

# EYEWITNESS

SEEING FROM WITHIN  
AN OPPRESSIVE SOCIETY

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# EYEWITNESS

SEEING FROM WITHIN  
AN OPPRESSIVE SOCIETY

BY  
GUSZTINNÉ TULIPÁN MÁRIA



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# Dedication

To all the witnesses of Christ—who “didn’t love their life so much that they refused to give it up” (Revelation 12:11, gw).

To Dad and Mom—who dared to love, believe, and witness; who understood suffering to be part of following Christ; and who loved telling their stories to their children, grandchildren, and now to the great-grandchildren.

# Acknowledgement

Special thanks to Rev. John Haines for reading my manuscript and making gentle suggestions for improvement. Having served as our first district superintendent, he knows us well, and we value his meaningful ongoing friendship and mentoring over the years.



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# About the Author

Gusztinné Tulipán Mária<sup>1</sup> [GOOS-tin-nay TOO-li-pahn MAH-ri-ah] is married to Gusztin Imre [GOOS-tin IM-re]. Both Imre and Mária are graduates of European Nazarene College (EuNC) in Büsingен [BEW-zeen-ngen], Germany, where they came to understand the Wesleyan heritage and holiness message. In 1996, following their studies, the Gusztin family moved back to Hungary and were involved in opening Nazarene mission work there. Both Mária and Imre have been involved in church planting. Mária has a heart for theological education, and Imre's passion is in the area of publishing. Mária and Imre serve as copastors for the Budapest Church of the Nazarene. Mária is one of the leaders of the Budapest Learning Centre of EuNC and vice president of the Wesleyan Alliance, Hungary, of which the Church of the Nazarene is a charter member. Imre serves as the district superintendent for Hungary.

The Gusztins have a son, Rudolf, who is a musicologist at the Institute for Musicology—Hungarian Academy of Science, Budapest, and is very active in the Budapest Church of the Nazarene as a worship leader. He is the

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<sup>1</sup> Mária's full name in Hungarian is Gusztinné Tulipán Mária. Both Gusztin and Tulipán are family names. The first one is her husband's family name, and Mária family name was added in marriage. The “-né” means “Mrs.”

Hungary district NYI president and holds a district minister's license.

The whole family enjoys cooking and experimenting with new recipes. Escaping from the city to get into nature is essential; the Buda [BOO-dah] Hills are a favourite place to visit. Hiking has always been a favourite family activity, and a new hobby is Nordic walking. The Gusztins also enjoy driving to small villages—spending a day, “breathing with the village,” eating their food, going to their market, and praying for the place.

## **NOTE:**

We celebrate the fact that the Church of the Nazarene is a global church. With that in mind, you may notice spelling, punctuation, measurements, and usage of words that differ from where you live (examples: “judgement,” “,5 litre,” etc.). These are in keeping with Mária’s European background.

# Preface

Many readers will not know much about Hungary and its history. By glimpsing at the major chapters of world history, I have gathered a few snapshots related to the geography of Hungary (past and present) and the Hungarian people:

- **The Roman Empire:** The Romans reached as far as the Western part of Hungary, the part of the Roman Empire called Pannonia [puh-NOH-nee-uh]. It was under the rule of Roman emperors from 35 BC to AD 49 and was a flourishing Roman province from the end of the first century. The Huns forced the Romans to withdraw after AD 395.
- **Arriving in Central Europe:** The first Hungarians arrived from the northern part of the Black Sea in Central Europe in the ninth century. Around AD 900, seven Magyar [MAH-jar] tribes, the dominant people of Hungary from Central Asia, conquered the Carpathian [kahr-PAY-thee-uhn] Basin, according to the widely accepted theory.
- **Christianity:** In AD 1000, Christianity was accepted by Stephen I, the first Hungarian king; and Bishop Gellért [GEL-lhert], the first missionary from Rome, arrived to teach the people about Christianity. Though his mission trip ended in cruel death, the mission went on. The

majority of Hungarians became Christian in the eleventh century. In the most eastern frontier, Hungarians followed Western Christianity, or Catholicism. Beyond that point, Eastern Orthodox traditions were followed.

- **The Ottoman Empire:** In the Middle Ages, Hungary was an influential political power until it lost a decisive battle against the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire in 1526. That marked the beginning of 150 years of Turkish rule. Two-thirds of the country was occupied by the Turks. Islam was not forced by Muslim settlers, and the Ottomans practiced relative religious tolerance. Hungary was in constant struggle with the Turks and was seen as a frontier protecting Christian Europe from Muslim invasion.
- **Reformation:** German merchants carried evangelical ideas from the Holy Roman Empire, taking them first to German-speaking citizens. These also included Protestant beliefs delivered by people studying at the monastery in Wittenberg [VI-tuhn-buhrg], Germany, where Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation. The former Hungarian territory was the most eastern line where Reformation reached and was again a frontier line within Europe.
- **The Habsburg Era:** The Habsburgs [HABS-buhrgs] freed Hungary from the Ottomans, but drew it into part of their empire. Just as the Hungarians had fought the Ottomans, now they started to fight the Habsburgs for independence. This was yet another empire, another oppression, and another era of freedom fighting. The last

revolt in the mid-nineteenth century, which caused almost every noble family to lose a family member in their fight, ended with a treaty creating the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This began a period of flourishing economics and culture. Hungarian became the official language, and the reformation of the language took place.

- **The War Era:** World Wars I and II took their tolls on Hungary. After World War I, the Treaty of Trianon [TREE-uh-nahn] in 1920 altered the shape of Hungary, eliminating two-thirds of the country's territories. After World War II, which included a short German occupation, Hungary was oppressed again.
- **The Communist Era:** As in previous centuries, freedom came at a high price. The power that freed the country stayed to oppress it, so the Red Army had military bases throughout the country. Hungary again became a border-line country; or was it a bridge? Hungary was the most westernized of the Soviet (Eastern) Bloc states. Freedom fighting started, initiated by university students. The 1956 uprising was defeated with the help of Soviet tanks. As a result, 200,000 people left the country via Austria, 3,000 people were killed during the fighting, and more than a 100,000 people suffered during the retaliation. In 1968, a quiet economic reform led to economic growth that was eventually stopped by Soviet leaders. The climate of 40 years of Communism resulted in dehumanization, deportations, atheism, and people being suspicious of neighbours and family members. At the same time, some pastors collaborated with the

police, reporting on one another. People still struggle to recover from the hardships of that time and to regain the trust that was lost.

- **The Changes:** The Hungarians refer to the time following the 40 years of Communist rule and the Iron Curtain, which took place in the 1990s, with the phrase “after the Changes.” Hungarians take pride in their country helping initiate “the beginning of the end” of the Berlin Wall. Just as the country was on so many borders between the East and the West throughout its history, Hungary became a bridge when it resisted world powers and first allowed persons to cross from the East to the West on the Hungarian borders.



As for any people group, scars from history stay long and are carried deep. Peace agreements come at a high price. If you stay long enough with a Hungarian family, they will pull out a map of larger Hungary, showing you and telling stories about how their family was affected heavily by history. They may tell of confiscated assets, lost education and career opportunities, and families shattered when members emigrated to the West, fearing punishment from participation in freedom movements and uprisings. There may be lamentations over wrong choices and the severe punishment of other nations after the wars. Hungary's history is full of fights for territory, freedom, and being overrun by others. Yet, the culture and the language remained, or became even more strongly protected treasures as Hungarians' identity.

- **Language:** The language is entirely different from Germanic and Slavic languages. It does not belong to the Indo-European languages, but to the so-called Uralic<sup>2</sup> [yoo-RA-lik] language family. There are 24 languages spoken in the European Union; Hungarian is one of them.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The major members of the Uralic language family are Finnish, Estonian, Sami (Lapp), and Hungarian. The Uralic languages are sometimes called the “Finno-Ugric” languages and spoken in Siberia, European Russia, and Eastern Europe. Finnish, Hungarian, and Estonian are unique in being the only major European languages that are not part of the Indo-European family. The tribes that spread the Uralic languages across Europe and Asia probably originated in the Ural Mountains (hence the name “Uralic”).

<sup>3</sup> Some of the best known English words of Hungarian origin are probably: *paprika* (from Serbo-Croatian *papar* “pepper” and the Hungarian diminutive “-ka”), *coach* (from *kocsi*, originally *kocsi szekér* “car from/in the style of Kocs”), and *sabre* (from *szablya*). More English words of Hungarian origin: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_English\\_words\\_of\\_Hungarian\\_origin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_words_of_Hungarian_origin). n. pag. Web. 8 November 2016.

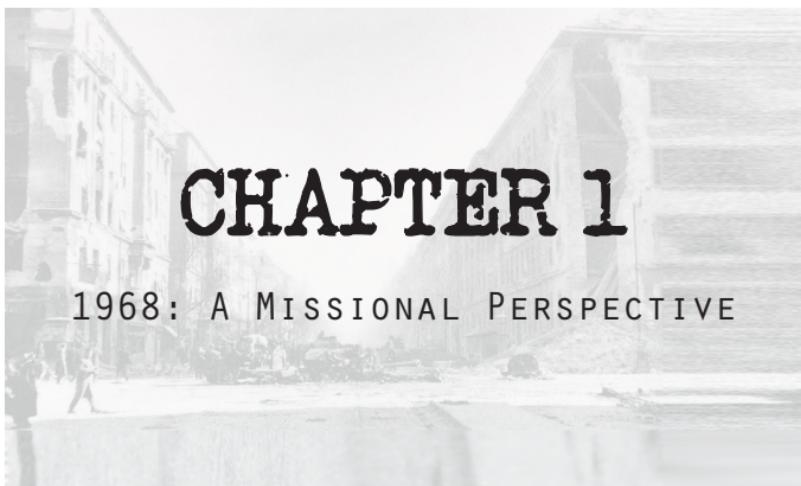
- The Old Hungarian script (written from right to left) looks like this: ٢٤٣٢١٠٠٠٠.
  - And the modern Hungarian keyboard looks like this:
  - The name of the language and our ethnic group as a nation is “Magyar.” Other languages call Magyars “Hungarians,” after the Hun people group.
- **Mission:** As a pagan people group, Hungarians met the God of Christianity through migration. After the new faith was proclaimed, the king and the people were baptized, went through the changing relationship between state and church, and experienced the Reformation of the church like the rest of Europe. Missionaries were persecuted and killed by our pagan ancestors. Later, Hungarian Christians were oppressed, persecuted, or otherwise hindered by non-Christian powers or other Christian nations. The most recent trial for the church was during the Communist dictatorship, when churches had to sign an agreement of cooperation with the government. All work and personnel of the church were under the control of the Communist Party. After the changes in the 1990s, a “free church in free state” model was adopted. The church is recovering and needs to confess the role it played. If it betrayed the people, it needs to regain their trust, forget the hostile language of the past, and regain the desire for evangelism and mission. It must relearn how to conduct missions and find the means and strategy to do so.



Because of its location geographically, Hungary has been constantly overrun throughout its history. Its placement between Western and Eastern Europe resulted in its being a crossroads of migration and power. This is also true of the current refugee situation.

Hungarians have survived so far by God's mercy. Hungary is a nation that very much wants to live, but that must keep returning to God and His mission. The mission may take the form of a borderline at some times or a bridge at others. May our nation—with such a shattered history—become a bridge to everyone who crosses our country in the future. These people may be travellers, seeking their places as we once did, or oppressors, who think they have the power to do anything. To them, may Hungary become a bridge from death to life, from bondage to freedom—freedom that can only be found in Christ!





# CHAPTER 1

## 1968: A MISSIONAL PERSPECTIVE

I was born in 1968:

- In a Communist country, under *oppression* when a newly emerging “Roman legion” lived in barracks in our cities.
- In the Hungarian People’s Republic, living together with *hateful foreigners*, those oppressors we were taught to call “brothers,” “friends,” and “allies.” They were the troops of the “liberating” Red Army.
- In an era when we had numerous enemies, persecutors who wanted to *destroy us, kill us, threaten us*.
- **I was born into a Christian home when Christians were persecuted and “freedom” was relative, and I was a victim of much suffering.**

*But let me introduce myself again.*

I was born *after* two world wars ended:

- After our ancestors fought for their freedom in the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, after the Rákosi [RAH-koh-shee] fearful era of Communist totalitarianism, where the government controlled every aspect of our lives and opposition was suppressed.
- To a Goulash Communism<sup>4</sup> that, while still Communism, was called “the happiest barracks in the Socialist camp.” (Mind you, they were still barracks.)
- In the time when the secret police were *not as brutal* as before and when the restrictions of speech and movement decreased.
- In a year when an economic and cultural reform began, allowing some market-oriented economy and relatively prosperous lives. (“Prosperous” meaning no queuing [“lining up”] for groceries; you had a shopping list and one or two choices per item.)
- To a period when I saw the “enemy” puzzled at God’s power and persecutors meeting Christ and becoming tremendous evangelists.
- **When revival took place, and I was an *eyewitness* of great events.**

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<sup>4</sup> Goulash Communism refers to the variety of Communism as practiced in the Hungarian People’s Republic from the 1960s until the Central European collapse of Communism in 1989. With elements of free market economics and an improved human rights record, it represented a quiet reform and deviation from the Soviet principles applied to Hungary in the previous decade. [For more information, see: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goulash\\_Communism](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goulash_Communism).]

Depending on how I introduce myself, what you are reading will evoke pity, sympathy, recognition, or other emotions.

A witness's story is the interpretation of God's work in our time and among us; it is bringing the past into the present. Charles R. Swindoll [SWIN-dahl] said that life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you react to it. Let me rephrase that thought: life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you interpret and retell the story.

Retelling our stories becomes part of the salvation stories or histories for the next generation. There are specific instructions on how we need to remember, repeat, and retell our stories. The story of Israel can be a successful story or an unfortunate story, depending on the witness's telling and the reader's interpretation.

I do not like success stories made up of optimistic exaggerations. Given my background, that is propaganda, even if it is mission propaganda and for a holy purpose. Such embellishments are not a source of faith and encouragement. If something is not the truth, it remains a human story with lots of colour.

But I do not like self-pitying stories either; they evoke pity from others and produce excuses for the tellers. More than that, they miss the salvation facet: the faith, the miracles, God in action.

I like the complex of the ugly and the good together, attributing our lives to God and discovering the touch of His hand through it all. There is nothing that is outside of

God's story. So...my life story is the ugly and beautiful: the beautiful shining through the ugly. And somehow the two seem to be connected.

**Truth, reality?** What are they? They have become complex concepts in a world where realities and parallel truths are invented. We already know Who the truth is; we should not invent worlds and realities apart from who He is.

Mission is remembering and retelling God's story as we fully participate in its present reality. We do this by retelling what has been, separating the present from the past, and learning to think, to feel, and to behave as a result of what we discover. The past is a tool of a prophet, a tool of interpretation. My reflections of God's past actions help me understand present events and God's mission now.

In the Old Testament, God is a God who remembers: remembers who we are, how He relates to us, what He promised. God also calls us to remember His acts in history. Interestingly enough, we are generally directed to remember times of slavery and exile, the difficult times. The Psalms reflect one story, interpreting humanity from God's perspective.

Why are we called to remember the hard times and not ignore them? Why should we build memorials or set up stones of remembrance? Now we may not build memorials from stones as was done in the Old Testament. Our memorials may come in the form of NMI missions books. And today, we do not just have the 12 tribes; books are translated into the many languages represented by the Church of the Nazarene.

In the New Testament, Christ orders us to remember. He connects those memories with an act of a table (I will return to the “table act” throughout this book). The Holy Spirit helps us in the important act of remembrance, which becomes an encouragement for the present. In the Old Testament, God was very particular about what and how His people should remember their narrative. Not remembering—or misremembering—leads to memory loss of who God is, what Christ has done, and how the Holy Spirit moves. This leads to discouragement, despair, loss of mission passion, and lack of unity. The human approach to our differences can replace the One who holds us together. We forget God’s acts among us, both in human history and in Nazarene history. We are in danger of becoming deaf to His voice and forgetting the purpose of mission.

Our mission started with some fishermen. Unfortunately, some people have taken that to mean that they can exaggerate “how big a fish they caught” (or how many, in this case). We can call it “The Big Fish Syndrome.” For those we mentor, it is important that our mission stories and our mission goals not be distorted for any reason. How can we be trustworthy if the stories retold are not true? In the account of the 12 spies going into Canaan the first time,<sup>5</sup> 10 leaders exaggerated the situation, and God did not appreciate that at all.

***We are encouraged to look back to the past and remember:*** “...We are surrounded by so great a cloud of

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<sup>5</sup> Numbers 13–14

witnesses.... ”<sup>6</sup> Those of us who bear witness have two sets of spectators: those who have borne witness in the past through their blood and sacrifice, part of the “cloud of witnesses,” and those present spectators, people around us, watching as we run.

We are the story of God for the young ones (and sometimes not so young) watching us. What do they see? What mission story are we living right now?

As a child, I was an *eyewitness*. What follows is an account of some stories and my reflections on those stories: snapshots of the past that formed me into who I am today and how I interpret the world. How others acted in front of me became my source of encouragement to stay faithful to God who continues to act in our history.

What will the eyewitnesses of my life remember and retell? Will my life encourage them to stay faithful to God? Will God’s story in my life be an encouragement to *my eyewitnesses*?

There is a travel guide series entitled *Eyewitness Travel Guides*. A former slogan was “The Guides that Show You What Others Only Tell You—The Eyewitness Way to See the World.” In the following chapters, you will read my reflections as *an eyewitness* of God’s action in our history. I can guide you through my stories, but I pray that God will use this book to help you—with your own life, your time and place—to see the world as an *eyewitness*.

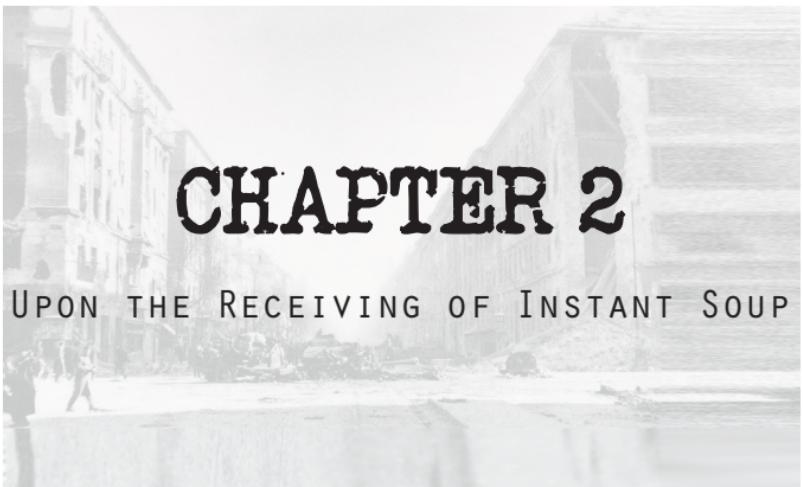
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<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 12:1a, esv

# Act On It

- Consider the following: Are my stories the true stories of the gospel, or am I manipulating my testimony to make myself look better in the others' eyes?
- Seek opportunities to tell your life story to someone (friends, family members, congregation). Be a “good spy” of this “land” for them; they will have to make decisions in the present based on your past stories of God.





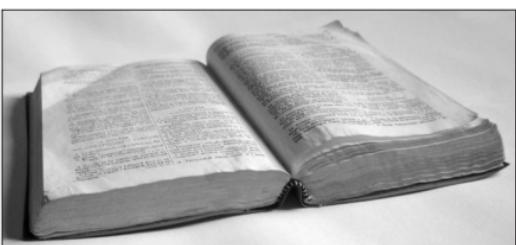
# CHAPTER 2

## UPON THE RECEIVING OF INSTANT SOUP

We had no idea where the donation came from in the 1970s. Maybe this is a belated response, but feedback is always useful:

Yes, the packages of instant soup all safely arrived to our kitchen. We would like to express our appreciation for the packages of clothes, food, toys, especially the books. To be honest, the Hungarian books helped the most because we did not speak English, German, Swedish, and Dutch. Our apologies.

My first Bible was a smuggled blue Bible, and I still treasure it. You know how some people



The blue Bible smuggled to Mária.

have a list of their biblical heroes in the order they want to meet them in heaven. (I guess even our heavenly plans are somewhat affected by the celebrity phenomenon.) Those of us who tend to think of more challenging questions might like to ask key biblical figures: “Why did you commit that first sin?” or “Did you know that we had to work hard, suffer hard, and die hard?”

