

# Joy IN THE JOURNEY

Activities & Service Opportunities of Mayfair Church of Christ

***"And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"***  
**(Acts 2:8 KJV)**

By Don Gardner

*"Kila andiko, lililopuliziwa na Mungu, lafaa kwa ma-fundisho, na kwa kuwaonya watu makosa yao, na kwa kuwaongoza, na kwa kuwaadibisha katika hakij; ili mtu wa Mungu awe kamili, amekamilishwa apate kutenda kila tendo jema"*

Did you have trouble reading the preceding paragraph? If so, it is probably because it is not in your native language. It is in Swahili, the language primarily spoken by many of our World Bible School students in Kenya. Here is the same passage in English:

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV).*

As Christians, we understand this passage, along with 2 Peter 1:21, as evidence upon which we accept the Bible as God's revelation of His will to mankind.



**A sister in Kenya displays her new Bible.**

However, one cannot know God's will if that person does not have access to the Scriptures in a language they can understand. Recent data indicate that approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide don't have access to a complete Bible in their primary language.

Many of the WBS students that Mayfair supports can read and write English, but for most, it is their second language. If they have the Scriptures in their primary language, Swahili, they can better understand the text, which will help them in their own learning as well as in sharing God's word with those outside the body of Christ.

In an effort to better facilitate their study and teaching, Mayfair recently transferred funds to one of our World Bible School key follow-up ministers, Wycliffe Afuma Odwori, in Butere, Kenya, to purchase Bibles printed in Swahili. As a good steward of God's blessings, Brother Odwori bought Bibles that normally cost \$15 each for only \$9.25 each by buying in bulk. Purchasing 215 Bibles, he saved over \$1,200 and will be able to share the Word with over 200 souls seeking to know God's will for their lives.

**If you would like to contribute to future Bible purchases, please make your check out to Mayfair Church of Christ and mark it for "WBS Bibles."**



**Wycliffe Afuma Odwori, unpacks boxes of new Bibles translated into the Swahili language.**

# JUST ONE THING

By Dick Savage

In Philippians 3, Paul the Apostle tells us that there is one thing he is focused on. But, before we examine his one thing, I would like to look at some other places in God's Word where the writer has just "one thing" upon which he wants the reader to focus.

## I. One Thing Desired

*The one thing I ask of the LORD— the thing I seek most— is to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, delighting in the LORD's perfections and meditating in his Temple (Psalm 27:4 NLT).*

The Psalmist's one desire was to...

- A. Be God's child (dwell in the household of God)
- B. Enjoy God's perfections (beauty)
- C. Meditate on God's Word (inquire about the things of God when he goes into the temple)

## II. One Thing Lacking

<sup>20</sup> "Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young." <sup>21</sup> Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Mark 10:20-21 NLT).

This rich young ruler had come to Jesus wanting to know how to be saved. Jesus pointed him to the Ten Commandments. The man said He had been obeying the laws of God all his life. Then Jesus said, "You are lacking one thing" (paraphrased). Jesus pointed out the fact that he loved his money more than God. To be a follower of Christ, one must be willing to transfer ownership of all possessions to Jesus Christ.

## III. One Thing Needed

<sup>41</sup> But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details!" <sup>42</sup> There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42 NLT).

Jesus was visiting the home of his friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Martha was busy in the kitchen

trying to get the meal ready, while Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to His teaching. Mary had chosen the more important thing—setting aside time to be with Jesus.

How relevant is this for us today? We think we are living in the busiest time in history, and maybe we are. But one thing is more important than any other part of our busy schedule—taking time out to be with Jesus.



## IV. One Thing Known

"I don't know whether he is a sinner," the man replied. "But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!" (John 9:25 NLT)

Jesus had just healed this man's blindness. The jealous religious leaders were questioning him about all the details of his healing. They were trying to find ways to accuse Jesus of wrongdoing. The man finally told them that there were some things he did not know, but the one thing he knew was that once he was blind, but he could now see.

It is important for us to study and learn as much as we can about the Bible. Some things will be easily understood, while other things have been debated for years, and learned scholars are still trying to figure them out. While it is very important to have a

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correct understanding of Scripture, that is not all that we need. We each need to have personal knowledge of what Christ has done for us individually.

