



COVER STORY

Go Forward!

God's impeccable timing in mission—and marriage

By Wendy Harris-Guptill

"Oh, no!" I said aloud, taking a deep breath as I heard the eerie moaning and saw the crowd coming down the trail. My heart sank when I saw Nurgina's brother carrying her limp body on his back, stumbling toward the clinic. Nurgina was one of our schoolgirls. Despite the fact that her uncle Mami was a powerful chief and witch doctor, Nurgina and her mother had been attending church for several years. Nurgina was now a happy teenager who loved to share her faith, but Satan was not happy!

Nurgina was in trouble, and even Mami feared for her life. Everyone in the village believed that one of Nurgina's brothers had been killed by demons. They had personally witnessed demon harassment on many occasions. They feared that the demons might kill Nurgina as well.

She was completely limp, moving only her head as she cried out for help in her mental agony. She begged for all that was dear to her: her family, the missionaries, the pastors, her Bible, her notebook and pen. She could neither see nor hear us even if we pressed close to her. I did a quick medical evaluation and determined that this was not a medical problem. Prayer was the only treatment available for her.

We organized a round-the-clock prayer vigil for Nurgina. As the hours passed, Nurgina kept crying out in distress, "Help! Satan is so bad! God is so good." We felt helpless as she called us by name but seemed unable to hear our words of comfort or even our singing or prayers. We tried to hold on to our faith that God could and would free her from this torment.

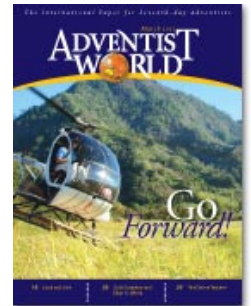
What a joy it was to see her set free after 48 hours of prayer and fasting! Nurgina's testimony to all who would listen was sobering but clear. A few days before her attack she and her mom had knowingly spent the night in the presence of a satanic ritual. As Nurgina suffered, her mother remembered their sin and confessed it to God. Minutes later Nurgina was set free. What a wake-up call to the reality of the great controversy going on around us.

Mission Nurse Life

For five years I had been working as a nurse in a remote clinic in the mountains of Palawan, Philippines. It was a privilege having a part in saving lives, and though challenging, it brought great fulfillment. I loved living in my little bamboo hut and being able to help people who had so little. Although treacherous, the three-hour hike on the steep trails to our village was refreshing. I



JOYOUS: Nurgina soon after her deliverance.



HOME
ABOUT AW
ARCHIVES
CONTACT US
AR ONLINE
SEARCH

Site Search



loved the beauty and peacefulness. The experiences I had dealing with the poorest people I had ever met—both physically and spiritually—would shape me forever and prepare me for the future.

I was challenged with the responsibility of caring for a whole mountainful of very sick and needy people. It was not unusual for a whole village of people to show up at 5:00 in the afternoon with patients on their backs, ready to be treated, fed, and housed for the night. Almost everyone suffered from malaria. There were also outbreaks of typhoid, whooping cough, and measles. During those times patients lined the verandas, needing round-the-clock care.

I'll never forget Milsu, a typhoid patient from a nearby mountain. When we found him, he was nearly dead, and his family had given up on him. They had even considered killing him because they were afraid of his crazy behavior, thinking he had an evil spirit. I knew he would certainly die if he stayed where he was, and I begged the family to bring him to the clinic. They were afraid that he might die on the way, and were very hesitant to move him. I told them that our God was strong and that He would take care of their loved one. We slipped and tumbled down the mountain with Milsu tied securely to the stretcher. I prayed hard that he would survive! Incredibly, with day and night care, IVs, catheters, hand feeding, and constant prayer, he recovered completely. He and his wife always give me a big smile now when I see them and their four young children. As God came through for me again and again, I began to trust Him more. But I was about to learn some other important aspects of faith that I had somehow missed up to this point in my Christian life.



HOW ARE YOU? Wendy assessing a patient in a remote mountain village.