I would like to meet my “Bible provider” (also known as a “Bible smuggler”) in heaven and say:

Thank you for smuggling in my first Bible. What consequences did you suffer as a result? Did you experience any punishment? What did you have to give up to get those Bibles to me and to others? Please know that it was all worth it. And please know that I followed your example and smuggled Bibles across borders to other Hungarian-speaking people.

I also need to report about the packages of instant soup you sent. Honestly, we hated them. You see, we were used to preparing everything we ate—herbs, vegetables, fruits—fresh from the garden. The dried whitish-yellowish powder that you sent was unknown to us. Powdered soup was a hard concept to digest.

Although we did not eat them, the packages were placed on our kitchen shelves as a sign of love. There was someone who thought of us, prayed for us. Some of the other delicious items you sent, we gave thanks for. We loved them and ate them with gratitude. We ate them, and I do not remember them any more.

But the instant soup that we did not eat, that I still remember. It was not edible, yet it was a precious token of love. So I need to tell you that, even though we never liked the packaged soups you sent, your love meant a lot. We felt joyful, and we considered it evidence that the Kingdom is strong and is in action.

A package of instant soup can be a sign of love, a message saying, “We are praying for you; we know of your suffering and your faith.” It is a “message in a package” that there are Christians “beyond the wall” who know of us. What a great source of encouragement it was!

We all make mistakes. Today, we hope that people are more informed, culturally sensitive, and aware of the best methods. That is great! For example, we hope our constituents today could read information that might say, “Do not send packaged soup to a soup-eating country like Hungary where people cook fresh soup almost every day. Homemade soup is dear to them.”

Yet, mistakes made in love can be turned around by God. If something is given and received in faith and love, it will be a source of strength and encouragement...even a package of instant soup.

While I have nicer Bibles now—Bibles with commentaries, my first Bible has the most vivid commentary on a life lived with God, dependent on Him. The side notes in that Bible are lessons born out of life situations experienced firsthand. They reflect not only good information, but fear, tears, life-threats, physical pain, and miracles. My blue Bible

has running commentaries added item by item as I grew up. Bibles have a variety of titles; my blue Bible could be called “Bible with My Life Comments.”

I have always been told whom to hate: which group, which nation. It is so tiring to think that, according to the world’s way of thinking, there will always be a nation, a group of people that I should be programmed to hate. People love to hate other people groups. And this not-so-good-news of whom to hate has spread among Christians and by Christians.

But who will tell me whom to love? I hear different messages even from within the church:

- Love your neighbour; hate your enemy.
- Love your neighbour; pray for your enemy and forgive them.

If we live in a world where “Roman roads” again connect us via optical cables and satellite dishes, let us use those connections for missions as our ancestors did. And if we are to love our neighbours and we are to pray for our enemies, let us participate in these activities for missions.

One of the traditions at my local church is the monthly NMI Sunday. For each month, the church chooses a country to study. Countries with Nazarene work were first on the list, then we added countries for which there was no information on a Nazarene presence. (In those areas, we prayed for possible underground work or for future missions.)

Every family researches a recipe from the country, prepares the food, and brings it for a potluck after worship when we continue with a missions afternoon. The missions luncheon begins with descriptions of foods unknown to us, then we eat.

A person who signed up to represent the people of the featured country gives a 10- to 15-minute presentation about the country, its people, the Nazarene work there, and prayer requests from that area. We then pray for God's work there. The NMI website<sup>7</sup> is a great help, and browsing through *NCN News*<sup>8</sup> and *Engage*<sup>9</sup> magazine also gives good results. However, direct contact with the appropriate districts becomes a simple, meaningful way to learn about them and to send short messages: "We have heard of your faith. There are Christians and Nazarenes running the race with you and praying for you."

Nazarenes from several countries even sent us recipes in preparation for their upcoming Sundays, as well as stories, greetings, and testimonies. The Netherlands District sent meaningful, detailed prayer requests about events on their district. On several occasions, we sent photos back to the districts, close-ups of the food and of the church sharing the meal of those countries. One of those districts forwarded our response to the pastors on the district, copying us in with the following message: "The Budapest Church was praying for us last Sunday." Some of those churches replied, saying that the food looked authentic.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.nazarenemissions.org](http://www.nazarenemissions.org)

<sup>8</sup> [www.ncnnews.org](http://www.ncnnews.org)

<sup>9</sup> [www.engagemagazine.com](http://www.engagemagazine.com)

**If we were sitting at one table, we would break bread together, eat all cultures' foods, and remember each other's stories.** It is difficult to hate, ignore, despise, or look down on others when you sit at one table with them. There are countries where we cannot send something so small as a package of instant soup. However, for those people whose countries we cannot enter, we can sit at one table with them. We can act in faith and share the table: "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith." This is the beautiful theme for the 2017 General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene.

We should not bring a spirit of division to the table. No *person* can rule over this table; this is not *our* table. *We* are guests, even if we were asked to prepare the table.

I flip through our NMI Sunday calendar and see so many countries that we have already "eaten together with, sitting at their table." But we can anticipate more good Sundays. After all, we have a huge task to share the table with all the world areas where the Church of the Nazarene has a presence or all the countries where God has mission.

Why don't we familiarize ourselves with what it means to "break bread at one table"? Then if the world ever becomes fragmented again, if Iron Curtains, police cordons, border fences, and "Berlin walls" go up—virtually, physically, ideologically, doctrinally, or politically—we will be ready. If we must face hatred initiated by governments or even by religious leaders, we will be familiar with each other's food and stories, having learned from each other over the years. We will still be sitting at one table without division: "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith."

# Act On It

- Learn about missions. Do not stay ignorant, but do not be satisfied with just thinking of missions (becoming very well-informed). We also need to do missions; a mission requires action. Do not be afraid of making mistakes in missions; but participate in missions in love and by faith.
- Share your table with someone in Christ's name:
  - Once a month, prepare a pastry from a designated country for the church fellowship and offer a prayer for the people of that country during worship.
  - Bake a bread common to a people group and break the bread of that nation with your family. Remember that Christ died for them; they are His. Think of it as a response to Christ asking you to prepare the table of the host country, and remind yourselves that you are guests of the other group, whether neighbour or enemy. While at the table, discuss Henri Nouwen's [HEN-ree NOW-uhn] Concept of Hospitality as referenced here:
    - Hospitality...means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer

freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. It is not to lead our neighbour into a corner where there are no alternatives left, but to open a wide spectrum of options for choice and commitment. It is not an educated intimidation with good books, good stories and good works, but the liberation of fearful hearts so that words can find roots and bear ample fruit. It is not a method of making our God and our way into the criteria of happiness, but the opportunity to others to find their God and their way. The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt a life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find their own.<sup>10</sup>

- How can you offer a space where change can take place?
- How can you provide opportunities for others to “find their God and their way”?
- How should you pray for those whom you may consider “enemies”?
  - There are countries we cannot enter with the gospel, where it is difficult to send Christian resources—books, finances, missionaries, and broadcasts—in a

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<sup>10</sup> Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements in the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 68.

conventional form. How can we enter into communion with them when we do not know them? We start by “preparing their table” at our churches, as if we are sitting together, and praying for them.

## Join Me at the Table

Earlier, you read my note of thanks for the Bible and instant soups. I would like to provide some “soup on paper” in return: a recipe—sent now from a freely communicating country. If you care to “eat at our table,” feel free to use it; and as you join us, remember us in prayer. Enjoy our hospitality!

### Peach or Strawberry Soup

*A Cold Fruit Soup for Hot Summers—a Favorite of Nazarene District Superintendents*

#### Peach Soup Ingredients:

1 kilogram (2.2 pounds) peaches

2 litres (8.5 cups) milk

2 decilitres (6.75 fluid ounces) whipping cream

20 grams (4 teaspoons) vanilla sugar<sup>11</sup>

2–3 tablespoons regular sugar

Whipped cream

Sliced almonds

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<sup>11</sup> Vanilla sugar may be purchased or be prepared at home. Combine approximately 2 cups of white sugar with the scraped seeds of one vanilla bean. Or add 1 to 2 whole vanilla beans to an airtight jar containing 1 to 2 cups of white sugar; let the mixture age for approximately 2 weeks; replace sugar as it is used and the beans will last indefinitely.

### **Preparation:**

1. Chop 0,5 kilogram (1 pound) peaches.
2. Blend peaches and 1,5 litres (6.25 cups) milk.
3. Add the cream and continue to blend.
4. Add the vanilla sugar and regular sugar.
5. Add the remaining milk.
6. Chop and add the remainder of the peaches.
7. Chill before serving.
8. Serve with whipped cream and almonds, or serve with vanilla ice cream.

### **Strawberry Soup Ingredients:**

800 grams (1.75 pounds) strawberries (fresh or frozen)  
30 grams (2 tablespoons) vanilla sugar  
3 decilitres (10 fluid ounces) whipping cream  
1 litre (4.25 cups) milk (fresh is better)  
5 tablespoons regular sugar

### **Preparation:**

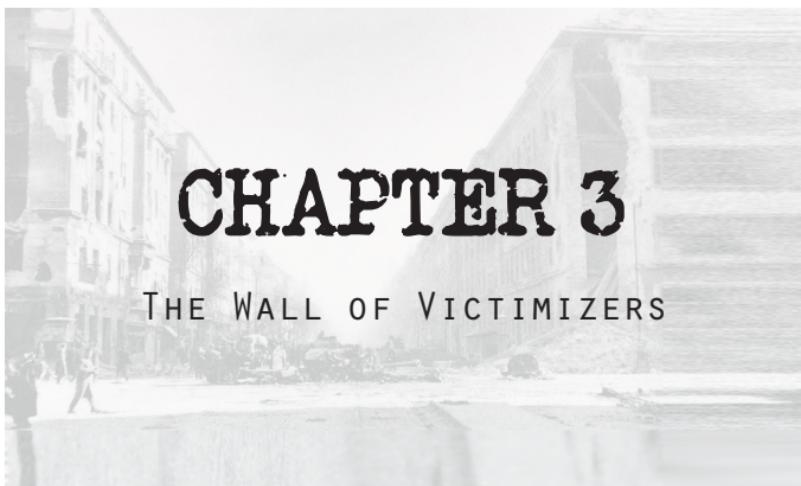
1. Put 600 grams (1.3 pounds) strawberries (fresh or frozen, but defrosted), regular sugar, vanilla sugar, and a little bit of milk into blender.
2. Blend slowly, so the fruit blends well with the other ingredients.
3. Add cream and blend for a minute to thicken the soup.
4. Add the remaining milk.
5. Pour soup into serving bowl, and add the remaining fruit, chopped.

6. Refrigerate soup for a minimum of 30 minutes.
7. Serve whipped cream and sliced almonds in bowls on the table. Everyone can garnish their soup, according to their preferences.
8. Option: Serve vanilla ice cream and additional fresh fruit for extra toppings on the soup. The ice cream will give it more of a vanilla taste and make it thicker and richer.

**Variation:** This recipe is nice with other berries, mixed forest fruit (a mixture of any red/blue/black berries), and peaches. With some fruits, like sour cherries, apples, pears, and gooseberries, we cook the fruits beforehand, adding cinnamon, cloves, and lemon juice to taste. After the fruit is cooked, chill, then make according to recipe.

More recipes are available in the appendix on page 167.





# CHAPTER 3

## THE WALL OF VICTIMIZERS

In persecution stories, there are at least two sets of players—the persecuted and the persecutors. In Budapest, Hungary, there is a museum about Communism and Nazism, the House of Terror. As you enter the museum, you see a huge wall covered with photos: The Wall of Victims. They are all dead. In the basement of the House of Terror is another huge photo-covered wall: the Wall of Victimizer. Some of these people are still living. The museum is on Andrassy [AHN-drash-shee] Avenue, a World Heritage property<sup>12</sup> in the actual headquarters building for the Hungarian Nazi Party (also called the Arrow Cross Party). The building later served as the headquarters for the State Pro-

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<sup>12</sup> A World Heritage Site is a landmark which has been officially recognized by the United Nations, specifically by UNESCO. Sites are selected on the basis of having cultural, historical, scientific, or some other form of significance, and they are legally protected by international treaties.

tection Authority (the secret police force); and the basement was a prison, torture chamber, and place of execution during the Communist regime until 1956. Now the House of Terror is a place of remembrance with two huge walls—one for the victims and another for the victimizers.

Missions is about learning from one another. One group encourages another through prayer and giving; the other group tells of lessons learned through suffering. We all need to learn how to live in freedom; however, you can learn from us how to live within the lack of freedom. The apostle Paul declared the importance of living by faith in the extremities of life: “I have learned to be content regardless of my circumstances. I know how to live humbly, and I know how to abound. I am accustomed to any and every situation—to being filled and being hungry, to having plenty and having



Just a small segment of the Wall of Victims at the House of Terror in Budapest.

need. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”<sup>13</sup> “Teaching one another in freedom and in exile” is a lesson we all need to learn. No nation can be sure what their future holds; we need to be ready.

I am sure people around the globe wondered what was behind the Iron Curtain. Some of you may have asked, “What is behind those fences that separate us—fences created by governments, by our own fears, and by religious differences?” All of us were people separated, and we were taught that the “others” were our enemies and that they were threats to us.

As I reflect on life behind the Iron Curtain, I remember **dreaming and hoping...**

As a child, I thought of the world as a big place divided into two parts, those where Christians were free to worship and those where they were not. As children, we often played “church” at home, and we envied some of you. I believed in two perfect places: heaven as the perfect place “over there,” and the other place—on the other side of the Iron Curtain—was a big, free world: a big, free, *perfect* world. Well, I still believe one of them is perfect.

Behind faces, there are dreams, hopes, envy, and longing. Some of *us* are the dreamers, and some of *you* are the objects of those dreams.

What else was behind the Iron Curtain in the past and the fences of today? There was **a lot of fear**. Today when I

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<sup>13</sup> Philippians 4:11b-13, bsb

pray for those who are persecuted, I am reminded of the fear and the seemingly unrealistic peace that can exist at the same time. Their fear, my fear. My peace, their peace.

In those days, the purpose behind everything was to deceive, terrify, debase, dehumanize, and antagonize. It was a fear-based reality.

When I was a child, almost monthly “the big black car” arrived, and I was rushed inside the house and told to be quiet. My father would be taken away, usually returning a few hours later. We could never be sure, however, since he was often arrested during his travels and would sometimes be kept several days. I still remember the indescribable feeling I had when Dad disappeared for a few days.

My childhood was a time and place where persecution was made up of lies, secrets, hatred, and fear.

One of the greatest lessons I learned was the “before Easter experience with our persecutors.” Those Christians taught me how to handle fear, even as a child.

It was Thursday night of Passion Week, and the church was together in the evening for Bible study and a short service. Two armed policemen interrupted the service. My father explained that we had permission to gather within those four walls for worship. (We were “only” forbidden to *convert* people; we had the freedom to go to church, but that “freedom” often came with “price tags,” such as losing educational opportunities and jobs or having to move frequently.) My father asked the policemen to either sit down or return at the end of the service. The intruders did not use

the opportunity to learn about the Bible; but as soon as Dad said “Amen,” they were at the door.

It was a time for an irregular announcement: the policemen commanded everyone to stay where they were. It was scary for us children, but we took our cues from the adults. (I guess this is when the children’s Sunday School time *really* started: “Children, what should we do when we are afraid?”)

The police ordered, “Everyone will leave the church one by one, giving your full name and address.” We all knew that anyone providing this information could be taken away at any time. It was not uncommon for people to “disappear” when authorities took such close interest in them. In the 1970s, this was a terror tactic, used to threaten Christians so they would not feel “being religious” was worth the effort.

There was silence. Nobody moved. (Our children’s lesson was unfolding!)

Mrs. Kovács [ko-VAH-ch], a middle-aged woman, stood up and walked straight up to the policemen. She gave her name and her full address, then turned and walked toward the door. At the last minute, she turned around.

“By the way, my husband loves the Lord,” she said firmly, “but unfortunately he is at work and could not make it tonight. He would have been here, otherwise. Can you put down his name as well? Same address. Oh, and my sons! They really love the Lord....They are strong Christians.” She went on and on, naming family members who could not be in attendance, but who loved the Lord and “would have been there, otherwise.”

The policemen, wanting to create fear, were puzzled by Mrs. Kovács's response. One by one, the people in the church stepped forward, dictating their names and addresses and those of all their friends, relatives, and neighbours who were unable to attend that night.

The policemen had to write down everything. After all, gathering information on everyone was the key to making this fear-based system work. The event resulted in long work hours for them. The members of the congregation were encouraged by each other's faith; and as they left the building, some of them added, "Oh, and Easter is near. Have a blessed celebration of the Resurrection. Christ is risen!"

It took a lot of courage for this body of believers to accomplish what they did.

My name is somewhere on that list written by the policemen; my parents gave my data in faith. But I was not the hero of this story, I was only *an eyewitness*—a member of the next generation learning courage.

Thank you, adults, for this lesson! I will never forget. It has helped me in my life and in my pastoral ministry. I was an eyewitness of the previous generation's faith.

I also noticed, as a school kid, that there were different types of adults around us. Behind the Iron Curtain everyone had some kind of a fear in their eyes. There were those who had fear and hatred in their eyes (the oppressors.) And there were those who had fear and love in their eyes (the oppressed Christians).

Love was the only distinction in that crazy world that distinguished Christ's disciples. Amongst the fears that we Christians experience today, do we have fear and hatred or do we have fear and love?

Today when I pray for those who are persecuted, I also think of **those who persecute**. Their fear does not come with peace from above; it is hatred fed by fear. I think of the men and women who wear uniforms, think they have power, and serve one who pretends to be bigger than Christ, yet is the enemy of Christ.

I have to be honest with you—when I see a uniform, I still react differently than people who never had to flee from one house to another during the night. We, as Christians, were trying to save our lives. When we hid in a darkened room, my older sisters and my mom were afraid that one of my younger siblings would cry or cough. They knew the smallest sound might be heard by those who marched around the house and who relished the thought of fulfilling the command to kill us. I remember wanting us all to be silent and invisible.

Growing up, I realized more and more that we all have fear, even the persecutors. Think about it, Christ was persecuted at the command of those in authority; they were afraid of Him. If you examine persecutors, you realize their fear is greater than that of the persecuted. Not only that, their fear is eternal unless they meet the One who removes all fear.

My mind goes back to those who first persecuted us, then worshipped with us. When we are tempted to fear those

who oppress us, we need to be mindful that there might be an apostle behind the eyes of those oppressors. They are *eyewitnesses* to our lives, just as I was an *eyewitness* to those Christians around me.

The victimizers are watching. A long time ago, a Roman soldier said, “Surely he was the Son of God!”<sup>14</sup> Another eyewitness changed from a persecutor to one of the persecuted, from Saul to Paul. Isn’t it strange that one’s death is another man’s salvation, that killing someone for his or her faith becomes evangelism that was never planned?

Our response to what to do with persecutors can be an easy one when answered at a Bible study where everyone has nice Bibles, coffee is served, and the participants have relatively comfortable lives. The answer becomes tough when those persecutors are *your* oppressors, when you suffer at *their* hands, and especially if they are still living “happily-ever-after” lives.

Then again, the response becomes less troubling when we consider that persecution and suffering are not about us. Christ is the one being persecuted, not us. The persecutors are not after us, but after Christ in us.

For instance, in Communism, all Christian work among children and youth was forbidden, no evangelism was allowed. What is Christ’s church without evangelism? At that time, it was said that within 10 years every trace of Christianity would be gone in Hungary.

John replied to such thinking: “I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew 27:54

is to come, the Almighty.' I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."<sup>15</sup>

Missions bears witness to those hostile to Christians. It also provides an arena for such people to observe, to witness. It allows persecutors to dialogue with Jesus:

"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?"

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."<sup>16</sup>

Jesus does not say, "I am Jesus, the Lord of those whom you are persecuting." He simply says, "I am the One you are persecuting."

Where is your place of mission? Who are the people "guarding" you? Who witnesses how you act when your rights are taken away? There are future "Pauls" among today's oppressors because Christ keeps appearing and stopping the faith-killers. Christ talks to the persecutors. Do not cause His work to be in vain. Yes, you may be fearful, but fear and hatred should not mark us. *Our* fear should be paired with love.

Forgiveness is difficult work. It is even more challenging when those we need to forgive are still alive. We cannot seek revenge, knowing these people are lost spiritually.