V. Paul's one thing to focus on

<sup>13</sup> *No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us (Philippians 3:13-14 NLT).*

We have only one thing to do - reach the goal.

1. Release the successes and failures of the past into God's hands.
2. Reach forward and grasp hold of God's will for the future.
3. Keep pressing toward the eternal reward.

God does not want us to waste our lives away. He wants us to live every day with a purpose. He's given

us a reason for living: to be like Jesus. If we are to be filled with joy, we must make the most of today; we cannot stay trapped in memories of the past nor bet on the coming of the future. If we want to enjoy life to the maximum and be filled with joy, we must seize the moment and make the most of today.

The goal Paul pressed toward was twofold: to know Jesus Christ and to become like Him. Jesus had saved Paul and made him His very own possession to bring him into an intimate and eternal relationship—one that would grow and increase throughout Paul's earthly life and culminate in "perfection" or "perfect knowledge" at his death (Philippians 3:12, NLT).

Crossing the goal line does not happen on Earth. While we press toward Christian maturity in this life, "we see things imperfectly," but when we reach the final destination at death, "we will know everything completely" and know Christ fully even as we are fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12 paraphrase).

Paul says I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize, for which God, through Christ, is calling me. While we have not achieved it yet, we must hold on to the progress we have made and keep striving for the goal.

## What Makes the Gospel Powerful?

By Igor Egirev

**Editor's Note: This article appeared in the July 2025 issue of "In Christ" newspaper, a publication sharing news from congregations of the Churches of Christ throughout the Russian-speaking area, and available in both Russian and English. This article is used by permission of the author.**

The apostle Paul makes it clear that the power leading to salvation is found within the Gospel itself. He writes: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16, KJV). We must remember this: the Gospel inherently carries the power of salvation. But where exactly does that power reside? Is it in the words—the message itself—or in the act of proclaiming it? In truth, it is found in both, and Scripture confirms this. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17, KJV). This is plain: in order to believe, one must first hear. The Gospel message has saving power—but that power remains dormant unless it is spo-

ken. The message must be proclaimed. The act of preaching releases the power embedded in the Gospel. It becomes active when someone gives it voice. Physics distinguishes between potential and kinetic energy; in the same way, the Gospel holds immense potential, but it needs a messenger to set it in motion—stirring the mind and igniting new life. Yet even this is not the whole picture. The power also lies in God Himself, who works through the messenger. Jesus not only gave us the Great Commission but also the Great Promise to be with us as we proclaim the Message (Matthew 28:18–20). In Acts 16:14 we read about Lydia, who listened to Paul's words—"whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul (KJV)." Ultimately, it is God who saves. Yet He has chosen to work through those who share the Good News. In a real sense, we become co-laborers with the Almighty in the work of salvation. He is the physician; we are His instruments. So, where is the power?

1. In the Gospel itself.
2. In the act of proclaiming it.
3. In God, who opens hearts to receive it.

## ***“Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life” (Proverbs 16:31 ESV)***

In this issue of “JOY in the Journey,” we continue our series on Mayfair’s Senior Members, who truly wear a “Crown of Glory.” As members age, they are often unable to meet with us due to health issues, but are still near and dear to our hearts. This month, we learn more about one such member, Jean Berry.

### **Jean Berry**

By Lynne Berry

**EDITOR’S NOTE: Lynne Berry is the daughter of Jean Berry. We are grateful for her willingness to share the story of her mother’s life.**

Jean Millsaps Berry was born on March 14, 1929, in Maysville, Alabama. Her parents were Essie and Arthur Millsaps. Arthur met Essie, who lived in Brownsboro, when he came through on his job with the railroad. They fell in love and married. They lived for a while in Memphis but then decided to settle near Essie’s home.

He was a blacksmith for a while, then he bought the only store in Maysville, and they lived in the house next door. The store later burned. It was located where the Smith General Store is now.

The house was torn down several years ago, and a Dollar General was built on the site. My grandparents donated the land to the Maysville Church of Christ when it was first established in Maysville. That congregation has since moved to Gurley.

