

February 2, 2021 -- REFLECTIONS WRITTEN FOR MY MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

By Bob Young

If my mother were still alive, today would be her 99th birthday! She was born 2-2-22.

In 1 Thess. 2:4, Paul wrote, "but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts." Paul recognized that God was testing the hearts of early church missionaries and workers. The goal is to pass the test.

What are some evidences of God's testing? What will it take to pass the test?

God calls us to be history-makers. Let me clarify.

→I do not mean that we should expect our lives to be written in the history books. Many important people will live their entire lives and hardly be noticed in written histories. Many great men and women remain unknown.

→I do mean that you and I look at those who have gone before us and we rejoice in what they taught us, how they shaped us, and what we learned. Among others, I think of my mother.

→I do mean that you and I are called to be history-makers for the next generation. God's plan for the advance of the gospel in this world involves a generational chain. Four generations are mentioned in 2 Tim. 2:2.

→I recognize that simply by living we are making history. What will future generations remember? What will they say about us?

The most memorable events of our personal histories come out of the shared experiences of difficult days. In my family we talk about the great blizzard of March 1957 in southwest Kansas, almost two feet of snow on Thanksgiving weekend 1974 during our first year in Michigan, and the January 1978 Great Lakes blizzard. In my lifetime, our nation still remembers November 1963, January 1986, September 11. Now we can add 2020-2021.

COVID is testing ministry and missions. Barna predicts that 20% of US churches will not survive COVID. In many churches that will survive, ministry and mission have been ineffective. What will be remembered from this time? Will we pass the test?

The past year has confirmed the importance of mission work that focuses on facilitating the work of national workers and churches. National workers are exactly where they want to be during the pandemic—at home!

→We see that many national mission churches are doing quite well.

→We see the importance of church-wide leadership equipping so the churches can function in smaller groups.

→We see the potential for outreach during dark days. Historically, the church flourishes during such times when it is capable of changing and adapting and meeting new challenges in new ways.

→We see the value of empowering local churches, fulfilling God's plan for evangelism and church planting.

→We rejoice to walk alongside churches and leaders, providing counsel and guidance, helping them toward healthy spiritual living. Such churches soon double or multiply, reflecting hearts shaped by the gospel as they establish more churches, using their own human and physical resources.

In the fall of 2019, Dwight Pierce encouraged me to consider virtual learning possibilities in my mission ministry. I worked with Dwight and a plan was developed to facilitate virtual assemblies and classrooms using technology platforms. My biggest question was, "How are we going to help the churches across Latin America learn about, adopt, and adapt to the new possibilities of technology?" My initial contacts expanded into a small network with a few churches interested in exploring the possibilities. Then came the pandemic! Suddenly, hundreds of churches were interested in virtual classrooms, assemblies, conferences, and workshops. I had anticipated spending a year or two communicating with churches to encourage them to use virtual classroom technology. God took that seed idea and brought it to reality within weeks.

During the past year, the use of technology, audios, videos, and written materials distributed on websites and social media has exploded. Evangelism has moved online as never before! God has used this time to draw many Christians closer to Him in their daily walk, to fortify the foundations and open new vistas for ministry and mission. I pray that future generations will remember our vision, our commitment, our confident faithfulness, our renewed spirits, our leadership and flexibility in an otherwise dark world made darker by the pandemic!