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<sup>15</sup> Revelation 1:8–9. Interestingly, Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky [VLAH-duh-mir mah-juh-KOV-skee] may have paralleled some of this thought when he wrote, "Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin shall live forever."

<sup>16</sup> Based on Acts 9:4–5.

Then some countries experience *a traffic jam on the road to Damascus* as Hungarian writer Péter Esterházy [PAY-ter ES-ter-HAH-zee] calls the phenomenon of such a sudden turn of events.

Adding to the challenge are those persecutors who want Christianity to be gone in 10 years, then have changes of heart when they meet Jesus and eventually sit in the pews with us. These had been our torturers and spies, those who had “guarded our clothes” like Saul did before his Damascus Road experience.

Then there are the Christians who allow our persecution, who watch the worst of our suffering, knowing and refusing to join in that suffering. I want to interrogate them: “Where were you when we were terrified, suffering, and persecuted?”

“I was watching you all at the baptism in the Tisza [TEE-sah] River, guarding the weapons, ready to arrest anybody.”

“I gave the command and wrote reports on you.”

“I was a spy on your Dad.”

Just like Saul, guarding the clothes at the stoning of Stephen, they will have to admit to being *eyewitnesses* and later experiencing salvation as a result. These miracles happen again and again—Sauls turn and become Pauls.

Yet, in other countries, the road to Damascus is empty, as Hungarian journalist Gergő Süveges [GAR-goh SHOO-veh-gesh] says, because conversion is not compatible or not politically correct. Some are from countries where Christians are not persecuted; however, churches suffer

because the cultures are not compatible with Christianity any longer and people have lost their faith.

Remember, it is Christ they hate, not you; and persecution was prophesied. “I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you,”<sup>17</sup> and “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”<sup>18</sup> “A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”<sup>19</sup> Does that help us know how to relate to them?

After so many years, uniforms still scare me. Recently, I had the opportunity to see people in whose eyes I recognized those same emotions. We must have looked quite similar to those uniformed people of years ago.

During the recent incident, I was wearing a “Caucasian Christian European uniform,” the uniform of a certain attitude toward the oppressed. For me, it was a moving experience to reach out; because behind those eyes gazing at me, I saw myself in a railway station long ago. I remembered the fear, the hope *for* hope.

The group was called “migrants,” the “not-wanted.” We had been told to fear them and it worked: we looked at them with anxiety, and they looked back at us with dread. Telling people to fear someone else is a successful strategy. *People love to hate.*

Hundreds of unfamiliar eyes scrutinized the local people as they passed. We felt those stares; and as our eyes met, they

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<sup>17</sup> John 15:19

<sup>18</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12

<sup>19</sup> John 15:20

waited for our reaction. As soon as we smiled a welcoming smile or waved in a friendly manner, a nod of thanksgiving or a wave was returned.

We stepped closer. “They” were behind police cordons. (There are always barriers—fences, curtains, walls, or cordons—built with fear and hatred.) “They” sat on the tiles of the railway station’s floor: strong men, sick men, middle-aged men, women, children, families, young boys sent by their parents to a better world, pregnant women.

We went very close and simply sat down with the police cordon between us, placing us all equally on the ground. Suddenly “the others” became persons with names and life stories. We told our stories; they shared theirs. Pictures of families were held out for observation. What followed was a lively discussion of what was left behind, why they left, where they were going, hopes, and fears. Sandwiches were shared.



Mária (right) with refugees (faces blurred to protect those in transition).

Just that week, I had changed my old phone for a new one. I wanted to take a photo of myself with the group, but I did not know how to do so with my new camera phone. A Syrian man—an engineer back in his home country—taught me how to use it.

Yes, I was wearing a European Christian “uniform” and identity. It was healing for me to be able to sit down on the ground with those fearful people who wanted hope. I used to belong to their minority; I was the outcast, one of those not wanted. Now I found myself in the majority, with strangers on the other side of the cordons.

What else was behind the Iron Curtain? **There was God in action.** Even in those places where you cannot reach and cannot send food, God is in motion.

When you intercede for the persecuted church, “Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”<sup>20</sup> Do not just beseech God, pleading with Him for those who are suffering; remember to praise God also. For example, I often think of the miracles that happen when there is persecution. I give thanks for God’s presence in people’s suffering and the ways people sense that presence: God’s control, peace, spiritual powers, heaven seeming closer and more real.

When and where Christians are free to work, they work hard, very hard. And, often, in the midst of that work, heaven fades, it becomes distant.

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<sup>20</sup> Hebrews 13:3

I encourage you to intercede for the persecuted, because I lived as one of those persecuted people. We experienced physical harassment (how neat the term looks compared to its nasty reality) and lost educational opportunities. And we were turned down for employment. One person was moved out of a dormitory as a penalty for a classmate's conversion. Verbal and public humiliation were frequent. But God was with us, miracles happened weekly, and His mission went on.

In the 1970s, my father was sent to a small village to plant a church. Among the first converts was a mother. When her family learned of this "shame," the son and father rushed to our home, calling for my father and punching him for ruining their lives by causing their family member to convert to Christianity. The force of the blow caused Dad to sway, but he continued to stand peacefully in front of them.

The two men were expecting him to swing back, causing the fight to continue. They grew furious at his lack of aggression. News of the altercation spread (those villages were speedier than the Internet today). Several people suggested that my dad report the event to the police, to which he replied, "A soul is worth much suffering. My prayer instead is that God will bring a revival for this village."

The news continued to spread throughout the village that the "priest"<sup>21</sup> was hit and that he did not complain, did not hit back. There was no fight. As a result, a group of people came to church the next Sunday, risking their jobs,

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<sup>21</sup> They called every minister a priest.

wealth, safety, and the anger of their families. The local pub became “the server room” for the gospel as the strong men of the village discussed whether my father should have hit back and also what should be done when the attacked does not hit back. This was not a sensible response for a strong young man!

In retrospect and as a pastor, I think of the Budapest Nazarene mission strategy—the budgets, the plans, the statistics, and the invitations. Helping develop curriculum for our college, I also quickly reflect on Nazarene ministerial preparation. What do we teach about the church, evangelism, and mission? Evangelism can start with a slap in the face. The enemy will organize the crowd. No committee is needed; sometimes people come to you. When a “non-fight” takes place, the gospel spreads at the local pub through angry, puzzled men.

This seemed true for the years my family was in that village. Most of the church events provided lively discussion at the local pub. Practically all murder attempts were planned there, as well as related events afterwards. The men at the pub were persecutors—not only that, they were *eyewitnesses*. Mission took place right there.

Goulash Communism was strange, and the Party took pride in Hungary’s freedom. However, this freedom was a precious one—carefully guarded, checked, and controlled by the Party. Freedom was only allowed within church walls; and even within those walls, it was scrutinized.

Communism “protected” children and young people most of all. People of faith were not allowed to educate the younger generation, as the Party often used education as a tool to indoctrinate them.

Baptisms were frequent, as people were converted daily. Since it was the only form of open witness allowed, the church was eager to baptize new believers soon after their conversions. The services were conducted in a nearby river, so they would be open to the public.

The process often went like this: when a church planned a baptism, permission to conduct the service was requested and granted. (After all, there was *freedom* in our happy country.) At the same time, a “sneak attack” was also organized to prevent the event from taking place. The KISZ (Alliance of Young Communists) received a command to host an event at the same location and the same date, starting one hour earlier than the Christian event. Hence, two permissions were given “accidentally”; the church being unaware of the fact.

On the appointed day, the whole congregation marched throughout the village to the shallow bank of the river. The Party activists, satisfied with their plan of action, knew they did a good job—the believers would not be able to have the service and the Party leadership could not be called into question, as they had given permission for it. The church’s freedom was respected; those offering permission just made a mistake!

The church arrived at the river and saw there was a larger crowd of young Communists (students and young adults)

well into their programme. Some of the people from the church were willing to take the easy way out (much like people have said for 2,000 years), saying: "Lord, send them home," "We will cancel the service, Lord," or "What a shame for the converts to march back to the village in their white robes without having been baptized!"

Yes, the nonbelievers in the village would have considered it a good joke. There would have been laughter and mocking as we marched back. It would have been quite a spectacle, an event remembered for months! There weren't any textbook instructions on how to handle such a situation: do you sing while marching back to the church after a cancelled baptismal service, the new converts still wearing their white and *very dry* robes?

We did not cancel the service. The church leaders asked the ferryman to take us all over to the other side of the river (multiple trips, since our group was large and the ferry was not). He first refused, but eventually changed his mind,



ferrying one small group across the river at a time. (It would have been hard for anyone to be late for this service!)

Eventually the service started, and we knew it would be a test. It was difficult to set up the baptismal service, as the riverbank was hilly, the water deep, and we were unfamiliar with the river's current. The congregation had to stand high up on the bank, away from the river. My father walked down the steep bank and stepped into the river. His opening prayer was not just a ceremonial prayer, but a true prayer of faith that the congregation had chosen the right spot where the river was not too deep, where it was safe, and mainly "that no one may be lost"! One by one, the converts followed my dad down the bank and out into the river.



By the time the service started, the youth on the other side of the river were singing Communist songs loudly; however, the congregation soon began to sing hymns on our side. As the service progressed, the young Communists became subdued, then the ferry began making trips across the river again.

The shallow side of the river gradually became quiet and empty as the young people came over in small groups, wanting to see the unique event. They participated in their first

Christian service, watched Christians being baptized, and heard people testifying to salvation that only comes from Christ. What started out that morning as a baptismal service became a time of evangelism to Communist young people by noon.

*God so loved the world, so loved them—the Communist young people—there—in the River Tisza—and then—during the Communist dictatorship. He loved those blocking the church service, as much as those being baptized. He had a mission on both sides of the river.*

What is mission? Where does it take place? And what is our role in God's mission?

*Question:* How do you hold open-air evangelism during a Communist dictatorship, when evangelism is forbidden?

*Answer:* The Party organizes it. God uses the enemy's schemes to invite all who need to hear the gospel. This is how you *can* reach a lot of young people, even when you *may not*.

The oppressor is often an eyewitness, a mission field. Times of suffering and hardship are when the gospel speaks. During those times, if we speak in love, even when fearful, God can work.

For those places we cannot reach right now, God gives visions and dreams to people and uses our oppressors for His work. For these reasons, "curtains," fences, walls, and creative access areas exist.

I am not lamenting about “wanting to go back to Egypt” at all, but **persecution is not the worst that can happen to a person**. Gaining the whole world and losing our souls<sup>22</sup> is worse. Providing everything for our children, and losing their souls is worse. Living comfortably and not experiencing God in action is worse.

What if we “do” missions all our lives, arrive at the final judgement, and are told, “You did not give Me anything to eat<sup>23</sup>, you did not seat Me at your table, you did not see Me as a stranger, you did not notice Me. The one you were feeding was not Me, but your ego and your Christian image. You only did it when others were looking on, when it elevated you in their eyes. Your missiological footprint, which you thought was so big, caused more harm than good.”

### **Love is the difference; hatred is the sign.**

Jesus dared to challenge a lot of things, but He never responded with “anti-Roman” sentiment. He was passionate—not to demonstrate how to defeat those who followed the enemy, but to show His followers how to love those around them.

We should learn from Christ, our example, and examine what we say about our oppressors. We are often ready to hate the enemy; however, that task keeps us busy and distracted, preventing us from allowing God to show us our failures.

Years after the times of my parents’ and grandparents’ suffering, we went to a funeral. My father was scheduled to

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<sup>22</sup> Mark 8:36

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 25:42

officiate at the burial, along with another minister from a historical church,<sup>24</sup> and my grandfather was with us.

Grandpa used to be a *kulak* [KOO-lahk], a wealthy farmer; however, he lost his wealth when his lands were confiscated by the Communists who frowned upon private assets. Later, when Grandpa became a Christian, he was transformed into a fiery believer, who sang and praised God in spite of everything. He was imprisoned and beaten for his faith; yet, in prison, he continued to evangelize with his joyful singing.

Unfortunately, a minister was behind Grandpa's imprisonment. Sometimes, *we Christians* oppress and persecute *us Christians*. We are divided.

At the end of the funeral, Grandpa took Dad up to the minister who performed the funeral and said, "May I introduce my son to you?"

"Oh, congratulations," said the minister. "That was a powerful sermon! What a great speaker and preacher your son has become!"

"I think so," Grandpa replied with a smile. "Would you consider my son following Christ to be a fruit of my suffering and imprisonment for my faith? Would you agree with me that my suffering for Christ was worth it?" You see, Grandpa had learned that this minister was the one who had given the orders, resulting in Grandpa's arrest.

The minister stood there embarrassed, then said, "Yes, I think it was all very worth it. I envy you."

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<sup>24</sup> The name of the church is omitted to prevent speaking against anyone.

*The eyewitness.* Everyone is watching. Evangelism and missions take place, even if they are planned by the enemy. C. S. Lewis was right, when he wrote, “Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive.”<sup>25</sup>

Christ forgave those who crucified Him. What a powerful example to us! And what a powerful witness for Christ’s followers to forgive those that hurt us, allowing them a time of grace. “You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, knowing that you yourselves had a better and permanent possession. So do not throw away your confidence; it holds a great reward. You need to persevere, so that after you have done God’s will, you will receive what He has promised.”<sup>26</sup>

People often think that evangelism takes place only when invitations are sent, attractive programmes are printed, and the details of the event are organized by a committee. After the crucifixion, Peter and the disciples were praying, breaking bread, listening to apostles’ teaching, and waiting....praying, breaking bread, listening to apostles’ teaching, and waiting....

At Pentecost, Peter did not send out invitations, and yet there was a crowd. Peter still did not do anything, and the Holy Spirit came. Peter *still* did not do anything, and people started to comment on the events, to ask questions, to voice their opinions. **Then** the mission opportunity came! Peter

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<sup>25</sup> C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*: © 1952, [www.dacc.edu/assets/pdfs/PCM/merechristianitylewis.pdf](http://www.dacc.edu/assets/pdfs/PCM/merechristianitylewis.pdf) (accessed September 27, 2016), 53.

<sup>26</sup> Hebrews 10:34–36, bsb

stood up and interpreted the events as a witness should; he did mission work in a multicultural context.

When a local railway station is full of people from numerous countries not speaking the same language, you begin to think: We have been praying, breaking bread, receiving apostles' teaching, and waiting. Now the crowd is here. That crowd may or may not be "Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs"<sup>27</sup>; but maybe from Western and South Asia, Africa, and the Western Balkans, and visitors from neighboring countries who joined the travelers. These nationalities comprise the crowd of 60 million displaced people among thousands of asylum seekers worldwide.

Just as Peter had to explain what was occurring at Pentecost, our Pentecost can be found among refugees, immigrants, and any others around us. We should be interpreters of the world's events to our crowd. We should be prepared to explain when people ask, "What does this mean?"<sup>28</sup>

The Holy Spirit uses world events for salvation to unfold. Are you prepared for the crowd to gather? Will you be a Book of Acts witness about whom some may say they are drunk,<sup>29</sup> while others will be "amazed and perplexed?"<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Acts 2:9–11a

<sup>28</sup> Acts 2:12

<sup>29</sup> Acts 2:13

<sup>30</sup> Acts 2:12

Will your church be a witness when the crowd asks, “Brothers, what should we do?”<sup>31</sup>

It is always better to be a victim than a victimizer. The victim has the right to stand up for the truth, to endure, to go an extra mile, and to serve the oppressor: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.”<sup>32</sup>

## Reconciliation

When I think of reconciliation, I am reminded of the man in the parable who has been forgiven his debts, yet did not want to forgive the debts of another servant.<sup>33</sup>

Reconciliation is the acknowledgement that I abused my power and position and that I belong to a nation whose ancestors did the same: they lied, stole, killed, took away lands, and worshipped idols. I sinned against God. Acknowledgement of my personal suffering under Communism does not compare to the magnitude of my sins. I am a citizen of a nation that has oppressed others, and others—including some of my readers—are probably citizens of nations that oppressed us.

Reconciliation is the acknowledgement that I am a *released* servant who should not bind others, but am now *bound* to do one thing...release others.

Reconciliation with other human beings is the joyful and grateful celebration that my debts are forgiven. Any other action would be unreasonable and cruel.

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<sup>31</sup> Acts 2:37

<sup>32</sup> Romans 12:20

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 18:21-25

Reconciliation is a broken relationship changed into something beautiful and friendly when it is not “us and them.” It is only “us”—people in need of reconciliation with God and one another.

In this parable, mercy and grace expose cruelty. We need to continually pray, “Forgive us, as we forgive others.”

If we live as ones who are forgiven, our sins will be ever before us. How should we respond to world events? How should forgiveness affect our actions?

## **But not all Christians forgive**

At one of the open-air baptisms, we received the required permission from the local government; however, there was also a group of people who were told to kill the “priest” (my dad). The leader of the group was a man whose wife had become a Christ-follower. Because of her former key position in the Communist Party, the woman’s conversion meant the loss of those who could protect her and guarantee her survival, the loss of jobs, as well as putting the whole family in danger. The man told the “killing team” that both his wife and the priest needed “to go.”

The news reached the ears of some of the Christian men in town. First, they tried to convince Dad that the baptism should not be held, that we should tell the new convert that performing the service was too dangerous. My pastor father explained to the church that cancellation was not an option, but prayer was.

The church started to pray about the service. The congregation was also fearful for the wife and what her death

might mean for her family and the village, so they prayed for her as well.

The day of the baptism came, and the crowd started to march to the river. The church was so caught up in fear and prayer that they forgot their usual prayer request that the police not show up. So the police also arrived. (Often, the police showed up to notice anything that could be used against the “priest” and the church, possibly arrest several people, and end the service.) Some church members started to say that our prayers were not answered. Not only that, they pointed out that it was even worse, because now we had both the police *and* the murderers in attendance.

Again and again, the church had to learn to trust God. The policemen watched the whole service close by; the murdering team stayed a distance away. As it turned out, their actions were not synchronized. Each group was not aware that the other planned to attend. The men planning harm were afraid of the police and did not dare come close. God protected His people. The wife was baptized, and later other family members were as well. We did not know the word “bodyguards” back then, but God certainly ordered them for us.

When the House of Terror opened, I wanted to take my Mom there to see it. I thought, “Finally, the truth is here; justice is served. The photos and names of our persecutors are revealed; they have been put to shame.” Several times, I tried to convince my mother to visit the museum with me. Each time, she told me that she did not want to visit because it was not a *museum* to her, it was her *life*.

When my brothers asked for the III/III files (secret police files) on my father, they found that 80 percent of the text was still blacked out. You see, most of the victimizers are still alive. There is potentially a group for people to hate, and we as humans love to hate!



Exterior of the House of Terror.

Peter says: “You know that through this man God worked miracles, did amazing things, and gave signs<sup>34</sup>... **whom you crucified.**”<sup>35</sup> When we witness to our oppressors, this is generally where we stop...with the accusation. In church history, these verses have caused much suffering because disciples—in the name of the Lord—only preach half of the gospel by stopping at this point.

We sometimes forget to add what Peter continued to say: “**This promise belongs to you** and to your children and

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<sup>34</sup> Acts 2:22, GW

<sup>35</sup> Acts 2:36, GW

*to everyone who is far away.* It belongs to everyone who worships the Lord our God.”<sup>36</sup> Can we say this to those who have caused extreme suffering? This promise belongs to you. God has a mission on both sides of the wall. It was not easy for me to extend that promise to my oppressors; however, that is when the real Good News starts.

In the Church of the Nazarene, we are compelled to pray for the persecuted church, mistreated believers. I like leading that prayer in my local church and always share one or two stories of people who have suffered for their faith.

Which brings me to the next powerful question: on what day do we pray for the persecutors—the terrorists, the hateful, the oppressors, those hostile to Christianity? The world rejoices over the death of a terrorist, persecutor, or dictator. But to the Lord, that death is a loss of a soul unsaved. “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Acts 2:39, GW

<sup>37</sup> Ezekiel 18:23

# Act On It

- In what ways, do I take pleasure in the punishment of the wicked?
- Prayer:
  - Think of as many persecutors as you can. For me, these have become a gallery of people for whom to pray. I give thanks for those oppressors who are still alive, as they can still find Christ.
  - Pray that none of the persecutors will perish. Sample prayer: “Lord, meet the persecutors and give them dreams and visions to see Jesus. In this way, the death of Stephen, the suffering of my grandparents, my parents, and my own suffering will not be in vain. Please, save their souls, and use us as You will. Amen.”
  - Seek God’s forgiveness:

Father, forgive us and free us from Jonah’s spirit: desiring the wicked be punished, considering some unworthy of salvation and our mission efforts, withholding ourselves, and turning away so we do not meet the wicked.<sup>38</sup>

Go to these people and give Your message of forgiveness and grace.