Mom loved growing up in Maysville. Both her parents worked in the store, and her father farmed as well. She remembers all the traditional elements of a country store of that time – pot-bellied stove, checkers, barrels of crackers, hoops of cheese, and lots of characters hanging around. My dad’s family had the only store in Bell Factory, which was about five miles away.

As they grew in the 1930s, each store had the only telephone in its little community. My dad learned how to fix the phone when it went out. One day, he was summoned to the Millsaps store to see if he could fix their phone. He said that was the first time he had ever seen my mom, and she was so overweight he didn’t know if she was going to walk or roll because they had ice cream at their store. His parents didn’t have ice cream at their store.



**Jean Berry**

Mom attended Central School, Madison County High School in Gurley, and Florence State Teachers’ College (now the University of North Alabama). She became reacquainted with my dad after he returned from World War II, and they married.

During their first three years of marriage, my dad farmed, and they lived on the old Berry farm on Maysville Road, which my ancestors first settled in the late 1800s. That is where they lived when I was born. There was tremendous population growth in Huntsville and Madison County because of the relocation of the German Rocket Team here in 1950. Schools were bursting at the seams. The principal of Riverton School recruited Mom to teach, beginning her almost 40-year teaching career.

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Mom taught first grade for the most part. She taught at Riverton and then at Chapman. Her students loved her. There was no such thing as kindergarten in those days, so in many cases, she had to start with the basics. But she could teach them to read.

She also helped my dad with his business. He started building houses in 1955, sometimes with a partner and sometimes alone. In the early days, she helped him with the payroll and accounting at night.

Mom was an excellent cook. It amazes me how she cooked a full breakfast and a full supper every day. In the summer, when she was not teaching, lunch was usually the big meal. She tried all sorts of foods and always encouraged me to try everything. I remember her making fresh coconut cake – buying the coconuts, having my dad split them open, draining them, mounting the grater on the kitchen counter, and grating the coconut by hand. Her dressing was exceptional. I only wanted dressing at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter because it was part of what made those holidays wonderful. She fried okra like no one I have ever known, and it was the best. Try as I might, I can't replicate it.

And she created a beautiful home. Mom has great taste in clothes and furniture. I hope I have picked up some of that. My dad built her dream house in the early 1970s, and she loved to entertain there.

My dad died in 1980, and it is still the tragedy that haunts her. She moved to Cedarhurst in 2000 and enjoyed living there more than any other location. Two seizures prompted her move to Fleming Farms, first to assisted living. She is now in Memory Care. She had COVID a few years ago, and it resulted in serious, long-term hearing loss. Hearing aids can only do so much. But they are helpful (she doesn't like to be yelled at, so if you see her, please speak clearly and favor her left ear).

Mom has always been dedicated to the Church of Christ. Many thanks to Keith Hodges for taking her to church on Sunday nights – it's just too hard for her to get up and get dressed in time for the morning service. And many thanks to all of you who have shown Mom such care and attention. Your cards and rides, especially from Patty Smith and Judy Smith, and visits have meant so much.



Jean and Tom Berry's 25th Anniversary

## SENIOR LIFE

The mission is to strengthen, encourage, and comfort older members of the Mayfair congregation and provide opportunities to give or assist others as needed.



SeniorHelp is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, DONATIONS are tax-deductible and always welcome to further our mission of assisting seniors.

**SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE**  
GALATIANS 5:13

Please make checks payable to SeniorHelp.

### Mayfair Assistance Helpline

**256-704-3384**

**Mayfair members who require physical assistance with home maintenance, auto repairs, or transportation needs can call and leave a message and you will be contacted for details.**

## Progress Toward the Prize

By Jim Flowers

Last spring, Kerrie and I experienced the joy of our first set of lambs being born on our small hobby farm. The first lamb arrived on Easter morning, earning herself the name Mary Magdalene (who we affectionately called Mary Mags). She was followed soon after by our second lamb, a male, whom we felt it appropriate to name Peter. Not long after Peter was born, our first set of twins arrived safely after some touch-and-go moments and were named Martha and Lazarus. After their births, we were thankful that not only did the lambs survive healthy, but so did their mothers, who were giving birth for the first time.

