooding in India, and an earthquake in Costa Rica, to mention only a few.

We have not reported in *World Vision* all of the year's disasters. But it probably seems that way. Perhaps we should be more positive, we've thought to ourselves, and develop a magazine that builds self-esteem. Maybe we should de-emphasize missions and provide some fiction and Bible studies, or even some articles for children. Perhaps, but we cannot.

There are many parts of the Body of Christ, and each part has its place and responsibility to carry out in behalf of the others. We view our role as being an advocate for the suffering and hurting people of the Third World. We think we perform our part responsibly and, therefore, consider the role too important to neglect, even for one issue.

**We welcome the Rev. David Olson** of Waukegan, Illinois, to our staff as Editor of *World Vision*. Months of searching for the person God wanted to give us have brought a dear brother whose editorial background and magazine experience far surpass our requirements.

David is a graduate of Northern Baptist Theological College and Seminary and has been associated with the Harvest Publications Division of the Baptist General Conference for nearly

30 years. As the editor of that denomination's Christian education publications, he has been editor of more than a dozen periodicals and books for adults, youth and children. He has also written for Tyndale House Publishers, Scripture Press, *Christianity Today*, *Eternity* and others.







# LATIN AMERICA:

**"NATIONS, CULTURES, ARTS, CIVILIZATION—THESE ARE MORTAL, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat." So remarked C. S. Lewis in his sermon on the immortality of the individual.**

The great pre-Columbian civilizations of the Americas—the Maya, Aztecs and Incas—are gone. Ruined pyramids and palaces of the Maya lie asleep in a Guatemalan rainforest. Similar remnants of stupendous architecture near Mexico City attest to the past glory of the Aztecs. Thousands of miles of expertly-engineered roads extending the length of the Andes from Colombia to Argentina remain after their builders and travelers, the Incas, have vanished.

Though Latin America's past is not all splendor, the worshipers of the sun have left ample proof of their faded grandeur: the sophisticated astronomy of the Maya (one of their observatories still stands today), the perfected irrigation system of the Incas, the Aztec gold. Archaeologists have unearthed many thousands of artifacts including painted vases, jade carvings, gold jewelry, and all sorts of sculpture and hieroglyphs that tell us about the arts, music, games, systems of law, religions and governments that once flourished. These civilizations are gone.

But the people remain.

Today the descendants of these "lost" civilizations are found still speaking the old languages and practicing old rituals. Over the past five centuries many have become assimilated into the imported European (especially Spanish) culture, but others retain an Indian identity that is to them

a source of pride and meaning. Mayan descendants in the southern tip of Mexico and Guatemala still cherish ancient beliefs. They grow and prepare corn in a centuries-old manner. Peruvian farmers use foot-plows common to their Incan forefathers, and even women's hairdos are unchanged.

While there is splendor, there is also need. Many of the modern Maya, Aztecs and Incas are beset by troubles on all sides. This month's magazine includes stories about what is being done to help these and other peoples of Latin America become whole—physically and spiritually.

From Cuzco, Peru, once the capital of the Inca empire, comes a story about today's Incas, the Quechua, who are being helped to survive in a hostile environment. There is a report on how the highland Maya in Guatemala are getting help, and a piece that describes the spiritual needs of today's Aztecs. Also in this issue is a report on a recent gathering of Mayan church leaders in Guatemala, and an article about an unusual project among Haiti's poor.

"But it is immortals," continued Lewis, "whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors." As Christians continue to labor in Latin America to meet the needs of those who have been snubbed, exploited or ignored, the people will rise—God willing—to a new splendor in Christ which far surpasses that of mortal civilizations.

## Splendor and Need







(left) Area coordinator Maria Grajeda trains teachers for the program. (lower right) A Quechua literacy primer. (bottom) Some members of a Quechua congregation of the Peruvian Evangelical Church.



It was the usual monthly committee meeting. . . .

"Here's another request to begin a new class," said Felipe, the secretary.

"Who has signed it?" asked Eduardo who was in the chair.

"Well, let's see. One, two, three . . . twenty-two, *twenty-three* thumbprints!" was the reply.

Twenty-three thumbprints. One letter. The thumbs belong to Quechua people, and that's the way they do things—together. The Quechua of southern Peru are not loners, not isolated beings. They live in a family, belong to their people, are part of the clan. They are related to one another, giving and receiving, helping and being helped, sharing life's problems.

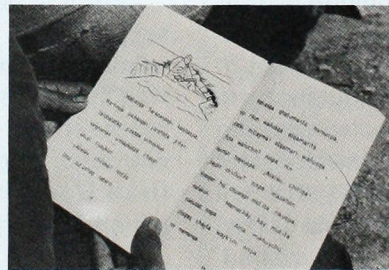
Twenty-three thumbprints,

each one unique. Behind each is an individual proclaiming his personhood and being and need. Each print symbolizes that same need: "I cannot write my name. I cannot read. Help me! Help us!"

Yet the Quechua people have a great literature, an *oral* literature. They are a pre-literate people with tremendous memories. They tell exciting legends of their forefathers. They recount with relish the exploits of their culture-heroes. They puzzle over intricate riddles. They cringe in fear at tales of disembodied spirits who steal the soul.

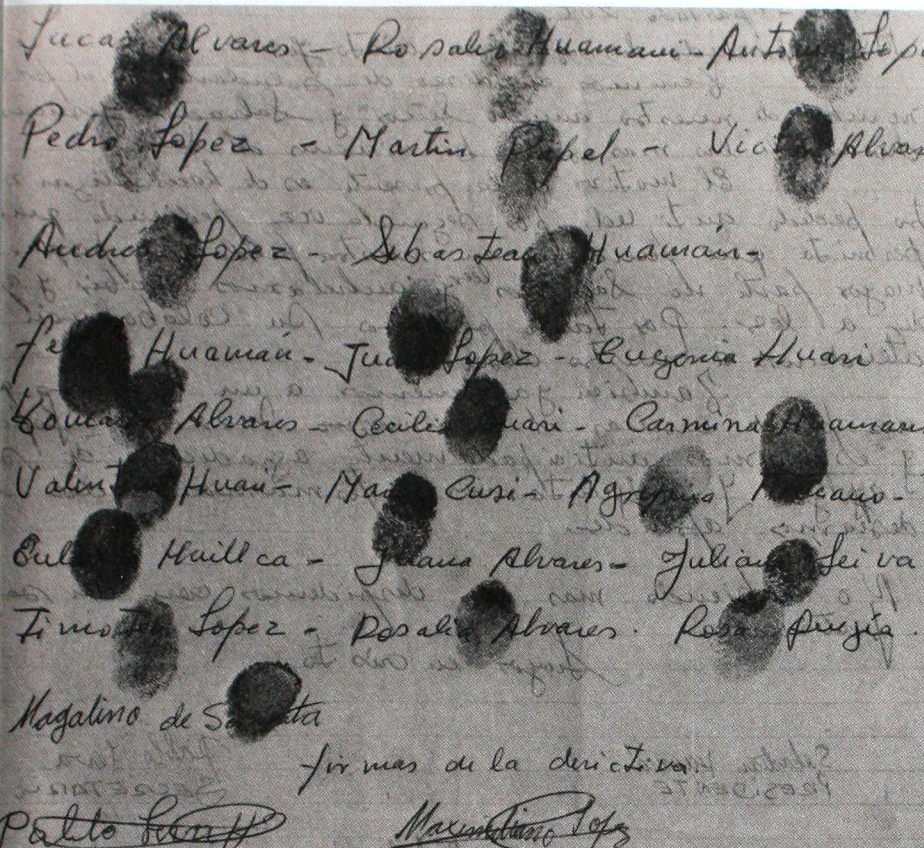
Their ancestors, the Incas, could not write, either. Yet they built one of the greatest empires the world has known, complete with social security. There was no need of thumbprints then. Thumbs yes, for fingers and thumbs were essential in tying knots. The Incas communicated with an elaborate series of knotted strings, the "quipu." With these they sent and received messages, and even did the inventory of the empire!

