

Making Disciples International (UK)

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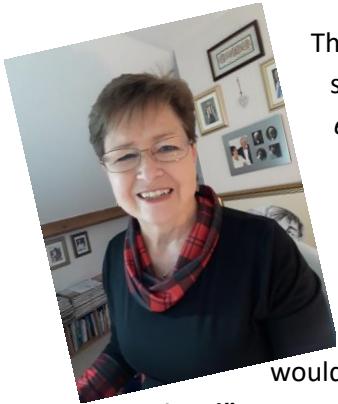
3 June 2021

Dear Friends

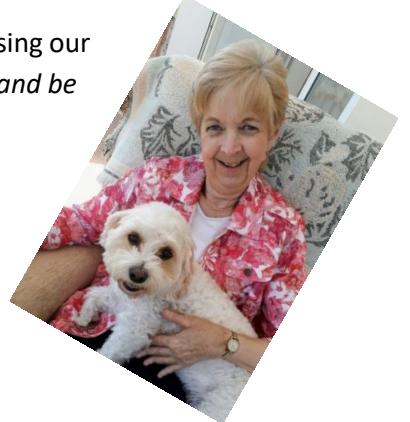
We greet you warmly having often prayed that you would remain holy and faithful, actively preparing yourself for the Lord's return. This is not the time to dilly-dally. We have to determinedly press on, even against the tide, nurturing faith in God by a Spirit-inspired understanding of His Word. Not giving up.

A word of encouragement

We believe God has been speaking to us and the word we have received is "gather" (Hebrews 10:25). The pandemic has separated believers and now it is time to *regather forming strong cells of faith and trust in God, His Word and His people*. Wherever we are, in addition to gathering in our churches on Sunday, we must cluster in our homes to fellowship with the Holy Spirit, around the Word, to gain new strength and anointed vision - then strategically reach out in love for the unsaved in our neighbourhoods. We do not see these gatherings as clubs, we see them as strategically placed *platoons of God's people* where military-style spiritual kits are selected and packed, any surplus discarded, to be battle-ready. Determined to seek God, to wait upon Him to hear His voice, senses will be sharpened to discern the day.



The great danger of enforced inactivity is becoming dull – losing our spiritual edge! We hear the Holy Spirit saying "*sharpen up and be emboldened by the Spirit and the Word, without fear or compromise*". No watering down – pure, bold and unashamed faith in God and the Bible; confident in His salvation and buoyed by the love of God's people. Isn't it encouraging to read the last chapter of the Book? For sure, if we did not know the end of the story we would fall into despair. **"Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"**



And I heard as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Revelation 19: 6-9 NKJV).

During the lockdown, by God's leading, I have produced 12 teaching videos to accompany my discipleship study book, *Sow What?* first published in 2015. I have never felt free to give this book a big push – but now I do. I realise it is a study, among materials produced by others, significant for this season. The study is based upon Jesus' Parable of the Sower. *Sow What?* is a personal and group study. One chapter is read and considered per week and the accompanying video (approximately 25 minutes) can be watched together followed by discussion, confession and prayer.

What was Jesus saying that day in the Galilee to the multitudes? The majority missed it – just a few grasped it – not dissimilar today. The lazy and self-righteous majority walked away unchanged, the smaller but humble number pursued Jesus to ask more questions until revelation dawned in their spirits and were transformed. What we can grasp by way of revelation has the power to utterly change and clothe us ready for the Lord's imminent return. That is no easy path but it is the best option. It requires the release of everything, including our rights, to the Lord. When He is Lord, we are His bond-servants (servants by personal choice).

It is called the *Parable of the Sower* but more poignantly maybe it should be called the *Parable of the Seed and the Soil*. The seed is the Word of God and the soil is the soil of our hearts. We question why when God's seed is purposeful and powerful to transform, so few Christians radically changed from their old patterns of attitudes and behaviour? Mixture plagues the Church. Why, when we have heard so much Bible teaching, have our lives been changed so little? What is it that contaminates, clutters and captivates our hearts, stifling spiritual growth? Christians have to get a grip on this fast and do something about it. Jesus offers straight answers in the *Parable of the Sower – His no-compromise recipe for spiritual transformation*.

The book *Sow What?* by Jan Whitmore is available on Amazon and the videos are freely available on our website: www.makingdisciples.co.uk Just click on the video linked to the chapter you are reading and it will open up on your screen. The videos are also available on YouTube. Just search for "Sow What? Jan Whitmore". If it is easier for you, I can send the videos on a USB stick.

