

11 January 2006 International YWAMer

Armed in the Spirit

A word from YWAM's International Chairman concerning recent deaths in YWAM.

By Lynn Green, International Chairman

Dear Family,

I write to you on behalf of the Global Leadership Team of YWAM.

We are in the midst of a very difficult time. In the last 8 weeks we have suffered the untimely deaths of 14 YWAMers.* In addition to the devastating road accident in Nigeria, we have experienced the loss of YWAM staff who carried much responsibility and leadership in Brazil, Zambia, England and India. YWAM Brazil has also been under great stress due to the public and legal struggle over their work in the Amazon. After months of that battle, Jim and Pam Stier and many of their friends were also the victims of a frightening armed robbery during a celebration at their home.

We are battered and bruised. Many of us are deeply grieving the loss of a friend, husband, wife or child and all of us feel the pain because *"when one member suffers, we all suffer"*. We have never known a time like this and we cannot be sure that it is over.

What are we to think of all this? Has the Lord left us exposed? Are we under judgment? How do we respond in such difficult times?

I do not believe these tragedies are directly from God. This is not judgment from His loving hand. Rather, He can and will work in these very hard circumstances to bring good if we look to Him in faith and ask Him to bring good out of hardship. Romans 8:28 and 29 says, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."*

God's primary purpose for us is that we should grow to be like Jesus and there is no doubt that He wants to turn all suffering and hardship to that end. We may wish it were not so, but we grow more in times of hardship than in times of ease. All who suffer are tempted to turn away from their Father in heaven, but when we turn to Him more deeply in our pain, then He works a greater Christ-likeness in us. God uses our sorrow as a sculptor uses a sharp instrument to shape a piece of wood into a work of art. The work of art is our Christ-likeness. But that is only one facet of these tragedies and I would like to look at another one.

We are in a great cosmic war. At times like these, the world in which we live does not make sense unless we see it through the lens of warfare. The scriptures clearly present this image but we quite easily lose sight of it when our lives are going smoothly. But Jesus seemed to deal daily with demonic forces that were intent on destroying people's lives. In addition, Paul wrote clearly about our battle against the

principalities and powers of the kingdom of darkness. When we look at life in these terms, it does make sense. In battle, there will be casualties. Great sacrifice is required. We must remain vigilant and stay obedient and *"well armed in the spirit"* for this battle.

Less than a year ago YWAM embarked upon 50 days of prayer and fasting. All the evidence suggests that God initiated that idea and He blessed us as we did it and now He is answering our prayers and reviving us. At the base where I live, our prayer life is completely different now. Jesus meets with us as we turn out for prayer every morning and we have this great sense of moving forward in the Spirit. To our shame, we used to struggle to manage even one good intercession time each week. We would call for prayer times and less than one in five of our staff would come. We were in a desperate state! But the Lord has come among us and we are in a completely different place. Hallelujah!

We have news of many other signs of revival from around the world. Perhaps most encouraging of all is the way God met with us powerfully during our GLT meetings last August. The Lord sent us a clear and powerful prophetic word through his Egyptian servant, Dr. Atef. The GLT were deeply convicted and repented before God and I had a strong sense that the Lord was accepting our brokenness and His grace was being poured out in new measure on YWAM.

All these signs of reviving are undoubtedly a threat to our enemy and he is lashing back at us. He has particularly targeted our leaders. This spate of deaths began with Hilary Rue, a member of the leadership team from The Kings Lodge in England who was killed in a car accident just outside the gates of the YWAM property in November. Then we lost eight of our family in Nigeria, including several leaders. Willie, the driver was earmarked to take over the Port Harcourt base and had the potential for national leadership in Nigeria. Rahim was planning to start an HIV/AIDS School this month and was the DTS leader. Two of the others were very gifted in music, had their own CDs cut and sold to help pay for the DTS students and outreaches. Among the YWAMers from outside Nigeria who were killed in that same accident, there were some key leaders and people of remarkable maturity and commitment to Jesus. Then we lost two young people from the Curitiba, Brazil base - Pryscilla Lisboa and Dennis daSilva who died in a car accident while travelling, shortly after their DTS outreach

About the same time, a base leader in Zambia, Elizabeth Mbewe, died suddenly of a rare condition which could not be treated because of a lack of basic health care. She was a single mother of three and, among her many leadership responsibilities, cared for more than 100 orphans. Tony Lima, who died of a heart attack at age 38, was the South American director for Frontier Missions, a key leader in Brazil and an effective mobiliser for missions. The latest death was that of Sudhakar Simeon, our leader in Chennai, India, who was also carrying major national leadership and served on the boards of several other organizations. Sudhakar was killed in a motorcycle accident while he was returning from a conference where he had spoken at the memorial service of a YWAM pioneer for the Muslim world who was also killed in a motorcycle accident 14 years ago.

This enemy attack is clearly aimed at YWAM leaders, so what do we do?

I would encourage every base and team to set aside a dedicated time for prayer and worship. This is the time to proclaim the power of the Lord Jesus and the effectiveness of the blood of His sacrifice which is His shield over us! Let us put aside fear and embrace the battle. These tragedies are meant to draw us into deep, compassionate unity â?" to fight for our brothers and sisters, not just for ourselves. But beware that you do not rush into battle without being prepared. Dr. Atef spoke to us about Samson, who was not aware that his strength was gone. He thought he could defeat the enemy just like he always had, but found that he was overpowered. His disobedience cost him his sight and eventually, his life. Dr. Atef spoke to us lovingly but was very direct with us - our sin has made us weak and ineffective against our enemy. He listed several specific areas we need to seek repentance for. These were:

1. Unclean relationships between young people.
2. Materialistic living.
3. Lack of financial transparency.
4. Unresolved conflict between leaders.

Please take some time to let God search your hearts, repent and put things right, then worship and intercede. Our experience here at Harpenden is that God has brought us into a season of repentance that just keeps going deeper. Repentance is such a wonderful gift of God. Continuing repentance is what brokenness and humility is about, and that is the means by which God releases His power and authority to us.

I will write more in the coming months about the issues the Lord brought to our attention via Dr. Atef. But now let us declare war on sin in our midst and then take up our authority in Christ to defeat the enemy who has come up against us.

Finally, let us recognize that our enemy wants us to be afraid - afraid to send teams to Africa or other locations that we think might be unsafe; afraid to engage with the battle to transform nations through the power of the gospel. But as we have prayed in the context of our losses, the Lord has encouraged us to ask for each life to be like a seed that produces much fruit - not 30 or 60, or even 100 fold as the parable mentions - but 1000-fold reproduction. Will you do the same? Already, we are hearing about people committing their lives to Jesus, and to His call to reach the world, at the funerals and memorial services of these who laid down their lives. We are "called to the all"; we are called to reach every person in every Omega Zone; we are called to be light-bearers to the world. Let us take up that calling with renewed joy and confidence in the Lord our God to watch over us in all circumstances. Let us join that great host of heroes throughout history who have loved and obeyed God and who have *"loved not their lives, even unto death"*!

Yours for the King and Kingdom,

Lynn

P.S. More detail on the word from Dr. Atef is posted in the Chairman's letter from

October 2005, along with other letters and articles from the Chairman at: www.ywamict.org . See www.ywam.org for more information on those who have died and to learn about the situation in the Amazon.

* Ed. note: Since the writing of this letter we learned that Philbert Henriquez, from Guyana, died of a heart attack in November, just days after he had been prayed over as director of YWAM Guyana.