Today's Quechua are an agricultural people. For them the annual cycle of seedtime and harvest asks no skill of deciphering strange squiggles on a page. It asks only the ability to read the sky—the wind, the clouds and the rain. The daily task of spinning and weaving requires no signature. Yet the intricate patterns "written" into their skillfully-woven ponchos are so distinctive that the wearer's home village can be read at a glance from the design. The



Bill Mitchell is coordinator and exegete for the United Bible Societies' project of translating the Old Testament into Cuzco Quechua. His wife, Alice, is involved in the Quechua literacy program.





# Twenty-Three Thumbprints

by Bill Mitchell

problems of life need no printed form to be filled for help, but instead demand that the sufferer read the omens in the coca leaves.

No one has ever required them to read and write. Even the church they have known in the four centuries since the Spanish Conquest has been more interested in rite than write, and in rote than wrote.

But today "progress" has un-

fitted these illiterate Quechua people for life in their developing country. They are the disadvantaged. Ruthless middlemen exploit them in their marketing. They find themselves at the mercy of paid scribes, who fill up the endless forms with which bureaucracy plies them. They cannot participate in elections, for illiterates are denied the vote. Hemmed in by hostile spirits, oppressed by the omens, they cannot even turn to the liberating Word of God.

The twenty-three thumbprints

speak for their community: "Please set up a literacy class in our village. Most of us cannot read, but we are eager to learn. . . ." They speak, too, for all their people—some 500,000 Quechua-speaking people in the department of Cuzco alone. In the south of Peru, 61 percent of those between the ages of 15 and 39 cannot read or write.

**T**his community has heard of the Quechua literacy program of the Peruvian Evangelical Church, a program funded by World Vision. Following the success of the pilot project under the leadership of Hilda Briscoe, Chinalborn British missionary with 30 years experience in Peru, the program has expanded rapidly this year and is now approved by the Ministry of Education. From the high, treeless Andean plain 14,000 feet above sea level, to hot, sticky jungle valleys on the eastern slopes of the Andes, some 50 literacy teachers struggle to impart basic reading and writing skills.

Like all groups who want to be taught, the twenty-three thumbprinters have found a prospective teacher from their own community. Such teachers have at least five years of primary education and will be trained by one of the area coordinators.

News travels fast in these rugged mountains, and many other communities now want help.

These twenty-three thumbprints will soon be obsolete, but the people will not. Meanwhile, other thumbprints will call for help to Eduardo, Felipe, Hilda—and us.

Simple, smudged eloquence!





# A Promising Harvest for the Highland Maya

by Kitty Herriot

Last year was difficult for Abel Morguin and his wife, Clara. He and his family ran short of food; there was hunger, there was sickness, and Abel had to make several trips to the coastal tropical region of western Guatemala to earn a little extra money on the plantations.

This year is different. His corn is tall and green. He has a huge compost pile that has already provided fertilizer for his field.

His wife has a beautiful vegetable garden, they have healthy rabbits to eat, and the smoke of the cooking fire no longer fills the house as Clara is now using a special mud stove. They are practicing better hygiene and nutrition.

Why the change?

Abel's family is one of the first to benefit from a project in which a group of highland Maya, the Mam Indians, are learning

better ways to grow food than they've ever known before. Where serious deforestation has denuded the steep mountainsides, and centuries of rains have washed the topsoil away, Mam farmers are gaining new technical knowledge in a promising and fascinating experiment.

When two Presbyterian missionaries, David Scotchmer and Charles Diebold, initiated the Mam Agricultural Project two years ago with World Vision assistance, it was not a new idea. It had been apparent for years that the highland Maya needed help in getting more yield from their limited land. They live in the mountains of western Guatemala at elevations of 7800 to 9000 feet. The rapidly expanding population and repeated subdivision of land by inheritance have given each farmer a very small plot to work with, and even this is often on a slope. Soil erosion on the slopes has made farming difficult in an area that would otherwise be very productive.

The farming problem has taken its toll on the people. Although nutrition has improved in recent years, the small stature of both the people and their livestock shows them to be malnourished—lacking in complete protein, vitamin A and iron.

Aware of this need, the Mam Evangelical Center had for several years tried to demon-

*Kitty Herriot is a development consultant who works with World Vision in Latin America. She lives in Guatemala.*



Increased yield from cornfields such as Abel's (above) promises a brighter future for this new generation of Maya.





strate better agricultural techniques to the farmers. But the ideas presented were not catching on. The farmers observed that anything was possible as a demonstration, but certainly impossible for them!

So, concluded Diebold and Scotchmier, what must happen was that several Mams would have to take the risk of experimenting on their own land with their own crops, so that neighbors could "peek over the fence" and observe the results. These men would become the promoters or farm leaders, and they would teach first by example. Once the new techniques (especially terracing and fertilizing) were established, each of the four leaders would involve four neighbors in the process, and they in turn would teach others.

On a recent visit to the area, a World Vision project supervisor was visiting farmers with the

four farm leaders. They discovered a neighbor of one of the leaders quietly and rather secretly copying the leader's farming techniques. The supervisor and the rest stopped to investigate. When they came near, the man was somewhat embarrassed to be faced with his mentors. He had put tremendous effort into building his first two terraces as a "trial" technique, he explained. He was experimenting, but with no illusions, because—as many



*Farmer shows his first two terraces to project leaders.*

other Indians believe—he could really not imagine that he would gain in the end. Terracing seemed like a terrible waste of land. But he was trying to find out for himself whether the harvest results could be better than with traditional farming. All joined in and broke land together for a while.

As the program continues to expand, and the leaders' experience and sensitivity increase, they are beginning to see other needs they and their neighbors have, and are pondering the solutions.

The amazing tenacity of the highland Maya, combined with opportunity and love, may someday even transform the mountain farming system itself, where 75 percent of the population live on 25 percent of the land. But thanks to the Mam project, families like Abei and Clara's don't have to wait until then to get a new start on life.



## UNREACHED PEOPLES

### Christianity, Aztec-style

Montezuma's descendants still live and thrive. Conquered and subdued in the sixteenth century, the Aztecs and other Nahuatl-speaking groups gave their name and character to a modern nation.

Known as "los Mexicanos," the 1.25 million descendants of the Aztec nation are spread throughout the towns and villages of central Mexico. Some are very traditional, living and farming much as the Aztecs did centuries ago. Some never speak Spanish. Others would startle Montezuma, driving their Mercedes, decked out in the latest Western fashions.

White Catholic churches dominate the central plazas of Aztec villages, mute testimony to the conquest of body and soul by the Spanish. The modern Aztecs are "Christian." But Montezuma breathed ancient Aztec spirits and ideas into their Christianity.

Evil eyes, shamans to deal with witchcraft and sickness, saints to please with costly fiestas and pilgrimages—it all adds up to the conquest of the Christian faith by Aztec ways of dealing with an unpredictable and unsympathetic world. A cult has grown up about the Virgin of Guadalupe. She is considered the mother of all "Mexicanos" and is called Tonantzin, the ancient Aztec earth and moon goddess.

The mixture of Christian and

non-Christian elements makes evangelization difficult. Three hundred years of history say it is impossible. But God is alive and Jesus Christ is Lord, and He will be honored as the church faithfully and compassionately shares the Good News.