Kerrie and I were, and remain, in awe of what we saw and experienced from the moment the lambs arrived until they left for their “forever homes.” We watched as our adult ewes experienced labor and gave birth for the first time, often seeming confused about what was happening. Despite their confusion and discomfort, they instinctively knew, for the most part, that their new lambs needed to be cleaned, which they did gently and lovingly. It was incredible to watch the lambs, merely minutes after being born, struggle to stand on skinny legs barely capable of supporting them. As soon as they had the slightest amount of stability, the lambs immediately started searching their mother’s torso for a source of milk.



**Mary Mags enjoys the sunshine with Dolly**

Most times, they started suckling at the ewe's neck and slowly worked their way down their body. Incredibly, the ewes, who had never nursed a lamb before, also knew that their lambs needed feeding, and they would ever so gently nudge their tiny lambs in the direction they needed to go to find sustenance. Then, once the lambs were in the correct location, both the mother and lamb delicately worked through the positioning of their bodies and the process required for the lambs to receive life-sustaining milk.

For several weeks, the lambs survived on only the milk they could get from their mothers, but as they grew, they observed their mothers grazing on the grass and hay around the farm. Eventually, they started to mimic what they saw and began to nibble on blades of grass despite not being able to consume them because they still lacked teeth. They were not deterred, though, and continued to work towards eating grass and hay because they instinctively knew they needed it based on their observation that it sustained their mothers. Gradually, the lambs drank less milk, ate more grass and hay, and started to grow and become more independent.

As the lambs grew and became stronger, they became a bit more mischievous. They would butt heads and scuffle as they learned about their own strength, often returning to their mother's side when they felt they were outmatched. They would bounce around the farm together in the warm sunshine until their energy was exhausted, at which point they would collapse in the middle of the field for a short nap. One of our favorite daily events was when it was time to put all of them in the barn for the night. The



**Wynonna feeding Martha and Lazarus**

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lambs had one more burst of energy before they went in. Their mothers would calmly enter the barn prepared for a night of rest, but the lambs would have a multi-lap race around the perimeter until their energy was exhausted or one of their mothers stepped in to break things up. It was always a joyful conclusion to the day that would send Kerrie and me back to the house with a smile.

The lambs eventually grew big enough to fend for themselves. They had grown stronger, they relied less on their mother's milk, and they were able to graze for their food. Even their sporadic bursts of energy began to level out, and they started acting more and more like their mothers. At that point, we reluctantly handed them over to new owners who, thankfully, share pictures and videos of them thriving at their "forever homes." It was a beautiful experience and process that occurred over two and a half months, and Kerrie and I hope to experience it again starting in April.

A large percentage of the New Testament is devoted to maturing those who follow Jesus Christ from being newborn lambs to more independent sheep. As Kerrie and I observed with our flock, the natural process is for the lambs to grow up. It would have been impossible and unnatural for the mothers to feed them milk indefinitely, and we would have been concerned and disappointed if one of the lambs had not moved on to consume grass and hay. The lambs had to go through this process to move on to their permanent home.

In the book of Hebrews, the writer uses sound reasoning to remind the readers that Jesus is the Messiah who had been promised to all mankind, that He sits at the right hand of God serving as the great high priest that mediates between man and God, and that we should not lose energy in our journey to enter God's rest. Based on the text, it seems some had never made much progress on that journey or, even worse, had grown weary in doing so, an issue that people always have and will always face. To address this, the writer said the following:

*"About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles*



**Peter rests in the barn**

*of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity..." (Hebrews 5:11-6:1a ESV)*

-and-

*"And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews 6:11-12 ESV)*

In the life of Christians and lambs alike, there is an appropriate time to stabilize yourself, get your sustenance from basic sources, determine the strengths God has endowed you with, and determine how to navigate this journey (even if it might be considered a little mischievous at times). But a time must come to grow beyond those things, to stand firm on the convictions we develop over time, to implement those convictions and abilities in a life of devotion and service to Jesus, and to have a steady journey toward God's gift of eternal rest in our forever home in heaven. My prayer is that we don't grow weary in our journey to God's rest, which is only available through His grace and mercy, and that we appreciate the excitement and energy of those who are just beginning the process.