We confess that, with some people groups, we cared for the comfort of shade or air-condi-

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<sup>38</sup> Jonah 4:1–2

tioning more than the loss of their souls. We, as a church, have at times only done mission work because, as in Jonah's story, You had a fish spit us out on these people's shores. Otherwise, we would have voted against entering towns and cities. At times we did not want to go to certain areas; we preferred to send our missionaries to serve in easier places or to provide a budget for someplace "not where You had planned."

Father, thank you for making us go to those unwanted places.

Now, we ask that You continue to encourage the Church of the Nazarene to go to those places where You are needed most and when we will be most effective—even if it is a "Nineveh," not an ideal target for a missionary or evangelist, too wicked, beyond hope, "not worthy" of our efforts. Force us to stay missional: doing mission where and when we need to be.

- Let us not be naïve: sins not forgiven will be punished; but until then, we have a mission. The death of every persecutor is a sad event. Christ loves all, "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."<sup>39</sup> How can such people come to repentance? What are

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<sup>39</sup> 2 Peter 3:9

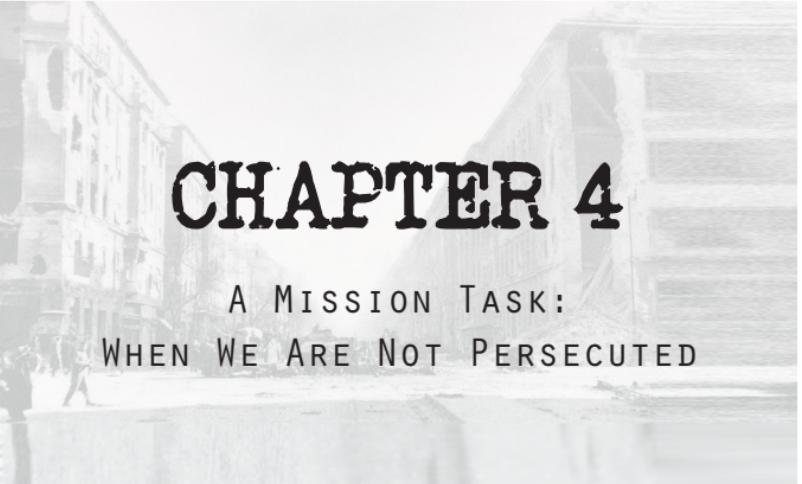
some real life, historical opportunities of evangelism in the world today?

- What is the proper way of relating to persecutors? How do we carry out “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Matthew 5:44





# CHAPTER 4

## A MISSION TASK: WHEN WE ARE NOT PERSECUTED

I do not find a command to rejoice when we are not persecuted. However, for those of us who are not receiving hostile treatment for our faith, we should make sure oppressed Christians' sufferings should not be in vain. We need to be good witnesses when we are not persecuted.

...so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Philippians 2:15–17

A one-of-a-kind book<sup>42</sup> was recently released describing the persecution of Christians in the twenty-first century. According to the book, 2014 was the worst year, with 400 million Christians strongly persecuted. Every 5 minutes a Christian was killed for his or her faith, and there were 50 countries where persecution was considered “extreme” or “very strong.” The author writes that some countries claim to be Christian with no Christian persecution; however, there remains a hostility against Christianity in these countries that affects people’s jobs, lives, and freedom.

Prayer for the persecuted is necessary, but it is only half the task. Let us not only pray for those who suffer, but let us live so that their testimony will not be destroyed because of us: “for the name of God because of you is evil spoken of among the nations.”<sup>43</sup> Since all of us are involved in a battle without borders, we must keep in mind—even in places free of persecution—that all of us will be required to work together to achieve “the victory over him because of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.”<sup>44</sup> It should be true of both those suffering and those living in a freer world—who should pray for those that do not—that: “They didn’t love their life so much that they refused to give it up.”<sup>45</sup> Let our faithful lives be observed across the nations. The news of our lives can even reach creative access areas or

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<sup>42</sup> Győrfy, Károly, Keresztényüldözés a 21. század elején. Kairosz Kiadó, Budapest, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Romans 2:24, YLT

<sup>44</sup> Revelation 12:11a, GW

<sup>45</sup> Revelation 12:11b, GW

places where we cannot go physically. We need to live our lives in such a way that their suffering will not be in vain.

“Mom, what was the hardest time of your life?”

“The persecution years.”

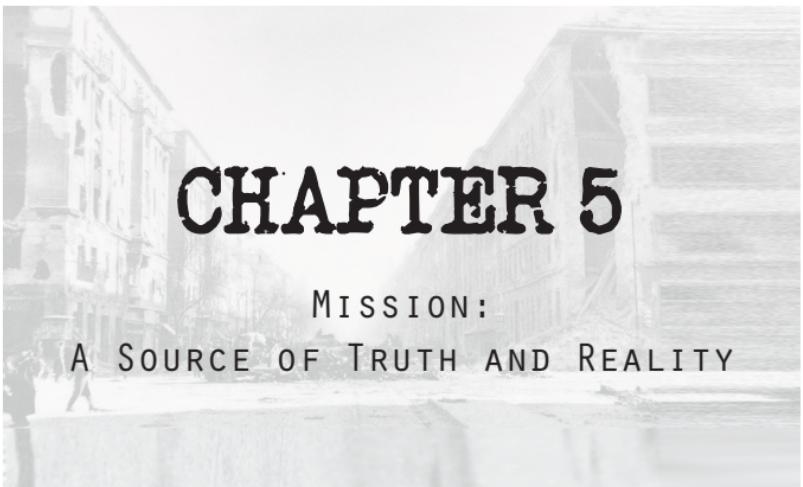
“And the happiest time of your life?”

“The same years.”

After thinking a while, she added, “We did not have time to think whether we had enough food or what we wanted. God was acting; events were rolling. It is the best thing to be in the middle of God acting.”

# Act On It

- How can our witness prevent other Christians' sufferings from not being in vain?
- How can we make persecuted Christians' witness stronger to the world?
- What are some “less-than-Christian” behaviours or ways of thinking that ruin some Christians’ witness?



# CHAPTER 5

## MISSION: A SOURCE OF TRUTH AND REALITY

Under Communism, we lived under two “realities.” We were torn between what we were told at school and what we heard in the living rooms of our parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts. All historical events were interpreted by a variety of sources, not just Christians and Communists. To navigate among the lies and truth, the name of the game was “Find the True Source.”

The spreading of so-called truth can happen in any society for various reasons via many channels (media, education, etc.). So we must ask ourselves, “What is the role of the family when children are taught something other than the truth outside the home?” What does it mean for faith development, missions, education? How do children learn to weigh knowledge and reality? They will not effectively learn solely through the memorization of facts, but by learning to think about life experiences and to interpret those events.

If a family is able to live their faith, that is more convincing than any media “authorities” can present.

Jesus said: I am the truth. I am the reality. He revealed the Father, and the fullness of God was in the Son. In Him, all reality extended into the past, the present, and the future.

As a child growing up under a dictatorship, subconsciously I learned that truth is not made up of mere facts. Truth is related to the source of information, to a person. Truth is relative only if it is a philosophical concept; when truth is based in a person, it is no longer relative.

In order to survive, I had to learn to weigh what was said against who is saying it. For me, truth came through my family. The weighing process was who spoke the message. Trusting the right person as the source for the truth was more important in the world of two realities than the facts on either side.

Take history for example, how my grandfather told stories about the wars and how the oppressors described them could result in very differing viewpoints. It could lead to the differences between a liberating or oppressing army, revolution or anti-revolution, judging something positive or negative. Our whole history could be told as two opposing stories.

For us, my grandfather represented a trustworthy, personal truth about world history; our parents did the same. They retold the stories to us about creation, World War I, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Habsburg-Hungarian monarchy, and other stories. Our family members were our sources.

I recently looked in a history book, and it was as if we were sitting in my parents' living room, listening to the stories. The stories had changed and were closer to what I heard as I grew up. I guess the textbooks are catching up and historians are working from different sources now. It must be difficult for those families who believed the "official" version of the truth back then.

When my husband, Imre, was in engineering college, he had to study Political Economy. The Socialist economy was so confusing that the students finally confessed to their professor that it just did not make sense. The professor said, "You and I know that this is what I am ordered to teach. We both know this does not make sense. But I will teach it, you will learn it and take the exams, and that is the end of it. I know it is not true, but I have to teach it."

The source of truth becomes crucial in a double-reality world. Truth is not expressed in trendy words; it is all about the person saying it. And we trust in the One who said, "I am...the truth."<sup>46</sup>

I am afraid there is a double reality even now. Satan's oppression is ongoing. It might have nicer forms or names other than Communism. Satan is the father of lies, and that creates the double reality.

Our mission is to tell the stories, interpret events, and reveal the Truth. We must become trustworthy sources for

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<sup>46</sup> John 14:6

our children. Mission tells the true story as we experience it, as we witness it, and as we interpret history and events around us.

There are many ways to fight against kingdoms and rulers of thoughts. However, our main task should be to develop healthy relationships with our children, so they can have real-life faith experiences in our homes and churches. We need to teach them to use all their senses: tasting, hearing, seeing, touching the substance of faith, the essence of God, the Truth, the fullness of God. They need to “taste and see that the LORD is good”<sup>47</sup> and not be satisfied with just nibbles of a Christian religion downsized to a narrow world or a sterile version of an unexciting faith.

What if people hear our stories and trust us as their source of truth? That is called a mission opportunity. They give us the privilege and responsibility of relying on us. They will ask us to tell the stories of the world: What is happening now, who is who, what does it mean, what should we do? They will ask some of the same questions asked by the multicultural crowd at Pentecost: “What does this mean?”<sup>48</sup> and “What shall we do?”<sup>49</sup>

After hearing truth from us, they can study and hear the many interpretations of “truth,” the lies told by others in their lives. But what if our children come home or our neighbors visit our church and they hear the story of the world as *God’s story*?

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<sup>47</sup> Psalm 34:8

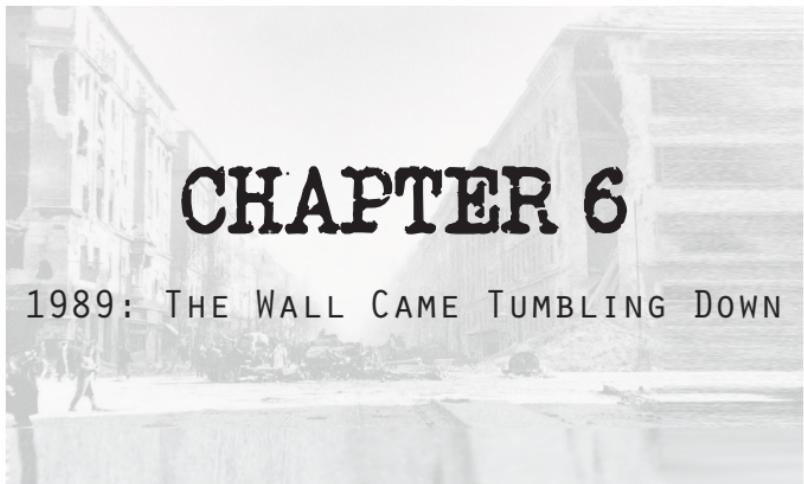
<sup>48</sup> Acts 2:12

<sup>49</sup> Acts 2:37

I remember the first Bible study Imre and I held in our living room in 1997, starting a Nazarene church plant. We were talking about the beauty of creation and it being God's work. A lady responded, "I have studied many versions about how the world came into being, but I have never heard this version before!"

# Act On It

- Reflect on the following questions:
  - What double realities must you face in your life?
  - How are you a source of truth to others around you?
  - How can we regain our mission by becoming more trustworthy?
  - You might be ready to fight for the Truth (and make others suffer for your conviction), but how much are you willing to suffer for Him as the Truth?
- To regain your mission field, start with your family and friends, being a person who reflects God's perspective on your reality.
  - How are you a true witness of the past and the present?
  - How will you be a prophet, interpreting the confusing events and realities of today as part of the salvation story, answering the following questions from your listeners: "What does it mean?" and "What shall we do?" Missions starts with being truthful when we answer questions about here and today.



# CHAPTER 6

## 1989: THE WALL CAME TUMBLING DOWN

“Who would have thought?” That is the reflection I hear from those within the system of the Eastern Bloc and those who were the observers, watching us from outside the Iron Curtain.

When you are a prisoner of time, you cry out in hopelessness, believing that suffering will never end. I would have not thought it either. I thought the next generation would live as we lived, and I believed we needed to prepare them to live right under the same system.

On 23 October, 1989, I was in a delivery room. I went to the hospital at midnight, just as the clock turned from 22 to 23 October. A regular October day. Everything about me is an autumn person.

At 7:30 a.m., my son was born. My first prayer was, “Lord, will You save him from all that I had to live through,

please? But also will You protect him and help him to understand You in the midst of all the turns of life? Show yourself to him as You revealed yourself in all the strange happenings in my life."

My first visitor was a family member, and the first news I received was: "The Republic of Hungary has been announced today. It is over!"

I hugged Rudolf, my "freedom child," that morning.

Earlier I thought I was deprived of a nice childhood, an enjoyable youth—freedom and fun. Today, I think I had a rich experience of God, not just through a rational indoctrination of why the Communists are not right. I can prove that God does exist; not through heavy Bible studies and worship services—and we had them frequently when I was growing up. I learned, not as a slave to enlightenment or in opposition to an ideology; no, I learned *by experience*.

We experienced God's reality, thanks to a hostile environment. His people—while persecuted—prayed and witnessed, and God acted. This went beyond "watching"; I had an experiential learning. I learned about God through living and watching His acts in *my* history.

We need to give our sons and daughters an opportunity to learn by living and experiencing, instead of chewing each bite of doctrine for them. We have colleges and educational programmes set up; we even have programmed missions. We must discern when beautiful *and* ugly things happen in the world and allow our children to feel and live through them. We need to be the storytellers, helping the next generation,

like our parents guided us in navigating our present realities from the past.

We can be so overprotective, shielding children from reality, from God himself who acts in the harsh realities.

I pray that my son will see God acting through his feeling, seeing, and experiencing life.

When Rudolf started his summer practicum for theology, I was like all Christian mothers and wanted him to have the best learning opportunities. My husband said I was like Salome, the mother of the Zebedee brothers, wanting the best for her boys.<sup>50</sup> I felt that I was less ambitious than Salome, either Christ's right hand or His left hand would have been fine for me, whichever the Lord wanted.

Instead, my son was assigned some extreme circumstances by the practicum leader: homeless people in a poor Roma village with high crime and little hygiene. Rudolf came home and said, “Finally, I am living! I can feel, see this is not fake. It is reality, and God is acting.”

Why do we want to protect our children from living their history? True faith allows God’s will in our children’s lives and helps them experience Him in action, to become eyewitnesses instead of being bored with secondhand Christianity.

What is our current history? Terrorism, new empires, new gods, new religions, new waves of immigrants? What is

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<sup>50</sup> Matthew 20:20–28

“the ugly” today, where are the needs, where are the cups of suffering being swallowed?

In the first century—depending on your perspective as the storyteller—history included new laws and Caesar issuing a decree that all the world should be taxed. It involved chaos, escape, refugee status, and killing babies. It definitely was not the celebrated golden years of a nation.

However, for some, the story of the first century involved the Son of God being born, shepherds seeing angels and hearing them sing, wise men following a shining star, and a new mother- and father-to-be listening to angels in reality and through dreams.

The twenty-first century will stay with you for a time with facts, dates, and local and global events, like the evening news. Where can you hear and see angels today? What events cause the sky to unfold? Where are the realities in which God intervenes?

For some, Communism is a political reality, a time in history, a negative element between 1950s and 1989. For some, it was the best of the times—Christ meeting people on the road to Communism and saving their souls. They became the “Pauls” of the church.

What good does it do if you stay in the “palace” or the “temple” when important events take place in the small hamlet of Bethlehem or in a Hungarian Szabolcs<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Szabolcs was one of the oldest counties in Hungary. It is in the northeastern part of the country.

[SAW-bowl-ch] village? Are you shielding your sons and daughters in the palaces of wealth and knowledge? What if those who are on the road—those who tend the flocks, those who gaze toward the sky—hear the angels and have the dreams, because they are outside the palaces and temples? Will your children miss these monumental announcements?

Dear Zebedee Parents and Ambitious Christ-followers,

Your sons and daughters will speak what God has revealed.

Your young men will see visions.

Your old men will dream dreams.

In those days I will pour my Spirit on my servants, on both men and women.

They will speak what God has revealed.<sup>52</sup>

There is a saying that if you want your children to have a good life, let them go hungry and cold a little bit. Let us give the gift of real-life experiences to our children, teaching them mission *through* mission. We need to help them see and understand how God acts in history by allowing them to see how God acts under real-life situations. Two people—one a believer, the other not a believer—can live the same history, but one can miss the salvation story! Christ saved the sons of the Zebedees from a bored, fake discipleship of sitting on His right and left hands.

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<sup>52</sup> Acts 2:17–18, gw

We know that people learn best through experiences (for example, learning to cook by cooking). What a great idea! How about learning to do missions by doing missions: experiencing fear, going cold, going hungry, etc.

We taught our child everything we knew about faith, and we had a son who was very smart, talking about God and the Bible. However, the moment our son saw God in action and owned *his* story, it became real and powerful. Experiencing God in action was the most convincing lesson for our son, and that is true for everyone.

Allow your children to meet God in their time, through the events of the world. Do not prevent them from hardship. In the niceties of life, they cannot meet God in the same way. When God acts, their senses will not be numb. They will see, hear, and understand. They will experience fear, faith, trust, disappointment, and miracles.

I would rather be persecuted and sense God with all my senses than to live a bored, safe, Christian life. **The best thing is to be a part of God's mission.**

Remember the former slogan of the *Eyewitness Travel Guides*: "The Guides that Show You What Others Only Tell You—The Eyewitness Way to See the World"? These books actually count on you wanting to go to the places they describe. They expect you to go and to use the books, not as storybooks but as guides when you are there.

The way we need to teach the Bible to our children is not as a mission storybook of a place they will never go, experiences they will never have. Rather, we should teach it as a

guide, so they will want to go, then actually go and experience missions. They should use such accounts as a guide for experiencing life and God's mission. We all need to become eyewitnesses! Do not teach the next generation that mission is a story that others tell!

Being involved in God's mission should always make us self-reflective, which may lead to a humbling conversion and recommitment of ourselves. When we talk about our faith in Christ to people who are dedicated to another religion or ideology for which they sacrifice much, our discipleship may seem shallow to them. They may consider our "sacrifice" a gift of the leftovers of our time, and our prayer life could be seen as a duty to be carried out.

In our journey in missions, we should be humbled when we observe the commitment of those whose belief systems are taken with life-and-death seriousness. Then we should repent and recommit ourselves to Christ before we teach others. May we not teach new believers to commit less to Christ than what they did to their previous gods! And may God teach us through their former commitment to serve Him even more fervently!

The revival seemed to start when my parents initiated a new ministry in a village in Szabolcs county; however, the revival did not start with them. One by one, some of the key Party leaders became Christians through my parents' ministry. These leaders included the president of the Commission, the secretary of the local KISZ (Young Communist Council), and others in key or respected positions.

A lady in the area was in charge of convincing, influencing, and changing people through Communist propaganda. (It is interesting that originally “propaganda” meant “spreading of the faith” [*Propaganda Fide*.]) She was met by Christ as she traveled to the many villages and towns in the area. When she became a Christian, she said, “If I was this diligent to win everyone over to the Party, I should go to each village and town, to each house, to win them over to Christ.” And so she did! She was tireless for Christ.

With our “mission-centered life,” would we want to teach a zealous person of another faith not to pray as much, not to work as hard, not to give up oneself for the community, not to be as religious as they were before? If so, we would fail at a lesson that could help make us more devout Christians, take away what the new believers used to have without replacing it with something better. Do we offer a closed church door, a faith community where we only show up if Saturday entertainment did not tire us out too much? Or do we run out the church door immediately after services because we have such busy lives? What do we offer? Do we only want converts, or do we want disciples?

My son, a musicologist—born in freedom—wrote his master’s dissertation work on music as a propaganda tool during dictatorship. Through his research, we relived history as books, archive documents, articles, studies, and sheet music flooded our living room and other parts of our home.