You can have a part in seeing these modern Aztecs come to know Christ in a personal way. So that you may understand them, pray for them and love them, World Vision's MARC Division has prepared a brief prayer folder that includes data from the Unreached Peoples Program. This is available to you for the asking. You will also receive a list of 200 other unreached peoples about whom you may request additional information.







They told me I am worth nothing, that my people and my language are of no value. For 400 years the Spanish have told us that the Indians of Guatemala are a stumbling-block to the country's growth." A quiet fire burns in Isaac's eyes as he speaks. "I don't believe that any more. We are all the same before God. Only He can give us value."

Isaac's grey hair is thinning now. He walks with the certainty of a poor man rich in the things of God. Isaac is a Quiché, a descendant of Tecun Uman, the warrior-king defeated by the ravaging Spanish explorer Pedro Alvarado in 1524. As an itinerant pastor, Isaac serves several small congregations scattered among the coffee plantations that dot Guatemala's Pacific slope.

Isaac and 140 other Mayan church leaders gathered in August of this year for Guatemala's Second Evangelical Indian Congress. Eight language groups and six denominations were represented at the three-day event held at the Quiché Bible Institute in San Cristobal, Totonicapan.

"I am not a learned man," said Isaac, his words filled with music but chopped short in the Quiché style. "But at the Indian Congress we talked seriously about our problems. We discussed each theme thoroughly in Quiché. It was good to think hard and share with other people who have the same prob-

lems I do. Problems like how to teach people to be better disciples or how to get involved in the community effectively."

Mayan church leaders bear heavy responsibilities in ministering to their people. Poverty is a way of life for most Maya. Average daily pay for agricultural workers is about \$1. Since only two percent of Guatemala's people own almost 80 percent of the cultivatable land, few Indians have enough room to grow all their own food. Some staples must be bought at the market. Beans now cost 30-40 cents a pound. Rice costs about 20 cents a pound. Meat, except for occasional home-grown chicken or pork, is out of the question. Life expectancy is 53 years, but half of all deaths in Guatemala are of children under five. The latest data indicates that 81 percent of Guatemala's children suffer from malnutrition.

All this means that people like Isaac, as a matter of survival, must minister to physical as well as spiritual needs. Isaac is a trained health promoter. The injections he can give have sometimes been a matter of life and death to his parishioners. Churches must often include agriculture courses, literacy classes and nutrition training in their weekly schedules.

At the same time, Mayan church leaders bear a spiritual responsibility for which they desperately need more theological training and indigenous literature. What they want is not the philosophical meanderings of European theologians, but simple techniques on how to study the Bible and apply it to their daily lives.

The goal of the Evangelical Indian Congress, according to Domingo Guitz, newly elected head of the next congress, is to "build bridges between the numerous groups of Mayan Christians." Almost four million of Guatemala's six million people are Maya. Although their blood has often mixed with the Latins' in the course of four centuries, the Maya retain their own languages, dress and distinctive customs. But in Guatemala alone, the Mayan culture is now fragmented into 23 different tribes, each speaking a language as different from the others as English is from German.

Despite their differences," said Guitz, "all these tribes have a common heritage and common problems. Since we have a Congress only about once every 18 months, we're also thinking about publishing some kind of simple magazine to allow Indian church workers and lay leaders to exchange ideas and share news items. But all of that is still just a dream. What we know for sure is that the Evangelical Indian Congress is meeting a very special need. We feel God wants us to keep meeting that need."



## COMMON HERITAGE, COMMON PROBLEMS

by Dennis A. Smith

*Dennis A. Smith is a fraternal worker for the United Presbyterian Church. He has been assigned by the Guatemalan Presbyterian Church to work in media development and interpersonal communications.*





Two hundred years ago, majestic pine trees covered the mountains on the island of Haiti. Hardwoods blanketed the plains. In fact, the small Caribbean island used to be called "the mahogany queen." Lush forests and productive soil made Haiti the richest of the French colonies.

Over the decades, the trees were cut down—the hardwoods for export, the others to make room for farming and to turn into cooking charcoal. Trees seemed an inexhaustible resource. Nobody could have known about the long-range consequences.

Now, the trees are gone, and two centuries of erosion have stripped Haiti of her most

valuable resource—the topsoil.

Today, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and one of the 10 poorest in the world.

This environmental disaster has produced an enormous human tragedy as well. Food production in the mountain areas is never more than at bare subsistence level—and most often below that. The average rural family will never see more than \$40 or \$50 a year.

Because of their terrible poverty and inadequate diet, 100 percent of the children in rural Haiti suffer from malnutrition in some degree. An estimated 30 percent of them suffer third-degree malnutrition, which in early life will inevitably produce brain damage.

Parents often use stern mea-

## TREES and TOPSOIL

sure to teach their children to live with hardship and hunger. Though it seems severe, it is really an act of tough and realistic love.

A missionary told the story of a young child brought into their hospital badly burned. She was crying in great pain. The missionary put a piece of bread in the child's hand and tried to console her. The mother took the bread away, saying, "No, she may not have it now. She must learn to support hunger."

It was not an act of cruelty; that mother knew that "supporting hunger" must be learned at an early age in Haiti.

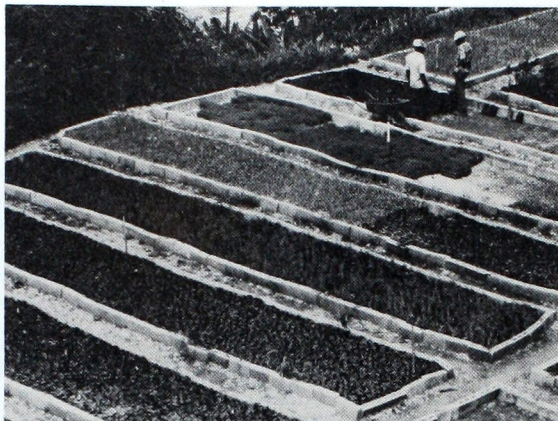
The people have many ways of learning to cope with hunger. They walk around with pieces of rock salt under their tongues because this softens the sharp bite of hunger pangs. At night the children are told to lie on their stomachs because this will make the pains of hunger go away. In the morning, women put on what they call their "hunger cloths" which they can tighten throughout the day as the pains stab at their stomachs.

Because of our partnership with you, World Vision is meeting some of these people's

*Reforestation has begun on these eroded hillsides near Fermathe, Haiti.*







Nursery where thousands of pine and eucalyptus seedlings are grown.

now they see the value of trees. They know this is not just some beautification project. The pine and eucalyptus trees we are planting can stop the deadly erosion and bring back to this impoverished island its life-sustaining topsoil. More than anyone, the people of Haiti know how critical this is. Ninety percent of them live on this soil; their very lives depend on it. We want to bring it back, not only for this generation, but especially for those to come.


immediate needs as quickly as possible with food supplements, nutrition training, tools and seed.

But the Baptist Mission in Haiti is planning for the people's

future and we're committed to helping them.

It's an exciting project: reforestation of the island of Haiti! We're putting back the trees taken down in ignorance. And the people are excited because

Scientists agree that the island can recover its richness in a relatively short time—if we can stop the erosion. The trees we are planting can do just that.

We're taking the long look, and planting for tomorrow. 

## WORLD VISION IN LATIN AMERICA

### CHILDCARE

Sponsorship of approximately 50,000 needy children in Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Uruguay.

### 1979 COST

\$6,800,000

### RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

**Bolivia:** Study of general development problems and helping Aymara Indians establish a preventive health program.

3,000

**Brazil:** The second year of a five-year community development program for 1200 rural people.

100,000

**Chile:** The second year of a four-year project with the Mapuche Indians aimed at developing self-reliance.

29,000

**Colombia:** Three projects involving agricultural development, animal husbandry, education, nutrition, health care and family planning.