**MAYFAIR**CHURCH OF CHRIST

## Honoring Those Who Serve

We recently began a new series honoring our unsung heroes who serve God by serving others. In this issue, we honor Allen Reynolds. As we honor these servants, we are reminded of these words of the Apostle Paul, *“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you” (1 Thessalonians 5:12 ESV).*

### Allen Reynolds

By Don Gardner

The Apostle Paul told the church at Rome that each of them had different gifts according to the grace they had received. He goes on to list specific gifts such as prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, contribution, leadership, and performing acts of mercy. One gift Paul didn't mention, but is important to us in our age of technology, is the gift of fixing things. Allen Reynolds is THAT GUY!

Allen's parents, Jerry and Jean Reynolds, decided to serve as missionaries in Ghana, West Africa, when Allen was three years old. After moving back to the U.S., Allen made four more trips to Ghana to support food relief and medical missions, as well as working at a medical facility.

As long as his health allowed, Jerry made more than 50 trips to Ghana, where fixing things was a mandatory. Allen developed his skill at fixing things from what he learned from his father.

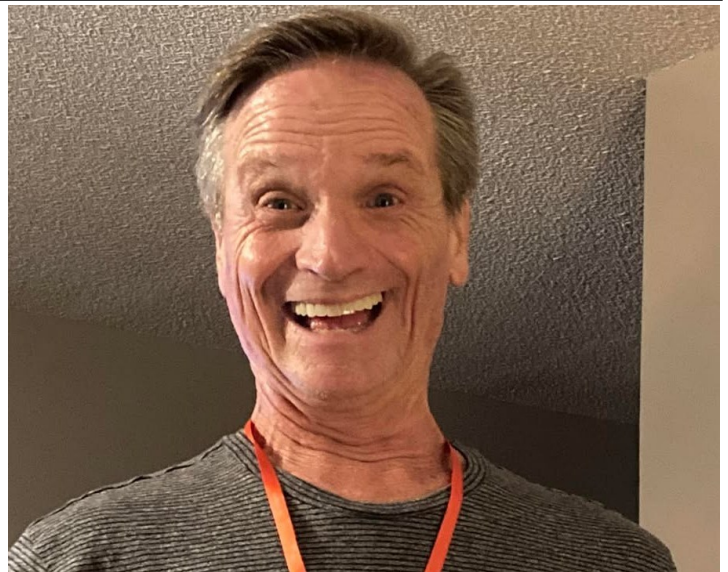
Allen studied pre-engineering at Lipscomb University from 1976 to 1980 and transferred to Nashville State Community College, where he earned an Associate Mechanical Engineering Degree in 1981.

***In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16 ESV).***

After arriving in Huntsville, Allen worked for the Intergraph Corporation and the Lockheed Corporation before following his manager to KT Engineering, an aerospace company supporting NASA, where he performed Computer-Aided Design for numerous projects.

Allen came to Mayfair in 1981, where he met Tamra Jones in the Mayfair Singles Class at Mayfair's previous location on Whitesburg Drive. They married in 1988, and two years later, their son Jamison was born.

Over the years, Allen has served many through the design and construction of wheelchair ramps, repair-



Allen Reynolds

ing the van for the Latino ministry, and making home repairs. Additionally, he has served the Lakewood and Westlawn congregations, helping with parking lot paving projects and installation of lights in their worship centers.

***The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people (Titus 3:8 ESV).***

When he isn't fixing things, Allen enjoys singing with his quartet, which was named the International Senior Quartet Gold Medal Champions at a recent competition in Pasadena, CA.

During his time at Mayfair, Allen has served as a deacon in several ministries, including Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, and Worship Ministry. In 2017, Allen was hired as the Facilities Manager at Mayfair. He recently retired from that job, but needless to say, Allen won't be idle as he will be working with his son, Jamison, at All Motor Garage in Harvest.

Following his retirement, the Tree of Life Quilters presented Allen with an automotive-themed quilt. Later, he was recognized by the congregation when an elder, Dick Savage, presented him with a plaque commemorating his lifetime of faithful service.