Update for prayer

1. **Maritha Esterhuizen** has recently had yet another round of radiation treatment on another cancerous lump. Our hearts go out to her as she negotiates difficult, tiring and painful days. We count it a privilege to support her from our ministry fund and we can report that the steady flow of money, provided by you, is sustaining her. Thank you so much for joining us in this act of love and compassion. Her faith grows stronger as the finishing line is in the distant view. Wherever she goes she shares a living testimony of God's faithfulness and His loving provision. She reminds us of a story David Pawson shared about a friend who was dying. The friend said, "*gather friends and family to see how a Christian prepares to die*". That is sobering! May God help Maritha fulfil her days and may her vibrant testimony touch many. We are in very close contact.
2. **Missionary support.** The pandemic has had a devastating effect on the financial support of missionaries. Churches back home have struggled with decreased or irregular giving and as is often the case the first budget to get cut is the mission fund, often leaving missionaries abandoned on the field. Heartbreaking stories and requests are coming our way, to which we would like to respond. If you would like to help us to help them then please make a PayPal donation via our website, or in the UK send a cheque payable: Miss W E Nel or Mrs J E Whitmore. Details for giving are on our website: www.makingdisciples.co.uk Please also speak to your church leadership to make sure that missionaries are being tangibly cared for during this crisis.
3. **Opening up and moving ahead.** We have recently had several requests for accommodation and debriefing at our home and we are looking forward to ministering in this way again. Of course, we have had to delay because of the pandemic rules for households in the UK. However, the country may be opening up this

month. Please pray for wisdom as we consider how best to move forward. We are also gearing ourselves for other ministries in our home – welcoming *gatherings* for fellowship and discipleship. Pray for that too. We sense the Holy Spirit stirring up gifts within and want to be ready to facilitate as God leads.

4. **Israel.** We continue to support workers in Israel. The war with Hamas in Gaza was unrelenting and the 4000 rockets fired into Israel created heightened fear. God has His troops out there, strategically placed within Christian ministries to comfort and help. One said, "*The war was one terrible thing, but recovery is quite another*". With antisemitism on the rise in the nations, Jews continue to regather in the Land of God's promise. He will defend them based on covenant love! Pray for Christian workers on the frontline – laying down their lives for others. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
5. **Personal news.** Praise God we remain well and greatly sustained by His love. The older bodies creak but spirits are strong! Mintie's misshapen spine just about holds up – but there are signs that more injections may be needed shortly. Standing, sitting and walking are all in much smaller doses. She will also have cataract surgery in the next 2-3 months. She smiles as she says, "The joys of 72!"
I have loved organising the garden this year and we have an abundance of vegetables that will feed us and our visitors over the summer. I am also very much enjoying doing the rewrite of "You fish ... we fish" under a new title which should be finished this year. It relates to what we have learned in the pastoral care of missionaries – hopefully inspiring the next generation of caregivers.
We are not without heartache. We are weighed heavily as we walk with close friends, who for us are family, in their suffering. The onset of dementia, inoperable cancer, Parkinson's, Huntingdon's disease takes its toll on our minds and hearts – especially as we have not been able to travel to come alongside as we would have done pre-pandemic. At times we have felt overwhelmed with sadness – so much suffering.
6. **Tributes.** Recently our dearest friend **Margie Macari** who lived in Shelbyville, Illinois was promoted to glory after a long struggle with dementia. She was our darling "Mamma Margie" who prayed for us every day as we ministered to others on the field. Her generosity paid for *many* missionaries to take time out from the mission field to retreat with us at our Mission Encouragement Trust gatherings. She sent over hand-made gifts as well as much needed personal supplies for the workers. A prayer warrior, Margie was always at our elbow asking, "What is next? How can I help?" Margie and Jim Macari's home was one of our favourite and secure USA homes. They ministered to us with great love and provision. Margie always believed I should write *Sow What?* and funded its publication. Our hearts feel a great loss – there are no more animated and warm phone calls. She is home. "*Margie, we will be coming right behind you! Cheer us on!*" Dear Jim also passed away yesterday. Ill himself, we feel sure that he had waited for Margie to be safely home before he too took his leave. You cannot replace folk like this.

Also recently, **Colleen Wong**, one of our vivacious caregiving colleagues and very dear friend was killed in a hit and run car accident in California. It has been a huge shock to our system. Colleen and David her husband (both in their fifties), also taken in recent years by cancer, were worship leaders in our retreats for single missionaries. Colleen had the ability in the Spirit to see realms that for many are just a mystery – it made her ministry to missionaries cutting edge and prophetic. We mourn her loss. Thank God for the hope of the reunion in heaven for those who have remained faithful to Jesus right to the end.

We hope this letter brings you great encouragement. May we remain steadfast in hope, unswerving in belief and tenderhearted toward God's people.

Much love,

Jan & Mintie

Jan Whitmore & Mintie Nel