

Revival & REFORMATION

The Official *United in Prayer* Weekly Blog and World Church Prayer Requests
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When God Said “No!” (Lessons in Lockdown: Part 1 of 2)

By Don MacLafferty

I hugged and kissed my family goodbye and said, “I will see you in 16 days!” as I waved goodbye and caught my ride to the Calgary International Airport. It was March 10, 2020, and I was on my way to call for revival on the campus of Adventist University of the Philippines. I was also going to equip all the pastors of the new Cavite Mission to disciple the new generations for Jesus Christ. In addition, I had resources for couples who wanted stronger marriages and resources to disciple their children.

COVID-19 was gathering steam globally as my plane sped down the runway and up into the skies to Vancouver and then straight to Manila. April and I had talked together and prayed a lot about the risks of going on this mission. Repeatedly, the Holy Spirit brought us to the same conclusion: God called me to go. There was urgency from God for me to go, now. The global circumstances were not even a consideration.

I had no idea of the adventure that awaited me. When I arrived at the beautiful university campus, I had no clue that I would be locked down there for nearly three months! I did not imagine that the time would come when working students would stand in the hot sun for hours waiting for emergency rations of rice and a few vegetables. I did not foresee that this campus would have a 6:00 p.m. curfew enforced by armed security personnel.

Two days after my arrival, the entire campus was locked down! Before the gates closed, 2,000 of the 3,000 students were able to leave campus. There were about 1,000 students and about 500 faculty, staff and their family members left on campus.

It was determined, as we prepared to begin the week of revival, that attendance would not be required both because a revival with Jesus has to come from the heart and because many were fearful of mass gatherings — even before social distance was required by the government. Fear kept many away. Several hundred came on opening night, positioning themselves in the spacious campus church with two or three maximum to a pew.

The campus was accustomed to huge events (like Week of Prayer, for example) with mass choirs and fine performances before thousands. But this was to be a simple revival with Jesus where those who came would all be invited to participate in prayer and study of the Word in an interactive way. The switch for the audience from being a spectator to being a participant was a big shock!

As the week of revival progressed, so did news of the pandemic. Fear rocked the campus. The numbers dropped.

There was a great hunger in the hearts of the few for a personal revival with Jesus. Night by night they came to worship Jesus, humble themselves, repent and seek Christ and the Holy Spirit through His Word. The week of revival concluded Sabbath, March 21. Quite a number began a new life in Jesus that week!

God led us to offer a 6 a.m. discipleship training for those students who were moved in their hearts to grow as disciples and disciple-makers. Starting Sunday, I would do five early morning sessions with these students, do a Zoom discipleship training each day with the pastors of the newly formed Cavite Mission and then fly home to Canada on Thursday, March 26. It was a neat and tidy plan...or so I thought.

Several days before my departure, my flight was canceled. Flights were getting canceled all over the world — fast! Friends found me another flight. A doctor, who was waved through countless military checkpoints, quickly drove me to the airport to catch the new flight. I stepped into the Nino Aquino International Airport in Manila and it was like an abandoned warehouse rather than the expected ant hill with thousands of passengers swarming the concourses.

I stepped up to the ticket counter with excitement, for it was one of the only counters still open. I was greeted graciously and asked to show my passport. I handed it over. They smiled and invited me to place my luggage on the conveyor belt. I was elated. I was going home despite the pandemic!

The agent kept studying the screen, puzzled. He asked for a printed copy of my reservation for the flight. I showed it to him proudly. The ticket had just been purchased the night before. He stared at it for too long and then said, “Sir, I am so sorry, but your ticket is invalid. You are going home to Canada via Hong Kong and tonight Hong Kong International Airport will be closed at midnight to all transit passengers. Your layover is past midnight. You cannot go.”

“When is your next flight?” I asked with fleeting optimism. “Maybe this coming summer in June or July,” he cautiously suggested. The rest of the airport was empty. I called the doctor, and he dropped me off at the campus after dark using every precaution he and I could think of.

I kept my presence on campus a secret all the next day. The pastor drove me up quietly to enter the back of the church where the students were holding a prayer meeting. The pastor asked the student audience, “Could you imagine Pastor Don being here with us tonight instead of being in Canada where his flight should now be landing?” The students chorused back, “No. We wish! But he is long gone.”

I walked out on the stage in front of students stranded far away from their homes, where they felt cut off from their moms and dads. The students erupted with squeals of laughter and joy and applause. We prayed together that night. The students were excited about me being there with them for this lockdown, but tried to honestly pray for God to bring me home!

That night my friends found me another flight only to have it canceled. Then they found me another flight with the last remaining seat available. "Wow! How Providential!" I thought.

The next morning God awakened me to pray and be in His Word. I surrendered my life and situation to Him. I asked Him, "What is on Your heart?" The still small voice of God led me to Acts 16 with the story of Paul being blocked by the Spirit in his travels before hearing the call to Macedonia. I studied the chapter and took notes, praying for wisdom.

The next morning, as usual, I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. I asked God to give me the wisdom He promised in James 1:5-8 so I would know what to do next with my reservation home. The Holy Spirit immediately responded that He had already given me the wisdom I was requesting. He reminded me of the Acts 16 story He had given me the day before.

I went out into the field to pray. God spoke to my heart, "The priorities I have given you on this mission are not yet accomplished. I am moving the hearts of young people and they are preparing to make their stand. I will send them like My arrows from My quiver to their dorms, rooms and homes to call My people to pray and return to Me. I will send them, hurl them, across this nation and around the world."

"Cancel your flight tonight to LAX...Do not leave who I have raised up for you to disciple as My champions. Cease looking for a way to leave here. Do not leave here until I reveal to both you and April that your work here has been accomplished for this time. Organize the students first to call the homes and dorms back to Me and then equip them to call the churches back to Me."

So I cancelled my flight to LAX — my last option to get safely home...and stepped into an adventure with God far beyond my expectation. (To be continued next week!)

Don MacLafferty is a disciple of Jesus, a husband to April for more than 30 years, a dad to Jason, Julie and Jessica and Founder/President of In Discipleship. This testimony was originally shared at Time to Get Ready Ministries.

World Church Prayer Requests

March 12 - 18, 2021

- Pray for students around the world who continue to struggle with lockdowns and a difficult time attending classes.
- Pray for AUP and other Seventh-day Adventist Universities throughout the world, that God will give the leadership wisdom during these unique times.
- Pray with us for the Chechen people of Turkey. The Chechen have a difficult history and about 112,000 have settled in Turkey. As far as we know, there are no Christian believers among this group. Join us in praying for them to meet Jesus through tentmakers and believers in their communities.
- Pray for the upcoming World Youth Day, which occurs March 20, 2021. Pray that many young people will take part and lives will be changed for eternity.