We learned that not only Christians suffered. Oppression extended to poets, writers, scientists, factory owners, and musicians who believed in something for which they were willing to suffer. It was awakening to read their reflections and compare how they lived through, and related to, suffering. Some of them were very brave, went to prison, and risked their careers. Some of the Christians did not.

Jesus suggests we learn from these people. Sometimes others are willing to risk and sacrifice more for something corruptible and man-made than for the incorruptible.

Christ died for us and risked everything. Are we willing to sacrifice ourselves? Sometimes we limit God's mission. The crowd is in attendance, the Holy Spirit is present, but we have a difficult time sacrificing our comfort or being willing to be more devoted. Spiritual laziness, self-sustenance, and self-preservation cause us to think that we can do missions when, where, and how we want it.

The word "mission" is ruined by Christians today just as much as it was ruined by the Pharisees during Jesus' day.

The judgement that I dread to hear most about missions work is: "Woe to you...you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Matthew 23:15

# Act On It

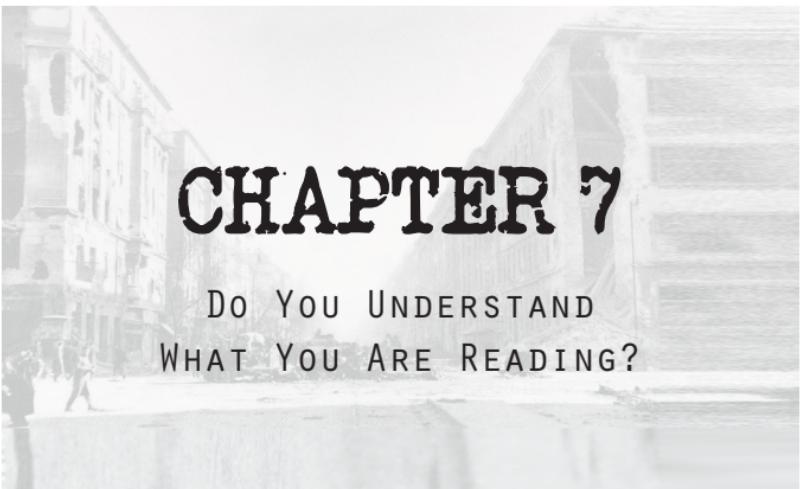
- What do you think about this reflection on hard times: “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees”?<sup>54</sup>
  - What are your thoughts on Jesus’ suffering: “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered”<sup>55</sup>
  - Think twice: If you try to avoid affliction and not take missions seriously, you will miss out on a few lessons and a lot of miracles!
- “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”<sup>56</sup> How can these verses help us improve the way we participate in missions?

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<sup>54</sup> Psalm 119:71

<sup>55</sup> Hebrews 5:7–8

<sup>56</sup> Luke 6:41-42



# CHAPTER 7

DO YOU UNDERSTAND  
WHAT YOU ARE READING?

Understanding the Bible is not only influenced by our cultures, but the systems in which we live. Plus, children understand sermons entirely differently than what we think. I grew up in the church; whenever the church door was open, we were there. I heard many sermons, Bible stories, and memorized many Scripture verses. I read and reread my blue Bible. To this day, I remember some of the verses that puzzled me most as a child.

*“Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”<sup>57</sup>*

This Scripture made me anxious as a child. Where and when I was growing up, if the Party, the police, or secret agencies took such an interest in someone, it was a sign

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<sup>57</sup> Luke 12:7

of potential suffering, nothing good. The idea of being watched was engrained in my thoughts. I did not want my name on a “black list” or my life recorded in a III/III file of the secret agency. And even *they* did not go so far as to number the hairs on my head. Reading this verse made me uneasy. Whenever I heard this passage, fear froze my mind at the beginning, so I would not consider the part that says “don’t be afraid” and “you are worth more.” Unconsciously, I avoided such passages.

*“O Lord, You have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
You understand my thought from afar.  
You scrutinize my path and my lying down,  
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before there is a word on my tongue,  
Behold, O Lord, You know it all.  
You have enclosed me behind and before,  
And laid Your hand upon me.”<sup>58</sup>*

I did not find this passage wonderful or feel the same excitement expressed by David: “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it.”<sup>59</sup> When I was younger, Psalm 139 freaked me out!

Now that I am an adult, God is not as busy with my hair as He used to be, since there is a smaller number to account for. I understand why I instinctively avoided these verses.

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<sup>58</sup> Psalm 139:1–5, NASB

<sup>59</sup> Psalm 139:6, NASB

When people in power gather information on you—when they watch you day and night, abuse such knowledge, and use it against you—there is nothing wonderful about it. (My fear about being watched was gone for a short while; however, now our use of technology may be making this a timely reminder.)

When I came to understand that the One who loves me and the One about whom He says “the Father himself loves you,”<sup>60</sup> I believed that it was all right that He knows everything about me. In fact, it is *best* that He knows, since He will never use this knowledge against me, never ruin or destroy me with this information.

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe in Me as well. In My Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and welcome you into My presence, so that you also may be where I am.”*<sup>61</sup>

This is an all-time favourite for two reasons. Since we were not allowed to travel, any Scripture describing not only God coming to us, but one day taking us where He is, sounded wonderful! I still want to go to heaven. I have traveled to many beautiful places and would love to go to many more, but heaven is still my childhood dream to be realized!

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<sup>60</sup> John 16:27

<sup>61</sup> John 14:1–3, bsb

My first trip to the United States was to Mount Vernon Nazarene College (now University) in Ohio. I could not believe that there was so much *space* and that one could experience it *freely*! This is the second reason why I loved this verse and memorized it. Every morning I repeated approximately 15 to 20 Scriptures from memory before going to school. This passage was frequently among them. I day-dreamed of the Father's house where there are many rooms. I would love to read a whole book of a biblical explanation of the many rooms in my Father's house. I am still fascinated by it.

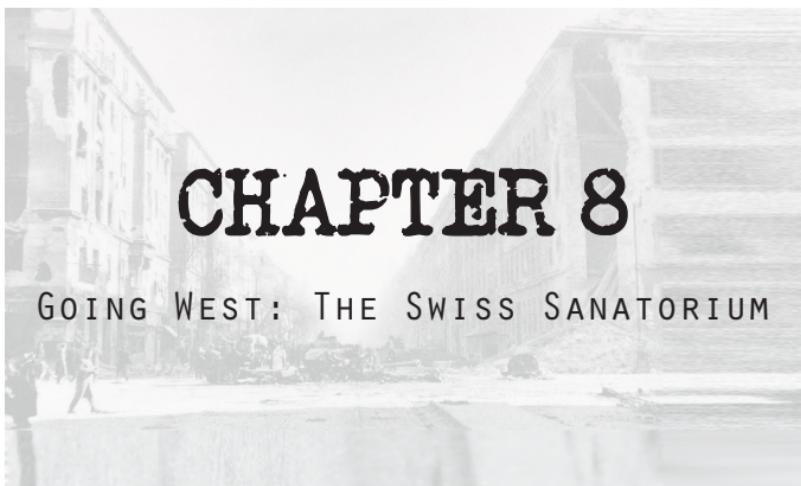
I once overheard a missionary talking about our country and explaining to other foreigners that Hungarians love to live in small apartments and very crowded houses. What an interesting conclusion. I wanted to scream and say, "No, we do not love to live in crowded conditions! We just do not have enough rooms! But *in my Father's house* are many rooms!"

We children had interesting ways to interpret God's Word, often heavily influenced not by our knowledge but how we experienced our surrounding reality. And maybe, we adults do, too.

# Act On It

- Think about some of the lenses you use:
  - When reading God's Word:
    - If something is very dear to your heart, why is that so?
    - If you avoid or dislike some of the truth God reveals about himself, why do you think that is?
  - When thinking about missions:
    - What aspects of missions make you tense or do you ignore?
    - To what facets of missions do you feel especially drawn?
    - How do these responses relate to your life experiences or your understanding of God's Word?





# CHAPTER 8

## GOING WEST: THE SWISS SANATORIUM

Imre and I sensed a call to prepare for ministry and to understand scriptural holiness. We were encouraged to go to European Nazarene College (EuNC) in Büsing, Germany,<sup>62</sup> by a young Nazarene woman who had spent time in Hungary and who heard our stories and of our passion to learn. After learning more about EuNC, we packed our belongings and our young son, Rudolf, and moved to Büsing.

EuNC was the site where I first met Russians who were Christians. I was overwhelmed! At home, they were the enemy. In Büsing, I heard them pray in the language of my oppressors.

When I was growing up in Hungary, learning Russian was compulsory. If you were a “true Hungarian” and not a

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<sup>62</sup> Büsing, Germany, is a German town entirely surrounded by Switzerland.

Communist, you hated Russian. However, I fell in love with the language, thinking it beautiful, and went to a specialized class where we had eight language classes per week. It led to conflicted feelings in me as a secondary and high school kid.

I remember one night at EuNC when we were telling our life stories—two Russians and one Hungarian. Two of us had been persecuted Christians, and one had lived with the elite of the persecutors.

When I went home, I started sobbing. Imre tried to determine the cause.

“Did you have a good time with your Russian friends?”

“Yes.”

“What is wrong? Why are you sobbing?”

“We told our persecution stories.”

“Mária, you need to forgive.”

“I have forgiven, but it is so complex. They even suffered more than we did! So for one thing, now I have to put away this thought: ‘All these Russians!’”

Satan wants to turn nations against nations, brothers against brothers. I had to give up the notion of Russians against Hungarians and accept the fact that this was nothing more than Satan against God’s people. And that he uses every creature of God against believers.

“I am sobbing because two of us suffered,” I continued, “However, as we discussed it, the one who was living in the ‘palaces and temples’ of Communism said, ‘This cannot be

true. We would have known. We would have noticed.’ Together, my Russian classmate and I tried to convince the other Russian that all the persecution *did* happen, that we experienced real pain and lost relatives. It is our life story.”

Masha [MAH-shah], one of the Russian students, did not want to believe the cruel stories of the past. It hurt me so much. I felt I could not even *own* my story. I kept hearing her voice, “This is not true. This cannot be. Those people you accuse were Communists, but they were good people, not cruel.”

Please, allow us to own our story, let our story be part of our—yours and mine—combined stories. If you deny our stories, you deny us.<sup>63</sup>

This is exactly what I repeated in a conversation at the Global Theology Conference, where Nazarene theologians gathered to discuss relevant theological issues from a Nazarene point of view. As we discussed the sad reflections of adults who experienced apartheid and how those experiences became part of their personal stories and the story of the church, some who were listening were sympathetic. Others were tired of hearing our brothers and sisters reflecting, retelling the stories, and asking some hard questions.

Do not become weary of listening or tell us to become quiet; not allowing us to own our stories is yet another form of oppression. Do not tell us to pick up the pieces of our lives and move on in our journeys. We should never cut out

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<sup>63</sup> 1 John 1:3

the ugly parts of our stories. (If we did that, too many pages of the Bible would need to go as well!) The ugly portions are part of our beautiful stories of miracles, confessions, and forgiveness. Through what we experience, ugly and beautiful combined, we are formed into a unit, the Body of Christ. Telling our stories is part of the healing process, and there may need to be a confessional part to the story that should be added for those who were victimizers.

I realize that the retelling of our stories can be painful and emotionally draining for listeners, but it is important for us to tell and for you to hear, and, in turn, for you to tell and for us to hear. Today you listen to me, tomorrow I will need to listen to you. It is a learning process for all of us.

God commands us to remember, to retell, to teach how He has brought us through and out of bondage, slavery, persecution, oppression.<sup>64</sup>

Just as my Russian Christian friend disbelieved our stories of persecution, I am well aware that we could build another House of Terror where my people would be the oppressing group at the base of the Carpathian Mountains. We all tend to think of ourselves as nice people and others as “ugly” or “bad.”

It seems like there are two “mission projects” in the world. In Satan’s mission, he “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”<sup>65</sup> God’s mission is one in which He does not want anyone to perish but

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<sup>64</sup> Deuteronomy 11:18-23

<sup>65</sup> 1 Peter 5:8

have eternal life.<sup>66</sup> We try the same argument with God that Peter did, asking what is clean, what may be touched by super-clean Christian hands, and which people groups we should not touch because of danger or “lack of cleanliness.” According to the passage in Acts, there are no unclean items in the sheet any more.<sup>67</sup>

I am so glad that we were not considered unwanted and unclean by EuNC; it was a healing place for me. There were no humiliating teachers; they actually wanted us to succeed. At EuNC, having a strong faith was appreciated. I have never seen so much kindness in one place before.

For this chapter title, I used the term “sanatorium.” Going to EuNC was like going someplace where they offer a treatment for tuberculosis. The air of being free was so fresh for us; it was like having lungs that are healed.

I remember the East Germans sharing during chapel of their first experiences with an automatic door and a toilet that flushed differently from what they were used to. We laughed so hard! We laughed out of pain and at ourselves. We laughed freely now, and we laughed just because it felt good to do so.

EuNC gathered us from places so far away from each other. We were reintroduced to one another, not as enemies or fake brothers<sup>68</sup> anymore, and were invited to rediscover the rest of the world together.

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<sup>66</sup> 2 Peter 3:9

<sup>67</sup> Acts 10:9-23a

<sup>68</sup> Hungarians called Russians “enemies” or “fake brothers” at that time.

At EuNC, students receiving financial assistance were assigned work on campus to offset the cost of their education. When Imre and I began our studies, we started with cleaning the toilets in the basement. By the end of our studies, we had made our way up to the library. One student, having her cultural lenses on, said, “Do you not hate doing the toilets? Both of you are studying, you have a child, and you have to do many work hours. Doing the toilets is humiliating.”

We looked at her, and I felt like hugging her or bursting into song or laughing. Then I said, “We would not want to be anywhere else but here. Cleaning the toilets here is a privilege for us. Do you not see that this is part of the perfect gift for us from above?”

For me, EuNC will always be the memorial place of reuniting with Christians from all over the world: Europe and Asia, Australia and the USA.

When we moved back to Hungary, we wanted to take the teaching of holiness and life perspective with us, the feeling of the clean air of a sanatorium filling the people of our church.

As we had church leaders visit in our country, they brought more of the same feeling with them. Our first district superintendent was not Hungarian, and we expected there would at least be a feeling of “East” and “West” between the district superintendent and the people in our church. Anyone looking for these signs searched in vain.

It was not his nationality that defined him,<sup>69</sup> but that he belonged to Christ. This was a new concept for us, being used to looking for a person's identity when there was a sudden change of borders and who is who on the map. There was no east, west, north, or south, but Christ.

A district superintendent is a leader, and we knew what a leader was. We had them during our time of Communism, we just did not call them superintendents. When new Hungarian Nazarenes saw *this* leader mop the floor, arrange the chairs, or clean up, they said, "You should not do this."

It is interesting how a servant leader can make some people feel so uncomfortable. Our Hungarian disciples reacted in a variety of ways to this attitude.

How do you feel when you go to a country where you could exercise a lot of power, even abuse it? People in that location are used to it, and they will serve you, be humble, and show you respect. In this situation, some people enjoy the power, thinking "I am a king here. At home, I am just a simple person." What a temptation!

Some leaders are well aware that they are considered powerful in a mission culture, but "did not consider '*his or her power as more power over a people group*' something to be used to his own advantage," but emptied himself or herself and began to wash disciples' feet. When Nazarenes with less power say, "You shall never wash my feet, clean the place after the meeting, or wash the dishes. Never, sir."

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<sup>69</sup> He just happened to be a Westerner, but that would be one of the last terms I would have used to describe him.

A servant leader replies, “Unless *we* do this, *we* have no part with *Christ and one another*.”

In those early years, our mission stories were what leaders did, how they humbled themselves, how they gave up their nationality-given rights, habits, and privileges.

Servant leaders create a sanatorium for those who need to be healed from the sinful abuse of power, either by them or over them. They share a healing balm to those suffering from cruel dictatorships, humiliation, and other abusive treatments by people.

You can become a source of healing for people who have suffered tribulation. We are often eager to give and share, especially out of our bounty. While it is nice to bestow our newest technology on others, that is not what they need most.

Share yourself. And even if you do give *things* to others, do not substitute what you have with who you are.

# Act On It

- Self-reflection:
  - Who am I? Has my nationality/ethnicity become my foremost identity? Does it block my participation in God's mission in any way? Do I need to rethink where my deepest commitments are? Under what covenant do I operate?
  - What might the following statements mean concerning how we act toward people groups?
    - "They will be my people, and I will be their God."<sup>70</sup>
    - "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."<sup>71</sup>
  - What are the points of arrogance where I put myself above others?
  - What people groups do I rank myself above, and why?
  - How deep do you think you should humble yourself? And how deep are you willing to go to do so?
  - The following passage shows us Christ's depth of humility: He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross."<sup>72</sup> Do I emulate that humility?

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<sup>70</sup> Jeremiah 32:38

<sup>71</sup> John 13:35

<sup>72</sup> Philippians 2:7-9, BSB

- Self-giving:
  - When you give, give yourself—not just things. You have not given anything unless you have given yourself.
  - Learn to pray prayers of humility. Write your personal prayer of humility. Make it sincere and personalized by naming the points of arrogance and power where you need Christlike humility.
  - Until you write your own, you can start with this prayer.

O Jesus! meek and humble of heart, Hear me.  
 From the desire of being esteemed,  
*Deliver me, Jesus.* (repeat after each line)  
 From the desire of being loved,  
 From the desire of being extolled,  
 From the desire of being honored,  
 From the desire of being praised,  
 From the desire of being preferred to others,  
 From the desire of being consulted,  
 From the desire of being approved,  
 From the fear of being humiliated,  
 From the fear of being despised,  
 From the fear of suffering rebukes,  
 From the fear of being the subject of malicious  
 charges,  
 From the fear of being forgotten,  
 From the fear of being ridiculed,  
 From the fear of being wronged,  
 From the fear of being suspected,

That others may be loved more than I,  
*Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.* (repeat after  
each line)

That others may be esteemed more than I,  
That, in the opinion of the world, others may  
increase and I may decrease,  
That others may be chosen and I set aside,  
That others may be praised and I unnoticed,  
That others may be preferred to me in everthing,  
That others may become holier than I, provided  
that I may become as holy as I should.<sup>73</sup>

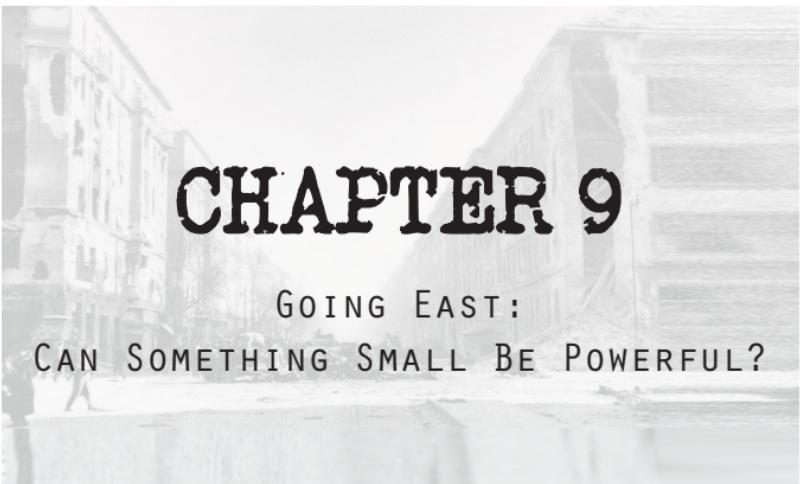
- Mission without humility can be dangerously destructive for both the one giving and for the one receiving!  
Enjoy the journey of humility! “Blessed are the meek!”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Litany composed by Rafael Cardinal Merry de Val (1865-1930)

<sup>74</sup> Matthew 5:5





# CHAPTER 9

## GOING EAST: CAN SOMETHING SMALL BE POWERFUL?

As we worked in the EuNC library, one of our jobs was to remove old Sunday School material. (Since it was outdated, no one used it.) We were told to throw the materials into the trash.

We gathered the pile with a sense of discomfort. All the while, we were thinking, "How can people throw out such a great treasure? There are great lessons, beautiful colour pictures, a whole curriculum already established. Teachers, with little preparation, can just get ready and teach."

After a bit of hesitation, we asked the librarian if we could keep it; she was puzzled, but said yes. Then we asked the property manager if we could have a little room in the attic to store our treasures; he was puzzled, but said yes.

