



Mission Address:
Baptist Mid-Missions
P.O. Box 308011
Cleveland, OH 44130-8011

Sending Church:
Calvary Baptist Church
1380 South Valley Forge Road
Lansdale, PA 19446-4797

Phone: 011-511-985-33-2436

Email: stanperu@gmail.com

Blog: www.templetonstoperu.blogspot.com



Dear friends in Christ,

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Each person who comes to Christ has a different story. Maribel began attending our Bible studies. Then she came to our second Bible study on Sunday mornings. She came off and on until she made a decision to repent and forsake something she knew in her life was offending God. From then on, she never missed a Sunday and became more and more concerned about her salvation. Shortly after that, she came to Christ. It was a slow process of illumination until she finally reached for the switch of the Holy Spirit, said yes to Jesus, and the light was turned on.

Margarita was ready to receive Christ the moment I began explaining the gospel. I don't think I have ever explained salvation to anyone who grasped it quicker. In a single conversation that lasted one hour, she was converted. Her understanding of the sufficient work of Christ came so quickly that it took me back. It could have gone quicker, but I took my time to make sure it was clear.

John, a courteous and painfully shy man by nature, began attending our services and sat as far in the back as he could. I was totally unaware of how hungry he was for something real. He was searching, while fighting to reject the pull to return to an addiction to marijuana. He was winning the daily battle, but just barely. The third time we talked, he understood the gospel and came to Christ. He still has his battles, but now he is clinging to the One who can give him the strength he needs to have complete victory.

These three stories keep us encouraged when setbacks come like tsunamis and obstacles just won't budge. We have very serious problems with government procedures in the radio ministry; all caused by government workers. Our search for a church property for over 4 years has brought no results. A needed building permit has taken 3 years and we are not one inch closer than the day we began. The adversity has been strong: contracted outside help that deceives, robberies at camp, struggles in marriages and families, unfaithful members, personnel leaving in important positions in our church and radio ministry. We have held off the intrusion of false doctrine in the church. We have suffered a loss of members leaving our congregation. Some for good reasons like relocating, some for reasons that are not good, and some for matters so insignificant it is too embarrassing to mention; revealing loyalty to Christ was paper thin. When you lose one member, the pain is great. When you lose several, it is greater. When you are a small congregation and those who leave are dearest to your heart, the pain is intense. Every pastor experiences it several times a year. You just don't get used to it.

If I said I don't get discouraged, I would not be honest. If I said I am discouraged, it would be untrue. The truth is: I am up and down. One telephone call gives me a high. Five minutes later another leaves me despondent. But Jesus keeps me going!

The last weeks have been challenging beyond our strength. But we have a source. We can dip our little spiritual tin cup into His celestial blue ocean full of refreshing grace and run back into the fray. What Maribel, Margarita, and John needed is what we need: to sip God's grace. Real problems produce real pain that require real solutions. And God's grace is real!

Ruth and I want to especially thank you for your prayers on our behalf. The Lord is sustaining us through His grace and your prayers. What a Savior! He still forgives us when we fail, loves us when we waver, and gives us strength when we are weak. We have to remember that we serve the Lord of the ministry and not the ministry of the Lord. We encourage you to pray for your pastor.

For Christ's glory,
Stanley and Ruth Templeton