59,000

**Dominican Republic:** The last of a

two-year project drilling 10 wells. 24,000

**El Salvador:** Two three-year projects involving the treatment of malnourished children and training of students in vocations.

20,000

**Guatemala:** Eleven projects ranging from the resettlement of homeless families and promoting literacy among the Mam Indians to agricultural, water development and health programs.

149,000

**Haiti:** Ten projects including well digging, literacy, nutritional assistance, immunizations against TB, reforestation, health education and family planning.

550,000

**Honduras:** Continued refugee assistance and providing fresh water and agricultural training.

10,000

**Peru:** The second year of a three-year literacy program.

39,000

### UNCOMMITTED FUNDS

For emergency relief and development projects, evangelism and Christian leadership enhancement.

800,000

TOTAL \$8,583,000





## PERSONALITY PROFILE

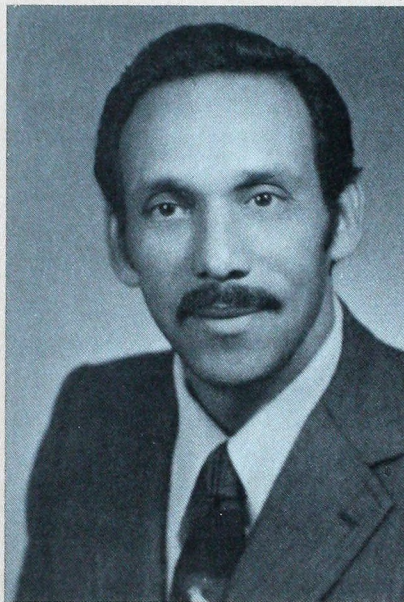
# Miguel Suazo: Humility and Courage

by Barbara Weisbrod

**S**ome people say that God prepares us to do certain tasks. Others say He creatively uses *our* preparations to further His work. In either case, Miguel Suazo's life is an example of how God uses simple, humble experiences to mold a man into a visionary, courageous leader.

A man not only of Guatemala, but of her Latin American neighbors as well, Miguel was born in La Paz, Honduras, of poor parents. He was orphaned at the age of five when his mother died and his father was exiled to Nicaragua. Miguel vividly remembers being sent, all alone, "like a package," to live with an older sister, via several intermediaries living in villages along the way. When asked if he had been afraid, he smiled and said, "No, I trusted everyone I came into contact with. It was my first trip out of my village, and a great adventure."

Upon Miguel's sixth-grade graduation he was given an



unusual gift: a chance to accompany Central American missionary Lloyd Olson on a 15-day trip through several villages. At each stop, Miguel was given a table, Bibles and the responsibility to sell those Bibles and other Christian literature.

Today, Miguel is still "selling" Bibles and literature—as administrator of the American Bible Society in Guatemala. But to view him as just a salesman is to ignore the depth of the man—depth gained through three years of study at the Central American Mission seminary in Guatemala, seven

years as an advisor to Evangelism In Depth in Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Peru, and 11 years as a pastor in both rural and urban churches in Guatemala and Honduras.

In Miguel's first pastorate he was an itinerant preacher in charge of seven far-flung rural congregations. For his first month these churches, totaling 400 members, paid him \$7. In the second month it was \$14, and in the third it was \$21, along with a mule to make the trip over the precarious mountain trails tying the villages together. The skills one now sees in his work were then beginning to blossom.

**T**hey now enable Miguel to facilitate church growth in many ways: through evangelism, through meeting needs of the whole person with the living presence of Jesus Christ, through a passionate interest in literacy and through his unusual ability to deal with all denominational leaders on an equal basis.

Miguel has also worked with World Vision of Guatemala in a number of ways that range from serving as a member of the Disaster Preparedness Committee to providing an inspirational message at a recent staff retreat. In that message and in a subsequent interview, he stressed the need for courageous leadership in the church in Latin America. "Future problems can be met," he said, "but only with men and women who are willing to sacrifice, and who will be strong in the face of corruption, divisiveness and political unrest. Our church is prospering and has a message the people need to hear."



*Barbara Weisbrod is the wife of Mr. Don Weisbrod, World Vision field director in Guatemala.*





# Dear Juan, Letters of Love Dear Sponsor

by Esther Day Topliff

**E**agerly I tore open the envelope. Inside was a folder with the picture and description of my "adopted child" in Guatemala.

Long and lovingly I looked at the face of handsome little Juan, brown-skinned with black hair, large dark eyes and a happy grin. He was one of six children. His mother had deserted them, and his father, a poor farm laborer, had brought him to the World Vision-sponsored school.

Juan was the fifth child I had the privilege of sponsoring, and I took this needy little one into my heart, as I had the others. I did not dream just how desperately he would need concern and prayers. Nor did I anticipate the miraculous way God would answer.

I wrote to Juan:

How happy I am that I can be your sponsor. What a

fine looking boy you are. Your picture is on my dresser where I can see you every day.

I am praying for you and your family, that God will bless you and give you everything you need. Do you know Jesus? He loves you very much.

His answers began to come, and I treasured every little note, carefully written in Spanish in his own handwriting. Translations accompanied them. One of the first read:

It is a pleasure to send you greetings and hope that you are well and happy. I help to work on the farm in the country. We lived in Tecpan but we had to move to another village. I still study in the same school. My father travels a lot because of his work.

This tender note brought special joy to me, as I read it over and over:

Thank you so much for the letter and your picture and the birthday card. I am in school from January until October. I am in the first grade. I live with my father, two brothers and three sisters. My parents are separated. I walk one hour to get to school as we live in a village.

Last year I asked Jesus into my heart at the little

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*Esther Day Topliff, a retired elementary teacher, is a freelance writer and works as a foster grandparent at Fairview State Hospital for the Developmentally Disabled. She lives in Santa Ana, California.*





church in the village. I told my ideas to a lady and she is writing my letter in English.

Sometimes he enclosed carefully crayoned pictures—a vase of daisies or a quaint scene of his homeland.

How grateful I was that he knew Jesus as his Savior, and that he was in a school where he could experience the love and teaching of the Lord through Christian teachers.

When his annual Progress Report arrived, I was proud to see that it not only showed very fine progress in his school subjects, but also described his good personality traits, health, Christian instruction, chores and activities. With the report was his letter, neatly printed in English this time:

I send you loving greetings and desire with all of my heart the Lord will bless you. I am sending you my Progress Report. I appreciate all you have done for my welfare. With love, Juan.

The love and appreciation of my child who had known such need touched me deeply. I prayed for him, and that I might take the World Vision tour to Guatemala to see him.

**T**hen sudden tragedy shattered the life of my little one, and the lives of countless victims in Guatemala.

The terrible earthquake struck in February of 1976. I was heartsick as I heard the news. The middle of the night. No warning. In just 39 seconds 22,000 people lost their lives and some 76,000 were injured. More than a million were left homeless.

In fervent prayer I lifted Juan and his family to God, asking that His arms would be around them to protect and comfort them in this terrifying time.

In reply to my letter to World Vision, I was told they had been unable to contact their workers there. I would be notified as soon as they had news of Juan's welfare.

As days, then weeks, dragged by, reports of the devastation and deaths were overwhelming.

"O, Lord, you love him even more than I do," I cried. "Take good care of little Juan and his family."

And then, at last, in April the answer came. With great rejoicing I read the letter from Dr. Edmund Janss, director of Childcare Ministries.

We are happy to report to you concerning your child in Guatemala. You will be pleased to know that, thanks to the Lord's protecting hand, 98 percent of our children are now registered as safe and sound. . . . Your child is safe for which we are grateful.

Then, in May, the letter I longed for most ar-

rived! With tears in my eyes, I read Juan's precious note:

Thanks to God, I was not hurt in the earthquake. No one in my family died. My aunts and uncles are fine. My grandfather died and also my neighbor. I am a Christian and my father also. We are fine. My cousins are fine. Juan.