## Baja Missions Expands into South Baha

By Denton Kimbrough

God has been with us and blessed us in our outreach to the Baja Peninsula for almost 30 years. Hope has been given to so many who thought they were hopeless. Lives have been eternally changed by the Good News of Jesus. Only when we get to Heaven will we fully realize and appreciate all the good that has been done and is being done in the name of Jesus in this special place.

Since 1997, our work in Baja has concentrated on the northern half of the peninsula. Over 20 churches have been established and are growing. The Baja Bible Institute (BBI), which trains preachers and grows church leaders, will soon graduate its 6th class. Our graduates are serving in congregations not only in northern Baja but throughout Mexico. Also, three free medical-dental clinics have been built at three of our churches in Northern Baja. The physical needs are enormous in this part of the world, and the spiritual needs are even greater. Because of the principle beautifully modeled by Jesus in the Gospels, we know that physical healing opens doors for spiritual healing. We have seen this firsthand as our outreach at these clinics has led to opportunities to share Christ.

Another tremendous blessing from God in our work in Northern Baja has been the gift of Camp Baja. This ten-acre camp is dedicated not only to ministering to young people, but it is also the location of Casa Amor, our assisted living facility. Camp Baja is also where we do outreach to provide therapy services for children with disabilities in the area. The possibilities of all that might happen at Camp Baja are continuing to grow.

Many baptisms have already taken place at Camp Baja. It is our hope and prayer that many souls will come to know Jesus and will be saved through all the efforts at Camp Baja. While God has been working

mightily in Northern Baja, we know He is not done! After almost three decades of work there, we feel that God is calling us to share Jesus with those who live in Baja Sur (Southern Baja). After much investigation, we sadly discovered that there is no Church of Christ in that location. In October of this past year, a small group of us traveled to Southern Baja to explore the opportunities that God has for spreading the Gospel there. In just a few days, we discovered that the potential for growing the church in this place is incredible.

While we were there, we spent most of our time in La Paz, which is the capital city of Baja Sur. La Paz has a population of about 250,000. Before our trip, our Brother Liberato Palomares (BBI Director) had arranged for a young man to meet us there to explore the opportunity for his family to move from mainland Mexico to La Paz and set up a house church in this beautiful city. With God's help, things "fell into place" quickly.

That man's name is Mario Rosas, and he has proved to be a very spiritual man. He agreed to move his family to La Paz to establish the Lord's church in that city. Before we left, we secured a house to rent where they could live and where the church could gather. As our group departed, our hearts were filled with joy and gratitude as the Lord's church was being planted in this city. Mario's wife's name is Sarai, and she works in the medical field. They have two children. Their names are easily remembered because their son's name is Mario and their daughter's name is Sarai. They are a wonderful family that loves Jesus and loves others.

They moved to La Paz in November, and the church is already beginning to grow. Those who are lost are hearing the lifesaving message of Jesus in that loca-

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**The Baja Peninsula**



**Mario and Sarai Rosas and their family**

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tion. Mario and his sweet family are working tirelessly to share the Good News. This is what Mario had to say about the work that is beginning in La Paz:

“We thank God, for we are having 10-13 adults coming along with my two children. We are thinking that soon we won’t have enough space for more people, but we figured we can organize the services well inside the house. Summer is coming, and the heat is intense. But God will make it work. Every Sunday, we are having one or two regular visitors, and I’ve been teaching baptism classes during the week. We always have a prayer meeting on Fridays. Three visitors come, and it’s been a very blessed time. Based on what I’ve seen of the city, it’s a very untapped place for the gospel, and thank God I am making many contacts.”

Meanwhile, God is blessing the work in this place even more. He sent another family to La Paz to work hand-in-hand with Mario and Sarai. God is forming an awesome team to make a real difference in La Paz. Espartaco Alonso Uriarte (his nickname is “Taco,” which is much easier to remember) attended the Baxter Institute in Honduras and has been a part of a church plant in Nicaragua. He made the difficult decision to leave Nicaragua due to safety concerns for his family in that country.