Over the years, we collected WordAction material<sup>75</sup> for the day we were to go home and take it with us.

Finally, the day came when we were ready to move. When we loaded our possessions, there was no room for the boxes of WordAction material. The boxes sat next to the van.

By this time, it was evening. We looked at each other, then came the moment our helpers feared. We unloaded clothes, boxes of personal items, and some of our furniture. Now the boxes of Sunday School materials would fit, and the personal items were standing next to the van.

We anxiously approached the property manager, "As you know, we are moving home. We do not know when or if we will have a chance to come back. (We were still not used to travelling towards the West.) We cannot take back some of our personal items, and this is all we have as a family. Would you allow us to store them in the attic just for a year or two? If we do not come back at that time, you can give them away or throw them out."

He was puzzled, but said yes. (By this time, the EuNC faculty and staff must have become used to strange habits of the Eastern and Central Europeans.)

Off we went, happy with the material and fantasizing about how it would be used. In the following months, we

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<sup>75</sup> WordAction Publishing Company is a not-for-profit organization that provides relevant Sunday School curriculum and small group materials to enable people of all ages to discover God's Word. WordAction is a part of the Nazarene Publishing House and has become the largest publisher of Wesleyan-Holiness Sunday School curriculum in the world ([www.nph.com](http://www.nph.com)).

showed it to several people. (At that point, Hungary did not have Christian literature of this quality.) Everyone who saw it, loved it.

Theological students we were teaching and Sunday School teachers from several denominations fell in love with the material. The only problem was that it was in English!

As we began to plant churches, we helped the future Sunday School teachers—in an oral training program—prepare for their classes. We did this for almost a year.

### **A Christmas gift that keeps giving**

As Christmas drew near, we talked about what special gifts we could give the Nazarene Sunday School children and those attending from the community. At almost the same time, several people said the same thing, “A Christmas lesson in Hungarian with beautiful activity pages!”

We just needed one lesson to test whether this would be used in our culture, whether children would like something so different from what they had seen. Nazarene mothers and fathers, who happened to be the pioneering Sunday School teachers, gathered and asked for help, requesting the same thing.

*Now we come to confession time. Only read on if you can forgive us. Nazarene Publishing House already has! It is a sin dealt with.*

A few weeks before Christmas 1998, we created a five-lesson booklet—one lesson for each Sunday of Advent and one for Christmas. We translated, edited, worked on activity pages, laid out pages, made cultural changes, and then...we had it printed in colour and made into a booklet.

This was all done during the evenings and late into the nights in a living room. One mom, our district Sunday School leader, worked the hardest. When we asked her why she put in so many hours, she said it was worth it for her child, for *our* children. She felt Hungarian children deserved this surprise.

I do not know how much time you spend on Christmas shopping; but to us, we could not have given a better gift to the children. One activity that each child participated in that year was making paper angels. Each child took home an angel.

As Western culture flooded our country at that time, kids took Spiderman, Superman, and dinosaurs to their kindergartens and schools. Who would have thought that the Nazarene kids would take their angels and other activity figures to show their friends and teachers?

One Sunday, we sent the kids home, and a boy shyly returned his page and asked for a new one. We asked why the other one was not good enough, and the boy said he needed one not wrinkled at all since the parents promised to bind each page and lend it to other families.

In one place, we had elderly people in a new church plant. Zero children. When the house group saw what the other Nazarene groups were using, they requested the same material. We explained that these materials took a lot of time to create and were expensive to print. Telling them that the materials were homemade, we also pointed out that these lessons were for children and that their group did not have any.

They replied that it was their problem. By the time we printed a few lessons for their groups, the grandmas gathered a group of children from their families and village so that they could teach Sunday School.

Balázska [bah-LAZH-ka], a four-year-old boy, was one of the “gathered children.” He attended Sunday School regularly, learnt about Jesus, and prayed to Him. One day, Balázska’s dad was very anxious and was a bit impatient because his wife had a difficult exam to pass. The father explained his impatience to his son, and Balázska suggested that they pray for Mom.

The dad told us later that he was surprised and embarrassed as he admitted to his son that he had never been to church in his life and did not know how to pray. The four-year-old explained that he learnt to pray in Sunday School, so the two “men” prayed with the little one leading the prayer.

Growing up in Communism, the dad testified that he missed out on Sunday School altogether. He could have been part of a lost generation. However, God’s grace is so wonderful that it extended to the next generation, who now teach their parents.

We think of the young ones as treasures and have hope for the future. God has used the kids to give back what was taken away from the parents! They are not just the future; God is using them now. The children have turned out to be the best evangelists in our case. There is a cross-generational influence taking place: one generation affects the next, and it continues to develop as the story is shared.

The young ones were not slaves of past injuries; they were free of the fears that their parents had. They did not see spies in everyone around them. They were full of trust and hope and were free to take the gospel to their friends, to their schools, and to show the Bible story sheets to their teachers. God has given a new day!

Parents would bring their children to the Sunday School teachers' homes (we did not have any buildings at that point) and knock on the door, pleading, "Would you allow my child to come, too?"

Some parents walked long distances and did not have time to go home and return. So they sat on the stairs, waiting for their children to learn about God, which the parents had not been allowed to do.

We were invited to visit kindergartens and schools. We knew that such times of grace might not last long, so we had to be prepared to do what was required when there was a time slot offered. God prepared and used such times because we were ready; and He continues to do so.

In 1998, just nine years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, we were walking through some streets in Hajdúhadház [HOI-doo-hud-hahz] during Advent season. Looking around, we saw familiar paper angels sitting in the windows, and we knew that these were Nazarene homes with families that brought their children to Sunday School. Those paper angels walked into many homes that Christmas!

It is 2016. Every year, we take out all the tree-topper ornaments from the boxes. We have three to choose from. We always put two back, because the winner is the paper

angel our son prepared almost 20 years ago. The angel sits on the top of the Christmas tree as a reminder of a time past and maybe a time coming, when perhaps even paper angels are forbidden. However, we know that we were and will be surrounded by His angels, guarding us against all powers.

How far can angels go? Into how many homes? Will they have to stop and discontinue? So many times we enjoy the fascination of “angels appearing,” new ministries starting. But what comes after the start? Will there be those that will continue to support the ministry to see it come to fruition?

Our God is a God who does not only start—“he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”<sup>76</sup> We need to become more like Him. There is something divine about “perseverance in the doing.” Yes, we started sending the angels into homes to help parents who did not have Christian upbringing during Communism; and the WordAction material has been such a great help to teachers, parents, and grandparents.

However, we need your help. This is an opportunity for us to accomplish something together: to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>77</sup> Sometimes mission plans get old, interests shift, and those who joined at the beginning tend to abandon them. You might want to hear a new story from us, but we have the task to persevere, to bring the teaching and making of disciples to fruition.

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<sup>76</sup> Philippians 1:6b

<sup>77</sup> Matthew 28:19

Will you persevere with us? Will you help us continue to bring the Christ's teaching into people's homes? We still need your help to provide materials to make up for 40 years without them.

Sometimes opportunities such as these pass. We will regret lost opportunities if we do not use them to reach souls for Christ, even children's souls. We do not want to have to ask forgiveness for losing the next generation of a nation.

We started to sell the material to 19 denominations, including long-established churches. Several professional teachers sat at our district office, which served as a book shop prior to the webshop started for the WordAction material. They remarked, "This material is so different. It is more spiritual and goes deeper. It is a well-thought-through professional curriculum and is indeed translated into the language of the children."

Since those beginning days, four years' worth of curriculum has been published in Hungarian and sold to many institutions. Even state-owned kindergartens buy the material as their religious class curriculum.

Our thanks go out to all who have been involved in writing the lessons, editing, publishing, printing, and shipping. You have participated in the mission! I am so glad to have told this story; for how else would you know that your angel came to Hungary and touched many children's lives?

The children that received those angels—kindergarteners at the time—now serve on district committees and councils, including the District Camp Committee (and some will bring their own kids to camp this year).

Zoli [ZOO-lee], who was just a small boy back then, began serving on the missions council last year and continues this year. His heart is set on missions. The materials brought Jesus to his level, translated into not only Hungarian, but to his age group and in colour. I wish you could have seen how much the coloured activity pages meant to the children!

### **The opportunities of small beginnings**

At the beginning of the Nazarene work in Hungary, we were asked by the Eurasia regional director about our mission statement. On that first document, there is a sentence: “We would like to be a spiritual shelter, a place of refuge, a haven.” In the early days as we planned the work in Hungary, we were faithful to that statement and have continued to be faithful to it. God prompted us to initiate ministries of which we could not know the full implications, opportunities for which seeds had been planted years before. Our experience at one point led and prepared us to face another one. God continues to work in ways we cannot foresee or comprehend. He prepared us for the next step in mission.

The past has spoken, and now a new generation steps into leadership.

In the search and desire to do something monumental, we need to be aware of the opportunities of small beginnings, humble steps. In the awe of the generous alms given by those who have much, we must not miss the *two* very small copper coins of the poor widow that caught the eye of

the Son of God.<sup>78</sup> Do not lose sight of the small things, and do not despise the small actions that God has done, can do, and is doing through you.

If you look for the biggest impact and invest your time in that, you might be acting in a place other than where the Lord wants to see a small work begin. It is fashionable to despise small work, even in the economy of the church. And it is fashionable to be fascinated with the large and powerful.

“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin...”<sup>79</sup>

Maybe I can speak here for those from similar backgrounds and with similar stories: On behalf of the small, we thank those who were willing to reach out to Hungary, rather than a great work that would elevate your standing in the church. You did not want to become the biggest, to do the greatest, and to create the most effective project. You did not look at us as unpromising, but opened your hearts to us and shared yourselves with us. We know it would have been easier, less foolish (in the eyes of the world), to go where there was strength and, therefore, not as risky. Thank you for not “despising” us.

“So do not throw away your confidence...”<sup>80</sup>

*A side note for those who are wondering about events in this chapter: The attic at EuNC has been cleared, and our furniture and clothes have slowly made their way back to Hungary.*

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<sup>78</sup> Luke 21:1-2

<sup>79</sup> Zechariah 4:10a, NLT

<sup>80</sup> Hebrews 10:35a

It might seem like a small gesture or a minor act, but mission is always a *choice* we make. We choose to do or not to do something. Sometimes it is a choice between what you take with you or what you leave behind. Those choices make a difference and have a profound impact on mission. So can small be powerful? Yes! In fact, such small acts can reach very far. Do not despise the small acts that you can do for missions!

# Act On It

- Old stories are not “old” if they are about God acting. They are timeless. They are part of our collective history, a part of the psalms we need to sing about how God acts among us in our times and places. What were some mission stories you have seen on video, heard, or read that have had an impact on you? These true stories of God never become outdated. Think back, retell them, reread them, or watch them again. Give thanks again for God’s action in our history.
- Can you think of resources in your church or home that might be unused or underused? If so, how could they be put to better use? How can you be a better steward of what you have?
  - “It is said that the difference between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ is not simply the obvious issue of ‘possession’... it is the fact that often those who ‘have’ do not utilize that wonderful resource, while those who ‘do not have’ would give anything for that ‘unused or underused’ resource. Many...will wonder at the sense of urgency presented here...so, let us make it clear: too often you have the resources, but not the enthusiasm or will to utilize them for their widest possible effect. Others, like your brothers and sisters in Hungary, have invested themselves heavily in an effort to provide these resources, which in other parts of the world are not really appreciated.”

(Missionary John Haines, referring to the Hungarian Angel ministry)

- **Perseverance Exercise:** Think about an older project, something that was popular when it was first introduced. However, over time, your people may have tired of it, lost interest, and wanted something new, so the project was abandoned by supporters or volunteers. Can you think of such projects that, although they may seem small and unimportant, are unfinished and can still make an impact? Who dictates “mission fashion” anyway? So many missions projects do not continue to the end of the work, because the appeal withers in a short time, yet the work is underway. We ruin many good projects this way. Do not choose your support based on what makes YOU and YOUR church significant and the impact YOU want to have.
- Funds are rare for the continuance and sustainability of literature ministries, such as was related in this chapter. Continuing to publish teaching and Wesleyan-Holiness materials in Hungary, and educating and resourcing our ministers who then prepare all the saints for good work would be a great option, too. Such gifts extend beyond the Church of the Nazarene and help other believers as well. Consider donating to the Hungary literature fund. Please designate your giving to Hungary WordAction—Hungary Field Specials Account.
- The opening of the Church of the Nazarene in Hungary could not have taken place without generous gifts to the World Evangelism Fund, the cooperative genius of the

mission enterprise of the Church of the Nazarene. The World Evangelism Fund is based on the concept that we can do more working together than could ever be done working alone. To continue making Christlike disciples in the world, especially in the “small places” like Hungary, your participation in this ministry is vital.





# CHAPTER 10

DO YOU TAKE ON THE MISSION?

History affects all of us, and how we experience it will form us for the rest of our lives. The way I look at God's mission and world events today is very much affected by some of the key events in which we were allowed to participate, and these also contributed to the exodus of the migrating people groups mentioned earlier.

While we were in bondage in Hungary and fighting for our freedom, it was uplifting to help others toward their freedom. Under Communism, Lake Balaton [BAH-lah-tohn] was a vacation spot for Germans; however, it also became a meeting place for both East and West German families and friends separated by the wall of ideology, fear, and hatred until 1989.

Just before the collapse of Communism in Hungary, East Germans who were on vacation in Hungary sensed the coming change. They did not want to return to East Germany, but preferred to go on to West Germany. After

a short hesitation, the last Communist government gave permission for them to leave the Communist bloc through Austria toward West Germany. However, before permission was granted, the Germans were in refugee camps in Hungary for a few weeks. It was the first act of opening the border between the East and West, and this formed a big “crack in the wall”—the decision is said to have directly led to the fall of the Berlin Wall a short while later.

A couple of years ago, we walked down the streets of Budapest and saw signs everywhere. “*Danke Ungarn!* [DAN-ke OON-gahrn] Germany Says Thank You for 1989” read the billboard assembled by the Embassy of Germany. The gratitude was expressed for the Pan-European Picnic organized by Hungarians on the border of Austria and Hungary. On that day, the dismantling of the Iron Curtain began. The event was in celebration of the removal of the first part of the fence separating East and West. The East Germans came to the celebration; and as the border opened, they ran over to Austria as one group.

Also, as people started to stand up against dictators from the neighboring countries of the Eastern Bloc, ethnic Hungarian refugees started crossing the borders illegally. Some were shot and died; others were caught, imprisoned, and tortured. Some made it by swimming over, arriving soaked to the skin. Others were ill when they arrived. Some brought their small children; others came alone or with a group of friends or siblings.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> It was at this time that the Nicolae Ceaușescu [nik-oh-LIE chow-CHES-kew] era was coming to an end in Romania.

These events affected our lives and homes. What a time and place to live in! How can we forget and act unfaithful to this heritage? We should never forget where we have been in exile, how God delivered us, and all the miracles that He has done on the way! Our people should never forget who we were in the past when we act in the present. We should never forget the small, but beautiful, role God allowed us to take on in the past. Even in my short lifetime, I have seen walls go up and come down, fences dismantled and rebuilt.

I often thought that I would like to write to my friends whose lives affected ours and whose lives we tried to help, sometimes doing more than we thought possible. I often wonder where these people are now. Do they help others? We all need help at one time or another; we humans have been put into each other's care. We are interdependent. Now I wonder, "Do they take on the mission to help others? Do they feel obligated out of gratitude to help one who is where they once were? Do they remember?"

I do remember; *I was an eyewitness.* I remember some names and several faces that became part of our lives for a while. There are quite a number of personal stories shared by people marching through our home, thus becoming part of my story. If I could send a letter to them, I would send this:

## *An Open Letter to My Migrant Friends*

*Hello Migrant Friends,*

I hope you have all resettled into your new lives. I don't know if you remember me, but I remember you. In a sense, you were a dear friend to us: You sat in my chair and ate from my plate. You ate my bread and my vegetables. You used my fork and knife with which to eat, and you drank from my mug. You slept on my bed.

You arrived very late with just the clothes you were wearing. You were very hungry and thirsty when you arrived. You did not call us beforehand, and we did not check our calendars. In fact, we did not know you were coming. There was loud knocking or a bell ringing at the door, mostly in the middle of the night. Some of you were wet, because you swam through rivers to come to our house.

I only knew you had arrived because I went to bed in one room and, when I woke up for school the next morning, I was in another room.

You might not remember me; it was a bit crowded. There were several of you and several of us. You came to our home: an apartment of 75 square metres (807 square feet) for 14 people in my family, and a few of you joined us with each new group of arrivals. The visits by strangers went on for several weeks.

I never asked how you knew our names and our address. How did you know where to come for a bed, for food, and for a cup of water?

We shared what we had when it was needed: our square metres, our food, our clothes. Now that you have settled, on behalf of my family, I dare to ask only one thing:

Remember to open your door to strangers and refugees. Give your cup, your bed, your plate, your bread, and your vegetables to someone who is in need. Give only what you have, but give it when it is needed.

We have not heard from you, which is quite all right. I do hope others have heard about your faith. Remember that you were believers under a dictatorship and you wanted religious freedom. Now that you probably have that freedom, I ask that you remember to use it to do the mission of God freely. You are now free—free and obliged at the same time to share all the blessings with others.

Our friends, former refugees, you were hungry, thirsty, a person with one set of clothing. You understand what it means to be *one of them*. Provide refuge to someone, give them something to eat, give them something to drink. Tell them the story of how you were once a refugee. Do not say that your house is not big enough or that you do not have enough cups or that you do not have time. Do not grumble that you did not know ahead of time and could not prepare for guests.

Remember your story and those who took you in. I remember, for I was *an eyewitness*. You owe this to God who provided for you in those difficult days! This is mission: receiving and giving, living the story and retelling the story as a source of encouragement for others.

“We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you.”<sup>82</sup>

Since then, surely you will know that the walls have been removed. There might be a great mission field back at home. Now the gospel can be freely shared. Please, pray that someone will share it.

*A member of your host family*

Though I do not have a piece of the Berlin Wall (I guess we were too busy helping), I do feel I have a large piece of it in my heart and in my memories. And I believe that I have contributed to taking some of it down. Since then some other fences are going up—so we heard. Borders that were closed back then—and difficult to cross—were opened, but they might be closed again tomorrow. I will always want to be there at a wall to dismantle it—whatever it is that separates us from being united in Christ.

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<sup>82</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:11b–13

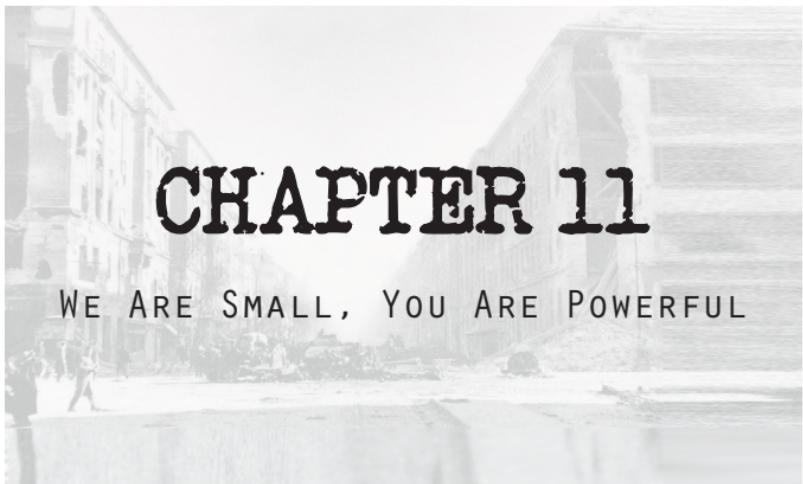
# Act On It

- If you were a refugee, a migrant, oppressed, or persecuted, have you told your story, thereby making it part of the story of God's people?
- Write a psalm about how God delivered you, list all the miracles surrounding that event, and encourage others who are in similar situations.
- What does it mean to you when God tells His people after their deliverance: "...You also were strangers in the land of Egypt"?<sup>83</sup>
- How can you open your home to others?

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<sup>83</sup> Exodus 23:9, NASB





# CHAPTER 11

WE ARE SMALL, YOU ARE POWERFUL

In 2015, I was asked to give my testimony to the Eurasia Regional Conference, a meeting drawing more than 600 people from approximately 50 world areas during which we discussed issues specific to the Eurasia Region. I was overwhelmed by the nations represented. Some are very powerful and mighty. Some are like us, small; and still others, for which my heart cries out, are going through trials we know so well.

