

Coming Out from Behind the Counter: Serving Along the Amazon River Basin

By Marjorie Hayes

For almost as far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a pharmacist. My Mom inspired me at a very young age with her own tenacious fight through pharmacy school while raising 4 young children. Chronologically, I realized my lifelong pharmacy dream before Christ Jesus stirred my heart with His Holy Spirit, calling me to surrender myself to Him for salvation. Shortly after becoming a born-again believer in Christ Jesus, the Lord presented me with a clear opportunity to take my first missions trip. It was a life-changing experience for me, both spiritually and even professionally. Several other overseas medical missions trips followed, and each one uniquely stretched and grew me in my relationship with Christ. My second missions trip in 2009 was with Amazon Outreach (AO) and God had used that trip to teach me about His relational nature. So my heart leaped during Missions Week at my church early in 2025 when I saw a clip of an Amazon Outreach video. After that church service, my Missions Pastor asked me if I'd be interested in going on a medical missions trip to the Amazon with AO. Much to my amazement and delight, the Lord was calling me to serve on the Amazon River for the second time!

As I prepared spiritually for what would be my seventh overseas medical missions trip, I wondered what the Lord would teach me about Himself this time. Reflecting on my first AO trip 16 years earlier, my personal prayer back then was to know my God more intimately. He answered that prayer by teaching me that He is a relational God... He calls us to a restored relationship with Himself through His Son Jesus who teaches us that the greatest commandment is all about relationships: *"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."* (Mark 12:30-31, NKJV). Much has changed in my life in the 16 years since that first AO adventure, and I am very grateful to have a deeper and more confident walk with our Shepherd King Jesus. In continued preparation, I reflected on my most recent missions trip the year before with Global Health Outreach to Ghana, West Africa. As on all my previous missions trips to that point, I served exclusively as a pharmacist, filling hundreds of prescriptions each day. It was a rewarding and wonderful experience to be part of that GHO team, but there were several times when I felt cut off from the ministry happening outside the busy pharmacy. Along with that, a trip the year before to a small missions hospital in Togo, West Africa had left me struggling with feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness. Looking back, I can now see that **the Lord** was preparing me to be transformed by the renewing of my mind in how I define my worth and purpose. *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* (Romans 12:2, NKJV).



On August 8, 2025, a team of 25 people (mostly all from my church, Starkey Road Baptist in Seminole, Florida) along with a few missionaries from Amazon Outreach set out on our mission to the Amazon. We were a diverse team of men, women, and children ranging in age from 11 years to 84 years young, and the Lord quickly united us in the fellowship of His Holy Spirit for service and glory to Him. At the start of what would be our first day of ministry, our Missions Pastor expressed

the need for a female to serve in the women's ministry we planned to provide in each village we visited. He asked a young lady who was a pharmacy technician on her first overseas mission. I knew that the Lord was already stretching this young lady by simply being on this adventure, and that she would be most comfortable serving in the familiar area of the pharmacy. I also knew that we had a Brazilian pharmacist serving on our team for the week, as he was the same pharmacist I'd served with on my first AO trip. I immediately recognized God's open door: that the Lord had someone else in mind for serving in the women's ministry. It was finally my time to come out from behind the counter and serve the ladies of these villages along the Amazon river basin in what we humorously called our "Amazonia Salon." Each day we served in a different village via women's, men's, and children's (VBS) ministries, eyeglass ministry, and medical and pharmacy ministries. And each day was crowned with a clear gospel presentation, often given by a pastor of these Amazonia villages. He explained to our team in advance that he is often not welcomed into the villages at all, but that he is never as welcomed as when he has an entire AO mission team with him ready to serve their people. The people in the Amazon have come to recognize the AO boats approaching, and they enthusiastically come paddling by rowboat and running by foot to be served and loved by the various missions teams.

