

July- August 2025 (part 1)

RICK & BECKY MARTIN

MISSIONARIES TO THE PHILIPPINES SINCE 1977

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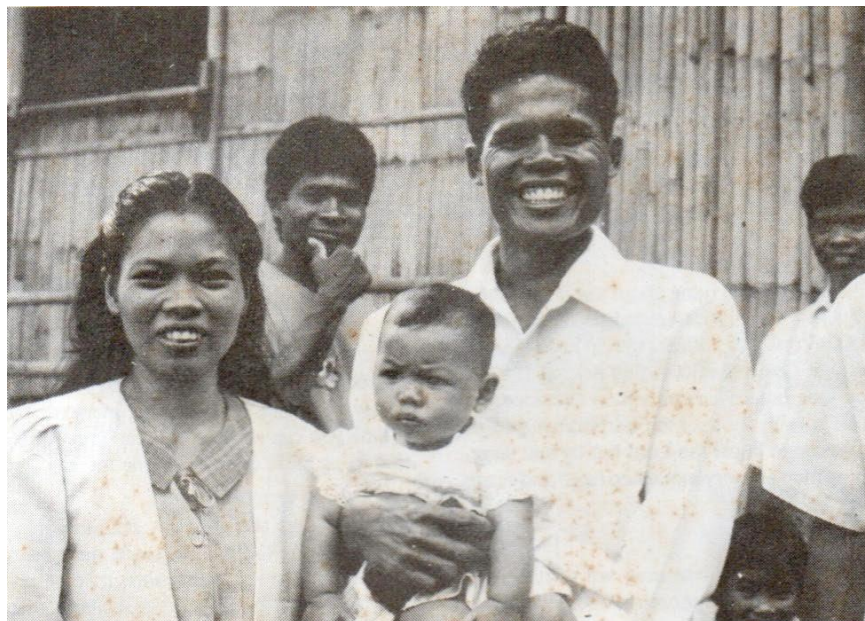
Dear Friends,

In this month's prayer letter are several stories of some very unlikely men that become pastors.

This year the prayer letters have been about the importance of having a strategy to start churches. 1990 was a year that the Lord gave 3 open doors to starting churches. The first was that one of our graduates started a Bible College. The second was the door was open to send out foreign missionaries from the Philippines.

The third open door came because of a survey trip I took to Haiti where we were planning to send the first foreign missionaries. While on that trip Missionary Don Dryden told me about something he was doing to start churches in Haiti. He had helped some of the graduates of his Bible College to start nighttime Institutes in their churches. Like Haiti, few married men in the Philippines were able to go to Bible Colleges as it is difficult to go to school and at the same time, have a job to support their family. Brother Dryden is now in Heaven, and I will always be grateful for what he taught me.

When I returned to the Philippines, I challenged our graduates to do the same. A number of them were enthusiastic about doing this. The first to start was Pastor Eduardo Cornelio below pictured in 1991 with his family.



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On his first anniversary at his church in a village in Maayon Capiz he invited me to speak on this special day. He introduced me to one of his first converts there, Ramon Mapacpac. Ramon was teaching Sunday school as you can see below when I was at the church.

Later, Ramon went out and started a church. Below are some of his members in front of the native style church made of bamboo and a grass roof.



He also took me to a school class meeting under a tree near his church. He told me when he first went there, he had no place to have a service so for 3 months he had services under this tree where one of his workers was teaching a group of children.



I will never forget what Bro. Cornelio told me that day. There was only 1 Independent Baptist Church in the 28 barangays or villages of Maayon Capiz at that time. He told me before he died his dream was that every one of those villages would have a church like his. 35 years later almost all the barangays have a church. Most of them are a result of the ministry of Eduardo Cornelio and the men he trained.

One of the blessings of starting these institutes is how it motivated the pastors. They considered it a great privilege for any pastor to have a part in training another pastor to go and start a church.