The following note was added by a worker:

Juan's house fell and it is a wonderful thing that not one in his family died, because so many died in his village (more than 3000 persons) and the town was 100 percent destroyed. It is now only dirt and dust and is being cleared by tractors. The people are living in temporary housing. School began again in April in lean-to rooms. Please pray for Juan's village and the school.

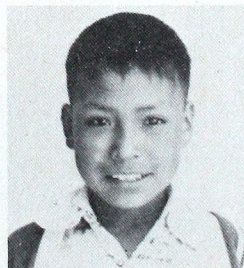
"Praise God, Praise God! Thank you, Lord, for answering our prayers." The words poured from my grateful heart. I hurried to reply.

My very dear Juan:

How I thank our Heavenly Father for keeping you and your family safe. I am so sorry your home was destroyed, but I know He will help you get another one.

I am praying for the people of your village, and for your school, and I know God will give you a new school too. So we will just trust Him, won't we? I am very happy that you and your father are Christians. Jesus lives in my heart, too, and so that makes us very close.

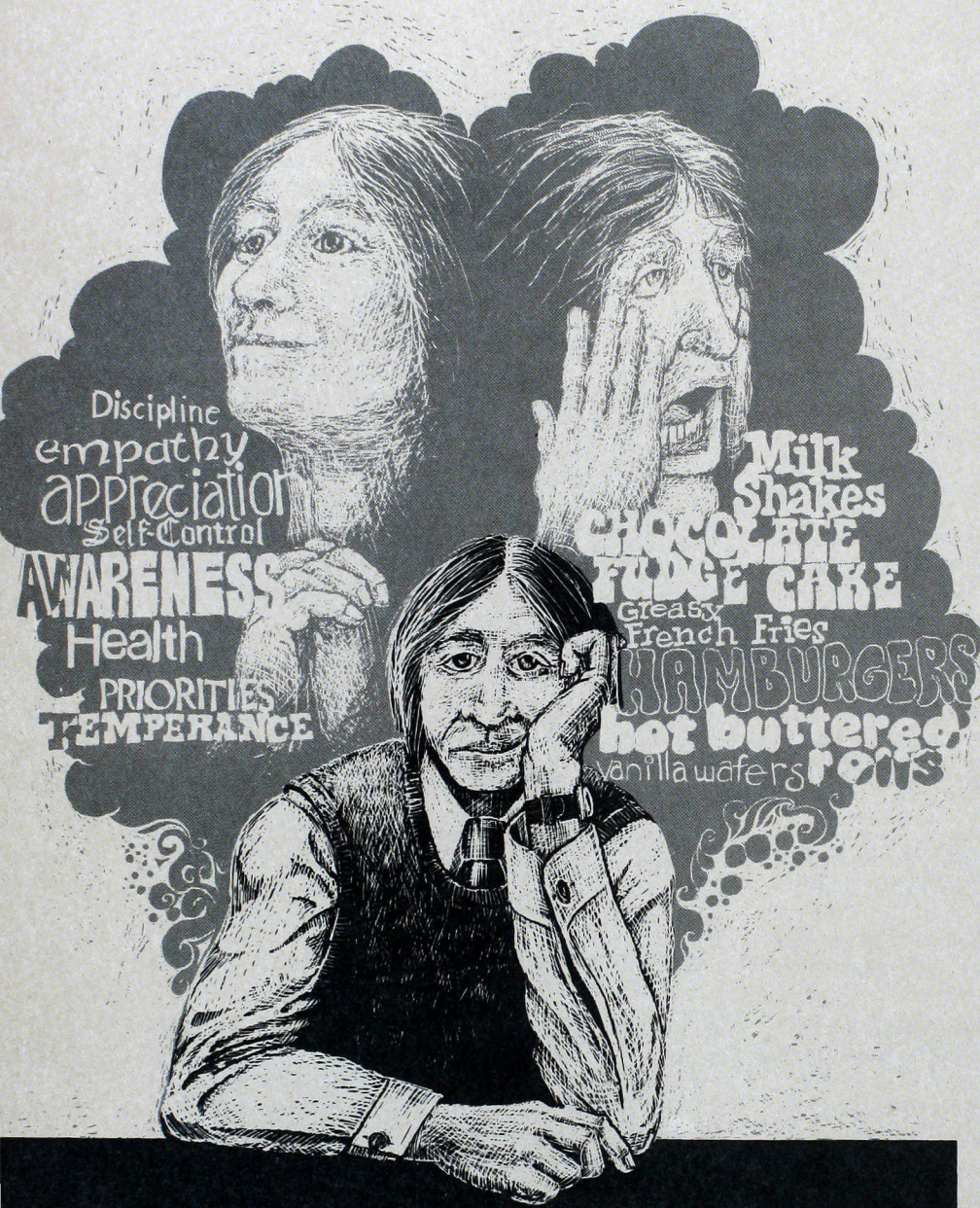
Some time later I learned that Juan and his family had moved away. But my love and prayers went with him.



*Would you like to enter into a special, one-to-one relationship with a needy child? You can sponsor a child for \$15 a month. While becoming a welcomed friend, you will also be providing your child with food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education and spiritual guidance.*

*Please see the instructions on the business reply envelope between pages 12 and 13.*





**Y**esterday I fasted. I hated it. It was 20 degrees and gray. I was cold, hungry and pouting. I stopped at a long red light beside Dunkin' Donuts. I resented people seated on pink-cushioned stools, pressing hot, white-porcelain cups against their lips and sucking in streams of creamed coffee. I watched them rip chunks of chocolate-glazed doughnuts between their teeth and lick sugar flakes from their fingers. I resented that they were warm and full.

I fast each Monday. I have a love/hate affair with it. But I stick with it for six reasons:

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## My Love/Hate Affair with Fasting

by Neil Gallagher

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**One**, I'm addicted to food. Once I start eating, I don't want to stop. A drug addict thinks only of the next fix, the alcoholic, of the next drink. When I eat, stacking my stomach with pizza, smashing a hamburger between my teeth, or bathing my tongue with strawberry shakes, I want to keep going. I'm tempted to think not of work or

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*Neil Gallagher is a freelance writer living in East Providence, Rhode Island.*



service, but of food, food, food.

Suppertime: "More potatoes?"

"Yuh, okay, Sweetie. . . and, uh, while you're there put a little more gravy on it." (Well, I *have* to eat seconds; it makes my wife feel good.)

9 P.M.: "Uh, Sweetie, while you're in the kitchen, bring me out some sherbet please." (Well, *everyone* snacks at night.)

Along with sherbet, I plunge my fist in a vanilla-wafer box. (Can't eat sherbet by itself, you know.)

This is followed by an apple, a sandwich, a glass of milk or something else "so that a sweet taste won't stay in the mouth."

Once I start shoveling forkfuls of food and crunching snacks, I will not stop. I keep on shoveling and crunching, regardless of time, weight, or expenses. And I always find excuses to deceive myself.

Fasting on Mondays kicks me in the slammer, protecting me from food. It's a slap in the face, stinging all week. I'm no longer driven to food. I'm in control of it, not vice versa.

**Two**, I don't have a weight problem, and I don't intend to wait until I have one to say no to food. Fasting screams at me: Your body is a divine building, a home for God's Spirit.

Teaching me to be a good housekeeper, fasting shoves me on the track. Not just on Mondays, but all week.

Fasting reminds me that it's dumb to wait until belly swims over belt before I discipline my body. It reminds me that if I wait to exercise until I am a flabby 40-year-old, I risk straining a weak heart muscle.

**Three**, fasting rearranges my priorities.

We eat to stay alive and healthy. I know that now. I didn't before.