Straight Out of the Sky

As time went by, my friends and relatives began to show concern about my being single, nearing 30. The chances of finding a soul mate in the middle of a jungle seemed impossible. I found it humorous when people tried to discreetly hint that maybe it was time for me to come home for a while and “find someone.” However, I trusted God’s promise in Matthew 6:33 that when we put the Master first, all other needs will be supplied. I knew that God did not need me to return to an Adventist community to find the companion He had for me. My mother finally came to the same conclusion and quipped one day, “If God wants you to have a husband, He’ll have to drop one out of the sky!”

I had no idea of the amazing things God had in store for me in the following months. In May 2008 I met Dwayne Harris, a pilot/aircraft mechanic who had recently left all to pioneer a new work in the Philippines with a small helicopter that God had provided. Having worked in the village for several years, I could see the distinct advantages of having helicopter assistance with our medical evacuations. I was pretty excited when I heard that he was seriously considering basing the helicopter near our village!

Dwayne hardly knew a soul in the Philippines upon arrival and had used up his own resources just getting himself and the helicopter into the country. God led someone to help him get the helicopter through customs without a hitch. Then various people of all types and religions had stepped in and provided a place for Dwayne to stay, food to eat, and fuel for the helicopter during the six months he was in Manila!

My parents, who live outside of Manila, opened their home to Dwayne every weekend during this time. The chance to get out of the city and fellowship with other Adventists on a beautiful campus was welcome, especially since he came from the wide open spaces of Montana, a far cry from the 15



FAMILY BUSINESS: Wendy visiting an elderly patient

million people living in Manila! Even though this time in the city was a time of waiting and character building, God continued to demonstrate His love and care for Dwayne. elderly patient.

As I continued my work in the mountains far from Manila, God provided several more opportunities for Dwayne and me to meet. I began to highly respect Dwayne and his simple but confident trust that God would provide for His work. As I realized that this was a truly genuine man, I couldn't help wondering what God had in store for us.

Four months after I met Dwayne he was finally able to get the helicopter cleared, registered, and ready to fly from Manila to Palawan. And yes, much to my delight, God dropped my future husband out of the sky (somewhat literally) and into my jungle home without me having to set foot out of the Philippines! One year after we met, Dwayne and I were married.

Changes and Greater Opportunities

The change for me was not hard—a wonderful new roommate, a helicopter for transport, and an exciting new mission in progress! As Dwayne joined me in my little hut, we lived a fairy-tale missionary life as we made medical visits and evacuations with the helicopter. A half-day hike up the mountain to reach a patient now took only minutes! I continued running the busy jungle clinic while Dwayne helped with the construction of a new clinic building. The evenings were usually quiet, and we had no phones, Internet, or other media to distract us. We enjoyed planning for the future of our mission.

It soon became clear that we needed a safe place to keep the helicopter—out of the weather and accessible by road—along with the heavy tools and fuel. We needed a place where we could base our operations and reach the needs of all the missionary projects that were scattered across southern Palawan.

It wasn't long before God provided several nurses to take my place in the mountains, and we moved to the lowlands to start building a hangar with adjoining living quarters. God directed us to a saintly Adventist man a short distance from town who donated a portion of his beautiful land for our project.

We began the building project in faith, without complete funds for finishing the structure. God provided enough money each month to allow us to continue building without having to slow down for lack of funds. One year later, through God's miracles, we had a hangar with adjoining mission apartments, complete with a runway! God also provided another helicopter pilot and other nurses and support missionaries who are now running the Palawan project as Dwayne and I expand the ministry into other parts of the Philippines. As God leads, we will soon have helicopters to serve all the mountainous regions of the country, and a fixed-wing airplane for travel between islands.

