

Share Your Story: Your Mission Field Includes Everyone Everywhere

By Mary J. Ferrill Brown

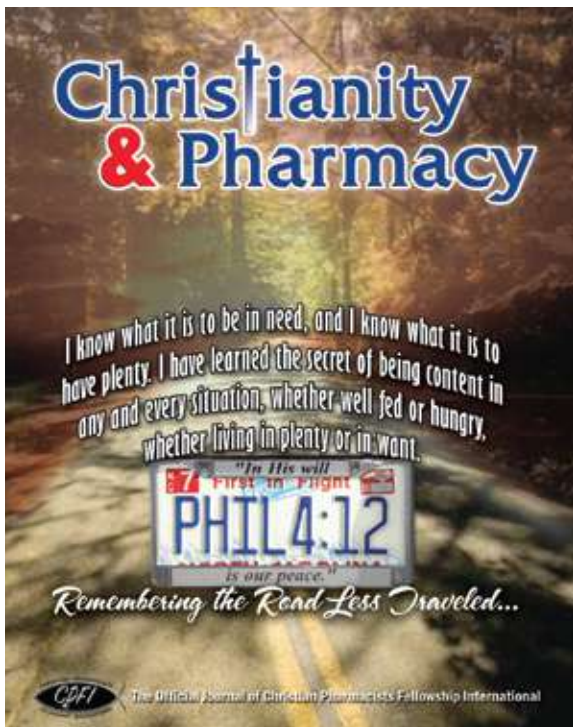


I recall a TV commercial stating that, on average, Americans move to a new location 12 times throughout their lives. I laughed because I have probably moved more than double that amount! I wish I could say that all of my moves were directed by the Holy Spirit, but many times I made plans and then asked God to bless them, instead of first seeking God's guidance and then obediently waiting for His plan to be revealed. Indeed, some of my wandering ways were prompted more by worldly circumstances than spiritual revelations from my Lord and Savior. Nevertheless, as I ponder the migratory nature of my life, a distinct pattern emerges—one that has God's fingerprints all over it.

Each new adventure brought new people into my life—godly people who provided spiritual nourishment that deepened my faith and encouraged my walk with Jesus. Had I remained in one locale, I might never have met them here on Earth. I have also met people who afforded me a blessed opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus and minister to them. I'll probably never know on this side of eternity if seeds I planted have borne fruit, but it is a profound blessing to be able to reach out to those in need as a disciple of the living God. I look forward to the day when I will see Jesus face-to-face in His heavenly kingdom... and also when I see all my "Jesus friends" whom I will instantly recognize. We will no doubt reminisce about the intersection of our faith journeys while here on Earth.

I am also reminded about seemingly mundane interactions that have taken place in some of the most unlikely places, such as the DMV. As a person who has claimed residence in several states, I am well acquainted with the tendency for unpleasant experiences at a DMV. They appear to have one major characteristic in common—inefficiency. Whether you make an appointment or not, you can expect long lines and the probability of encountering disgruntled customers and staff. I was informed by many people with whom I worked at that time that the DMVs in North Carolina were particularly awful. I decided to adjust my mindset before visiting the North Carolina DMV. I prayed about my visit several times, that I would be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16) to all those with whom I came in contact. Armed with my Bible (the sword of the Spirit from Ephesians 6:17), I entered the DMV with a smile on my face and a sense of peace. I specifically prayed using Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV) – *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with Thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”* I was fully prepared. After checking in, I sat down, Bible in hand, planning to read God's Word as a spiritual antidote for the long wait.

To my pleasant surprise, it did not take long for my name to be called. However, despite my attempts to lighten the conversation with the DMV official, I was met with robotic, blunted responses. I just kept smiling and answering his questions, hoping that a door would open for me to witness to him. He asked me to state my previous addresses over the last 5 years. All I could do was stare at him for a few moments and then chuckle, pondering how many relocations I would have to recall. Remember, I moved a lot! I did the best I could to recite all my previous addresses. While I was listing each location, I unwittingly commented that God must have had me move many times to make sure I didn't become too attached to my earthly home, since my final destination with him in Heaven is what's most important. I will never forget how this cold, robotic DMV worker suddenly stopped what he was doing, swung around in his chair, looked directly at me and asked me to repeat what I had just said. I obliged and repeated my statement. His face lit up and his entire demeanor changed. He said he had worked at the DMV for many years and felt he could not talk about his faith without offending someone or getting in trouble with his supervisor. He said he would no longer have that attitude because my answer, being sincere and heartfelt, was not at all offensive. The DMV portion of our interaction was postponed for about 30 minutes as I discussed with him how to personalize his testimony in ways that would make it more amenable to a work environment. He began to realize what a wonderful opportunity he had to engage with a captive audience stuck at the DMV! I shared 1 Peter 3:15a (NIV) with him: *“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you*



have. But do it with gentleness and respect.” He was so excited by our interaction! I witnessed a soul transform in front of me. I have no idea if our discussion had a lasting influence on him to witness more openly, but I know it did for me.

If I had not lived in so many locations, I would not have had a reason to go to that DMV and have that discussion with that specific worker. I look forward to running into him in Heaven so I can learn how his new evangelistic mindset worked out.

It was also in North Carolina where I had my only personalized license plate (see photo). This state allowed punctuation, so I chose Phil 4:12. You may wonder why I didn’t choose the well-known verse, Philippians 4:13 (“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” NIV). I decided to use my license plate as another means of evangelism. When I see a personalized license plate, I usually try to figure out its meaning. If someone is familiar with the Bible, they might know Philippians 4:13, but the context of that verse is found in 4:12 (NIV) – “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” I was hoping to encourage people who saw my

license plate to open their Bible and read that verse for themselves, and perhaps even investigate the Bible further. If I had not lived in NC, I would not have had the opportunity to go to a specific DMV to encourage a specific staff member while requesting that personalized evangelism license plate.

I have many more stories of interactions I’ve had over the years, only because I was open to the Lord guiding me to initiate conversations in certain places and with certain people. God has provided a never-ending audience for telling stories of my personal faith in (and relationship with) Jesus Christ. When I was in Israel, I had a ring made in Hebrew with a verse that speaks to the burning desire I have to speak with others about Jesus. The verse is Jeremiah 20:9 (NIV) – “But if I say, ‘I will not mention Him or speak anymore in His name,’ His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.” I urge each of you to make the most of every opportunity God gives you to start conversations with people He puts in your path. You will never know until eternity what spiritual fruit may come from it—for you and the people around you.

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