I used to arrange my schedule around: (1) breakfast, (2) coffee

and doughnuts at 10, (3) lunch at 12, and (4) big supper at 6 (I used to spend more time eating at night than reading to the kids). Very subtly—almost unconsciously—I arranged my schedule to meet someone at lunchtime who'd probably suggest lunching while talking (it didn't matter who paid for it as long as I got the chance to eat). I arranged to visit people at home not always on the basis of their needs, but on the basis of who'd most likely feed me cake and coffee.

My schedule revolved around food.

Fasting on Mondays reminds me that I need to go to the "filling station" only once in a while; that food is for fuel, not mainly for fun.

**Four**, since fasting cuts not only excess food but *substance* food, I'm remembering each week that the world's hungry will be fed only when the rich are willing to give from substance, not just excess. And the world's definition of "rich" is: people who eat three meals a day, or can if they want to.

Since I began fasting, I've had more dollars to send to hungry people. I estimate that by not eating on Monday, I save at least three dollars, which I'm then able to send to a famine-fighting organization.

**Five**, fasting reminds me of hunger and provokes me to count my blessings. It's been a long time since I've felt forced hunger in a freezing tenement.

Living in a slum-tenement, my mother refused to yield to slum mentality and so she inspired me to try college. I got a degree and got rich, earning \$75 a month while a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand. I ate three meals a day. That was ten years ago, and I've been eating three meals a day ever since (or can, if I want to). I forget what hunger is. On Mondays I remember.

**Six**, fasting cripples Satan, reducing the sphere of his attacks on me. God gave Satan temporary reign over the earth and its material parts, one of which is my body (Job 1; 1 Peter 5:8). My body is his bait, prey, and hunting ground. The more I deny the fleshly appetites of the body, the more I deny Satan access to my body. Constant eating—meal after meal, day after day—depletes energy, rapes discipline, smothers my intimacy with God, and opens avenues of attack for Satan. Relentless eating makes both flesh and spirit flabby. And twenty-one meals a week is (for me) relentless eating. Fasting on Mondays is a punch in Satan's face, driving him away from this body.

There are extremes of fasting, I've discovered. Fasting does not mean I deny food and its proper enjoyment. I now enjoy food more since I'm in control of it and not it, me. My wife bakes Mexican enchiladas dripping with yellow cheese and fire-red sauce, onion rolls—soft, hot and tangy—bursting with a cloud of steam when ripped open, and chocolate cheesecake, laced with white, crunchy coconut. I love them and want to enjoy them, but not be controlled by them.

And no one forces me to fast. Nor I, others. Whenever priests, preachers, deacons or elders dictate a decision that on such and such a day everyone must fast, they're out of line. Fasting is voluntary, between each person and God.

Another extreme is dictating how to do it. I fast from Sunday night to Tuesday noon, usually with water and sometimes juice. I know Christians who fast for 10 days, taking only liquids. I know other Christians who can fast only from bedtime to noon the next day. Everyone's metabolism is different.

Another extreme is not fasting at all.





# monthly memo



The mail we receive daily here at World Vision (tens of thousands of pieces weekly) is both terribly important to us and immensely gratifying. So many of you write notes, comments on your receipts, letters with your check, or a kind word of greeting. Please know that every piece of mail is carefully and tenderly handled, read and responded to where a response is suggested. We do so much appreciate the letters we receive. They not only hearten and encourage us in the work we are called to, but they also remind us constantly of the responsibility we have to be good stewards.

A mother recently wrote and told us:

*As a family we have the rewarding privilege of helping to support a young boy in Taiwan. My children think of him as their brother. After watching the WV hunger program on TV this week, our youngest child (age 7) emptied her wallet and told me she wanted to do more. This check represents Gretchen's money. Please use it for a needy child somewhere.*

*And may I say it has been heartwarming to watch our other "son" so far away grow through the pictures he has sent us and the letters he has written these past few years.*

*May God be extra merciful to you and bless you as you continue in this important work.*

The following letter from Texas was signed "The Ladies":

*We the ladies of the County Jail want to help. We were always aware of the hungry and needy*

*people in this world, and our prayers are strong to the Lord on these matters. After viewing last night's telecast, we talked of all the candy money (and cigarettes too!) that we could cut down on and give. We don't have a great deal to give, but what we do have comes from all of our hearts. It makes no difference if we are in residence here! We felt that if we took the first step, other inmates' hearts would be touched and they would follow for a very good and self-rewarding cause. . . . We ladies have found God and we know He loves us, for He truly shows us every day.*

Then some other letters:

*I watched World Vision's telethon on TV last night. I am a single person who at present is 90 pounds overweight, and I figured I spend about \$80 a month on food. Those hungry and starving people helped me to realize what a pig I really am.*

*I have decided to sponsor three more little girls with half of my food money. . . . Please assign three little girls in the most need. I plan to put their pictures on my refrigerator door as a reminder that if I overeat, someone else may die.*

*My eight-year-old daughter has been at it again, collecting money for little starving children. I praise God that He has given her this burden. . . . Previously we sent \$5 that she had collected over several months, a penny or a nickel at a time. Then she came up with a new plan. The schools were conducting a Read-a-thon for multiple sclerosis. . . . so she decided to conduct her own private Read-a-thon for World Vision. She asked people from our church to sign up, and she made her goal of*

*\$10. I'm so happy to send this on to you and hope it will give new health and hope to some little girls and boys.*

*I too cry from deep within my heart when I hear and read of the human suffering in this world because of hunger. It is the poor, innocent children for whom I feel so very badly. Their bloated tummies and large, sad, empty eyes reach out to me and touch my soul, as if to say, "Help me please, I'm so hungry!"*

*Once during the depression I was alone, ill and hungry for three days, and the empty ache in my stomach was something I shall never forget. A man . . . noticed my weakened condition and gave me money to buy food. He, no doubt, has long since been deceased, but though my memory for names is poor . . . , I will never forget that man's name.*

*It is indeed true that when we cast our bread upon the waters, good is returned again and again. I find more and more that conditions improve for me each time I contribute to the hungry of the world.*

*I have already sent you a contribution this month, but how could I not send you another one for "Operation Seasweep"? You see—I, myself, and my four-year-old son have also been on a boat fleeing from Communist-occupied Latvia. The year was 1944, and instead of being pirated on the sea, we were torpedoed, but—thank God—we were not hit. May God our Father bless you and help you in "Operation Seasweep." How good it is to remember that God is far stronger than the Antichrists in the world.*

Many of your lovely letters reach my desk—and Dr. Mooneyham's—and we are so grateful for the interest our partners show and share in the ministry. We thank God for each of you. Thank you so much for your prayers. May His grace, peace and joy abide with you all.

*Ted W. Engstrom*

Ted W. Engstrom  
Executive Vice-President



# God, I Thank Thee That~



## piece of mind

A forum  
for expression of personal opinion,  
criticism and dissent

by Kenneth L. Wilson

Giving thanks reveals us for what we are. We say a good deal about ourselves not only by being thankful but by what we are thankful for.

Jesus makes this clear in the story he tells of two men who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee began his prayer, "God, I thank thee," and that is a good beginning for a prayer, now as then. But from that point on, his prayer was downhill all the way.

"I thank thee that I am not as other men are," he prayed (to himself, for God wasn't listening), and went on to enumerate some of the people he was thankful he wasn't. He must have been looking around as he prayed, for he noticed a publican who obviously had no spiritual confidence at all. The Pharisee promptly added publicans to the list of people he was glad he wasn't, this publican particularly. Then he went on to remind God (who still wasn't listening) that he himself fasted twice a week and gave tithes of everything he owned.