It was a new revelation to me, as our mission progressed, how it could be so simple to take God at His word and trust His promises for everything, not just when being in a tight situation. I was perplexed how I, and possibly many others, had missed this core part of faith. I can see clearly now, as I read God's Word and the Spirit of Prophecy, that we should not be limiting God's work by our lack of faith! (And not just financially, but in all the needs for furthering His work.) Seeming obstacles are often God's way of testing our faith in His ability to do the impossible.

My understanding increased as I observed Dwayne. I began to realize how I had been so shortsighted in my ministries so far. Dwayne talked to others with humble confidence about our plans, never mentioning money, personnel, housing, or any other needs that might be conditional for such huge undertakings. The issue was never "if God will provide" or "if we can work this issue



CAREFUL! Slippery trail to mobile clinic.

out.” It was just trying to think bigger, moving forward, seeking God for wisdom, and trusting Him with the details.

Thinking Big

As I'm catching the vision, we have boldly gone forward in other ways that we feel are important, even though often our funds are enough only for the current month. Besides keeping up with the increasing demand for the helicopter, we are also supporting several Bible workers and have donated several motorcycles for their use. We have seen the Holy Spirit moving powerfully through these local church workers and our support missionaries who have devoted much of their time to Bible studies, Muslim and medical work, agriculture, and children's outreach. We cannot keep up with the demand. It is so exciting to see God not only provide for this work but bless it too. We have had the privilege of witnessing multiple baptisms of more than 80 people and two flourishing church plants as a result of this work.



MISSION WORK IS FUN: Pre-packing medicines with missionaries and visiting medical team.

Because of the great medical needs, we have trained villagers from the local church to be health workers, focusing on education and simple natural remedies as well as the use of medicines for malaria and other common diseases of the area. This attracts more patients, resulting in the need for more supplies, but it also gives us great opportunities for witness. We often cover hospital costs for destitute patients, who need assistance with blood transfusions, clothing, and food.

As God opens doors, we are in the process of starting a second project in another area of the Philippines, using helicopters and airplanes to reach other remote areas. Because it seems humanly impossible to accomplish such a huge task, this will seem like a crazy endeavor to the world. But we believe God can do it, and we're excited to see just how!

Many local and foreign missionaries are sacrificing their lives to reach the isolated people groups scattered across the Philippines. However, it often takes days or weeks to reach these projects by foot. Precious time is wasted in travel or trying to survive on the limited supplies that can be carried in. When the missionaries or villagers get seriously ill, it is very difficult to transport them by land or sea. In other areas people are begging for missionaries to come and help them, but the areas are so remote that no one has the time to make the visits. We see a huge need for more helicopters to help support these projects and speed the spreading of the gospel in the short time we have left.

What will it take to start a new project from scratch in a new area? How many more helicopters or airplanes will God provide? What about nurses, pilots, mechanics, support staff, housing, hangars, and runways? It's not our concern. We have experienced how God provides for His work when we trust in Him.

We are still babes learning to live by faith, but it's been nothing but exciting so far. In Dwayne's words: "When we surrender all to God, He will provide beyond our dreams or imaginations." And that's exactly what God has done—not just financially but in every aspect of our lives. "The Lord wants His people in these days to believe that He will do as great things for them as He did for the children of Israel in their journey from Egypt to Canaan. We are to have an educated faith that will not hesitate to follow His instructions in the most difficult experiences. 'Go Forward' is the command of God to His people!"*



*Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1940), p. 277.

Wendy Harris-Guptill has been a missionary nurse in Asia for the past eight years. She and her husband, Dwayne, continue to move forward with the Philippine Adventist Medical Aviation Services (PAMAS), a faith-based organization inspired by Gospel Ministries International. Since this article was written, they have begun two new projects in northern Luzon and Mindanao. To learn more about the ministry, visit www.pamasmission.org.



PRINT THIS PAGE



EMAIL TO A FRIEND



SEND US A COMMENT

[Home](#) | [About Adventist World](#) | [Archives](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [AR Online](#)

SiteMap. Powered by SimpleUpdates.com © 2002-2011.