I come from a small nation. When I looked around at the people from powerful and powerless countries, I saw former empires, economic empires being built right now, and those that fall into other categories. There were people from places that are considered oppressive and those who feel oppressed. Attendees came from world areas that play the big games of ruling the world and those that are tossed around like so many chess figures in the hands of the game players.

However, as a citizen of another Kingdom, when I looked around, I saw brothers and sisters who chose to humble themselves, to become small.

All of us carry the power and the authority of God's kingdom: the ministry of reconciliation, to bind or to release. The question is: What do we do with this power?

In light of recent events, I reflect on my childhood and youth, thinking back to living through Communism, and what living through persecution means for my life after Communism. Yes, I come from a Christian home, a pastor's family. I remember the personal stories of fear and miracles.

When I pray for the persecuted today, I always give thanks for the miracles of which I am unaware, but am convinced are taking place. I have experienced how God acts among the oppressed. I have learned that I experienced Him in ways during persecution that I never could have amongst the niceties of life.

In the summer of 2015, I found myself in an interesting position—a position of power—and I recognized fear in the eyes of “the others.” I knew that same fear so well in my own heart; it was the fear of those who are unwelcome.

We were ministering at railway stations, among people that have recently been referred to as “refugees.” They were surrounded by a police cordon. Commands came frequently to the long lines of people: families, young mothers with children, the elderly, and pregnant women.

“Stand up,” we heard. “Sit down.”

Each time we heard the commands, we stood up with those behind the cordons. Then, on command, we sat down

on the stones of the station. They were inside the cordon; we were outside. But the harmonized movement made us one group. And as we obeyed the commands, we shared life stories. We took pictures. We were humans who became peers.

With tears in our eyes, we waved goodbyes whenever a train left for Austria and Germany with our new “neighbours.” One group of young people shouted back, “We wish we could take you one day—when this is all over—to our beautiful country and show you Syria. Thank you for everything.”

We did not just hand out sandwiches or clothes or chocolate and toys to the children, who, by the way, were so kind and courteous. We sat with them. We formed a fellowship with them on the grounds of the stations.

This event caused me to ask: What does reconciliation mean for me today?

It means not only forgiving my persecutors (from other countries), my oppressors (from my fellow-citizens during Communism), but also letting go of what has been done and not doing it to others. Reconciliation also means that I must realize that not letting go is a sin (as defined in the parable of the debtor<sup>84</sup>).

Reconciliation is also the understanding that anything less than releasing would be abusing the power I have been given in Christ’s kingdom. Also, anything less than love would simply be cruelty on my side.

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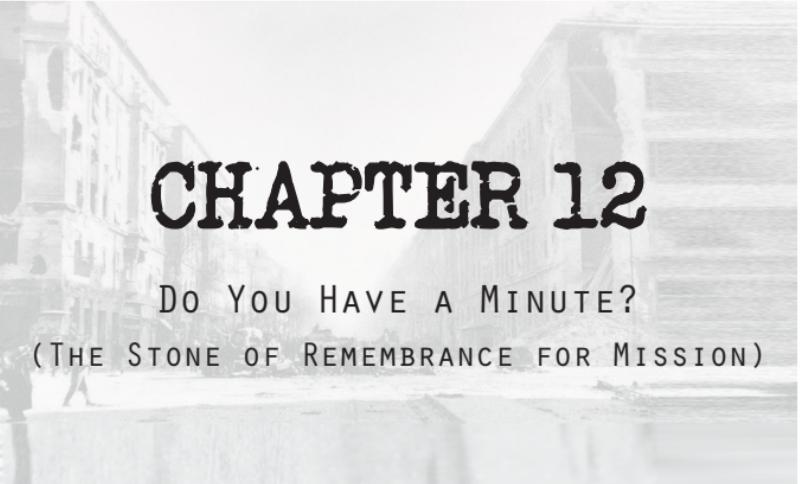
<sup>84</sup> Matthew 18:23–35

# Act On It

- When you pray for those who suffer for their faith, do not just intercede and ask on their behalf. Remember to praise God for all the miracles of which you—and perhaps they—are unaware that are taking place where faith brings suffering.
  - Address God as the God of all nations, who sees all suffering and is in control.
  - Pray and ask all you can on the behalf of those suffering (water, food, health, safety, normal humane life, work, and a very good life). Then do not stop, go further in your prayer. Do not limit your prayer to human pity or only focusing on human needs. Pray that all will happen according to God's will, not just for the cup to be removed. Prayer for the removal of suffering could be perceived as lacking faith and vision. Think beyond the physical world. Think of the mission happening and the salvation story unfolding, and pray for that to take place.
  - Mention specific world areas, people, or difficult situations of which you are aware.
  - Thank God for the salvation history unfolding among the persecuted, and thank Him for the miracles that are happening.
  - Praise God as Victor and Deliverer—past, present, and future.

- Weep for yourselves and for your children, thinking of your own sins and those of the next generation.
- Pray in the name of Christ, who willingly accepted suffering.
- What is the lesson of the passion of Christ and the passion of the martyrs for us?





# CHAPTER 12

Do You HAVE A MINUTE?

(THE STONE OF REMEMBRANCE FOR MISSION)

The following is one of the *One Minute Stories* by István Örkény [E-sht-vahn UR-kayn], who wrote satire, exaggerating reality to evoke both empathy and disgust at the same time. Each story is a good critique. *One Minute Stories* was published in 1968, reflecting the time into which I was born.

Örkény was a Party member, but participated in the 1956 Revolution against the Soviets and the Communists, so life became difficult for him. His life span (1912–1979) covered the stories we heard in our family about wars, captives on the Russian front, the Revolution, and the lands taken away by the Party.

Örkény tells of his own life story in one minute. His stories are short because his life is interrupted by wars and other historical events. Maybe we need to learn this tool. To paraphrase Henri Nouwen, the world and we Christians have become too wordy. We need to learn how to use silence,

keep the gospel precise, and understand the essence in mission. Our lives are not only words; our words should and will be interrupted by reality: wars and many other events.

The following story is my favorite. Örkény is anecdotal here, inserting critical observations on his own people. This story, too, is humorous, with criticism of the time, expressed through the pointedly grotesque satire for which he was known.

As we take account of our mission, we need Jesus' humor and critiques to examine ourselves as His followers. So where do we stand? Here is a one-minute story, a one-minute critique.

### **The Last Sour Cherry Pit<sup>85</sup>**

There were just four Hungarians left now. (In Hungary, that is; there were still quite a number scattered around the globe.) They dwelled under a cherry tree. It was a very fine cherry tree; it afforded both cherries and shade, though the former only in season. But even of the four Hungarians, one was hard of hearing, while two stood under police inspection. Why this was so neither of them could recall any more, though from time to time they'd sigh, "We're under police inspection."

Only one of the four had a name—i.e., only he could remember it. (His name was Sipos

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<sup>85</sup> Örkény, István, "The Last Cherry Pit," In *One Minute Stories*, Corvina Books Ltd. And Brandl & Schlesinger of Syney, 1996. (Original title: Az utolsó meggymag, Translator: Judit Sollosy). Used with permission.

[SHEE-posh].) The others had forgotten theirs, along with so much else. With four people, it is not essential that each should have a name.

Then one day, Sipos said, “We ought to leave something behind to remember us by.”

“What on earth for?” asked one of the two men who stood under police inspection.

“So that when we’re gone, something should remain for posterity.”

“Who’s going to care about us then?” asked the fourth Hungarian who was neither Sipos nor one of the two men under police inspection.

But Sipos stuck to his guns and the other two backed him. Only he, the fourth, insisted that the world had never seen a sillier idea. The others were highly offended. “What do you mean?” they said indignantly, “How can you say such a thing? You’re probably not even a true Hungarian!”

“Why?” he countered, “Maybe it’s such a godsent being a Hungarian these days?”

He had a point there. And so, they stopped bickering. They racked their brains about what they could leave to be remembered by. To carve a stone would have required a chisel. If only one of them had a stickpin! With it, Sipos reasoned, they could etch a message into the bark of the tree. It would stay in the bark forever, like a tattoo on a man’s skin.

“Why don’t we throw a big stone into the air,” suggested one of the two who stood under police inspection.

"Don't be a fool. It'd fall back down," they told him. He didn't argue. Poor man, he knew he was short on brains.

"All right," he said to the others after a while. "Why don't you come up with something better if you can. What is it that would last?"

They put their heads together. At long last, they agreed to hide a cherry pit between two stones (so the rain wouldn't wash it away). It wouldn't be much of a memorial to be sure, but for want of anything better, it would have to do.

However, they were faced with a problem. While the cherry season lasted they had lived on cherries, and afterwards had gathered up all the pits, crushed them into a fine powder, and consumed them. Consequently, there wasn't a single pit to be had for love or money.

Just then, one of the Hungarians, who was neither Sipos nor one of the men who stood under police inspection, remembered THE CHERRY. (He was no longer contrary, but was, in fact, with them heart and soul, and couldn't wait to help.) But the cherry grew so high up on top of the highest branch of the tree that they couldn't pick it back then. And so it had stayed where it was, shriveled down to the pit.

They concluded that, if they stood on each other's shoulders, they could bring down the solitary cherry after all. They mapped everything out in fine detail. At the bottom stood one of the two men who were

under police inspection, the one short on brains but long on brawn. On his shoulder stood the man who was neither Sipos nor was under police inspection, after him the other man who was under police inspection, and last came Sipos, the flat-chested weakling.

With a great deal of effort, he climbed to the top of the column made up of his three companions, and once there, stretched out to his full height. But by the time he had reached the top, he had forgotten why he had bothered to climb up in the first place. It went straight out of his head. The others shouted to him to bring down the shriveled cherry, but it was no use, because he was the one who was hard of hearing.

And so, things came to an impasse. From time to time, all four would shout in unison, but even so, the problem persisted, and they stayed just as they were, one Hungarian on top of the other.

They stayed just as they were, one Christian on top of the other. We have been on a mission for the past 2,000 years. Have we become deaf and forgetful? Do we still remember why we have been climbing up the tree?

We may all be crazy for mission, but have we forgotten why we were climbing so high? Maybe some of those we helped reach the top of the mission tree have become deaf to God's voice or will forget why they are there. So if the deaf and those who forgot the original goal are on the top, those that do remember are crying out to those deaf who are above.

## *Stones of Remembrance from the Short Nazarene Story in Hungary*

There are many stories of the Church of the Nazarene since it began in Hungary that have become our one-minute stories.

### *WordAction*

This is a wondrous story to us with a short episode taking place every week. Families, schools, and churches are affected by it. “Go and teach all nations” is happening. The global church teaches Hungary through WordAction material. It is a stone of remembrance not only for Hungary, but for the global church. As churches participate in the World Evangelism Fund, they help provide published teaching materials. It is a stone of remembrance for many Christian denominations in Hungary, given by the international Church of the Nazarene. It becomes part of the Hungarian Christian story as Nazarenes provide material. I believe pastors and faith teachers from a variety of churches—Reformed, Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, and others—would agree, since they regularly order and teach from this material at churches, schools, and kindergartens.

### *Alabaster*

The Alabaster story from Foldes [FOHL-dash] is another one-minute story. A widow offered the use of her home as a location for a small congregation at Foldes, even though it was crowded.

We introduced the Alabaster Offering to the church, thinking we would explain the idea of the offering slowly and maybe receive the first offering in a couple of years. We wanted the people to be accustomed to this Nazarene ministry and understand that they could participate if they wanted to join in a great opportunity for the Kingdom.

The congregation understood Alabaster as a Nazarene practice in which they should participate and began to gather money from a variety of sources.

One lady in the church, a hairdresser, put a jar on the counter in which clients could place tips...for Alabaster. When people asked about it, she would explain about the ministry that provides buildings around the world.

“But you don’t have a church. Why give so [people you will never meet] can have one?”

“Because someday we will receive that help. For now, we give what we can to help others.”

Just a few weeks later, the congregation contacted the district office and asked where and how they should send the money.

“What money?”

“We took the Alabaster Offering. We want to send it in soon so it can be given to where it is needed.”

We, also inexperienced, first-generation Nazarenes, had fast-track training. After all, Alabaster funds cannot wait.

The first Alabaster Offering in Foldes was amazing... more than most Nazarene churches would manage in places with more secure economies. (Keep in mind that Hungary was impoverished.) With their forints [FOH-rints]

(Hungarian currency), the people of Foldes were willing to send their hearts to their Nazarene family to any country they were able to help, even if it was just a little bit.

Alabaster funds eventually made their way to help build the Foldes Church, providing a real testimony to the “full circle” of Alabaster’s influence. Of course, other churches benefited from Alabaster in Hungary, too.

If you are a new Nazarene mission or a small work, do not wait until you become bigger or older to participate. The sooner you start, the better it will be. Your people will sense that they are members of the family that is the Church of the Nazarene. This sense of belonging comes not only by being nurtured by the international church, but by acting as one who belongs to that church. You have the right to participate in the giving, the sending, and in all the tasks.

I come from a large family. I have never witnessed my younger siblings wanting to be treated as “babies”; they always wanted to act like their older, mature siblings. They tried extra hard to grow up to be like us.

Hungary and other places like us may be young districts or small nations. Let us grow up to the task and act in a mature way! Let us have the goal to imitate those that are more mature and not to slip back to infancy as a church. Let us not act childish—crying, begging, acting as if we were helpless. Instead, let us make every effort of wanting to grow, mature, and take responsibilities.

### *Work & Witness*

The Hungary District also wanted to participate in sending a Work & Witness team to another country, but it was

impossible for us to do so financially. To at least help our people grasp this great idea, we started hosting Work & Witness teams within the country—one church sending a team to another church. Could we say our small district sent Work & Witness teams? Yes!

The Lord prompted Rev. Philip McAlister—then field strategy coordinator for Northern Europe and district superintendent for Hungary—and the Germany District to help us. I am not sure the German church is aware of how they helped us become a giving district. We had missions gatherings and dreamed about sending a team, but it seemed futile to even consider.

We received a phone call from Rev. McAlister, saying the Germany District wanted to send a team and even had the project money, but the team was not able to go. Philip asked whether we would go.

Imre and I could not believe the master plan: German project funds with a Hungarian work force. Thus, it happened that the first Work & Witness team was on their way from Hungary to Poznan [POHZ-nahn], Poland, led by volunteer missionaries Bob and Janet Miller. The Hungary District team was able to go, serve, and give. Thank you, Germany District! The Northern Europe Field—made up of mature districts—nurtured us, helped us, and taught us like an older sibling.

What better way to thank God and other Nazarenes for the many wonderful Work & Witness teams that visited us—for funding the trips, the work, and the sharing—than to go ourselves!

Other stories include when we were able to go and evangelize through music in Tirana [ti-RAH-nuh], Albania; or when a team went to Segesvár [she-jesh-VAHR] and Cíkmántor [sik-MAN-tohr], Romania, to help with children's ministry.

Isn't being Christian and Nazarene about interconnectedness, to give or being enabled to give, participate or being enabled to participate? That is doing mission together—not mission done by some to others!

### *Wesleyan Theology Alliance*

The last one-minute story I want to share is a stone of remembrance not only for the Church of the Nazarene, but for a wider circle of people. When the Church of the Nazarene started its work in Hungary, we as the first Hungarian Nazarene family had the privilege to be involved from the beginning. While Imre and I knew we had great church leaders, those leaders did not live in the country. We felt alone and isolated within our own context, too.

In a nervous time of change in our country, we sensed that the various denominations were trying to make the best of this time, sometimes in spite of one another.

Suspicion and fear were common. The agenda of the old regime turned churches against one another, preventing fruitful work. However, Communism is not the only force that plants suspicion and waters it to grow into distrust and betrayal.

We had a great friend, Charles Elliott, who was here with another Wesleyan mission organization. At a time when his workload was slow, we asked him to come and help with us.

While Charles assisted in the district office, we discussed a dream of all Wesleyans loving one another and working together. We wrote up a list what groups might be in the country and set up a meeting time on the third floor of the Nazarene district office. Charles invited other groups to join us.

On 22 June 1998, the national leaders of seven Wesleyan churches and mission organizations sat in the meeting room, wondering what we wanted. Imre listed the three goals that Charles, Imre, and I had developed:

1. Be connected. Regularly meet and share what each group does, so we can join in events, such as camps, etc. In this way, we would not duplicate efforts, but would utilize what we could and build on it.
2. Join efforts in publication. Nothing Wesleyan and Holiness is published in Hungarian. Through joint efforts (a joint literature team and volunteers, joint financial budgets) and holding theological conferences to cultivate theology in our tradition, terminology could be formed and refined in Hungarian, producing original material in our context.
3. Join efforts to develop quality theological education in the Wesleyan tradition. Each group doing this on their own would be expensive, difficult work. Collaboration would make effective theological education a reality.

All three of us were excited, but very nervous, too. The Wesleyan leaders had never sat down together like this

before; we were strangers. They listened with grace, but they were puzzled. They did not know the Nazarenes, the youngest and smallest denomination at that time. My guess is they thought our goals were too ambitious. The group agreed on the first goal and said no to the two “big” goals.

One out of three was not bad. We started to meet regularly.

- One year later in 1999, we started holding small conferences, presenting theological essays. In 2017, we will organize the 14th Annual Theology Conference. This is a great dialogue between the Wesleyan churches (United Methodist, Salvation Army, Free Methodist, Church of the Nazarene, etc.). We also had conferences where the dialogue was between Wesleyan churches and other evangelical churches through the Wesleyan Alliance or at the Lutheran Seminary with essays comparing Luther and Wesley or, during another year, Calvin and Wesley. We also celebrated the 300th anniversary of Charles Wesley’s birth with a conference day and by publishing new Wesley hymns. All of these were done through joint efforts.
- Two years later in 2001, we started publishing the 52 Standard Sermons by John Wesley and have been publishing together since that time.
- Two years later, the first class started with a student body, the faculty, the tools, and means from member organizations of the Wesleyan Alliance. Nazarene students, sitting together with students from six other denominations, met in a classroom at the United Methodist centre and

were taught from a European Nazarene College curriculum. They learned church leadership from a Salvation Army teacher; theology from a United Methodist sociologist, theologian and pastor; and communication from a Free Methodist journalist and theologian.

How many opportunities would have been lost if we had allowed enmity to rule? So many churches around us continued to be hostile toward one another. The regime that dictated hostility was gone. The groups did not remember why they needed to hate one another or why they shouldn't work together; they just continued to do so. It is a great stone of remembrance to make the decision to humble ourselves and work together as the Wesleyan Alliance.

In 2003, the first official assembly was held in Hungary to make the decision to register the Wesleyan Church Alliance (now the Wesleyan Theology Alliance). We would work together in the areas of education, publishing, and to enhance church work by embracing our shared inheritance. There is a time for everything, the wise teach us “a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,”<sup>86</sup> and “a time to tear and a time to mend...”<sup>87</sup>

There was a time in church history when various church groups departed from one another. We sensed that this was the time to come together as Wesleyan groups. Since there is a time for everything, we pray that this will happen in other parts of the world as well. The story of the Wesleyan

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<sup>86</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:5a

<sup>87</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:7a

Alliance maps out a solid way to build collaborative work with other Wesleyan groups in new countries.

It is still hard to believe that all three goals—with the bonus of officially registering the Alliance as a legal entity—have become a reality. This provides a context in which our Nazarene work is embedded—deeply rooted not only in the Nazarene DNA but in the Hungarian culture—and closely interconnected with Hungarian churches and what Christ does in our country. We do not stand alone. We pray that, as the Hungarian Nazarene work suffers attacks from the one against us, we will survive—not because of great individuals, but because early on, the small and young work was deeply interconnected:

- Interconnected with the global Church of the Nazarene and truly embracing this identity, through the teaching, traditions, practices, and meeting in conference with its people;
- Deeply rooted and fully contextualized in the Hungarian culture. We are interconnected and collaborating with Hungarian churches, avoiding the image of a church that is “missionary-brought,” having the freedom and space to find what it means to be a Hungarian Wesleyan-Holiness church without molds into which we are forced. The work will not grow to be a tree if it is in a “mission pot”; it should be planted in native soil, even if the planting is traumatic in that soil and in the wind.
- Interconnected as a district. Interdependence is a sign of growing maturity. It takes time to get there: growing

from total dependence, through a stage of independence, to the ultimate realization of just how important interconnectedness is to the church's ongoing development and its work in the mission of God. This will only take place as we intentionally provide time for fellowship and learning with others within our own context. Forming great traditions early on and coming together as a district strengthen Nazarene identity and free it to be formed. Local churches, in turn, become strong and attractive places for new people that we reach who may join us in district, youth, and family events.