The publican didn't even say thank-you to God. All he could manage was, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

It's a story about pride and humility, but it is also a story about isolation and identification. What got the Pharisee off on the wrong foot was his easy assumption, "I am not as other men are." He thought he was getting, and deserved to get, preferential treatment. He didn't know that God was an equal-opportunity employer. The publican was convinced that he was as so many other men are, a sinner. He asked only for what he knew he did not deserve—grace.

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*Formerly editor of Christian Herald, Dr. Wilson is now retired and serves, part-time, as Special Assistant to the President of World Vision and as Consulting Editor to this publication.*

So often when we give thanks, we are thankful for the wrong things. Our thanksgiving shows us up for what we are by showing what we think is important. Either we separate ourselves from others in our thanksgiving, or we join ourselves with others in acknowledgment of our common human plight. Carving knife at the ready, our unspoken prayer is too often, "We thank thee, Lord, that we are not as others. unfed, unhoused, unhealed, unclothed, and all because we are your children and they are not." In our giving thanks we have great trouble seeing beyond the immediate. We begin to believe that what we have, what we know, is all there is, and we are determined to hang onto every bit of it.

We are like the boy a friend of mine used to be. Lead soldiers were his passion when he was small. He played with them hours every day, arranging them in phalanxes, moving them up and down, grouping and regrouping. An aunt, noticing his absorption, one day said to him, "The time will come when you will not be interested in lead soldiers." The boy looked up in distress and that night lay cowering in his bed, thinking of what she had said. Why, if the time ever came when he wouldn't be interested in toy soldiers, he thought, life would not be worth living! There would be nothing left! Today he is a highly respected obstetrician, and he smiled as he told me of that experience out of his boyhood.

We are like that. From here, any possible change in the future looks like threatening deprivation. We are reluctant to trust our Christian growth to the wise love of God who matures our priorities and passions and lifestyles.

This Thanksgiving, I expect we'll be having a turkey and all the trimmings at our house. But I hope that I remember to be thankful for more than turkey. Perhaps my prayer should be, "Lord, teach me to be truly thankful—and make me teachable." And the line, "Be merciful to me, a sinner," would not be out of place. For this year's prayer will have to be one that I would be willing for hungry families from around the world, looking into the windows of America's dining rooms, to overhear.





by Gail Ivins

I did not learn until my last semester at a Christian college that some of the hungriest people in the world live in our American prisons. They are starving for human compassion. Eighty percent of these prisoners come from a background of poverty, and upon release they find it harder to "stay straight" in this environment than ever before. Half of them return to prison in less than two years.

But I am not an expert about America's prison system. I know only that in the last eight months a whole new ministry has opened up to me. I began writing to a lonely prisoner. Not only has William become a real friend, he's become a precious Christian brother. Some of the deepest hungers of his heart have been satisfied. But let me start from the beginning. I want you to hear the story in his words.

William wrote a letter to the editor of our college newspaper saying he was a lonely prisoner who had lost contact with the outside world. He wanted someone to write him. So I did. It was around Christmas that he received my first letter and a Christian book I thought he'd like (*Prison to Praise* by Merlin Carothers).

He answered, thanking me for

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*Gail Ivins is a recent graduate of The Kings College in New York and a member of the Christian Writer's Guild.*



**"Accept me as  
a person,  
not a convict."**

the book and saying, "I'm looking for a friend who will understand me, trust me, accept me as a person, not a convict."

Another letter said, "Your letters are more than welcome to enter into my cell. You may not know how much a letter helps a

person in prison."

William told me that he read the Bible and prayed, but I could not tell if he had been born again. So I asked him. Soon his answer came, "I'm trying to stop smoking. I know it's not right. I want to





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**“Most inmates are rejected and alone. The postman passes many cells without leaving mail. . . . the prisoners cry silent tears.”**

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every day, and the more I learn about the Lord, I want to really accept God, and I am tonight. That's a promise. . . .”

I eagerly awaited his next letter to see if he'd kept his promise. He had!

“Yes, I've accepted Christ and I've been feeling good ever since. Yes, God has forgiven me for my sins. . . . I've got love for people that I've never spoken to in here before.”

Immediately, William started telling others about His Lord. The thought struck me that our government spends thousands of dollars trying to “rehabilitate” prisoners, but get one prisoner *regenerated* and you don't have to pay him to work on the others! Just listen to William: “I'm trying every day to get people to come to the Lord. Pray for me that these fellows will take heed.

“I really thank you for those tracts that you send to me. I read them and then send them on to other parts of the prison, mostly to the fellows that are locked up in the hole and don't have anything to read.”

accept Jesus as my Savior. I haven't been born again but I'd like to.”

From these few words I surmised that William thought he had to stop smoking before he accepted Christ. I wrote back telling him that Jesus would accept him as he was, and that he should not even expect to be able to stop smoking until the life of Jesus was in his heart.

He saw the light!

“You know, I'm going to try God. I've had the wrong misunderstanding about it. I figured you had to stop doing all of the things you were doing, but like you say, Jesus will take them away from you. I learn more

**F**inally, the day came for William when he could report, “Thank God that I've gotten across to a young fellow here and he's accepted the Lord as his own. I'm trying to bring the fellow close to God. . . .”

I could go on and on sharing quotes with you to show how William has grown, but I'll stop with a few sentences that I think have touched my heart more than any others.

“Gail, have you ever felt so good that you could cry, but held the tears inside? Really, my life has changed and I feel so good. I wish that I could have found the Lord long, long ago!”

As I said before, I am not an expert on prisons, but I do know there are thousands of lonely prisoners who desperately need someone to care. William tells me that most inmates are rejected and alone. The postman passes many cells without leaving mail. He says the prisoners cry silent tears, and they don't understand why some of us on the outside do care. Let's help them understand!

Remember, 80 percent of those in prison are poor. Jesus has a heart for the poor. In the beginning of His ministry He said, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to those who are in prison . . . and to bind up the brokenhearted.”

I am convinced that if Christians care, not only will many hungry hearts in prison find Christ, but ex-convicts will have a better chance in the outside world when they have Jesus in their hearts and Christian friends who love them, accept them, and help them find jobs.

If you are interested in writing to an inmate or helping a released prisoner, write:

Prison Fellowship, Inc.

P.O. Box 40562

Washington, D.C. 20016

and ask for a volunteer application. Or you may find a church with a prison ministry in your area.






# In September, the floods came.

Not just the normal monsoon flooding, but the most widespread floods anyone could remember. Across a 1200-mile stretch of northern India, fields were submerged, houses destroyed, cattle washed away. Rivers overflowed their embankments, swollen by the monsoon rains and an additional 860 billion cubic meters of melted snow from the Himalayas. Water and silt covered a staggering 20 million acres of land. Over 35 million people in about 40,000 villages were affected.

"No one had ever seen so much water," a relief worker declared.

World Vision responded with an immediate grant of \$125,000 to help those who had lost virtually everything. Six thousand families received blankets, children's clothing, rice, coal, vegetables, cooking vessels and plastic roofing material. Food kitchens were set up for refugees who were driven from their homes by the floodwater. Medical teams gave immunizations against cholera and typhoid. Water purification tablets were distributed, and efforts were made to help locate those who had been lost or separated from their families.

But emergency relief is only half the story. Now the people must face the task of rebuilding their lives.



**Mr. Arjan Singh**, 85, camped for several weeks with his large family on top of their small mud-and-brick house. He recalled the night of September 4: "It was four o'clock in the morning when we woke to hear the water coming. We did not believe it would rise so high, but it just kept coming and we all had to quickly climb on top of the roof." He and his neighbors are determined to rebuild their community, but they know they will need help. "We will work hard," he said, "but our fields and crops are buried under four feet of silt. Even if we had the seed to plant, which we don't, it would be three months before a new crop could be ready for harvest."