Taco’s wife’s name is Doris, and she is a pharmacist. They have been married since 2002. They have three children. After resolving difficulties securing the proper visas, Taco and his family were finally able

to move to La Paz in January of this year. They immediately began working side by side with Mario and His family. This is what Taco had to say about his new work in La Paz:

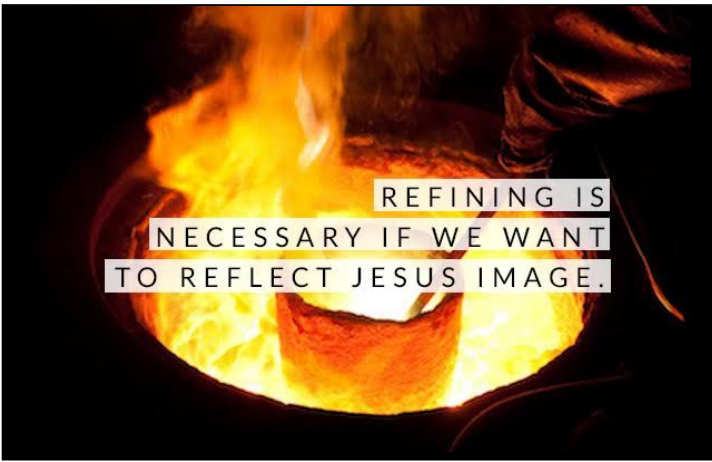
“We know we have some adjustment time since everything is new for us, but we are really excited about this opportunity. I pray we will do a good job here. As I told you before, we already started a new congregation in the past, so for us, we know that work means we must share Jesus. But also, we must show God’s grace and love to others and guide them to reach the Lord in His path. We ask that you pray for our team and for our families. We want to do this work being led by God first and in the companion [ship] with the Holy Spirit. Also, pray for my two children (Jura and Josh) who could not come with us, for they are in Honduras studying in college. Thanks for the help and for all your support and prayers.”



**Taco and Doris Uriarte and their family**

God willing, Martha and I (along with two other couples) will be traveling to Southern Baja soon to visit these two families and worship with those meeting in La Paz. We always go to encourage our church family in Baja, but it seems God always helps them encourage us instead! I ask that you continue to pray for the work throughout Baja and especially pray for these two families as they dedicate themselves to growing the church in Baja Sur (specifically in LaPaz). We are excited to see all God has planned for His church across the entire Baja Peninsula. May we always be His willing servants.

Also, if you know of any U.S. churches that might sponsor these families and this work financially, or if you have questions, please contact me at: Email: [dentonk@mac.com](mailto:dentonk@mac.com) or Cell phone: 256-527-4375.



## The Refiner's Fire

By Debbie Wagner

*"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. "He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer the Lord an offering of righteousness" (Malachi 3:2-3 NKJV).*

As I read and study the scriptures, I have multiple questions regarding some of the analogies used by God. I always pray He will give me a bridge to fill the gap between His divine reality and my feeble human understanding. As I was reading in the book of Malachi, I encountered a couple of questions regarding the verses noted above.

First, what is the full process involved for a silver-smith as he sits and purifies the dross from precious metal? Second, how does he know how long to expose the metal piece to the flame and not destroy it? Lastly, how can I apply this to my life in the here and now, and on the final judgement when I stand before my Lord, Jesus Christ, on Judgement Day?

Like most folks, I went to Google. There I found such treasured pearls regarding what God was speaking to me regarding the "refiner's fire." I have to share these precious nuggets of enlightenment and understanding with you all, my brothers and sisters in Christ.

The silversmith must sit in front of the fire the entire time of the purification process and ultimate refinement. He firmly holds the precious metal in the center of the fire where the flames are the hottest; therefore, the impurities will burn off, rising to the top, and becoming scum. He faithfully keeps a

watchful eye on the precious metal the entire time of refinement, and he knows exactly how long to expose the silver piece to the flames so it will not be destroyed. Yes, the master of his trade knows the exact moment to withdraw the silver from the flames.

WAIT FOR IT:

It is when he can SEE HIS IMAGE in the precious metal.

