

SEEDS OF THE KINGDOM

Seed Sower Award



*The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. Matthew 13:24
And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Hebrews 10:24*

In this series, we intend to highlight the work of those who are currently busy introducing the seeds of righteousness, peace, and joy into this sin-filled earth, with the hopes that at least a few lives will receive the Word and be eternally changed. The purpose in turning the spotlight on these works is not to glorify those men and women who are actively advancing the kingdom of God, but rather to stimulate YOU, the reader, into doing YOUR part in YOUR corner. Neither is the purpose meant to be that of asking the readers to donate financially or personally participate in these projects, although that is certainly an option in some cases. Take these ideas, tweak them to fit your situation, and begin to plant the kingdom of God in your environs. The inclusion of any person or church in these articles is not an endorsement by *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* of every doctrine and practice that the spotlighted individuals or churches may represent in other areas of their life. As well, the spotlighted person/group may not endorse all aspects of *The Heartbeat of the Remnant*.

To start with, we have chosen to feature Mount Zion Literature Ministry (MZL), based in Clarkrange, TN. The following is based on an interview with Joseph Yoder, who helps in the ministry there.

The Heartbeat of the Remnant (THR)- To start off with, what is MZL all about? Can you give me in a few sentences a brief overview of what you are doing?

(MZL) Our vision is to gather together some of the doctrinally sound Christian literature that we have here in the US and make it affordable and attainable to the poor countries. We are currently working in Latin America with Spanish and Portuguese, and in Africa and the Philippines with English. We purchase the materials, subsidize it 45 percent, and pay all shipping costs to the poor country. That makes it more affordable in their economy. Our efforts include providing school curriculum and setting up stands in book exhibits in many countries as a way to spread the literature.

(THR) So what was the seed of this ministry? How did this whole thing get started?

(MZL) MZL was born in 1997 when two or three brothers had a vision of making literature available, because we knew there was a shortage of literature in Spanish-speaking countries. A local brother had a print shop, and originally the idea was to print the literature and distribute that. Then the idea changed to just buying the literature already available and distributing it. So the church donated \$7000.00 to get things rolling. Then three of us took a trip to Central America to see what the needs and options were. The churches down there encouraged us strongly to move ahead. Publicadora La Merced in Costa Rica in particular helped us get our bearings and encouraged us in the project. They set up some book racks in various places down there, and our first shipment of books went to them. From that point, we started sending out some newsletters to let people know what our

vision was. And it just kind of went from there. Open doors here, open doors there, from one country to another ...

(THR) So it took off growing. Did it grow faster or slower than expected?

(MZL) It grew much faster! We just couldn't believe it! It grew much faster than we ever dreamed. The growth exceeded all our expectations.

(THR) So along the way have you run into any obstacles, or anything that you did not foresee that has set you back?

(MZL) Well, not that I know of. From the beginning we always had the idea to not go any further than what the Lord opens the door. We labored with the understanding that we are not going to borrow money. We are never going to purposely go into debt. We are going forward as the Lord provides the way. And He has always provided! There may have been opportunities that we could have stepped into that we didn't, such as working in Asian countries. That has been suggested. But we never really felt that the door was really opened for us there as of yet.

(THR) Do you see much results of your labors in the form of changed lives?

(MZL) Actually ... no. As I pondered why, I think it is because we as a ministry are not really the ones who are dealing face to face with the individuals buying the books. We are only a funnel, or channel, to the distributors.

(THR) So by working as you do, you are moving in faith, not personally seeing many results of your labors, but trusting that the seed will bear fruit?

(MZL) Yes. But we do hear of some of the results. The distributors write newsletter articles, and we do hear of fruits from time to time. For example, the home-school conventions in the poor countries give us stories of people who are just delighted to find a full Bible-based curriculum that they can use to teach their children at home. We have seen, for example, ladies coming to the home-school conventions, who after several years of attending, now come with a head covering. They tell us that they read the literature, saw the pictures, and realize that people are actually practicing it, and it makes sense. So they have started doing it as well. There have also been a lot of exclamations from poor people in various countries about finding literature that they can afford.

(THR) Our purpose in doing this interview is not so much to get people to donate to your ministry or get personally involved—although that is an option—as it is to inspire others to do something similar. What suggestions would you have for someone or a congregation who may want to do what MZL is doing, only in, say, Vietnam?

(MZL) The main thing is that you need to have the support of your congregation, and of God. We



Spreading seeds of the kingdom at an education convention in Saltillo, Mexico

need to be able to do in faith whatever it is that we are doing, and not faith in ourselves.

(THR) You mean, believing that God has inspired us to do this, and it is not something we just took upon ourselves?

(MZL) That's right. Let God let it grow, not make it grow by our own efforts.

(THR) So, what would you say the biggest need is that is facing MZL today? I know that when I was an MZL distributor in Bolivia a few years back, the biggest need was simply to have folks who could get the materials in front of the eyes of the potential recipients. Or, in other words, people who would take the books to the street in the target country.

(MZL) That basically says it. MZL does not have any staff in foreign countries. We are essentially a funnel, or a channel, to get the books and Bibles from the publishers into the hands of distributors or mission groups in the poor countries. We are currently distributing in most of the Latin American countries, but there are a few of them where we lack a central distributor, such as Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia, where we could use someone trustworthy to serve as a distributor.

(THR) We have talked about the past and the present, but what is MZL's vision for the future?

(MZL) Right now we are working on Brazil. We have just begun there and presently have about 20 titles available in Portuguese (which is the main language in Brazil), but we need 200 titles. We need to find a good source of Bibles, Bible Dictionaries, Concordances, etc. We are hoping we can expand our Brazil project by 100 times, or however many times God allows. Next, we have had quite a few contacts and requests for literature from Spain. This is sort of a brand new thing, we just talked about it yesterday at a meeting. One of the brothers is going to go to a book expo there in October to investigate the options and visit some of the contacts.

And, we have recently started in Equatorial Guinea in Africa. As of yet we have no distributor there, but we do have a pastor there that has bought books from us. As well, we are looking to expand in Colombia, because it seems to be a good base to also reach Venezuela and Ecuador.

(THR) Thank you. May the Lord bless the seeds! I can envision each Bible, book, and tract as a tiny seed being scattered over the earth. Many will never sprout perhaps, but I am sure that some will, and they will bring forth fruit. Would you be willing to give some advice to any of our readers who may be interested in starting something similar to what MZL is doing, maybe in another country?

(MZL) Sure. Just write Mount Zion Literature, P.O. Box 37, Clarkrange, TN 38553 or email mzlmistry@mzlm.org. We have a free newsletter describing our work that anyone may sign up for.

(THR) Blessings to you in your labors for the kingdom. Goodbye.

(MZL) Goodbye.