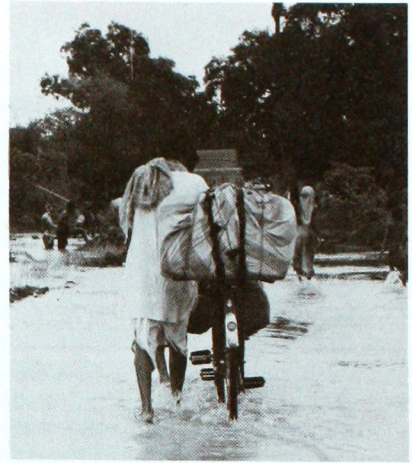
**Villagers near New De** measure out potatoes and onions supplied by the Discipleship Center, one of the organizations World Vision cooperating with in the relief effort. The portion shown is two days' supply for one family.





**These homes in a suburb of New Delhi** were buried under ten feet of water for three days. The 130,000 residents of the area returned from relief camps to find their homes collapsed, their property looted, and mud covering everything.

**A man with all his belongings on this bicycle** moves along a flooded roadway as the waters rise.



**Farmers ferry relief grain and bamboo** to stricken families in Bengal. Some 25,000 families are estimated to be homeless in this eastern region of India.



**Mr. Prem Chand Mondol**, a 45-year-old farmer, sits in a makeshift shelter on a high river embankment. He and his wife carried their three children through chest-deep water for half a mile to bring them to safety. He plans to return to his small farm after the water goes down another three feet, but he does not know what he will do when he gets there. He does not have the \$100 it would cost to rebuild his home, and he has no seed to plant on his tiny plot of land.





For Those Who Have Everything

# Christmas Gift Idea

**W**e all have them on our Christmas shopping lists—a few individuals or couples who seem to have everything. You know they don't need anything, and yet you want to give them something. You want to demonstrate your love so they'll know they are in your thoughts. What do you do?

This year, in behalf of those special friends, why not help a needy child? Show those friends that you love them enough to save a child's life. You can do that now through World Vision—and without giving away the names and addresses of your friends.

With every \$10 contribution, you can help provide the food, medical assistance, clothing and Christian education needed to give an impoverished child hope for the future. And for each \$10 contribution, World Vision will provide a meaningful Christmas card and envelope for you to send to your special friend.

The quality card, entitled "Children love Christmas," features the illustration of a happy Indonesian child on the cover. On the inside, left, is a short description of the young girl and how she has been helped because someone cared. On the inside, right, is a Christmas message that reads:

*"... behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people." Luke 2:10*

*May your Christmas be a time of great joy! This year, as a gift to you, a contribution has been made in your behalf to World Vision to help a needy child in an impoverished area of the world. As you share the abundant life that the Christ-babe came to give, may God richly bless you this Christmas and in the coming year.*

All you'll have to do is sign the card, ad-

dress the envelope and mail it. Those who receive it will know you've thought of them in a very special way.

To order the cards, fill out the coupon below (or place special peel-off mailing label on the coupon); for immediate handling, enclose the coupon with your check made payable to World Vision in an envelope addressed to Christmas Cards, World Vision, Box O, Pasadena, CA 91109.

Your total gift is tax-deductible and will be acknowledged by a receipt. Your cards will be shipped within three days.

.....  
Yes, I want to celebrate this Christmas with some special friends by helping needy children. Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ special Christmas cards and envelopes immediately.

Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_\_ (\$10 for each card/envelope ordered). 1000-S05-005

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Identification No. \_\_\_\_\_

*(See magazine mailing label)*





## Praying in the Plural

Los Angeles freeways, most residents agree, make up the finest highway system in the country. Unlike many other traffic arteries elsewhere, these are toll-free, perhaps because here the automobile is almost the sole means of transportation. Many-laned and well-marked, the freeways are only a little less crowded in off-peak hours than in rush hours. Ingenious and complicated interchanges allow traffic to move smoothly from one freeway to another, and one of them near the heart of Los Angeles—a veritable Colossus of Roads—is often pictured when some national magazine wants to symbolize motor transportation. The freeways provide probably the best ground travel method anywhere for covering long distances in a hurry.

And yet all it takes to bring that flow of traffic to a sudden halt is one disabled car. Let one car have to stop and in seconds the freeway becomes “the longest parking lot in the world.” Even when the obstacle is removed, it may be hours before the traffic regains its pace. It amazes me that all this can be caused by something as simple as four lanes having to squeeze into three.

The other day when I was caught in one of these jams, I began to think about prayer. For, like many of you, I pray when I get in my car to go somewhere. If the family is along, it may be a spoken prayer. If I am alone, it's a silent prayer. I pray that I will harm no living thing as I pass by, that the Lord will protect me from being in or causing an accident, and that I will have a safe journey. Because I am often in a hurry, part of my prayer sometimes is that the Lord will get me through. Then came the tie-up and a new perspective on freeway prayers.

Sitting there immobile, I realized it wasn't enough to pray just for myself, but that everybody on the road had to be prayed for, concerned about. I'm at the mercy of an accident or mishap far up ahead that brings every car behind it to a grinding stop. I can't turn off on a side road and go my own way. There are no side roads. There's no place to go. My car may be working perfectly, and that's fine. But let someone I don't know and probably can't see have a flat tire and the almost immediate result is as if it had been my flat tire. Anybody's accident ahead of me on that freeway becomes my accident, for it brings not only him but me to a helpless halt.

So the message was that a prayer only for myself was not big enough. God, if He wanted, could have worked a unilateral miracle and somehow whisked me over the stopped cars and on my way.

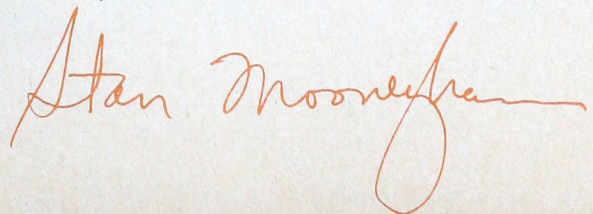
But it hasn't been my experience that He generally operates that way. I am not only my brother's keeper; I am also the kept brother—for good and ill. In a world that is by the week becoming more interrelated, there is little solitary safety. We are bound together. If I am to be secure, everyone on the road must be secure. I can't pray, “Lord, get me through!” I have to pray, “Lord, get us all through.”

Then it occurred to me that such a prayer was nothing new. It was the way Jesus taught His disciples to pray. That exemplary prayer which we so often and so automatically pray, doesn't say, “Deliver me from evil.” It says, “Deliver us from evil.” There are evils from which deliverance can come only for all, if for any. The entire Lord's prayer, from its very first word on, is a prayer in the plural. Not “My Father,” but “Our Father.” Not “Give me, this day, my daily bread,” but “Give us, this day, our daily bread.” In our kind of world there's less and less standing room for those who would pray self-centered prayers. What Christian worth the salt he is supposed to be, would wish, for that matter, to eat bread, ringed by a silent circle of the breadless?

The world is more tightly bound together than we realize. Driving along happily in our little self-contained and, we think, self-sufficient independence—tank full, motor tuned, tread deep—it's easy to think the world exists for us. But let the lights flash and traffic halt and suddenly we know how dependent we are, the strongest upon the weakest.

We are not moving alone down the highways of the world. We are affected by everything that happens to anyone on the way. Our security lies in their security. That is not simply a nice, shining platitude, but a pragmatic fact of life and faith. Being thankful that other cars on the freeway have good tires and that other travelers through life have adequate food and shelter is an exercise not only in sanctity but in survival.

Perhaps someday we shall learn how to discover our relationships before there is revolution or war, before there are riots and depression, whether at home or a world away. For the traffic backs up so very quickly.





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