### *Leadership Initiative*

As with any young district—and maybe even old ones—we have the challenge of training new leaders. The training of young leaders has been a blessing for us. When the Eurasia Region offered a programme called Leadership Initiative (LDI), we offered it to our first group of young leaders in 2009, then did another training in 2013. Rather than identifying leaders and throwing them into the deep waters of never-ending ministry tasks, leaders received two years' training and mentoring. Those that wanted to take on continuing leadership roles were given one year of coaching.

This has helped a number of young leaders who would have otherwise not had the courage to take on leadership roles. Others would have lacked the benefit of mentoring leaders who came alongside them and nurtured them. The story of LDI helps map out a better future for our young,

assuring we do not make the same mistakes in the future that were made in the past.

### ***What Is Your Story?***

“We ought to leave something behind to remember us by.” What could we leave behind to be remembered? What is the stone of remembrance of the mission carried out by our generation? What do we leave behind? A sour cherry pit between two stones? A pile of mission books? A set of moralizing sermons? Christian pride? Good statistics?

The stories I shared in the prior chapters are like Örkény’s one-minute stories: snapshots, reflections from my past, and my present experience with God. I was tracing God’s presence behind the Iron Curtain, and the stories were meant to be about God who is present behind fences, walls, and cordon. The stories were also about those staying faithful and being His witnesses to everyone, even—and especially—to the persecutors and oppressors. These were my account as *an eyewitness*.

So, what is your one-minute story?

# Act On It

- Those watching how each of us runs our spiritual race are the eyewitnesses of our lives. Those who we may consider enemies of Christianity—no matter the system under which we live—are eyewitnesses of God's story. Ask yourself the following questions:
  - Is my life story as His person a missional story to those worshiping other gods?
  - What is my heritage?
  - What do I leave behind to be remembered by as His person?
- Consider what symbol truly represents a stone of remembrance of God's mission for you—what you have done, why you did it, and how it relates to the story of God. Now, make a stone of remembrance with that symbol. (The only rule is that you may not use a sour cherry pit between two stones; anything else may be applied.)





# CHAPTER 13

## THE WITNESSES PAGE

“You will be my witnesses.”<sup>88</sup> It is not only a command—certainly not a threat, even when considering its price—it is a promise. We *will* be witnesses.

Through this book, I wanted to be a witness of His work, relating reflections of my life.

How can you relate your life story in such a way that you are not the main hero, telling the story with Christ at its centre? When you tell your story, do you recount all that you saw, heard, and experienced as a witness as part of the salvation story? What is your story of God’s mission—in your time and place?

If you have never retold your story as part of the salvation history, start now by telling it to yourself and to others. You cannot relive your life, but you can retell it. Sharing other people’s stories is great; you become the

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<sup>88</sup> Acts 1:8

bearer of good news. However, your story is just as important for others to hear.

In our spiritual formation group at my church, we began an exercise several years ago that we still continue: we retell our stories. We have heard others' stories—and our own—before, but again and again we retell how God made himself known to us, what things happened in our time. I retell my story again and again; others do the same. The goal is that we will know each other's stories by heart and that each story will become an authentic part of God's story—in our time and in our place. We are orally compiling God's work: remembering, teaching God's story to and with others, and glorifying God for His work in and through us.

If you notice, the crucial questions around the greatest salvation events like the Resurrection and Pentecost were not the facts:

- Easter—everyone knew the facts; everyone talked about them. The Emmaus disciples did not argue any of the facts.
- Pentecost—everyone heard and saw the events and had an opinion. The crowd did not argue the facts of the day's events. It was in the interpretation where they differed.

On both occasions, the crucial question was, “What does this mean?”

In this day of globalization, everyone in the world has access to more information than we could ever imagine.

Events are broadcast or posted from one end of the world to the other. Many of us are connected via the Internet. The question to the “prophets of this age,” today’s disciples, eye-witnesses of today’s world events: can we interpret them? What do they mean? A witness interprets correctly from the salvation story perspective.

We must add our stories to others’ salvation stories, so we remember them and learn from them. Also, as we share these stories many times over, we may hear our children say, “Nothing is happening in our lives.” If you know the stories, you can respond with many interesting events happening around you and through others.

There are volumes of information shared these days, even in this mission book. However, you still need to be a witness and tell what you heard, what you saw, what you experienced, and make sense of it. Help others understand what your story means in the salvation history.

In primary and high school years, my siblings and I were mistreated because of my family’s ministry and our faith. We were beaten, humiliated many times, and bullied by teachers in front of other students. When my friends in class tried to comfort me, saying kind words, they were punished. The order was given: no one can talk to Mária or help her.

When I was in high school, I won competitions in the Russian language. I competed at different levels; and at each level, I won. The ultimate prize was to go to Leningrad (today Saint Petersburg) for a month.

Before the trip, I was called into the office of the director (headmaster) of the gymnasium.<sup>89</sup> In attendance were my teacher, the director, several faculty members, and the secretary of culture for the county. The culture secretary specifically came to let me know that I would not be allowed to represent my country or be named as the prize winner. The reason behind this was my family background, that I would bring shame to Hungary by being a Christian. He told me that the second-place prize winner would make the trip.

My teacher knew how hard I had worked and how much I loved the Russian language. She too had worked very hard with me and was very upset. Before I entered the meeting and even while I was standing there, she spoke up and told them that the decision was not right and that I should be allowed to go, even if ideologically I was not in agreement with Communism. She risked disciplinary action, her Party membership, and other challenges by saying this.

The county's secretary of culture turned to me and said, "As long as I am in office, you will never have a chance."

I heard that sentence many times in my childhood.

And so, the person who won second place spent a month in Leningrad. I stayed home.

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<sup>89</sup> A gymnasium is a type of school with a strong emphasis on academic learning and providing advanced secondary education in some parts of Europe and the CIS, comparable to British grammar schools, sixth form colleges, and US preparatory high schools. In its current meaning, it usually refers to secondary schools focused on preparing students to enter a university for advanced academic study.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gymnasium\\_\(school\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gymnasium_(school)) n. pag. Web. 23 November 2016.

Just a few days ago, I actually met my high school Russian language and literature teacher after many years. She, a former Party member, told the story from her perspective. I told her that I sometimes did not believe it actually happened, because I wanted to forget the memory so much.

My former teacher told me that I had the wrong family background, that my father—as a pastor—had the worst possible job, and that they thought I would be the worst representative of Hungary in the Soviet Union as a believer. It didn’t matter how well I did in my studies. She also said that, after I left the room, she tried to be tricky and argued with the decision-makers that, maybe if a believer went to the Soviet Union, Communism would have an effect on me, that it was a chance. My teacher had to face consequences for standing up for me.

I explained to my former teacher that, for a year, I had the exceptional and joyful opportunity to pastor a young couple from Saint Petersburg in the Nazarene Church, while they lived in Budapest. I guess, “as long as God is in office,” nothing is impossible.

Even today, you may be living in a situation that could cause humiliation or punishment for praying in public, handing a Bible to someone, having a cross on a public building, or greeting someone in a Christian way.

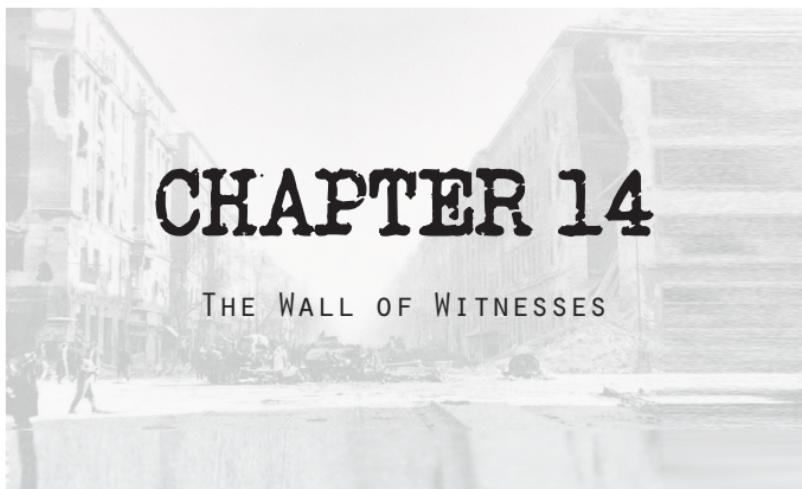
You are writing your mission journal every day as *the eyewitness*. Do not just view the world as a tourist—an outsider—rather view it as an *eyewitness*, be engaged in the world around you. After all, you do not have a tourist visa on this earth, but a work visa. You are on a mission.

# Act On It

- What kind of a storyteller are you? What is your narrative of God’s work?
- What are your psalms, your reflections, of God’s work?
- Share your experiences with God within your faith community. Be aware and interpret Christ’s actions in your life.
- As you experience world events—migrations of people, terrorism, new ways of oppression, hostility to Christianity, or persecution—how do you interpret what is happening, and what do you tell others about events from your past that will help others understand current events?
- What would you answer if Jesus asked your church or family today, “Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? ‘Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?’”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Mark 8:17–18, NASB



# CHAPTER 14

## THE WALL OF WITNESSES

WALLS. There are different walls. The Berlin Wall of separation. The two sides of that wall:

- The Wall of Victims,
- The Wall of Victimizer.

Yet there is one more wall beyond these two categories: the Wall of Witnesses. I do not want to merely think of myself as a victim of a regime in human history. I am *an eyewitness* of the ugly and the beautiful, human sin and God's miracle.

If your picture were hanging on one of these walls, which one would it be?

People from other generations wept for your space on the Wall of Witnesses.

There are events we need to remember. There are also events we need to forget, laying them aside as garbage or counting them as loss: a lost childhood and youth, lost opportunities, garbage that was put into your life without your permission. Human history does that to nations, families, individuals.

“...Let us also **lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”<sup>91</sup> We cannot run for mission if we have the weight of the past slowing us down.

The past is ours. God’s promises for the present and the future are ours, whatever they may bring. Christ is ours, and we are His.

Go! Run!

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<sup>91</sup> Hebrews 12:1b, esv

# Act On It

- If you see yourself as a victim in your story, how does it distort your participation in the mission of God and how you relate to Him and to others? Ask for healing and understanding so your eyes are opened to see God acting throughout your story. Experience the truth and the freedom that are yours, and be freed for mission to all, even those you have considered your enemies. From your victim's status, become a witness.
- If you know you were, have been, or are part of a victimizer group, plead on behalf of your people and seek restoration and God's forgiveness for your people. Ask for God's healing, that your eyes will be opened and you will see the world—not from the victimizer's position at the height of human pride, but as God sees the world. Seek God's truth that can free you. Only He can free you from the past and empty you of your perceived power over others. He is the one who can free you for mission. He can take you from your powerful, prideful, and abusive position, to become His witness.
- I have prepared a Wall of Witnesses as a closure to this book. Can you imagine your picture here? It is a Wall of Witnesses, not of Fame. It is the unknown, yet well-known—unknown to and by the world, yet known by the Father. I pray that you can move your picture from the Wall of Victims or Victimizers to the Wall of Witnesses.

# A Wall of Witnesses

“Through the glory and dishonor, slander and praise; viewed as imposters, yet genuine; as unknown, yet well-known; dying, and yet we live on; punished, yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.”

2 Corinthians 6:8–10, bsb



# An Invitation

Some of us will meet at the 2017 General Assembly. Through those that come from the countries from behind walls, fences, borders, curtains, and cordons, we will all meet under the theme “One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith” for all the nations.

Let us remember that we all work in making Christlike disciples in the nations under different circumstances. For some, attending the General Assembly will be a healing experience—an encouragement, a touch of love, giving strength to go back, to go on. For them, it will not merely be a great social event, nice services, excellent sermons and reports, and beautiful music. It will be survival, food, water quenching a great thirst for the people of God. They will be soaking in fellowship with each of us. They may not understand why some attendees are laid back, taking everything easy, and not using every tool and every opportunity provided.

If your story right now is among those who “have,” be there to build fellowship with others, give of yourselves, and be an encouragement. Do not give your pity, but your love.

Let us prepare. Then let us come together being content in Christ and echo the words of Paul, “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every

situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.”<sup>92</sup>

It is good and proper to share another’s joy and trouble. We all need each other—what a great gift to gather together! We are a people of “One Mission”: that no one may perish—not oppressors, not those responsible for the crucifixion, not even the guards standing beneath the cross. Let not one soul be lost in any of the nations.

“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere...”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Philippians 4:12

<sup>93</sup> Hebrews 10:35–36a

# Appendix

## More Soups

Some of the fruit soups are cooked, then chilled before serving. These are made from fruits like sour cherry, apple, rhubarb, etc.

### Apple Soup

#### Ingredients:

6-7 apples

2-3 tablespoons sugar

3 litres (3 quarts) water

2 decilitres (3/4 cup) sour cream

2 tablespoons flour

1 package vanilla sugar (12 grams; approximately 1/2 ounce)

#### Preparation:

1. Peel the apples and cut them into cubes.
2. Boil the water with sugar.
3. Mix the sour cream with the flour.
4. Put the apple cubes into the boiling water.
5. Remove the soup from the stove and pour in the sour cream, stirring until thickened.
6. Add the vanilla sugar.

## **Another Apple Soup**

### **Ingredients:**

60 dekagrams (1-1/3 pounds) tart apples  
Zest of one lemon (approximately 1 tablespoon)  
1 stick of cinnamon  
2 nutmegs  
1 pinch salt  
6 dekagrams (3-3/4 tablespoons) sugar  
2 decilitres (3/4 cup) sour cream  
3 dekagrams (1-3/4 tablespoons) flour (or 2 egg yolks)  
1,5 litres (6 cups) water

### **Preparation:**

1. Peel the apples and cut them into thin slices.
2. Put the apples into cold water with all the spices, and cook them. (You may want to put the spices into a removable cooking bag.)
3. When the apples are tender, remove the spices (or the spice bag) and remove pot from stove.
4. Mix the sour cream with the flour and add it to the soup, stirring constantly. Mix well. (You can also use egg yolks for thickening the soup instead of the sour cream-flour mixture.)
5. In summer, pour the soup into a serving bowl and place the bowl on a bed of ice to serve.
6. In winter, serve the soup at room temperature or warm.
7. The same recipe can be used with sour cherries, but add more sugar (10-15 dekagrams; 3.5–5 ounces).

## **Nectarine Cream Soup**

### **Ingredients:**

30 dekagrams (10.5 ounces) nectarines  
3 decilitres (10 liquid ounces) water  
1 decilitre (3.4 liquid ounces) milk (1,5% fat)  
1 egg, separated  
1/2 tablespoon cinnamon  
Liquid sweetener or honey (to taste)  
150 grams (5 liquid ounces) yoghurt (1,4%)  
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

### **Preparation:**

1. Peel and slice nectarines.
2. Add the lemon juice, cinnamon, and honey/sweetener to the water in a pan, and steam the fruit.
3. When the fruit is cooked (but not mushy), allow the fruit and water to cool, then blend well.
4. Add milk, yoghurt, and egg yolk, then whip until foamy.
5. Whip egg white separately until stiff peaks form.
6. Fold the whipped egg white into the soup.
7. Refrigerate the soup for 1–1,5 hours. (The soup will not only cool down, but will also become creamier.)
8. Serve the soup chilled and garnish with fruit pieces.

## **Strawberry–Sweet Cherry Soup**

### **Ingredients:**

1/2 cup strawberries  
2/3 cup sweet cherries  
1-2/3 cup cold milk  
3/4 cup cream  
4 tablespoons sugar  
Pinch of salt  
1-1/2 cups water  
10 whole cloves  
1 small cinnamon stick  
1 lemon peel

### **Preparation:**

1. Remove the pits from the cherries.
2. Mix and mash both fruits in a blender.
3. Put the mix through a strainer. You should have the strained juice of the fruits.
4. Add cold milk, cream, sugar, and salt to the fruit juice.
5. Prepare the spices by cooking the cloves, cinnamon stick, and lemon peel in water for 5 minutes.
6. Cool the spiced water, pour it into the fruit soup through a strainer, then stir.
7. Serve the soup chilled, with whipped cream and pieces of fruit.

## **Sour Cherry Soup**

Feeds: Approximately 4 people

2-litre (2-quart) cooking pot

### **Ingredients:**

1 litre (34 liquid ounces) water

1 can (680 grams; 24 ounces) of sour cherries

Sugar (according to taste)

Cinnamon (according to taste)

2-3 pieces of clove (according to taste)

3 decilitres (10 liquid ounces) whipping cream

1 package (40 grams; 1.5 ounces) instant vanilla pudding

### **Preparation:**

1. Pour the can of sour cherries into the pot, add water, and season with sugar. Add cinnamon and clove according to taste. Bring to a boil at medium heat.
2. While waiting for soup to boil, stir pudding with whipping cream until smooth.
3. After soup comes to a boil, remove from heat, and allow to cool. When it is lukewarm, remove 2 decilitres (approximately 7 ounces) of the sour cherry soup and mix well with the pudding, then add the mixture to the remaining soup.
4. Serve the soup lukewarm or cold with whipped cream on top.

# **Chestnut Cream Soup with Sour Cherry**

(Serves: 4)

**Note:** This creamy, nice soup is very easy to prepare, a help during the Advent season when everyone is so busy. This is great for your Christmas Eve evening soup as an alternative; it has an aroma that is irresistible.

## **Ingredients:**

- 15 dekagrams (5.3 ounces) sour cherry (canned, without seeds and drained)
- 1 decilitre (3.4 liquid ounces) water
- Few drops artificial extracts/flavourings<sup>94</sup> for cooking (vanilla, rum, or other flavoured extract)
- 9 decilitres (30.4 ounces) milk with 2,8% fat
- 1 pod vanilla (scrape out the vanilla beans from both halves)
- 1 tablespoon pudding powder for thickening (not instant; vanilla fits well)
- 1 decilitre (3.4 liquid ounces) milk with 2,8% fat
- 25 dekagrams (8.8 ounces) chestnut puree
- 1/4 teaspoon (1 millilitres) ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons honey (polyflora honey preferred)

## **Preparation:**

1. Drain the canned sour cherry, removing seeds if necessary.
2. Mix the extract/flavouring with the necessary amount of water (according to extract packaging), and soak the sour cherries in it for 2 hours.

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<sup>94</sup> I use Dr. Oetker aromas (artificial extracts/flavourings). They are non-alcoholic aromas/flavourings for cooking and baking that the cook dilutes with water. They can be purchased online.

3. Heat the larger amount of milk slowly, stirring the vanilla beans into it.
4. Mix the smaller amount of milk with the pudding powder.
5. Add the pudding to the heated milk-vanilla mixture, blending it well. Continue to heat to boiling.
6. Crumble the chestnut puree into the soup.
7. Remove the boiling soup from the stove, and use a kitchen mixer to make the soup smooth.
8. Put soup back on the stove, and add cinnamon and honey.
9. While the soup is cooking, make sure to stir it well.
10. Drain cherries from the extract liquid, and discard liquid.
11. Add the sour cherries to the soup, bringing it to a boil again, then remove from heat.
12. Allow soup to cool to room temperature, then chill.
13. Serve with whipped cream and slices of orange.
14. Serve the soup cold or warm.

## Rhubarb Soup

### Ingredients:

- 1 package of vanilla sugar (12 grams; approximately 1/2 ounce)
- 8-10 stalks of rhubarb
- 2.5-3 litres (2.6-3 quarts) water
- 1 lemon (use one that is not bitter, or use lemon juice)
- 2-3 decilitres (7-10 ounces) sour cream
- 1 tablespoon flour (I do not like it very thick. For thicker, use up to 2-3 tablespoons flour; it also depends on how thick the sour cream is.)
- 2-3 tablespoons sugar (cane sugar)—amount is according to taste

### Preparation:

1. Clean the rhubarb (cut off the leafy portion and discard) and wash.
2. Slice rhubarb.
3. Cook rhubarb in water until the fruit is half-tender.
4. Peel a small lemon, slice into circles, and place into the soup.
5. Add package of vanilla sugar.
6. Mix the sour cream and flour, and pour mixture into soup, stirring well.
7. Add sugar (cane sugar is best). It is important to add the sugar late; otherwise, it burns.
8. Bring soup to a boil, stirring constantly.
9. Serve the soup cold or warm.

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