

## THE PLANTING OF A NEW CHURCH

I endeavor to plant churches in the villages of Southeast Romania as the Lord leads me and enables me to do so. With that being said, I recognize and acknowledge that the Lord is the One who opens the door of the Gospel because the opposition is strong here. No matter how strong a man may be, his feet are still made of clay (**Col. 4:3, Rev. 3:8**) and I am weak.

### **SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO GET STARTED.**

There are many people the Lord places in my path of obedience to preach the Gospel. Upon arriving in a village, I am sensitive to the Lord's leading and guidance as I pursue His goals. It is difficult to find a bridgehead, namely a key person or a family to assist in the Lord's work. I once heard something attributed to the Apostle Paul that I really like: "When Paul entered a city, he was always interested to find out where the prison was located and what the conditions were like because he was almost sure he would arrive there." Sadly today, there are preachers who are more concerned with staying at expensive hotels than they are about the truth of the Gospel.

When I am conducting mission work, my goal is to seek out a family that has a home that I can stay in. Typically it's a poor family with many children. I begin to befriend the children, young people, and others. How do I do this? God has uniquely gifted me to use my hands in a variety of labor intensive jobs and during the days, I work alongside the people of the village developing relationships to earn their trust and respect. Even if I lack the skill to accomplish a certain job, the Lord provides the ability. When I lack wisdom, I pray and God gives me wisdom. Many times I have learned skills while accomplishing a job for the first time. This is how I learned to weld, to do electrical and plumbing work as well as other types of skills. In the evenings, I spend time talking with people. In the winter, there is usually a lot more time to spend with people and they are very open to conversations. I often show Christian movies to adults and teenagers and kid's movies for the younger ones. Developing relationships in this manner sometimes causes dissention with the local orthodox priest and can also cause strife with other Christian groups. When God leads me to a particular village, I don't usually leave until I have finished the work. I am very tenacious and patient knowing that my Lord is working.

My discussions with people are pragmatic. They're about topics that are important such as educating children, marriage, divorce, sin, the consequences of sin in a person's life, and of course salvation through grace that is offered by God through Jesus Christ.

For many years I was preoccupied with preaching the Word of God with the flair of a "professional". In order to achieve this, I asked for guidance and advice of other Christian men. Many challenged me to live a holy, clean life, to read various books, but only a few advised me to be a witness for Christ in the

spirit of **Acts 1:8**. Once I understood this, Matthew 10:20 began to be demonstrated in my life. The Lord works not just through me, but in me also.

#### **GROWTH IS NECESSARY, AND REQUIRES EFFORT AND PATIENCE.**

My passion is in investing in people. Individuals, families, whoever the Lord puts in my path I seek to invest in them. I spend time with them. We study God's Word together. We visit other churches in the area. We practice evangelism together in the village. There I see their preparation, their passion, their fear, their courage, and their love for people. Taking these steps helps me evaluate each individual's capacity for ministry and guides me on specific needs for training. People that respond to our evangelism form small groups that meet in houses. This process can sometimes take four years. It is during these years when the group is meeting that they determine if they are determined to be a church that is willing to storm the Gates of Hell. When the group has grown and there is so much activity like a swarm of bees, it needs a hive – a place to gather together as one. Only then can we begin the process of seeking God's direction in identifying a location that can accommodate the group. As in America, location, location, location is the key to securing a meeting place. The group needs to be independent which limits problems later.

#### **SOMETIMES THE END IS PAINFUL.**

When this newly formed group has its leaders established and its elders to shepherd the flock; when they have a place to gather as one body, the next step is often a painful one. It is like seeing your children grow up and seek their own life of independence. The group is left to care for themselves under the watchful eye of the Holy Spirit and the men that will lead. I am no longer a part of the process. While not engaging in the daily activities of this new church, I don't forget them. I visit often and provide biblical guidance and wisdom. I am available for help when the need arises. If mistakes are made, I am ready to guide them in resolving the issues. In the end, if I have done as the Lord has enabled me to do, they will grow in grace, they will grow in the strength of the Lord and they will pursue the missional mandate of the church found in **Matthew 28:19-20**. They must continue without me.

Leaving this mission is not easy. I have grown to deeply love the people and they love me. They don't want to see me go, but it is necessary. This separation process can take several months. This mission process does not happen overnight. It is typically a five to eight year process. Following that, I'm no longer connected. If they make mistakes or have issues, the foundation I established will enable them to handle problems and crises as they occur. By way of illustration, I don't want to be like the child that helped a baby swan break free of its egg. The child cut the egg away not knowing that baby swan needed to fight his way out on his own to develop the strength necessary for

daily living. Without developing that strength the baby swan was not able to fly – was not able to be what God wanted him to be.

The church is a living organism that undergoes cycles of life. Like an infant that is totally dependent upon his parents, then learns to become independent, and finally interdependent. The same cycle occurs in the spiritual realm. I have never experienced a period of more significant spiritual growth than when engaged in the work of the ministry. I want to grow; I want to preach with power, I want to be a faithful worker, and at the same time I cry out to God . . . Lord I am an unworthy servant. I have done that which was my duty to do!”

Be blessed!

Matei