The next story is about how one pastor trained a pastor in his institute for married men and how God used that man that he trained. Peter Tim Tim (below on the far left in the picture) graduated from IBC in 1993. He was a soft-spoken student when he was in college, but in his heart, he had a passion to be used by God. About 5 years later he started an institute for a few of his men.

One of those men was Florencio Muleta, (second from the left in the picture below) who started a church in another village. Brother Muleta had a lot of faith and began to win people to Christ that most Christians would never even try to win. Maximo Ortigas (third from the left below) was the head of a cult called "Grace", that believed that the followers should give all their possessions to the church. The first time he witnessed to him, Maximo said "I've spent many years leading a church. I've done many good things. I have a lot of members. I will go to heaven because of that."

Brother Muleta was persistent and finally Maximo Ortigas accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. To make a long story short, Brother Muleta trained him in his institute that had just started in his church. Brother Maximo graduated several years later and started a church. Through the years Maximo Ortigas also started an institute in his church and the Lord has used him to train 6 men to start churches.



Peter Tim Tim, Florencio Muleta, Maximo Ortigas ,& Benvenido

Another convert of Brother Muleta was Benvenido (on the far right) who was a vigilante that killed several people, who the residents of his village thought were thieves who were stealing livestock from the people. The villagers were glad someone had solved the problem but later they began to fear him because he had killed so many people. One day Brother Muleta went to this house and shared the greatest story ever told about how Jesus died for everyone including someone like Benvendido. Brother Muleta went back several times, and he finally accepted Christ as his Savior. His life was changed so much that people could not believe what he had become. Brother Muleta trained Benvenido in his Institute, and he went out and started a church after he graduated. Brother Benvendio also started an institute in his church and has trained several men to start churches.

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Brother Muletas' 5 children all came to IBC and graduated. His four sons each started churches after they graduated. Brother Maximo and Brother Benvendido also sent their sons to IBC and they graduated as well. It all started with a humble, soft-spoken person who had a burden to be a part of training men who would be faithful and fruitful. Brother Muleta went to heaven in October 2019. He was preaching on a Sunday morning in his church and had a heart attack. The Lord took him home as he was doing what he loved to do, preach the Word of God.



Maximo Ortigas preaching in his church.

Samson Clorion was born Christmas Eve, 1960, in Dumarao, Capiz, here on our island of Panay, Philippines. His parents separated while he was still a baby. Because of this, he was left in the care of his grandmother.

When Samson was five years old, he got the measles and lost his sight. When he reached his teenage years, he tried to fill his days by making friends. However, these friends influenced him to smoke and drink. One day while he was alone, he realized how foolish he must look - a blind drunkard. That day he quit, but his life was still empty. He kept asking himself over and over; "Why am I blind? What can I do with my life?"

One thing that Samson could do was listen to the radio. One day, he just happened to tune in to a Baptist preacher talking about salvation by grace through faith in Jesus alone. He listened intently to every word. That day (in 1979) Samson received Jesus as his Savior.

He had a burning desire to learn the Bible, but he was never able to go to a special school to learn Braille. He just began praying about it and soon God touched someone's heart to give him a tape player and some Scripture tapes.

One day one of the graduates of Iloilo Baptist College, Pastor Reymundo Porras, started a church in the village where Samson lived. Soon, Brother Porras saw the great love Samson had for Jesus. No one needed to accompany Samson to church. It seems unbelievable, but do you know what they did? Samson owned a cow, and so Bro. Porras and Samson taught the cow to take him to church. So, he would climb on her back, and she would take him to church! Surely if we want to learn about God's Word bad enough, He will provide a way!



Because of his desire to serve the Lord, Samson would try to visit people in his village. He would memorize the way to certain people's homes. Although he would often fall while trying to walk on the slippery dikes between rice fields, he kept on. So many of us have excuses why we can't serve God, but Samson would always manage to find a way to serve the Master he loved.