The "refiner's fire" is a biblical metaphor for trials, hardships, and divine discipline that test the faith, the heart, and purify the heart of the believer to be "holy" and "set apart." Our weaknesses are brought to the surface to be removed as the dross and impurities caused by our sins, spiritual corruption, recklessness, and/or worthlessness. If we allow His purging to come to completion, it will create in us a period of spiritual growth, the capacity to experience the joy of the Lord even in our sorrows, purifying us to be valuable vessels for His use in the kingdom, and strengthening our character to be in the image of our Great Refiner, Jesus Christ. This is the purest and truest LOVE expressed from the Master Refiner for His Bride.

This newfound knowledge hit like a massive wave over me and caused me to break down emotionally, followed by a flood of tears from a mother's broken heart. I immediately knew my hardest purging by the "refiner's fire" was July 4, 2023, when my son, David Aaron, went home to be with the Lord our God. I understood even more at that moment. He was testing me and had me in the center of the hottest fire imaginable for a mother, a child of His, His desire for me to be more like His image, and He loved me enough to expose me to His purifying flames. I could have blamed Satan and turned my grief into bitterness and anger toward God. However, I knew better. He had me in the clefts of the rock with His mighty hand covering and protecting me. I knew He had NEVER and WOULD NEVER forsake me, even in my deepest, darkest valley.

Yes, my first instinct was to go and be with David. I could not imagine my life without him. But I love and fear my God too much and did not want to miss out on seeing my Jesus, David, and other loved ones gone before me, one day. I thank God with all my

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# Getting to Know Your Elders

We continue our series on getting acquainted with our Mayfair elders by learning about Al Nunley and his family, their history, and how they came to be at Mayfair.

## Al Nunley

I was born on June 7, 1947, in Anderson, Indiana. I was named Alvin Nunley, III, after my grandfather and father.

I was raised as what is affectionately known as an "Army Brat." My father was in the Army for more than twenty years. As such, our family moved every few years. My father was in the Korean War. During this time, my mother, sister, and I lived in Nashville, TN.

After the war, my father attended the Army Officer Candidate School in Aberdeen, Md. We lived in places all around the world, including the United States. This included Fort Benning, GA, Vicenza, Italy, Stuttgart, Germany, Hawaii, Killeen, TX, and Newark, OH, where I was baptized at age 13.

In 1965, I enrolled in pre-engineering at David Lipscomb College. After two years, I transferred to the University of Tennessee, where I majored in electrical engineering. It was at the Christian Student Center where I met my future wife, Linda.

We married in 1969 and moved to Dallas, TX. I worked for Texas Instruments for almost ten years. We attended Waterview Church of Christ. It was during this time that we adopted our two children, Mary-Dell and Alvin Nunley, IV. We are the proud grandparents of four wonderful grandchildren. They are

Farrah, a junior at UAB, Hayden, a senior in high school, Holt, who is in kindergarten, and Devion, who is four.

We then moved to Eufaula, AL, where I accepted a position with Techsonic Industries, the maker of Hummingbird depth finders. During this time, we attended Eufaula Church of Christ.

This was a small church of about eighty members who became our spiritual family. I taught Bible class, led singing, and preached on occasion for seventeen years. I grew spiritually in ways that I could not have imagined. It was a true spiritual blessing.



Al & Linda Nunley

After seventeen years, we moved to Huntsville and became members of a wonderful church called Mayfair. We have been at Mayfair for almost thirty years. I was asked to be an elder in 2002. Being an elder has been the greatest privilege of my life.

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heart that He found in His heart that I was worthy of His refining to be more like Him on my journey through this foreign land. I am a sinner saved by His never-ending love, grace, and mercy, asking for His forgiveness daily. Yet, He saved me and carried me through the depths of pain no parent should ever feel. Over two years later, He showed and taught me the lesson on the "refiner's fire." I have the capacity to have joy in Him and to rejoice in His presence every morning! No longer hearing the whispers of Satan but only the voice of my God while desiring more of Him and less of the world.

***The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the hearts (Proverbs 17:3 NKJV).***

***Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction (Isaiah 48:10 NKJV).***

***<sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:6-7 NKJV).***