As I settled into walking in the good works the Lord had prepared for me on this particular trip, I realized that for many years, I had been erroneously finding my worth and purpose in my identity as a pharmacist. *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:10, NKJV). Coming out from behind the pharmacy counter and painting many fingernails, sharing my testimony with many ladies, and helping many kids in VBS was a breath of fresh air to my soul! I have been greatly blessed to be a pharmacist, but that is not my identity... nor is my inherent value tied to my profession. What God says about us is what our true identity is. God says we are valuable, and He demonstrated that by bankrupting Heaven to send His only Son Jesus Christ to die for us so that we can live through Him and with Him forever. Jesus reassures us of our great value to God: *"Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."* (Matthew 10:31, NKJV). Our purpose in life is to become more like Jesus. We are the **Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International**. I love that our name begins with Christ and that our purpose as a Fellowship is to put Christ first in all we do as pharmacists. Although I became a pharmacist first, I am a Christian by identity and a child of the most High God who says I have infinite value. My purpose is to become more like Jesus, who *"did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* (Matthew 20:28, NKJV). So I thank God for using my trip with AO to help me see my purpose – and my identity – more clearly.





Marjorie Hayes is a second-generation pharmacist and a native of Florida who received her PharmD degree from Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, FL in 2001. Marjorie was inspired to pursue pharmacy by her beloved late Mom who fought her way through pharmacy school in the early eighties at the University of Florida with four kids! Marjorie has been an employee of Walgreens Pharmacy since she was a teenager. She started with Walgreens as a pharmacy technician and has since worked as a pharmacy intern, graduate intern, floater pharmacist, staff pharmacist, and pharmacy manager. Shortly after graduating pharmacy school, Marjorie had a personal crisis that led her into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. She has been a member of Starkey Road Baptist Church in Seminole, FL since 2014 and has served in the AWANA ministry for the duration of that time.

Marjorie got her first opportunity to serve the Lord on a medical missions trip in 2008. She went to the Dominican Republic with SCORE international and was forever changed by her experiences there. Several short-term medical missions trips followed, with her most recent trip with a GHO team to Ghana, West Africa. Marjorie knows firsthand how the Lord can use times of dire need to draw hearts to Himself for salvation, and she believes that is the heartbeat of medical missions.

Out of Egypt

By Teri Miller

We started our journey at 2 AM with only the light of the stars and a few occasional flashlights to illuminate the path. The sound of camels snorting and feet shuffling could be heard all around. Ascending what is believed to be present day Mount Sinai, I felt aligned to stepping into the pages of the Bible. I imagined Moses making the slow arduous journey in leather sandals, in order to speak to a most holy God — a God that came down to the mountain top—possibly this very mountain top. The weight of that reality gently seeped into my consciousness as the climb continued. Grinding out the last 600 vertical feet using my hands (and crawling when necessary) was well worth it to watch the sun come up over the horizon and to gaze through the haze. I wondered what it must've been like for Moses to have a real encounter with God Himself. Words can't describe that unforgettable moment.

What started as a planned trip to Israel and a step of faith as I pushed through the "what ifs" and uncertainties in life, turned into a four-year test of perseverance, faith, encouragement from others, and God's steady and

stable presence. In February 2020, I turned in my down payment and decided to venture out to Israel with approximately forty members of my church family. My community began to open my eyes to hope and God's provision through many new and inspiring acquaintances. Before the trip could become a reality later that fall, COVID changed the plan... not just for one year, but for two. The next opportunity to experience the land my Savior walked was in 2023; however, I was working in a new, full-time faculty position which would not allow me to travel abroad for two weeks. In 2024, the Israeli travel agency who had been graciously holding my place required a final decision; but in God's perfect plan, the destination for this original adventurous band of image bearers had changed from Israel—to Egypt. I hadn't ever considered going to Egypt, but my love for seeing God's creation and my proclivity toward new opportunities compelled me to join the adventure. Unbeknownst to me, Egypt, Mt. Sinai, and the stops in

between were part of God's affirming pathway for my journey of faith.

As the Israelites were leaving Egypt, not knowing where their final destination would be and trusting the "doors" God opened, God took them through some of the most unlikely places and allowed them a sphere of influence and a future they never would've had