Many of the graduates of IBC have started Bible institutes in their own churches to train married men to become pastors. It's very hard for married men to go to Bible College here. Brother Porras started an institute and challenged Samson to become a pastor. Samson agreed, so Pastor Porras taught him daily. To make a long story short, by the grace of God, Pastor Samson Clorion started the Tacay Fundamental Baptist Church and became their pastor!



Samson preached without an outline since he couldn't see and never learned to write. This handicap, he tells us, makes him totally dependent on God. He prays earnestly for God to give him a message for each service and teach him what to say. He said he makes an outline in his mind and preaches it. God has never failed him. Years ago, he was the speaker for the Camp for the Blind that Iloilo Baptist Church organized. To the left, is a picture of him teaching some children. Several years ago, the Lord took him home. We miss him. He left a testimony that was a blessing to many people, especially pastors.

"My name is Jonathan Aspera, pastor of Bethany Covenant Baptist Church in San Dionisio, Iloilo. I have been blind for many years.

I was born into a poor family, yet my parents worked hard to provide a way for me to go to school. I had great plans for my life, but they did not include the Lord. I finished my automotive vocational course, but I was not content. I worked as a security guard for a while at one of the largest universities in Manila. One year later however, my blood sugar and blood pressure went sky high, and that's why I became blind.

I became very discouraged. All my dreams and plans vanished. I was always thinking about my four children. I kept asking myself, "How can I be a good father to them and provide for them financially now that I am blind? How can I raise them?"

One day someone invited me to join a Bible study. That is how I got saved - I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and then I was baptized. This church (started by Michael Balinas, a graduate of Iloilo Baptist College) offered a night class for lay people. It was a great opportunity for me, and I graduated from that Bible Institute. I had a great desire to be used by God. I started a pioneering work in my home place. It was hard for me to travel from place to place, because of my blindness, but I thank God for giving me a wonderful wife who loves me and helps me with the ministry. My wife reads the Bible to me. Then afterwards I ask her to write about the spiritual lessons I've learned. Then she reads it out loud to me over and over, so I can memorize it. Then on Sunday, I preach the word of God to my church people."

Below is Brother Jonathan Aspera witnessing a man using Braille scripture.



"Yet God gave me a burden to do even more for Him - to train men to be pastors through a Bible institute. That year I trained two laymen. I taught them every night about Bible doctrine and other subjects. These men have helped me so much in the ministry. They help me in Bible study, Sunday school, soul winning, song leading, and so on. I have a plan to train more men to start pioneering works in some villages and I want to train more of my

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members to be soul winners. My wife is my partner in soul winning every week. We go to three different places.

God has given us some faithful church members who have provided our needs. My family and I also raise ducks. I work with the police in our town by teaching values and I want to start a school ministry."

Brother Jonathan's church met under trees or in different homes, until the day God graciously provided a church building. Brother Jonathan spends three days a week soulwinning and three days a week conducting Bible studies! Through the years he has sent students to Iloilo Baptist College.

Pictured right, is Brother Jonathan Aspera teaching the Bible in a home.

Several hundred graduates have nighttime institutes for married men.

Monthly area meetings for Alumni pastors and their wives are held in as many as 15 locations around the Philippines. Below is one being held in Negros Island.



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During these meetings there are sessions for the pastors about how to make their institutes for the men in their church more effective. The pastors also pray with each other that the Lord will help them start more churches. Sometimes we hold a one or two day workshop giving the pastors ways to start an institute and how to make their institute effective.



Food and fellowship are a part of these meetings. Pastors are motivated by the teaching they receive during these sessions.



Someone has helped us make 600 sets of books that include over 2000 pages of material for 59 different subjects that these pastors can use to teach their men. Most of the pastors use a 3-year curriculum for their men they train.

Lastly, please pray for the pastors and the men they are training to start churches. It is very difficult for a pastor to train a man in their church to go out by faith and start a new church. By God's grace they are making an impact on other villages.

God bless,

Rick and Becky Martin